



BOL PUTIN K ZÁPADU VŽDY PRIATEĽSKÝ? INTERPRETAČNÁ ŠTÚDIA PRVÝCH DVOCH FUNKČNÝCH OBDOBÍ PERZIDENTA VLADIMÍRA PUTINA VO SVETLE TEÓRIÍ REALIZMU

WAS PUTIN EVER FRIENDLY TO THE WEST? AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF THE FIRST TWO TERMS OF PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN, IN LIGHT OF THE THEORIES OF REALISM

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Medzi mnohými západnými analytikmi je zaužívané vnímanie Vladimíra Putina ako priateľa Západu, ktorý sa z dôvodu príčinných a štrukturálnych dôvodov, ako vojna v Iraku, rozširovanie NATO, protiraketová obrana vo východnej Európe alebo ceny ropy, zmenil na revanšistického vládcu, ktorým je dnes. Táto esej toto vyvracia a dokazuje, že bol vždy presvedčeným realistom vo vzťahu k taktickému zblížovaniu so Západom, sledujúc primárne svoje vlastné záujmy. Štúdia podčiarkuje dôležitosť prvých dvoch funkčných období Putina v kontexte stanovenia jeho budúcich politík. Štúdia je má vysvetľujúci charakter a testuje teóriu realizmu na krokoch Ruska počas prvých dvoch vlád Putina, ktoré rozsiahlo korešpondujú s obdobím vlády G. W. Busha.

Kľúčové slová: Rusko, Putin, východná Európa, realizmus, NATO

It is common notion among a lot of Western analysts that Vladimir Putin was a friend of the West, and due to causal and structural reasons, like Iraq War, NATO expansion, East Europe missile defense and oil price index, he turned into a revanchist ruler that he is today. I argue, that was not the case, and this

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essay highlights that he was always a shrewd Realist, on a tactical alignment with the West, looking to chart his own course at his earliest convenience. The study of this time period, of Putin's first two terms, highlights the importance and suggests future policy course in dealing with him. This study is expository and tests the theory of Realism with Russian actions under the first two terms of Vladimir Putin, which broadly coincides with the George W Bush Administration.

Key words: Russia, Putin, Eastern Europe, Realism, NATO

JEL: F51, F52, F53

1 INTRODUCTION

The dawn of this century saw one of the most audacious terrorist attacks in the history of mankind, one that shattered the optimism of the post-cold war world, and had a direct impact on our everyday life. September 11th terrorist attack was such an event, one that changed the course of history, or as some might say, restarting the course of history against the predictions of some American scholars of International Relations who predicted the demise of history as we know it. It changed the functioning world around us, affected international relations between nation states and powers considerably, atleast for the near foreseeable future. Nowhere were these changes more noticeable than the tumultuous roller coaster relations between United States of America (hereinafter US), and Russia, two former superpower Cold War foes, and still the two largest and preponderant military powers in the world. From the Russian gestures towards Washington right after 9/11, which almost bordered on an alliance formation, to the Russian tanks rolling into Georgia in the summer of 2008, the timeframe between 2001 and 2008 marked the return of Russia as a great power, a major international player, after decades of relatively reduced influence and decline in status post-Cold War. The new Russia was more economically stable due to burgeoning oil wealth and energy revenue, more authoritarian but considerably less free and democratic than even a decade back under Yeltsin, and possibly more revanchist. It is also not shy to show or use hard power and its renewed strength and confidence, as evident from the 2008 gas crisis with Ukraine resulting in a subsequent squeeze on Europe, South Ossetian war of 2008, renewed long range Bomber sorties over the Atlantic since 2007, a rigid non-negotiating stance to the European Ballistic missile defense shield. But to understand this re-invigorated Russia one needs to look at the first two terms under Vladimir Putin, when Russia changed gradually determined not to concede the proverbial single inch to its former Western rivals, mainly the United States.

Even before the terror attacks of September 11, Russian diplomats were warning of an “*arc of instability*” spreading from South Asia to the Balkans, which were on one hand a defence of Russian actions in the Caucasus and a call for a joint effort to root out Islamism. (Headley 2005) US – Russian relation had many contours and layers in the post-cold war world, and is arguably one of the most complicated

bilateral relationships. The optimism immediately after the Cold War, and the Atlanticist approach in Russia gave way to a more cautious Realism during the Balkan crisis. Relations with the West were the “*primary frame of reference*”, (Mankoff 2009) as Jeffrey Mankoff (2009) referred, which is a product of the Cold War mentality of bipolarity and zero sum game attitudes. Russian foreign policy after the end of the Cold War took two distinctly parallel trajectories, as a Western, Atlanticist, or rather a primarily European power, and an exceptional, uniquely positioned, Eurasian power with sphere of influence in the former Soviet Border States.

The Russian discourse on International Relations in the post Cold War era was, partly due to its diminished clout and partly due to its sense of victimhood, more or less centered on a Realist paradigm. The Post Cold War Russia, due to its comparatively diminished power and sway over international politics, never quite got over their strict sense of skepticism about the West, even at the height of its Atlanticist honeymoon, opening of Russian economy and Russian media, and co-operation with World Bank and IMF. Although it saw moments of optimism and co-operation during the Boris Yeltsin – Bill Clinton era, the traditional idea of Russia as an encircled, endangered and victimised nation remained deep seated in the psyche of the upper echelons of Russian society, enforced and exploited smartly by the Russian political class for domestic political gains. (Trenin 2006) During the Second Chechen War, and the now infamous Yeltsin warning to United States to not forget “*for a minute, for a second, for half a minute that Russia has a full arsenal of nuclear weapons*”, the American romanticism about Russian reforms received a major setback. (Laris 1999)

The rise of Vladimir Putin in 1999 was met by the West with some skepticism, partly due to the fact that he was a comparative unknown former intelligence agent and newcomer in traditionally hierarchical Russian politics, and partly because he was a protégé of Yeltsin. Little was known about him, other than the fact that he was a former KGB Second Directorate agent posted in East Germany. His rise to power was sudden and phenomenal, even though mired with controversy. (Anderson 2009) The situation in Russia was fluid, but with the Second Chechen War winding down administrations in Washington thought this to be a moment to have a relook at their ties with Russia. Vladimir Putin initially was also optimistic about doing business with US administration. As Lilia Shevtsova (2008) analyses, Putin ended a decade long chaotic experiment with democracy and freedom and capitalism, strengthening market vector, continuing pro-western engagement trying to integrate Russia in the Western community more. (Shevtsova 2008)

The September 11 attacks brought this relationship between the two largest nuclear powers to a more stable footing. Russia was one of the first countries in the World to support United States during the preparation stage ahead of the invasion of Afghanistan during the beginning of the “War on Terror”. Putin was apparently determined to do something which has eluded his previous predecessors, try to reinstate Russia as a Great power, and realized this to be a great opportunity. For that reason if it was needed that Russia was to agree to the primacy of United States and be

a part of NATO alliance, Russia was also agreed to that. *“In the crucial first stage of the Afghanistan operation, Russia de facto became an ally of the United States. In an effort to build a strong security relationship with Washington, Putin chose not to respond to George W. Bush's unilateral withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty that Moscow had always regarded as a bedrock of strategic stability, and he tolerated a U.S. military presence in the former Soviet Central Asia and Georgia”* wrote Dmitri Trenin (2012).

It is arguable, though, how much Vladimir Putin was motivated to make Russia a primarily democratic Western power. He warned about the tyranny of Islamic terrorism, pointing out that Russia was itself a major victim in Chechnya and Caucasus region. In his own words, in a speech given during the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, in World Holocaust Forum titled *“Let My People Live!”* Putin pointed out, *“Today we must also realise that modern civilisation faces a new and no less terrible threat. Terrorists have taken over from the executioners in their black uniforms. The similarities between Nazism and terrorism are obvious: the same contempt for human life, the same hatred for different views and, most terrible of all, the same commitment to their fanatical goals. Today’s terrorists would not hesitate to exterminate all who do not share their aims or who do not meet the criteria they have set. It is my firm belief that we can preserve our civilisation only if we set aside our minor differences and close ranks against the common enemy as we did during the Second World War.”* (Putin, 2005)

Initially regarded as an energetic modernizer, Putin’s pro-Western line was measured, and broke down completely in 2007 in the now infamous Munich Conference presentation, where he accused the United States of being unilateral and not ready to respect the boundaries of any sovereign state in the World. Even during the post Sept 11 rapprochement there were always problems between West and Russia fundamentally on issues like Russian influence in the former Soviet states which it considered as its traditional sphere of influence. Moscow’s interpretation of the events of September 11th was different from Washington’s, as Russia viewed it as a chain of events, similar and linked to the global problems of militant Islamic Jihadism, similar to the Chechnya problem it is facing at home front, or Bosnia and Serbia crisis a decade earlier. Washington was however reluctant to tie these situations together. US unilateral and muscular policy in regards to secular Iraq also increased Russia’s unease, as Iraq was a major market for Russia, and it enhanced Russian desire to see the world as multipolar rather than hegemonic. The final nail in the coffin of rapprochement was the colour revolutions in the former Soviet states of Georgia and Ukraine, which Russia saw as Western backed, and which increased their insecurity and fear of encirclement. *“The United States has overstepped its borders in all spheres - economic, political and humanitarian, and has imposed itself on other states, going from one conflict to another without achieving a fully-fledged solution to any of*

them...” Putin declared in 2007 Munich Security Conference. By the end of the Munich Conference (Watson 2007), the rapprochement was nearly dead.

