

THE CHANGING PATTERN OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE NEW RUSSIA SINCE 1991

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Recibido: 11 noviembre 2016 /Revisado: 2 diciembre 2016 /Aceptado: 24 junio 2017 /Publicado: 15 febrero 2018

Resumen: Evaluar la pauta cambiante de la política exterior de la Nueva Rusia surgida de las ruinas de la Unión Soviética en 1991 es un complejo pero interesante estudio que destaca cómo el Nuevo Estado ruso se ha comportado dentro del sistema internacional liderado por Occidente, así como la dinámica de las relaciones internacionales que han caracterizado el nuevo orden mundial surgido tras la Guerra Fría. Siguiendo la tendencia y el patrón observable en la pujante política exterior de la Nueva Rusia, este artículo identifica el liberalismo y el nacionalismo como las principales características de la política exterior del país. Mientras que en algunos momentos se mostró claramente prooccidental, en otras asumió una dimensión totalmente contraria e incluso llegó a mezclar ambas posturas en un intento de establecer a la Federación de Rusia como centro principal de poder en los asuntos exteriores. El documento concluye que este patrón visible en la política exterior de la Nueva Rusia fue en gran medida moldeado por el interés nacional y la búsqueda de establecer a Rusia como una superpotencia mundial.

Palabras clave: Rusia; Occidente; Política exterior; OTAN; Puño de hierro

Abstract: Assessing the changing pattern in the foreign policy of the New Russia that emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union in 1991 is a complex but interesting study which highlights how the New Russian state has operated within the Western-led international system, as well as the dynamics of interstate relations that characterised the international order that emerged after the Cold War era. Tracing the trend and

observable pattern in the foreign policy thrust of the New Russia, the paper identified liberalism and nationalism as the dual underpinning features of the foreign policy of the New Russia. While at some point it was largely pro-West, at another it assumed an anti-West dimension and, yet at another level, it blended both postures in its thrust to establishing the Russian Federation as a major power centre in world affairs. The paper concludes that the changing pattern observable in the foreign policy of the New Russia was largely shaped by national interest and the quest to establishing Russia as a world superpower.

Keywords: Russia; West; Foreign Policy; NATO; Iron fist

INTRODUCTION

“I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. But there may be a key, and that key is Russian national interest.”
Winston Churchill.

An examination of the changing pattern of the foreign policy of the New Russia that emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union in December 1991 is a complex but interesting study in contemporary international relations. It highlights the dynamics of interstate relations that subsequently characterise the international order that emerged after the Cold War and how the New Russia has operated within the Western-led international system. In making this assessment, however, it is imperative to emphasise that the New Russia that

emerged in the post-Soviet era was not a totalitarian state ruled by a Communist Party with a single, clearly defined foreign policy. That state disappeared in 1991. In the words of Michael McFaul, a Carnegie scholar, the New Russia is a democratising state, and her foreign policy thrust, in turn, is a product of domestic politics in a pluralistic system.¹ This new status shapes the behaviour of the New Russia in world affairs in the post-soviet era.

Essentially, the foreign policy thrust of the New Russia was largely guided by a blend of nationalism and pro-West policies in the immediate post-Cold War era and a more inclusive, aggressive and competitive anti-West posture much later before the turn of the millennium, which affirms its intention to be more active and assertive in international affairs, not as a mere participant but as a power centre in the “New World Order” designed and shaped by Washington and its allies. Thus, since the emergence of the New Russia Federation, the state has pursued a complex foreign policy largely influenced and driven by national interests that is dominated by economic needs of the state. This pattern though necessitated a pro-Western stance, it assumed an anti-Western dimension from about 1995, when practically the New Russia pursued as part of its foreign policy thrust an interest aimed at countering and revising Western expansion into former Soviet space and Western “arrogance” in the international system with an “iron fist” as well as to increase Russian influence in world politics – a foreign policy largely influenced and shaped by the personality of the leader of the Russian Federation, political parties and interest groups to an uncommon degree.²

¹ Michael McFaul, “What are Russian Foreign Policy Objectives?” Testimonies before the House Committee on International Relations”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, Washington DC, 1 May 1999, <http://carnegieendowment.org/1999/04/30/what-are-russian-foreign-policy-objectives-pub-424> (accessed 23 June 2016).

² Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking*. New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2002, 1. See also Fyodor Lukyanov, “Putin's Foreign Policy: The Quest to Restore Russia's Rightful Place,” *Foreign Affairs*, 95/3, 2016. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2016-04-18/putins-for> (accessed 23 June

Fundamentally, while the foreign policy of the New Russia is largely guided by a blend of confidence and insecurity, this blend has evolved, creating another gap between the West and Russia, especially since the turn of the millennium. While in the West, there is a broad prevailing belief that Russia is in decline, emphasising the insecurity in the mix:

“unreformed economically and politically stagnant, on the verge of major domestic upheaval while dependent on high oil prices, Russia faces a range of challenges in a fast-moving and evolving international environment,”³

Russia's view is different. Russia considers itself as a re-emerging power on the rise to claim its proper status in world affairs. The New Russia's foreign policy thrust, thus, aims at working to anticipate and lead events in the international system, to be more prominent in international affairs, advocating its interests, using both more traditional ‘hard power’ instruments as well as developing its international presence and using more ‘soft strength’ to protect and assert its interests.⁴

The paper is divided into themes for better understanding of the trend and pattern observable in the foreign policy pursuit of the New Russia and the dynamics of her engagement with the West in the post-Cold War era. The following themes are considered: the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the New Russia, Foreign Policy of the New Russia: Objectives and Perspectives, and Foreign Policy of the New Russia: Observable Pattern and Trend from 1991.

1. THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW RUSSIA

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought about a profound change in the global power balance. It marked the end of the rivalry that saw the struggle of “two systems” projected onto all areas of international affairs and an era marked

2016). This view was equally shared by Sergey Karaganov, a Russian political scientist, in his discussion in 2011 of Russia's foreign policy in the 21st Century.

³ Andrew Monaghan, *The New Russian Foreign Policy Concept: Evolving Continuity*. London, Chatham House, 2013, 7 – 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

by the threat of global war with little or no possibility for constructive international cooperation.⁵ Historically, the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is usually traced to Mikhail Gorbachev and the policies he pursued to reorder the Cold War relations with the West as well as his domestic policies to reform the ailing Soviet economy and agitated society. Gorbachev's policies of "glasnost" and "perestroika," set in motion the chain of events that eventually led to the collapse of the Union.

When Gorbachev took office in 1985 as leader of the Soviet Union, he chose a new Soviet path distinct from his predecessor's. He sought an end to the Cold War with the West as a step towards resuscitating the ailing Soviet economy. Gorbachev had ambitious plans to create a profoundly different relationship with the West and the rest of the world. This agenda, which the Kremlin described as "new political thinking," was initially quite popular domestically and was well received abroad as well. However, as Gorbachev struggled and ultimately failed to restart the Soviet economy, "new political thinking" came to be seen as an effort to compensate for, or distract attention from, rapid socio-economic decline by concentrating on foreign policy.⁶

However, throughout the late 1980s, the reform-minded Gorbachev and his allies in government believed that the best way out of the Cold War would be to agree on new rules for global governance.⁷ In his acceptance speech as the new soviet leader, he outlined as part of his foreign policy pursuit and asserted the Soviet leadership valued the successes of the relaxation of international tensions achieved in the 1970s and were ready to take part in carrying on with the process of establishing peaceful, mutually beneficial cooperation with the West. He emphasised,

"we want termination and not continuation of the arms race and, therefore, offer a freeze of nuclear arsenals, an end to further deployment of missiles. We want a real and major reduction of the arms stockpiles, and not the development of ever-new weapons systems, be it in space or on Earth."⁸

To achieve this, Gorbachev entered into deals with the West, mainly the United States of America, on the termination of the arms race, the reunification of Germany and the adoption of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe aimed to reduce confrontation and forge a partnership between the rival blocs in the East and the West. While these concessions eased the tension in East-West relations, relaxed international tension and assured a hopeful end to the Cold War, the continued deterioration of the soviet economy and the increasing agitation within the Union, especially of constituent states and influential movements, moved the Eastern superpower closer to disintegration.

The continued deterioration of the soviet economy during the late 1980s and early '90s, and Gorbachev's resented romance with the West culminated in some intriguing political manoeuvring and attempts at forceful hijacking power by coup d'état from the Communist Party. These events defined by the loss of confidence in the leadership of Gorbachev and the Communist Party set the stage for the eventual disintegration of the Soviet Union. By December 1991, the Soviet Union had virtually ceased to exist, and the future of its territories and peoples uncertain. First, three republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania seceded from the Union, while the other twelve republics continued to strive for independence. Although attempts were made by Gorbachev to establish a new "Union of Sovereign States" with some degree of integration in foreign policy, defence and economic affairs, agreement among the remaining twelve republics was not achieved. In fact, the union republics had begun to act as though they were sovereign states and were negotiating with each other, bypassing the central government. This process culminated on

⁵ Melville, Andrei; Shakleina, Tatiana (eds.), *Russian Foreign Policy in Transition: Concepts and Realities*. Budapest, Central European University Press, 2005, 28.

⁶ Klee, Mary Beth; Cribb, John; Holdren, John (eds.), *The Human Odyssey: From Modern Times to Our Contemporary Era*, 3, USA, K12 Inc., 2010, 309 – 312; see also Lukyanov, "Putin's Foreign Policy: The Quest to Restore Russia's Rightful Place,"

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 12, 1985 available on Microsoft Encarta 2009 [DVD] (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008).

