

**THE US-RUSSIAN SPHERES OF INFLUENCE  
IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA**

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**2016**

**THE US-RUSSIAN SPHERES OF INFLUENCE IN THE  
POST-COLD WAR ERA**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF  
PHILOSOPHY**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR**

**2016**

**UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA**  
**ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

This study is an assessment of the US-Russian spheres of influence strategy in the post-Cold War. The research framework offers an examination of the conceptual and practical aspects of sphere-of-influence. An analysis of NATO-Warsaw Pact is used to connect the historical and contemporary US-USSR/Russian pursuit for influence projection. The central argument of this study is that sphere-of-influence remains a strategic frame forever present in the foreign policies and geopolitical visions of the major powers. Both these powers are increasingly important within their relevant sphere of influence and both aim an influence projection beyond their spheres. Though unequal, one is a global power, the other a regional power, the two countries are capable of leading and framing the political, economic and security problems in their respective spheres. This study has chosen three contemporary evidences because they represent incompatible geopolitical positions between the US and Russia, which are the NATO's expansion and its open-door policy towards the CIS region, the recent Ukrainian Revolution and Syrian crisis. The sources available to conduct this research came from a collection of archival documents, official papers, and transcripts, speeches of leading figures of all the parties involved in the three events. Such data collection contributed to the argumentative aspect of this study with sufficient proof and academic evidence. The structure of the study is presented in two parts: the first part examines the concept of the sphere of influence and the US-USSR' spheres of influence during the Cold War; the second part is an assessment of the continuity for spheres of influence by the US and Russia in the post-Cold War.

Many have offered significant findings about the US-Russian relations in the historical and contemporary scholarly climate. The main findings resulting from this study are: throughout the Cold War and post-Cold War period, both the US and Russia have been equally determined to maintain control over the events that affect the status of their

spheres of influence. Secondly, in terms of sphere of influence, the Ukrainian Revolution is significant and strategic for the US-Russian geopolitics as was the status of the divided Germany during the Cold War. The fact that Germany was critical for the influence over Europe and Ukraine and is also crucial for influence over the CIS region. Thirdly, NATO's open-door policy to the CIS countries triggers not only a more assertive Russia but also a more aggressive Russia. Fourthly, Syria has become a critical situation in the Middle East for all the regional and international players involved because it is the only Middle Eastern case where both US and Russia are involved and standing on the opposite sides. Lastly, while the three evidences being discussed in this research are ongoing events that still needs to be watched and reflected upon, the US' and Russia's pursuit for influence projection remains. Between the US and Russia, whether mutually assured security frame or the sphere of influence approach is employed, it has always has been about who gains a strong and significant political posture in world affairs.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini merupakan satu penilaian mengenai pendekatan sfera pengaruh AS-Rusia pasca Perang Dingin. Kerangka penyelidikan ini menumpukan sepenuh perhatian kepada konsep sfera pengaruh. Kajian ini adalah suatu penilaian terhadap konsep sfera pengaruh sejak era Perang Dingin supaya dapat menonjolkan hujah utama kajian ini. Disamping itu, pendekatan ini merupakan satu kerangka yang sentiasa wujud dalam polisi luar dan visi geopolitik dua kuasa utama ini. Tujuan mengkaji hubungan AS-Rusia adalah kerana kedua-dua kuasa menjadi semakin penting dalam sfera pengaruh masing-masing walaupun tidak seimbang, satu merupakan kuasa global, dan satu lagi kuasa serantau. Kedua-dua negara ini mampu memimpin dan mempengaruhi masalah politik, ekonomi dan keselamatan dalam sfera pengaruh masing-masing. Bagi membuktikan kepentingan pendekatan sfera pengaruh AS-Rusia, kajian ini telah memilih tiga peristiwa kontemporari yang masih berlangsung iaitu polisi buka pintu NATO terhadap rantau “Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)”, revolusi Ukrain dan krisis Syria. Sumber yang dirujuk untuk kajian ini adalah daripada koleksi dokumen arkib, kertas dan transkrip rasmi, ucapan pemimpin terkenal dari kesemua pihak yang terlibat dalam ketiga-tiga peristiwa tersebut. Koleksi data sebagai bukti akademik ini menyumbang kepada hujah yang dibangunkan dalam kajian ini secara jelas dan tepat. Struktur kajian ini dipersembahkan dalam dua bahagian. Bahagian pertama menilai konsep sfera pengaruh dan sfera pengaruh AS-USSR semasa perang dingin. Bahagian kedua pula merupakan satu penilaian mengenai kesinambungan sfera pengaruh oleh AS dan Rusia pasca Perang Dingin.

Dalam iklim kesarjanaan sejarah dan kontemporari, ramai yang telah menawarkan penemuan yang penting mengenai hubungan AS-Rusia. Antara penemuan utama kajian ini adalah sepanjang Perang Dingin dan pasca-Perang Dingin, kedua-dua AS dan Rusia

ingin mengekalkan kawalan ke atas peristiwa yang akan meninggalkan kesan ke atas status sfera pengaruh mereka. Kedua, dari segi sfera pengaruh, revolusi Ukrain adalah penting dan strategik bagi geo-politik AS-Rusia sebagaimana kedudukan Jerman yang berpecah dua semasa Perang Dingin. Ini kerana Jerman merupakan negara yang penting dalam mengekalkan pengaruh ke atas Eropah dan Ukrain pula adalah penting bagi mengekalkan pengaruh ke atas CIS. Ketiga, polisi buka pintu NATO kepada negara CIS telah mencetuskan Rusia yang lebih tegas dan juga agresif. Keempat, Syria telah menjadi satu lingkaran pengaruh di Timur Tengah bagi kesemua pemain utama di peringkat rantau dan antarabangsa. Akhirnya, sementara ketiga-tiga kajian kes ini merupakan peristiwa yang masih berlangsung dan masih diperhatikan dan difikirkan, usaha AS dan Rusia untuk menyebarkan pengaruh mereka terus berkekalan. Sebarang isu antara kedua buah negara ini sama ada keselamatan bersama atau persaingan mendapatkan pengaruh, setiap kerjasama dan persaingan ini sebenarnya adalah mengenai negara mana yang mendapat ganjaran yang lebih baik,

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many deserved to be thanked for their encouragement and support, especially those who were willing to make time to discuss my research and gave their best suggestions to maintain the focus on the sections elaborated in this thesis. The first stages of the reading and data collection were a reflection on the overall argument of the thesis, ‘sphere of influence’ which cannot be denied that it is a prominent feature of great powers’ politics. Several discussions held with many relevant parties also enlightened me with important ideas about my research and made it possible for me to keep this thesis on-track. Many thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Shakila Yacob, for her meaningful guidance, who patiently corrected my drafts and guided my research throughout the PhD journey.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Azlina Rasip for her kind patience in dealing with the various bureaucratic processes throughout my study. I appreciate the kind assistance of several professors throughout the writing of several drafts of the thesis, especially Associate Professor Dr. Joseph Fernando. Finally, my utmost and sincerest thanks goes to my family, and to many friends of mine whom I did not mention here. Thank you all.



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

|         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
| ABM     | : | Anti-Ballistic Missile                         |
| BTF     | : | Berlin Task Force                              |
| CFE     | : | Conventional Armed Forces in Europe            |
| CIS     | : | Commonwealth of Independent States             |
| CSTO    | : | Collective Security Treaty Organization        |
| CTR     | : | Cooperative Threat Reduction                   |
| EPAA    | : | European Phased Adaptive Approach              |
| EurAsEc | : | Eurasian Economic Union                        |
| FSA     | : | Free Syrian Army                               |
| GUUAM   | : | Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Moldova |
| JEF     | : | Joint Expeditionary Force                      |
| MAD     | : | Mutually Assured Destruction                   |
| MAS     | : | Mutually Assured Stability                     |
| NATO    | : | North Atlantic Treaty Organization             |
| NCTC    | : | National Counter-Terrorism Center              |
| NPT     | : | Non-Proliferation Treat                        |



|        |   |   |
|--------|---|---|
| NRF    | : | NATO Response Force                                     |
| PAA    | : | Phased Adaptive Approach                                |
| PCA    | : | Partnership and Cooperation Agreements                  |
| PfP    | : | Partnership for Peace                                   |
| RAP    | : | NATO's Readiness Action Plan                            |
| PfP    | : | Partnership for Peace                                   |
| PJC    | : | Permanent Joint Council, NATO                           |
| SACEUR | : | Supreme Allied Council Europe                           |
| SALT   | : | Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty                        |
| SCG    | : | Syria Contact Group                                     |
| START  | : | Strategic Talks for Arms Reduction Treaty               |
| SOC    | : | Syrian Opposition Council                               |
| SORT   | : | Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty                    |
| TCG    | : | Trilateral Contact Group of Ukraine, Russia and<br>OSCE |
| USSR   | : | Union of Socialist Soviet Countries                     |

## **GEOGRAPHICAL DEFINITIONS**

The borders of all countries are geopolitical terms or names, because borders are neither natural nor neutral. Contemporarily and historically they have served the purposes of the great players at different times, because great powers have been and are capable of imposing maps on societies, for political, military and material purposes, as well as for tailoring their spheres of influence. CIS refers to the former Soviet states, known also as Central Asia. The current Middle East is the geopolitical product of the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1918, the result of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. NATO was created as a political-military institution to defend the Western Europe from any Soviet aggression, and Warsaw Pact was established as a USSR's response to NATO's creation, to lead the bloc of the socialist countries. In the post-Cold War the former Warsaw Pact members became NATO members.

Both borders of countries and borders of institutions contain geographical as well as geopolitical context to their definitions. Especially given the fact that all countries have been established out of war or self-determination struggle, the geographical definition of every country has been through changes. Also noteworthy is the fact that no country is homogeneous, whether in terms of religion, race or ethnicities, as such at different points of time these divisions tend to go for self-determination, a principle recognized by the international law. Therefore, the geographical and geopolitical context of every country's borders has varied during the different stages of individual statehood.

## RUSSIA

In the 14th century Ivan III defeated the Mongolians and established a Russian ethnic state which established the roots of modern Russia.<sup>1</sup> Ivan III's son continued to expand the Russian state into Kazan, Astrakhan through the “gathering of the Russian lands” and created a multi-ethnic Russian empire with Orthodox Christianity as the central religion.<sup>2</sup>

The post-Cold War Russia is the largest country in the world, with a population of around 142-148 million people, the central religion is Orthodox Christianity. Geographically it is located between the Baltic Sea in west, the Arctic Ocean in north, Black Sea and Caucasus in the south, by land, it borders Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and China. It is a multi-ethnic country composed of Russians, Tatars, Siberians, Caucasians, and Chechnyans. Geographically Russia lies between the European continent, the Arctic, and Central-East Asian continent.



Map 1.1: Russia <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dmitry Trenin, “Russia’s Sphere of Interests, not Influence”, The Washington Quarterly, (32: 4), 2009, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Russia and the Neighbouring Countries Outline Map”, <http://freecoloringpages.co.uk/?q=neighbouring+countries>

## UKRAINE



**Map 1.2: Ukraine** <sup>4</sup>

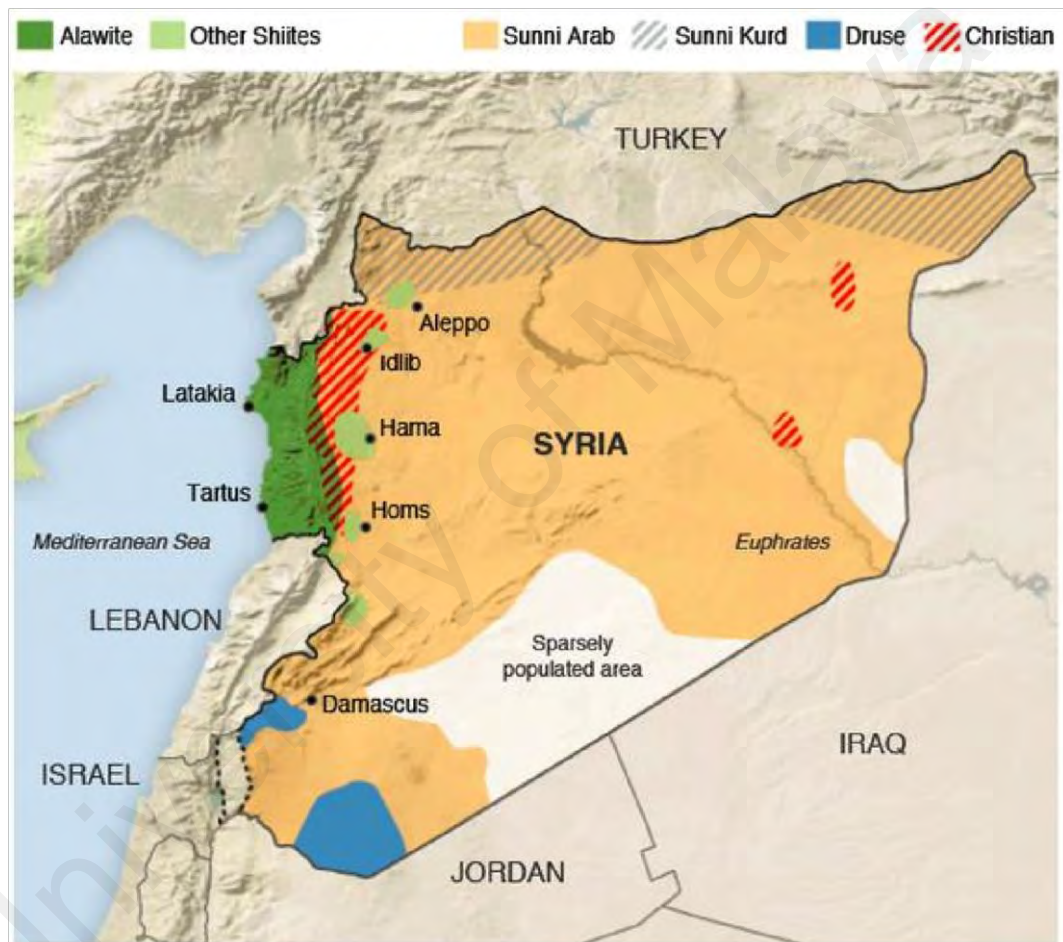
The geographical definition of every country is connected with the geopolitical context as well, and this is true in the case of Ukraine. Historically, Ukraine was part of the Habsburg Empire, the Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the USSR. *‘Ukraina’*<sup>2</sup> means borderland, and the country has been an important borderland between the Russian and the Western empires. From 1793 to 1795, it became part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, until the Russian Revolution in 1917. From 1918 to 1940, Ukraine was under Poland’s rule. Crimea was given to Ukraine in 1954, and subsequently annexed by Russia sixty years later, in 2014. Michael Rywkin describes Ukraine as a country of confusing identity.<sup>5</sup> To refer to the scope of this study, during the Cold War Ukraine was part of the Union of Socialist Soviet States (USSR). Whereas the current Ukraine is a precipitation of the USSR’s dissolution. Throughout the post-Cold War Ukraine has its long border of 220 km with Russia, and neighbouring Poland on the European side.

<sup>4</sup>“Some basic statistical facts about Ukraine”, available at <http://www.agency-exclusive.com/pages/ukraine.php>.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Rywkin, “Ukraine: between Russia and the West” *American Foreign Policy Interests*, (36: 2), 2014, p. 119.

## SYRIA

Geographically, Syria is located in the Middle East, bordering Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel and the Mediterranean Sea. The current Syrian borders originated from the French–British Sykes–Picot Agreement in 1918 to reshape the borders in the Middle East. It became independent in 1946, and maintained its borders until 2011, when Syria became part of the Arab uprising. Before the Syrian uprising, it had a population of 25 million.



Map 1.3: Syria <sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> William R. Polk, "Understanding Syria: From Pre-Civil War to Post-Assad", December 10, 2013, The Atlantic, available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/12/understanding-syria-frompre-civil-war-to-post-assad/281989/>.



## UNITED STATES

US gained its independence as a country in 1776, when thirteen colonies decided unanimously to split from the British colony, and create a federal union called the United States. Since its creation until today, its political system has been a representative democracy and a laissez faire economy. It borders Canada and Mexico, and territorial waters with Russia. As of 2012, it has a population of almost 312 million people.



Map 1.4: U.S.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "US States Map with Capitals," available at <http://www.mapsofworld.com/usa/usa-state-and-capital-map.html>.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This thesis is an assessment of the post-Cold War US-Russian pursuit for spheres of influence. The contest for spheres-of-influence has historically defined the nature of every great power relationship and the international system has not been capable of managing or keeping it under control. This study describes and examines concretely the sphere-of-influence scenario in the US-Russian bilateral relations. Although different circumstances and conditions have shaped this bilateral affair, both the US and Russia have tried to translate their political, ideological, economic and military capabilities into building reliable forces, allies and even coalitions of different purposes throughout the Cold War and post-Cold War. Despite the numerous attempts since the end of communism in 1990, to establish an economic interdependence between the Western economic institutions and Russia with the approval of the US, the line between economic interdependence and political independence in global affairs and in their own spheres of influence has remained murky. Therefore this study argues that in the post-Cold War era, the main foreign policy missions of both US and Russia continued to be the sphere-of-influence and deterrence, just like during the Cold War.

While in an interdisciplinary history-international relations study such as this one, every concept, approach, and perspective includes all the same elements intertwined together, such as peace, security, defense, legitimacy, war, power, influence, foreign policy, defense policy, national interests, etc, every narrative depends on the particular element and context being examined and emphasized, and which one is emphasized most and in what sense. Therefore while deterrence, peace, power, conflict, sphere of influence, etc have been extensively written about by experts, when writing about each of these elements on its own, each is closely woven and structured by foreign policy makers with the other important international relations' elements as well. Therefore as the focus of

this study stands on the US-Russian continuity for pursuit of spheres of influence even in the post-Cold War, it is an analysis that is built upon evidences of war, conflict, coercions, diplomatic interference and clandestine political activities, but these elements are used to prove the pursuit for sphere of influence. This explanation is needed to clarify because many questions may arise through the reading of this study, but the evidences chosen in this study are only intended to strengthen the substance of the central argument - the existence of sphere of influence in the US-Russian relations- and not to elaborate on the deterrence or power or strategic stability/superiority per se. The elaboration of deterrence, foreign policy, defense policy, and nuclear stability or instability, the preparations for postures of war, etc are steps through which the US and Russia have tried to communicate a resolve to each other to defend their relevant spheres of influence.

Whether US-USSR or US-Russia, each era has been accompanied with visible actions of troops and weapon deployments, technological development of conventional and non-conventional weapons, and different doctrines to justify the interventionary activities as tools of conveying a credible response to each other's actions. This study argues that the relevance of such evidence in the US-Russian relations prove that they are used to build and structure a sphere-of-influence. The US has constantly pursued all these elements to maintain the united Western Hemisphere and its leadership position within it. And Russia has pursued the same approach too towards the CIS. Just like every international strategy and doctrine, (deterrence, containment, interference, not-interference, etc) sphere of influence too has been a mixture of negative and positive techniques of influence projection. To what extent can it contribute to the international stability or instability, it all depends upon the equilibrium of the American and Russian interests and upon the mechanism for compromise between these two countries.

In this study, the US-Russian pursuit for spheres of influence has been measured versus another crucial concept of this study, *mutually assured security*, because in the US-



Russian relations sometimes it has been one, sometimes the other, and seldom a balance between these two concepts. Both these countries have formulated these two concepts in response to one another's strength and assertiveness in the international affairs, either geographically or institutionally. Furthermore, both *sphere-of-influence* and *mutually assured security* are closely connected with influence projection. In the case of mutually assured security it means a rational and reciprocal influence projection. In the case of sphere-of-influence it means ambitious and assertive influence projection. In addition, both these concepts come from power and produce power, whether in the US-Russian bilateral relations, or in any other major powers' relations. Institutional influence takes place in the multilateral form, through a treaty, alliance, coalition, or institution that joins together a number of countries that are vital or important to carry out a certain mission, ideology, economic gains or collective security and defense. The institutional influence is built upon mutual benefit and agreement by all the parties that agree to become members, it also includes a set of norms and procedures that pertain to the identity of the country that leads the institution. Geographic influence refers to different allying countries in different parts of the world, basically in the bilateral form.

Both the US and Russia have accorded their influence projection to the leadership role they want to play in world affairs, specifically in their relevant zones of influence- US in the Western Hemisphere and Russia in CIS, and its remaining allies. Their predominant means of wielding influence have become the strong military postures sustained by different economic packages of oil and arms trade, and their independent assertiveness and initiatives as far as their spheres of influence are concerned. As a whole, it has not been possible to have well-coordinated positions in one issue and confrontational positions in another issue, in the US-Russian relations. Academics and policy makers are trying for mechanisms that can adjust the degree of cooperation and confrontation, but as this study argues, such mechanism can only be effectively and successfully implemented

if the degree and feeling of vulnerability to each other is kept rational. The success of such mechanism as negotiated by diplomats, policy makers and experts is not about building the trust, it is about the level of the vulnerability. And sphere of influence is very crucial to protect the major powers from feeling vulnerable to each other.

Through the data analysis, this study observed that it is the great powers' designs for sphere of influence that has changed the structure of the international system historically, as opposed to the claim of the institutionalists, realists, and liberals that it is the anarchic international system that puts pressure on the states to establish their position and strength within the system. The claim that the international anarchy imposes pressure is true for the secondary powers and weak states, but not for the level of great powers and ambitious countries. International anarchy is always led by the major poles in the system. Whether multipolarity, bipolarity or unipolarity, it only changed the shapes of great powers' orbits of influence, but their pursuit for influence remains a constant. To prove the pursuit for spheres of influence by the US and Russia in the post-Cold War, a part of this study elaborates on the US-USSR spheres of influence, and then the central time frame of this study- post-Cold War US Russian pursuit for spheres of influence which is analysed through three particular case studies.

The first one focuses on the causes and consequences of NATO's enlargement policy and its open-door approach towards the CIS area; the second case study is about the significance of the pro-Western Ukrainian revolution in 2013-until the time of this writing; and the third one refers to the significance of the Syrian crisis from March 2011 until the time of this writing. The strategic landscape of the US-Russian relations is broad, but each of these three events represents significant momentum for the US-Russian relations, and clearly manifests the US-Russian pursuit and contest for the spheres of influence. The sphere of influence is usually a mixture of positive and negative techniques, but to the major powers it is a national interest and if it is harmonious between

the major powers, then there can be a considerable degree of stability in the international system.

This study determines that it is impossible to establish compatibility of interests between the US and Russia in the particular case studies chosen in this research. Certainly, the whole spectrum of the US-Russian relations is not about these three issues only, but since the major powers' pursuit for influence has become clearer and stronger, then these three case studies are the most relevant evidences, because they have become three different situations where each US and Russia want to win rather than a compromise that does not suit its sphere of influence perspective. Despite the common efforts for economic interdependence, common counterterrorism initiatives and assessments, it has been impossible to coordinate the mutually assured security with an independently-led orbit of influence.

In analysing NATO as a case study, this study maintains that during the Cold War, both NATO and the Warsaw Pact represented a sphere-of influence on its own. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and USSR at the end of the Cold War meant the emergence of democracy as the global ideology, and US' led NATO as the central institution of post-Cold War collective security and defense. As NATO continued to expand its fronts further into Central East Europe and became more global in its character and missions, Russia strongly disagreed with every enlargement wave of NATO. The vacuum zone between East and West in Europe became fully integrated into the Western bloc, and Russia focused on strengthening its dominance over the former Soviet Union zone. Nevertheless, it was the security-economic package introduced by NATO and the EU to Ukraine and even Georgia that fundamentally encouraged Russia's determination for a more independent behaviour as far as its national interests and sphere of influence are concerned. Sphere of influence grows and protects the status of great powers and all major powers are equally concerned with it. The confrontational posture created by the

three case studies chosen in this research clearly illustrate that between the US and Russia, each has conveyed to the other the message of not meddling either in the Western Hemisphere affairs or in the CIS affairs.

In the case of NATO's enlargement and open-door policy towards CIS direction, it is about a US-Russian compromise or deterrence; in the case of the Syrian crisis it is a matter of conquest, either the regime defeats the opposition and ISIS or the regime gets overthrown, which basically gets translated into a victory for the coalition that supports the regime or the coalition that supports the opposition; in the case of Ukraine it is submission and deterrence, either an internal fragmentation between the eastern and the western part of the country, or a full submission towards Western or Russian side. In the Ukrainian and the Syrian crisis, the conflicting domestic parties have allowed the favourable international parties (US and Russia) to interfere for the pacific settlement of the situation that is going on. Regarding the US and Russia, on one side each refuses interference in the affairs of sovereign countries, also each has granted recognition and legitimacy to the favourable domestic side on the ground. Additionally, the warring domestic parties in Ukraine and Syria refuse to recognize each other as legitimate. The United Nations and the Security Council as the venues where countries undergoing a conflict should submit their case or differences, the resolutions of this international organization have been usually bypassed or ignored by one of the main powers. While a deeper description and analysis of the NATO's approach towards CIS, the Ukrainian crisis and the Syrian crisis is being analysed in chapters 4, 5 & 6, it is necessary to introduce these three case studies briefly in this introduction.

Firstly, the origins of NATO come from the Treaty of Washington signed in 1949, which was an agreement between the US and Western European countries to stand as a united front against the provocations and aggressions of the USSR. A series of political and military manoeuvres that took place between the US and USSR in the Germany's and

Berlin's arena convinced US and the Western Allies that the creation of NATO as a Western Hemisphere's collective defense and collective security organization, and the admission of the Federal Republic of Germany into NATO in 1954 would be the right steps. In return, immediately in 1955, the Soviet Union established the Warsaw Pact as an alliance of the Eastern European socialist countries, a form of USSR's collective security and defense of the Eastern camp in Europe. This study holds that these two international institutions led by the US and USSR were the main spheres of influence during their Cold War adversarial relations.

The end of communism, the dissolution of the USSR and the united Germany within NATO marked the end of the two superpowers' adversarial relations and the start of a new cooperational bilateral affair. Democracy advancement as the global ideology and the survivability of NATO were pursued as the two-prong US-Western post-Cold War global strategy, because the architecture of the European security and of the global security continued to be as significant for the US as during the Cold War. Furthermore the concerns that the Central Eastern European countries would not be capable of coping with the post-communist transitions and that tensions among the European countries could be triggered again, led both the US and Western Europe to agree with NATO's expansion throughout the European continent.

Since Europe has always been an important arena for both US and Russian geopolitics and strength during and after the Cold War, Russia signaled its dissatisfactions with every round of NATO's expansion. Despite a number of NATO-Russia forums and negotiations held to assure Russia that it is not NATO's intention to expand at the expense of Russia's vital interests, such level of trust and transparency was never built between these two fronts. NATO as a US-led institution for the collective defense and collective security of the Western Hemisphere could agree to accept Russia only as a member not as a peer. Neither Russia, nor France, nor any of the ambitious European powers was allowed to be

an equal to US in the decision planning and making. On the contrary, Russia insisted on the equality in decision making and in the concert of post-Cold War major powers.

Whatever the ebbs and flows of the Russia-NATO relations, an inclusion of the former Soviet republics was proclaimed by the subsequent Russian administrations as an option off the table, a non-negotiable geopolitical concession. NATO was caught between the will to expand into CIS as a region of independent countries in order to deter and contain Russia in the future, and a cautious approach which does not risk the relationship with Russia or renouncing it as an open-door policy for CIS. The Ukrainian 2013 revolution already put Russia and the whole Western front in a confrontational posture, an issue being discussed in depth in chapter 5.

An EU's Eastern Partnership<sup>1</sup> was offered to six countries of the CIS, and Ukraine became the first country to adopt the Eastern Partnership, an attractive package to prepare Ukraine and make it fit for the Euro-Atlantic structures, but also a package that pulls Ukraine away from Russia's CIS economic-security integrationist structures. The Ukrainian preparation for the EU and NATO membership represents a vital threat to Russia's status in CIS because it fragments Russia's central position in this region. As Ukraine took a turn towards the Western orientation, there was a growing sense of vulnerability for Russia, in terms of its posture in CIS and in terms of the security. Therefore as Russia felt compelled to prevent such vulnerability through all the possible countermeasures, a critical post-Cold War US-Russia and Russia-West confrontational postures started to take place. In terms of sphere of influence, Ukraine is more critical to Russia than to the West because it shares a long border with Russia, it is the second largest country in CIS and Europe, and it has the goal of attracting the rest of the anti-Russia

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<sup>1</sup> EU Eastern Partnership was a process initially proposed by Poland to offer membership to the CIS countries, then it was discussed at the level of the EU policy makers, who gradually approved and started to implement the program. Basically Eastern Partnership was and still is intended to orient the CIS countries toward EU integration and prepare their economies and their state structures suitable for EU.

coalition, (i.e., Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldavia-the GUUAM countries).

The aftermath of the Ukraine's Western orientation brought Russia's annexation of Crimea and full control over the Sevastopol port, which provides the Russian fleets with access into the Black Sea. As the EU and NATO intend to advance into the CIS, they have the potential to curtail the Russian geopolitical significance, strength, and power in this region. Furthermore, the US' support for the interim government during the recent Ukrainian Revolution and its determination not to let Ukraine fall into Russia's sphere of influence are among the many evidences that the US and Russia are contesting each other through proxies for spheres of influence.

The Syrian crisis which started in 2011 is another evidence that manifests, proves and puts into test the US-Russian cooperation or contest for influence projection over this country. How the crisis started and evolved since 2011 until the time of this writing is deeply described and examined in chapter 6. It went through stages of civil war between the government and the opposition, followed by insurgency-counterinsurgency, sectarianism, radicalism, and ISIS, each of these stages still ongoing for five years, putting in risk the existence of Syria and probably the Middle East region as it has been known until today. In the Syrian case study, the US' support for the opposition and Russia's support for the Syrian regime is another evidence of the US-Russian contest for influence through proxies. The regional and international complications unfolded by the Syrian five-years situation have turned the Syrian arena into a strategic commitment for any player involved in this crisis, both in terms of the fight against terrorism and in terms of whose client state is the transitional Syria going to be. Whatever the outcome of the crisis, the new transitional Syrian government is going to be either a US ally or a Russian ally.

Throughout the global war against terrorism since September 2001, Russia was reluctant to get involved with an active and assertive political-military foothold in the

Middle Eastern affairs. This is also related to the fact that strengthening the economy and the military posture, and its position in the European security vis-à-vis NATO and EU as peers, these were Russia's primary goals since the end of the Cold War. This study holds that Russia has been trying to substitute its lack of institutional influence with geographic influence through strategic and tactical commitments in the world affairs.

This study does not aim to predict, but to describe and analyse. Furthermore, neither the flow of the international affairs nor the major powers' game for influence projection can be predicted with accuracy. But the evidence chosen and examined in this study clearly proves the purpose of this study- the persistence of sphere of influence approach in the foreign policies of both US and Russia.

Due to a series of dissatisfactions with the Western front Russia feels compelled and determined not to lose any of the assets of influence it is left with, whether Crimea which hosts the Black Sea Russian fleet in the Sevastopol port; the integrationist structures in the CIS; the dependency of other countries on the Russian oil and gas reserves; the friendly Syrian regime and Tartus port in Syria, along with other crucial bilateral affairs and strategic involvement in the cases of North Korean and Iranian nuclear programs; also strengthening different bilateral relations with the EU countries to reverse the EU decision of sanctions against Russia, and to improve Russia-European relations.

Both the US and Russia have employed different strategies and manoeuvres to establish influence through alignments. This thesis argues that the US has focused on establishing institutional influence by means of crucial institutions that set the rules and laws of world politics, such as NATO, the EU, UN, different arms control treaties, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. Meanwhile Russia's course of building its influence in the post-Cold War has focused on geographic influence, different loyal proxies in any region, and wherever there has been a vacuum of power or a possibility.



The focus of this thesis is built on the point that, during the Cold War (1945-1990) and post-Cold War (1990-2016), despite numerous attempts to establish common assessments of common problems and crises, the pursuit for sphere of influence has prevailed. The three cases discussed herein are sufficient evidences to draw such an opinion, because, in these three issues, Russia is the US' main geopolitical competitor, and both have designated the other as the 'adversary'. At the centre of this geopolitical game stands the pursuit for influence, and this causes shifts in the world order and in the structure of the international system because it creates shifts in the coalitions of states.

This thesis argues that the great powers' rise and assertiveness come at the expense of each other's interests and at the expense of the much propagated principle of non-interference in other states' internal affairs. On one hand, the US-led Western influence in security and economic terms is perceived as more credible than Russia's political, military and economic influence; on the other hand it is the will of the people to determine the foreign policy of a country. In the case of Ukraine, it is the will of the masses to join the EU and NATO; however, Ukraine is internally divided over this issue. Western Ukraine prefers Euro-Atlantic structures whereas, the eastern Ukraine prefers Russia's alliance. But in the post-Cold War era, Ukraine is more crucial to Russia's than to the US' influence. Russia is aware that Europe as a whole belongs to EU and NATO and has tried to maintain a cooperative tone of the bilateral relationship throughout the various stages, but the CIS represents the final frontier of Russia's great power status in the post-Cold War great power concert. For this reason, the current Russian administration cannot accommodate the EU's and NATO's expansion at the price of such vital interests. To balance the loss of influence throughout Europe, Russia is countering with a closer alliance with China, and other tactical commitments in the world. Is Russia a geopolitical threat? Is Russia trying to carve out an Eastern policy or a non-Western policy? It all depends on whether or not Russia's sphere of influence in the CIS is acknowledged.

A mutually assured security with each other is always the preferred US-Russian policy. To achieve this requires transparency, trust and closer ties at the foreign-policy level between the two countries. Yet the pursuit for influence in various regions and countries causes irreconcilable differences in strategic perspectives. The US remains determined to maintain an unchallenged US-led Western Hemisphere dominated world order, a hegemon of Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific security and economics. On the other side, Russia wants partnership with the Western front and acknowledgment of CIS as Russia's zone of influence.

The war on terrorism was the only front that unified the interests of these two countries. Yet, the post-September/11 US-led global war on terror caused a limitation of the Russian sphere of allies in both Central Asia and the Middle East. In the global war on terror era, an enhanced American strategic presence in Central Asia and Middle East became unavoidable. With the loss of its allies through the global war on terror and the uprisings in the Middle East, Russia has decided to establish its strategic presence wherever the opportunity presents itself. This has been clearly manifested in Russia's alignments with Iran, Syria, and Egypt, as well as Crimea's annexation in Ukraine; and the recent moral, military and economic support for the pro-Russian eastern Ukraine provinces.

Both the US and Russia are nuclear powers and important players in the international system. They want to avoid direct and large-scale confrontation, because the opposition of one can potentially thwart the intervention of the other in any issue. Each refuses to limit its strength and influence in areas where it has clear superiority, such as in the CIS for Russia, in the Middle East for the US, and the acceptance of NATO and EU by Central Eastern Europe.

Since complete cooperation remains impossible, at least selective pragmatism is the preferred course by the US and Russia toward each other. American administrations have focused on confidence-building measures to overcome the perception that one's loss

means another's gain, and to establish the mutually assured security point of view that can harmonize the relations between the US and Russia. Through such an approach these two countries can figure out common assessments and responses for shared challenges and threats. Because both the US and Russia aim for influence projection in every region and wherever there is a vacuum in international affairs, then partnership or *mutually assured security* in the three events discussed in this study remain impossible. The pursuit of influence makes it impossible to accommodate the other's concerns without sacrificing one's own interests and influence.

The quality of this bilateral affair matters to international relations because it strengthens either hegemony or multipolarity. When it is a cooperative relationship, the US hegemony prevails. When it is a contentious relationship, then there is contention between pro-Russia and pro-US allies, a condition that leads to multipolarity. Contention for influence at vital overlapping areas, like NATO, Syria and Ukraine currently, even pushes Russia and China closer together. Although the US and Russia prefer cooperation to confrontation, yet the context of their foreign policy objectives revolves around the pursuit for influence, which greatly reduces the space for cooperation. Russia is trying to protect its current and future status as a great power, which in its eyes has been threatened by the EU's and NATO's enlargement policies. This is the reason why Russia insists on the US non-interference in the CIS and the remaining Russian geopolitical assets in the world. From the US' perspective, the Russian assertiveness disturbs the current world order into Western and non-Western systems, thereby risking the whole post-Cold War world order.

A 'strategic partnership' and mutually assured security remain impossible, not because of the Cold War or post-Cold War habits, but because of the great powers' policies of deterrence and influence projection, regardless of the structure of the international system. As the international system puts pressure on the states, ambitious powers like the

US and Russia want to strengthen and expand their areas of influence, while denying the same to their rivals. The action-reaction trajectory produced by this clash of ambitions creates different coalitions and political alignments. It gradually creates shifts in the structure of the international system. The foreign policies of the main players affect the structure of the international system and its recurrences. In the game of great powers, a reduction of one's sphere of influence means a geopolitical catastrophe, therefore, it remains an impossible geopolitical concession. The issues discussed in this study—namely, the Syrian crisis, the Ukrainian revolution, and NATO's expansion towards CIS—represent the clearest proof that the US-Russian pursuit for spheres of influence continues.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

This study examines the post-Cold War US-Russian relations vis-a-vis the sphere of influence prism. The contemporary relationship is characterized by growing tensions between the two countries due to conflict of interests in some areas of influence rather than lack of will to be partners. A constant theme of this relationship is that, it has never been about a direct confrontation, but disagreements and confrontations regarding different regional policies, because both want to manifest assertiveness and active engagement in global affairs, and to maintain the current posture: the American hegemony and the Russian regional power. However, the American projection for global hegemony has clashed with Russia's aim for regional hegemony. The pursuit for spheres of influence at some point replaces the previous partnership-cooperation with rivalry, and the disagreements with confrontation. To prove and to illustrate the sphere of influence rivalry between these two countries, three case studies have been chosen, namely, the issue of NATO's expansion, the Syrian crisis in 2011, and the Ukrainian Revolution in 2013.

These events clearly highlight that the sphere of influence did not end with the Cold War. As these two powers continue to compete for influence projection in areas vital to their current posture, wherever they present themselves, more often than not, a disagreement between them escalates into a level of crisis. NATO's expansion, and the Ukrainian and Syrian crises are not a direct threat to either the US or Russia per se, but they represent a threat to the perimeters of influence for each of these two players.