The study of this timeframe is extremely important, as it shows the reasons Russia stepped back from its rapprochement with United States. Even though there are still co-operations between the two countries when it comes to NATO operations in Afghanistan, space exploration flights and Somalian piracy, one can declare that the honeymoon period between the two countries post 9/11 is definitely over, even with the successive US administrations trying for a reset in relations (Bovt 2012). The return of Russia as a great power, and the subsequent frosty relation with the United States, which largely coincided with the first two terms of Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin, is often explained in two major narratives. One that it was never really a successful rapprochement, but rather a tactical and timely realignment from both sides, based completely on Realist principles, and eventually the mutual distrust between the two powers and the failure to find common ground led to its breakdown and demise. *“While it remained weak, Russia saw a special partnership with United States, as the effective route to power and influence in the World. With Russia’s pre 2009 energy fueled revival, Moscow once again found itself in a position to act autonomously on the international stage and less in need of a United States that never seemed to take Russia’s interests seriously anyway”*, explains Jeffrey Mankoff (2009). The second narrative details the Russian inclination to be a partner of the United States but being rebuffed constantly which led it to be more muscular and revanchist. *“What is striking, however, is that Washington, while focused intently on particular global issues -- from promoting the fledgling democracies of the Arab Spring to handing off Afghanistan to pivoting toward Asia -- thinks it can afford having no general strategic vision of relations with a country that, despite all its weaknesses and failings, can make a huge difference in the emerging global balance. Conventional wisdom in Washington declares that if there is no problem, there is no policy. This may have been just fine in the years of clear U.S. dominance in the world. It is hardly affordable now”* predicts Dmitri Trenin (2012) while trying to explain the reasons for Russian revanchism.

I try to argue otherwise, using the theoretical framework of Realism, and trying to portray that Putin was always a tactical Realist, aligning with the West, for his perception of Russian state interests.

Russian foreign policy in the post Cold War period underwent three broad shifts in paradigms. Each of these changes was related to some events in the tumultuous first decade after the fall of communism. As communism was swept away, and state structures crumbled, the strictly hierarchical, centralized and Soviet controlled order gave away to anarchy and corruption. The immediate period post communism period was quite dark and troublesome for Russians, extremely fluid for the new Russian authority, policy makers and elites, and often confusing for analysts across the globe. The post Soviet era gave rise to something of a conceptual vacuum, and Russian policy makers were not always ready to address that challenge. However with time, two specific discourses started to be seen among the policy makers and

government. In the early days of the post cold war, with the seeming victory of liberal democracies, the dominant discourse was by the liberal enthusiasts in Russia, which were mostly pro-western and wanted Russia to be a partner of the Global West. They regarded Russia to be a mainly Western-European power that sought more engagement and integration with the West. This became known as the Atlanticist school in Russian political circles (Sergunin 2000). The opposing to these liberal ideas came from the fragmented left and communists, the Ultra-Nationalist, and the Slavophiles. They started to have some effect on foreign policy decision making after the original Atlanticist euphoria died down and grim economic realities set in. In these conditions, a school of thought which believed Russia to be a unique power by nature, based on its unique geo-political position and exceptional sphere of influence, and broadly came to be known as the Eurasianist school.

Russia under Vladimir Putin, especially after 9/11 de-emphasized both these directional approaches. While agreeing to the reality that sometimes engagement and integration is needed with the West, it was more or less agreed that the ultimate decider of Russian destiny and foreign policy should be based on Russian national interest. To achieve that effect, both cooperation and confrontation was needed. Putin's pragmatic approach, coincided with the attacks of September 11th, and formed the basis of a Realist and at times muscular foreign policy. The theoretical framework of Realism seemed to me a logical benchmark in assessing the actions of Russian State during the first two terms of Vladimir Putin, and a detailed explanation and analysis of Realism will be done in this chapter.

2 THE RE-EMERGENCE OF REALISM IN RUSSIA'S POST COLD WAR FOREIGN POLICY BEFORE 2001

From the Czarist Great Games in Afghanistan to confront the British Empire, to the formation of the Triple Entente with England and France to balance the Austro-Hungarian and German empires Russian foreign policy has historically maneuvered the logic of balance of power, although this was not always done quite successfully or efficiently. The Soviet Union also sought to use the balance of power mechanism, and aligned itself with NAZI Germany to neutralize a massive threat on its Eastern flank during Soviet invasion of Finland and clinically dissect Poland among both the nations, after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August 1939. The Soviet one-sided declaration of war on Japan during the last days of the Second World War was also an effort to reap the benefits of power distribution after the war, which resulted in annexing the Southern Sakhalin and South Kuril Islands from Japanese sovereign control. The Cold War was in many ways a great balancing game with United States, where notwithstanding moments of extreme tension, and the use of proxy states during small regional wars, the world remained in a state of a "long peace", as John Lewis Gaddis noted. Elements of rapprochement and détente, and peace due to the "*ritualistically deplored fact that each of these superpowers is armed with a large nuclear arsenal*" (Mearsheimer 1990) appeared to strengthen the argument that both the Superpowers understood the limits of their hard power and took the prospects of a nuclear

showdown seriously enough to come to a tacit understanding, based on balance of power.

As previously noted, Russian Foreign Policy post cold war, underwent three key changes in terms of paradigm. The immediate post Cold war was an era of openness and liberalism, under the “Atlanticists” like Boris Yeltsin and Andrey Kozyrev, and to some extent Yegor Gaidar. The immediate post Soviet leaders after Gorbachev, wanted to capitalize on the liberal momentum of Russian relations with the erstwhile foes, and went ahead with their idea of convergence of their interest with West. The Atlanticists believed unlike Gorbachev, that Russia and West are not two distinct identities, but rather, Russia is primarily a Eurocentric, if not completely European power, and the similarities between the two should be in plurality, democratic rule, free market economy, and individualism. Russia under President Yeltsin, often acted unilaterally with regard to military matters and cutting of missile warheads and supporting Western and international efforts against Iraq. “*Russia has from time immemorial been with Europe, and we must enter the European Institutions, the council of Europe and the common market, and we must also enter the political and economic unions...*” Yeltsin declared, in 1992.

“Boris Yeltsin's primary aim in foreign policy, like Mikhail Gorbachev's before him, was to create a non-threatening external environment that would be most conducive to his country's internal economic and political development. As in the early decades of Soviet rule, this concentration on domestic development, together with relative shortcomings in military strength, produced a foreign policy of accommodation, retrenchment, and risk-avoidance--at least, in Russia's relations with states beyond the borders of the former USSR.” (Ginsburg, ed 1993) Yeltsin assigned his task of remodeling Russia to a young Kozyrev, who was heavily influenced by Gorbachev and his “new thinking”, while working in the Departmental of International Organisation. (Donaldson 2000) “Kozyrev--not surprisingly--constructed a heavy reliance on Russian participation in international institutions. Determined to liberate Russia from the burdens of empire, the messianism, and the over-reliance on military instruments that had characterized both the Tsarist and the Soviet periods, Kozyrev developed foreign policy ideas centered on the promotion of human rights and the universal values of global economic, environmental, and nuclear security, realized through a community of democratic states. Since democracies do not attack other democracies, a democratic Russia would have nothing to fear from the West.”

Kozyrev, Yegor Gaidar and other liberals under Yeltsin believed that the road to the free market was the ideal way for Russia and that the liberal West would be the ideal partner. They were certain that Russia needs to lose the illusion of being the “bridge” between the East and West, between Europe and Asia, must avoid leading the Commonwealth of Independent Nations, not just because the addition of economic burden would slow market reforms, but also the peacekeeping roles in Russia's borders would restore the privileged status of the military like during Soviet times, and would therefore negate the growth of democracy. The idea of “Russia the conciliator, Russia

the unifier, Russia the harmonizer” should be effectively discarded. On the other hand the “pragmatic nationalists” or “Eurasianists” even during the time of Yeltsin was opposed to this role of “junior” partner of the West. For them, Eurasianism was not a rejection of the West, but an effective “restoration of balance”, and as a first piece of movement in the restoration of balance in post Soviet foreign policy, was the renewed interest in the “near abroad”.

However the domestic environment of Russia immediately after the Cold war was anarchic and chaotic without any central order, and myriad interest groups vied for power, and without strong centralized authority and institutions during the time of political and economic transition, and with massive structural flaws, Russian dream of being a part of the west slowly started to collapse. Another important factor was the scarcity of investment in Russia and the hardship faced by the people as the Yeltsin economics of “Shock Therapy”, even with all good intentions didn’t quite work as planned. The internal economy, stabilized with the loans from IMF and World Bank, but along with it came the cost of internal stagnation, collapsing Government sector, breakdown of social services, job losses, and massive poverty. The other factors which exacerbated Russian skepticism about a liberal foreign policy were Chechnya-Dagestan-Ingushetia problem and homegrown Islamist terror, NATO’s eastward expansion, beginning of the Yugoslavian civil war and growing confrontation with NATO. Between 1993 – 95 the anti-americanism among general public went up from 26 to 44 percent, and among elites from 27 to 53 percent (Tsygankov). President Yeltsin by April 1993 moved away from the "liberal Westernizing" idea and the convergence of "establishment" thinking around the "pragmatic nationalist" viewpoint with his *blizhnee zarubezh'e*, or "near abroad" foreign policy document. The document highlighted, the perceived earlier imbalance in Russian relationship with United States, and even while mentioning that there are grounds for common interests, it stressed that U.S.-Russian interests did not always coincide, and cited concern about "discriminatory restrictions in the commercial, economic, scientific and technological spheres."