December 1991 in the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) by three Slav republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. From this point forward, it became clear even to the leaders of the Union that “the U.S.S.R. has ceased to exist as a geopolitical reality.”⁹

This level of deterioration was not envisaged by Gorbachev. Thus, this unanticipated internal dislocation weakened the Soviet’s position in the ongoing process to end the Cold War with the West. The dissolution of the union meant the exit of a superpower from the international arena, leaving the United States as the only surviving superpower to dictate the course of event henceforward. Gorbachev resigned as Soviet president on 25 December 1991, and all Soviet institutions ceased to function at the end of 1991. The main benefactor was Russia, leading state among the soviet republics. It assumed the U.S.S.R.’s seat on the United Nations Security Council, and all Soviet embassies became Russian embassies. Thus, the New Russia emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union as the Russian Federation. The emergence, however, was nothing comparable to the political influence wielded by the U.S.S.R. in world affairs as a superpower. The New Russia inherited all that was left of the Soviet Union but not its superpower status, and thus came to be subjected to the “New World Order” charted by the ‘fortunate’ West.¹⁰

In January 1992, a month after the official dissolution of the Soviet Union, US President, George H. W. Bush, announced in his State of the Union Address: “By the grace of God, America won the Cold War.” Bush asserted, “The Cold War didn’t ‘end’ – it was won.”¹¹ On the

end of the Cold War, Russian officials, however, have not made so clear a statement about what exactly happened from their point of view. According to Fyodor Lukyanov, Their assessments have ranged from “we won” affirming the Russian people overcame a repressive communist system to “we lost” indicating that the Russians allowed a great country to collapse.¹² Nevertheless, leaders of the New Russia have all agreed on one thing: the “New World Order” that emerged after 1991 was nothing like the one envisioned by Mikhail Gorbachev and other reform-minded Soviet leaders as a way to prevent the worst possible outcomes of the Cold War. The disintegration of the Soviet Union rendered Gorbachev’s paradigm obsolete. A “New World Order” no longer meant an arrangement between equals; it meant the triumph of Western principles and influence.¹³ The US-led 1990 – 1991 Gulf War introduced a new dynamic: without the constraints of superpower rivalry, the Western powers seemed to feel emboldened to use direct military intervention to put pressure on states that resisted the new order, such as Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. Thus, the New Russia entered into the new world order prepared to battle for relevance and assume eventually the exited status of the defunct USSR as a superpower in world affairs.

2. FOREIGN POLICY OF THE NEW RUSSIA: OBJECTIVES AND PERSPECTIVES

The foreign policy of the New Russia at inception was influenced by some long-term interests, such as the desire to establish Russia as a democratic, free state in the post-totalitarian era, provide favourable conditions for the formation of a modern efficient economy, ensure the state’s financial and economic independence and achieve the equal and natural incor-

⁹ Martin McCauley, "The Gorbachev Era." *Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*, Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014.

¹⁰ See Dewdney, John C.; Pipes, Richard E.; Conquest, Robert; McCauley, Martin, "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." *Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*. Chicago, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014. See also Noguee, Joseph L.; Donaldson, Robert H. *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II*. New York, Pergamon Press, 1992; Engelmann, Kurt E.; Lincoln, W. Bruce; Parrott, Bruce; Lieven, Dominic, "Russia." Microsoft Encarta 2009 [DVD] (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008).

¹¹ George H. W. Bush, President of United States of America, State of the Union Address, 28 January

1992, <http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-5531> (accessed 20 June 2016).

¹² Fyodor Lukyanov, “Putin’s Foreign Policy: The Quest to Restore Russia’s Rightful Place,” *Foreign Affairs*, 95/3, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2016-04-18/putins-for...> (accessed 23 June 2016).

¹³ See Thorun, Christian, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia’s Conduct towards the West*. Great Britain, Palgrave McMillan, 2009, 9: McFaul, “What are Russian Foreign Policy Objectives?”

poration of the Russian Federation into the world community as a great power that boasts a centuries-long history, unique geopolitical situation, considerable military might, and significant technological, intellectual and ethical capacities.¹⁴ These long-term interests formed the basis for the foreign policy objectives subsequently pursued by the New Russia from 1991 and shaped the pattern of her engagement in the international system up to present day.

In the last two and half decades of the engagement of post-soviet Russia in international relations, a pattern observable in her foreign policy thrust and behaviour in the international system indicate a complexity. At one point, her foreign policy thrust has been largely pro-Western, and at another, it assumes an anti-Western posture, although not to the extreme as to engender the fear of a global war. In fact, the foreign policy pursuits of the New Russian from 1993 espoused both characteristics, a syncretic foreign policy posture that blended pro-Western interests with an anti-Western stance to reflect the influences of the various schools of thought and interest groups that had continued to influence and shape Russia's behaviour in world affairs.