Furthermore this study argues that sphere of influence policy has been a constant of the great powers' geopolitics, a constant feature of international relations, and a constant ingredient of the bilateral US-Russian relations. The three case studies examined herein prove that both the US and Russia have contributed substantially to the continuity of sphere of influence approach.

Firstly, within this bilateral affair, during and after the Cold War, the mutually assured security has been parallel with the sphere of influence. Secondly, the US and Russia are both among the central poles of international affairs, as such, they refuse to share leadership in the area of influence that belongs strictly to one or the other. The contemporary Russia's assertiveness means a new balance of power and a gradual shift of the world order from unipolarity to multipolarity. The US' assertiveness seeks an absolute security with no peers in any region of the world, (neither Russia nor China) together with preventing any formation of coalition of states that might favour the US' adversaries or imbalance the US hegemony. Russia as a great power seeks to maintain its geopolitical assets, and the US as the hegemon seeks to expand its geopolitical assets.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The central research questions of this study are as follows:

1. How did the US-Russian relationship and sphere of influence policy evolve from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era?

2. How does the American and Russian 'contest for influence' affect the US-Russian bilateral relationship in the post-Cold War?
3. What are the reasons behind Russia's assertive foreign policy?
4. Did the contest for spheres of influence prevail over the mutually assured security in the US-Russian relations, or did the mutually assured security prevail over the contest for influence?

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The following are the main objectives of this study:

- 1) Firstly, this thesis traces the continuity of the sphere of influence in the US-Russian relations from Cold War to the post-Cold War era, analysing the parallel structures of the Cold War spheres of influence, NATO and Warsaw Pact.
- 2) Secondly, this study examines the significance of the continuity for spheres of influence on the US-Russian bilateral relations. Understandably, one's defensive measures are perceived as offensive by the other; one's advances in terms of influence projections are perceived as anti- the other, as such making it impossible for the US and Russia to coordinate their geopolitical visions regarding NATO's expansion and, the Ukrainian and Syrian crises.
- 3) Thirdly, the significance and rationale of Russian assertiveness, as well as the consequences for Russia's relationship with the US are examined, followed by the fourth objective in addressing the balance between mutually assured security and the contest for spheres of influence.
- 4) The last core objective is to highlight the degree of mutually assured security and the contest for influence, which one has prevailed in the bilateral US-Russian relations during the time frame of this study.

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

This study adopts a historical-analytical methodology to examine and explain a concept that has a long historical and intellectual tradition, which is also a very complex process and structure -sphere-of-influence, the pursuit and the contest for it in the contemporary US-Russian relations. The historical-analytical technique involves data collection and data analysis to explain the research questions and objectives in order to strengthen the central argument of this study. Among the differing representations of the sphere-of-influence concept drawn from the data collection, some works undermine and others strengthen the place of this concept in the contemporary US-Russian relations. To overcome this problem, this study built upon the trends of thoughts and tactics of the US and Russia, manifested in the primary and secondary sources, particularly of special importance, the speeches and transcripts of the leaders from different American and Russian administrations through different decades of the timeframe included in this study- Cold War and post-Cold War. The speeches, interviews and transcripts of the US and Russian leaders/policymakers and scholars from the Cold War to the post-Cold War, including the leaders of the specific case studies included in this assessment, served as an important reliable tool to prove the relevance and the validity of the sphere-of-influence concept in the US-Russian foreign policies.

Through the data analysis it was noticed that both US and USSR during the Cold War equated their position as superpowers with the national interests. This trend is being carried out in the post-Cold War as well, a world order in which, to US being a global hegemon is a national interest, and to Russia being a regional and great power also means a national interest. Such position, as a global power, superpower, or regional power comes from and is sustained through a geographic or institutional influence projection. To map out a conceptually sophisticated sphere-of-influence perspective, this study highlights sphere-of-influence in general on its own, and a sphere-of-influence of the specifically

US-Russian bilateral relations. Therefore, the analytical insights of this research methodology rest upon the primary sources such as speeches, transcripts and interviews through continuous administrations of the countries being examined in this study, within the time frame of Cold War-post-Cold War, the current time of this writing.

To make the discussion and findings of this study as accurately and reliable as possible, there has been an extensive use of primary and secondary sources. While secondary sources have been used extensively, plenty of them are available in the UM library, digitized archival material from the online NATO, UK, US and Russian repositories have been used as well, in order to support the reliability and objectivity of this research. A serious problem encountered while conducting this study is that no data on its own could offer an unbiased information or research because the news, reports, papers, statements and transcripts from the US and Russian side, or from the regime and the rebels' side often contradicted each other, or was intentionally to denounce the other side. As a result, the information provided has been often biased and ambiguous. To overcome this barrier, this study focuses on the trend of the evidence, policy and thought provided from the historical data as well as contemporary data, in order to construct a more reliable picture. It is important to highlight that the views of the analysts and academics differ from those of the policy makers participating in the negotiations and decision-making process. Basically, the academics and analysts are more dovish and cautious in their suggestions about the nature of the US-Russian influence projection and how these two countries should respond to each other's tactics or movements that are perceived as threatening. Whereas the policy makers and leaders are more hawkish and aggressive in designing and engineering the long-term geopolitical projects, and this applies to both America and Russia.

The information on the Cold War era, NATO-Warsaw Pact spheres of influence, comes from the digitized archives, books, academic journals, and transcripts. The



information about the NATO in the post-Cold War era also comes from the digitized NATO archives, academic journals, speeches, opinions, and interviews expressed from the main policy makers driving the sphere of influence direction and policy, on both sides, (i.e., the US and Russia). Meanwhile the information about the Ukrainian and Syrian crises relies mostly on primary sources, such as speeches, interviews, transcripts of the leaders, and academic journals, because these two events are recent and still unfolding.

In addition to the above mentioned sources of the data analysed for this study, other important primary sources include published papers from well-known Russian think tanks and magazines such as Russia in Global Affairs, Valdai Discussion Club, Russia Direct; and the US think tanks like American Enterprise Institute, German Marshall Fund of the United States, the Forum of Atlantic Council, Foreign Policy Research, and congressional reports, and records/transcripts of conferences. The neutral views come from the individual scholars who try to take into account the strategic interests of both players, the US and Russia. The data being gathered from all these directions, has been changeable through time and analysed from various angles. Nevertheless the data taken as a whole has shed light on the persistent trend of thought about the long-term geopolitical vision for sphere of influence on both these two countries. Understandably, among the data collected, most of the Russian sources are pro-Russian side, whereas the Western and American sources are pro-US' side.

A very useful and substantiated data was collected through books, articles, journals, and op-eds coming from the Valdai Club, Russia Direct, the Carnegie Endowment, the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, the American Enterprise Institute, The Pulse of Middle East, The Middle East Review of International Affairs, The Journal of Strategic Studies, The Journal of Arms Control, Contemporary Security Policy, The Journal of Military Studies, Survival, The Journal of Peace Research, The Christian Science Monitor, The New York Times, The Washington Post, Foreign Policy, Foreign

Affairs, Global Security, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies. The data was selected based on the relevance to this study and it has provided significant varied viewpoints from historical and analytical context, together with different recommendations for the possible future direction of this relationship. The whole data most importantly, assisted this study with better explanatory information to make more sophisticated the core argument of this study- that both US and Russia have been equally concerned and assertive towards sphere-of-influence strategy, that sphere-of-influence remains a historical constant at great powers level of all the times, and international system is unable to manage or control it. The intention of this thesis is to be neither biased nor opinionated, only to provide a clear assessment of the sphere of influence between these two countries in relation to the events discussed here, because they represent the crucial turning points for the post-Cold War US-Russian relations.

## **1.6 The Scope of the Study**

This research is conducted on a topic that is both historical and current, but only certain key events within this time period are analysed. Therefore the scope of this study is narrow and subject to limitations. It intends to put the data of the research into perspective, relevant to the US-Russian spheres of influence in order to prove it and make it easy to understand.

As the time frame of this study varies in accordance with the case studies being chosen to illustrate the central theme of the study, specifically, it ranges from the start of the Cold War in 1947 until the current time of this writing. The NATO case study was chosen because of the significance of NATO in tackling the integration of post-World War II Germany within the alliance, the security of Western Europe, and the extension of that security to Eastern and Central Europe after the Cold War. The European continent was

one of the theatres for a contest of deterrence, containment and influence between the US and Russia.

The Ukrainian crisis is chosen for another case study to elaborate on this topic because geographically Ukraine borders Russia and is located in the CIS region, a region that Russia considers a non-negotiable Russian zone of influence. Ukraine's pro-Western foreign policy orientation leads to Ukraine's being considered for membership in NATO and EU, and consequently, will pull the rest of the anti-Russian coalition, (i.e., GUUAM-Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Moldova) into the Euro-Atlantic structures. Eventually these CIS alignments will balance Russia's role as a regional power.

Syria is experiencing another important conflict with international dimensions, in which the American and Russian interests have clashed due to the rivalry for influence over Syria and Middle East, and it is an event that has relevance to this study. The Syrian regime is the only Russian ally in the Middle East and as Russia strengthens its assertiveness, it has become more determined to defend its remaining zones and assets of influence in Europe, the Middle East, and anywhere else.

Finally, the scope of this study is to prove that both the US and Russia continue to pursue influence for as far as it can possibly reach. At the time of this writing the Ukrainian Revolution has become an event that has triggered Russia's assertiveness to carve out its influence institutionally and geographically like no other event before. Consequently, both Russia and the US have designated each other as 'the adversary' and 'the geopolitical foe', as such both these countries keep flexing their political-military muscles against each other.

## **1.7 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual development of this study stands between sphere of influence and mutually assured security strands of thoughts and strategies in the US-Russian relations.

This study depicts sphere of influence as a consistent central feature of the US-Russian relations dominated by a posture of war-readiness, war, alliances, cooperation and obstacles to cooperation. Sphere of influence as a strategic foreign policy approach has evolved through the history of great powers' relations, because great powers have improved the mechanisms of establishing equilibrium, harmony or understanding with each other. The central aim for better mechanisms of cooperation was no more world war, no more direct warfare between great powers. Because the other types of wars, conflicts and interventions have never ceased. Since the end of WWII, only the major powers' war and the possibility for war among them has been kept under control through different institutional cooperation, but the other forms of violent struggles have not ended. Historically, it has been the great powers' sphere of influence policy that has shaped and changed the political map of the world. From the Peloponnesian wars, to the Greeks and Babylonians, the Romans, the treaty of Versailles when states started to be organized as political entities, to the Concert of Europe in 18<sup>th</sup> century, the World Wars I and II, Cold War, and the post-Cold War, the political map of the world has been shaped and changed due to the great powers' sphere of influence designs.

Among the diverse opinions in the contemporary international affairs, the US-Russian relations and sphere of influence, each is a story already narrated to a great extent, but the relation between these two strands of thought in the post-Cold War has not been covered yet conceptually. There has been an extensive examination of this bilateral affair in terms of security, military postures, their engagements in international affairs, and the different ideologies they preach (communism-capitalism or democracy-authoritarian). In terms of sphere of influence, both are concerned with the role they want to accord to itself in the regional securities of Europe, Middle East, Asia, Africa, Western and non-Western Hemispheres. Regarding the concept of mutually assured security, it is an expansion of mutually assured destruction and mutually assured stability into mutually assured

security. For the purpose of this study's the conceptualization the sphere-of-influence is being analysed versus the mutually assured security, for both these concepts at the core are political, one is related to deterrence and containment, the other relates to cooperation and dialogue.

A sphere of influence is established through economic, security, threat, defeating a threat, etc, and a mutually assured stability or destruction which means a condition of nuclear and conventional parity, at the core are projects with political goals. In the US-Russian relations these two concepts represent the political posture each wants to hold in the international arena and in the bilateral relations with each other. Mutually assured security framework intends to harmonize or coexist the different US-Russian strategies and political goals in international politics and their incompatible interests. Regarding the convergence of these two central concepts in the US-Russian relations, firstly there is a political gain and political cost for each; secondly it comes a point where each the US and Russia want to make it clear the line between the predominance of the US power and predominance of the Russian power. (China too has the same concern) And NATO's open door policy towards CIS, the Ukrainian revolution and the Syrian crisis represent such lines between the US and Russia. This proves the contest for spheres of influence.

Stanley Hoffman elaborates that the post-Cold War was designed to advance the US interests and its predominance.<sup>2</sup> Suzanna Hast argues in her book and PhD thesis that in the US-Russian relations, Russia is the country trying to expand its sphere of influence over the weaker countries and neighbours.<sup>3</sup> Sergey Karanov argues that the current Western strategy of sanctions, misinformation and preparation of NATO as a military force is a strategy of misunderstandings and miscalculations, which the West needs to understand better how it turned Russia from a previous ally into a foe.<sup>4</sup> Andrei Dobrov is

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley Hoffman, *Primacy or World Order: American Foreign Policy since the Cold War*, (New York: McGraw Hill), 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Suzanna Hast, *Spheres of Influence in International Relations: History, Theory and Politics*, (Routledge), 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Sergey Karaganov, Opinion, "Western delusion triggered this conflict and Russians will not yield," *The Financial Times*, September 14, 2014.

Sergey Karaganov is Honorary Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and Dean of the School

of the opinion that “American politicians are putting together a game strategy whereby there is a country in each region of the world loyal to the U.S. and willing to carry out its policy.”<sup>5</sup> While John J. Mearsheimer argues that all great powers are revisionist imperial powers competing for security, although the US may not want to be deeply committed in European and Asian affairs, it will do so if there is the risk of a potential hegemon emerging either in Central Asia or in Northeast Asia, because US will not permit the emergence of any hegemon in another region that threatens the status of Western Hemisphere and the status of the US’ leadership in it. Christopher Layne argues that although there are other formidable countries in the world, Russia-militarily, Japan, Germany and China economically, only the US possesses the strength in all categories of a great power capability, and geopolitically it is the most preponderant for it is capable of preventing the formation any powerful coalition balancing against it.<sup>6</sup> At great powers’ level the contest for spheres of influence always creates the posture of one’s defense and preventive measures versus the other’s belligerence and offensive measures. Currently, due to the pursuit for sphere of influence, as clearly illustrated in the three case studies chosen in this research, the US and Russia stand exactly at such posture: the strengthening of one’s defensive-preventive measures versus the other side’s provocative-belligerent actions. As spheres of influence mirror the polarization of international system, US agrees neither with balance of power, nor with sphere of influence notion for they will be hostile to each other, nor with the creation of any formidable external alliance, except for the alliances that sustain and strengthen the Western Hemisphere. In this scenario, the academics and policy makers on the Russian side voice concerns with Russia remaining a pole in the international affairs, a concern which triggers an articulation and implementation of all the strategies that come with it. And the case of NATO into CIS,

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of World Economics and World Politics at the National Research University–Higher School of Economics.

<sup>5</sup> Andrei Dobrov, Comment in forum “Russia’s Priorities,” *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy & International Relations*, 52:4, (2006): 31-32.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great powers Will Rise,” *International Security*, 17: 4, (Spring 1993): p.5.

Syria's last client state in Middle East, and the Ukrainian revolution have created a sphere-of-influence kind of incompatibilities to the US-Russian bilateral relations.

The two main operational concepts chosen to argue this thesis are the contest for influence and mutually assured security. Influence refers to the ability of a country to project power culturally, economically, politically and militarily over a country or a set of countries. The leading country projects its own set of rules for a balanced and smooth running of the objective that unites these countries into an institution, alliance, or cooperation. This objective can be a threat, economic interdependence, military cooperation or common security front against an external threat. Regarding the influence projection, the US focused on the bigger picture of world politics by means of economic-military institutions and alliances with the like-minded states and with the most advanced countries. Gradually it led to the creation of an alliance of a superpower with other advanced like-minded allies which set up the rules of the world politics in democratic processes, transitions, market economies, and human rights. The most powerful organizations of international law, military and economic alliances were designed to be led and controlled according to the US's role in international politics. Meanwhile, Russia, in the shape of USSR attempted parallel leadership and dominance of the socialist bloc; Russia in the shape of Russian Federation continued its pursuit for influence through bilateral alliances and some fragile integrations within CIS, rather than through institutions. The Western influence has been more credible and reliable than Russia's influence.

It is not the scope of this study to elaborate on the role of the ideology, deterrence, containment or nuclear parity per se, during and following the Cold War. The main purpose of this study is to argue that the nature of great power relationships, in this case, the US-Russian relations has always revolved around sphere of influence policy, and ideology, economy, deterrence etc., all of these have been tactics and strategies used by

the powers to serve their main purpose: create a sphere of influence, then maintain, strengthen and expand it.

In this study, the concept of mutually assured security in this study is intended as beyond just nuclear deterrence strategy, instead in this study it is meant for an overall political as well as military stability in the US-Russian relations. Furthermore, this study illustrates that mutually assured security goes hand in hand with the rivalry for influence between the US and Russia, by means of both dialogue and deterrence. Neither wants to antagonize the other but nor to curtail its geopolitical interests or sphere of influence. The situations related to NATO's expansion into the CIS, the possibility of Ukraine becoming a NATO member and the Syrian crisis need a mutually assured security in political and strategic terms, in order for these two main powers to reach a compromise. This compromise should be based on the acceptable and unacceptable level of influence in the three events being examined in this study.

After the Ukrainian Revolution, Russia perceived the defense of CIS as its sphere of influence as more crucial than the cooperation and participation in the fight against terrorism. While the US (with its allies in Middle East and Europe) have basically directed their foreign policy towards fighting against terrorism in the Middle East, including expanding the NATO's anti-terrorist operations worldwide. Russia has concentrated on preventing Ukraine from falling into the Euro-Atlantic structures of the EU and NATO, preventing the loss of the Syria as an ally in Middle East, and establishing its influence in world affairs. These three issues mean the line between the area of US dominance and the area of Russia's dominance.

The international system shapes the behaviour of states as well as vice versa. No country or great power can afford to go for it alone in the current international system. Neither the US nor Russia can afford to pursue the contest for zones of influence alone. They pursue it through an array of political alignments and institutions to balance the



rival's interests and advantages. The US contests Russia through Ukraine in the CIS, through NATO's expansion in the eastern zone, and Syrian opposition in Syria. Whereas, Russia tries to maintain its sphere of influence through political alignments wherever possible, and tries to prevent the US from increasing its geopolitical reach at the expense of Russia's interests. The mechanisms that Russia have used to prevent a weakened nuclear deterrence and loss of the CIS sphere include threatening to withdraw from arms control treaties, allying with Iran and the Syrian regime, supporting the former Ukrainian government, annexing Crimea, and struggling to keep the CIS integrated in the Eurasian Economic Community and the Collective Security Treaty Organization through an array of both pressures and concessions.

In this contest for influence, the US and Russia have used their foreign policies to figure out how to influence the international system, maximize security in an anarchic system and expand their influence in the world. Such contest makes it impossible for the US and Russia to coordinate their geopolitical visions in Syria, Ukraine, and NATO's entrance into the CIS. The US aims to expand its global influence to maintain unipolarity. Russia, on the other hand, aims to maintain whatever post-Soviet era influence it is left with—basically, the deterrent nuclear weapons, the CIS zone of influence, the Tartus port in Syria, and the Syrian regime as Russia's last remaining ally in Middle East.

Furthermore, the rivalry for influence between these two countries has significantly minimized the options for the second main concept of this thesis: mutually assured security. The current relationship is characterized by growing tensions and clashes regarding the expansion of Western institutions into what Russia has always considered as Russia's sphere of influence. The expansion of NATO and EU into the CIS represents a threat to Russia's influence in this zone, because it will challenge Russia's Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). And the current Syrian regime represents the last allying country in Middle East.

Prior to the Ukrainian revolution a framework for a mutually assured security between the US and Russia seemed possible. After the revolution, the Russian annexation of Crimea, the concentration of its armed forces towards the eastern Ukrainian border, and pro-Russia armed forces seizing buildings in the provinces of eastern Ukraine, as well as demanding their independence from the current Ukrainian government, these events alerted the Western front as to what are the next Russian ambitions and plans. For this reason, there have been sanctions and no successful negotiations between the Western front and Russia since 2014. Furthermore NATO has currently approved the deployment of four battalions on a rotational basis, in Poland and three Baltic states. Russia also has decided to fortify its borders with Poland and the three Baltics countries with troop deployments. This thesis argues that the recent events demonstrate that contest for influence weighs more than the mutually assured security for both the US and Russia. Even though it has been expressed in terms of security and threat, here the threat is about lines of spheres of influence, not about a provocation for a direct warfare.

Another argument related to the two main concepts of this study is that in the post-Cold War era, the primary powers like US, Russia and China continued pursuing their influence. The US maintained institutional influence through NATO, European Union, International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, etc, while China and Russia focused on geographic influence and few institutions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS. Furthermore, the secondary powers like Britain, France, Germany, Japan, accepted the leadership of the primary powers, but the primary powers accepted neither each other's leadership in any country, issue or institution, nor have they accepted their area of influence to be curtailed by each other. Touching China's or Russia's area of influence triggers confrontational dimension between the powers. However the emphasis of this study deals only with the US-Russian bilateral relations. France also has been the main European country that has demanded for an equal role with

US in the European security. Whereas Britain, Germany, Belgium, Poland have preferred the US' leadership of the European security.

The structures are not defined by all actors that flourish within it, but only by the main powers. The search for influence projection is pursued only by the most capable states which identify the national interests with the interests of their areas of influence. The US has equated global security with the US security, Russia identifies its security with the stability of the CIS, and China has identified these features with the security of the Southeast Asia. The countries in these regions are independent, but when one country from any of these areas is insecure or subject to external intervention, then the primary power perceives it as its responsibility to defend and maintain its ally or client state. Therefore the great powers are very sensitive when it comes to their allies.

The contemporary relationship between the US and Russia is characterized by a growing tension due to their incompatible geopolitical priorities about the regional policies and due to their mutual assertiveness, since both have sought to be actively engaged in the global affairs. This study further suggests that changes in the balance of power, threats or interests, bandwagoning or balancing, occur under two conditions: when there is a risk that force might be used, and when there is a risk that a great power's sphere of influence might be reduced. In the game of the great powers, a reduced sphere of influence means a significant geopolitical loss, therefore it remains an impossible geopolitical concession, as clearly highlighted in the issues discussed in this study, (i.e., Syria, Ukraine, and NATO's expansion towards CIS).

## **1.8 Literature Review**

The literature consulted for this study tackles the US-Russian relations, and the events highlighted here were chosen to assist in the analysis and understanding of this bilateral relationship. To contribute to a better understanding about the sphere of influence

perspective, few worthy works of prominent scholars are included in this section. In addition, the selected literature for this section is divided according to the case studies being examined in this work in order to provide an order of certain important ideas, policies and steps needed to support and strengthen this study: Cold War and post-Cold War era US-Russian sphere of influence; the role of NATO and the consequences of its expansion towards the CIS; the aftermath of the 2013 Ukrainian revolution; and the consequence of the recent Syrian crisis, 2011. The writings coming from the circle of the policy-makers denounce and proclaim the vulnerabilities and destructiveness of the other's policies. At the academic level, the Russian academics support the Russian stand, and the American academics are proponents of the US stand. The neutral and unbiased writings state and agree with the revivalism of the sphere-of influence, due to the factor that the main centres of power, the US, Russia and China have established assertiveness around what they perceive as their rightful spheres of influence.

The spheres of influence affects the nature and the stability of world order projects, because the great powers' designs for spheres of influence are projects for regional or international order. Russia has pursued regional sphere of influence designs after the Cold War, and the US continued with the Cold War structures and institutions to strengthen and expand the global reach of its influence. The US as the hegemon of the most powerful coalition of states- Western Hemisphere- has articulated the principles, rules and laws according to which the world order functions. Different scholars have offered different insightful contexts of such debate. For instance, John J. Mearsheimer in the book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, states that US is not a global hegemon but the hegemon of the Western Hemisphere because although it is stronger than Russia and China economically and militarily, it cannot maintain its dominance over China and Russia, and both countries possess the capabilities to deter an invasion of their country. Furthermore Mearsheimer states that the United Nations or any other international institution cannot

have a much coercive leverage over the great powers.<sup>7</sup> Henry Kissinger in *Diplomacy* describes world orders as being characterized by ‘an aspiration to permanence’ yet, “the elements which comprise it are in constant flux”.<sup>8</sup> Here, Kissinger elaborates in details the US’ diplomatic and political manoeuvres to keep under control its position as the hegemon of the Western Hemisphere, through a community of common values with Europe, strategic alliance with China and Asia in general, integrating Russia in the multilateral Western structures economically and preventing it from being a major power in Eurasia-Europe and Asia. Many scholars like Kissinger, Mearsheimer, etc have pointed that US has never agreed with balance of power, but to achieve a harmony with the rest of the major powers, scholars claim there is a need for at least an equilibrium of the main interests of the major powers. Andrei Tsygankov<sup>9</sup> agrees with the benefits and cooperation of non-Western and Western parts of the world order integrated with each other but it cannot be an integration at any cost, and not an integration biased about the cultural and political differences of the other members if such integration were to take place. Both Francis Fukuyama’s idea of ‘end of history’ and Samuel Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations’ proclaim the greatness of the Western civilization and the greatness of the developed democracies, which must continue to be the dominant force of world politics. This study adds that both the US and Russia have articulated the sphere of influence designs according to the contemporary reality. Stanley Hoffman elaborates in details in his book the fact that “every aspect of American foreign policy is part of the problem of world order. There is no topic familiar to foreign affairs specialists that does not have a world order aspect, however much we may be used to looking at it from another angle.”<sup>10</sup> Noam Chomsky argues that the Cold War policies continued to persist and to

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<sup>7</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2003), 363.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Kissinger, “The New World Order Reconsidered,” in *Diplomacy*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 806.

<sup>9</sup> Andrei Tsygankov, “The World Order after September 11,” in *Whose World Order? Russia’s Perception of American Ideas after the Cold War*, (Notre Dame: Indiana), 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Stanley Hoffman, *Primacy or World Order: American Foreign Policy since the Cold War*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1978), 201.

be intensified even in the post-Cold War.<sup>11</sup> Samuel Huntington claims that “in the emerging era, clashes of civilizations are the greatest threats to world peace, and an international order based on civilizations is the surest safeguard against world war.”<sup>12</sup> Both superpowers deterred each other’s interventions and restrained each other’s domination in different areas of the world, and the decline of USSR’s global political designs in 1990 left America to pursue its global military, political and economic designs without a serious danger on its way. Meanwhile Russia went through two different stages, firstly an internal build-up in terms of identity and economy by means of cooperation and integration with the West; secondly and currently, the phase of rising and asserting its place in the concert of major powers for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore taken as a whole this brief literature, this study argues that every era, including the post-Cold War one has not been made out of peace or conflict and war between different religions, ideologies, civilizations, cultures, etc, but about the great powers’ pursuit for spheres of influence. To maintain sphere of influence, every great power has cooperated with different kinds of dictators, political systems, religions, races or ethnicities, because within the frame of sphere of influence, the great powers have made use of all these elements with the purpose to gain political control, domination and expansion over as far as possible. The purpose behind the call for civilization, deterrence, security, threat, etc, when it comes to great powers’ level is always about sphere of influence. And the stability or instability of the international system depends on the prevention or making of a world war and whether there is a clash or equilibrium of spheres of influence between the major powers.

### **1.8.1 From Cold War to post-Cold War Era US-Russian relations**

Arthur Schlesinger argues that the USSR preferred a sphere-of influence view, but the US rejected the notion of a world divided into spheres of influence, because those

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<sup>11</sup> Noam Chomsky, *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 68.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Orders*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 321.

divisions could plant the seeds for third world war.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Schlesinger agrees that the Cold War was the product of a dilemma, not a planned decision.<sup>14</sup> Sharp differences of opinion exist about the origins and the course of the Cold War, but this study holds that Cold War was a traditional great-powers contest for influence, an approach being pursued even in the post-Cold War era.

In 'The Premature Partnership', Zbigniew Brzezinski stresses that the US' post-Cold War policy toward Russia was based on incorrect assumptions and strategic goals. The US had no clear vision of what the post-Cold War Russia was—a defeated foe, a partner or an ally—and Brzezinski suggests that 'the emergence of a true American-Russian partnership requires not only a bilateral accommodation but, even more, a constructive geopolitical framework'.<sup>15</sup> This thesis agrees on the need for a constructive geopolitical framework if the US and Russia want to establish mutually assured security and a mutual acceptance of each other's influence.

Daniel Deudney & G. John Ikenberry in 'The Unravelling of the Cold War Settlement' point out that the Cold War was not based on the strength of the victor and the weakness of the defeated but on the mutual vulnerability of both powers to the same type of weapon, the nuclear weapon.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore the authors argue that the Cold War was based on a settlement between the US and Russia, but the US reneged on many parts of the settlement by pursuing goals contrary to the settlement's policies, and that has caused the souring of the relationship. This study explains further that the 'open door' policy of the EU and NATO in Eastern Europe reduced Russia's zone of influence, and the expansion of these institutions into CIS has alerted Russia.

Another study from Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard* suggests that America's security is identified with the global security, so it must lead or dominate the

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<sup>13</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Russian Revolution—Fifty Years After," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1967, 36.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>15</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Premature Partnership", *Foreign Affairs*, March 1994.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Deudney & G. John Ikenberry, 'The Unravelling of the Cold War Settlement', *Survival*, 51: 6, (December 2009-January 2010): 39-62.

global affairs through a network of alliances. Brzezinski's work also offers the assessment that an expanded NATO and a more assertive global role of the EU can serve as a trans-Eurasian system to counter Russia's ambitious desires.<sup>17</sup> Brzezinski's opinions here highlight America's vigorous pursuit of its geopolitical designs for the maintenance of unipolarity. This study points out that the US' pursuit of global influence in every region has sometimes clashed with the interests of the regional power. NATO's open-door policy into CIS, Ukraine's inclination towards the West, and the loss of the last ally in Middle East, have caused serious confrontations between a great power (US) and a regional power (Russia).

Stephen F. Cohen (2006) notes that the US tried to exploit Russia's weaknesses after 1991, and its policy toward Russia has been much more aggressive than the policy toward the Soviet Union with a growing military encirclement around Russia's borders.<sup>18</sup> According to Cohen, America has tried to keep down a weakened post-Soviet Russia because the US wants permanent bases in Central Asia, independent access to the Caspian Sea oil and gas, and NATO's expansion into several post-Soviet republics. This study highlights that these US policies are part of geopolitical designs to expand its influence projection over as far as possible. On the other side, Russia has also been cautious in its geopolitical concessions to the US. It considers NATO's expansion as an unacceptable level of influence, and its entrance into CIS as a red line between the two countries, thus, Russia decided to strengthen its nuclear strategic deterrents and conventional weapons posture.

In his article, Sergei Lavrov, the current Russian foreign minister, is of the opinion that the US is practicing a second containment policy towards Russia.<sup>19</sup> However, according to Lavrov, pursuit of the containment policy would build bloc approaches again. The US

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<sup>17</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 198.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen F. Cohen, "The New American Cold War," *The Nation*, July 10, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Sergei Lavrov, "Containing Russia: Back to the Future?" *Russia in Global Affairs*, 5: 4, (October-December 2007).



has treated Russia with both containment and cooperation. NATO's enlargement policy to promote democracy has violated previous assurances to Russia. So, as Lavrov puts it, 'How can democracy be promoted by a military political alliance that within a framework of its "transformation" has been consistently increasing the number of scenarios for the possible use of force?' However, as this work shows, Russia has pursued its own containment policies towards the US as well, through engagements with Iran, North Korea, Syria, and Ukraine, to prevent or reduce US influence wherever possible. This thesis shows that containment and deterrence have been mutual.

Richard Sakwa (2008) points out that Russia's post-communist foreign policy has been identified as an Atlanticist one (allying with US and the West), an imperialist one (in which Russians want the reassertion of Russia's power), and as a neo-Slavic one (also called Eurasianist, aiming at the development of the country's Slavic identity).<sup>20</sup> Through its foreign policy, Russia has intended to preserve its status as a great power in the world. Nevertheless, points of tension have been present during all administrations. Russia supported Iran and Syria with weapons, while the US supported revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. Consequently, after the Orange revolution in Ukraine, Russia introduced the idea of 'sovereign' democracy, arguing that 'Moscow asserts the sovereign right of each country to define democracy as it sees fit'.<sup>21</sup> This study argues that in the post-Cold War concert of great powers, Russia considers the CIS as being exclusively in Russia's zone of influence, and strategic partnership with Russia is conditional upon recognition of such a Russian zone of influence.

Robert Levgold in 'Russia's Unformed Policy' states that during a decade of the post-Soviet time, Russia's domestic and foreign policy was surrounded by plenty of uncertainties.<sup>22</sup> As such, Russia needed to figure out with whom to ally to improve its

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<sup>20</sup> Richard Sakwa, "Putin's New Realism in Foreign Policy," in *Putin: Russia's Choice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Routledge: 2008): 269.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 284

<sup>22</sup> Robert Levgold, 'Russia's Unformed Foreign Policy,' *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2001.

standing. Regarding its relationship with US, the US insisted Russia not to pressure or threaten the former Soviet republics for choosing alignment with the US over Russia. There are many dimensions to the US-Russian relationship and each side seemed engaged in an ambitious policy, pursuing an independent sphere of influence strategy versus the other. One of the points that is highlighted in the present study is that the principle of non-interference is lauded by every great power when it serves its interests, and it is also broken when it serves its interests to do so. For instance the US claims strongly and loudly that the Ukrainian borders should not be changed including Crimea, and prevention of a Ukrainian fragmentation because it threatens the European security, but it is not on the same idea in the case of the Syrian crisis. If Syria risks being divided which means a threat to the Middle East, it seems to be an acceptable option for the US and West. Vice versa, Russia may prefer and accommodate a fragmentation of Ukraine into eastern and western parts, but in the case of Syria, an undivided Syria serves as a better asset of Russian influence in the Middle East. Both the US and Russia have equally pursued the search for assets of influence, whether it meant interference or non-interference.

### **1.8.2 The impact of NATO's Enlargement**

Ronald D. Asmus in the book titled *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, addresses the question of why NATO continued to exist in the post-Cold War world, despite the disappearance of the communist threat from the USSR.<sup>23</sup> The author is a proponent of NATO's enlargement in Eastern and Central Europe, and explains that, although there have been both supporters and critics of the idea of NATO's enlargement, the US administrations have developed a rationale for continuing and expanding NATO over the whole Europe since the Clinton era. Western Europe feared

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<sup>23</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2013).

the instabilities that would come from Central Eastern Europe, so it wanted the US support and presence. Meanwhile, the US wanted to unify Europe and integrate it into a US-led economic-security structure. As a result, NATO initially offered membership to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, simultaneously establishing the NATO-Russia Founding Act in order not to alienate Russia. The US' rationale behind NATO's continuation and expansion was to support the countries going through democratic transformations just as the US supported the democratic transformation of the Western Europe after World War II, and to ensure Europe's security after the Cold War. This study adds that NATO served many purposes, including the expansion of democratization, the security and unity of the democratic countries, deterrence and containment of the outsiders, unity and cooperation for the insiders; and related to this study, a sphere of influence and sphere of democracies.

In 'Enlarging NATO: The Russia Factor', Richard L. Kugler and Marianna Kozintseva explain that after the Cold War Russia was inward-looking and the integration of Central Eastern Europe into NATO was a huge geopolitical strategy.<sup>24</sup> The authors argue that at the end of the Cold War, Central and Eastern Europe referred to a neutral zone between the US and Russia. The US policies for NATO's and EU's expansion into these zones would increase their geopolitical reach, turning the neutral zone into a Western zone and tipping the military balance in favour of West. The authors caution that the strategy should be implemented without provoking and alienating Russia. This study is in 2015, when

Eastern and Central Europe are already fully integrated into the Western zone despite Russia's reservations and protests. In the post-Cold War era Russia has been reduced from the USSR with the Warsaw Pact into a Russia with the CIS. The present thesis argues that as the situation stands today, the CIS represents the final zone of influence that the Russian administrations will refuse to lose.

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<sup>24</sup> Richard L. Kugler, Marianna V. Kozintseva, *Enlarging NATO: The Russia Factor*, (Monograph Report: RAND Corporation), 1996.

Arthur R. Rachwald in 'A Reset of NATO-Russian Relations: Real or Imaginary?' explains that to the Russian view NATO's enlargement threatens Russia's aspirations.<sup>25</sup> The 'reset' started in 2009, a year after Russia's Five Day War in Georgia, for the purpose of reconciliation and new strategic adjustments. However, Russia has never been satisfied with its position vis-à-vis NATO, because in the NATO's decision-making process Russia has neither veto power nor a role in formulating NATO policy. To counter

NATO's power and influence, Russia proposed a European Security Treaty (Helsinki Plus security proposal), which suggested a trans-Atlantic security framework, including China (a Russian ally) but excluding Japan (a US ally). Expanding Rachwald's idea, the present thesis shows that the US-Russian relationship, during and after the Cold War has always been an action-reaction chain of policies, institutions, and events, because of the zero-sum thinking. One's defensive measures are perceived as offensive to the other, one's geopolitical advantages seem to come at the expense of the other's strategic interests.

Oksana Antonenko and Igor Yurgens are of the opinion that in the post-Cold War world, NATO and Russia share more common security concerns than they formerly did.<sup>26</sup> Regarding the pros and cons of NATO's Russian membership, NATO does not intend to offer Russia Article V on mutual defense commitment, or to weaken NATO's commitment to its members. Therefore a cooperative approach in tackling together the crises seems the first task of NATO-Russia relations, and this requires demilitarized relations and confidence-building measures. The authors claim that pragmatic cooperation would create a more convenient atmosphere in dealing with common threats and would increase cohesion within NATO. The present study argues that a NATO-Russian framework for coordinated geopolitical visions can be possible, except for NATO's expansion into CIS. Russia's determination to keep Ukraine and the CIS within

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<sup>25</sup> Arthur R. Rachwald, 'A "Reset" of NATO-Russian Relations: Real or Imaginary?' *European Security*, 20:1, (2011): 117-126.

<sup>26</sup> Oksana Antonenko & Igor Yurgens, 'Towards a NATO-Russia Strategic Concept', *Survival*, 52:6, (2010): 5-11.

its orbit clashes with NATO's determination to offer membership to Ukraine, Georgia and any other possible CIS country.