With Yevgeni Primakov replacing Kozyrev, Russian foreign policy slowly started to shift back to its Realist roots. Russia started to forge renewed ties with Central Asian formerly Soviet republics with economic and security projects, and attempted strategic ties with China and India. In January 1996, Yevgeni Primakov started pursuing the "pragmatic nationalist" and "Eurasianist" viewpoints declaring that "Russia has been and remains a great power, and its policy toward the outside world should correspond to that status" and "Russia doesn't have permanent enemies, but it does have permanent interests". The “permanent interests”, an apparent Realist theme, was explained in four tenets by Primakov:

- *“The creation of the best external conditions conducive to strengthening the territorial integrity of our state.*

- *The strengthening of centripetal tendencies in the territory of the former USSR. Naturally, this does not and cannot mean the rebirth of the Soviet Union in the form in which it used to exist. The sovereignty obtained by the republics is irreversible, but this does not negate the need for reintegration processes, first of all in the economic field.*
- *The stabilization of the international situation at the regional level. We have achieved great successes in the stabilization of the international situation at the global level, having jointly won--I want to put special emphasis on the point that there were no victors or vanquished here--jointly won the cold war. Now things depend on the settlement of regional, nationality-based, interethnic and interstate conflicts. Russian foreign policy will do everything possible to settle such conflicts, first of all in the CIS and in the Yugoslav crisis.*
- *The development of fruitful international relations that will prevent the creation of new hotbeds of tension, and especially the proliferation of means or weapons of mass destruction.”*

The opposition to westward leaning foreign policy was not uniform in content. It was divided between Eurasianists, Leftists, and Ultra-Nationalists, but one thing that was common among these three groups was the conviction that Russia should be more forceful in dealing with west and the foreign policy of Russia should be determined only by national interests. Russian military and security elites, or “Siloviki” as they are known, never ceased to think itself as a great power, with a unique place in history and a special sphere of influence in the former Soviet states. Primakov, for the first time in post Cold War, brought back some sense of pride in Russian foreign policy, and the elites were uniform in supporting him, or at least not criticizing him like Kozyrev. Under Kozyrev, Primakov and Putin, no policy maker or bureaucrat elites raised any questions or doubts about Russia’s role in the international arena, its fundamental identity as an autonomous great power, and its right to be consulted on a wide array of diplomatic and international issues, even when they do not necessarily affect Russian national interests in any direct way. However with its continued dependence on Western monetary assistance, which somehow didn’t solve the internal economic woes, and Primakov’s limited scope of maneuverability under the Presidency of Yeltsin, these strategies were not enough to get Russia back as a great power.

The Realist return was marked by a few events, which heightened certain assertive posturing that was largely absent in the first few years after Soviet Union’s breakup. First instance was the secession of trans-Dniestr from Moldova on grounds of Russian indigenous population. In fact, it is argued, that the Western inaction on Russia’s military actions in Moldova in 1992, actually undermined the Kozyrev and Atlanticist lobby, who were constantly arguing that Russia cannot afford to take such unilateral actions. And on the other hand, Russian administration learned that there can be latitude and wiggle room among the former Soviet republics, without any direct

scope of confrontation with the West. (Lynch 2010) In the Balkans, the Russian Realist diplomacy was seen early during the establishment of a contact group in mid June 1994, which simultaneously avoided NATO bombing threat in Sarajevo, and placed Russia as a middle-man in any negotiations between NATO and Serbia. This careful piece of diplomacy was a symbol of things to come during the more assertive show of force during the 1999 Pristina Airport crisis, where Russia, in one of the last acts of Yeltsin Government, placed 200 heavily armed paratroopers to capture and possess the airbase, ahead of NATO. Meanwhile NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1995, further undermined the Yeltsin government, and the Atlanticist lobby, as back in Russian political circles, as it was seen as an evidence of a spineless Russian appeasement to Western militarism, reshaping of the world, and “new world order”.

Indeed it was NATO, which provided the impetus and motivation for Russian Foreign policy establishment to embrace Realism. The NATO expansion in the east, in former East European communist ex-Warsaw Pact countries, starting with Poland provided considerable unease to Russian leadership. Russia, was however in no power to stop the expansion. The Russian leadership under Primakov, charted the Realist balancing route, and acquiesced to the inevitability of the move, but not before guaranteeing a NATO-Russia joint council, that for the first time, at least formally, allowed Russia to have a voice within NATO deliberations. It can also be understood that the ramification of this was also in the increasingly anti-western domestic populace. Russia continued to co-operate warily with NATO, like placing peacekeepers in Bosnia under NATO command. The unilateral action of NATO bombing in Kosovo in 1999, without any UN mandate drew the loudest Russian protests against a “barbaric NATO colonialism” of the West, forcing Russia to look inward, and perhaps at the permanent demise of Atlanticist voices within Russian political circles, for the near foreseeable future. The Russian Government broke off NATO-Russia talks, airlifted paratroopers in Pristina almost provoking a firefight with the American and British forces, and started to look inward in a deeply traumatized and affected way, all the while wary of the rise of the Ultra-Nationalists and Communists. The realists pointed to the Kosovo crisis as evidence of the direct threat emanating from the NATO and growing European security concept, but resumed the dialogue with NATO after the end of the war because they knew that it is impossible to ignore this influential pole of the world power, at least at that point of time.

It should be remembered, that the Realist school transcended the ideology boundaries of different groups, and everyone in the foreign policy establishment, even the Atlanticists, slowly started to shift towards foreign policy realism, due to the situations around Russia, most of which were beyond their control. Added to that were the turbulent civil-military relations, unsatisfied domestic electorate, and last but not the least, threats of Ultra-Nationalist and Communist resurgence. Streaks of Realism were noticeable there even during the Kozyrev era, though it took serious proportions during Primakov’s spell as foreign minister. The Russian meddling during the Georgia-

Abkhaz crisis of 1992-93, meddling in Tajikistan's internal affairs, growing patrolling of Afghan border, and nuclear trade with Iran etc. continued in varied speed both under Kozyrev and Primakov. Both the Eurasianists and the Atlanticists believed that Russia needs to take more notice of its immediate border states and neighbourhood, namely the former Soviet republics. As early as 1992, Russian foreign policy establishment were aware that, "*A decisive component of Russia's new mission in the world is to ensure, with help from the world community, that the ex-Soviet area does not become a geostrategic hole radiating instability and war and ultimately endangering the very existence of humanity.*" (Vladislavlev 1992) The Russian national security concept, approved by Yeltsin in December 1997 (and revised in January 2000) also drew massively upon realist ideas.

As Allen Lynch (2010) observed, "*There was a decided shift in Russian policy in the course of 1993, away from the premises of liberal internationalism toward more realist, and frankly, more realistic, assessment of Russian interests and capabilities. This shift occurred early in the Kozyrev administration and, while it was certainly not Kozyrev's preference, the Foreign Minister helped Russian policy adapt to the frustration of its more utopian expectations about integration into the broader liberal world without jeopardizing Russia's links with that same world. 'Liberal' Russia discovered very early, as had the ill fated Provisional Government of 1917 and the Bolsheviks by 1921, that the structure of the international political system tended to undermine the transformative claims of ideology, whether it be liberal or communist.*"

Vladimir Putin's arrival as a Prime Minister in 1999 changed two things. On one hand Putin restarted the economic reforms that was stalled under Yeltsin, and controlled the burgeoning oligarchs by strengthening the military and security elites or the Siloviki, often by coercion against the tycoons. In foreign policy he went out of his way to support the United States and made a massive pro-western shift after 2001. This he did, at a time, when a considerable portion of Russian political sentiment was still not pro-American. In September 2001, 54 percent of Russians were still neutral, 28 percent wanted to go with the West and against the terrorists, and 20 percent were in favour of the Taliban. Eventually in the course of this dissertation with time, we would see how the pro-west shift died its untimely death in Russia, but during the initial days of Vladimir Putin, there were a lot of "creative borrowing" of ideas from both Atlanticist, and Eurasianist ideas. Putin's "Great Power Pragmatism" was more successful in dealing with security and economy; autonomy, prestige and identity, at the same time. Russia's "bandwagoning" in the "War on Terror" immediately got a great positive response from the West. Subsequently during the Moscow Theatre Hostage crisis and the Beslan School siege, involving actions by Chechen terrorists, the disproportionate and heavy handed response from Russia drew muted criticism from around the world, and support from US, Britain and the West. Rather, the "bandwagoning" with US and West, helped Russia to hijack the narrative and agenda of the global war on terror, and use it to strengthen the domestic security apparatus, crack down on internal dissent, and allocate massive budget to an ambitious

rearmament plan. The heavy handed response to the Chechen terrorists also bolstered Putin's image at home, as a no-nonsense strong leader, and took the ammunition from the ultranationalist and communist camps.

There were benefits too, with Oil and Gas exports and general trade, increasing due to proper regulations, structural reforms and institutional changes and policies, resulting in an unprecedented economic boom. Russia also signaled its renewed intention to join the World Trade Organizations. The social welfare programs improved, as a result of a strong economy, as did the general living conditions and wages of average Russians, after a decade of chaos post-Soviet experiments. And finally the pride and prestige of being recognized as a Great Power started to sink in again. With the benefit of hindsight, it now seems ironic that perhaps the best of praise of Vladimir Putin's pragmatic leadership and approach came from none other than George W. Bush, when he stated, right after meeting Putin for the first time; *"I looked the man in the eye. I found him to be very straight forward and trustworthy and we had a very good dialogue. I was able to get a sense of his soul. He's a man deeply committed to his country and the best interests of his country and I appreciate very much the frank dialogue and that's the beginning of a very constructive relationship."* The "special" relationship, and subsequent short-term rapprochement would not last however, as both the great powers would collide massively over during the course of the next eight years, due to clash of interests, while co-operating in some shared areas, and proving the validity of Putin's Realist balancing act (Wyatt 2001).