Although it was well recognised at the inception of the state that it was vital the New Russia's foreign policy be guided not by ideological stances or parties' needs, but by fundamental national interests, her foreign policy from 1991 has been a product of ideologies and group interests that are superimposed as national interests. However, all the leaders of the New Russia since 1991, from Boris N. Yeltsin to Vladimir Putin, share in supporting a few common, general foreign policy objectives, and disagree on many other. In general, there is a consensus that Russia's first foreign policy objective must be to reverse her internal decline and established a firm control of its borders, as it is impossible for the New Russia to be a major international actor with a shrinking economy. This well-known fact underlies the foreign policy of the New Russia, but how the achievement of this goal was being pursued is what influences

¹⁴ Melville; Shakleina (eds.), *Russian Foreign Policy in Transition*, 27.

the pattern and character of the foreign policy of the state.¹⁵

In the same vein, there is a unanimous position on the fact that Russia must pursue economic political and military cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States. Russia's foreign policy elites remain resolute on establishing a Russian sphere of influence within the region. To achieve this, Russia must pursue as a foreign policy goal the promotion of greater cooperation within the Commonwealth that comprises eleven of the former fifteen soviet republics. This position and the first policy on the economy and territorial integrity of the federation are the major domestic determinant of the Russian foreign policy.¹⁶ In addition to the pursuit of Russia's economic revival and avoiding further disintegration of the federation, and the need to carve out a sphere of influence for the New Russia, leaders of the state also agree that the maintenance of Russia's nuclear superpower status is key to retaining global relevance and retaking Russia's rightful place in international affairs. According to McFaul, "Russia's nuclear weapons stockpile is the one power attribute that still accords Russia special status in the international system."¹⁷

This set of objectives shape Russian foreign policy behaviour and influences Russian foreign policy response to other international issues in general and predictable manner. Russia's tacit support for the control of international oil at the turn of the millennium, which resulted in the raising of oil prices, increased hard currency revenues for Russian oil companies and the Russian government, was largely influence by her internal economic problem. It was also because of Russia's desire to maintain the Commonwealth of Independence States as its sphere of influence that Russia does not support the deployment of American troops in Azerbaijan and fears further NATO expansion towards its borders. Generally, on issues like this, Russia's foreign policy thrust has followed

¹⁵ See McFaul, "What are Russian Foreign Policy Objectives?"

¹⁶ Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy*, 28 – 46: McFaul, "What are Russian Foreign Policy Objectives?"

¹⁷ Ibid.

a discernible pattern – Russia’s national interests.¹⁸

A major influence on the changing pattern of the foreign policy of the New Russia has been the influence of the different school of thought in Russia’s external relations, which determines the behaviour of the Russia in the international system at any given time. Essentially, the school of thought to which a leader belongs usually dominates how Russia would pursue her interests in the international system as well as respond to international issues within the system. Majorly, scholars have identified the various perspectives represented by these schools of thought. According to McFaul, there are four schools of thought in Russian foreign policy, namely the Pro-Western Idealists, the Pro-Western Pragmatists, the Anti-Western Pragmatists and the Anti-Western Ideologues.¹⁹

Russia’s foreign policy in the early years of the post-Soviet era was largely influenced by the pro-Western Idealists. The Pro-Western Idealists support ideas about democracy, the market, self-determination and integration with the Western capitalist system. This is clearly opposing and adversative to the ideas pursued by the soviet ancien regime. A key figure in the emergence of the New Russia in 1991 was the Russian leader Boris Yeltsin, who subsequently was elected president of the federation. Boris Yeltsin and his government were guided by this set of liberal ideas that included in foreign policy matters a distinctly pro-Western and peaceful foreign policy. After independence in 1991, Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev and President Boris Yeltsin, at first, maintained a strongly pro-American foreign policy. Yeltsin and Kozyrev initially had a relaxed attitude toward the eastward expansion of NATO, which had been the main military alliance of Western nations during the Cold War.²⁰

Boris Yeltsin’s pro-Western stance was not unexpected giving his struggles against soviet communism and the support he received from

democratic forces in the Baltic, Caucasus and Ukraine, which resulted eventually in the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The pro-Western Idealists as a group only have a normative commitment to Western values and Western integration; they were not being driven merely by self-interest.²¹ Although the advocates of this liberal approach are in the minority, it formed the major influence on Russia foreign policy in the early part of the Yeltsin leadership. Andrei Kozyrev, the first Russian foreign minister directed the affairs of Russia’s external relations along this line until his dismissal in 1996.