Mikayel Bagratuni is of the opinion that NATO's expansion has been a polarizing issue among NATO members.<sup>27</sup> In his paper, 'Russia and the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept: New Era of Partnership or Wishful Thinking?' he explains that NATO's expansion of membership to Ukraine and Georgia has been strongly opposed by Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Norway, France, and Portugal, out of their concern that NATO's entrance into the CIS will create a collision course with Russia. NATO's Strategic Concept of 2010 offered to engage Russia in cooperation on missile defence and common threats such as terrorism and nuclear proliferation, issues that could produce cooperation with Russia. Bagratuni's writing in 2011, a time when the 2010 elections in Ukraine were won by the pro-Russia Viktor Yanukovich, who refused Ukrainian membership in NATO and the EU. However, as this thesis is being written in 2015, new events have taken place. Ukraine's new government is a pro-NATO and pro-EU by orientation, but much is still uncertain. The US-Russia confrontation over Ukraine has intensified, with the pro-Russian rebels demanding for independence, while the Ukrainian government is offering a degree of autonomy yet within the Ukrainian law.

This thesis argues that Russia and NATO have not been able to establish confidence building measures in order to coordinate threat perceptions and plans for dealing with common global concerns. NATO has remained one of the US' spheres of influence, which during the Cold war was paralleled by the USSR's Warsaw Pact, and in the post-Cold War, CSTO tried to be a CIS' Warsaw Pact. This thesis argues that, in the post-Cold War era, until the current time of this writing, the US' priority was the war against terrorism, and deterring and keeping under control the rivals was secondary. However, to Russia, strengthening its position as a power vis-à-vis the other powers has been primary and the

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<sup>27</sup> Mikayel Bagratuni, 'Russia and the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept: New Era of Partnership or Wishful Thinking?', (Policy Paper: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute (CDFI), April 2011.

war against terrorism has been secondary. In between these two main objectives for both of these countries, there have been different nuances of cooperation for joint efforts against terrorism and maintaining a cooperative post-Cold War great powers' concert. However, the recent Ukrainian crisis and Russia's annexation of Crimea have created serious rifts in the Russian relations with US, Ukraine and the whole Western front. As

Russian troops and volunteers remain close to the eastern Ukraine's borders, NATO on the other side is demonstrating Article V—mutual defense and commitment to the defense of its allies. Feeling encircled and isolated, the West fears that Russia will use force even over eastern Ukraine, and threaten the other CIS countries with Russian minorities in order to create a Russian empire. Another consequence of this scenario is that Russia will tend to rely on its political alignments with Iran and China.

The behaviour of great powers creates shifts in the balance of power, ultimately leading to changes of the international system. Yet, one of the main points of this thesis is that the relationship between great powers is always about a contest for influence. Russia wants to be a reliable partner for the US, but it cannot accommodate American interests if they curtail Russia's areas of influence and its potential. Both are concerned with the big picture of power, threats and security within regional and global politics. It seems to be a continuation of the Cold War geopolitical policies of deterrence and containment, because deterrence and containment serve each power to defend its sphere of influence.

Although the roots of the Cold War are widely interpreted to be based on ideological differences, it was in fact rooted in the contest for influence, whether through ideology, or nuclear weapons, technology, economics, and networks of allies. All crises, conflicts, and disagreements were essentially about influence in different regions of the world. The only difference now is that Russia is weaker than Soviet Union, although it remains determined to maintain its legacy as part of the global concert of great powers. On the

other side, the US' Cold War and post-Cold War have focused on the preservation of its hegemony in terms of setting the rules and laws of the world politics.

The recent Ukrainian and Syrian crises have proven to be turning points in the US-Russian relations, creating many doubts about the reasons behind Russia's assertive foreign policy. Does Russia aim to develop multipolarity and a new world order? Does it aim to return to the Soviet Union's sphere of influence over Eastern Europe and the Balkans? Or does it aim to send the message that its dominance over the CIS zone is a non-negotiable concession to US, EU and NATO? This study asserts that the CIS is the final area of influence for Russia, and Ukraine is central to gain the CIS' influence, for either to Russia's side or the US' side. Therefore it is almost impossible to reconcile the US-Russian interests in the CIS and NATO's expansion to this zone.

### **1.8.3 The US, Russia, and Ukraine**

The literature on the recent Ukrainian crisis consists of interviews, speeches, op-eds, opinions expressed by different policy makers, and think-tanks analyses. In order to understand the US and Russian concerns about Ukraine, it requires knowledge about the CIS background, because Russia and Ukraine geographically belong to the CIS region.

Ukraine is an important CIS country, in terms of population and size. In 1990, Ukraine was a nuclear country. In 1994, Ukraine signed the Budapest Memorandum with the US, the UK and Russia, according to which Ukraine would transfer its nuclear weapons to Moscow in exchange for security guarantees. In 2004-2005, Ukraine went through the first Orange Revolution,<sup>28</sup> which did not succeed. The crisis in November 2013 seemed to be a continuation of that revolution and an effort to complete the transformation of Ukraine into a democracy, with membership in the EU and NATO institutions. The mass uprisings that started in November 2013 deposed the then-President Yanukovich who was

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<sup>28</sup> Orange Revolution, in 2004, the first Ukrainian colour revolution to break away from CIS structures and join Euro-Atlantic integration.

a Russian ally, and the West recognized the new interim government that came in power. Next, Russia then annexed Crimea, and that annexation became a confrontational issue between Russia and the West. Both the West and Ukraine have refused to recognize the Russian annexation of the Crimean province. Furthermore, the Russian support of the pro-Russian provinces has alarmed the US and the EU. The US claims that Russia is trying to foster secessionist and separatist feelings in the Russian-speaking provinces in eastern Ukraine, in the Baltic countries and everywhere else in the CIS.

Laura Blaj writes that, after 1991, when all the new republics gained independence, Ukraine was the only country that did not ratify the CIS Charter because it preferred to maintain an observer's status.<sup>29</sup> Ukraine was the most important relationship for Russia within the CIS, for several reasons, namely, its large population and size; its nuclear weapons; its autonomous majority Russian-speaking province of Crimea; and the Sevastopol port hosting the Russian Black Sea fleet. Furthermore, Ukraine was the only country that tried to participate in other institutions and initiatives to distance itself from Russian power and domination. Domestically, eastern Ukraine has always been pro-Russia and western Ukraine has been pro-West. In "The Premature Partnership", Zbigniew Brzezinski emphasizes that Russia with Ukraine is an empire; whereas Russia without Ukraine is no longer an empire.<sup>30</sup> While in an interview with Viktor Zamayatin in the Ukrainian newspaper *The Day* (2004), Brzezinski said, 'Ukraine is not a pawn nor a queen but a very important piece in the chessboard'. The present thesis agrees with the importance of Ukraine in terms of its significance for the US-Russian influence over CIS. Because strategically, to the Western front, Ukraine's membership into EU and NATO simply means a further expansion of its influence, while to Russia's influence it is vital.

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<sup>29</sup> Laura Blaj, 'Ukraine's Independence and Its Geostrategic Impact on Eastern Europe', *Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 21: 2, (2013): 165-181.

<sup>30</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski 'The Premature Partnership', *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1994



For this reason Russia remains determined to keep Ukraine within its orbit—whether all of Ukraine, or just eastern Ukraine.

Dr. Jonathan Eyal claims that Russia will try to encourage the separatist movements of Tatars, Moldovans, and Russian-speaking groups in eastern Ukraine with the purpose of seeking autonomy and federal government in Ukraine.<sup>31</sup> Flemming Splidshoel-Hansen in “GUUAM and the Future of CIS Military Cooperation” states that Russia tries to be a force sufficient to balance and maintain the CIS security, while the US aims to have political influence in the CIS. The CIS members decide on their foreign policies as independent and sovereign units, moving toward Russia or the US, whichever direction is most profitable.<sup>32</sup> Through the creation of GUUAM, the member states sought to enhance their military capabilities for a security independent from Russia and to set up new CIS security structures that could prevent another centralised Russian rule. The GUUAM coalition makes it difficult for Russia to maintain this sphere of influence despite the fact that Russia is determined to keep this coalition’s strategies under control. This is clearly demonstrated in the case of Ukrainian Revolution, explained in more detail in Chapter Five.

Taras Kuzio writes that, in the CIS’ geopolitical pluralism, Russia instead of settling the ethnic conflicts within CIS it has paralyzed the situations in its own favour.<sup>33</sup> Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan are the new power centres in the CIS, and they intend to balance Russian strategic superiority in the CIS through American support. This study argues that Russia is suspicious about the democratic transitions in the CIS and Middle East, because these democratic transitions have meant loss of client states for Russia, and thus, a reduced sphere of influence for Russia. Russia prefers to be a pole rather than

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<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Eyal, “Russia and Ukraine: The Empire Will Strike Back,” (Analysis: Royal United Services Institute RUSI), 24 February, 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Flemming Splidshoel-Hansen, ‘GUUAM and the Future of CIS Military Cooperation,’ *European Security*, 9: 4, (2000): 92-100.

<sup>33</sup> Taras Kuzio, “Geopolitical Pluralism in the CIS: The emergence of GUUAM,” *European Security*, 9: 2, (Summer 2000): 81-114.

integrated into the West, but it cannot be a pole if it loses its political-military significance in the CIS region.

#### 1.8.4 US-Russia and Syria

Samuel Charap in 'Russia, Syria and the Doctrine of Intervention' explains that in the Syrian crisis Russia became the main agent of international diplomacy, nevertheless the solutions offered by Russia were accepted by neither the US nor the Syrian opposition.<sup>34</sup> The central argument of this article is that Russia's support for Syria has more to do with the US power than with Syria itself, whereas the US interference is more about getting rid of a regime that has not been in tune with the US interests than with an intervention in a humanitarian crisis.<sup>35</sup> Roy Allison in 'Russia and Syria: Explaining Alignment with a Regime in Crisis' suggests that the intensification of the Syrian crisis poses a threat to regional stability.<sup>36</sup> Allison explains that Russia has defended the legitimacy of the Syrian government and shielded it with Russia's veto in Security Council, on three grounds: (1) the claims that the Russian government stands against an externally promoted regime in Syria and any country, (2) the Syrian scenario includes diverse geopolitical interests in the regional power play, and (3) there is a potential regional spill-over from Syria, Islamist networks, and insurgency in the northern Caucasus.<sup>37</sup> So Allison describes Russia's stance for Syria as an alignment of mutual convenience. Examined through the prism of American and Russian involvement and their contest for influence through their proxies, the Syrian crisis is a contest for the new Syrian government to be either a Russian asset for influence or an American one.

In the programme paper, 'Western Policy towards Syria: Ten Recommendations',

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<sup>34</sup> Samuel Charap, "Russia, Syria and the Doctrine of Intervention," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 55:1, (February-March 2013): 35-41.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>36</sup> Roy Allison, "Russia and Syria: Explaining Alignment with a Regime in Crisis," *International Affairs*, 89: 4, (July 2013):795-823.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.,

Claire Spencer *et.al*, suggest ten guidelines that the West should consider in resolving the Syrian crisis. As the crisis has become militarized and radicalized, the Western response has not been consistent. It has shifted from demanding that the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad leave power, to implicitly considering him as a partner in negotiations brokered by the UN, and from considering a military strike against the regime into accepting the regime's surrender of the chemical weapons.<sup>38</sup> The authors here suggest ten guidelines, and this thesis agrees with four of these authors' recommendations: to identify clearer objectives and prioritize what matter most to Syria; to safeguard the integrity of the state; to identify common ground between the key players; and to avoid seeing the crisis primarily through the sectarian lens.

Elizabeth O'Bagy in 'The Free Syrian Army' describes the start of the Syrian opposition and its evolution into different institutions as the necessary preconditions to gain legitimacy and to overcome their divisions.<sup>39</sup> She highlights the attempts undertaken by the opposition to bridge the gaps within, to unify under the different committees that could organize the financial support, weapons and strategies of the opposition to overthrow the regime. These Committees are supposed to organize the foreign policy and the defense policy of the opposition to overthrow the Assad's regime and prepare for a post-Assad Syria. This study adds to the depiction of the Syrian situation the significance of Russia too, asserting that the Syrian regime has not fallen yet due to Russia's support. This thesis also points out that the port of Tartus<sup>40</sup> is a geopolitical advantage which Russia will not trade off for any price or concession being offered, because whoever replaces Assad will not be the same kind of ally.

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<sup>38</sup> Claire Spencer, Christopher Phillips and Jan Kinninmont, "Western Policy towards Syria: Ten Recommendations," Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House, December 2013, pp.1-3.

<sup>39</sup>Elizabeth O'Bagy, "The Free Syrian Army," *Middle East Report 9*, (Washington D.C: Institute for the Study of War): March 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Tartus port, at the coastal area of Syria, it hosts Russia's Mediterranean Fleet since the Cold War time, and despite the current crisis and Syrian instability, Russia remains determined to protect its assets of influence.

Kenneth M. Pollack describes the Syrian conflict as an inter-communal civil war between the Shia regime and the Sunni opposition.<sup>41</sup> Pollack argues that although the US has limited aims in the Syrian crisis it should do more to accomplish the goals, either by boosting the capabilities of the opposition or by striking certain regime targets to force the regime to give up the fight. According to the author, ‘in many cases, the operations of the foreign powers have less to do with defeating the regime than with protecting specific interests’.<sup>42</sup>

This current study adds that Russia’s and US’ participation in the Syrian crisis and the fact that they support different sides of the conflict, highlight their geopolitical interests in the contest for influence. Mark Katz in ‘Putin’s Foreign Policy Toward Syria’, comments that according to Putin’s opinion, Syria is the latest battleground in a global, multi-decade struggle between secular states and Sunni Islamism.<sup>43</sup> This research agrees with this view and adds that the outcome of the Syrian crisis is significant for US-Russian, and Gulf-Iran relations.

This research moreover highlights that the Syrian crisis has become polarized at the religious and political level, domestically, regionally and internationally. The growth of sectarian divisions and fighting in addition to the many militant groups fighting for different inclinations have been supported by different outside external networks, risking Syria’s survival as a state and the whole shape of Middle East. There are two main teams in this crisis, and two solutions are needed: firstly, a coordinated framework between the Syrian regime and the opposition, and secondly a coordinated geopolitical vision between the US and Russia. Russia seems determined to maintain by all means its remaining allies, whose loss reduces further Russia’s posture as a great power. On the other side, the US wants regime transformation in all the countries with the non-friendly governments.

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<sup>41</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, “Breaking the Stalemate: The Military Dynamics of the Syrian Civil War and Options for Limited US Intervention,” *Middle East Memo* 30, August 2013, (Brookings: Saban Center): 1-19.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Mark Katz, “Putin’s Foreign Policy toward Syria,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 10: 1, (March 2006).

The above mentioned literature offers a brief review about the topic being discussed in this study, specifically the relevance of the three case studies being analysed here. The literature being mentioned in this study provides different findings and claims that have emerged from prior research about the US-Russian relations and spheres of influence, and it was helpful in stimulating new thinking and putting this study in a larger context with new conclusions and findings. Thus, only the literature that is mostly relevant and helpful to address the subject of interest and the research question has been chosen as a reference.

An area of debate has started about whose stand is right or wrong, between the assertiveness of US as the hegemon and democratic country leading the democratic camp, and Russia as a regional power and a country that stands outside the democratic camp. No prior research has structured the US-Russian relations in such a frame, no prior study has approached this subject through the three case studies being elaborated here, and through the concepts of mutually assured security and spheres of influence. This fact enables this study to provide a contribution to knowledge. Further research on this subject will provide a different frame, with different findings and opinions.

## **1.9 Significance of the study**

In the vast literature written about the US-USSR and US-Russian relations and their spheres of influence, this study enters an already existing conversation in which this analysis adds something new, that projection for sphere of influence occupies the attention of both US and Russia. This study holds the position that within the international system, great powers and regional powers play a critical role in the creation in the maintenance and a possible order or breakdown within their sphere, because they are capable of creating, maintaining or disrupting the political-security aspect of that sphere.

This applies to the US' influence in the West, and Russia's influence (though recently shaken) in the former Soviet area. Different descriptions and viewpoint have been

suggested to explain the sphere of influence, as a wrong approach, as a demarcation line, or as interference into the affairs of the weaker states. Although this research analyses the US-Russian sphere of influence in relation to their mutual and different perceptions regarding NATO's expansion towards the CIS; the Ukrainian revolution; and the Syrian crisis, it does not intend to argue who is right or wrong, but rather examine what is going on and offer suggestions for a less confrontational US-Russian rivalry for influence. Whenever these two countries interfere on the opposite side, the crises will be prolonged and not settled until these two countries can come to a mutual agreement.

These events are critical for the US-Russian bilateral relations and for the current world order because the players involved in these three events must align with one or the other. Moreover, there has been no research yet about the post-cold war US-Russian sphere of influence based on these three issues, and no study yet analysing these events through the US-Russian influence point of view. It is necessary to emphasize that in these three issues there are many players involved but this study has tried to keep the discussion narrowed according to the central argument, which is the US-Russian pursuit for spheres of influence.

#### **1.10 Limitations of the study**

Although much work has been carried out regarding this subject, this study generates significant findings in the area of US-Russian spheres of influence related to NATO's reach into CIS, Ukraine and Syria. However this study is not without flaws and limitations. Firstly, the analysis takes an external view of the countries being analysed; their domestic perspective remains peripheral. Next, is the fact that the issues discussed in this study are still happening at the moment, which significantly affects the fluidity of the US-Russian relations and spheres of influence.

Another limitation, comes from the fact that it is not within the scope of this study to provide an extended discussion on the issues that are peripheral to this study, such as the Arab uprisings, the war on terrorism, the European security, deterrence, containment, ideology, etc.

NATO is a well-known issue and there is plenty of literature about it during the Cold War and post-Cold War era. Yet its policies which are constantly adjusting to the new geopolitical realities and events have called for adjustments of its articles, membership, and its perimeters. Further modifications of NATO's posture and policies towards Russia, particularly regarding the recent events in Ukraine are still to be articulated, since NATO is determined to get Ukraine on its side and Russia is equally determined to prevent it from happening.

Another limitation comes from the sources which are published in Russian, Ukrainian, and Arabic languages. Not all of them have been translated into English. Also, many of the important primary sources, such as digitalized archives and government documents remain restricted. Nevertheless, the data being collected has been sufficient enough for conducting this study, -to prove and support the arguments put forth in this study.

Another limitation to this study is that, although there are many number of players involved in the issues being discussed herein, the viewpoint of the US-Russian rivalry for influence stands at the core of this study. Also the views and roles of the other players are looked at in terms of their significance to the US-Russian game for influence.

Another serious limitation comes from the information provided by the data collected. It has been hard to find unbiased sources, and all data are centred on supporting one side or the other's right for sphere of influence. Most of the news, transcripts and reports address the other side as the aggressor and the adversary, and justifies its own stance in the conflict, therefore, the reliability and the accuracy of these sources have been vague.

### **1.11 Organization of the Study**

This research is divided into seven chapters.

The first chapter is the introduction, which includes a brief presentation of what this study is about, the main concepts, the problem statement, research questions, objectives, in order to highlight and illustrate the continued US-Russian rivalry and pursuit for sphere of influence beyond the Cold War era.

The second chapter is a background on the sphere of influence, its meaning, its significance for the major powers, and how it applies to the current US-Russian bilateral relations. This chapter also discusses on the US' and Russia's approach towards sphere of influence, when there is a tacit understanding and when it becomes confrontational.

The third chapter explains the Cold War US-USSR spheres of influence being manifested through their main political-military institutions, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The factors leading to NATO's establishment as an institution was to deter the

USSR's military ambitions and aggressions towards Western Europe. The architecture of the European security and influence was an important geopolitical goal for both the US and USSR throughout the Cold War era. This chapter explores the NATO- Warsaw Pact confrontational relations through the prism of spheres of influence, because these two institutions meant a clear demarcation between the East and the West as well as deterrence. The NATO's mission to counter the strength and influence of the USSR's Pact in the European continent continued until the full unification of Germany and its integration within NATO. The integration of the united Germany into NATO meant the end of the Cold War, which started with Germany's division and ended with Germany's unification on the Western terms.

The fourth chapter examines the continued attention for sphere of influence between the US and Russia even in the post-Cold War, expressed through an enlarged NATO and Russia's structures (specifically, CIS, CSTO, and EurAsEc) to integrate the CIS republics



under Russian political, military and economic influence. In the post-Cold War era, NATO as a political–military institution expanded democratization policy beyond the Cold War perimeters, which served as deterrence to the rivals, as well as a sphere of influence. The role of NATO was to pursue the same Cold War goals of keeping Germany integrated in the US-led security structure and containing Russia. Also NATO’s missions expanded into global dimensions, from taking care of the European security and democracy into Europe, and containing Russia, into tackling different anti-terrorism involvements wherever necessary at the global level.

Chapter Five analyses the US–Russian influence projection and rivalry through their stances towards the recent Ukrainian revolution, focusing in particular on the importance of Crimea for Russia and the US’s preoccupation with Russia’s show of strength towards the international rules. This scenario has produced a serious confrontational dimension between these two countries. Ukraine’s former government was a Russian ally that walked away from the EU orientation. This pro-Russian regime was replaced with a pro-US/Western regime. The CIS is as crucial to the Russian foreign policy as is the Middle East to the US foreign policy. Therefore, Russia views interference in Ukraine as interference in a zone that belongs exclusively to Russia, a loss that Russia cannot afford and is determined to prevent.

The sixth chapter explores the US–Russian relationship in the case of the Syrian crisis, from 2011 to the current time of this writing. The Syrian crisis has become an issue of importance beyond just the figure of Assad or his regime. It has turned into a crucial battle between the Gulf and Iran for influence in the Middle East. Since the US considers the Middle East’s situation to be one of the most important areas of the American foreign policy, then it is determined to prevent Russia from thwarting American goals in this region. The US supports the opposition based on the principle of democratic transition, whereas Russia supports the regime based on the principle of non-interference;

consequently, the crisis has been prolonged for almost five years. Thus far, it seems impossible for the two countries to find a common solution, because each aims to project its own influence projection in this crisis.

Chapter Seven concludes the study. It offers an assessment of the issues discussed in the previous chapters, the convenience and inconvenience of cooperation between the two countries, the impact of the ongoing US–Russian continued rivalry for spheres of influence, the impact of the US–Russian relationship to the events discussed in this study, and toward the current world situation. In addition, a brief set of recommendations has been suggested, in terms of how to make the current US–Russian relations less confrontational.

## **CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND: THE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE APPROACH**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes and evaluates significant events, academic and policy making interpretations and different contexts from historical as well contemporary viewpoints to prove the historical and current persistence of sphere-of-influence strategy on the agenda of the great powers, specifically on the current US-Russian relations. The main sections this chapter refers to are: a brief illustration of the sphere of influence concept; the aims and determinants of influence; an elaboration of the presence of the sphere of influence in the American and Russian administrations; the US-Russian contemporary influence projection with a focus on their cooperative and confrontational points, and the implications of the US-Russian confrontational points of influence projection.

Sphere of influence has not been analysed as a comprehensive and consistent approach of international relations, but it is nevertheless an operational concept and a sign of the great powers' strength and prestige. Many important configurations and confrontations exist in the world politics, but the US-USSR/Russia's spheres of influence matter most to the stability of the international arena because both remain still the most powerful nuclear powers on earth, and their ongoing deterrence-dialogue bilateral relationship since the end of WWII until today revolves around an independent unique influence projection in world affairs.

While sphere of influence is a complex, complicated geopolitical web, this study has selected only certain key strategic events and studies that are sufficient evidences to prove and support this argument. There are many aspects to a sphere of influence, such as culture, ideology, history, religion, race, territory, military and economic packages to sustain it in terms of a geopolitical belonging. It is also a strategic form of statecraft, it is case specific rather than common, it varies between the great powers, strategic powers and other countries which try to survive or to get stronger in the international system.

Only the major powers have the capabilities in terms of size, population, army, economy, and vision to lead a sphere-of-influence or a geopolitical belonging. Whatever the reason, cause or the power that weaves the sphere of influence, it is necessary to consider that just like security, economics, and interests, even spheres of influence are interdependent.

Different definitions have been attached to the sphere-of-influence concept, as imperialism, a foreign policy device, a demarcation, and power. There are many purposes to a sphere of influence, but this study interprets sphere of influence as the great powers' long-term strategy to remain or survive as a pole of international affairs, and to advance or to prevent a change in the status quo. Such strategy is built according to the circumstances, necessities, and capabilities, yet the purpose is always political influence through a legal-making alignment, institution or agreement, multilateral or bilateral, designed to advance the major power's sphere and strength. In the relevant sphere of influence every power aims to defend and advance, refuses to retreat from and provides an articulated scheme of the sphere's internal and external interests. Among the numerous world politics' strategies and schools of thought, sphere of influence is the most unique international relations' strategy because it contributes to harmony and equilibrium or discord and war between the major powers, and it has been so through the different eras of history. The mechanism and the flexibility how the great powers' spheres of influence are managed and accepted can keep under control the great powers' rivalry for absolute power. In the past, the great powers' influence projection over a set of reliable allies and satellites was mostly imposed and coerced, after the Cold War it started to be more coordinated and collective decision making. To clarify the theme, this chapter elaborates on the aims and determinants of sphere of influence, and its significance for the US and Russia.

## 2.2 Background of the Sphere-of-influence Concept

This section provides a background of the relevant literature related to the definitions and contexts of sphere of influence to prove that it has always existed as an operational strategy of world politics. Since the past, whether the system of feudalistic societies or monarchs and dukes, the major powers kept pursuing for colonial areas to establish and advance their spheres of influence. After the Westphalia system, states became the political entities and the leaders of primary and secondary powers again continued the pursuit for influence projection through a set of allies and satellites. The strong states of different eras pursued the sphere of influence through bloody wars and such approach remained common until the end of World War II. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 established balance of power as a foreign policy tool for the great powers then, but it was broken because of security and influence projection competition between Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Prussia. The League of Nations was formed to keep under control the ambitions of the major powers to prevent another great war, but again it was challenged by the pursuit for European hegemony (sphere of influence) from France, Russia, Germany, and Britain. Also After World War II, the powers at that time – the US, Britain, France, Germany, the USSR, China, and Japan - decided to reduce the open warfare against each other and to keep checked each other's offensive strength. The competition for security and spheres again divided them into the US' and USSR's coalition. Although wars did not end, they shifted from direct military confrontations between the great powers to indirect confrontations through the intervention in each other's proxies. Therefore, this study asserts that the sphere of influence has been a permanent feature of the great powers' politics and no international institution has ever been able to manage it until now.

The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English* language describes sphere of influence as “a territorial area over which political or economic influence is wielded by

one country”.<sup>1</sup> *Collins English Dictionary* defines this concept as “a region of the world in which one state is dominant”.<sup>2</sup> In the international relations realm sphere of influence is defined as “a spatial region or concept division over which a state or organization has a level of cultural, economic, military, or political exclusivity, accommodating to the interests of powers outside the borders of the state that controls it.”<sup>3</sup>

During the Age of Discovery between 1500 and 1800, the great powers fought many direct and prolonged wars as a device to declare their respective zones of influence. As a term, sphere-of-influence was firstly introduced during the Age of Imperialism (1875-1914).<sup>4</sup> The first sphere of influence treaty was signed by Britain and Germany in 1885 to outline their spheres over the Gulf of Guinea. The term was used as a diplomatic mechanism to demarcate clearly the areas of interest of each great power at the time. As a consequence the probability of direct military confrontation between the great powers decreased significantly.

The discourse about the spheres of influence in the post-Cold War era is limited, and as a term it is used and misused, it is even interpreted as an injustice if it means power and dominance. According to James George, six meanings have been attached to sphere-of-influence: as a demarcation, as a security zone, as imperialism, as control, as a compensation device, and as a resolution of conflict device.<sup>5</sup> Many writers agree with the sphere-of-influence policy between the great powers, such as Liska<sup>6</sup> and Yalem<sup>7</sup>. George W. Ball in *‘The Discipline of Power’* argued that sphere of influence is an operative notion although it is denied and denounced by the great powers.<sup>8</sup> Yet Ronald Steel objected to

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<sup>1</sup> “Sphere of influence.” *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition, (Place of Publication: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2013). <http://www.yourdictionary.com/sphere-of-influence>.

<sup>2</sup> Sphere of influence, Dictionary.com. *Collins English Dictionary-Complete & Unabridged* 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. (Place of Publication: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sphere\\_of\\_influence](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sphere_of_influence).

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia contributors, “Sphere of Influence,” *Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sphere\\_of\\_influence&oldid=663989753](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sphere_of_influence&oldid=663989753) (accessed July 5, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> James L. George, “Spheres of Influence: A Method of Balance of Power for the Cold War,” (Ph.D Thesis, University of Maryland, 1972), Abstract.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.10

<sup>6</sup> George Liska, *“International Equilibrium,”* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957):148-161.

<sup>7</sup> Ronald J. Yalem, *“Regionalism and World Order,”* (Washington D.C. Public Affairs Press, 1965): 22-31.

<sup>8</sup> George W. Ball, *“The Discipline of Power,”* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968): 300.

this notion by stating that sphere of influence is a harmful concept because it “puts the weak too much at the mercy of the strong, whether in Eastern Europe, in Southeast Asia, or in the Caribbeans”.<sup>9</sup>

In the book “*Spheres of Influence in International Relations, History, Theory and Politics*”, Suzanna Hast argues that if Alexander Wendt stated that anarchy is what states make of it, then even the sphere of influence is what states make of it.<sup>10</sup> Hast further expanded the sphere of influence explanation by stating that sphere of influence can be used as 1) a foreign policy tool, 2) an international order through institutions and rules that govern the society of states, and 3) acceptable and unacceptable influence. This study concurs with Keal’s opinion that “spheres of influence and understanding about them remain part of international politics and for better or worse will continue to be”.<sup>11</sup> Charles O. Lerche defined the sphere-of-influence as ‘a device by which competing great powers delineate their areas of hegemony. Each of the great powers undertakes to respect the other’s power rights in its zone. The assumption behind this principle is that in this manner the disputes between great powers can be minimized’.<sup>12</sup> Except for the conceptual interpretation, policy makers have interpreted sphere of influence in terms of world order systems. Noam Chomsky argues that the Cold War bipolar world system was replaced by a post-Cold War US’ led Western Hemisphere which continued to expand further through different international institutions.<sup>13</sup> Samuel Huntington elaborates world order in terms of civilization, among which the Western civilization is the predominant one for it is based in democracy, human rights and globalization, as such all the other civilizations must embrace this culture.<sup>14</sup> According to Huntington,

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<sup>9</sup> Ronald Steel, “*Pax Americana*,” (New York: The Vikings Press, 1967): 329.

<sup>10</sup> Suzanna Hast, “*Spheres of Influence International Relations, History, Theory and Politics*”, (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited): March 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Keale, “Contemporary Understanding about Spheres of Influence,” *Review of International Studies*, 9: 3, (July 1983): 155-172.

<sup>12</sup> See Charles O. Lerche, Jr. and Amdul A. Said, *Concepts of International Politics*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1963):116.

<sup>13</sup> Noam Chomsky, *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press), 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (Touchstone: Rockefeller Center): 1996.

“the post-Cold War world is a world of seven or eight major civilizations. Cultural commonalities and differences shape the interests, antagonisms, and associations of states. The most important countries in the world come overwhelmingly from different civilizations. .... The predominant patterns of political and economic development differ from civilization to civilization. The key issues on the international agenda involve differences among civilizations.”<sup>15</sup>

Francis Fukuyama argued that the end of the Cold War meant the end of the ideological evolution and the spread of Western liberal democracy internationally, Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”<sup>16</sup> Alexander Cooley argues that “the conflation of the Western values agenda with power politics has discredited that agenda.”<sup>17</sup> Hedley Bull elaborated that the international institutions place the sphere of influence between the sovereignty and intervention into a state.<sup>18</sup> Edy Kaufmann opted for the demarcation of spheres of influence as an official and tacit influence.<sup>19</sup>

This study adds that sphere of influence has been a mixture of negative and positive mechanisms of influence projection for what starts as limited to the establishment of the few friendly allies expands into the great powers’ full scale mobilization for security and status. From a limited alliance it becomes a process that shapes the geopolitical belonging of the regions and beyond them. Only the great powers have global visions and the military-economic means to support it. As a concept, the sphere of influence is controversial. There is no agreement or rule or recipe about how the influence will be exercised, as a process or a condition, coercive or voluntarily. In addition, between the leading country and the influenced states it is a process of keeping both their own identity and the new submerging identity, both the sovereignty and the influence process into which one country enters. As a process it also refers to the voluntary participation in a

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>16</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History,” *The National Interest* 16, Summer 1989.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Cooley, “Western Values as Power Politics: The Struggle for Mastery in Eurasia,” *Global Dialogue*, 11, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Keal, “Contemporary Understanding about Spheres of Influence”, *Review of International Studies*, 9:3, (July 1983): 155-172.; and Paul Keal, *Unspoken Rules and Superpower Dominance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 1983.

<sup>19</sup> Edy Kaufmann, *The Superpowers and their Spheres of Influence. The United States and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. (London: Croom Helm): 1976.



team for a certain purpose, such as promoting prosperity, reducing conflict or ensuring peaceful cooperation.

Between the leading countries influence projection is both cooperative as well as contesting and sometimes confrontational, as each power wants to act autonomously in its own sphere, which means the group of its allies and clients. In addition, there is a different set of policies within the sphere and outside the sphere. A different tone of policy emerges between the signatories of an institution or agreement, and between these signatories and the outsiders. Such recipe has applied to NATO, the Warsaw Pact, the EU, CSTO, and all other kinds of institutions.

International stability depends on the global equilibrium, global equilibrium depends on an equilibrium of the great powers' vital interests, and sphere of influence is a vital interest to every great power. Great powers cooperate with different kinds of allies, cultures, ethnicities, religions, political system, ideologies, as long as these are their allies or client states. In addition, this study argues that two types of spheres of influence exist: institutional and geographic. Since the Cold War and now in the post-Cold War era, the great powers tried to keep under control the confrontational posture with each other through law-making agreements, persuasive explanation and negotiations between the governments.

This study asserts that contemporarily the institutional influence is a network of interdependencies led by a power through either an economic integration or a military-defense integration which inevitably leads to political integration. The most important and successful key to establishing and maintaining this type of influence is the extent to which the authority is transferred to the rest of the influenced states by the leading country, certainly based on mutual relevance and gains. In the case of US-Russian spheres of influence, Russia's CIS, CSTO and EurAsEc, as well as the US-led NATO, European Union, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank, all represent mutual beneficial

integrations in addition to the sphere of influence for the leading country. Whereas the geographic influence refers basically to a set of bilateral relations between a power and other individual countries, especially if they are strategic bilateral cases or the most important events at the time. Ukraine is strategic bilateral relations for the US and vital for Russia. Whereas Syria is strategic for Russia and the US in terms of gaining an ally, and also vital for both in terms of dealing with the chaotic situation created in Syria, because the spill over effect of terrorism has consequences beyond just Middle East. Both the Ukrainian and Syrian crises are discussed in chapters five and six.

After World War II, the US started to establish the general setting of international interdependencies and the binding international rules in economic and security realms through a set of political, legal, military and economic institutions. Meanwhile, Russia though weaker continued to focus on spreading its influence in the strategic events of world politics, in order to prove its weight in the international politics, except for CIS, because this area is considered as Russia's backyard, rightfully and geographically its sphere of influence, just like the US' Monroe Doctrine<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, Russia's involvement with the countries non-friendly to the US has meant assertiveness to prove that it is a power that matters in the world affairs, rather than an anti-US or anti-Western policy. The perception or misperception as if one is running against the other is fuelled by the fact that each power, the US and Russia, (China too) aims to lead its relevant sphere of influence independently and unilaterally, attempting and assuming to have one another's subtle recognition. Neither the West nor the US is weaker, but it cannot bend the other powers to pursue its will, tune and interests, at some point it meets resistance from the other powers, whether Russia, or China.

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<sup>20</sup> Monroe Doctrine: In 1823, the US approved the sphere of influence for the first time, out of the concern that the Holy Alliance's (Austria, Russia and Prussia) involvement in the Spanish revolts would have a spill-over effect over Latin American countries. Then US President Monroe was forced to shift the American policy from non-interference in European problems to preventing Europe from interfering into the US' Latin American sphere of influence.

### 2.2.1 Aims of Sphere of Influence

This section discusses about the aims of the spheres of influence. Firstly, security and prestige are the paramount prerogatives of a great power position as such all the great powers are countries of sphere-of-influence personality. On one side, accepting sphere of influence stands against the international principles of sovereignty and non-interference, on the other side it is not possible to deny it because that is the practice of great powers in international politics. Paul Keal argues that despite the fact that sphere of influence is rightfully condemned for the practices and limitations it entails over the influenced states, it is necessary to understand and admit the sphere of influence play a role in the relations between the influencing powers.<sup>21</sup>

During the Cold War, security, prestige, deterrence and containment were the aims of NATO and Warsaw Pact. As the sphere of influence approach continued beyond the Cold War era, this study holds that the pendulum of sphere of influence between the US and Russia has oscillated between mutually assured security through full integration into the Western structures woven with contest for influence projection due to an autonomous leading position within their own spheres of interest. The oscillation lasted until when NATO offered alliance membership to the CIS countries, a theme which is discussed in the chapters four and five.

The central aim of the influence projection is political control, which can be either clear as in the Cold War's NATO-Warsaw Pact, or limited as in the participation of an external power into one's own sphere (Russia into Latin America or US into CIS), or insightful through flexible options of economic-military penetrations, technology, etc. Participation in an alliance or institution becomes defined in terms of national interests, and this is another aim of the leading power's influence projection. Such influence will mean gains, security, or prosperity along with constraints and limitations of states'

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Keal, "Contemporary Understanding about Spheres of Influence", *Review of International Studies*, 9: 3, (July 1983):171.

independence, because to a certain extent the policies of the member countries will need to be tailored according to the collective norms set up by the institution or alliance. Moreover, the secondary powers and other kinds of states, (small, weak, failed, or states in crisis) define their economic or security integration into international institutions as a national interest too.