Under President Putin, Russian foreign policy experienced a revival and restoration of earlier prestige. Russia was back on the world stage as a partner in the global "war against terror", seeking legitimization of its new role of a revived and revanchist great power and projecting power through economic, and at times through political-military means. Relations with the West deteriorated, after a brief detente, as Russia increasingly started challenging agreements that were concluded in the 1990s when it was perceived weak. When Vladimir Putin came to power, relations with the West were already deteriorated extremely, after the war in Kosovo. Russia West face off in Pristina airport was a tense situation, the first in the post Cold war world where two largest nuclear powers faced each other. The 1998 - 1999 financial crash also limited Russia's maneuverability and international reach came to a new low. The question of Russian identity and foreign policy was still unanswered, and whether Russia would be Eurasian or Atlanticist was also not properly and conclusively determined.

One of the first acts of President Putin was to re-install both Tsarist and Soviet identities and national symbols. The Duma adopted the Tsarist double headed eagle as a state emblem, and the Soviet anthem was restored with new lyrics. The blend of Tsarist and Soviet symbols helped answer the question of Russia's search for a 'usable past' that could unite the nation. Putin appealed to both the Tsarist and Soviet pasts, seeking to reconcile white and red Russians by the political exploitation of nostalgia. (Gomart 2006) Putin referred favorably to the Russian philosopher Ivan Ilyin, whose

thinking appears to have influenced the Russian President. Ilyin was an ardent anti-communist who left Russia after the revolution and wrote about how a post-communist Russia should be united and rejecting Western notions of individuality and political competition, led by an enlightened and strong leader with an extremely centralized political system. Russian foreign policy also underwent a sharp change under Putin. “Putin restored stability to the country by reining in forces of decentralization and competition, creating the ‘power vertical’, restoring control over the country by the Kremlin (increasingly staffed by veterans from the intelligence services) and its allied party United Russia, and recapturing state control over the commanding heights of the economy.” Putin’s Russia was in essence a completely Tsarist, centralized state, however with burgeoning oil wealth, and was dubbed as Russia inc. by scholars. Under this government system, political and economic elites became connected, and the Kremlin officials who manage the affairs of state also started to manage and largely control the state's major economic assets. The chairmen of the boards of most of Russia's strategic industries, including energy companies, were members of the presidential administration or holders of high government office and foreign policy decisions were influenced by commercial decisions which were in turn increasingly driven by political interests. The centralized hierarchy, became similar to Soviet system, only difference is this time it came with oligarchs and free market, with a highly interfering state capitalist authority. The domestic ‘power vertical’ slowly extended to foreign policy which was made by a narrow circle of people, especially the predominance of former intelligence officials in the Kremlin. That resulted in the increasingly confrontational rhetoric from Putin's second term, and the *Siloviki's* approach to the West closely started to resemble the Soviets. The West was viewed as the *glavnyi protivnik* (main enemy) out to weaken Russia and overthrow or destabilize the Government, Western antagonist out to ‘tear Russia . It also served the internal function of appealing for the Russian population's support during the succession process as Putin neared the end of his second term, Suggesting that Western governments and NGOs want to interfere with Russia's elections and its sovereign transition was part of a carefully managed process which was targeted to the domestic audience, and we will analyse some incidents and see how this transformation from pro-US Russia immediately after 9/11 to a completely antagonistic Russia during the end of Putin's second term, was a totally tactical move

3 9/11 AND PUTIN’S RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

“War on Terror” and alignment”

As noted previously, Russia had a major strategic shift in its foreign policy thinking during the Primakov era. The “balance of power” doctrine, which formed the bedrock of Soviet style Realism, made a comeback in Russian thought process during the late 1990s. As long as the Soviet Union existed, the concept of balance of power was relatively simple, as being the only two superpowers, facing off each other

provided with a binary and traditional view of balancing. With the collapse of Soviet Union, Russia faced an entire new and different set of realities, and the question of balancing became much more complicated and multidimensional. The intention of Primakov at the Sino-Russian Beijing summit of 1997 was a “creation of a multipolar world order” which was a revised concept of Bipolarity. According to that concept, if Russia could not counter balance USA on its own, it would seek to constrain Washington with any external help necessary, be it with China, Islamic World or even great powers in Western Europe which is opposed to US unipolarity and hegemonistic tendencies (Lo 2003). This idea was a revised concept, and moved away from the strategic concepts of nuclear parity and numerical arms equilibrium, as almost obsolete Russian nuclear arsenal and technological backwardness made nuclear parity unattainable, and moved to a more holistic strategic stability, a rough equality in international and geo-political reach and influence. This mindset carried on till the last days of Yeltsin administration, during the Kosovo war and Pristina airport crisis, and resulted in Yeltsin issuing a veiled threat to USA during his last official tour to Beijing.

Vladimir Putin was a more pragmatic leader, and compared to Gorbachev, Yeltsin, Gaidar, Kozyrev and Primakov, was a relative novice. His background was KGB and bureaucracy rather than political, and he carried no chip in his shoulder. One of the first challenges in his young Presidency was the second Chechen conflict, and he realized the threat facing Russia from Islamic terrorism. He rhetorically as well as intellectually engaged with Islamic terrorism, and in doing that, revived the idea of Russia being a “barrier” between the civilized west, and barbarians from the East, popular in 19th century. The massive evolution of threat perception had a great effect on traditional thinking and Russian geo-political concept. *“Even before Putin became Russia's President in early 2000, and long before the Twin Towers fell, he had invoked the idea of a war against global terrorism to justify Russia's war in Chechnya. The terrorism aspect, at least, was true. Chechen separatists, who renewed their centuries-old struggle for independence soon after the Soviet Union fell, had resorted to terrorism as early as 1995, when they seized a hospital in the Russian town of Budyonnovsk and held more than 1,500 people hostage. Then in 1999, a series of apartment bombings, also blamed on the Chechens, killed hundreds of people in Moscow and other Russian cities. Putin responded by launching Russia's second full-scale invasion of Chechnya in less than a decade. “He received carte blanche from the citizens of Russia,” says Mikhail Kasyanov, who was Russia's Finance Minister at the time. “They simply closed their eyes and let him do whatever he wanted as long as he saved them from this threat.”(Shuster 2011)*

The September 11 attacks in the US changed temporarily the basic principles of European Security in the face of a new challenge against perceived unipolar global order, and bolstered the creation of a new strategic framework between US and Russia. This was evident with Moscow’s unilateral support and enthusiasm for Bush’s war against Terror, and massive US military presence in Central Asia and intelligence and information exchanges related to Afghanistan. The mutual interests were a joint

working partnership in Afghanistan, and Russian co-operation in Central Asia and Caucasus. Russia needed US to support Russian entrance to G8, US Loan of \$20 billion to dismantle strategic weapons, and the American offer to support Russian accelerated membership of the World Trade Organisation. Other than the Global ramification of this rapprochement, which resulted in Russia having an equal partnership with the United States since the Cold war, it also helped in the regional levels like stability in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Caucasus.

Relations between Bush and Putin however didn't start out smoothly. Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national security advisor, initially argued that "It would be foolish in the extreme to share defenses with Moscow as it either leaks or deliberately transfers weapons technologies to the very states against which America is defending." In a February 2001 interview in *Le Figaro*, Rice commented that "I believe Russia is a threat to the West in general and to our European allies in particular." In February 2001 arrest of FBI agent Robert Hanssen, resulted in the US ejecting 50 Russian diplomats: the largest number of expulsions since 1986. The Russians reacted by expelling an equivalent number of American officials. In July 2001, President Bush and President Putin met for the first time, when President Bush "looked into his soul", and found a man worthy of relationship with mutual respect. "'I found a man who realizes his future lies with the West, not the East, that we share common security concerns, primarily Islamic fundamentalism, that he understands missiles could affect him just as much as us. On the other hand he doesn't want to be diminished by America.'" President Bush said about Putin. Putin reciprocated by being equally warm and referred to President Bush as a "partner". But, it took another couple of months, and a devastating terror attack for Putin to grab the opportunity as a true Realist.

From the start of his presidency in January 2000, Putin advocated the idea of a joint and concerted campaign against terrorism with American and European leaders. He was one of the first world leaders to raise the alarm about terrorist training camps in Afghanistan and to warn of linkages between these camps, well-financed terrorist networks, and Islamic militant groups operating in Europe and Eurasia (Hill 2002). Russia also actively supported the Northern Alliance in its struggle with the Taliban in Afghanistan, declaring that "Radical Islam is a threat to the entire civilized world." In December 2000, Moscow joined Washington in supporting United Nations sanctions against the Taliban and later appealed for sanctions against Pakistan for aiding the Taliban. "After the attacks on the United States, Putin went so far as to suggest he had been expecting a massive terrorist strike—it had only been a matter of time. The events of September 11 were a shock, but not a surprise. Putin's support for Bush was consistent with his efforts to draw world attention to the terrorist threat."