By the end of the first year of independence, the impetus for a pro-Western foreign policy had started to fade off, as Russian’s expectations concerning Western assistance were not met. The euphoria for democracy and the Western ways gradually became unpopular, and government foreign policy appeared to be drifting back to more anti-Western patterns of the soviet era. The pro-Western pragmatists drove the movement that reinvigorated the support for maintaining a pro-Western orientation in foreign policy pursuit of the Russian state.

These movements include groups with tangible economic interests in cooperative relations with Western countries, such as Gazprom, oil companies, mineral exporters, technology companies and the bankers, some Russian governors of Russian provinces, especially Titov of Samara and Prusak of Novgorod in northwestern Russia as well as Shaimiev in Tatarstan along with hundreds of non-governmental organisations supported a cooperative relationship with the West because of their stake, and a majority of public opinion.²² Thus, the pro-Western orientation of the Russian foreign policy was retained as these various movement gradually replaced groups with political ideas as the main societal forces influencing foreign

¹⁸ Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 38 – 40.

¹⁹ McFaul, “What are Russian Foreign Policy Objectives?”

²⁰ Lieven, Dominic, "Government of Russia." Microsoft Encarta 2009 [DVD] (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008).

²¹ McFaul, Michael, “What are Russian Foreign Policy Objectives?”; See also the analysis of Russian foreign policy in the immediate post-Soviet era in Mankoff, Jeffrey, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009, 53 – 54; Fawn, Rick (ed.), *Realignments in Russian Foreign Policy*, London, Frank Cass Publishers, 2003, 10 – 14.

²² McFaul, “What are Russian Foreign Policy Objectives?”

policy outcomes in Russia. For instance, the Russian business lobby, although has a rather limited scope of foreign policy interests, seek to maintain access to Western investment capital and markets. Thus, when security issues, such as opposition to NATO expansion threaten these access interests, the coalition of liberals within the Russian within the Russian government and their allies in Russia's economic society cooperated to sustain engagement.²³

The anti-Western pragmatists and ideologues are the other forces that influence foreign policy debates in Russia. While the pragmatists attempt to define Russian foreign policy objectives in terms of interests rather than ideas, norms or mission, the ideologues are passionately anti-Western and sees international relations as primarily a balance of power battle between Russia and the West. Both do not think that Russia stands to gain from a pro-Western foreign policy or Western integration more generally. Rather than see a Russian relations with the West as a "win-win," they perceive it as a "zero-sum game." Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, Moscow Mayor Yurii Luzhkov, General Aleksandr Lebed and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy are some notable proponent of anti-Western foreign policy orientation and influenced the course of Russian foreign policy significantly till present day.²⁴

3. FOREIGN POLICY OF THE NEW RUSSIA: OBSERVABLE PATTERN AND TREND FROM 1991

A key figure in the emergence of the New Russia was the Russian leader Boris Yeltsin, who subsequently was elected president of the federation in 1991. After independence in 1991, the Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev and President Boris Yeltsin at first maintained a strongly pro-American foreign policy. Yeltsin and Kozyrev initially had a relaxed attitude toward the eastward expansion of NATO, which had been the main military alliance of Western nations during the Cold War.²⁵

However, soon domestic pressure prompted a foreign policy shift. The Soviet Union was a superpower and possessed a very different social and economic system from that in the West. This appealed to the pride of many Russians and helped erase a traditional sense of inferiority to the West. In 1991, quite suddenly and unexpectedly for most Russians, the USSR ceased to exist and Russia lost much of its international power and status. In the 1990s, Russia was forced to ask the West for economic assistance and investment. The pro-American foreign policy of President Yeltsin and his foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, quickly found considerable opposition. The opposition increased when Russia did not receive the massive Western financial assistance that many Russians had naively expected.²⁶

In particular, strong support for the ultranationalist candidate, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, in the December 1993 parliamentary elections convinced the government that the public demanded a more nationalistic, less pro-Western approach to foreign policy. As a result, Russia resumed sales of arms and civil nuclear technology to developing countries, including Iran, which elicited disapproval from the United States. More importantly, Russia began expressing loud support for Russians in the "near abroad" (as Russians refer to the outlying areas of the former USSR) and strong opposition to NATO expansion, and was at odds with NATO countries over how to resolve the ethnic turmoil in the former Yugoslavia. NATO's support for Muslims and Croats drew disapproval from Russia, which had historical ties to the competing ethnic Serbs.²⁷

Much of this shift in policy was more a question of rhetoric than one of practice, however. By 1997, Russia's support for Russian-speaking secessionists in the Trans-Dniester region of Moldova had become more moderate. The Russian government never encouraged Russian secessionists in Crimea; their strength in 1993 and 1994 threatened both political stability in Ukraine and Ukraine's territorial integrity. In

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Lieven, Dominic "Government of Russia." Microsoft Encarta 2009 [DVD] (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008); Zimmerman, William, *The Russian People and Foreign Policy: Russian Elite*

and Mass Perspective, 1993 – 2000. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002, 88 – 89.