Between the great powers, sphere of influence aims balance of interests or balance of threat with each other, and in that area of influence where one has predominance the other rival powers remain excluded. The influence projection over the Eastern and Western hemispheres, the nuclear deterrence during Cold War, Russia's strategic alliances and involvements in the global affairs as counterbalancing tactics to the US institutional influence through international institutions in the post-Cold War, are clear examples of influence projection between the US and Russia.

An issue of great importance here is the personalities. Personalities matter significantly in a country's internal and external orientation because they design the aims and the viable destinations of the intended spheres of influence. For instance, on the Russian side, during the Cold War, Khrushchev was a sphere of influence' orientation more than Gorbachev. Khrushchev approved the Brezhnev doctrine for the military intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in any other socialist country who would attempt to refuse the bloc's ideology, just like the Johnson doctrine allowed for military intervention in the Dominican Republic, and in any other Western hemisphere country which would try to associate itself with the socialist bloc. Though it was not openly admitted as sphere of influence, it was a tacit understanding not to interfere in how the US or USSR handled its relevant proxies. And in the post-Cold War, President Putin has been more attentive with the sphere of influence projects than Boris Yeltsin (July 10, 1991- December 31,1999) and Dmitry Medvedev (May 7, 2008-May 7, 2012). Compared to Yeltsin and Medvedev, Putin has been more determined to preserve CIS as Russia's unchallenged geopolitical

asset and demonstrate Russia's importance in global affairs. During the first post-Cold War administration under Yeltsin, Russia's primary objective of its foreign policy was complete integration within the Atlanticism structures and rules. However, although weaker, it did not lose sight of the Russian-led integrationist structures and peacekeeping forces in CIS. And when the US offered to participate with its own peacekeeping forces in Central Asia, Russia warned it off.<sup>22</sup> Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev in 1992, stated that, losing control over Central Asia would mean 'losing geopolitical positions that took centuries to conquer'.<sup>23</sup>

While on the American side, all the American administrations have been focused on the sphere of influence projects, the vision of sphere of influence has continued consistently since the end of World War II. The US continued to preserve the primacy over the Western hemisphere during and after the Cold War through a set of different policies, such as the policy of democracy advancement through NATO to protect the democracy and the club of democracies militarily if necessary, and through the EU to keep the club of European democracies united. This study points out that both the US and Russia, (including China) have carefully controlled their influence, in terms of acceptance to the international rules, and also in response to each other's behaviour.

Although there is a nuanced interpretation among the differing theoretical and comparative analysis, such as Edy Kaufmann<sup>24</sup>, Barry Buzan<sup>25</sup>, Suzanna Hast,<sup>26</sup> Hedley Bull<sup>27</sup> Paul Keal<sup>28</sup>, all the studies agree that: great powers have always assumed a managerial role over the international affairs and that such influence comes at the expense of the sovereignty and independence of the smaller states. Also, it is the influenced state the one that manoeuvres between the great powers. This study argues that sphere of

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<sup>22</sup> Suzanne Crowe, 'Russia asserts its strategic agenda', Research Report 2, RFE/RL, (17 December, 1993): 5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>24</sup> Kaufman, "The Superpowers and their Spheres," 1976.

<sup>25</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, "Regions and Powers: the Structure of International Security," (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Hast, "Spheres of Influence in International Relations, History, Theory and Politics," 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Hedley Bull, "The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics", First Edition, (New York: Palgrave): 1977.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Keal, "Unspoken Rules and Superpower Dominance," (London: Macmillan): 1983.

influence seems to be both a strategy and an approach. As a strategy it carves out the allies or the suitable destinations for a certain political design or plan, whereas as an approach it establishes the cause that unites a set of allies, it may be a threat, economic prosperity, military cooperation, in the form of treaty or agreement.

Also, sphere of influence comes very close to the integration theory. Integration theory has also been controversial because it proposes the merging of two or more states into a bigger entity, an institution, a bigger state, or a bigger community for a common purpose. As such it crosses the level of state's sovereignty, but it is associated the element of voluntary decision. Therefore sphere of influence comes very close to the integration theory. Regional integrations are advocated as political projects that bring better regional peace and prosperity. Behind the sphere of influence also stands such logic of integration. All forms of integrations (spheres of influence) benefit the leading regional or global power and the participating member countries in a certain integration, or sphere of influence for the country that leads it. In a treaty, integration, federalisation, or sphere of influence, there is interdependency by a huge network of activities. The mechanisms how states are convinced to be part of integration or sphere of influence ranges from voluntary participation to coercive measures.

In 1944-1945 Churchill declared that it would be good to establish a world order based on 'the predominance of the great powers in a particular regional bloc'<sup>29</sup>, this was an official admission that spheres of influence are operational. Also the Cuban missile crisis brought an understanding between the US and USSR in 1950s-1960s that the US would not intervene in Eastern Europe and the USSR would not intervene in the Latin Americas, which meant an understanding about acceptable code of conduct with regard to spheres of influence.<sup>30</sup> Another form of tacit understanding was demonstrated when the US did

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<sup>29</sup> Hedley Bull, "Society and Anarchy in International Relations", in *Super Powers And World Order*, edited by Carsten Holbraad, (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971):149.

<sup>30</sup>Paul Keal, 'Contemporary Understanding about Spheres of Influence', *Review of International Studies*, 9:3, (July 1983): 159.

not interfere with the Soviet military intervention in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, exchanged with the Soviet non-interference when the US' intervened militarily in Cuba in 1962 and in the Dominican Republic in 1965. During the Cold War era, the areas of interferences were clearer than currently in the post-Cold War.

Anatol Lievmen explains that at the end of the Cold War, the US was happy with the status quo, but not Russia.<sup>31</sup> While Zbigniew Brzezinski suggests that in Eurasia, as one of the zones where the US and Russia's interests clash, the US must make sure that no state or combinations of states gains the capacity to expel the United States from Eurasia or even to diminish significantly its decisive arbitrating role.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, an expanded NATO and a more assertive global role of the EU can serve as a trans-Eurasian system to counter the Russian ambitious desires.<sup>33</sup> While according to Stephen Cohen, America tried to keep down a weakened post-Soviet Russia because the US aimed permanent bases in Central Asia, independent access to Caspian Oil and gas, and NATO's expansion into several post-Soviet republics.<sup>34</sup>

In international politics, the patterns of war and insecurity remain woven with patterns of peace and stability. All states are legally equal in terms of sovereignty, but not equally powerful. Only the main powers are tested with the experience of high politics and sphere of influence. Another aim of sphere of influence is the posture in international affairs, within their relevant spheres of influence it means preponderance, outside the sphere it means deterrence and containment of the rivals. Concretely, the US among the Western countries and Russia among the CIS countries, both are in the position of leadership and are determined to maintain such posture. Neither the US nor Russia want to be challenged in areas where they possess clear predominance. Furthermore, within their relevant

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<sup>31</sup> Anatol Lievmen, "The Secret Policemen's Ball: The United States, Russia and the international order after 11 September", *International Affairs*, 78:2. (2002): 245-259.

<sup>32</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Interests*, (New York: Basic Books, 1997): 198.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 199-200.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen F. Cohen, "The new american cold war", *The Nation*, 10/7/2006.

sphere, the powers mostly do not establish influence based on coercion and force, but on an understanding that a great power contributes mostly to a common cause, as such it is granted special privileges and rights in terms of the leading role. Externally, the sphere of influence may mean mutually assured security, cooperation or rivalry with the world outside that sphere. This is dependable on the nature of the relationship between the great powers, and one's unilateral actions are a serious concern for the other.

Each, the US and Russia has been capable of keeping under control and within the necessary bounds the internal political disagreements within their relevant spheres of influence. Kenneth Waltz writes that 'states must rely on the means they can generate and the arrangements they can make for themselves'.<sup>35</sup> While in the book *Man, The State and War*, Waltz writes that 'Conflict and war result, since each state is judge on its own cause and can use force to carry out its judgments'.<sup>36</sup> This study agrees with Waltz's opinions and argues that sphere of influence remains a great powers' cause and judgment, to which they employ all the tools necessary to tailor it. This study argues that sphere of influence is an impressive, multifaceted and intertwined process between the influenced and the influence, it can prevent but it can also cause conflict and war. Cooperation for mutually assured security between the great powers can be an end in itself, sometimes a means to other objectives.

This study holds that stability of the world order (whatever the configuration of the power centres, bipolarity, multipolarity or hegemon) depends on the understanding between the main powers regarding their areas of influence, either concrete in agreements or subtle. And the regional/international order is shaken when the influence of a power is threatened, an issue currently going on between the US and Russia, a discussion that continues through the coming chapters.

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<sup>35</sup> See Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of World Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979): 111.

<sup>36</sup> See Kenneth Waltz, *Man, The State and War*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959): 159.



### 2.2.2 Determinants of the sphere of influence

This part elaborates on the determinants of sphere of influence for a deeper understanding of this strategy. This study defines three factors as the crucial determinants for any influence projection to be established, maintained or to serve as a basis for further expansion, which are the military component, the economic self-reliance and good neighbourhood policy. Not all countries can afford to project a sphere-of-influence, only the main powers of the system that aim to achieve and preserve a certain level of prestige in the international hierarchy can pursue such ambitious geopolitical designs.

Both the US and Russia (China too) have given specific attention to these three elements. Regarding the military component there is almost a strategic parity between the US and Russia. A high importance is accorded to each other because only these two powers have parity in nuclear weapons, quantitatively and qualitatively, classified as tactical and strategic weapons. Therefore, Cold War or post-Cold War, the US and Russia remain the only two countries who possess a military component sufficient enough to project influence through active engagement in world affairs wherever it suits their interests.

This study asserts that the pursuit for influence produces clash of interests and the clash of interests causes limitations to cooperation and differences that cannot be overridden. In terms of influence, Russia is present in CIS but more preferable as an ally in the Middle East, whereas the US is present in the Middle East but more preferable as an ally in CIS. Alexei Fernenko claims that there is a continuation of crises and a set of contradictions between these two countries at the political and military level trying to establish the strategic sphere, because of issues that cause apprehension to Russia.<sup>37</sup> While both the US and Russia have been assertive countries, after the Ukrainian revolution Russia's foreign policy has become more ambitious than prior to the Revolution.

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<sup>37</sup> Alexei Fernenko, "Prospects for the Development of Russian-American relations," *Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC)*, April 2013.

The previous agreements and negotiations to reduce the nuclear strategic deterrents came to an end after the Ukrainian revolution. And the previous mutually assured security has been prevailed by the conflict of interests over the different US-Russian projects for influence. According to Sergei Lavrov, the current Russian foreign minister, in the post-Cold War the US has practiced a second containment policy towards Russia, a policy that could mean a return to containment policy and would build the bloc approaches again.<sup>38</sup> Although global stability, mutually assured security and eradication of terrorism before it could spread any more dangerously than it already is, have been common interests for the US and Russia, these common fronts have been overlapped by the fact that each wants to pursue this according to its own terms, cooperative efforts and responsibilities but independent assessment of the situations for an independent self-interest.

In terms of economic reliance, sphere of influence and economy are closely linked for the influenced states as well as for the power who wields that influence, because through economy the great powers try to attract and inspire confidence upon their allies. It is not part of this study's discussion to analyse how the economic conditions, global currencies and commodities affect the US-Russian economies, but to highlight that economic strength is one of the determinants that establishes and sustains a sphere of influence, through agreements, institutions or bilaterally. Robert Keohane states that 'economics has become more cheerful, and politics has become gloomier'.<sup>39</sup> The US economy is considered as the "engine" of the world economy.<sup>40</sup> Economic enticements are used to deepen the ties between the US and its allies, Russia and its allies too. Russia relies on gas and oil to boost up its GDP, and US too, except for the currencies and trade relations with different countries. During the Cold War the US and USSR stressed self-reliance, a national economy based on domestic production and technology. The US' market

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<sup>38</sup> Sergei Lavrov, "Containing Russia: Back to the Future?" *Russia in Global Affairs*, 5: 4, (October-December 2007).

<sup>39</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984): 5.

<sup>40</sup> Stephane Dees and Arthur Saint-Guilhem, "The Role of the United States in the Global Economy and its Evolution Over Time," Working Paper Series, No 1034, *European Central Bank*, (March 2009): 7.

economy during and after the Cold War and international laissez-faire has been the US' economic course in the post-Cold War era. Whereas the USSR pursued a central economic planning and five-year plans controlled by the governments. In the post-Cold War, Russia preferred to cooperate with the West in terms of laissez-faire for economic prosperity, yet politically independent in its sphere of influence. As the Western economic cooperation with Russia was conditional upon Russia's transformation to democracy, Russia embraced the process of the transformation but not at the price of curtailing its position as a pole in the international affairs. The economic twists and turns that took place between EU, World Trade Organization and Russia raised the level of economic cooperation.

After the Ukrainian revolution by the end of 2013 the whole Western front approved economic sanctions against Russia, which compelled Russia to take a turn towards an autarkic self-reliant economy, emphasizing a reduction of the dependency on foreign products, technology, loans, and markets.<sup>41</sup> Also a stronger economic cooperation with China, ASEAN, BRICS, and other countries are practiced to balance the economic damage caused by such sanctions, to lessen the dependency on the Western economy, to maintain its economic influence upon its allies.

Economic self-development and capacity for self-reliance depends on capital, raw materials, markets and competitive edge for production of goods. However not all the countries with sufficient material and military strength pursue influence projection, only the major powers, but the US and Russia have always been countries of sphere-of-influence personality. Basically the Western advanced industrialized countries are led by the US, and CIS has somehow been led by Russia in terms of economy and security. The contemporary spheres of influence are constructed basically as integrations under the institutions. The institutions have set up the mutually assured security and benefits

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<sup>41</sup> "Western Sanctions Freeze Russia's Economic Growth, IMF Says," *The Moscow Times*, 1 July, 2014; Ariel Cohen, Ivan Benovic and James Robert, "Russia's Avoidable Economic Decline," Special Report, Heritage Foundation. September 17, 2014.

frameworks, led by a major power, but not without the consent of the participant countries or allies. Whereas to the leading power, such institutional influence means containment and deterrence of the peers.

In terms of neighbourhood relations, a good neighbourhood policy has been emphasized and strictly observed by every great power, together with the prevention of external interference into it, because the safety and security with the neighbouring countries is a direct sphere of influence for the great powers. The US has long stressed and pursued the Monroe Doctrine, since when it was outlined by the then Secretary of State John Quincy Adams in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Latin America and peaceful relations with the neighbouring countries, Canada and New Mexico have been cautiously preserved by all the US administration. While Russia's equal concern refers to the CIS region. Sergei Lavrov describes Russia's relations with CIS as unique relations based on 'civilizational unity' that comes from countries which used to be parts of the Russian empire or part of the USSR.<sup>42</sup> The US has settled predominance and peaceful relations with its neighbours, while Russia is struggling to obtain the same in CIS. This study argues that the neighbourhood sphere of influence is the key strategic doctrine for the great powers because it means status and buffer zone for security and influence. Whatever the circumstances that create and sustain it, wartime, peacetime or mutual benefit, attempts to curtail a power's interests and perimeters in such direct zone of influence, creates confrontational dimension between the great powers. While the three issues discussed in this study clearly prove this argument, it is a point being discussed in the coming chapters.

Constructing a sphere of influence requires both theory and real knowledge of the ongoing critical international affairs. Stephen M. Walt states that 'it is hard to make good policy if one's basic organizing principles are flawed, just as it is hard to construct good

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<sup>42</sup> Sergei Lavrov, "Russian Foreign Policy and the New Quality of the Geopolitical Situation", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, December 29, 2008,

theories without knowing a lot about the real world'.<sup>43</sup> Great world wars have happened because of a lack of agreement between the main powers on certain strategic areas of interests. These agreements have mainly related to, either wartime military cooperation or post-war peacetime settlements. The US has been against spheres of influence based on the belief that they would create hostile blocs that would play politics against the one another. Even in 1941, the US was against the British acceptance of the Soviet sphere of influence in the eastern Europe and of dividing Europe into two different blocs, which eventually proved to be hostile towards each other.<sup>44</sup> The US has constantly preferred and pursued the course of 'One World' in international politics based on the belief that spheres of influence mean coalitions hostile to each other. Other powers such as the British Empire, the Russian Empire, and even Germany during the two world wars did not share this belief. However, in dealing with Germany during the World War II, the then US President Theodore Roosevelt extended the defense of the Western hemisphere eastward, which the USSR found concerning.<sup>45</sup> In 1947, the Truman Doctrine presented the US-USSR conflict in terms of ideology, as a battle between freedom and communism. The Cuban missile crisis in 1962, set up a tacit agreement between Kennedy and Khrushchev that, non-USSR interference in Latin America exchanged for a non-US interference in Eastern Europe.<sup>46</sup> This study argues that the events of Cold War, prior to and before it, prove that it has been impossible to hold the balance between the interests of the main powers, and this because of spheres of influence.

In line with this current study, referring to the post-Cold War US-Russian spheres of influence, both the US and Russia are countries capable of intervening overtly and covertly in the national situations of different countries, and both have been in a continued

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<sup>43</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", *Foreign Policy*, 110, Special Edition: Frontiers of Knowledge, (Spring, 1998): 29.

<sup>44</sup> Albert Resis, "Spheres of Influence in Soviet Wartime Diplomacy", *The Journal of Modern History*, 53:3, (September 1981): 417-418.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Refer to Edy Kaufmann, *The Superpowers and their Spheres of Influence. The United States and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. 1976.

programme for acquiring influence, in Europe, Middle East and elsewhere. In addition, both have been players capable of demonstrating a significant and influential presence around the world affairs. The three case studies analysed here, namely, the NATO's reach towards CIS, the Ukrainian Revolution in 2013, and the Syrian Crisis in 2011, are visible evidence of the continuing sphere of influence mind-set.

Thus, regarding the countries' personality, for the great powers of different epochs, for the US and Russia too, sphere of influence has been an inseparable part of their foreign policies. The Russian discourse is concerned with Russia's role as a pole in international affairs. This objective has been adopted by all the Russian administrations and presidents when Russia was tsarist, imperialist, or Soviet. Also America on the other hand, has been ambitious about its position as a power since when it was established as country. Since the Monroe Doctrine time, until today, the US remains concerned with its powerful and potential position in the international configuration of power. Robert D. Kaplan argues that although democracy, human values, and cooperation are discussed as the main driving elements of the foreign policies of countries, what is really going on in the world is a "struggle over geographic spheres of influence to the same extent it has been in former ages."<sup>47</sup>

The current study demonstrates that not only during the Cold War but even in the post-Cold War, the American and Russian administrations have seen the competing interests between them in terms of zero-sum thinking, one's gain means another's loss, and no mutually assured security treaty, forum or framework has ever been sufficient to overcome this perception. In every region, especially Europe and Middle East, the US and Russia have conflicting interests over the security and economic matters, because each aims self-interest. The difference stems from the fact that, contrary to the anarchy in the Middle East, Europe is united, consisting of the most advanced industrially countries,

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<sup>47</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, "Geography Rules: It's All About Spheres of Influence," *STRATFOR Global Intelligence*, August 21, 2013, <https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/geography-rules-its-all-about-spheres-ofinfluence>, (accessed: July 8, 2015).

and an important shoulder through which the influence of the major powers can be projected and strengthened.

This study asserts that significant geopolitical changes are occurring in the Middle East, Europe, CIS, and Asia, with Russia dedicating specific attention to carving out its own sphere of influence, and the US carving out the strength of its hegemony. This whole scenario, the events within, and the three case studies analysed in the other chapters, highlight the US-Russian great game for spheres of influence. Here, many discourses depict the West as weakened, and the current world order as shaken. Instead, this study argues that the West has not become weaker, but it cannot bend or curtail the vital and strategic interests of the capable rivals, Russia or China. Therefore, reciprocity and mutually assured security amidst the contest for geographic and institutional influence are deemed as necessary for a positive two-way US-Russia relationship.

### **2.3 US-Russia's Influence Projection**

In the contemporary US-Russian pursuit for spheres of influence, each of these two countries perceives its sphere of influence as a legitimate geopolitical vision. Although the US denies and refuses sphere of influence as a present paradigm in world politics, the idea of having no-peers in the international configuration of power reflects American influence projection in world politics. According to Robert Kagan, “to promote and defend a liberal world order has been a concerted effort not to accept the world “as it is”, and this has been the focal point of the American project since the Roosevelt and Truman administrations.<sup>48</sup> Kagan further asserted that the current world order is shaken, not “because the world has become more complex and intractable, because the world is

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<sup>48</sup> Robert Kagan, “Superpowers Don’t Get to Retire: What our tired country still owes the world”, *New Republic*, March 26, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/117859/allure-normalcy-what-america-still-owes-world>, accessed: July 5, 2015.

always complex and intractable', but it has to do with an intellectual problem, a question of identity and purpose."<sup>49</sup>

The Cold War has been analysed from different angles, but this study argues that it was a war of geopolitics caused by a clash of spheres of influence between the main powers of the time. Certainly the ideology was at the centre of the sphere of influence because it shaped the political and economic pattern of ideas and activities to the US' and the USSR's institutions. The democratic and the socialist ideas behind the US' and USSR's rhetoric shaped the 'us' and 'them' blocs, but the US and USSR were firstly concerned with the political and territorial control over the spoils of the WWII in Eastern and Western Europe. Democracy and communism were only the ideological outlook of the role they wanted to assume in the security of Eastern and Western Europe and Germany.

The US-Russian mutual assertiveness for an influential role in the international affairs during and after the Cold War, their desire for cooperative bilateral relations have been caught up with the competition for influence at the critical cross-purpose points, whether these be proxies or institutions. This study argues that the contest for influence, while it is a pattern of the US-Russian relations, it has always taken place in the format of one's strategic patience and prudence versus the other's strategic advances. Contemporarily the world system is trilateral, consisting of US, Russia and China. The US is in pursuit of hegemony, China is in pursuit of economic influence expansion, while Russia is in pursuit of influence expansion through strengthening its military means.

Between the US and the USSR or the US and Russia, the pursuit for influence has been a constant foreign policy objective. Despite the strategies adopted by both to create a common political assessment for the common international problems, the competition for influence has remained a confrontational dimension of this bilateral affair. The same

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.



principle applies in the relations with China as well, another country with great power ambitions that is cooperative as well as firm in maintaining the relevant orbit of influence. The US-Russia rivalry for influence is manifested in their different approaches and choices to affect the geopolitical distribution of power in Europe, the Middle East, CIS and elsewhere in order to carve out their influence projection. Robert Kagan strengthened his argument about the pursuit for hegemonic power, by stating that, “a liberal world order, like any world order, is something that is imposed, and as much as we in the West might wish it to be imposed by superior virtue, it is generally imposed by superior power.”<sup>50</sup> Whereas according to Jeremy Shapiro, currently, “conflict between great powers is only inevitable if the United States behaves as great powers in the past and seek to deny rising powers what they feel is their due. Spheres of influence, in contrast, have the capacity to make great powers feel more secure and to increase their willingness to cooperate within the larger liberal order.”<sup>51</sup>

This study considers sphere of influence as the great powers’ geopolitical scheme in the hierarchy of states, through the structural relations among the great powers, secondary powers and other smaller, weaker states. A sphere of influence also sets up the insiders and outsiders within an institution, integration or cooperation to control it, together with, an identity, a geopolitical belonging and a political rationality for the power who leads it. The end of the Cold War was elaborated as the end of the great powers’ policy of openly linking the sphere of influence policy with national security. However, it never ceased and the Ukrainian revolution in 2013 revived it in its clear visible form again. The discussion of this argument follows in chapters four and five.

This chapter outlines a background about the sphere of influence as a concept in order to understand the US-Russian relations, specifically in the post-Cold War era, because

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Jeremy Shapiro, “Defending the defensible: the value of spheres of influence in the U.S. foreign policy,” *Order from Chaos Foreign Policy in a Troubled World*, March 11, 2015, available at <http://www.Brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/03/11-defending-indefensible-spheres-of-influence-us-foreign-policy-shapiro>, (accessed: July 5, 2015).

the central argument of this study is that sphere of influence remains a pattern of US-Russian bilateral relations and every other bilateral or multilateral great powers' relations. Historically, all the great powers of different eras, since the time of Ancient Greeks, and Romans', until the contemporary powers like the US and Russia, have been involved in a continuous attempt to secure the sphere's cooperation with one's own position. Until the end of the Cold War, the great powers attempted to establish their domination over certain regions either at the point of a gun or through legally imposed means. After World War II, the remaining and emerging powers (US, UK, Britain, France, Japan) tried to minimize the confrontation at the great power's level through legal institutions and persuasive negotiations among the governments. The heavy destruction that the world war caused on the great powers' territories, populations, economies and militaries compelled the victorious powers to pursue their spheres of influence through an equilibrium of their interests and collective decision making for global issues rather than through direct confrontation with each other in order to minimize the chances of another direct great powers' conflict.

During the Cold War, between the US as the leader of the Western hemisphere and the USSR as the leader of the Eastern hemisphere, a series of institutions and agreements took place to keep under control each other's advances in influence projection, but also to prevent the disagreements and especially direct confrontations between these two main powers. Bobo Lo holds that great powers consider themselves as the self-appointed guardians of the international system'.<sup>52</sup> After the Cold War, the whole geopolitical landscape in which the US and Russia continued their projects for influence changed, and it is discussed in detail in the coming chapters. This study argues that the accommodation of spheres of influence in the international system evolved from the direct warfare in the past into the law-making institutions and agreements to complement better the bridge

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<sup>52</sup> Bobo Lo, "Russia: the Eastern Dimension." in *Russia: The Challenges of Transformation*, edited by Piotr Dutkiewicz and Dmitri Trenin, (New York: Social Science Research Center & New York University Press, 2011): 308-402.

between strategic reciprocity in the mutually assured security and the contest for spheres of influence.

The data collected for this research has focused on a purposeful gathering of sufficient and relevant events to provide an understanding about how the sphere-of-influence concept has been applied in the US-Russian bilateral relations through highlighting the key evidences that clearly illustrate the trajectory of sphere-of-influence. Conducting this research meant weighing one set of facts against another, because while it is being pursued by all the US and Russian administrations, it is also denied as an approach and denied to the other in the form of containment or parity. As such, this study is an attempt to offer some degree of clarification over sphere of influence as an existing paradigm of international relations and its pursuit by the US and Russia in the post-Cold War era.

#### **2.4 Russia's Conduct of Sphere of Influence**

This section elaborates on the Russian sphere of influence thinking. Firstly, in relation to the central theme of this study, both the Russian and American administrations have followed the sphere of influence paradigm for as long as these two countries have been great powers in the configuration of the international system, however the scope of this study is limited to Cold War and post-Cold War only. When the Cold War was established with the 'secret percentages agreement' between Stalin and Churchill, it meant an agreement for the lines between the US' influenced democratic states and the USSR's influenced socialist states. Whereas in the post-Cold War, "Russia's great power ambitions have been questioned in many Western discourses, along with Moscow's claims to have an upper hand in the post-Soviet Eurasia as a precondition for effective relations with the EU and NATO".<sup>53</sup> Both the American and Russian foreign policy makers adopted different policies to maintain, preserve and defend their relevant arc of

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<sup>53</sup> Andrey Makarychev, "Inside Russia's Foreign Policy Theorizing: A conceptual Conundrum," *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 21: 2, (2013): 254.

satellites and allies. This study is of the opinion that deterrence, containment, mutually assured destruction, and ideologies, these were all the mechanisms to serve the US-USSR's relevant spheres, NATO and Warsaw Pact. Each claimed the defense and internationalization of its own ideology.

Hungary tried to break away from the USSR in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. Due to these two uprisings within the Soviet bloc, the Brezhnev Doctrine was articulated and implemented which represented the Russian version of the American Monroe Doctrine, to prevent outside forces hostile to the USSR from interfering in this sphere; to limit the sovereignty of the communist countries; and to inform others that the USSR will defend its sphere even by military means.<sup>54</sup> Such policy remained in power until 1980s. The USSR's area was not a sphere, but its influence over Eastern Europe and other communist countries in the world, under the leadership of Stalin and Khrushchev included the use of military and economic pressures to prevent the internal dissolution and external interference, and to ensure the foreign policies of the communist countries remain in the context of the USSR's interests.

When looking at the Eastern and Western spheres, it becomes clear that both the US and the USSR adopted the same kinds of policies to maintain the leadership over their allies, through economic means to expand their ideology into each other's sphere, such as, the USSR in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua; and the US in search of anti-communist resistance movements among the different communist countries in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. Although Khrushchev preferred to tighten the influence over the sphere of influence even by military means if necessary, and Gorbachev preferred a more liberal approach of economics and relations within the Soviet area of

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<sup>54</sup> Brezhnev Doctrine was basically an article written in September 1968, titled "Sovereignty and the International Obligations of the Socialist Countries". It was articulated in response to the two uprisings in Hungary and Poland, which threatened the cohesiveness of the Soviet bloc, for this purpose, the Soviet Union signed agreements with other eastern European countries to ensure neither the communist government nor the Soviet influence would be threatened. Brezhnev Doctrine remained until 1980 when Gorbachev refused to use force in Poland's elections in 1980s, 1989s, and then the rest of the East European countries and the former USSR new states.

influence, the sphere of influence project was central to the attention of both these leaders and their administrations.

Gorbachev's leadership in the 1980s adopted the policy of New Thinking, referring to *restructuring (perestroika)* and *openness (glasnost)*, the opposite of the 1968's Brezhnev Doctrine. Unlike the Brezhnev doctrine, Gorbachev doctrine meant to strengthen the internal cohesion of the socialist countries through more open and cooperative initiatives with the Western world, and more freedom among the socialist countries in order to strengthen the internal cohesion of the socialist client states around the USSR. Both the US and the USSR intervened militarily when they perceived a threat or a vulnerability to their spheres of influence. To achieve the hegemonic position within their relevant spheres, they made use of ideology, nuclear deterrence, covert and overt operations in the internal affairs of different countries, and strategies to cause a balance or imbalance in the contest between their spheres of influence.

During the Gorbachev administration and the first year of Boris Yeltsin's tenure in office, the USSR/Russia took a turn towards a pro-integration and cooperation with the Western institutions and ideas. By 1991, then president Yeltsin initiated the policy of integrating Russia with the democratic countries. Nevertheless, Russia also continued to assert its influence in the former Soviet area. The post-Soviet area was secondary to this purpose, and CIS countries were treated not as foreign, but rather independent countries.<sup>55</sup> But between March and December 1992, the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation issued statements of different tone and context.<sup>56</sup> The March 1992 draft stressed an orientation towards Atlanticism, whereas the December draft stressed the importance of the CIS for Russia's status and prestige, together with special attention to the Russians and Russian-speaking people.<sup>57</sup> The continuity of sphere of influence strategy is

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<sup>55</sup> Stephen Page, "The Creation of a Sphere of Influence: Russia and Central Asia," *International Journal*, 49:4, (Autumn, 1994): 789.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 799.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 799-780.

expressed in the words of the chair of the Committee for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations, Evgenii Ambartsumov,

“As the internationally recognized legal successor to the USSR, the [Russian Federation] must proceed in its foreign policy from a doctrine declaring all the geopolitical space of the former Union as a sphere of its vital interests (like the 'Monroe Doctrine' of the USA in Latin America), and must seek the world community's understanding and recognition of its [special] interests in this space. Russia must also seek from the world community the role of political and military guarantor of stability on the whole former space of the USSR’.<sup>58</sup>

Although the Cold War was an era of acceptable spheres of influence between the two superpowers, the post-Cold War spheres of influence have been characterized by continuity and confusion between unipolarity and multipolarity. The US remains the central leading power, yet other powers, like Russia, China, Japan, and even EU have also tried to reassert their privileges within their regional alignments. A set of frameworks for mutually assured security was attempted through NATO-Russia Council, EU-Russia good relations, and negotiations about the missile defense. Although the geopolitical landscape and the currents within it changed the strategy of spheres of influence continued for both the US and Russia. Dmitry Trenin describes Russian policy as “an ambition to become a full-fledged world power, one of a handful of more or less equal players in the twenty-first century.”<sup>59</sup>

After the Syrian crisis and the Ukrainian revolution, as well as the NATO's declared intent of offering membership to the CIS countries, Russia changed its foreign policy attitude, more assertive and determined to defend its geopolitical assets. It felt compelled to establish new economic-security relationships with the CIS countries and outside this region to stabilize its threatened position in the CIS and the Middle East. NATO's reach into CIS is viewed as a threat by Russian policy makers, but also as a vulnerability that might be exploited in a threatening manner in the future. To counter this Russia kept

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<sup>58</sup> See Stephen Page, “The Creation of a Sphere of Influence: Russia and Central Asia,” *International Journal*, 49: 4, (Autumn, 1994): 788-813.

<sup>59</sup> Dmitry Trenin, “Russia's Sphere of Interests, not Influence”, *The Washington Quarterly*, 32: 4, (2009), p.4.

consolidating its position in the CIS through the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015, and the Cooperative Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), an issue discussed in detail in chapter four. Meanwhile the US and West perceive Russian assertiveness as a vulnerability to the current order and the international 'rules of the game'. Vulnerabilities in the great powers' spheres of influence bring forth a manifestation of the military forces. The actions of the US and Russia for influence projection in the CIS, Ukraine and Syria are not about territorial demands, but about recognition of their influence. In trying to make sense of these events, to relate them with the US-Russian bilateral relations, not all facts are of equal weight. However, just like during the Cold War also in the post-Cold-War era, it has become paramount to contain Russia's threat to the Western world order. James Goldgeier advocates for a revised containment strategy towards Russia with a focus on a stronger NATO and stronger Ukraine, in order to prevent the current Russian administration from threatening what the Western front has achieved throughout the Cold War and post-Cold War eras.<sup>60</sup> As this study argues, it is not about a new Cold War, or East-West ideologies, it is about great powers' sphere of influence.

## **2.5 US' Conduct of Sphere of Influence**

This section illustrates the US pursuit for sphere of influence strategy. According to the official pronouncements the US has rejected the notion of sphere of influence. Yet many scholars like John J. Mearsheimer in his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* states that since 1823 America asserted its economic and security dominance firstly within the neighbouring Latin America region. The then US President James Monroe and the Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams declared the Monroe Doctrine when almost all the Spanish and Portuguese colonies were gaining independence. According to David A. Lake, the Monroe doctrine meant "to prevent the rise of enemies and hostile alliances

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<sup>60</sup> James Goldgeier, "To Contain Russia, the U.S. Should Return to Cold War Policies", *New Republic*, Foreign Policy Blog, November 7, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/120140/25-years-after-fallberlin-wall-new-containment>.

on its own borders.”<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, this doctrine also meant to prevent the European countries’ intervention in North and South America in exchange for a non-American interference in the European affairs.

Subsequent US administrations have maintained and followed this doctrine, sometimes even advancing it. By 1919, President Roosevelt declared the Monroe Doctrine to be the central point of the new international order, by which the US could exert influence over the entire Western hemisphere.<sup>62</sup> The Monroe Doctrine has been invoked whenever a threat has emerged, either in terms of the communism subversion in the Cold War or an external penetration into this US’ sphere of influence. Even as recently as the Obama-Kerry team, mutual relations and stronger ties with Latin America’s Organization of American States (OAS) have been emphasized by American officials. Among a plethora of proponents and opponents of the US’ influence projection, Noam Chomsky has criticized the international institutions such as the World Bank, and IMF, for being institutions that determine the fate of others.<sup>63</sup> While Henry Kissinger, Samuel P. Huntington, Stanley Hoffman in the works being mentioned in the literature review, claim the need to strengthen the US leadership of the Western Hemisphere and the need to expand Western Hemisphere for it spreads democracy, human rights and economic interdependence.

However, the integration of a number of states into different institutions and treaties have also highlighted the dividing lines between insiders and outsiders, and the different policies for the signatories and non-signatories. Several other important doctrines put forth by various US administrations highlight the sphere of influence pursuit. For instance, in 1947 the Truman administration outlined the battle between the US and USSR

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<sup>61</sup> David A. Lake, “American Hegemony and the Future of East-West Relations”, *International Studies Perspective* (ISP) 7, ISP Policy Forum: Hard and Soft Power in East-West Relations, (2006); 27.

<sup>62</sup> Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, “No Other Gods Before Me: Spheres of Influence In The Relationship Between Christianity and Islam,” *Denver Journal International Law. & Policy*, 33:2, (2004-2005): 229.

<sup>63</sup> Tyler Durden, “Noam Chomsky: The Idea Of A Media Which Does Not Repeat US Propaganda Is Intolerable To American Leaders,” *Zero Hedge News*, 20/04/2015, <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/201504-20/noam-chomsky-idea-media-which-does-not-repeat-us-propaganda-intolerable-american-lea>.



in terms of the battle between communism and democracy, emphasizing that the US would be the leader of the free world and would defend it even by force if necessary. Under the Truman administration, the Economic Cooperation Act known as the Marshall Plan was the economic package that sustained and supported the American leadership and influence in the coalition of the countries pursuing the free world ideology. In terms of how to deal with internal instability, the US was as determined as the USSR to prevent the countries of the democratic bloc to ally with the USSR. After the US' intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965, another US doctrine adopted by the Lyndon Johnson's administration declared that the internal affairs of a Western hemisphere country that intends to establish a communist regime, will not be treated as an internal matter but as a threat to the US and Western hemisphere. Also in 1980s the doctrine of Jimmy Carter's administration was established, when President Carter announced to Congress the affirmation that Iran was a US' sphere of influence by stating that "[a]n attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."<sup>64</sup> The Carter administration's policy in the 1980s even employed a Rapid Deployment Force to defend the US' interests around the Iran's area against the Soviet Union, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.<sup>65</sup> Because both Saudi Arabia and Iran were important to the US for oil reason, the US wanted to prevent the Soviets from gaining a strategic role in these two areas. The doctrine adopted by the Ronald Reagan administration in 1981-1990 brought about the closure of the Cold War. During the last decade of the Cold War, the US was deeply involved in supporting the anti-communist groups in the communist countries in Asia,

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<sup>64</sup> Address before a Joint Session of Congress, 23 January 1980, Department of State Bulletin, 80, No. 2035, (February 1980).

<sup>65</sup> Transcript: Jimmy Carter, "Crisis of Confidence", 15 July 1979, The Carter Center, available at [www.cartercenter.org/news/editorials\\_speeches/crisis\\_of\\_confidence.html](http://www.cartercenter.org/news/editorials_speeches/crisis_of_confidence.html).

Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe in order to reduce the Soviet influence and roles in these regions.<sup>66</sup>

The American support for anti-communist resistance movements in different pro-Soviet countries was even associated with the military and political support for these movements. Furthermore, the Soviet bloc's inner cohesion had been seriously fractured. All these factors contributed to the end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the USSR and Warsaw Pact. Although discussed in greater details in Chapter Three, this section highlighted a significant part of the trajectory of sphere-of-influence personality through the different doctrines articulated and implemented by the US' administrations. David A. Lake argues that "US has invested in authority and used it effectively to manage its relations with other states, establishing regional hegemonies over Latin America in the late nineteenth century and the so-called West (including Northeast Asia) after 1945."<sup>67</sup> Authority is influence. After the Cold War, the US focused in strengthening its institutional influence through regional integrations.

Among all the US administrations, despite the different circumstances, necessities and responses to international events, and the rivals' behaviour, the sphere of influence has been the most persistent strategy of American foreign policy. The same can be said of Russia, (and the USSR). This study asserts that at the academic level, it has been suggested the US to recognize the Russian Monroe Doctrine, while at the policy-making level this is denied and rejected. Furthermore this study determines that sphere of influence is a mechanism of political control through institutions, agreements, or ideologies. During the Cold War, both the US and USSR implemented institutional and geographical influence through NATO and Warsaw Pact militarily, Council for Mutual

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<sup>66</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler & David S. Painter, *Origins of the Cold War: An International History (Rewriting Histories)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (New York: Routledge): 2005.

<sup>67</sup> David A. Lake, "American Hegemony and the Future of East-West Relations," *International Studies Perspective (ISP)*, ISP Policy Forum: Hard and Soft Power in East-West Relations 7, (2006): 25-26.

Economic Assistance and European Community economically, along with other bilateral and regional agreements.

Contemporarily in the post-Cold War, the first George H. Bush administration proclaimed the doctrine of the 'New World Order', an American-centred international system emphasizing internationalization of the liberal trade and democracy. When there were constraints to power to pursue an American-led international order, neoconservatives pursued the strategy of 'assertive unilateralism'.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, this study argues that to pursue the crucial national interests that relate to sphere of influence, both the US and Russia have manifested assertiveness. This discussion continues further in chapter four, but this chapter illustrated that the sphere of influence strategy has been equally pursued by both these countries.

## **2.6 Contemporary US-Russian Spheres-of-Influence**

Although the sphere of influence as a notion has been officially denied, this study has highlighted the evidences, doctrines and events that prove and manifest the aim of the great powers for hegemonic rights within their relevant spheres or their set of allies and influenced states. As a strategy a sphere of influence on one side demands some rights and control over the influenced states. On the other side, it is a mixture of mutual benefits, mutual cause, goodwill as well as a degree of imposed consensus. In the current bilateral US-Russian relations the confrontational or cooperative stance relates to the influence projection, each is trying to manifest the strength of its influence. Paul Keale explained that "Where the boundaries of the respective spheres will ultimately lie depends largely on the strength of the influence already established and on the adversaries' perceptions of the risk involved in bettering that influence."<sup>69</sup> The American expansion of its influence projection led to other kinds of acts by Russia, reactions that have significance and

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Keale, "Contemporary Understanding about the Spheres of Influence", *Review of International Studies*, 9: 3, (Jul., 1980) p. 165.

implications for the relationship between these two countries. Although not every area of intervention may lead to an expansion of influence projection, between the US and Russia, Europe and the Middle East have always been contesting arenas for influence, power and authority. According to James Sherr, “Cold War was the result not the reason of East-West discord. It started because the fundamental interests were in dispute and ended when they ceased to be in dispute.”<sup>70</sup>

The aftermath of the Ukrainian Revolution 2014 arose a confrontational posture in which each blames the other for destroying the current rules, thus calling to act in its own interests. James Nixey describes such situation as “Russia may have the greater interest in Ukraine. But the West has an even bigger interest in preserving the post-Cold War environment.”<sup>71</sup> The issues chosen in this study refer to the clear exercise of security, influence and contest. These are also issues on which the US and Russia are hardly in harmony because they mean acceptable or unacceptable influence accorded to each other, which has resulted in a strategic rivalry. Neither Russia has given up its influence policy and preserving the post-Soviet space as its rightful sphere of influence, nor the US its hegemonic status and preventing any challenge to its status in the Western hemisphere.

In the current state of the US-Russian relations, which is the main subject of this study, the US and Russia are involved in incompatible strategic influence in Ukraine, Syria and NATO’s entrance into the CIS. Sergei Karaganov explained the current propaganda and disagreements between the US and Russia as “based on misunderstandings and miscalculations due to a stand-off over Ukraine. To Russians it is something far more important: a struggle to stop others expanding their sphere of control into territories they believe are vital to Russia.”<sup>72</sup> On the other side, the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, and the EU officials like Jose Manuel Barroso and Herman van Rompuy have declared

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<sup>70</sup> James Sherr, “A War of Narration and Arms,” in Keir Giles *et. al.*, *The Russian Challenge*, Report, Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs (RUSI), London, (June 2015): 31-32.

<sup>71</sup> James Nixey, “Russian Foreign Policy towards the West and Western Responses”, in Keir Giles *et. al.*, *The Russian Challenge*, Report, Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London) (June 2015): 39.

<sup>72</sup> Sergei Karaganov, “Western delusions triggered this conflict and Russians will not yield,” *The Financial Times*, September 14, 2014.

Russia's behaviour as unacceptable for the current international system. Joe Biden in his 2009 statement in Ukraine, stated that 'Big nations should not be allowed to bully the small- and I want to reiterate it-any sphere of influence. We do not recognize anyone else's right to dictate you (Ukraine) or any other country what alliances you will seek to belong to or what bilateral relationships you will have'.<sup>73</sup>

As it has been officially admitted that spheres of influence existed during the Cold War but ended with it, this study extends this argument into highlighting that both the US and Russia have continued with the sphere of influence articulations even in the post-Cold War era. This is manifested in the attempts of Russia's institutions (i.e., CIS and CSTO) to establish ties with NATO and SCO, despite rejections by both China and the US, because of American concerns that such participation would have granted international acceptance to the CIS and CSTO, and the Chinese concerns that such participation would grant Russia heavier influence than China. Therefore Cold War or not, the US-Russian relations are confrontational rather than cooperative because both sides are pursuing sphere of influence strategy. And this objective is not to be subordinated on the events that happen in the international affairs. Rather, according to this study, whatever goes on in the international relations has to be subordinated to the opportunity to strengthen, maintain and expand areas of influence, as far as the American and Russian perspectives are concerned. Both countries' political will to resolve the controversial issues clashes with their geopolitical priorities to maintain their respective spheres of influence and their current status. Between the great powers, this cycling of rivalry for influence and mutually assured stability has been a recurrent theme

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<sup>73</sup> John Wendle, 'Biden's Balancing Act in Georgia and Ukraine', *Time*, July 24, 2009.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a descriptive-analytical assessment of the sphere of influence concept and its application in the US-Russian foreign policies. Although the role and significance of the sphere of influence will be subject to modification as further evidence comes in, also many questions will arise through the arguments put forth in this study, only an equilibrium of the great powers' vital interests can promote a meaningful international stability. Every Western-Russian mutually assured security is conditional upon recognizing the other's status and privileges in their sphere of influence. To manoeuvre a compromise between the US and Russia in the three events analysed in this study remains very much prone to the strategic reciprocity and ability to address a delicate balance of status and prestige between these two countries.

International politics, as well as the great powers' politics and sphere of influence remain complex scenarios. Therefore making accurate predictions is impossible, especially as new crises, events and rivalries keep unfolding. In attempting to contextualize the role that sphere of influence plays in the contemporary US-Russian relations, this study asserts that both the US and Russia are countries of sphere-of-influence personalities, possessing distinct geographical and institutional influence, and each is extremely concerned about the perceived vulnerabilities and encroachments. Furthermore, in the issues discussed herein, the main rival within one's sphere is the other. For the US it is Russia, and for Russia it is the US. To make the connection with the post-Cold War US-Russian spheres of influence, this study examines first the US-USSR' spheres of influence during the Cold War, which is the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3: THE US-USSR COLD WAR SPHERES OF INFLUENCE: NATO & WARSAW PACT



### Map 3.1: US-USSR MAP<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Online at: <http://www.glogster.com/maddiebernard/warsaw-pact/g-6ll0rsgsm9fq6k0qibfgta0>.

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a conceptual and analytical assessment about the history of the US-USSR's geopolitical rivalry during the Cold War. This chapter examines the rivalry for influence projection between NATO and Warsaw Pact on behalf of the US and USSR. Both NATO and Warsaw Pact represented two spheres of influence, the political-military leadership of these two superpowers in their respective zones of influence, as well as the contest for influence between the two. Although the Cold War history is too broad with literature, events, theories, and concepts, this chapter gives attention to the central turning points that relate to sphere of influence evidences, basically: the shift from post-Second World War Four-Powers' alliance against Germany into the Cold War's US-USSR disagreements about how to handle the situation in Germany; the US-USSR spheres of influence manifested through the division of Germany and Berlin, the creation of NATO and Warsaw Pact to highlight that through these two institutions the US and USSR carved out their spheres of influence in Europe and beyond; the internal management of NATO and Warsaw Pact by each superpower; few other crises significant for influence between the US and USSR; and the end of the Cold War.

Although there were many crises and conflicts that intensified and prolonged the US-USSR confrontation, this study asserts that the divided Germany was the most crucial asset and vulnerability for the superpowers' influence because the Cold War started with the Germany's division and ended with the Germany's unification. It was an event that was directly linked with the contest for influence. Attempts to diminish or curtail the influence of a rival creates contest for influence and attempts to diminish the deterrent power of a rival imbalances the strategic military posture between two rivals. Both these kinds of curtailment took place by the superpowers to gain edge over the other.

Therefore, this chapter examines the NATO-Warsaw Pact relations as the institutional influence that created and sustained the US-USSR spheres of influence throughout the



entire Cold War era, and everything else was a means to this end. The rest of the policies such as deterrence, strategic stability, containment, and economic aid plans were to serve and maintain these institutions, these spheres of influence.

### **3.2 The Post-WWII Status of US-USSR Relations**

This section introduces the change of the configuration of power in the international system from the Second World War to the start of Cold War, and the division of Europe into two different zones of influence between the US and USSR. From the data collected, it was noticed that in different periods of the history, the great powers of the time have been regrouped into pacts and agreements to rival or balance one another's power. For centuries the regional orders have been products of peace and war between the great powers, orders in which the substance of dispute and peace depended on the major powers' spheres of influence. The Concert of Europe settled in Vienna maintained the peace among the six European Powers, Russia, Germany, Austria, France, England and Italy for almost a century, until when diplomacy could no longer work and the flexibility of the system broke off because of different alliances and coalitions that the Powers created to defend their positions in the security of Europe versus each other. There was Triple Entente and a French-Russian alliance but the contest about military strength and which major Power or coalition would control the whole European continent; the contest among each other over who will control Central Europe, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, or the Balkans from the Turks, led the European powers towards the warfare machinery. As the equilibrium of the vital interests between the Powers broke of the system of diplomacy, each country started to prepare its military strength and initiate battles to defend or advance its posture. By the end of such military turmoil, Germany, Austria and Russia were badly wounded, Britain stood in a better shape than these three Powers.

Prior to the First World War, it was Germany the weakened Power whose geopolitical ambition to become the hegemon of Europe had been revived again. The League of Nations was another Great Powers' concert to manage their own geopolitical games, to contain Germany's military strength and ambitions, the will of the German leadership to unite the divided German minorities in the countries hosting them even by force if necessary, such as in Austria and Czechoslovakia, and to prevent Germany's rearmament. For this purpose the Western Powers of France, Britain and US conducted a number of treaties, articles, diplomatic manoeuvres, but the US did not ratify neither the Treaty of Versailles nor the League of Nations. As Germany started its military advancements against France and the Great Britain, the Soviet Union had the eyes on the Central and Eastern Europe, the European order shaken. In the period between the two world wars the six central great powers, the US, USSR, Great Britain, Germany, France and Japan started strengthening their militaries and compete for the best peace frame in Europe. Between 1919 and 1939, these major international powers ended up into two different hostile coalitions, Germany, Italy and Japan on one side, Soviet Union and France on the other side. The Soviet-French Pact was mostly based on a common concern about the territorial expansionist aims of the Fascist Powers (Germany, Italy, Japan) rather than due to the will of being allies.<sup>2</sup>

Britain which had always played a central role in European politics, at the moment of these two opposing coalitions preferred a cautious neutrality policy. Germany, on the other side, was dissatisfied with the post-WWI settlements, and by 1935 it was asserting for more rights and freedom from the obligations set up by the League of Nations. In addition, in 1935 Germany made a pact with Japan to counter the Soviet-French agreement. With the rise of NAZI, Germany's assertiveness and aggressiveness enhanced, manifesting itself in a series of invasions into Poland, Czechoslovakia and

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<sup>2</sup> See John L. Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security*, 10: 4, (Spring, 1986): 99-142.

Austria, to conquer Europe by force. The Soviet Union wanted to avoid war with Germany, so it signed a non-aggressive pact with Germany in 1939. However in 1941 Germany attacked Soviet Union, a war with huge casualties and destruction on both sides, and it was the war that defeated and removed Germany as a great power from the European political scene. Germany attempted in two world wars to be the hegemon of the European sphere. It failed in both and by 1945 it was in ruins and divided. This brief history of the major events of peace and war between the Great Powers proves that every organization, alliance and institution that has been established to keep under control the geopolitical ambitions of the Powers has been ineffective. Because dominance, military strength and sphere of influence are competing strategies of the Powers that prevail over any form of mutually assured security. The configuration of power among the major Poles of the international system keeps changing according to the changes of their influence projection and capabilities.

The Soviet troops remained in Eastern Europe holding control over this zone and its power seemed unchallengeable because after the war with Germany neither France nor England could maintain a great power's posture. The vacuum created by the weakened position of the central European players was filled by the US-USSR's geopolitical interactions. As the US entered the arena of European politics, it was more concerned with the threat posed by another aggressive Germany, while the European powers were concerned with the threat posed by both Germany and Soviet Union. Gradually the Western Europe and the US reached a mutual geopolitical assessment: the defense of the Western hemisphere from Soviet Union aggression and advances and the prevention of another aggressive Germany in the future. Such assessment was based upon the possible Soviet aggressive intentions towards the Western hemisphere.

The Four Powers' Potsdam Agreement in 1945 divided Germany into French, British, American and Soviet sectors. Richard Crockatt describes it as 'war against Germany

brought them together,[Soviet Union and the Allies] and the victory drove them apart in a continuous, if not fluctuating antagonism we now know as cold war'.<sup>3</sup> By 1948, the US decided to strengthen its hold, presence and leadership of the Western hemisphere, meanwhile a USSR's sphere of influence in Eastern Europe was taking place through the presence of the Soviet troops in East Germany and Poland, and a secret sponsored Soviet coup which overthrew the democratic government in Czechoslovakia and replaced it with communist government. Another step of the Soviet Union to strengthen its influence was its support for the communist parties in East European countries. Among the democratic powers, only US was the most capable great power and it decided to defend democracy and the like-minded democratic countries in Europe from Stalin's demands, threats and pressures upon the weakened France, Great Britain and Germany. The political, military and diplomatic calculations of the democratic camp led by the US called for support for self-determination in Eastern Europe and prevention of Central Europe to fall into USSR's camp. The Eastern-Western conduct of diplomacy and negotiations at that time became a mixture of contest for sphere of influence associated with ideological contest.

As a consequence of such Soviet advances in Central-East Europe, the US initiated negotiations for a joint security agreement with the three Western European allies, to join their respective three Berlin sectors. In a reactionary way the Soviet Union cut off the Allies' ground access into and from Berlin, forcing the Allies to airlift supplies into their respective Berlin sectors. This first Berlin crisis lasted for a year, 1948-1949. The Treaty of Washington on April 1949 between the US and Western European countries was a security pact and led the foundations for the North Atlantic Treaty. Organization (NATO) structure, mission goals and unity of the Western front. Its signatories were the US, Britain, France, Italy, Canada, Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, Portugal, Denmark,

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Crockatt, *The Fifty Years War: The United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics*, First edition, (New York: Routledge, 1994): 3.

Iceland, Luxembourg.<sup>4</sup> Greece and Turkey entered NATO in 1952, West Germany in 1955, and Spain in 1982.<sup>5</sup>

France was the only European power that wanted to participate with US equally in terms of NATO's political-military planning. Since such position was being denied by the US, then France withdrew from NATO in 1966 as a sign of refusal for the security of the whole West Europe to be integrated under the US leadership only.<sup>6</sup> It joined the organization later in 1995. The establishment of NATO signalled the US-leadership of the Western hemisphere, and it became the backbone of the security and defense of the US' sphere of influence.

The creation of NATO and the West Germany's membership into NATO on May 4, 1955, alerted the Soviet side, which immediately countered by the Soviet creation of Warsaw Pact on May 14, 1955 and the inclusion of East Germany into it. Warsaw Pact consisted of Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland and East Germany. This study determines that the purpose of each of these two coalitions, NATO and Warsaw Pact, was a coordinated defense in case of an attack or aggression from each other, the defense of their respective zones of influence based on strategic stability known as Mutually Assured Destruction,<sup>7</sup> and an inner political unity to counter any aggression or threat coming from the adversary. Hence, Warsaw Pact and NATO became two hostile well-armed security coalitions with exercises, strategies and policies capturing all the realms of a community, political and ideological, military and economic, technological and cultural.

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<sup>4</sup> See Dan Reiter, "Why NATO Does Not Spread Democracy", *International Security*, 25: 4, (Spring 2001): 47; and, Patrick Joseph Geary, "NATO battlefield strategy for the conventional defense of Central Europe", (Master's Thesis, University of Richmond, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Joseph Geary, 33.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Joseph Geary, 30; and Anthony Foster and William Wallace, "What is NATO for?" *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 43:4, (2001): 112.

<sup>7</sup> Paul H. Nitze, "Assuring Strategic Stability in an Era of Détente", *Foreign Affairs*, 54:2, (January 1976): 207-232; and Celeste A. Wallander, "Mutually Assured Security: Establishing US Russia Security Relations for a New Century," Strategic Analysis, Atlantic Council, Brent Scowcroft Centre on International Security, July 2013.

The stability between these two blocs rested on the nuclear deterrence throughout the whole Cold War. Henry Kissinger argues that the nuclear weapons changed the nature of the international relations and contained the political tensions from bursting into war.<sup>8</sup>

The elaboration of certain events in this section was necessary to highlight the change of the configurations of power in the international system, as argued by this study, due to the rivalry for influence between the great powers, whether in 1914 that caused the World War I, or 1939 that caused the World War II, or 1947 that brought the era of bipolarity. Proponents of bipolarity or multipolarity have been arguing in favour of one or the other, as the best frame for peace in the international system.

Nevertheless, according to the information drawn from the data collection, this study determines that although the domestic factors and state's policies have an impact in the international arena, and the changes in the international arena also have an impact on the behaviour of the states, the main factor that drives the direction of bipolarity or multipolarity is the rivalry for spheres of influence between the major powers. In addition, the two world wars caused the decline of the European influence, dominance and power in the world affairs, a space filled by the new geopolitical interactions of another set of global powers, the US and USSR. What is the important point to be stressed here that relates with the subject of this study is that the clash between the great powers is called world war, not other clashes. And secondly, such clash happens due to the disagreements among the great powers to uphold the previously established security structure. World War I demolished the established security frame from the Paris Peace Conference; World War II occurred when the post-WWI peace frame was destroyed; Cold War started when the European order diminished.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*. 607

<sup>9</sup> John L. Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of the Stability in the Postwar International System", *International Security*, 10:4, (Spring 1986), 99-142.

Historically every war among great powers has caused immense consequences at global level and it has happened for the clash of areas of influence. Every mutually assured security that has proceeded has been based on an accepted structure of spheres of influence between the major powers of the time, and it has been broken or demolished when the great powers could not agree on the spheres of influence's interference. Below it is discussed the US and USSR's sphere of influence in the context of NATO and Warsaw Pact.

### **3.3 The US-USSR Spheres of Influence**

This section elaborates on the comprehensive strategies that made the US-USSR spheres-of-influence operational: containment, détente, deterrence, ideology and the nuclear weapons. The spheres-of-influence have been geographic and institutional, offensive and defensive, and the scope of US-USSR's post-war security structure included all these postures. Furthermore the Cold War brought a more active engagement of the US and USSR in world affairs and a peaceful Europe meant a crucial shoulder for the strength of both Eastern and Western hemispheres. There is the view that Eastern Europe was designed to be a Soviet sphere-of-influence in the Churchill-Stalin secret negotiations.<sup>10</sup> On the other side there is the view that Eastern Europe became a Soviet sphere-of-influence because then neither the US nor West Europe could prevent it.<sup>11</sup>

The US decided to fill the vacuum in the Western Europe to prevent the external threats to the Western hemisphere, it was doubtful on the ability of Western Europe to confront the USSR and it was important to defend the Western Europe from its internal discords. In terms of war and aggression, geographically the Soviet Union was closer to the European theatre than the US in terms of war. This factor created both an intimidation to

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<sup>10</sup> See Geoffrey Roberts, "Ideology, calculation, and improvisation: spheres of influence and Soviet foreign policy 1939-1945," *Review of International Studies* 25, (1999), 655-673.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Soviet Union, also to be intimidated by the Soviet Union. The action-reaction cycle of policies and counter-policies was claimed by the superpowers as defensive. What started as an ideological-political containment policy towards USSR during the Truman administration in 1947 was continued by Eisenhower administration and gradually turned into a political-military containment for almost fifty years.

### 3.3.1 Containment Policy

Containment was the first Cold War policy articulated by George Kennan, the second-in-command in the US embassy in Moscow in 1946 who proposed a political containment of the Soviet Union in his Long Telegram cable. However in his lectures at the National Defense University he outlined clearer steps of the containment policy than in the Long Telegram.<sup>12</sup> In the Long Telegram he recommended an internal transformation of the socialist bloc and a political containment not a military containment. Whereas in his lectures, Kennan outlined three important objectives of the containment policy, which were:

“(a) to restore the international balance of power, thereby preventing the Soviet Union from exploiting power vacuums left by the defeats of Germany and Japan; (b) to reduce the Soviet Union's ability to project influence beyond its borders through the international communist movement; and (c) ultimately to bring about, through a combination of inducements and deterrents, a modification in the behaviour of the Soviet leadership toward the outside world which would cause it to learn to live with, rather than to seek to eliminate, diversity”.<sup>13</sup>

However, George Kennan's containment was criticized by Walter Lippman who argued that America must develop a criteria for selecting the areas that are vital to the American interests, so that to prevent the Soviet expansion. Therefore the practical containment was cautious as suggested by Lippman as well as insightful as suggested by

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<sup>12</sup> Edited by Terry L. Deibel and J. L. Gaddis, *Containment: Concept and Policy*, Volume Two, (Washington D.C: National Defense University Press, 1986), 722.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.722.



Kennan. Firstly, the US' and USSR's strategic approach towards the Eastern and Western hemispheres wanted their leadership to be politically acceptable within the relevant coalitions, because in comparison with the member states of Eastern and Western parts, the US and USSR possessed an advantageous military and economic credibility. This study asserts that in the USSR's containment to keep the US excluded from the Eastern hemisphere, and the US' containment to keep the USSR excluded from the Western hemisphere, an important factor was that the US was better capable of translating the political relations with its allies into long-term economic-technological advantages and military gains. This study concurs with John Lewis Gaddis' opinion that 'neither Soviets nor Americans have ever admitted of having (or going after) spheres of influence, but in fact much of the Cold War history can be written in terms of the efforts both have made to consolidate or extend their spheres of influence'.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, J.L. Gaddis notes the difference between the US' and the USSR' spheres of influence, by arguing that "the American sphere has been wider in geographical scope than its Soviet counterpart, but it has also been a much looser alignment, participation in which has more often than not been a matter of choice rather than coercion".<sup>15</sup> Geir Lundestad describes the US influence as an "empire by invitation beckoned by others as well as designed to advance the US interests."<sup>16</sup>

Hans Weigart describes the expansion of the US strategic bases as the US long-held articulated doctrine of 'hemispheric defense'<sup>17</sup> and argues that,

"What we regard as bases intended for defense against attack by hostile Powers might, and surely will, be considered by other Powers, e.g. Soviet Union, as evidence of a new American belief in Manifest Destiny. In other words, whenever we maintain a strategic base for defensive purposes, we shall be

<sup>14</sup> John L. Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System", *International Security*, 10: 4, (Spring 1986), 133.

<sup>15</sup> John L. Gaddis, "The United States and the Question of a Sphere of Influence in Europe, 1945- 1949," in Olav Riste, ed., *Western Security: The Formative Years: Europe and Atlantic Defence, 1947- 1953* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1985), 60-91.

<sup>16</sup> See Geir Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation? The United States and the Western Europe, 1945-1952", *Journal of Peace Research*, 23, (September 1986), 263-277.

<sup>17</sup> Hans Weigart, "US Strategic Bases and Collective Security," *Foreign Affairs* 25, (October 1946), 251-252.

suspected of harbouring aggressive intentions....Vice versa, we suspect the Russians of offensive intentions when they establish advanced bases'.<sup>18</sup>

Hans Morgenthau describes the nature of US-USSR rivalry as “contain or be contained, conquer or be conquered, destroy or be destroyed as the watchwords of the new diplomacy.”<sup>19</sup> This study asserts that this attempt has been carried out in the post-Cold War as well. While deterrence and containment have been consistent policies for all the policy-makers of the American and Soviet administrations, these two policies drew the lines of the spheres of influence but also served to enhance the intensity of rivalry for further influence projection.

### 3.3.2 Ideology

The defense of democracy became the universal mission of the US, meanwhile the USSR was more concerned with the defense of territory. The ideological content of Eastern and Western sides was one of the many important aspects that characterized the contest for influence projection and access points globally. Quoted from Henry Kissinger’s book *Diplomacy*, the Commerce Secretary Henry Wallace attempted to challenge President Truman’s doctrine as a battle of two ways of life between democracy and communism. Wallace stated in his address to President Truman,

“We may not like what Russia does in Eastern Europe. Her type of land reform, industrial expropriation, and suppression of basic liberties offends the great majority of the people of the United States. But whether we like it or not Russians will try to socialize their sphere of influence just as we try to democratize our sphere of influence. Russian ideas of social-economic justice are going to govern nearly a third of the world. Our ideas of free enterprise democracy will govern much of the rest. The two ideas will endeavor to prove which can deliver the most satisfaction to the common man in their respective areas of political dominance.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 254.

<sup>19</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), 285.

<sup>20</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 469.

The sphere of influence serves the powers to counter and to resist the threats and provocations coming from the rivals' military and economic offensives. Regarding whose sphere of influence has been preserving or expanding, offensive or defensive, this study asserts that it has been all of these by both superpowers. Melvyn P. Leffler and David S. Painter are of the opinion that,

“After the Second World War five developments shaped the international system: great power rivalries, changes in the technology of warfare, transnational ideological conflict, reform and reconstruction of the world capitalist system, and movements of national liberation. Events in each of these areas affected one another, accentuating tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, generating an arms race, polarizing domestic and international politics, and splitting the world into military and political blocs. This new international order became known as the Cold War”.<sup>21</sup>

This study argues that these two superpowers attempted to strengthen their sphere of influence through military and economic integration, for either one would lead to political integration. Most of the Cold War political cards and the contest for influence projection were evident in Europe first, Middle East was the second theatre, then Africa and Asia. The expansion of communism and capitalism, the policy of containing the rival, the expansion of arms sales and economic trades in other regions of world were among the tools for further influence expansion in the world.

In the economic realm the two superpowers were independent and self-reliant. A self-reliance accomplished through the economic institutions of Western European Community and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance was in charge of dealing with the economic interdependence of Eastern bloc. The socialist bloc was pursuing the central command economy, a system in which entrepreneurship, business and productivity were controlled by government. The Western European Community was in charge of managing the economic interdependencies of the Western European countries. The Western bloc was relying on

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<sup>21</sup> Edited by Melvyn P. Leffler & David S. Painter, *Origins of the Cold War: An International History*, Second Edition, Rewriting Histories, (Rutledge: New York and London, 2005), 12.

the free market economy with limited government's interference in businesses and companies. The level of the import products was present between America and Soviet Union, but such connection was preferred in the form of nothing that could not be required in any other country. Given the economic invulnerability between the two superpowers, the geographic distance, the militarily self-reliance conventionally and non-conventionally, this study concurs with J.L. Gaddis opinion who describes the US-USRR relationship as one of "mutual independence."<sup>22</sup> The US introduced an economic aid package to Greece and Turkey in order to prevent Soviet expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Marshall Plan to strengthen the Western European economies. J.L. Gaddis states argues that the ideological battle, economic competition, technological advancement were won by West, the USSR was left with the military means only to project its influence.<sup>23</sup> The ideological division was about great ideas to shape the spheres of influence throughout the world because each democracy and communism meant a vision of world order. The struggle was for equal influence or superiority of ideology to legitimate the sphere of influence. Because as an ideology per se, democratic countries and communist countries have cooperated with dictatorships and authoritarians. Therefore ideology was an instrument and sphere of influence was the goal of Us and USSR.

### **3.3.3 Deterrence**

Deterrence was parallel with containment throughout Cold War and post-Cold War. Deterrence was in two forms: deterrence by denial and deterrence by force. Militarily, in the form of deterrence by force, the first demonstration was the Western stand-up in the face of the Berlin airlift in 1948-1949 to prove to Soviet Union that the West was willing

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<sup>22</sup> John L. Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International Stability", *International Security*, 10: 4, (Spring, 1986), 112.

<sup>23</sup> Edited by Terry L. Deibel and J. L. Gaddis, *Containment: Concept and Policy*, Volume Two, (Washington D.C: National Defense University Press, 1986), 724.

to risk consequences and war to defend its unity and democracy. The European unity and integration was an agenda of the Atlantic alliance to deter the USSR threats and aggression. It also meant a new security architecture based on a military integration. The difference was that UK agreed with the military integration with the US, but France wanted coordination with the US not integration into the US' led military alliance. To carry on its political independence, France signed a treaty of mutual friendship with West Germany because due to the long historical tradition of European powers' conflicting national interests, France was suspicious of UK and of the UK alliance with US.<sup>24</sup> The rest of the Western European countries regardless of their perception about the European integration and the US control over it, they were not capable to deal with USSR without the US. And this was the main objective of the Atlantic alliance. Containment and deterrence tend to be reciprocal, and it only created diplomatic and military stalemate because the two rivals (US-USSR) were reciprocating each other advances. In this way, containment and deterrence expanded in the front of almost every major international crisis, whether Germany, Vietnam, Korea, or Middle East. So peaceful coexistence seemed a more appropriate approach.

In the military aspect, the level of threat in the European theatre was heightened and the troops were at the readiness level. The production of the Soviet atomic bomb created doubt on the credibility of the US' deterrent power among the Western European countries, at that moment. In terms of conventional and non-conventional weapons, there seemed to be a military capability sufficiently balanced that neither the US nor the USSR would dare open a direct warfare against each other. Against this kind of threat, NATO was the US the security shield for Western Europe, and Warsaw Pact was the USSR's shield for Eastern Europe's defense. The arms race was intensely intensified during 1960s-1970s. The US policy to equip some of its Western European allies with

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<sup>24</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 2003, 615-616.

Intermediate-range ballistic missiles as a defense against USSR aggression was accepted by these countries.<sup>25</sup> These missiles were proposed to be stationed in Britain, Turkey and Italy, under a bilateral control between the country and US.<sup>26</sup> Such a move meant US forward bases in the Western Europe and a strengthened deterrence against USSR. The French President De Gaulle proposed for a trilateral US-UK-France control of NATO's European military planning and missile defense, the proposal was rejected by the US. Among the European powers, the UK agreed with the US' military umbrella and presence to lead and protect the European security and defense. But France wanted a unique position as a European power. As a consequence France withdrew its assets from NATO, a move that dissolved to a certain extent the consensus of NATO members for the US' leadership, at that moment.<sup>27</sup> And NATO installed new locations into other member countries.

Another tactic of both containment and deterrence by denial was the US approach to improve relations with the two communist powers, China and Soviet Union simultaneously. Henry Kissinger is the well-known architect of such trilateral structure and it was outlined in a moment of tension between China and Soviet Union, each mounting military troops and weapons in the China-Russia border. The military clashes in 1969 in the Ussuri River of Siberia and the fear of further escalation, led the US to bring into the international picture another great power, China.<sup>28</sup> The US under Nixon administration acknowledged the independence and pacifist intentions of the communist China in Asia, also opened the channels of communication and diplomacy between US and China. This was the moment when somehow the structure of international system shifted from bipolarity US-USSR into trilateral structure of US-USSR-China. According to the national interests of the US during and after the Cold War, it has dictated

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<sup>25</sup> "Assessing the NATO/Warsaw Pact Military Balance", Report, Congressional Budget Office, Congress of the United States, December 1977.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Patrick Joseph Geary, "NATO battlefield strategy for the conventional defense of Central Europe," (Master's Thesis, 1987), 30.

<sup>28</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 721-722.

engagement with China, containment-deterrence with USSR/Russia. When the Cold War between the US and USSR was at its peak in 1960s-1970s, the US' open-door policy of dialogue and diplomacy with China placed Soviet Union between two threats, NATO in Europe and China in the Asian front. This led towards détente period, in which the USSR sought for peaceful coexistence with US and China.

Another form of deterrence, was deterrence by force and reprisal. In 1970s the USSR deployed long-range intercontinental ballistic missiles SS-20s in the Eastern part of Russia directed at Western Europe, a move to which the US replied by deploying Pershing-II and cruise missiles directed at Eastern Europe.<sup>29</sup> To counter this, the Soviet Union deployed SS-22 ballistic missiles in Czechoslovakia and East Germany.<sup>30</sup> The intense arms race to balance or imbalance the strategic parity continued and led to a number of arms control talks which resulted in the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces agreement in accordance with the 1981 Western proposal of 'zero option' to eliminate all the US and USSR medium land-based missiles.<sup>31</sup> Militarily and politically the spheres of influence were shaped according to the ongoing events, but both superpowers were equally determined to pursue designs of influence projection over as far as possible.

#### **3.3.4 Détente**

Between 1961 when the Berlin wall was built and 1969 when the US-China diplomatic relations improved, the situation in Europe and Germany was tense with provocations, and rivalries. France was trying for détente with East Europe and West Germany as a tactic to establish France as a great power in Europe independent from the US. Also the German unification was no longer part of the East-West negotiations. Another concern

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Risse-Kaplan, "Did 'Peace Through Strength' End the Cold War? Lessons from INF," *International Security*, 16:1, (Summer, 1991), 163.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.163.

was that the possible fallout of the weak East Germany from USSR would raise the national aspiration of the strong economically West Germany to make the country again a potential great power, and this could mean the collapse of the Atlantic Alliance' German policy.<sup>32</sup> Basically the period of détente was caused by the emergence of trilateralism US-USSR-China during the president Nixon administration, which ended the Vietnam War, also gradually reduced the Soviet influence in Europe and Middle East without alienating Soviet Union at the point of a crisis. In Asia it was China the central Power recognized by the US, in Middle East it was a détente period in which the USSR became even the spokesman of the Arabs countries' side, and it was the main supporter with arms and economic packages to Egypt and Syria.

By 1970-1971 the détente became another long-term geopolitical strategy of the US-USSR struggle (peaceful relaxation of the US-USSR tensions) to continue defending their spheres of influence, also to deter and contain each other through dialogue and diplomacy. The initiatives of diplomatic talks to establish the condition of peaceful coexistence between the two superpowers led to the first Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT I) signed in 1972, in Moscow. Also the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) was signed in the same year. Both SALT I and ABM raised awareness among the defense and foreign policy makers for an arms control program to keep under control the nuclear proliferation and to reduce the nuclear strategic weapons of the two superpowers. The US considered détente period as a patient phase to moderate the Soviet attitude towards its domestic policies and human rights, and to add the European Security Conference in the list of American interests through setting international standards, such as in the Helsinki Agreement for the human rights and fundamental freedoms, Mutual Balanced Force Reductions for mutual arms control. Détente was intended as a structure of peaceful coexistence and the establishment of mutually agreed international standards by the US-

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<sup>32</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 735.



USSR and UN. Also both the US and USSR were aware that they had different incompatible agendas and positions while going through the détente phase.

### **3.3.5 Nuclear weapons**

Nuclear weapons despite of parity or superiority condition, they were mutually destructive, therefore they were the centerpiece of military strength and negotiations between the US and USSR during the Cold War, also in the post-Cold War era. Until 1949 the US had the nuclear monopoly. By 1950s when the Soviet Union developed its nuclear weapons programme, the nuclear race became cautious because of the cycle that every moment of nuclear parity was followed by attempts to achieve nuclear superiority. Even after the establishment of Mutually Assured Destruction, the course of nuclear superiority was preferable. After the Cuban missile crisis in 1961, the Kennedy administration introduced the strategy of massive retaliation response in case of an attack from Soviet Union. The official stance of US regarding the nuclear weapons explained by John J. Mearsheimer as “American policymakers sometimes aid that the ultimate purpose of missile defense was to move away from a nuclear that prized offense to a safer, defense-dominant world, but the truth is that they wanted defenses in order to facilitate winning a nuclear war at a reasonable cost.”<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless both Soviet Union and America wanted to build a strong deterrent nuclear counterforce and be superior versus the other rather than accepting the mutually assured destruction capability.<sup>34</sup>

Politically, the nuclear weapons linked the strategic defense of Eastern and Western Europe with the strategic defense of the US and USSR, since each had claimed to pursue the policy of protecting its relevant hemisphere from external aggression. West Germany had a period of tension with US when it proposed to develop neutron bomb which was

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<sup>33</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: Norton & Company Inc., 2001), 228.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.230.

less destructive than the nuclear bomb, but it was unilaterally prevented by the US.<sup>35</sup> The American intermediate-range nuclear ballistic missiles in Europe were a powerful deterrent and retaliatory force against any possible conventional or non-conventional Soviet attack. But by 1982, when the leader of West Germany Helmut Schmidt was replaced by Helmut Kohl, Germany was becoming more nationalist and preferring the course of leaving the NATO membership. Under Helmut Kohl's administration in 1983 West Germany was against the US deployment of missile defense in West Germany, and the Soviet Union threatened to leave the arms control talks if Pershing-II missiles were installed in West Germany. Somehow, in 1960s the French president de Gaulle was against the NATO's missile defense in Europe and West Germany sided with the US' view. In 1983, the French President Mitterrand was the main European leader who supported the deployment of Pershing-II and West Germany was against it.<sup>36</sup>

It needs to be emphasized that nuclear weapons are only useful in preventing major wars between the great powers because they can restrain or compel the action of other states. But when it comes to intervention in any crisis or area, to control strategic areas, to defend or overthrow a government, then these situations require conventional strategies and forces, not the nuclear weapons. For this purpose, despite the demand for technological improvement of the strategic air and submarine missiles in terms of speed, accuracy, precision and to be undetected, countries are also involved in military exercises to master the conventional forces and arms in different terrains. During the Cold War, USSR and Warsaw Pact countries, NATO and the US also made numerous military exercises in the areas expected to erupt a confrontation, along the Central European line that meant the division between East and West. Soviet Union emphasized the counter-city strategy with a basis on Mutually Assured Destruction. The US focused on

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<sup>35</sup> Robert H. Reid, "Neutron Bomb uncertainty: West Germany might not accept weapon from U.S." *Daily News*, July 26, 1977.