The September 11 attacks proved to be a breakthrough for Vladimir Putin. It gave him an opportunity to get into an immediate tactical alignment with the West, to offer support to the Americans, even when the Russian elites wanted a more careful, neutral stance, a "proof" that Russia was right all along in its assessment of Chechnya and Islamic terror. It is debatable how much Putin believes that "International

Islamism” and not domestic terrorism threatens Russian state, nor is it clear, as to how high the position of Islamic terrorism in the threat perception of Russia, and whether and how long it is likely to be retained. What is clear is that Russia, specifically Putin’s Russia, took this opportunity to legitimize the Chechen conflict, and the Russian military operations in the Caucasus. The routine and disproportionate violations of human rights were justified as “extreme measures against extreme threats”. Putin rejected the logic of advantage in American discomfiture, as he realized with his sense of strategic opportunism that there is more benefit and much more gain from supporting the Western coalition and war against terrorism. He understood that Western attitude towards Chechnya would be milder and if not pro-Russian, at least neutral. Most importantly, he realized that playing a constructive role would perhaps not help Russia advance its direct geo-political or strategic interest or influence, but would help Russia stage a grand comeback in the international stage as a responsible great power.

Putin was the first foreign head of state to phone Bush with condolences and express an unequivocal condemnation of the terrorist act, and pledging unending support. Russia still embroiled in the second Chechen war, saw 9/11 as powerful vindication of his warnings about the threat of militant Islam and terrorism, a point they wanted the World to know for ages. Putin singlehandedly decided to share intelligence and aid Washington’s campaign against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, despite subtle opposition from some in the Russian military. Putin’s visit to the presidential ranch in Crawford, Texas in November 2001 symbolized the return of rapprochement in US - Russian relations, a temporary but much needed Détente, much different from the last days of Yeltsin administration, although it is debatable how much it was significant and meaningful for Moscow when it comes to strategic equations or specific rewards. The resulting US – Russia joint statement declared the Cold War to be officially over, and that neither country considers the other as a threat.

“We affirm our determination to meet the threats to peace in the 21st century. Among these threats are terrorism, the new horror of which was vividly demonstrated by the evil crimes of September 11... We have agreed that the current levels of our nuclear forces do not reflect the strategic realities of today.... We support the building of a European-Atlantic community whole, free, and at peace, excluding no one, and respecting the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.”

In the context of the global war on terror, in December 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell traveled to Moscow to report that the US would withdraw from the ABM treaty in six month’s time. Putin was surprisingly understanding of the situation, and stated that Russian security was in no way threatened by the unilateral development. As a result of this Russian acquiescence, In May 2002, US President Bush signed the Strategic Offensive Weapons Reduction Treaty in Moscow, under which each side promised to cut its strategic weapons from 6,000 warheads to 1,700-2,200 over 10 years. The nuclear balance and deterrence still lived in the strategic mindset of Russian Siloviki, as a critical component of national security, but what is more important in this

policy is not the deterrence factor, but the eagerness to maintain the highly particularized status and pride of Russia as a world power, perhaps not matching US but still above all other power, including UK, Germany, France and even China.

Some critics say that Putin's alignment with the West immediately after 9/11 was also due to the fact that Putin realized that Russia would not be capable to stop forthcoming US unilateral actions anyway. Putin's decision to support US troop deployment in central Asia is one notable example; he couldn't have prevented it at any cost. Putin understood when Uzbek president Islam Karimov told him that he would cooperate with the Americans regardless of Russian position. Other leaders of frontline central Asian countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also indicated that they are willing to welcome American military presence in their countries as a stabilizing factor, in the global war against Islamic extremism, which threatened to spread and threaten their existence too. *"He let the U.S. ship supplies through Russian territory and did not object to the U.S. setting up bases in Central Asia, where the local despots quickly caught on to the opportunity. Uzbek President Islam Karimov, for instance, allowed the U.S. to build a permanent base, perhaps hoping that his new alliance with the war on terrorism would help reduce U.S. scrutiny of alleged human-rights abuses in Uzbekistan."* However, whatever the exact case maybe, it is evident that even when he was a young President and an inexperienced leader, Vladimir Putin had the political acumen to understand the flow of the political wind. He was astute, pragmatic and Realist enough and attuned to the perceived need to "bandwagon" with USA, even if it meant opposing his entire military-Siloviki establishment if needed. He understood the political and strategic limitations of Russia, and realized that greater benefits lies siding with the West. He declared a full on conflict against terrorism, especially against Chechnya, and immediately got a full support of his domestic constituency, and muted response from the West, as a reciprocation of Putin's "help" in Global war on terror. The Chechen terrorism, which had its own unique identity, much different and customized than the global Al Qaeda Jihadi nexus, started to retaliate too, giving Putin even more justification to go all out against them, in the name of Global war on terror. Moscow bombings, Moscow theatre siege, and the Beslan school siege, shook the Russian nation, and the death of hundreds of school children shocked the World too. Putin warned Russians to be stronger against this fight against Islamic terrorism. *"As I have said on many occasions, we have faced crises, rebellions and terrorist acts many times. But what has happened now - the unprecedented crime committed by terrorists, inhuman in its cruelty - is not a challenge to the president, the Parliament or the government. This is a challenge to all of Russia, to all our people. This is an attack against all of us... . We cannot but see the evident: we are dealing not with separate acts of intimidation, not with individual forays of terrorists. We are dealing with the direct intervention of international terror against Russia, with total and full-scale war, which again and again is taking away the lives of our compatriots."* Putin said in his speech after Beslan.

Interestingly, an analysis from the think-tank Jamestown Foundation think tank, as early as in 2004, predicted that Putin's response would find favour among the military establishment of Russia. It stated that: *“Putin's approach will find extensive support within Russia's security establishments. Sergei Mironov, Speaker of the Russian Federation Council, believes that Russian citizens will now support increased security measures affecting their daily life, such as tightening security around transport and public gatherings. In itself, this would be a huge undertaking that would cost considerable sums of money to adequately support.The cause of Chechen separatism has suffered a setback because it is now linked in the popular mind with horrific, ruthless acts of terrorism, passing into the uncharted area of targeting children. Putin remained largely silent during the crisis, and he now seeks to reaffirm his credentials as the one politician in Russia that can secure progress against terrorism, which is not necessarily synonymous with bringing peace to Chechnya. As international sympathy and support have been rapidly given to Russia, Putin will seek to capitalize on such evidence of international unity.”* (McDermott, 2004)

That is what exactly happened. The mighty Russian security establishment which was initially wary of Putin's support for Bush's Global war on Terror, now happily supported Putin's anti-terrorist measures, joining the global bandwagon, and taking advantage of an extremely maneuverable concept and ambiguous war to their local interests. By 2005, Moscow effectively suppressed the Chechen separatism, with a puppet, pro-Kremlin Government in place, and massive Human rights violations, torture and extra-judicial killings, as Kremlin backed Ramzan Kadyrov consolidated power. Putin achieved one of his biggest goals that he promised before coming to power, a solution to the Chechen problem, atleast for the short term.

4 OIL AND ENERGY BOOM: RETURN OF GREAT POWER RUSSIA

After the tumultuous political and economic experiments of the nineties, Vladimir Putin took the reins of Russia in 1999, when the economy was almost shattered, productivity was diminishing, and an intermittent and ongoing war, which was draining Russian resources. Russian economic thinking under Putin can be traced back to the Soviet times. Even though Russia was no longer communist, it was not a textbook free market economy either. Infact, capitalism and free market, which helped countries like Poland and Hungary to develop and converge towards a more pan-european growth rate, Russian growth rate and economy kept on plunging throughout the 1990s, partly because the institutions and economic fundamentals in Russia during the Tsarist and Soviet times were completely flawed (Sutela).

Putin's own economic thinking was hinted at in his Masters thesis (Kandidatskaya dissertation). Putin wrote about “Dual Track” planning, underlining that Russia was still in a transitional phase on its transition to a proper functioning market democracy, and there should be a certain amount of rationalized and stabilizing Government control. Centralized Government control should be a permanent fixture under this process, and Putin's work in the KGB gave him a basic idea of the hierarchical model KGB follows, leading him to believe that hierarchical state model is

also a proper economic model for Russia. Economic determinism was the pressing model for a Realist Russia and this was reflected in the RF Security Council document of May 2002, which states, “*Russia has to avoid being cornered by ideological notions of division between friends and foes. Economic benefits for Russia should become the main factor and criteria of foreign policy orientation.*” (Isakova 2005) Russia’s goal was to use all opportunity of economic development to prepare Russia to face the potential security challenges, and in order to do that initial rapprochement with the West was not ruled out.

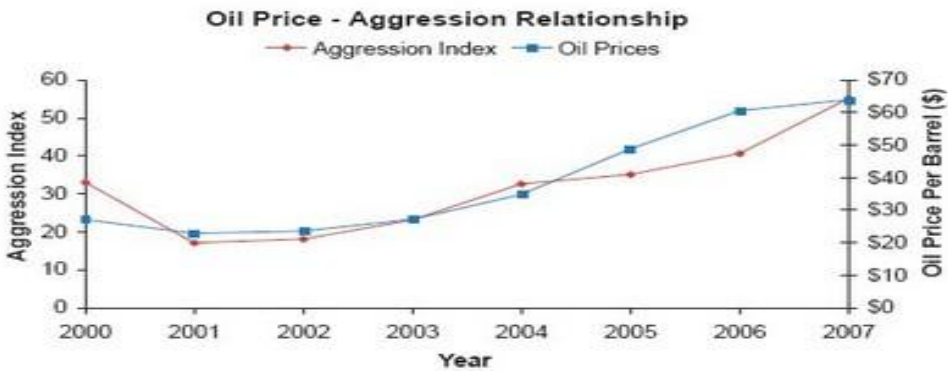
The 2000 to 2008 were the most successful years in Russian economy. Economic growth was around 7 percent, and national income was doubled. The total size of economy increased six times, from US \$ 221 Billion to US \$ 1348 Billion, and measured in Dollars Russian economy grew even faster than China. Russia benefited from the growth, as real consumption rose by an average of 15 percent annually, more than twice the size of the GDP. The federal budget surplus rose from 1.5 percent of GDP to 5.5 percent. Revenue surged in an amazing rate due to economic growth, tax reforms, and most importantly...oil export revenue taxation. Russia which had no central bank reserve during the mid-1990s had the third largest reserve after a decade, only after Japan and China. By 2007, official reserves covered all foreign debt, and the economy not only grew and continued growing, it actually stabilized.