²⁶ See Lieven, Dominic, "History of Russia." Microsoft Encarta 2009 [DVD] (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008).

²⁷ Lieven, "Government of Russia."

1997, the New Russia signed a friendship treaty with Ukraine, settling the long-standing dispute over the Soviet Black Sea Fleet and confirming its recognition of Ukraine's post-independence borders.²⁸

There were multiple reasons for Russia's restraint. The country was conscious of its economic and military weakness, and it was also aware of the potential for conflict within the former USSR if national borders were challenged or ethnic conflicts encouraged. Furthermore, Yeltsin recognized that Russia needed to integrate itself into the world economy and Western-dominated institutions, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), if it was to regain economic prosperity and effective global influence. Russia's long-running dispute with Japan over the Kuril Islands also reduced the country's room to manoeuvre in international affairs.²⁹

However, American determination to incorporate many former Soviet satellite states into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) angered the Russian political elite. Because NATO's essential purpose had been to serve as an anti-Soviet alliance, the political elite felt it was insulting when the former satellites were invited to join. They also resented being excluded from the dominant military and political bloc in Europe, which seemed intent on extending its membership right up to Russia's borders. Under Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, Russia became more critical of United States policies and began to rebuild political ties to China and some of its old allies in the Middle East. Even as Russia fostered these ties, the Russian government recognized its own weakness and its need for positive relations with the West. This knowledge prevented Russia from going too far for fear of isolating itself from Western nations. In the Soviet era international isolation and the attempt to develop a powerful self-sufficient economy had failed disastrously. Yeltsin's regime understood this and was committed to full participation in the world economy

and international trade. These things could only be achieved on the West's terms.³⁰

In 1999, the New Russia's relations with Western nations suddenly worsened as NATO admitted the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, thus expanding into Central and Eastern Europe, and also attacked Yugoslavia to compel the Yugoslav government to halt military operations against Albanian separatists in the Kosovo province. This NATO eastward expansion, mainly by absorbing countries that had previously formed a buffer zone around Russia elicited reaction from Kremlin. For centuries, Russian security strategy has been built on defence: expanding the space around the core to avoid being caught off-guard. As a country of plains, Russia has experienced devastating invasions more than once; the New Russia, thus, has long seen reinforcing "strategic depth" as the only way to guarantee its survival.³¹ Consequently, Russia denounced NATO as aggressive and expansionist and drew closer to China. However, Russian policymakers understood their own country's weakness and its need to attract Western investment. The government's rhetoric at times reflected the increasingly nationalist mood in Russian society, but its foreign policy remained cautious.³²

The resumed antagonism against Western actions by the New Russia in international affairs became more noticeable towards the close of the century and was borne out of the need to check Western arrogance and its expansion into former soviet space. Despite being cautious of its foreign policy action, the New Russia demonstrated its resentment of the actions of the West in international affairs, especially the aggression of the United States, NATO and the European Union. To the Russian, the West misinterpreted Russia's inaction. As Ivan Krastev and Mark Leonard observed in their 2014 publication, "The New European Disorder," Western powers "mistook Moscow's failure to block the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Oliker, Olga; Crane, Keith; Schwartz, Lowell H.; Yusupov, Catherine, *Russian Foreign Policy Sources and Implications*. Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, 2009, 93 – 95; see also Lieven, Dominic, "Government of Russia." Microsoft Encarta 2009 [DVD] (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008).

³⁰ Lieven, "History of Russia."

³¹ Lukyanov, Fyodor, "Putin's Foreign Policy: The Quest to Restore Russia's Rightful Place," *Foreign Affairs*, 95/3, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2016-04-18/putins-for> (accessed 23 June 2016).

³² Lieven, "Government of Russia."

post-Cold War order as support for it.”³³ Beginning in 1994, Russian President Boris Yeltsin repeatedly expressed deep dissatisfaction with what he and many Russians saw as Western arrogance. However, according to Fyodor Lukyanov, “Washington viewed such criticism from Russia as little more than a reflexive expression of an outmoded imperial mentality, mostly intended for domestic consumption.”³⁴

From the Russian point of view, a critical turning point in Russian relations with the West at the close of the century came when NATO intervened in the Kosovo war in 1999. Many Russians including strong advocates of liberal reform were appalled by NATO’s bombing raids against Serbia, a European country with close ties to Moscow, which were intended to force the Serbs to capitulate in their fight against Kosovar separatists. The success of that effort, which also led directly to the downfall of the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic the following year seemed to set a new precedent and provide a new template for Russo-Western relations in world affairs. Since 2001, NATO or its leading member states have initiated military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. All three campaigns led to various forms of regime change and, in the case of Iraq and Libya, the deterioration of the state. In this sense, it is not only NATO’s expansion that has alarmed Russia but also NATO’s transformation, a purely defensive alliance now a fighting group, which it was not during the Cold War.³⁵