<sup>36</sup> John Corry, "TV: PERSHING II AND WEST GERMANY," *The New York Times*, December 28, 1983.

counterforce strategy based on nuclear and force superiority against the adversary's attack.<sup>37</sup>

There has been an extensive theoretical debate about containment, détente, deterrence, and ideology, but this study argues that these were used to shape and run the East-West hemispheres. The concept of sphere of influence has been treated as one of limited relevance in the US-USSR/Russian relations. This study maintains that sphere of influence has been the central concept of the foreign policies of both these countries because the great powers are always involved in measures and countermeasures to gain advantage over their rivals. And sphere-of-influence is the central strategy of gaining such advantage.

The great power relationships are the dominant political relationships in world affairs. Between the two superpowers, the centrality and importance of deterrence and containment was manifested in the alliances, wars, and their military operations worldwide. Deterrence was a military approach serving the political concept of containment, basically a conventional and non-conventional form of deterrence. Whereas containment was based on the expansion of political relations with others states bilaterally or through institutions meant to keep the threats geographically away from one's sphere of influence. Both the US and USSR possessed military capabilities of global military operations, anywhere, at any time, in defense of their respective spheres of influence.

According to Melvyn P. Leffler,

“the American conception of the national security included a strategic sphere of influence within the western hemisphere, domination of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, an extensive system of outlying bases to enlarge the strategic frontier and project American power, an even more extensive system of transit rights to facilitate the conversion of commercial air bases to military use, access to the resources and market of most Eurasia, denial of those resources to a prospective enemy, and the maintenance of a nuclear superiority.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Susan Welsh, “What the U.S. tactical nuclear doctrine means,” *EIR International*, 7:33, (August 26, 1980).

<sup>38</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, Chapter 1, “National Security and US Foreign Policy,” in *Origins of the Cold War: An International History*, Second Edition, (New York & London: Rutledge, 2005), 31.

Soviet Union too on its part pursued its sphere of influence through “opportunities in Dardanelles, Iran, Manchuria; hoped to orient Germany and Austria toward the East, used Communist governments to expand Soviet influence in areas beyond the periphery of Russian military power.”<sup>39</sup>

Conceptualizing the above mentioned discussion in line with the subject of this study, the US-USSR/Russia’s influence, it becomes apparent that sphere of influence has been the intention of US and USSR/Russia’s foreign policy. This study asserts that the rivalry for sphere of influence between the US and USSR/Russia can be pursued within a framework that sets order in the rivalry, a framework that sets the rules of diplomacy, nuclear proliferation and the behaviour of states. Taken as a whole, it can be claimed that the stability between the US-Western hemisphere and USSR-Eastern hemisphere was maintained through carefully military and political plans.

Although the US-USSR rivalry for influence projection spread all over the globe, the sphere of influence per se was originally intended and articulated for the European continent only. Germany was important to the European status and security, as well as to the influence of USSR and US because it was the area where the Eastern and Western spheres of influence collided. For this purpose their rivalry over whose side will Germany be became the turning point that led to the division of the country and Berlin due to the awareness that whoever can get a united disarmed Germany on its side can strengthen its influence over the whole Europe and is capable of thwarting the other. As a consequence, attempts to get all of it led to dividing it throughout the Cold War.

Germany was designated by both superpowers as the Central Front of their confrontational postures and their respective spheres of influence. Germany declared the Defeat of Germany on June 5, 1945, which was signed in Berlin by the US, USSR, UK and France who assumed the supreme authority over Germany.<sup>40</sup> Berlin became the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>40</sup> “Survey of the Present Situation in Germany,” Allied Government and Policy, 1946, The National Archives, (London, Catalogue

important city because it was the capital of the defeated Germany, the seat of the Allied Control Council, the centre of the Soviet zone and the headquarters of the Soviet Military Government.<sup>41</sup> This discussion proceeds in the following subsection.

### **3.4 The Division of Germany and Berlin**

According to the data drawn from the archival documents Germany has always been a crucial country between East and West. But this study argues that what drove the two superpowers into adversarial positions for five decades was the battle for who gets hold over Germany, because the hold over Germany meant the prevention of another aggressive Germany and also influence over the European affairs. The Potsdam agreement in 1945 divided Germany into four sectors among the four victorious powers who agreed about Germany's disarmament but disagreed on how to handle the fate of Germany due to conflicting national interests. "No power is at present strong enough to capture Germany as a whole, nor is the organization for so doing at present in existence. But on its own zone each Power is doing its best to sow its own beliefs which, in so far as the East and West are concerned, are diametrically opposed."<sup>42</sup>

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Reference: CAB/129/9), 2.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.14.

<sup>42</sup> "General Situation To-day", in *Survey of the Present Situation in Germany*, Allied Government and Policy, 1946, The National Archives, (London, Catalogue Reference: CAB/129/9), 2.



**Map 3.2: Berlin map<sup>43</sup>**

The division of Germany started with the division of Berlin since 1948, but it was made official in 1961 when the USSR under the Mikhail Khrushchev administration (1958-1964) decided to build a barbed wall across the East Berlin border to finalize the eastern and western Berlin and Germany. Henry Kissinger describes East Berlin as one of the weakest links of the Soviet sphere of influence because it bordered a prosperous West Berlin and was recognized only by the Soviet satellites.<sup>44</sup>

The first Berlin crisis in 1948-1949 was triggered by the London Conference recommendations on June 7, 1948, according to which the three Western Powers, France, US, and Britain agreed to merge their three sectors into the state of West Germany.<sup>45</sup> To this, Soviet Union answered with the Berlin airlift, blocking the ground and water routes to the three Powers from reaching West Berlin and the three powers continued to support West Berlin by air for almost a year. In this event the Soviet political goal was to push the three Powers out of Berlin. The airlift blockade ended in 1949 and the USSR's goal

<sup>43</sup> The Berlin Airlift, available at [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/airlift/map/map\\_01.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/airlift/map/map_01.html).

<sup>44</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 571.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen G. Walker, "Bargaining over Berlin: A Re-analysis of the First and Second Berlin Crises," *The Journal of Politics*, 44:1, (February, 1982), 152.

to prevent the division of Germany was not achieved.<sup>46</sup> In 1958 Khrushchev issued to the West the proposal that West Berlin had to become a demilitarized free city otherwise Soviet Union would sign a peace treaty with East Germany. This led towards the second crisis occurred in 1961 when the Soviet Union made official the division of Germany with the build-up of East and West Berlin wall and declared to the three Western Powers its intention to create a separate peace treaty with East Germany.<sup>47</sup> Politically, while the USSR wanted to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany, the Western front and the US could not agree with it for it would mean a permanent division of Germany. Instead the Western geopolitical vision was the whole Germany integrated within the West.

Prior to the Soviet possession of the atomic bomb the military balance was in favour of the US. After the Soviet side obtained the atomic bomb formula and produced it, then the conventional balance in Europe shifted in favour of the USSR. According to James A. Thomson, the conventional balance was completely in favour of the USSR, NATO had 34 divisions in Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, and USSR had 57 divisions in Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia.<sup>48</sup> On the contrary, John Mearsheimer claims that in fact it was NATO more superior militarily in quantity, especially in quality.<sup>49</sup> However the Allies remained cautious about taking Berlin through ground battle, due to the expectation of the Soviet Armed Forces' conventional preponderance or parity with the US forces in Europe. Also caution was needed in trying to balance the Soviet preponderance for it could trigger a misunderstanding with the USSR and create the possibility that Soviets could open a general war before the conventional parity could be achieved by the Western rearmament.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.152.

<sup>47</sup> Report Of The Four-Power Working Group On Germany Including Berlin On Planning To Deal With A "Separate Peace Treaty" Between The Soviet Union And The "German Democratic Republic," National Research and Record Administrations (NARA) Archives, (Washington D.C: Library of Congress), February 10, 1961.

<sup>48</sup> James A. Thomson, "An Unfavorable Situation: NATO and the Conventional Balance," (RAND NOTE: Santa Monica), November, 1988.

<sup>49</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Numbers, Strategy, and the European Balance," *International Security*, 12:4, (Spring 1988),174-185.

Therefore, the US adopted the military doctrine of flexible response referring to responding to the Soviet aggression proportionately in case of an attack. Massive retaliation doctrine was formulated for a scenario that in case of an aggression from the USSR in any area of the Western hemisphere all kinds of weapons would be used, including the possibility of limited nuclear tactical weapons.<sup>50</sup> The USSR had focused on the strategy of armoured blitzkrieg which meant sudden and precise attack on the enemy fronts and lines of communications for a quick victory. Both superpowers had the means, capabilities and the proper preparations to conduct such type of military offensives. For this reason avoiding a direct military confrontation unless a matter of last resort was deemed as paramount.

By 1950s the Allies fortified their control around West Germany and West Berlin, while USSR established a communist government in the Eastern Germany. The division of Germany, the creation of NATO and Warsaw Pact plunged Europe deeper into the cold war rivalry between the two superpowers. Economic assistance and military aid were provided to the respective sphere of influence by each superpower to strengthen the inner state of the coalition and its own influence within it. The US introduced military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey, and the Marshall Plan to assist the West European economies but also to prevent them from falling into the Soviet zone.<sup>51</sup> Militarily the US also established NATO, a political-military organization with many purposes. The most commonly agreed NATO purpose was to keep ‘Soviets out, Germans disarmed, Americans in’ in the European affairs. In a memorandum the then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara states that “Our political objectives in maintaining a US military presence in Europe have been and remain as important as our military objectives.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Paul H. Nitze, “Strategic Stability in an Era of Détente,” *Foreign Affairs*, 54: 2, (January 1976), 212-213.

<sup>51</sup> Marshall Plan was an American four-year program that started on June 5, 1947, a program which offered an investment of billions of dollars to make Europe recover from the consequences of WWII. It was offered to all European countries, but USSR prohibited its allies from accepting aid from the Marshall Plan.

<sup>52</sup> Robert S. McNamara, Draft for Memorandum for the President, “NATO Strategy and Force Structure,” DOD/FOIA. September 21, 1966.



The official division of Berlin in 1961 meant an official division of Germany and Europe into Eastern-Western parts. In the 1948 Berlin crisis, Soviet Union struggled to prevent Germany's and Berlin's division, and the Soviet Union made formal the division of Berlin in 1961 with the Berlin Wall.<sup>53</sup> Berlin was constantly a source of tension between the two superpowers, yet both USSR and NATO maintained the logical preparatory and precautionary measures in order not to create alarm on each other. By 1961 when the USSR finally built the Berlin wall, The NATO forces at the time could not defend the Western allies even with nuclear weapons. Andreas Wenger puts it that, "the US wanted a US nuclear contribution with a European conventional contribution as a fair share of the alliance, but Europeans were concerned with US providing leadership and Europeans providing troops."<sup>54</sup> In the words of Sir Harold Caccia, the British Ambassador to Washington "The British people will not be atomized for the sake of Berlin."<sup>55</sup> However, after the Berlin Wall built in September 13, 1961, NATO decided to be more deterrent and more actively involved with the security of the Western Europe.<sup>56</sup>

One of NATO's central aims was to prevent the West Germany's territorial loss. This purpose was possible only through NATO's forward conventional defense. In his speech about the situation on Berlin, Kennedy reaffirmed that 'the US would never allow Soviet Union to drive it out of Berlin, either gradually or by force.'<sup>57</sup> In addition, Soviet Union's choice of military strategy for the Warsaw Pact was the blitzkrieg strategy, which was a quick and sudden attack directed towards deep strategic penetration that would break NATO's lines of communication and would provide a breakthrough in conventional battle.

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<sup>53</sup> Stephen G. Walker, "Bargaining over Berlin: a Re-analysis of the First and Second Berlin Crises," *The Journal of Politics*, 44: 1, (February 1982), 152-153.

<sup>54</sup> Andreas Wenger, "The politics of military planning", in *War Plans and Alliances in the Cold War: Threat Perceptions in the East and West*, edited by Vojtech Mastny, (New York, Routledge, 2013), 172-173.

<sup>55</sup> Memorandum of Telephone Conversation with Secretary Dulles, March 6, 1959, Berlin Crisis 1958-1962, no. 899, NSA.

<sup>56</sup> Dr. Gregory W. Pedlow, "NATO and the Berlin Crisis of 1961; Facing the Soviets While Maintaining Unity," Supreme Headquarters Allied Power Europe, (Washington D.C: National Archives and Records Administration).

<sup>57</sup> Dr. Donald A. Carter, "The U.S. Military Response in the 1960-1962 Berlin Crisis," The US Army Center on Military History, (Washington D.C: National Archives and Records Administration).

After the Berlin Wall, the USSR also implemented restrictions and unauthorized inspections on the Allied vehicles and flights, including the border inspections in East Germany-East Berlin.<sup>58</sup> A Western political initiative to handle the Berlin situation was a US proposal for an International Access Authority in 1962, to keep investigated the traffic in and out of Berlin through a committee that would consist of five Western members- Britain, France, West Berlin, Federal Republic, US, five communist parties- Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Berlin, German Democratic Republic, and three neutral countries- Sweden, Switzerland and Austria.<sup>59</sup> Konrad Adenauer, the leader of West Germany rejected the offer since it gave equal voice and representation to the democratic and communist members.

According to John G. Ikenberry “Cold War created the free world coalition and if not for the common Soviet threat which served as the glue of the Atlantic world, Europe and the US would have started to drift apart.”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore Ikenberry asserts that “the US was more willing to forgo short-term interests and domestic driven economic interests and focus on the longer-term good of the Atlantic world.”<sup>61</sup>

This study noticed that, Europe’s role as an ally has always been crucial to both US and USSR/Russia, and Germany has been at the centre of such balance or imbalance, (militarily during the Cold War, and economically in the post-Cold War). For this reason these two countries have contested each other for Germany’s support in this region not only during Cold War, but even prior to and after the Cold War, because Germany’s support meant (and still means) the European continent’s support and a stronger US global sphere of influence. The US-USSR’s response to the Berlin crises highlighted that it was crucial to keep Germany’s aggressiveness and power under control, and to draw

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<sup>58</sup> Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Subject: Temporary Reinforcement as Berlin Deterrent (S), The Joint Chiefs of Staff, (Washington D.C.: The National Archives and Record Administration) 6 June 1961.

<sup>59</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 590.

<sup>60</sup> John G. Ikenberry, “Strengthening the Atlantic political order,” *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, 35: 3, (2000), 57-58; also see Stephen M. Walt, “The Ties That Fray: Why America and Europe are Drifting Apart,” *The National Interest*, 54, (1998/99), 311.

<sup>61</sup> J.G. Ikenberry, 57.

the lines of influence between the US and USSR through the Eastern-Western divisions of Germany, which meant Eastern-Western division of Europe.

This study determines that it was the institutional arrangements of NATO and Warsaw Pact the crucial aspect in shaping the US and USSR's sphere of influence because institution entails a reciprocal institutional binding. In addition, NATO and Warsaw Pact institutions gave legitimacy and authority to the US' and USSR's influence over their allies and the signatories of these two coalitions. It was a two-way reciprocity between the US and the NATO members, and between the USSR and the Warsaw Pact countries. The superpowers provided security and assurance to their allies and client states at the extent that the attack on one would be considered as an attack on all. In return, the capabilities and policies of the allies had to be tailored according to the superpowers' sphere of influence interests.

### **3.5 The Significance of NATO & Warsaw Pact for the US-USSR's Spheres of Influence**

This section examines the institutional aspect of influence projection carried out by NATO and Warsaw Pact and treats these two institutions as unitary actors and synonymous with the US and USSR. These two spheres-of-influence reflected the tendencies of the US and USSR to be the global managers of the international politics.<sup>62</sup> The US institutions created to consolidate its hold on the Western sphere were proceeded by the Soviet institutions for the same purpose in the Eastern part. For instance, Soviet Union created the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance as a counterpart to the US Marshall Plan, Warsaw Pact as a counterpart to NATO, and German Democratic Republic (GDR) as a counterpart to Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). All these steps aimed to deter the rival and to strengthen the respective spheres-of-influence internally.

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<sup>62</sup> See Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics*, First edition, (New York: Palgrave, 1977); also Paul Keal, *The Unspoken Rules and Superpower Dominance*, (London, 1983).

NATO tailored its political-military assets and strategies specific to the USSR threat, but also because the German geopolitical ambitions were as concerning as the Soviet ones for the US. Because Germany had been a country of sphere of influence ambition, eager and willing enough to initiate two world wars to be the hegemon of the European continent, the status and strength of Germany also had to be under control. G. J. Ikenberry is of the opinion that “NATO has been as much about knitting Germany into Europe and the Atlantic world as it has been about keeping the Soviets out.”<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, Ikenberry describes the role of NATO as an institution at the heart of the Western order which united the potentially threatening states and reduced their incentives to balance against each other.<sup>64</sup>

Regarding the military posture and readiness, when the Cold War started Soviet Union was more superior in conventional weapons and the US could not challenge it in Europe militarily.<sup>65</sup> According to NATO’s Strategic Guidance Report, the Allies needed many years to reach up to the level of USSR’s Second World War military capabilities. Different estimations highlighted that the Warsaw Pact countries and USSR possessed a predominance in conventional forces and armed forces. John J. Mearsheimer states that NATO conventional and non-conventional forces were much more superior than the Pact, so any battle would have definitely been won by NATO.<sup>66</sup> Others like Chalmers Malcolm and Lutz Unterseher claim that the Pact had superiority in the number of conventional weapons, but NATO had qualitative superiority.<sup>67</sup> A constant evolution of Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) produced more sophisticated and advanced weapons in terms of precision, accuracy and speed. There was no certainty about the strength of the opposing forces and neither conventional nor non-conventional battles ever happened. Colonel

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<sup>63</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “Strengthening the Atlantic Political Order,” (2000), 59.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 60-63.

<sup>65</sup> Patrick Joseph Geary, “NATO Battlefield Strategy for the Conventional Defense of Central Europe,” (Master’s Thesis: Virginia Commonwealth University), 1984.

<sup>66</sup> J.J. Mearsheimer, “Numbers, Strategy, and the European Balance,” *International Security*, 12: 4, (Spring 1988), 174-185.

<sup>67</sup> See Chalmers Malcolm, Lutz Unterseher, “Is There a Tank Gap?: Comparing NATO and Warsaw Pact Tank”, *International Security*, 13: 1, (Summer 1988), 5-49.

Wilbur E. Gray in his essay describes the NATO-Pact war as a hypothetical war and one of the great 'what ifs' in history.<sup>68</sup>

Militarily, there was deterrence by denial and deterrence by force. A direct US interference in the Soviet proxies or a direct Soviet interference in the US proxies would entail great risks. In terms of the nonconventional weapons, the US nuclear advantage was balanced with the launching of Soviet Sputnik in 1957 which balanced the long-range missile technology. The possession of nuclear weapons established the strategic stability condition in which each possessed the second-strike capability. The Soviet military presence strengthened the communist dominance in Eastern Europe, and US strengthened the democratic governments in Western European countries. When Soviet Union grew stronger militarily, NATO recognized Warsaw Pact as its legitimate negotiating partner,<sup>69</sup> and by 1979 NATO proposed for 'Associated Measures' to limit the number of division in the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks (MBFR).<sup>70</sup> In the same year, the Soviets proposed to prohibit their military exercises to no more than 40-50,000 troops.<sup>71</sup>

In terms of military strategy and warfare tactics, a forward deployment of conventional forces was designed to win a land war in Europe and the strategic warning capability was given great attention by both NATO and Warsaw Pact for a mobilization and deployment of troops to wartime positions, but due to the nuclear deterrence the superpowers moved cautiously against each other. In terms of defense policy conduct, sphere of influence provided strategic depth and forward defense to the superpowers, including the tactic of not fighting a war in own territory. The Eastern border of the Western Germany was named by Soviet Union as the Western Theatre of Military Operations.<sup>72</sup> The Soviet forces in this theatre included: "19 divisions of the Group of Soviet Forces Germany

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<sup>68</sup> Colonel Willbur E. Gray, "The World War That Never Was: NATO vs. Warsaw Pact," *Alternate Wars*, available at [http://alternatewars.com/the\\_war\\_that\\_never\\_was.html](http://alternatewars.com/the_war_that_never_was.html).

<sup>69</sup> Vojtech Mastny, "Did NATO Win the Cold War? Looking over the Wall," *Foreign Affairs*, 78:3, (May/June 1999), 181.

<sup>70</sup> Robert D. Blackwill and Jeffrey W. Lengo, "Constraining Ground Force Exercises of NATO and Warsaw Pact," *International Security*, 14:3, (Winter, 1989-1990), 86.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 186.

<sup>72</sup> Refer to "The Soviet/Warsaw Pact Ground Forces Threat to Europe", Chapter 4, pp. 55-68, in *New Technology for NATO Follow-On Forces Attack*, Office of Technology Assessment, (Washington D.C: U.S. Congress, 1987), 57.

(GSFG), 5 divisions in Central Group Forces (CGF) in Czechoslovakia, 2 divisions in Northern Group of Forces (NGF) in Poland.”<sup>73</sup>

According to the report by NATO Information Service in 1984 “the standing force of NATO was about 4.5 million personnel, 2.6 million of which were stationed in Europe, while the standing force of Warsaw Pact was about 6 million personnel, 4 million of which were in Europe to face NATO.”<sup>74</sup> The Soviet force structure included even “Operational Manoeuvre Groups (OMGs) with the purpose of capturing the key objectives in NATO rear that would pave the way for the follow-on forces and neutralize NATO’s theatre nuclear threat.”<sup>75</sup>

NATO on its part had a number of powerful contingents from the US, Britain, France, Belgium, and West Germany. Both the US and USSR admitted that the Eastern Germany’s and Western Germany’s troops were the most formidable and disciplined in the force structure of each bloc. Christopher Donnelly described the East Germany’s troops in relation to the USSR as “the most trustworthy and the least trusted of the military forces in Eastern Europe.”<sup>76</sup> Regarding NATO’s Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCENT), it included NATO’s Northern Army group (NORTHAG) with Dutch, German, Belgian, and British contingents, and NATO’s Central Army Group (CENTAG) which included two contingents, each American and German, also each being assigned a sector along the frontier.<sup>77</sup>

To relate the discussion of this section with the purpose of this study, it can be argued that both the US and USSR tried to enhance the reliability and dependability of the allies in their spheres of influence through controlling their key interests, economically, militarily and for collective security purpose. Secondly, the allies within the sphere of

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 57.

<sup>74</sup> See *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Force Comparisons*, NATO Information Service, (Brussels, 1984): 4.

<sup>75</sup> “The Soviet/Warsaw Pact Ground Forces Threat to Europe,” in *New Technology for NATO Follow-On Forces Attack*, (Washington D.C.:U.S. Congress), 1987.

<sup>76</sup> Otto O. Chaney, Jr., “The Soviet Threat to Europe: Prospects for the 1980’s,” Report, (Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 1983), 19-21.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

influence forged stronger ties with the US and USSR. As this chapter argues, the Cold War and every other war or confrontation between the great powers has happened and continues to happen due to the great powers' pursuit for spheres of influence.

This study holds that NATO and Warsaw Pact meant a declaration of the line that must not be crossed, a declaration backed up by sufficient force to make such message credible. During and after the Cold war, the US and USSR/Russia possessed a powerful military force capable of a credible forward defense. Also the nuclear deterrence issued the message that the defeat in a nuclear war is mutual. Only the wars between great powers are world wars, other kinds of wars are not world wars and they have never stopped despite the many schools of thought and different ways to organize world politics in a way that prevents wars. The relationship between the great powers depends on the accepted spheres of influence. One's attempts to strengthen own status and security causes on the other the feeling that peace is not assured. According to Stephen van Evera, "if all states accept their status quo and none wish to change it, wars are far fewer."<sup>78</sup>

However, this study argues that spheres of influence have been an enduring recourse of international politics, as a consequence of which whatever the frame of mutually assured security, the great powers will continue to view each other as a rival to be contained rather than accommodated. Concretely between the US and USSR/Russia, influence projection has been adjusted according to the geopolitical circumstances to ensure its continuation, and this has taken place based on institutional roots and diverse strategic bilateral agreements.

There were attempts for confidence building measures to decrease the hostility and suspicion level, to establish a mutually assured security despite the mutually assured destruction and rivalry for influence. Nevertheless, although NATO and Warsaw Pact were established to ensure viable deterrence and containment, in essence they were the

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<sup>78</sup> Stephen van Evera, "Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, 15: 3, (Winter 1990-1991), 32.

two superpowers' spheres of influence. Therefore this study argues that institutions are spheres of influence, and the case of NATO and Warsaw Pact clearly illustrate it. Both America and Soviet Union expanded the concept of security not only to their physical protection but even to the security of their respective allies because the institutions of NATO and Warsaw Pact played a constructive role for the superpowers to legitimize and exercise their power. These two institutions translated the power of US and USSR into influence.

### **3.6 The US-USSR's Internal Management of NATO and Warsaw Pact**

This section elaborates briefly on how did the US and USSR manage their institutional spheres of influence, basically, the US-NATO and the USSR-Warsaw Pact. NATO established in 1949 had an independent organizational structure while Warsaw Pact established in 1955 as a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance served as Soviet Defense Ministry.<sup>79</sup> USSR formed Political Consultative Committee for ad hoc political consultations between the Soviet and Eastern European representatives of the Warsaw Pact and Joint Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact Countries as a link between the Soviet and Eastern European armed forces.<sup>80</sup> Also different Eastern countries such as East Germany, Bulgaria, Poland would assist the bloc with arm trades and economic relations with the Third World countries.

NATO and Warsaw Pact meant an institutionalized integration, alliance, ideology, demarcation, collective security and defense, and spheres of influence. Because NATO and Warsaw Pact were so important for the strength of US and USSR, both superpowers wanted to ensure the reliability of their allies in wartime, willing and capable of fighting beyond their own territory to defend the interests of the bloc (sphere of influence). The

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<sup>79</sup>Richard F. Nyrop (ed.), 1982, *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, ( Washington D.C: Library of Congress), 307.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid. 327-331.



difference was that USSR was more inclined to impose its control on its zone of influence through coercive power and military might, while the US preferred an integration of NATO members' political interests for political consultations and common assessments. Internally the USSR was more coercive than the US towards its client states. This was demonstrated in 1956 when Soviet Union crushed by force the Hungarian revolts and in 1968 the Czechoslovakian revolts for wanting to break away from communism.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, the Warsaw Pact's unity was often shaken, firstly with the departure of Yugoslavia, when Joseph Tito decided to be an independent socialist country and to a certain extent he had support from the Western side. Secondly, in 1961 when Albania disengaged from Soviet Union and pursued a closer policy with China. Thirdly in 1963, Romania also disengaged from the Soviet Union but not with the intention to be closer with China.

Among the Eastern European countries it was not easy to maintain cohesion, because it was not easy to adjust the articles of the Warsaw treaty with the signatories. Poland was an important country for the Soviet sphere of influence but not a friendly bilateral alliance. Czechoslovakia did not trust much on the support from the West due to its experience in 1968 when Soviet Union crushed the country's revolt by force. Romania preferred an equal voice with Soviet Union within the Warsaw Pact's planning and decision making, or at least a rotating of the key positions.<sup>82</sup> The refusal of Soviet Union to grant this suggestion produced strong disagreements between Soviets and Romanians. Despite differences in their strategies and manoeuvres, each, the US and the USSR had the goal to be the key leader of its sphere, and this was equated with the national interests.

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<sup>81</sup> There were few serious uprisings against the Soviet control and against socialism form of government, such as in June 1953 uprising in the German Soviet zone, Hungary uprising in 1956 which even wanted to leave the Warsaw Pact. In 1960 USSR wanted to station troops in Czechoslovakia but was refused, and in the 1968 uprising it was invaded by the Soviet troops. All these uprisings were suppressed by force because they threatened the unity and cohesion of the Warsaw Pact.

<sup>82</sup> "The Warsaw Pact" in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, Glenn E. Curtis, ed. (Washington, D. C.: Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress, 1992), available at [www.shsu.edu/~his\\_ncp/WarPact.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/WarPact.html).

The US' management of its sphere of influence NATO has been one of diplomatic constraints to prevent the signatories from leaving the coalition but not the use of force. In addition, the US tried to accommodate the different preferences and interests of the member states, their contribution and diplomatic stand toward the alliance as a whole. In 1951, the Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) was established together with a civilian staff and a secretary-general to deal with the political dimension of the organization.<sup>83</sup> The key positions in NATO had to be Americans, (same as the Soviet management of the Warsaw Pact where the key positions had to be from the Soviet Union) although there was some participation from the other countries in others roles of policy planning.

Collective defense against the external enemy was the central threat and concern of both NATO and Warsaw Pact. The US policy to equip some of its Western European allies with Intermediate-range ballistic missiles as a defense against USSR aggression was accepted by the allies. These missiles were to be stationed in Britain, Turkey and Italy, under the bilateral control between the country and US. Such move meant US forward bases in Western Europe and a strengthened deterrence against USSR.<sup>84</sup> NATO was an alliance of democratic states, but in 1945 the US rejected the Baruch Plan of internationalizing the atomic program within the Western camp. As a consequence, France and Britain pursued an independent atomic weapons programme.<sup>85</sup> At this stage, the US interfered to establish with Britain and France a multilateral Nuclear Defense Affairs Committee within NATO led by the US. NATO also established committees for defense, military and finance functions for mutually agreed upon consultations and

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<sup>83</sup> "A Short History of NATO," in North Atlantic Treaty Organization, available at NATO Archives Online: [www.nato.int/history/nato-history.html](http://www.nato.int/history/nato-history.html).

<sup>84</sup> Richard Crockatt, *The Fifty Years War: The United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics*, (Rutledge: London and New York, 1995), 270.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 262-270.

decisions.<sup>86</sup> This reflects the major power's strategy to maintain an undivided independence and leadership over its sphere of influence.

It is also important to stress that there was an internal policy within the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and an external policy outside these spheres of influence. Although it has been widely interpreted as a battle for defense of socialism versus the defense of democracy, this study argues that at the core it was about spheres of influence. Whether the configuration of the international system is multipolar, bipolar, hegemon, or trilateral as it seems to be currently (US-China-Russia), sphere of influence is the major powers' conduct in international affairs. The bilateral US-USSR/Russia relations has provided different forecasts and suggestions by a number of writings. Dense events have had an impact in driving these two countries' mutually assured security as well as their rivalry for influence projection in global affairs. As the post-Cold War has proven, there is no ultimate consequences for the story of US-Russian bilateral relations because the sphere of influence continues, but it is important to emphasize that mutually assured security takes place when it is a win-win situation, and rivalry for influence prevails on crucial areas or causes that threaten the US' or USSR/Russia's status quo.

### **3.7 The End of Cold War**

This section elaborates on the events that led to the closure of the Cold War. It was a process that went through different stages especially during the last decade of the Cold War. The Cold War was characterized by numerous events and complexities but this chapter has illustrated only that part of it that has relevance to the sphere of influence angle.

According to Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "The end of the Cold War is clearly one of those momentous events whose explanation will always be a matter of

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<sup>86</sup>Celeste A. Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO after the Cold War," *International Organization*, 54:4, (Autumn 2000), 713.

debate. But such debates may be more or less illuminating, depending on the degree to which scholars actually engage each other's arguments and evidence."<sup>87</sup> The Cold War era as a whole and its last decade included domestic politics, leadership, strategies, and ideas of large-scale, but the central argument of this chapter is that Cold War was a war for spheres of influence between the two superpowers rather than an ideological war. Even if both the US and USSR were to be members of the same ideological outlook, their confrontation was shaped and caused by their different incompatible geopolitical vision. USSR wanted to become the hegemon of Eastern Europe and Central Asia especially in terms of territorial expansion, whereas the US wanted the hegemonic position of the Western hemisphere through the leading principle of democracy. This evidence further strengthens the substance of this study, that every confrontation that has taken place between the major powers during any epoch, has always been about the conflicting shape of influence projection.

Ideologies and policies, strategies and military doctrines, institutions and agreements, have all been tools to project influence. Therefore regarding NATO and Warsaw Pact, these study asserts they were two spheres of influence. Rather than providing a chronicle of events from 1947 to 1990, this chapter outlined only certain key events in the US-USSR relations that illustrate the historical presence of sphere of influence as a goal of the US' and USSR's approach to international politics.

The end of the Cold War went through certain stages, at the political, economic, and military level. However majority of writings dedicate it the figure of Mikhail Gorbachev, (1985-1990) who decided to end the East-West ideological conflict, to reject the use of force for keeping in power the communist regimes of the Eastern part, and to embark on democratization, along with adequate responses from the US negotiations.<sup>88</sup> Yet the main ingredient that caused it was the loosened ties between the Eastern European governments

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<sup>87</sup> Stephen G. Brooks & William C. Wohlforth, "Clarifying the End of Cold War Debate", *Cold War History*, 7: 3, (2007): 447.

<sup>88</sup> Archie Brown, "Perestroika and the End of the Cold War", *Cold War History*, 7:1, (2007), 18.

with the Soviet Union and the Soviet unwillingness to suppress them by force unlike before. Economically the market economy has been more prosperous than command economy, also technologically the West was more advanced than East. Militarily both superpowers were nuclear powers, thus the strategic stability existed. But the strength and the weakness of every sphere of influence depends on the coalition, and the Western coalition was stronger than the Eastern coalition. Cold War started with the building of two major spheres of influence and ended when one of them dissolved, although it has continued in another form after the Cold War, which is the discussion of the coming chapter.

### **3.8 A weaker Cohesion within the USSR's Sphere of Influence**

The last decade continued with the coming in power of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 and Ronald Reagan in 1981. The last Cold War USSR administration led by Mikhail Gorbachev acknowledged the USSR's coercive cohesion towards the Eastern European countries and admitted that it was not the right way to control it, together with a decrease on the military expenditures in order to improve the living standards of the USSR.<sup>89</sup> To rectify this Gorbachev initiated democratic and economic reforms. At the 19th Party Congress in summer 1988, Gorbachev declared that each country should decide its own political and economic system, and repeated this same statement in the UN speech, December 1988.<sup>90</sup> Immediately in 1989, the Central East European countries continued their uprisings to break away from Soviet Union. Therefore Soviet Union informed that it preferred reconciliation with the West rather than confrontation. The new policies for democratization and liberty, known as glasnost and perestroika intended to enhance the efficiency of the Soviet economic system and its openness to foreign direct investments.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> See Geir Lundestad, "Imperial Overstretch: Mikhail Gorbachev, and the End of the Cold War," *Cold War History*, 1: 1, (2000), 1-20; and Vladimir Zubok, "Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War: Perspectives on History and Personality," *Cold War History*, 2: 2, (2002), 61-100.

<sup>90</sup> Archie Brown, "Perestroika and the End of the Cold War", *Cold War History*, 7:1, (2007), 4.

<sup>91</sup> Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (restructuring) were reform policies implemented by Gorbachev since 1985. From 1985-1990

These were reforms intended for a democratic transformation within and strengthen the USSR sphere of influence internally, instead these reforms produced a loosening of the grip over the whole sphere.

In January 1989 George H. Bush came into power, in November 1989 the Berlin Wall was destroyed, confirming the unity of the two sides of Berlin and Germany. In this same year, the communist governments in Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany fell, and were replaced by democratic elites. The policies of glasnost and perestroika could not create consensus within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. Therefore, on one side, Gorbachev himself intended the glasnost and perestroika to be policies that would enable the communist governments to stand on their own, yet within the Soviet's sphere of influence. On the other side, there was a decreased inner Soviet ability and lack of willingness to interfere and bear the costs of intervention,<sup>92</sup> unlike the previous Soviet coercions in the events of Berlin, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

Vladislav M. Zubok states that the character of a personality in a position of power at a critical juncture can make a major difference in the course of history."<sup>93</sup> Furthermore Zubok explains that "For most statesmen ideas are tools and to understand their impact on history, one must examine how they are moulded and manipulated by the human agents who espouse them. In Gorbachev's case, he clearly overreached himself when he tried to mould Soviet realities according to the ideas of 'new thinking.'"<sup>94</sup> Yegor Ligachev states that "politics cannot explain the zigzags of the political discourse associated so closely with Gorbachev's name. There was an entirely complex of interrelated causes, including Gorbachev's personal qualities."<sup>95</sup>

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these two reforms brought fundamental changes in the economic, internal and international context of the USSR. The whole Central East Europe was swept by these two reforms. Although Gorbachev meant these two policies to strengthen USSR and improve its relations within and outside the bloc, it led to the reversed impact, to the collapse of USSR.

<sup>92</sup> Stephen G. Brooks & William C. Wohlforth, "Clarifying the End of Cold War Debate," *Cold War History*, 7: 3, (2007), 451.

<sup>93</sup> Vladimir M. Zubok, "Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War: Perspectives on History and Personality," *Cold War History*, 2: 2, (2002), 61.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 68.

<sup>95</sup> Yegor Ligachev and Stephen Cohen, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs of Yegor Ligachev*, (Pantheon: Westview Press), 1996.