Russia used this new found wealth and economic prowess to pursue a more active foreign policy in the geopolitical arena. Russia is along with Saudi Arabia the two biggest energy producers of the world, thus far. Energy provides over two third of Russian export revenue, and about half of fiscal revenue. Energy has been the center of Russian political economy since the early years of Putin’s reign, when much of the power were taken from the hands of the oligarchs, by the state. (Gaddy, Ickes 2010) Much of Russian energy sector falls under resource nationalism, limiting the role of foreign actors, renationalizing oil sector as opposed to the free market 1990s and strengthening the direct role of the state. Russian oil reserves are 5.6 percent of the world, and the world’s seventh largest. Taxes on oil and gas provide 37 percent of the Russian national budget. According to the World Bank and the IMF, each dollar increase in the price of oil augments the budget by about .35 percent of Russian GDP. Moscow’s recent aggressive campaigns to renationalize energy companies at home, leverage foreign debts for extra-territorial control over energy assets, discourage rival energy projects, use strong arm tactics to coerce rival oil companies, buy out stakes of foreign companies like BP by Rosneft, and bypass pipelines seem to underscore the Kremlin’s commitment to matching words with deeds for employing energy as strategic instrument of Realism, Mercantilism and Energy Imperialism. (Orban 2008)

The most interesting implication of Russia’s oil power was the correlation with its assertive foreign policy. An “aggression index” based on 86 events in Russian foreign policy from January 2000 to September 2007 was compiled by American Enterprise Institute in a report, a paragraph of which is quoted below: “*We then*

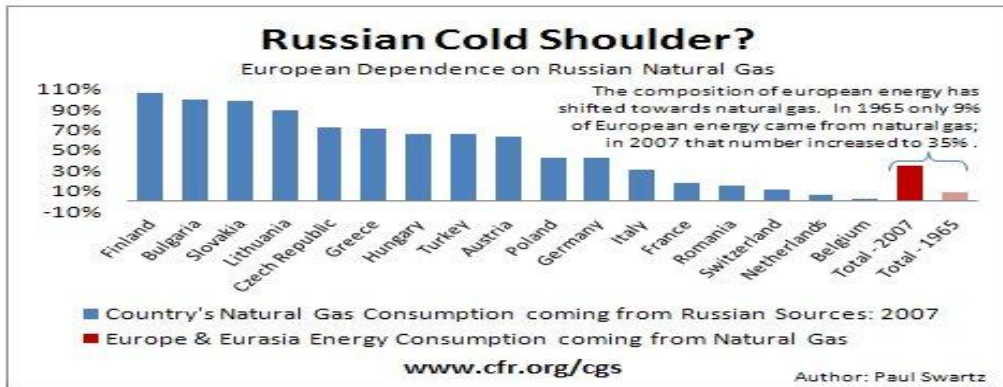
assigned each event a value between one and five, with a higher number indicating a more aggressive event—aggressiveness being defined as actions harming Western interests. Import bans, diplomatic expulsions, and similar activities earned low-level values: a 1 or a 2. More clearly threatening acts, such as arms sales to terror-sponsoring states, military exercises, attempts to support separatist regions, and interruptions of energy supplies to neighbors, earned mid-range values such as 3 or 4. We found that as the price of oil rose, the aggressiveness index increased: that is, the more valuable oil became, the more hostile Russian foreign policy became. The reverse was also true: when oil prices dropped in 2001 and 2002, so did Russia’s aggression. The relationship proved strongest at the annual level: a \$1.48 increase in oil prices yearly correlated with an additional “point” increase in Russian aggression. Oil prices rose from \$17.37 a barrel in December 2001 to \$73.88 a barrel in September 2007; over that same period, the aggression index rose from 17 to 55. To the best of our knowledge, this is the most comprehensive dataset available to analyze the effect of oil prices on Russian foreign policy; a few events missed here or there will not alter the bigger picture.”

The graph showing the correlation is here (Szrom, Brugato 2008):



Combined to this is the apparent dependence of the West, especially Europe on Russian gas and oil.

A graph from CFR showing European dependence is below:



Putin successfully used this new found oil and gas resources to influence European decision making procedure, especially during the buildup to the Iraq war, which we will discuss later. Of course, oil prices is not the sole determinant of Russian foreign policy, but perhaps it is not completely co-incidental, that Putin’s Munich conference speech came in 2007, a few months after 2006, when it had entirely paid off its International Monetary Fund obligations, which totaled \$16.8 billion in 1999. Russia no longer needed Western cash to keep its economy alive, on the contrary, Europe desperately needed Russian energy. The British House of Lords Report noted that the EU/Russia Energy Dialogue was essential for energy security and dependence of Europe. In fact, the most co-operative time between Russian Government and Washington was during July 2001 to February 2003, with only one aggressive action. “This pause corresponded with a fluctuation in global oil prices: they dropped from a high of \$30.35 a barrel in November 2000 to \$17.37 a barrel in December 2001. Oil prices did not hit \$30 a barrel again until February 2003.” Putin’s idea of a “European Great Power” has been based on playing main actors against each other, namely the trio of France – Germany – Italy against the EU Commission (and the West), and in a minor way, playing Germany against Poland, or any consumer of Russian gas against Ukraine. The main asset of this balancing was energy.

France and German alliance with Russia before the Iraq war was also an appeasement to the growing influence of Russian energy weapon, German chancellor Gerhard Fritz Kurt Schröder during the Iraq war, who allied with Russia and France to Veto the Iraq war proposal in the Security Council, later after retirement went on to work with Nord Stream submarine energy pipeline company in the board of directors. In 2003 Russian energy strategy document turned this “petro-confidence” into official foreign policy: “ensuring national security—that is the fundamental task of the energy policy.” After the forced re-nationalisation, close ties between the Kremlin and the energy industry have brought these policy goals within reach. We will see later in the chapters how Russia would use its energy resources as a weapon, during the Iraq war opposition to the United States, and to roll back NATO expansion by blackmailing Europe into subjugation. In the words of Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov stated

that “it would be right to say that we view our role in global energy supply as a means for ensuring our foreign policy independence.”

Russia would repeatedly use this energy power as a persuasive, coercive diplomatic tool against European Union, by stopping the supply of oil and gas to Ukraine for show reasons like price of gas, and transit cost. Russia provides approximately a quarter of the natural gas consumed in the European Union; approximately 80% of those exports travel through pipelines across Ukrainian soil prior to arriving in the EU. But one can gather, this was Russian response to intimidate the colour revolutions, supported by United States which was happening in Georgia and Ukraine.

Russian oil and gas blackmail was repeatedly mentioned and protested by Western powers, European and American (Baev 2008). “It is necessary to say politely and with a friendly smile that we are free and we will do what we want, We will not be manipulated or blackmailed, and if you threaten that you will not deliver gas to us, well then, keep it.” said Vaclav Havel, former Czech President from 1993 until 2003. and playwright, who led the anti-Soviet revolution in 1989. Just after the colour revolutions in both Georgia and Ukraine, President Yushchenko of Ukraine and President Saakashvili of Georgia gave joint statements calling the World to boycott Russia. “Ukraine's President Viktor Yushchenko said eastern Europe's energy supply routes must diversify away from Russia and not succumb to "energy blackmail." Mikheil Saakashvili said Russia had turned into an "export monopolist of all energy supplies -- both its own and those of Central Asia" and accused Moscow of undermining the ideal of a common European energy market. The strongest words came from United States Vice President Dick Cheney, when he “accused Russia of using blackmail and intimidation in its energy policy towards Europe. In one of Washington's sharpest rebukes to Moscow, Mr Cheney said it was not acceptable for Russia to use its vast gas and energy supplies to bully its neighbours.

"Russia has a choice to make," Mr Cheney told Baltic leaders during a summit in Vilnius. "No legitimate interest is served when oil and gas become tools of intimidation or blackmail, either by supply manipulation or attempts to monopolize transportation."” But unfortunately Europe as well as America was unable to do anything in the face of Russian energy and gas arm twisting tactics. Countless numbers of warnings, op-eds and policy papers aside, the West, especially the United States of America was helpless in front of Russian Realism. Europe in the beginning of the decade from 2000 to 2003 was not even united in its opposition to Russia. “Russia has long tried to ‘divide and rule’ the West, often successfully. In the past, EU leaders such as Schröder, Silvio Berlusconi and Jaques Chirac happily discarded pre -agreed EU positions in their attempts to forge a special relationship with Russia. (Barysch 2007)” Since 1991, Russia has attempted to practice energy coercion on at least 60 different occasions, with over 40 of these incidents resulting in cut-offs of energy supplies against the Baltic and CIS countries. Moscow’s repeated and gratuitous resort to

the oil weapons towards the Baltic states clearly represents “the blatant use of strong-arm tactics in economic disputes.”