At the turn of the century, however, Russia’s leaders continued cautious foreign policy relations with the West; relatively cooperative and unpretentious in opposing Western oversteps. Kremlin criticised, opposed Western actions when it threatens Russia’s interest and cooperated with the West on issues of common interests. Essentially, however, Kremlin was anxious to maintain good relations with the Western powers. President Vladimir Putin pursued a foreign policy of closer cooperation with the West. Following terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001, the New Russia be-

came a key ally in the US-led war on terrorism. In May 2002, the New Russia and the United States reached their first arms-reduction treaty in more than a decade. In addition, that month, the New Russia became a limited partner in NATO. In November 2002, Russia did not object when NATO announced a further expansion to include several more nations in Eastern Europe, among them the former Soviet republics of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia.³⁶ However, Russia was critical of the United States over its invasion of Iraq in 2003. Russia joined with Germany and France in the United Nations (UN) Security Council in proposing that UN weapons inspectors were given more time to search for the alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. And giving the strategic relationship of the New Russia with countries of the Middle East, it simply refused to join the invasion force that the United States and Britain assembled.³⁷

As the United States flexed its muscles and NATO became a more formidable organization, Russia found itself in a strange position. Russia was offered a limited niche inside Europe’s expanding architecture. Western leaders assumed that Russia would respond to its economic predicament by becoming part of what can be referred to as “wider Europe”: a theoretical space that featured the EU and NATO at its core but that also incorporated countries that were not members of those organisations by encouraging them to adopt voluntarily the norms and regulations associated with membership. This was unlike Gorbachev’s concept of a common European home where the Soviet Union would be a co-designer of a new world order, Moscow instead had to give up its global aspirations and agree to obey rules it had played no part in devising.³⁸ President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, in 2002 made it clear to Kremlin that Russia would share with the EU “everything but institutions.”³⁹ In plain terms, this meant that Russia

³⁶ Lieven, “Government of Russia.”

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lukyanov, “Putin’s Foreign Policy: The Quest to Restore Russia’s Rightful Place.”

³⁹ Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, Speech/02/619, “A Wider Europe: A Proximity Policy as the Key to Stability, Peace, Security and Stability International Dialogue and the Role of the EU, 6th ECSA-World Conference, Jean Monnet Project, Brussel, 5 – 6 December 2002.

³³ Krastev, Ivan; Leonard, Mark, “The New European Disorder,” *European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)*, 117, November 2014, 7.

³⁴ Lukyanov, “Putin’s Foreign Policy: The Quest to Restore Russia’s Rightful Place.”

³⁵ Ibid.

would adopt EU rules and regulations but would not be able to influence their development. This was suffocating for Russia, who must respond to this disregard.

For quite a while, Moscow essentially accepted this proposition, making only minimal efforts to expand its global role. However, neither Russian elites nor ordinary Russians ever accepted the image of their country as a mere regional power. The early years of the Vladimir Putin era saw the recovery of the Russian economy with a consequent increase in Russia's international influence. Suddenly, Russia was no longer a supplicant; it was a critical emerging market and an engine of global growth.⁴⁰ What is more, although the West was experiencing growing difficulties steering its own course economically in the first decade of the millenium, it never lost its desire to expand, pressuring Ukraine, for example, to align itself more closely with the EU. At this point, the Russian foreign policy to keep the West at arm's length became more pronounce. The New Russia, thus, came to the conclusion, as the Russian political scientist, Sergei Karaganov, put it in 2011 "that Western expansionism could be reversed only with an "iron fist."⁴¹

The "iron fist" was evident in Russia's response to Western incursion into its sphere of influence during the 2014 Crimean Crisis. The February 2014 ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich by pro-Western forces was, in a sense, the final straw for Russia. Moscow's operation in Crimea was a response to the EU's and NATO's persistent eastward expansion during the post-Cold War period. Moscow rejected the further extension of Western influence into the former Soviet space in the most decisive way possible with the use of military force. The Kremlin is now, more than before, resolute in order to defend its interests close to Russia's borders, it must play globally.