The Soviet Union gradually lost the position as an external great power over Eastern Europe, but could not compromise on the same kind of loss within the Soviet Union. It was determined to suppress the independent nationalist movements by force if necessary. The proposed reforms of democracy and openness were attractive to all the peoples of the Soviet republics and Central East Europe, so their uprisings against the Soviet-style system could not be prevented neither among the Soviet republics nor among the Eastern European countries.

The nationalist movements all over the new post-Soviet countries were crucial to the disintegration of the USSR. Nevertheless, the independence of East Germany was the final blow to the USSR's sphere of influence. The East Germany's leader Erich Honecker wanted to suppress the uprising through the use of force in the 'Chinese solution', but USSR had given order to the Central East European communist governments not to use force on the uprisings, and informed East Germany not to rely on Soviet forces to resolve its internal problems.<sup>96</sup> Gorbachev declared that the relationship with the socialist countries was to be based equality and fully voluntarily, not coerced like in the past.<sup>97</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 1988, Gorbachev also strengthened again the official stance of USSR that 'each socialist country should decide its own political and economic system.'<sup>98</sup>

Another factor that contributed to the decentralization of power within Soviet Union was the economic deterioration due to the failure of glasnost and perestroika because the Soviet economic system could not cope with the market economy immediately. Also the unified Germany's membership into NATO in 1990 led to the coup against Gorbachev in 1991. The communist governments in the Central Eastern European countries tried to resist but they were toppled by mass demonstrations. Even the Eastern Communist governments had orders from Moscow not to suppress the mass demonstrations by means

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<sup>96</sup> See Vladimir Zubov, "Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War: Perspectives on History and Personality," *Cold War History*, 2: 2, (2002): 86-87; and Geir Lundestad, 'Imperial Overstretch', Mikhail Gorbachev, and the End of the Cold War," 2000, *Cold War History*, 1: 1, (2000): 1-20.

<sup>97</sup> Geir Lundestad, 'Imperial Overstretch,' 2000.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 4.

of force, except for Romania where Ceausescu used force to maintain his dictatorship until he was executed. Finally, the USSR and the Warsaw Pact dissolved, and the Cold War era of US-USSR's spheres of influence came to an end. After the coup against Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin became the new President of post-communist Russia. There are different opinions about the closure of the Cold War, whether Soviet Union was forced to retreat due to economic and military reasons, or was it Soviet choice of reconciliation with the West rather than confrontation. While this is a matter of interpretation, in relation to the central theme of this study, Warsaw Pact was a Soviet institutional sphere of influence and NATO was a US institutional sphere of influence. The above mentioned description highlights that every region of the world was divided into pro-US and pro-Soviet allies.

This chapter determines that containment, deterrence, détente policies, and mutually assured destruction notion throughout the five decades of the Cold War, were the superpowers' strategies and mechanisms for demarcation and protection of their respective zones of influence. Saul Cohen argues that 'spheres of influence are essential to the preservation of national and regional expression ... the alternative is either a monolithic world system or world chaos.'<sup>99</sup> The US-USSR relationship was the dominant political relationship in the international system for fifty years interpreted through a wide-ranging analytical effort by many scholars and policy makers. Yet this study asserts that their central goal was the pursuit for sphere of influence, and such pursuit encompassed all kinds of perspectives, motives and preparations, in military and economic realms. Sphere of influence per se is complex, difficult and shifting, as such, both America and Soviet Union pursued it via tactical resources and strategies to create and sustain their relevant coalitions.

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<sup>99</sup> Refer to Saul Cohen, *Geography and Politics in a World Divided*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), (New York: Oxford University Press), viii.



### **3.9 Conclusion**

The Cold War was a historical episode of a powerful international rivalry, and as this study attempts to enter into the literature of the US-Russian bilateral relations, it highlights that whatever the interpretation of the US-USSR/Russian relations, the sphere of influence has been crucial as well as a national interest for both these countries during and after the Cold War. This study adds that, sphere of influence has been sought for self-confidence to resist the other powers' offensives and ambitions, also to counter the fear coming from rivals' economic and military presence in one's own sphere of interests. On one side sphere of influence prevents war and interference, on the other side it is established and extended through war and interference. Establishing their own orbits of influence through allies and proxies has been one of the techniques employed by the great powers to deter and curtail each other's power, as such this is a goal for which great powers are hardly in harmony with each other.

The USSR dissolved into the new CIS countries, the Warsaw Pact disappeared, while NATO survived and extended its security zone into the political vacuum of Central Eastern Europe. The post-Cold War US-Russian foreign policies continued the pursuit for spheres of influence though in a different frame and that is the central argumentative substance of this study. Though weaker, in the eyes of Russia's foreign policy, the former Soviet area has always been a rightful Russian sphere of influence, therefore the new republics' membership into institutions where Russia is excluded has not been acceptable by the subsequent Russian administrations.

In the US-Russian spheres of influence, there have been proponents of an aggressive stance to deter USSR/Russia and proponents of good terms with USSR/Russia, not to alienate it. Right now, the aggressive stance is given priority, and it has become a two-way US-Russian assertiveness to deter each other. An argument this chapter puts forth is that, the significance of Germany during the Cold War is equal to the significance of

Ukraine in the post-Cold War. Whoever got Germany on its side strengthened its influence over the whole Europe. Same stands for Ukraine's position, whoever gets Ukraine on its side, can strengthen its influence over the whole CIS area. The discussion about the US-Russian spheres of influence in the post-Cold War continues in the coming chapter.

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## **CHAPTER 4: THE POST-COLD WAR US-RUSSIAN SPHERES OF INFLUENCE**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter illustrates the core argument of this study, the continuity of the US-Russian spheres of influence in the post-Cold War. Conceptualizing and assessing the sphere of influence approach in the US-Russian bilateral relations is relevant as well as a difficult domain, because on one side it means forward positions. On the other side some are forward positions in which each is working hard to drive the other out of it. The extent to which this study's assessment is valid is a matter of opinion, yet it conveys the message that sphere of influence has been a crucial goal for both these countries' foreign policies. Despite being in different status, the US much stronger and Russia weaker than during the Cold War, the great power mentality for influence projection remained.

The two main arguments of this chapter are: firstly, the continuity of great powers' influence projection even in the post-Cold War; secondly, the contest for influence between the US and Russia is manifested through a set of institutions and alliances with countries on different regions. Furthermore the US undisputed hegemony is clashing with Russia's assertiveness to defend the areas vital to Russia's influence as a great power in the world.<sup>1</sup> To illustrate these points this chapter analyses the parallel kind of integrations pursued by both the US and Russia to ensure their spheres of influence by political, military and economic union of their allies, also to counter each other. The US-led NATO's expansion towards eastward direction, and Russia's influence projects into CIS through Collective Security Treaty Organization to counter NATO and the Eurasian Economic Union to counter EU's expansion, are clear illustrations of the US-Russian continued spheres of influence and contest for influence even in the post-Cold War era.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Charap and Mikhail Trotskiy, "U.S.-Russia Relations in Post-Soviet Eurasia: Transcending the Zero-Sum Game," Report, (Cambridge: Mass.: Working Group on the Future of U.S.-Russia Relations, 2011), 13-14.

Both these countries have continued the political-security leadership of their allies and proxies to balance the geopolitical advantages and disadvantages in relation to each other.

This chapter also argues that while the US has strengthened the NATO's geopolitical advances to defend the democracies, to spread democratization and to maintain the unity of the Euro-Atlantic camp, Russia on the other side, though weaker than USSR did not cede the post-Soviet area as Russia's sphere of influence. Leon Aron in his article argues that the deterioration of the US-Russian relations comes from "the way regimes in Moscow and Washington implement their strategic agendas, based on their ideologies, and in how they view – again through the prism of ideology – their partner's response to their actions."<sup>2</sup> Different opinions are offered towards the US-Russian cooperation or deterioration, but this study explains it through the prism of sphere-of-influence.

The chapter is divided into different sections: a brief background about the post-Cold War US-Russian influence projection policy; the persistence and enlargement of NATO, and its implications on the relations between these two countries; the NATO-Russia relations; the implications of NATO's policy to expand membership to the CIS countries and Russia's reactions; the Russian coherent policy towards CIS to ensure it remains a sphere of influence by means of multilateral and bilateral treaties within this region. Both countries are security and influence seeking states. An EU and NATO expansion into CIS has alerted and placed Russia at a confrontational position with the US. This chapter highlights the crucial initiatives and events that prove the mutual US' and Russia's determination to design influence projection.

## **4.2 The Post-Cold War US-Russian Relations**

This part provides a background about how the US-Russian bilateral relations started the post-Cold War. As elaborated in chapter 2, sphere of influence is at the front of great

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<sup>2</sup> Leon Aron, "U.S. –Russia Relations Through the Prism of Ideology," *Russia in Global Affairs*, 4.: 3, (July-September, 2006): 81.

powers' relations because it affects their prestige, status and security. The US-Russian relations is the most important bilateral affair for world politics, because when mutually assured security prevails there is a stable political order. When it is a provocation on their spheres of influence then it becomes confrontational bilateral affair leading towards East-West world order systems. To provide a balanced assessment of this argument, this study has included diverse academic and official views from the US and Russian sides. According to G. J. Ikenberry, the Cold War institutional roots of the Western order must be maintained and strengthened in the post-Cold War.<sup>3</sup> While Dmitry Trenin argues that in the beginning of the post-Cold War, there was "Russia's silence to NATO's enlargement for a new quality of Russia's relations with the West, but by 2000, Putin decided to pursue a different course from his predecessor, Yeltsin."<sup>4</sup>

This study argues that due to spheres of influence the great powers' relationships hardly last, but they seek to accommodate each other through selective cooperation. Also the context of the global crises always comes from the conflicting great powers' influence projection. The evidence of this argument is based upon three issues analysed in this study—the NATO's expansion policy towards the post-Soviet area, the Ukrainian revolution and the Syrian crisis, because in geopolitical terms, they mean expansion of influence for the US and curbed influence for Russia. For the purpose of influence projection even in the post-Cold War, the US and Russia have been mutually interested to an array of multilateral and bilateral alliances and diverse institutional arrangements to maintain their foothold and strengthen their position (although asymmetrical), US as the hegemon, Russia as a regional power in Eurasia. Because the world politics is transitional, strategic turning points keep occurring at different stages, which cause political order or disorder, and this is due to the great powers' pursuit for spheres of influence.

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<sup>3</sup> John G. Ikenberry, "Strengthening the Atlantic political order," *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, 35: 3, (2000), 59.

<sup>4</sup> Dmitry Trenin, "Silence of the Bear", *NATO Review*, No. 1, (Spring, 2002), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/issue1/english/art3.html>.

The end of bipolarity in 1990 brought the post-Cold War 'New World Order' as stated by George H. Bush, whose emphasis was on the advancement of democratic values and a just global order led by the US in an institutional form. As the global setting of world affairs shifted from bipolarity to hegemony, the US became the main pole and Russia lost the previous areas of influence, except for the former Soviet new republics. As the Soviet Union institutions dissolved, the new emerging Russian Federation was struggling to define its borders, national interests, rebuild its statehood, and settle its relationship with the new emerging post-Soviet states. During the first decade of the post-Cold War, the previous adversarial relationship was replaced by mutually assured security between these two countries.

The new Russian Federation established the Commonwealth of Independent States as an integration of the former Soviet area to be led by Russia. Andrei Tsygankov argues that "many Russian problems are typical difficulties that nations encounter with state-building, and should not be presented as indicative of Russia's 'inherent drive' to autocracy or empire."<sup>5</sup> To the Russian administrations, the collapse of USSR was considered as a 'geopolitical catastrophe,' as a consequence, the new imperative of Russia's foreign policy became 'not to speed up the integration into "the West" and make no sacrifices for its sake.'<sup>6</sup>

The shift from Cold War to post-Cold War found the Russian administrations willing to be part of the European home and a NATO member. Such course was approached by Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin during the first administration. Gorbachev expressed his desire for a common European home with Russia and global partnership with US.<sup>7</sup> Same efforts were continued by Yeltsin, Putin and Medvedev, but could not succeed because economically Russia was too big for EU's economic exercise, politically it was

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<sup>5</sup> Andrei Tsygankov, "The U.S. Russia Policy after 9/11," in *Russophobia: Anti-Russian Lobby and American Foreign Policy*, (Palgrave: MacMillan, New York, 2009), xiv.

<sup>6</sup> Leon Aron, "U.S.-Russia Relations through the Prism of Ideology," *Russia in Global Affairs*, 4: 3, (July-September 1986), 86.

<sup>7</sup> 'Council of Europe', The Common European Home," Speech by Mikhail Gorbachev, July 6, 1989, online at: [www.coe.int/aboutcoe/index.asp?page=noslnvites&sp=gorbachev](http://www.coe.int/aboutcoe/index.asp?page=noslnvites&sp=gorbachev).

independent-minded in pursuit for equality with US, and militarily it was a nuclear power.<sup>8</sup>

The US' institutions survived and expanded, spreading the democracy advancement policy and the global military clout. By 1993 the term European Community became European Union as declared in the Maastricht Treaty. And NATO as a counterforce to the Warsaw Pact, continued its policies and objectives in the security architecture of Europe. A united disarmed Germany became a NATO member, and all of the Central East European countries pursued this same course. Such a significant geopolitical advantage meant a US' sphere of influence, because Europe has been central for the US and Russian strength to carry out their geopolitical projects in world affairs.

In the Maastricht Treaty of November 1993 the term European Community became European Union, and NATO continued its goal of spreading democracy and defending the club of democracies. It expanded the security clout to Central East Europe just like it did with West Europe after WWII. The European context of security and influence has been an arena for joint or conflicting decision making power between the US and Russia. With the integration of a united disarmed Germany into NATO which finalized the end of the cold war, NATO as an institutional influence seemed a preferable course for the CEE zone, as such it continued to pull in the rest of the European countries, for many purposes: to support the expansion of Western democracy, to provide security for the upcoming instabilities in Central East Europe, to maintain leadership over European security affairs as well as to prevent the European powers from falling into crises with each other. An observation of this study is that, the secondary powers like France, Britain, and Germany accepted the US leadership, but the primary powers like China and Russia do not accept it. China and Russia remain determined to maintain independent powerful militaries and influence projection capability in their relevant spheres of influence.

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<sup>8</sup> Dmitry Trenin, "The Ukraine Crisis and the Resumption of Great Power Rivalry," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 19, 2014.

By the second decade of the Cold War, there was a distance from integration into the Euro-Atlantic camp but not confrontational. Russia's improved economy during 2000-2008 led to a renewed form of cooperation with the Western side, a partnership based on equality and reciprocity, in which Russia's role as a significant power to be acquiesced. According to Andrei Tsygankov's opinion, there have been 'three ways of organizing the US-Russian relations: mutually beneficial partnership, limited engagement, and containment.'<sup>9</sup> This study asserts that the post-cold war character of the US-Russian relations is determined by the US approach of CIS. If US attempts to strengthen its foothold in this region in a way that overpasses Russia's role, then it becomes confrontational. Apparently a big political game is taking place, in which America wants to ensure global primacy for the twenty first century, and Russia wants to maintain its influence assets. Russia has always been concerned with securing a good place in the security architecture of Europe.<sup>10</sup> As the global interconnectedness deepens, the mixture of cooperation in common global problems and independent-minded leadership in the relevant zones of influence becomes either confusing or conflicting.

There have been some energy deals, arms control talks and agreements, and discussions on how to tackle terrorism, but these have only meant tactical convergence, because the assertiveness and restraints to defend their influence assets in the world have been mutual. The phase of global war on terrorism that started on September 11/2001 was treated as a common front, yet there has been no common assessment on how to deal with terrorism and its consequences. Furthermore, according to the Russian official view, the global war against terrorism would be successful only if conducted on an international basis, otherwise there were concerns that the US would dictate the terms of the global war on terrorism.<sup>11</sup> According to some opinions, to Russia the critical countries connected

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<sup>9</sup> Andrei Tsygankov, "The U.S. Russia Policy after 9/11," in *Russophobia: Anti-Russian Lobby and American Foreign Policy*, (2009), 1.

<sup>10</sup> See Alexei Arbatov, "Russian Foreign Policy Thinking in Transition," in *Russia and Europe: The Emerging Security Agenda*, edited by Vladimir Baranovsky, (Stockholm and Oxford: SIPRI and Oxford University Press, 1997), 135-159.

<sup>11</sup> Sharyl Cross, "Russia's relationship with the United States/NATO in the US-led Global War on Terrorism," *The Journal of Slavic*



with terrorism were Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, while to US it was Iraq and Iran.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the global war on terror comes with Russia's rising determination to be an independent power and an independent strategically player in international affairs, vis-à-vis the Western coalition. Recent assertiveness means that Russia cannot become part of the West if it means curbing Russia's sphere of influence.<sup>13</sup>

To return to the core of this study, there has been a parallel coalition building efforts by both US and Russia to ensure their spheres of influence. The nature of the US-Russian relations in the post-Cold War is affected by many factors, but mostly by the US approach towards CIS, and NATO's expansion policy into CIS. If US attempts to strengthen its political foothold in CIS above Russia's then this bilateral relation becomes confrontational. Any political or economic interference that curbs Russia's position in the post-Soviet space triggers determination to defend its assets of influence in CIS and elsewhere in the world. In the words of Sergey Rogov, "Relations with NATO are a fundamental foreign policy matter for Russia. They determine the character of our relations with the West. If NATO expansion takes place without taking into consideration Russia's legitimate security interests, alienation between Russia and the West will become inevitable."<sup>14</sup>

In the post-Cold War era, the US continued to lead the international setting of world politics through NATO as a strong military alliance, and EU as a strong economic and political supporter, other institutions such as World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other forms of regional integrations. While Russia kept in its foreign policy sight the political primacy in the post-Soviet area, militarily through CSTO and economically through Eurasian Economic Union. A brief explanation of each of these coalitions is necessary and it follows below on this chapter, since they manifest the continuity of

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*Military Studies*, 19: 2, (2006),180.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 175-192.

<sup>13</sup> Igor Zevelev, "The Russian World Boundaries," 01/07/2014, Valdai Discussion Club.

<sup>14</sup> Sergey Rogov, "Russia and NATO should conclude a treaty", *Segodnya*, (17 May 1995), 9.

carefully tailored spheres of influence through these coalitions, including an array of significant bilateral agreements.

This study observed that since the end of the Cold War, the US' and Russia's led influence structures preserved the cooperative posture and the mutually assured security but it was shaken by different incompatible tactics. The first sign of deterioration was in 2003 when US asked Russia to ensure the Chechnyan problem through a 'political solution.'<sup>15</sup> The second cause that soured the US-Russian relations was the US' support for the 'colour revolutions' in CIS. In the military realm, the US withdrew from ABM Treaty, it continued with missile deployment stations in Poland and Czech Republic, whereas Russia responded with withdrawal from INF Treaty. Another issue that meant a turning point for the US-Russian relations was NATO's policy of admitting and offering membership to Georgia, a move supported by both G.W. Bush and Obama's administrations, which constituted a 'frank statement that Russia can have no sphere of influence at all, one of the usual prerogatives of a major power.'<sup>16</sup> Also, Russia's assertiveness in the regional issues was rejected by the US.<sup>17</sup> After the Ukrainian Revolution, the posture between these two countries and the coalitions they lead has become assertive and competitive. The consequence of such political climate is that it produces different coalitions, which can be "confrontationist", "competitive", or "concert-based."<sup>18</sup>

The Cold War institutional frameworks of the joint US-Europe world order continued in the post-Cold War. NATO continued to be the most important organization of the US' political-military influence and global leadership. The whole European countries accepted and preferred NATO's membership, its security orientation and its involvement

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<sup>15</sup> See Andrei Tsygankov, "The U.S. Russia Policy after 9/11", in *Russophobia: Anti-Russian Lobby and American Foreign Policy*, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Richard K. Betts, "The Lost Logic of Deterrence", *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April 2013), 90.

<sup>17</sup> See Andrew Kramer, "Russia Claims Its Sphere of Influence in the World", *New York Times*, September 1, 2008, p. A6. Helena Cooper; and Nicholas Kulish, "U.S. Rejects 'Sphere of Influence', for Russia", *New York Times*, February 2, 2009, p. A7.

<sup>18</sup> Martin A. Smith, "Russia and multipolarity since the end of the Cold War", *East European Politics*, 29: 1, (January 2013), 36.

in crises in different parts of the world. But Russia has always remained suspicious of NATO's existence just like in the Cold War time. Any cooperation forum or joint exercises established to convince Russia that NATO is not a threat to Russian security and interests has not succeeded in changing the Russian perceptions and its counter-responses to the NATO's geopolitical advances.

According to Vladimir Dedijer, sphere of influence has always been present and reasoned through territory, culture, religion, nationalism.<sup>19</sup> This study adds that sphere of influence encompasses all the possible elements that can be used to create a coalition or an institution. Security, threat, and economics are other elements that serve to carve out influence. These same reasons are used by the great powers even in the post-Cold War to create zones of influence or buffer zones in their borders. NATO is a political- security type sphere of influence for the US and CIS is basically a status and security type of influence for Russia.

At the beginning of the post-Cold War, Russia was concerned with securing its place in the new security architecture of the post-Cold War Europe.<sup>20</sup> Boris Yeltsin followed a West-oriented policy to be integrated into the Western military and economic structures. The US assisted Russia in establishing political, economic and domestic institutions, and offered an array of mechanisms such as G8 in 1998, membership in the European Council in 1996, closer partnership with EU and NATO, NATO-Russian Council in 2002, and membership in WTO in 2012.<sup>21</sup> Yet Russia felt it was not offered the status of an international actor, not treated as part of the post-Cold War great powers concert. Dmitri Trenin describes Russia's efforts to join West as "Yeltsin the one who tried the policy of fully integrating the country with West and join NATO, together with a direct alliance

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<sup>19</sup> Vladimir Dedijer, et.al, "The Evolution of the Concept of Spheres of Influence" in *Spheres of Influence and the Third World*, (Nottingham: Russell Press Ltd., 1973),13

<sup>20</sup> Alexei Arbatov, "Russian Foreign Policy Thinking in Transition," in *Russia and Europe: The Emerging Security Agenda*, Edited by Vladimir Baranovsky, (Stockholm and Oxford: SIPRI and Oxford University Press, 1997), 135-139.

<sup>21</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "The Ukraine Crisis and the Resumption of Great-Powers Rivalry," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Moscow Center, July 9, 2014

with US; then Putin's first two terms as country's leader conveyed to West the message of Russia's NATO membership; Medvedev proposed a European Security Treaty".<sup>22</sup>

However, the fact that EU and NATO were opened for the former USSR republics but not for Russia strengthened certain doubts. The NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997 and NATO-Russia Council in 2002 tried to accommodate such Russian concerns about the NATO expansion rounds, but Russia was not pleased with the status given within these two cooperation frameworks. While Russia wanted participation in the decision-making process, it was impossible for the US to share decisions and leadership with its former adversary in an institution meant for the US sphere of influence only. Another point argued in this study is that between ambitious powers and countries, the main objective of their foreign policies is to build, strengthen and expand sphere of influence, whether institutional influence or geographic influence. The cooperation between the major powers revolves around spheres of influence, mutual restraint and reciprocal acceptance of such spheres by the governments of the client states and by the other peer powers. The former British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd admitted that 'spheres of influence exist, they will not be eliminated by resolutions from this or that body.'<sup>23</sup> This study agrees with this opinion and argues that in the post-cold war it became a US' institutional influence through different global institutions, NATO the most important one, while Russia focused mostly on geographic influence through bilateral alliances. The loss the client states through the dissolution of the Pact's institution compelled Russia to project influence geographically, through friendly regimes in different parts of the world. Aware of its vulnerabilities, Russia also focused on tactical and strategic commitments, to prove that it is a power that matters in the international configuration of power, such as North Korea, Iran, Syria, Libya, and other countries considered by US and West as rogue countries. To

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> See Michael Harvey, "Perspectives on the UK's Place in the World," Europe Programme Paper, Chatham House, December 2011; and Douglas Hurd, *Choose Your Weapons: The British Foreign Ministry-200 Years of Argument, Success and Failure*, (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2010).

Russia they meant (and still do) allies and geographic influence since it lacks the institutions, but the West has perceived such move as a supporter of anti-US countries. Therefore this study illustrates that both Russia and the US are influence seekers, as such they refuse to let go of the assets that contribute to their current status. As a consequence, the mutually assured security is overcome by the rivalry for influence.

After every great power confrontation, in the cold war or prior to that, calls for a mutually assured stability framework come first. Yet the character of great powers' relations are an oscillation between mutually assured security and rivalry for influence projection. This has relevance to the US-Russian bilateral relations, which has also been characterized by a contest for influence performed through NATO as US' institutional influence and Russia's CIS and geographic influence projection, as devices to balance each other's political-military advantages. The US expanded NATO's political-military presence and influence throughout Central East Europe (CEE), it also expanded the dimensions of NATO from a political-military institution to ensure the European security, into a global institution tackling global crises and global security.<sup>24</sup> Russia also continued its influence projection elsewhere in the world through good relations with Argentina and Cuba in Latin America, Egypt, Syria and Iran in Middle East, China in Asia, Brazil, and other strategic interferences in the world affairs. These have been among the many Russian attempts to continue a renewed influence projection policy in the post-Cold War, whereas US continued with the expansion of the Cold War institutions. Russia wanted to be accommodated the position of being integrated with the Western front as well as being acknowledged its sphere of influence in the CIS, until 2006 when both Georgia and Ukraine were offered the possibility for NATO membership. This was a turning point for Russia's perception of its position in the bilateral relations with the US. Regarding the belief that the democratic nations do not initiate wars against each other, this study agrees

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<sup>24</sup> Karl-Heinz Kamp, "NATO at 60: The Global Security provider," *Security Politics in Asia and Europe*, (2010); Janusz Bugajski, "American interests in Central-Eastern Europe," *EurActiv*, 7 February, 2006.

with K.J. Hoslti's opinion who argues that such belief should not obscure the fact that "even states that have consistently denounced violence in international affairs will use force to achieve objectives or defend their interests *as they define them*."<sup>25</sup>

From the description provided in this section, it becomes apparent that just like in the Cold War, containment, deterrence, strategic stability, institutions, coalitions and strategic bilateral affairs, serve the major powers to translate power into influence. This study determines that both the US-led West and Russia possess powerful assets to defend their political independence in world affairs, also they mutually need each other's cooperation to deal with common threats, but there is lack of common assessment. Both Western front and Russia are willing to cooperate with each other on any matter, but it will not come at the price of curbing the current perimeters of influence each one possesses, US with its allies and institutions, Russia with CIS and any other influence asset left outside CIS zone.

### **4.3 Nuclear Deterrence**

This section addresses the US-Russian nuclear deterrence in the post-Cold War. During the Cold War, strategic stability between the two superpowers meant national invulnerability and retaliatory capability in the case of first strike. Strategic Stability was also defined as Mutually Assured Destruction, a concept deeply inherent in the political-military realities of the US-Soviet security relationship. It meant stability of nuclear weapons, a condition in which neither Soviet Union nor the United States could gain a decisive advantage from first strike. US initiated a series of arms control treaties and Soviet Union cooperated. In 1972 both signed SALT I according to which both agreed to limit the anti-ballistic missile defences. In 1979 START I, a common agreement for limitations of long-range missiles equipped with multiple independently targeted vehicles.

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<sup>25</sup>K. J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, (New Jersey: Simon & Schuster, 1975), 214.

With the end of the Cold War in 1991, STARTII was a treaty on reducing the nuclear warhead levels and gradual reduction of Russian and American long-range nuclear forces. Agreements on such arms control treaties highlighted the superpowers' concern for common interest and self-interest. The nuclear and arms control increase the transparency about the reduction of weapons but also want to prevent any vacuum that might be filled by other countries.<sup>26</sup>

Because the US and Russia are the only two most powerful nuclear countries, the bilateral relations continue to be characterized by the thinking that nuclear deterrence remains fundamental to maintain the strategic stability condition even in the post-Cold War era. Strategic stability came from the fact that a nuclear exchange would destroy the enemy and own country. The end of the Cold War brought new challenges for the US and Russian relations, characterized by changes and continuity of policies within this bilateral affair. This study maintains that, containment, deterrence, nuclear weapons and ideology-whether in terms of democracy-communism or in terms of free world-authoritarianism continue to operate the sphere of influence strategy of these two countries even in the post-Cold War. Nuclear deterrence and containment policies to serve the US-Russian geopolitics of influence projection remain still present in the table of this bilateral relationship. James Jay Carafano *et.al* argues that the post-Cold War Russia's assertiveness pose a threat to US because it means: a series of worldwide strategic and diplomatic challenges; its nuclear arsenal buildup; it's a threat to US' friends, allies, interests around the world; it's in cooperation with rogue countries, therefore US should prevent Russia's advances in all these areas.<sup>27</sup>

In the post-Cold War, the US replaced the Cold War Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) since the scientists considered it as a program impossible to render the adversary's

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<sup>26</sup> "Harmonizing the Evolution of U.S. and Russian Defense Policies," Report, Center for Strategic and International Studies, D.C. & Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, Moscow. 1993.

<sup>27</sup> James Jay Carafano *et.al.*, "U.S. Comprehensive Strategy Toward Russia," Special Report 173, (Washington D.C: The Heritage Foundation), December 2015.

nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete with the development of Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) and Prompt Global Strike (PGS). These two US nuclear giant steps that grant US permanent nuclear invulnerability alerted Russia which wants US legal binding agreements in exchange for its approval. Prior to the Ukrainian revolution the US refused any form of legally binding agreement on the basis that it does not aim to deter or threaten Russia, but the threat coming from Middle East, terrorists, and rogue countries like Iran and North Korea. In terms of foreign and defense policy, a sphere of influence supported by nuclear parity or superiority means a favourable position as a pole in international relations, a pole independent from coercion and aggression, it deters the adversaries and the peers, and it means an assurance to the allies. The nuclear weapons are the most important element of defense policy regarding any type of war-major or limited, therefore the US, Russia and all other nuclear powers have tried to be harmonize policies with each other and to keep its proliferation under control for they are the weapons that mean a threat to each-other.

Nevertheless, the US unilateral withdrawal from the ABM treaty in 2002 imbalanced the entire arms control regime and the US-Russian bilateral talks on strategic stability. Strategic superiority regarding the nuclear weapons is another factor that has shaken the level of trust between the two countries and Russia feels compelled to pursue an independent foreign policy of its own geopolitical ambitions and to maintain its deterrents unchallenged. A closer alliance with China related to economic partnerships, joint exercises and supporting each other diplomatically in the UN seems on the way. The strengthening of US unilateralist attitudes clashes with Russia's assertiveness because each claims to have a superior deterrence force as a tool of keeping its status in Western Hemisphere-US or Central Asia- Russia unchallenged.

Missile defense has been the most crucial point of US-American relations in cold war and post-cold war, because in this bilateral affair strategic stability has always meant



nuclear deterrence. Russian Ministry of Defense defines 'strategic stability as a condition in which neither party believes that it can gain decisive advantage through pre-emptive first strike, and thus does not seek to strike first.' The American definition of the strategic stability is the maintenance of retaliatory superior offensive nuclear force. Despite attempts and calls for nuclear disarmament, the facts that US, Russia, and other powers are seeking for the opportunity and advantage to improve their conventional and nuclear weapons, America's anti-ballistic missile defense and the Prompt Global Strike, do not argue in favour of nuclear reductions in the eyes of Russia.

One element of the strategic stability has been, the two countries seeking a verification regime and mutual relationship of offensive and defensive strategic weapons systems. Regarding the perspectives of these two countries' nuclear posture, currently US faces no threat that needs nuclear solution while Russia has called for the role of nuclear weapons in its defense doctrine as part of its deteriorated conventional capabilities.<sup>28</sup> Both these countries and other great and medium powers continue to see value in the role of the nuclear forces. Robertson explains, "whatever the international structure, the ability of a state to play an active role in world politics is linked to its military capability."<sup>29</sup>

In the Cold War, Russia's main security strategy was the strategic nuclear parity with US, whereas in the post-Cold War Russia seeks to neutralize the impact of US global ballistic missile defense system so that it cannot blackmail Russia. Russian policy makers deeply believe that the one thing that has protected Russia from a direct US intervention is its nuclear weapons. Sergei Karaganov also argues that nuclear weapons were the only reason that prevented NATO's actions at Russia's expense.<sup>30</sup> As the US views Russia's nuclear weapons as an existential threat, Russia views NATO and the ballistic missile defense as actions that have forced Russia to look for a global balance of forces, a Russian

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<sup>28</sup>Barry Blechman, Alex Bolfrass, Frank Valliere, "Russia and the United States," STIMSON, July 2009, edited by Barry Blechman

<sup>29</sup>Thomas P. M. Barnett, "The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in The 21<sup>st</sup> Century," (New York, Berkley Books, 2004), 8

<sup>30</sup> Stephen J. Blank, "Russia and the Current State of Arms Control", Strategic Studies Institute Monograph, (PA, Carlisle, U.S. Army College), 2012.

missile defense shield, and to develop the ability to overcome any missile defense system and protect Russia's retaliation potential. Putin declares that "Russia's military and technical response to the US global missile defense system and its European section will be effective and asymmetrical."<sup>31</sup> However, US claims that it wants the missile defense in Europe and the Prompt Global Strike as a capacity for defense against any provocation or threat coming from Iran or North Korea. This was the scenario until the Ukrainian revolution in 2013. After the revolution and Crimea's joining with the Russian Federation, the West has become alerted if Russia is planning same tactics towards the Baltics, and NATO wants to be ready in case of another Crimea's scenario in the Baltics.

The ballistic missile defense systems, the high-precision conventional weapons, the conventional balance in Europe and the space weaponization are areas of the utmost priority for each of these two countries, in relation to each other and in relation to their status internationally compared to the other great and rising powers. Plenty of negotiations have been going on about cooperation on common global threats, but it rather seems that each aims to contain the strategic deterrent of the other. Russia's strategic deterrent capability serves as part of deterrence strategy and it is the central security against external threats given the limited defensive perimeter of Russia in the post-cold war. As the US is trying to complete its ballistic missile defense system, it becomes the most invulnerable country in the world, it seals its military security in the international system, and eliminates the strategic situation of mutual-assured destruction in its relations with Russia.<sup>32</sup> The recent missile installations in Romania, and preparation for the other installations in Poland have made Russia feel compelled to balance these superior retaliatory steps through advanced powerful nuclear submarines, spacecraft, and land forces. Such initiatives for strategic superiority challenge the Mutually Assured Stability. Celeste A. Wallander describes Mutual Assured Stability as a condition "in which neither

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<sup>31</sup>Vladimir Putin, "Being Strong: Why Russia needs to rebuild its military", *Foreign Affairs*, February 21, 2012

<sup>32</sup> Stephen J. Blank, "Russia and the Current State of Arms Control, (2012), 18

party has the intention or capability to exercise unilateral advantage for political or military exploitation through preemptive coercion or military strike in such a way that precludes response, negotiation, or compromise.”<sup>33</sup> However every condition of nuclear stability is overcome by the pursuit for nuclear superiority.

Russia also refuses to start negotiations on limitations of tactical nuclear weapons, and after the Ukrainian revolution and the economic sanctions, Russia even refused to participate in the nuclear summit in Washington D.C. 2016. Furthermore, there is a difference in the counter-proliferation policy. US’ concerns do not approve of Russia’s independent nuclear activities with Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, India, but Britain, France, Germany are allowed to deal with rogue countries in the nuclear activities.

America is concerned with Russia's tactical nuclear weapons, and Russia is worried about the advancement of the US ballistic missile defense system. The report “Beyond the New START” explains that “the aim of arms control is not for arms control sake but to enhance the US national security as well as that of its allies.”<sup>34</sup> So far, it seems that both countries are reluctant to engage in further arms control, and the New START seems easier to be proclaimed than to be put into practice, because both countries are trying to advance the strategic superiority by all means.

Despite the many agreements and disagreements about the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons into the hands of unstable governments or arms control and disarmament, today, all the great powers and the rising ones seem to be more politically independent and engaged into a new technological arms race for both offensive and defensive systems, especially US, Russia and China.