Russian leaders like Lavrov (as mentioned above) openly talked about the country’s energy power as the fulcrum for the nation’s revival and survival, as well as the basis for realizing competitive advantages in the near abroad and most importantly to what they perceive as a way of standing up to so called US unipolarity. High profile energy showdowns against Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Armenia, and Turkmenistan, clearly demonstrates that Moscow was not unwilling to use energy as a potent and lethal weapon to subjugate and coerce smaller powers in what it considered as Russian sphere of influence. Europe’s reliance on Russian gas, coupled with tightening energy resources globally adds to Russian hostility to foreign ownership of significant strategic reserves at home. Desire to take control of the geographic chokepoints to alternative international transit routes seem to compliment Moscow’s resource nationalism and its tightening strategic grip over Europe and Asia. Russia even proved, ominously if one may add, at potential economic, political, and reputational cost, that it is absolutely willing to use Energy as a weapon, by cutting of gas supplies to Europe, and choking Georgian oil, eventually leading to war in 2008.

5 THE IRAQ WAR OF 2003 AND THE DOWNTURN IN PUTIN’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

Iraq Invasion 2003

Russia’s behaviour during the buildup to the US led invasion of Iraq was a fascinating study in Realpolitik. Russia hoped to be in a strong Euro-Western bandwagon, after 9/11, which would have helped them fight their own Chechen problem and have a control of their own sphere of influence in the Post Soviet space in their immediate neighbourhood. However, with the majority of the Chechen war winding down, and newfound slow surging economy based on the consolidation of oil and gas resources and stabilization of internal economy gave Russia a new found confidence. Since 2002, the US had been in talks with East European countries over the possibility of setting up a European based Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system to intercept long-range missiles which would apparently help to protect the US and Europe from missiles fired from the Middle East or North Africa. The whole posture of US Missile defence in East Europe riled Russia, as it was considered completely unilateral and against the principle of mutual understanding followed since the Cold War, and would make Russia’s nuclear weapons worthless. According to Russia, the act of installing ballistic missile defence system would be contrary to the commitment of Intermediate Range Nuclear forces treaty between US and the Soviets signed in 1987. Also, Russia’s idea of sweeping the human rights abuses in Chechnya completely under the rug, didn’t quite work out well, as there was still a lot of scrutiny of its record.

In 2003, with ever increasing belligerent rhetoric from the United States, Russia sought to ally itself with other European powers, in an effort to balance United

States. The idea stems from the mindset of Russia being a European power, rather than a Eurasian power, but behind the act was a strong realist idea of balancing, as Russia was increasingly feeling threatened by the unilateral tendencies of United States. The Russian interest in an alliance with United States in the post 9/11 scenario was fading fast. In the words of Dmitri Trenin (2012): *“After 9/11, Putin took the opportunity to offer the White House a deal. Russia was prepared to trade acceptance of U.S. global leadership for the United States' recognition of its role as a major ally, endowed with a special (that is, hegemonic) responsibility for the former Soviet space. That sweeping offer, obviously made from a position of weakness, was rejected by Washington, which was only prepared to discuss with Moscow the "rules of the road" in the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The Kremlin gave Westpolitik another try by joining the "coalition of the unwilling" at the time of the Iraq war. By joining the major European powers in opposing the U.S. invasion, Moscow hoped to enter the Western system through the European door and create a Russo-German-French axis to counterbalance Washington and London. Russia failed again. A new anti-American entente did not materialize; situational agreement with Moscow (and disagreement with Washington) could not overcome the fundamental character of transatlantic relations. Instead, transatlantic and European institutions continued to enlarge to the east, taking in the remaining former Warsaw Pact and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance countries and the Baltic states. With the entry of Poland and the Baltics into the EU, the EU'S overall approach became even more alarming for Moscow. At the same time, both the United States and Europe began supporting regime change from within and geopolitical reorientation in Russia's borderlands, most notably in Ukraine and Georgia, thus projecting their power of attraction beyond the former Soviet border into the CIS. The concept of "the near abroad," which Moscow used in the 1990S to justify its hegemony over the new states on Russia's periphery, was suddenly revived-only now there were two versions of it, one from the perspective of Moscow, the other from the perspective of Brussels, both" of which were claiming the same territory. From 2003 to 2005, for the first time since 1991, Moscow's relations with both parts of the West-the United States and Europe-soured at the same time.”*

Russia continued this effort to break up the Western alliance, and form an anti-US Hegemonic bloc. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, gave statements how Iraq war should be the last resort, and how force must be used only when all other resources and a settlement option was exhausted. “Russia, like many other members of the Security Council, believes the inspectors must continue their work in Iraq and establish whether or not Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction. If such weapons are found, the inspectors must document their elimination” This constant reference to “other members of the security council” notably Germany and France was an attempt to break up the Western alliance. And to some extent it was successful too. French Foreign Minister De Villepin said US shouldn’t be impatient, Chinese foreign minister Tang Jiaxuan

told reporters the council should respect International Atomic Energy Agency and support their work, and German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer warned that war on Iraq could fuel more terrorism.

In a final act of covert belligerence Russia actually passed the war plans and troop movement information of Pentagon, to Saddam Hussein via a Russian diplomat stationed in Baghdad. Although Russia officially dismissed the report, claiming it to be unsubstantiated and accusatory, word of Russian-Iraqi collaboration came as part of an analysis by U.S. Joint Forces Command, which looked at combat operations from an Iraqi perspective as a tool for shaping future U.S. operations. Pentagon claimed its report was based on thousands of Iraqi documents and postwar interviews with more than a dozen Iraqi officials. After the first US missiles landed on Iraq Putin didn't question the war goals, but rather just commented on how great a political error it was. He just called for national sovereignty to be respected and international laws to be

Contrary to public opinion, however, Russia never really wanted to defend Iraq. The only thing it wanted was to take opportunity to form a coalition, "coalition of the unwilling" at the cost of the internal bickering of the West. Russian Elite, while it obviously didn't support the Iraq war and was wary of a unilateral and belligerent United States, never for once wanted to leave the rapprochement with the United States. Leonid Slutski, the then deputy chairperson of the Duma (parliament) Committee for International Affairs, prudently declared, *"If Russia moved toward an anti-American tripartite alliance with France and Germany... this tactically favourable step would lead to a strategic defeat"*.(Volkov 2003) The pro-government newspaper Izvestia, which often acts as a mouth piece of the Government policies, also echoed the pragmatic Realist lines. On March 13th it came out with an editorial named the "Detachment of the honest broker" which stated the Moscow-Berlin-Paris axis has served its purpose, and would not help Russia anymore, and that the price of a confrontation with US is far too high. The limitations of an anti-US axis was evident, as Russia was skeptical that even with all its support, France and Germany, and the greater Europe would still not welcome Russia as a partner and ditch the United States. The op-ed continued with the passive pragmatic position stating that Russia still needs the United States steal market, as well as the support of World Bank. Russia skillfully managed to reach its objective to shame and show the United States as a solo aggressor, hell-bent on doing a grave error, and made sure that the error was done alone, bereft of a global legitimacy. That was the success of Russian realist diplomacy. As Izvestia succinctly pointed out, *"All this still does not mean supporting Bush's policy in Iraq. Just that he should commit his error alone, if it is an error. To stand in front of a racing steam locomotive, even as it moves towards an abyss, this is, at the very least, short-sighted. It was necessary to find the 'golden mean' and abstain totally from participating in the big brawl, with its completely unforeseeable consequences."*

On the other hand, this mild opposition and subsequent Iraq war gave Russia enough opportunity to reclaim its traditional Great power role and consolidate what it considers its sphere of influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Russian right

wingers led by Zhirinovskiy lobbied for sending massive military force to Middle East, and establishing pro-Russian regimes in Trans Caucasus. *“We should act worse than Americans. Ofcourse we are sorry for Iraq. But it is a great moment for Russia (to take the opportunity)...”* he said.

This pragmatic-Realism was starting to become of the centerstages of Russian Foreign policy again. Realism however gave way to blatant Realism and even power-projection seen during the colour revolutions of Eastern Europe, especially in Ukraine and Georgia, which forms the last phase of Putin’s first two term, and which would almost lead to a head on collision course with the West, namely United States of America.

6 EUROPE, NATO AND COLOUR REVOLUTIONS

The last phase of Russian Realism would be noticed in the dealing with NATO and Europe a little bit of which were already touched upon during the Iraq war and Energy politics. Washington never considered Europe Russia rapprochement as a threat, especially post Cold War, as the idea behind it was that it could boost the workability of the NATO Russia Council. after September 11th, NATO General Secretary Lord Robertson clearly stated that Europe and Russia needs to work together, and a common conviction is needed for those countries which work together. US strongly backed this rapprochement, as a reward Russia’s support on the war on terror, and Putin’s initial silence on missile defence and withdrawal from ABM treaty. But since the Russia – Europe relationship was based on a number of factors including Russian perception of NATO and US power towards Russia, it was dependent on a lot of variables. What happened in reality was that Transatlantic and European institutions continued to approach eastward, and continually encroach upon what Russia viewed as its traditional Sphere of influence. The European enlargement and entry of Poland and the Baltic states in European Union and the Mutual assistance programs towards the former Communist east European countries were viewed with alarm in Russia. By the end of the first term of Vladimir Putin around 2004, with the massive human rights abuse in Russia, the West and US already lost hope of a blooming democracy in Russia, and it was strictly reduced to a business like dealing. But what changed that dynamics was the advent of Colour revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, United States and Europe started supporting the democratic change and transition in those border countries of Russia, which were always a part of the perceived sphere of influence. The relation with Europe and US soured at the same time, in the time frame of 2003 to 2005. *“The “color revolutions” in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan made it clear that even the post-Soviet space-an area where Moscow was still dominant and felt more or less at ease -was starting to disintegrate. In late 2004 and early 2005, in the wake of the Beslan school hostage crisis and the Ukrainian election fiasco, the self-confidence of the Putin government hit an all-time low.”*