Therefore, having drawn a line in Ukraine, Russia decided that the next place to put down the iron fist would be Syria. The Syrian intervention

was aimed not only at strengthening Assad's position but also at forcing the United States to deal with Moscow on a more equal footing. The cease-fire eventually arrived at in 2013 although represents an unexpected cooperation on the Syrian crisis, where the civil war has pitted Moscow, which acts as the primary protector and patron of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, against Washington, which has called for an end to Assad's rule.⁴²

If anything at all, what the unexpected cooperation between the Russia and the US highlight is the fact that, although the world order has changed beyond recognition during the past two and a half decades and is no longer defined by a rivalry between two competing superpowers, it remains the case that when an acute international crisis breaks out, Russia and the United States are often the only actors able to resolve it.⁴³ Rising powers, international institutions, and regional organizations frequently cannot do anything, or do not want to. What is more, despite Moscow's and Washington's expressions of hostility and contempt for each other, when it comes to shared interests and common threats, the two powers are still able to work reasonably well together. This trend is very visible in the Putin Russia's foreign policy. However, it is important to note that these types of constructive interactions on discrete issues have not changed the overall relationship, which remains troubled.⁴⁴ Even as it worked with Russia on the truce, the United States continued to enforce the sanctions it had placed on Russia in response to the 2014 annexation of Crimea.

With the ascendance of Russian foreign policy and its ability to project the interests of Russia globally as global power, it marks the attainment of the long-sought status of the New Russian Federation. As Fyodor Lukyanov observed,

"the era of bipolar confrontation ended a long time ago. Nevertheless, the unipolar moment of US dominance that began in 1991 is gone, too. A new, multipolar world has brought more uncertainty into interna-

⁴⁰ Lo, Bobo (ed.), *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*. London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, 2003, 53 – 55, 69 – 72.

⁴¹ Karaganov, Sergei, "An Iron Fist to Keep NATO Expansion at Bay," *Russia in Global Affairs*, 4, 2011.

⁴² Krastev and Leonard, "The New European Disorder," 7.

⁴³ Lukyanov, "Putin's Foreign Policy: The Quest to Restore Russia's Rightful Place."

⁴⁴ Ibid.

tional affairs. Both Russia and the United States are struggling to define their proper roles in the world".⁴⁵

This assertion affirms the global relevance of the New Russia in the strategic calculation of the West. No longer can the West solely superintend issues in the international system unchecked. Whereas the condition of relations has not returned the world to a bipolar system of the soviet era, it has established the New Russia as a global power in the current multipolar system.

CONCLUSION

The changing pattern of the foreign policy of the New Russia that emerged from the ruin of the Soviet Union and the nature of its relations with Africa since 1991 has been considered in the foregoing. A noticeable trend in the foreign policy of the New Russia from the emergence of the state in 1991 is that its conception and implementation is greatly influenced by national interests as well as the interests of different stakeholders in the nation's external relations. It is these interests and the varied ways in which different schools of thoughts believe the foreign policy goals of the state could be achieved that has influenced the changing pattern of the New Russia from inception to date. A historical examination of the behaviour of the New Russia in international affairs showed that Russia's foreign policy hovered between pro-Western orientations to anti-Western stance.

Nevertheless, the domestic determinants of the foreign policy of the New Russia and the Russian people's belief in the superpower status of their state as a successor to the defunct Soviet Union necessitated the blend of both pro-Western and anti-Western orientation of Russia's foreign policy behaviour and response in world politics. For instance, the need to modernise and strengthen the inefficient economy of the Russian state necessitated a pro-Western posture in her relations within the western-led international economic order. A cooperative relationship with the West was necessary at inception and even at present to strengthen the weak economy of Russia.

On the other hand, the need to keep the Com-

monwealth of Independence States as the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation has necessitated the anti-Western thrust of the foreign policy at some point, especially from 1993 when NATO began to expand its influence into former soviet space, a development considered as security threat to Russia and her interest within the region. Similar behaviour has characterise the New Russia's response to the continued expansion of the European Union into former Soviet republics since the turn of the century.

The desire of the Russians to be accorded due respect in the western-led international order also encouraged passionate Russian nationals to favour an anti-Western foreign policy against what the Russian's called "Western arrogance." The stockpile of nuclear weaponry at the disposal of the Federation particularly conferred a special status on Russia, at least the West would necessarily reckon with Russia in intentional political matters. This soviet inheritance has made Russia confident enough in the international system to challenge the superpower status of the United States of America in major international relations matters. Russia had continued to be a check on the powers of the United States in world politics. Russia's role during the Iranian nuclear saga significantly influenced the outcome of the deal eventually arrived at. Russia's influence is equally significant in any possible resolution of the Syrian crises that had crippled the state since the Arab spring.

Russia's resolute stance on the recent Crimean crisis with Ukraine as well as its defiance to international sentiments for Ukraine also underline that although the New Russia may not be an economic power like the United States or China, its rival in the East Asian space, its formidable military strength and the sophistication of its military technology has made her a rival to the global power and a power centre in world politics. This understanding of its strength and weaknesses in relations to other powers in the international system has therefore necessitated some compromise in form of partnership with Western countries on many strategic issues in world affairs. In fact, the continued partnership with NATO and the United States is a case in point.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