The NATO enlargement processes largely estranged Russia, and established a new dividing line which excluded Russia. Russia clearly felt left out from the economic and political developments as it was not directly associated. Meanwhile a

new form of people's movement started to appear where post-Soviet authorities were challenged by a combination and alliance of local political forces, civil society, common people and international actors, human rights groups and NGOs. Countries in the Post Soviet authoritarian scenario with a relatively liberal political environment had the civil society to develop and receive foreign assistance, and independent media to emerge, which in turn enabled the opposition to organize and mobilize. Three revolutions – the "rose revolution" in Georgia (November 2003-January 2004), the "orange revolution" in Ukraine (January 2005) and the "tulip revolution" in Kyrgyzstan (April 2005) changed radically the situation and geo-politics in the post Soviet Russian "sphere of influence" and changed the dynamics of Russia and Western relation. In all the cases substantial Western support for the civil society and Western backed NGOs were instrumental. The use of NGOs and transnational actors are not new, and it is absolutely explained by a Realist paradigm as an instrument of hard power. Robert Gilpin was the first to explain the rise of MNCs as a function of hegemonic stability, and Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye also warned in the 1970s that "*transnational relations may redistribute control from one state to another and benefit those governments at the centre of transnational networks to the disadvantage of those in the periphery.*"

6 CONCLUSION

Impact of Realism on Putin's Policy towards US

The central research question of this dissertation was to what extent did neo-Realism shape Putin's policy after 2011, which I tried to answer in the previous chapters. Now, an obvious question might arise, which was beyond the scope of the chapters, which I will try to answer here. If neo-realism did frame a successful reconciliation between Putin and Bush, why did the rapprochement flounder and fail after 2003? Did Putin overplay his hand, or Bush was too ideological? To answer the first question, we have to assume Putin was genuine about the rapprochement out of goodwill and not interest. The evidence I gathered thus far is not corroborating to that assertion. Many Realists indeed however saw Bush's Iraq war as being too ideological. Prominent Realist scholars advertised in the New York Times, and Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer wrote an article in Foreign Policy how Iraq was not a threat to the United States. I have also argued in my published paper in International Affairs Review that US foreign policy from 1987, regardless of a liberal or conservative administration was too ideological and busy promoting freedom, rather than acting solely based on realist interests. Vladimir Putin on the other hand was arguably never serious about any genuine rapprochement; rather, he just used the Realist principle of bandwagoning successfully.

The fact that the rapprochement failed is due to the fact that bandwagoning has limitations, and Iraq war was one such. Realists believe that bandwagoning stops at a certain level as one state realise that the other state is getting stronger geo-politically as

both the states are essentially rivals. We saw that in the Munich conference when Putin accused United States of using “hyper power” and “unrestrained use of force”, and “blatant disregard of international laws”.

It is hard in international relations, to mark a specific date or even a timeline for a significant change in foreign policy or theoretical framework, but if the end of the first post 9/11 rapprochement between United States and Russia is to be marked down, it would be the bellicose Munich Conference speech by Vladimir Putin. By 2007, Russian need for a tactical realignment with United States was met. Russia successfully lobbied for membership in World Trade Organisation, dealt with the Chechen rebel problem hijacking the Global war on terror agenda to cover up for Human rights abuses and suppressing internal dissent without a single proverbial finger pointed, got the economy on a strong footing as an Oil and Gas superpower. Russia’s limited goals of opposing the Iraq war with limited bandwagoning with European powers, and taking advantage of internal dissent and inter NATO rivalry without jeopardizing relations with United States was also successful. However the Colour Revolutions and Energy turmoil in European relations proved the deficiencies of Russian foreign policy in dealing with USA, which was untenable. Washington also moved its largest sea-based missile defense radar in the Pacific from Hawaii to the Aleutian Islands, not far from Russia’s Kamchatka Peninsula, and announced plans to install a radar system in the Czech Republic and a missile interception system in Poland, which it claimed is needed to protect itself against a potential missile threat from Iran. The Munich Conference of 2007 saw Vladimir Putin outline the new strategic and tactical foreign policy framework...which, although still based on the core Realist ideals and interest of the state of Russia, was far more cynical, accusatory, threatening and offensive. Putin blasted United States on the issue of Iraq and missile defence, stating that Russia would plan to deal with these “threats” asymmetrically and effectively (Walt 2012) (Maitra 2013).

Putin’s accusation was about Bush’s unilateralism, the use of “hyper power” disregarding any established laws of International Relations. "*The United States has overstepped its borders in all spheres - economic, political and humanitarian, and has imposed itself on other states,*" he said, "*Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force - military force - in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts. As a result we do not have sufficient strength to find a comprehensive solution to any one of these conflicts. Finding a political settlement also becomes impossible...*" Regarding missile defence Putin mentioned that the logic of establishing a missile defence in East Europe to deter Iran goes against the laws of ballistic. In a moment of unusual Cold War style bluster, he berated United States on NATO expansion accusing the NATO expansion of having nothing to do with modernizing alliances, but rather just eroding mutual trust with Russia, by moving military hardware closer to Russia’s border. He also mentioned that there was a clear misunderstanding of Global threats today as the greatest threat comes from Islamic terrorism. Putin mentioned the BRIC countries of Brazil, Russia, India

and China as an upcoming bloc, with the potential of economically balancing the West. And finally, in what would be the most cryptic messages, he mentioned while talking about Kosovo, that unilaterally declaring independence is not a good thing, and if the World community is interested in accepting the independent status of Kosovo, then they must also be ready to grant accept independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Within months from the Munich Conference, Russia resumed long distance bomber patrols across the Atlantic. Just after the Shanghai Cooperation organization's Peace Mission 2007, Putin announced on 17 August 2007 the resumption on a permanent basis of long-distance patrol flights of The Russian Air Force Tu-95 and Tu-160 strategic bombers that had been suspended since 1992. *"In 1992, the Russian Federation unilaterally stopped sending its strategic aviation on long-range patrols. Unfortunately, not everyone has followed our example and other countries' strategic aviation continues patrols to this day. This creates certain problems for the Russian Federation in ensuring its security. In response to this situation, I have decided that Russia's strategic aviation will resume patrols on a permanent basis."* Russia also started naval sorties with carrier groups and submarine patrols, stopped since the Soviet times. *"The aim of the sorties is to ensure a naval presence in tactically important regions of the world ocean"* said Defence minister Anatoliy Serdyukov. Russia started to be increasingly assertive in dealing with its neighbours and meddling in their personal affairs, especially Ukraine and Georgia. Relation with Georgia in particularly deteriorated, over the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which culminated in a brief war between Russia and Georgia in 2008, where Russian army routed the Georgians in five days and declared independence to breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Russian post 9/11 honeymoon with USA seemed officially over with the Georgian war. However both George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin left power around the same time. The Georgian war was under the Presidency of Dmitri Medvedev, the protégé of Vladimir Putin, who positioned himself as a Prime Minister, and continued to take decisions. The new government under Barack Obama a year after the war started a "Reset" with President Medvedev, and the Reset process is still ongoing and fluid for us to delve into or comment. But the first post 9/11 rapprochement failed as we see, and after considering the evidence provided, this is my humble submission that we can attribute the failing of the rapprochement to the fact that Russia never really wanted a genuine rapprochement. It was always a tactical alignment from the part of Russia, a completely Realist mindset, where Russia was only interested in:

- a. Strengthening her position as a Great power.
- b. Taking care of internal dissent and Caucasus problem by exploiting the "War on Terror" template for its purposes.
- c. Use new found oil and gas wealth to its advantage to be a dominant power player in the energy market.

- d. When all else was achieved, to portray itself as a regional heavyweight, still capable of blocking US unipolarity.

Russia has consistently used a Realist framework, especially Structural and Offensive Realism in their foreign policy. Not all of the above objectives were met with complete success. US still remain the most dominant power in the World. And that was explained by Structural Realism too, the limitations of Russian power. *“Structural realism could be an interesting tool while explaining the structural post-Cold war limitations for the Russian foreign activity, despite Moscow’s ambitions and objections to the US hegemony. In fact, the structure of the international system as well as the new distribution of power within its frames after the fall of the USRR have considerably limited the Russian ability to influence the global affairs, restricting Moscow’s position to local, but certainly not global player. Thus, despite its great power rhetoric and demonstrations to prove its leading role in the international relations Russia is no longer the global superpower. Besides, structural realism underlines a tendency among the strongest players in the system to impose their rules over other subjects. It explains the Moscow’s efforts to participate in the global decision making mechanisms yet it is still truth that neither Russia’s political nor military and economic capacities compare the power of the U.S. as a leading subject in the system.”*

Russia ever since the Munich conference, continued with its Realist foreign policy, albeit a bit more aggressively. On one hand it opposed USA tooth and nail in Syria, vetoing thrice with China any intervention, where it has got significant military and business ties, on the other hand Russia stayed away from vetoing the Libya intervention, and allowed NATO to have a transition stop in Vladivostok. The Realism under Putin continued as Putin came to power for the third time in 2012. Fyodor Lukyanov, editor of Global Affairs wrote when Putin came to power in 2012, comparing his Realism with Medvedev, *“Where President-2010 sees opportunities and prospects; President-2012 discerns threats and reasons for concern...Medvedev proceeds from Russia’s domestic developments and looks for how events on the world arena could promote Russia’s growth. Putin, by contrast, starts with the global picture and draws conclusions on how external events can influence domestic processes.”*

Russia, never wanted, or acted as if it wanted a complete rapprochement; it took advantage of situations to gain the Great power status which they lost after Cold war. Only with the benefit of hindsight can we claim whether this Realism would continue in Russian foreign policy and dealing with United States. But that’s not within the scope of the discussion here.

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