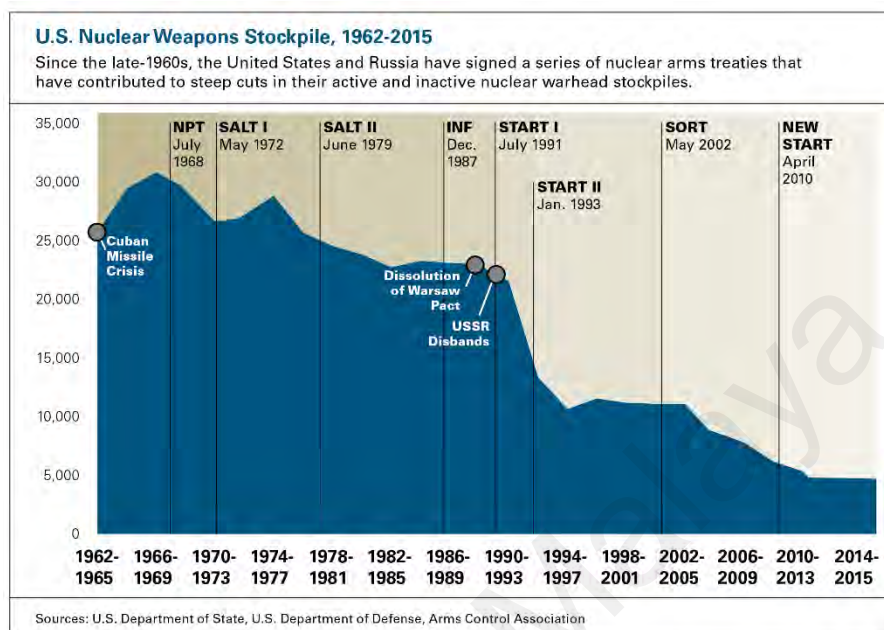
This study argues that even the post-Cold War has been continued containments, deterrence, rivalry for strategic stability or superiority, and propaganda rivalry for ideas-

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<sup>33</sup> Celeste A. Wallander, “Mutually Assured Stability: Establishing US-Russia Security Relations for a New Century,” Atlantic Council, (July 2013), 6

<sup>34</sup> James M. Acton & Michael Gerson, “Beyond New START: Advancing U.S. National Security Through Arms Control With Russia”, Report, Center for Strategic & International Studies, (Washington D.C. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), September 2011

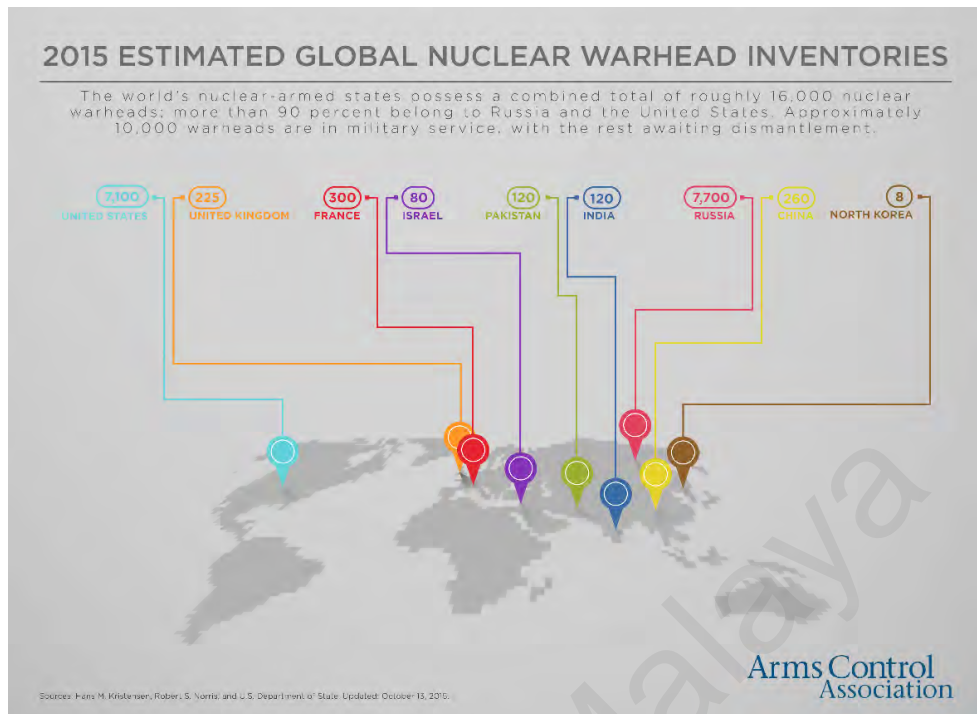
democracy, free world vs, authoritarians and dictatorships. This study maintains that these scenarios are part of great powers' sphere of influence strategy.



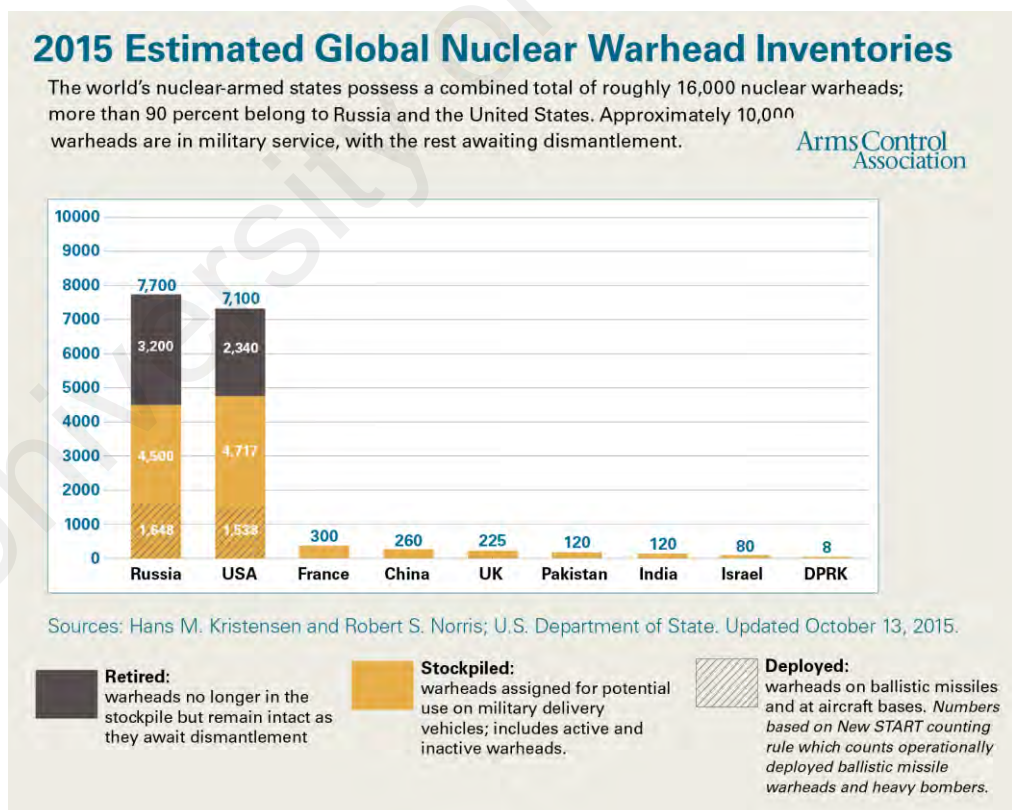
**Map 4.1: Source: Arms Control Association 1<sup>35</sup>**

<sup>35</sup> Kelsey Davenport, "Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance," *Arms Control Association*, Washington D.C., July 2016, available at: <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat>.

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Map 4.2: Arms Control Association 2<sup>36</sup>



Map 4.3: Arms Control Association 3<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

**Comparative Defense Spending (in billions of constant 2011 U.S. dollars)**

| Country                      | 1990  | 1995  | 2000  | 2005  | 2010  | 2013  |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| United States                | 527.2 | 411.7 | 394.2 | 579.8 | 720.3 | 618.7 |
| <b>Partners</b>              |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| France                       | 70.5  | 65.0  | 61.8  | 65.1  | 66.3  | 62.3  |
| Germany                      | 71.7  | 53.2  | 50.6  | 47.0  | 49.6  | 49.3  |
| Israel                       | 13.6  | 12.5  | 14.5  | 15.9  | 16.0  | 16.0  |
| Japan                        | 47.8  | 56.8  | 60.3  | 61.3  | 59.0  | 59.4  |
| South Korea                  | 15.1  | 18.6  | 20.0  | 24.7  | 29.9  | 32.4  |
| United Kingdom               | 58.8  | 48.4  | 48.0  | 58.2  | 62.9  | 56.2  |
| <b>South Asia</b>            |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| India                        | 18.8  | 19.6  | 27.7  | 36.1  | 49.2  | 49.1  |
| Pakistan                     | 4.4   | 5.0   | 4.8   | 6.4   | 6.6   | 7.6   |
| <b>Potential adversaries</b> |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| China                        | 19.8  | 23.1  | 37.0  | 71.5  | 136.2 | 171.4 |
| Russia                       | 291.1 | 33.8  | 31.1  | 46.4  | 65.8  | 84.9  |
| Iran                         | 2.8   | 3.7   | 9.9   | 15.1  | 11.0  | N/A   |

**Table 4.1: RAND Report<sup>38</sup>**

**U.S. Common Interest with Potential Adversaries**

|             | Values | Strategic Interests | Economic Interests |
|-------------|--------|---------------------|--------------------|
| China       | Low    | Medium              | High               |
| Russia      | Low    | Low                 | Medium             |
| Iran        | Low    | Medium              | Medium             |
| North Korea | Zero   | Low                 | Zero               |
| ISIS        | Zero   | Zero                | Zero               |

**Table 4.2: RAND Report<sup>39</sup>**

<sup>38</sup> Hans Benindijk, "Friends, Foes, And Future Directions: U.S. Partnerships in a Turbulent World," Report, (California: RAND Corporation, 2016), 50.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 17.

#### 4.4 Post-Cold War NATO

This section elaborates on the continuation of NATO's expansion as a mechanism to defend the Euro-Atlantic structure, to improve governance and security of the democratic club for a stable, secured and prosperous Euro-Atlantic sphere of influence. NATO's expansion and its impact upon the US-Russian relations is one of the three evidences examined by this study to illustrate the US-Russian influence projection. NATO has always been the key of US-Russian relations. After the Cold War, NATO's existence seemed questionable because of the reasons it was created for. The threats coming from the USSR and Germany were under control, Germany was fully integrated within NATO and the USSR dissolved. Many writings have analysed how the alliances and institutions are created and their international outcome, however this study asserts that sphere of influence is one aspect of the alliances and institutions. NATO was developed during the Cold War with specific policies and military capability to deal with the Soviet threat, capable of fighting a European and global war with organized military and civilian infrastructures such as SHAPE and NAC. In the post-Cold War it adjusted the same assets into dealing with the new type of threats and with the new security environment. Celeste A. Wallander asserts that alliances are not always merely aggregations of national power and national interests, they can be security institutions as well.....States create institutions in anticipation of the cooperation they will be able to achieve."<sup>40</sup> Furthermore Wallander describes NATO's persistence as an institution for consensus-building and preventing the renationalization of the members' defense policies.<sup>41</sup>

The difference between NATO's and the UN peacekeeping forces is that the UN requires majority's approval at the General Assembly and Security Council. While NATO's peacekeeping forces require the US' and the coalition's authorization only. The

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<sup>40</sup> Celeste A. Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO after the Cold War," *International Organization*, 54: 04, (September 2000), 705-706.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 724-729.

US continued its policy of global democracy as a unified-Western world ideology and to cope with the expectation that Central East Europe was not at par with Western Europe for a smooth democratic transition without going through crises and instabilities. It was expected that Europe would undergo another series of instabilities because the Central East Europe was new to democracy transition. And the US and West Europe wanted to facilitate this transition and make sure that the Central East Europe becomes part of EU and NATO. Therefore, NATO's plan to expand the club of democracies and defend it continued in the post-Cold War as well, together with preventing the internal European rivalries. NATO meant democratization, collective security and collective defense, forward defense and sphere of influence.

The purposes of EU's and NATO's expansion were to cover the CEE area militarily and economically just like the Western Europe which in essence were a continuation of the Cold war assets. Meanwhile Russia's status was very fragile even within the CIS perimeters. All the new republics opted for some degree of independent foreign policy, distanced from the Russian orbit. And the attempts to harmonize the differences between US and Russia were blocked by the offered NATO's 'open door' policy to CIS, and the CIS reluctance to agree with the Russian integrating structures.<sup>42</sup> However Russia has been equally persistent to use energy prices, common history, proximity, letting go off the loans, bilateral agreements, and the frozen conflicts as devices to keep CIS under the Russian political-economic influence and distanced from the EU-NATO membership.

The Global War on Terrorism became as primary objective to the European-US alliance as it was the war on communism. The contours of the US-Russian relations and their spheres changed twice during the post-cold war, in 1990s when the US became concerned with how to cooperate with Russia, and in 2013 Ukrainian Revolution when the US started to be concerned with how to deter Russia, a concern triggered by Russia's

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<sup>42</sup> Igor Zevelev, "NATO's Enlargement and Russian Perceptions of Eurasian Political Frontiers," Report, George Marshall European Center for Security Studies, (2000), Germany.



annexation of Crimea and its military strengthened posture in the Russian-Ukrainian border.<sup>43</sup> On the other side the US tried to adjust its national interests according to hegemonic designs, it continued with a variety of multilateral integrations. An opinion of this study is that a constant of international relations is the main players' concerns for influence, status, strength and security. This changes the international configuration of power between the main players from time to time.

After WWII, the major powers agreed to prevent hostilities with each other and to pursue a more peaceful nature of geopolitics, yet the great powers remained politically independent, and the secondary powers accepted to be part of joint alliances led by the main powers. Concretely, it can be said that the nature of the international system is trilateral, US-Russia-China. Nevertheless, every bilateral relation within this trilateral relationship matters for the international system, the US-Russian relations are more important because Russia's assertiveness pulls China's assertiveness, something which leads to an East-West configuration of the international system. However, the security and economic packages of the US-Western front are more attractive than the Russian (or China's) integrations offers. The US is the leading global power but its assertiveness to expand into areas vital for Russian influence creates confrontational dimension of their affairs. Luis Simon asserts that "China and Russia are unable to project and sustain power on a global scale and lack the attraction of the US."<sup>44</sup> While John J. Mearsheimer maintains that, China and Russia are geopolitical competitors that should be contained rather than engaged, because they are neither Mexico nor Canada.<sup>45</sup>

The integration structures have caused conflicting disagreements between US and Russia, for as this study argues institutions are spheres of influence for the power that

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<sup>43</sup> "Ukraine"Russia Has Options if It Chooses to Invade," Analysis, March 28, 2014, *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, online at <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/ukraine-russia-has-options-if-it-chooses-invade>; Maksymilian Czuperski, John E. Herbst, Alina Polyakova, and Damon Wilson, "Putin's Secret Warriors: Russian Soldiers Sent to Fight In Ukraine," *Newsweek*, 6 June, 2015; Sneha Shankar, "Russia Says US Paratroopers Training Ukraine Army Will 'Destabilize' the Situation," *International Business Times*, April 17, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Luis Simon, "The US holding the fort," in *Challenges for European Foreign Policy in 2015*, FRIDE, Spain, (2015) 23.

<sup>45</sup> See J.J. Mearshemier, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 2003.

leads them despite the reason that creates them. The creation and adjustment of the US institutions relates to the US' power. NATO meant political legitimacy and military defense of the Euro-Atlantic sphere of influence and containment of the rivals. Despite the expected internal disagreements about how it would affect the Russian perception, the US administrations were of the opinion that in strengthening the institutional roots of the Euro-Atlantic order, the pros outweighed the cons. President Bush expressed that NATO-Russia Council, (a format in which Russia was not Soviet Union but Russia) "will make the world more peaceful, and put behind us the Cold War once and for all."<sup>46</sup> Thomas Forsberg argues that "NATO wanted to reach eastward in the spirit of partnership; Russia was eager to learn from the West and wanted to be a partner."<sup>47</sup> Richard L. Kugler and Marianna V. Kozintseva suggested that a parallel expansion of both EU and NATO is necessary to sustain each other.

"The two institutions work together and perform complementary functions, and neither can operate effectively in the absence of the other. East European economic ties to the West will be ineffective in the absence of greater security. Conversely, security will have a far less stabilizing effect in the absence of the economic renewal that EU membership can bring. As a result, the logical conclusion is that both institutions should move eastward in tandem."<sup>48</sup>

The literature about NATO contains proponents and opponents of its expansion. Michael McGwire states that in 1997 a group of fifty prominent US foreign policy figures, scholars, diplomats, ambassadors and senators were suspicious about the merits of NATO's enlargement. To express their concern they sent an open letter to Bill Clinton on June 27, 1997 saying that "the current US-led effort to expand NATO is a policy error of historic importance."<sup>49</sup> These foreign policy experts argued that the cause of NATO's

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<sup>46</sup> "NATO and Russia bury the Cold War", *BBC News*, 14 May, 2002, at <http://news.bbc.uk/1/hi/world/1986270.stm>.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Forsberg, "Russia's relationship with NATO: A qualitative change or old wine in new bottle?" *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 21: 3, (2005), 394.

<sup>48</sup> Richard L. Kugler and Marianna V. Kozintseva, Chapter Two, "A Theoretical Framework," in *Enlarging NATO: The Russia Factor*, (Santa Monica, RAND, Santa Monica, 1996), 22.

<sup>49</sup> Michael McGwire, "NATO expansion: "a policy error of historic importance," *Review of International Studies*, 24, (1998), 23-42.

expansion would be an antagonized Russia, the strengthening of the anti-West elements within Russian political establishments and would lower the trust level.<sup>50</sup>

MccGwire expands his analysis by arguing that NATO's expansion would lead Russia into questioning the whole Cold War settlement, in Europe it will create a new cause for instability by creating new lines of 'ins' and 'outs.'<sup>51</sup> Regarding the European context of security between US and Russia, MccGwire states that "in the context of security in Europe there is no alternative to Russian cooperative involvement. Without Russian cooperation there can be no security. If Western Europe has to choose between the withdrawal of Russian cooperation and opposing US policies that are threatening to that cooperation, there can be only one choice."<sup>52</sup> John Lewis Gaddis claimed that "NATO's expansion is ill-conceived, ill-timed and above all ill-suited to the realities of the post-Cold War."<sup>53</sup>

According to Andrew Kydd, "NATO can be a benign security community that identifies more cooperative states and promotes cooperation among them, and yet be perceived as an expanding alliance that Russia finds threatening."<sup>54</sup> Kydd extends this explanation into elaborating that NATO and any international institution can choose to pay the price for a greater cooperation among its members or the price of a greater instability with the excluded potential members.<sup>55</sup> While Dan Reiter argues that NATO's enlargement does not spread democracy and the West should refrain from any further expansion.<sup>56</sup>

Strobe Talbott, a proponent of NATO's expansion expresses his support for NATO's growth by reasoning that it would strengthen the democratization and legal institutions in

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Kydd, "Trust Building, Trust Breaking: The Dilemma of NATO enlargement", *International Organizations*, 55: 4, (Autumn 2001), 801-828.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Michael MccGwire, "NATO expansion: "a policy error of historic importance," *Review of International Studies*, 24, (1998), 23-42.

<sup>53</sup> See John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, (Oxford University Press), 1998.

<sup>54</sup> Andrew Kydd, "Trust Building, Trust Breaking: The Dilemma of NATO enlargement", *International Organizations*, 55: 4, The Rational Design of International Institutions, (Autumn 2001), 802

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 803

<sup>56</sup> Dan Reiter, "Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy," *International Security*, 25: 4, (Spring 2001), 41-67.

Central East Europe (CEE), and it would assist in resolving the disputes peacefully through the peacekeeping operations.<sup>57</sup> Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier support the NATO expansion of its members and its activities on the ground of NATO as a global alliance to tackle the global challenges.<sup>58</sup> Yet to this opinion it is added the restraint brought by the required membership, because “while the alliance has increasingly recognized the necessity of operating far from Europe or ‘out of area,’ in NATO parlance—it has been limited by the requirement that its members states be North European or American.”<sup>59</sup>

The above mentioned brief literature offers different context and narratives about NATO’s expansion from its proponents and opponents. The CEE zone between US and Russia needed a powerful support in terms of security and democracy orientation and Russia was not able at first to provide such a clout for the CEE zone. In addition, according to the perception of CEE countries, the US-Western led security and economic institutions of EU and NATO sounded more credible than Russia’s incentives. So between the US and Russia, there is a clash of countries’ own choice about whose influence to follow, as a consequence it is perceived as an interference in each other’s areas of influence, whether the US’ aims in CIS or Russia’ aims in East Europe and Baltics.

This study asserts that whatever the ongoing events, communism, terrorism, technology, peace or defense frames, everything has taken place within the geopolitical game for influence projection, whether US’ or Russia’s institutions. (China too) When countries adopt an institution, they adopt the identity and the influence of the great power that leads that institution. Here lies the influence through a set of norms and values admitted by the countries that agree to become the signatories of a certain institution or

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<sup>57</sup> Strobe Talbott, “Why NATO Should Grow”, *New Review of Books*, (10 August 1995): 27.

<sup>58</sup> Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier, “Global NATO”, *Foreign Affairs*, (September/October 2006), 1.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.1.

integration. CIS too is a Russian coordinated framework with the assets of CSTO and EurAsEC to defend the post-Soviet region as Russia's sphere of influence. Countries that sign up for NATO, EU, or Economic Customs Union and CIS have accepted the identity of either US-West or Russia. With the Central East Europe Russia was reluctant to let it loose and let it fall in the EU-NATO institutions. But the zone of post-Soviet countries is considered by Russia as its rightful sphere of influence, any provocation to challenge such posture means a direct challenge to Russia's status as a great power.

Dan Reiter explains that West should rely on EU to spread democracy because it will less likely alienate Russia, while NATO's expansion carries geopolitical risks and does not explain how it will spread democracy.<sup>60</sup> Raymond Garthoff describes the impact of NATO's expansion on Russia as,

"To have driven Russia from support of Desert Storm to support for the Saddam Husseins of the future by denying it a responsible role in the security architecture of the new world order would be a heavy burden to assume for expanding NATO."<sup>61</sup> Snyder puts emphasis on the fact that "forming alliances and increasing the commitment level to own allies will increase the adversary to seek to strengthen its own alliances in return."<sup>62</sup> This study agrees with Snyder's opinion, adding that NATO's determination to expand, strengthen and defend the club of democracies brought Russia's assertiveness to formulate the same policy in CIS and to react against NATO's open door policy toward Ukraine, Georgia and the rest.

However there is a wide gap between academics' and policy makers' perceptions. Academics consider the NATO's enlargement in Europe, CIS and globally an error that defines insiders and outsiders for it builds cooperation within and confrontation with outsiders. While the Western policy makers have supported the expansion of NATO and

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<sup>60</sup> Dan Reiter, 'Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy,' *International Security*, 25: 4, (Spring 2001). 41-67.

<sup>61</sup> Garthoff, 1997, 10.

<sup>62</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics*, 36: 4, (July 1984): 477.

its goals over as far as it can reach to manage the inner relations between the European powers, and to prevent outside threats before they could reach NATO's borders. The Secretary of State, Albright in 1996 puts it, "instability that is dangerous and contagious is best shaped before it reaches NATO's borders."<sup>63</sup> Relating to Russia's concerns, the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Walter Slocombe explained that "NATO is not an alliance against Russia. NATO's basic principles –collective defense, democracy, consensus and cooperative security- are no threat to Russia of today or, we trust and hope, of the Russia of tomorrow."<sup>64</sup> In this duel for influence, each keeps exploiting its strong hand to acquire strategic advantage over the other.

There were many reasons associated with NATO's survivability and expansion. Firstly, US wanted to prevent Russia and Germany from unilateral moves and independence in the field of security. Because according to this study, the security and influence advantages of either Russia or Germany would cause serious shifts in the strategic balance between US and the other side. Christopher Layne claims NATO's persistence and enlargement as it,

"forestalled the rise of European power centres that could challenge US preponderance; it provided stability for the Continent by keeping the lid on Europe's latent geopolitical rivalries; and by stabilizing the Continent's core and its peripheries, it created the security framework for the Open Door. In short, post-cold war NATO was the instrument through which the United States perpetuated its hegemonic role in Europe."<sup>65</sup>

This study holds that NATO served as a military alliance; as an instrument of political integration of the democracies and as a sphere of influence. Its survivability demonstrates the enduring relevance of Cold War into the post-Cold War. In the post-Cold War NATO continued to adjust itself to the new needs for security in Europe and a sphere of influence that survived and expanded. The cohesion within the alliance was often fractured for

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<sup>63</sup> Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, Press Conference at NATO Headquarters, (Washington D.C.: US Department of State, Office of the Spokesman), 1998.

<sup>64</sup> Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Walter Slocombe, "Partnership for Peace and NATO-Russia Relations", Speech to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Defense Issues 10/28, (Washington D.C: 2 March 1995).

<sup>65</sup> Alan Mackinnon, "New menace from Russia? NATO is the real threat," Briefing, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), (London. May 2015).

different reasons, but the threat of communism during the Cold War and the threat of terrorism during the post-Cold War served as a uniting cause. Celeste Wallander points out another viewpoint that NATO has done for Central East Europe what it did for West Europe, preventing the West European defense policies from threatening each other again.<sup>66</sup>

To Russian administrations, NATO's survival and enlargement were not only a security system for Europe but also a tool to limit Russian perimeters of influence and to isolate Russia. Furthermore Russia was not pleased with the status it was given in the NATO-Russia Council, not equals and no participation in the decision making. This study noticed that between great powers, concretely between the US and Russia in this study, on that zone of influence where one has predominance and leadership, it will not share it with another rival power.

Different events triggered Russian mistrust of NATO. During the first decade of the post-Cold War Russia was not capable of participating in a strategic competition with US. The second decade brought improvement in Russia's economic strength and it became more critical of NATO's encirclement around Russia. NATO's reach into the borders of Russia through the Baltics membership and partnership package for Ukraine and Georgia triggered Russia's assertiveness to prevent the loss of CIS as a Russian sphere of influence by all means. NATO-Russia Council was established to address the concerns and joint activities on common issues, and to prevent a Russian assertiveness, but it was not sufficient to build a mutual strategic trust between the two countries.<sup>67</sup>

The first wave of NATO's enlargement included Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, which Russia did not agree with but neither opposed it. The second wave included the three Baltic states (Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania) right in the border with

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<sup>66</sup> See Celeste Wallander, 'Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO after the Cold War,' *International Organizations*, 54: 4, (2000), 705-735.

<sup>67</sup> Judy Dempsey, "Why Defense Matters: A New Narrative for NATO," June 24, 2014, Carnegie Europe, online at [carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=55979](http://carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=55979).

Russia, which created bilateral tensions between Russia and the three Baltic countries because it meant NATO military bases close to Russian borders.<sup>68</sup> In 2009, President Dmitry Medvedev (2008-2012) proposed the formation of CSTO rapid reaction force based in Russia to rival NATO.<sup>69</sup> The CIS members did not agree to sign the force but Russia unilaterally assigned a 98<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division and 31<sup>st</sup> Airborne Assault Brigade.<sup>70</sup> This study argues that NATO's expansion is mostly a threat to the Russian perimeters of influence, especially recently with the NATO troops stationed in the Baltics and increased troop deployments in Europe as assurance for the European allies. Both the US and Russia are players of mutual deterrence, the only two countries in the world that can deter each other militarily, so the option of direct confrontation is excluded at least for the time being. The post-Cold War changed the status and the perimeters of zones of influence for these two countries.

This study argues that in a way, both NATO and CIS were formed as institutions to cope with certain types of threats, to create unity within the members and to strengthen the influence of the leading power. In terms of assets and alliance, CIS and NATO are unequal, but the determination of the two leading countries to maintain its sphere of influence within the relevant orbit is equally persistent. US wants to maintain hegemony by all means as well as Russia wants to maintain CIS by all means. In the post-Cold War the US-Russian relationship was more cooperative, both agreed to formulate a mutually assured stability framework based on consensus and cooperation. But NATO's expansion was basically the expansion of a military infrastructure more than expansion of democracy, which came along with the collective defense and collective security. This became a cross purpose with Russia's policy of collective defense and collective security

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<sup>68</sup> Testimony to the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, CT-204, Stephen S. Larrabee, "The Baltic States and NATO membership," April 2003, RAND.

<sup>69</sup> "CSTO's rapid reaction force to equal NATO's-Medvedev," *Sputnik News*, Russia, 4 February, 2009.

<sup>70</sup> See Stephen Aris, "Russia's Approach to Multilateral Cooperation in the Post-Soviet Space: CSTO, EurAsEC, and CSTO," in *Russia and Regional Organizations*, Russian Analytical Digest, 76, (15 April, 2010), 2-6.



within the CIS area. Such cross purpose created an atmosphere where rivalry for influence prevails over the mutually assured stability.

#### **4.5 NATO-Russia Relations**

There was convergence and divergence of interests between NATO and Russia. To address Russia's dissatisfaction and doubts related to NATO, NATO-Russia Council was formed as a direct line of communication to discuss the threats, cooperation and trust between the two. Arthur R. Rachwald holds that "The contemporary assertiveness of Moscow may reflect a deep sense of political insecurity and construct favourable networks of coalitions before its relative influence and power are curtailed even further."<sup>71</sup> In the case of NATO's expansion it has been impossible for US and Russia to determine the acceptable limits of expansion and reciprocity regarding their respective slices of cooperation. The threat here is not about a direct military aggression between the US and Russia, but about the perimeters of the influence zone for each, for that means the perimeters of the US hegemonic influence and the perimeters of Russia's status as a great power in Central Asia.

NATO as a political-military institution led by the US serves the US political military influence and the US wants rivals out of it, neither Russia nor China. None of the two other primary powers is accepted to be a decision-maker in the US' led institutions. The same goes with Russia, which does not accept its leadership within CIS to be curtailed or shared. Although the fight against terrorism remains a cause supposed to be a common US-Russian front, Russia remains more concerned with building an independent zone of influence. It is aware that it cannot thwart the US influence, but it is determined to defend the shape of influence it is left with or build another orbit of influence, if necessary of a different shape, which means different alignments and bilateral affairs in different

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<sup>71</sup> Arthur R. Rachwald, "A 'reset' of NATO-Russia relations: real or imaginary?" *European Security*, 20: 11, (2011), 126.

regions. In the bilateral form Russia is in good terms with EU countries, Middle Eastern and Asian countries. Institutionally the US is the preferable country.

This study defines sphere of influence as an orbit of friendly countries where a power or superpower can maintain its political foothold through security or economic means, stationed troops and economic integration structures on the territories of the friendly allies. Through such protection and foothold a great power can project political-military-economic power over this zone. US has implemented this in Europe through EU and NATO. Germany as an economic power has attracted economically Central East Europe, Baltics, and all the former Warsaw Pact countries. While Russia is trying to do the same in CIS through Customs Union<sup>72</sup>, CIS,<sup>73</sup> CSTO<sup>74</sup>, even BRICS<sup>75</sup>. BRICS refers to Russia's alignment with China attempting to establish another type of World Bank institution that facilitates the transactions, rules and currencies between the member countries. BRICS means also a sphere of influence for the member countries and a way for Russia to survive the Western sanctions and to avoid being isolated.

It is necessary to emphasize that protection and influence over allies need to be accepted by the local rulers of the ally country and by the other peer powers. In this regard, the US does not recognize Russia as the dominant power in CIS, instead US supports the CIS countries' independent foreign policies. Is Russia (together with China) trying to carve an Eastern policy or a non-Western policy? US has been capable of preventing Russia's Eastern policy in Europe through spreading NATO towards Balkans, Baltics,

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<sup>72</sup> Customs Union is a Russian attempt to lead economically, at the moment with only four members, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>73</sup> CIS refers to the signing of the Collective Security Treaty Organization in 1992 established the CIS alliance framework. CIS serves as a forum of communication of the former USSR republics. Its meaning and survivability is questioned by many, but this study argues that Russia continuously initiates for the present and the future, different kinds of integrations that preserve its preponderant influence over CIS, bilaterally, multilaterally, economically, politically, militarily, through loans, threats or supports.

<sup>74</sup> CSTO was created as a defense alliance of the CIS members based on shared interests and political-military purposes. But in 1999, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan decided not to renew their CIS membership, because they preferred an independent course. Ukraine, Moldova and Turkmenistan also did not sign the 1992's Collective Security Treaty. Gradually an anti-Russia coalition had started its course. Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan are the heavyweights of CIS because they are countries with the ambition to counter Russia, but Ukraine was the most decisive country to walk away from Russian centralized authority, Uzbekistan has a US military air base in Karshi-Khanabad, and Azerbaijan is rich in energy, gas and raw resources.

<sup>75</sup> BRICS, refers to an alignment of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, attempting to establish their own banking system, to regulate the transactions and their currencies, to avoid dependency on WTO rules. The Central Bank of this alignment is set to be established in Beijing.

Poland, and offering the open-door policy to Georgia, Ukraine and all CIS countries. As such, the Russian attempts to survive as a great power may lead it to go for a non-Western policy and this has been manifested through SCO<sup>76</sup> and BRICS. In his recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, John Mearsheimer argues that through NATO's expansion West unknowingly provoked a crisis with Russia and suggests that the best solution to the Russia-West crisis is a Ukraine as a neutral buffer between Russia and the Western front.<sup>77</sup>

The above mentioned section has elaborated on the NATO-Russia attempts for conciliation and the different contexts of its narrative. Related to the NATO's expanding zone, US prefers a conciliatory and cooperative tone with Russia but not to share its NATO's leading position neither with primary powers (Russia, China) nor with the secondary powers (Germany, Britain, France). And in the CIS, Russia also prefers a US interference to a minimum degree, but not to share its independent leadership role with US or another external interference. These measures and countermeasures by both these countries prove that the pattern for influence continued even beyond the Cold War with the US in pursuit of unchallenged hegemony, and Russia in pursuit of unchallenged great power status. Finally, NATO's persistence and expansion represents the course of deterrence but also the course of orbits of influence between the US and Russia. The commitment to coexist has proven futile because there has not been yet an agreement on the level of exercising power and influence. Because both US and Russia are nuclear great powers, none will accept an enforced consensus, and a compromise based on conditions favourable to both countries has not been settled yet, throughout Cold War and post-Cold War.

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<sup>76</sup> SCO is Shanghai Cooperative Organization established in 1992, comprises of five members; China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan, to demarcate borders and carry out confidence-building measures between the member countries.

<sup>77</sup> John Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis is West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014.

## **Russian Influence Integrations**

This section is an illustration of Russian initiatives to continue with sphere of influence projects. There have been parallel attempts for integration projects by both US and Russia even in the post-Cold War, because integrations mean institutions, agreements, binding or non-binding, based in a framework of mutual gains and benefits.

### **4.5.1 Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)**

CIS is a zone where Russia cannot approve any form of external interference. Russia expected it was a subtle agreement with the US not to interfere on a significant scale in the areas of special concern for the other, and CIS has been considered as excluded from every external interference as far as Russian foreign policy toward the 'near abroad' is concerned. The CIS region is considered important in terms of the global war on terrorism, in terms of political-military presence in the region, democracy promotion and rivalry for influence between US and Russia.<sup>78</sup> Therefore a number of political, military and economical projects have been offered to the post-Soviet countries by both these two countries. Although unequal, the pursuit for sphere influence was carried almost parallel between the US and Russia. NATO's expansion into Central East Europe was countered by Russia's Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the attraction and expansion of EU was countered by Russia's economic integration named as Customs Union in 2005, Eurasian Customs in 2010, and Eurasian Economic Union in 2015. Russian integration projects in the CIS and the US attempts for a significant political foothold in this area represent a further evidence that rivalry for sphere of influence rather than mutually assured security continues to be the at the core of this relationship in this area.

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<sup>78</sup> See Taras Kuzio, "Promoting Geopolitical Pluralism in the CIS: GUUAM and the Western Foreign Policy," *Problems of Post-Communism*, 47:3, (May/June 2000). 25-35; "Russia and Regional Organizations," *Russian Analytical Digest*, editors Stephen Aris *et.al.*, Bremen and Security Studies, Zurich, 76:10, (2010).

CIS as a Russian-led integration was formed in 1991. It was a Russian initiative to maintain the integration of the former USSR republics under the Russian leadership even after the Cold War. The Baltic countries gained their independence in 1991 and refused to join the CIS.<sup>79</sup> The event of USSR's dissolution meant for Russia and for the new states a new phase of building their statehood independently. So each looked for a sustainable network of allies to complete the democratic transformation as smoothly as possible. Regarding Russia, it maintained the ambitions of a great power, but it went through a period of uncertainty from 1990-1998 because it was not strong enough to affirm its regional leadership. On the other side, the new member states started to operate in a new political, economic and military space, which created the group of Westernizers and Russophiles.<sup>80</sup> Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova were the Westernizers which preferred Euro-Atlantic direction. Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan were the Russophiles who had closer relations with Russia in the form of CIS, CSTO or bilaterally.<sup>81</sup> According to Taras Kuzio's opinion in her article, "the strategic policies of the West and its institutions such as NATO and EU aim at preventing the rise of another superpower. To this end, the West provides bilateral and multilateral assistance to support geopolitical pluralism in the former Soviet Union."<sup>82</sup> However, despite the limitations, Russia took control of the nuclear weapons of Ukraine into its own hands since the Budapest Memorandum in 1993 maintained the Black Sea Fleet in the Ukrainian port of Sevastopol.

Democracy promotion has been one of the contesting field between Russia and US in this area. The official Russian stance to this has revolved around non-interference in internal Russian matters and as expressed in a Russian Foreign Ministry statement, 'no one has a monopoly on interpreting what democracy is.....and called US 'democracy

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Taras Kuzio, "Promoting Geopolitical Pluralism in the CIS: GUUAM and the Western Foreign Policy," *Problems of Post-Communism*, 47:3, (May/June 2000), 25.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

promotion as ‘artificial’ and ‘forceful.’<sup>83</sup> On the other side, US has constantly offered support to the CIS countries, especially to the GUAM team through recognizing GUUAM establishment in the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, in 1997, including other forms of bilateral assistance.

#### **4.5.2 Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)**

Another integration that proves the parallel projects for influence is the establishment of Collective Security Treaty Organization set up in 1992 for joint military coordination, defense policies, and a united Airs Defense System.<sup>84</sup> CSTO, Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), SCO, and CIS have been the tools to assist Russia with “levers of impact over various functional and geographic area.”<sup>85</sup> CSTO is a defense alliance of the CIS members based on shared interests and political-military purposes. But in 1999, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan decided not to renew their CIS membership for they were planning to be part of the GUUAM team, an anti-Russian coalition. Ukraine, Moldova and Turkmenistan also refused to sign the 1992 Collective Security Treaty because they preferred an independent foreign policy course. Besides Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan are other important players of CIS because they have the ambition to counter Russia.

The events of September 11, 2001 and its aftermath created a completely new and strange geopolitical landscape in the international affairs. Russia remained vigilant and suspicious for any outside intervention in CIS, yet it had to accept the US air base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan, as part of partnership in the global war against terrorism.<sup>86</sup> The Kant air base in Kyrgyzstan was significant for operations directed to Afghanistan. Meanwhile, another strange phase of geopolitics took place in the CIS through the three coloured revolutions,

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<sup>83</sup> Vladimir Isachenkov, “Russia Lashes Back at US Criticism of Its Democracy Abroad,” *Associated Press*, 20 March, 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Ivan Safranchuk, “The Competition for Security Role in Central Asia,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, (March 2008), 163.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 161.

<sup>86</sup> See Sharyl Cross, “Russia’s Relationship with the United States/NATO in the US-Led Global War on Terrorism,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 19: 2, (2006), 175-192.

in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, and the possibility they could reach Russia itself changed the Russian perceptions about the US intentions in CIS. Furthermore, the colour revolutions strengthened the two currents within CIS, pro-Russia and pro-US teams of states. The pro-US/West CIS countries integrated into GUUAM, (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova), while Russia tried to integrate as many CIS countries as possible within the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) to counter the implications of GUUAM, to counter the EU's expansion and its attraction for the CIS countries. In bilateral form Russia is a preferred ally, in institutional form the US is the preferred ally. The strengthening of the US foothold in CIS weakens Russia's, it makes Russia vulnerable and gradually not a pole of international affairs. For this reason Russia remains determined to prevent the loss of its influence over the post-Soviet area.

The September/11 event opened a new common front of war against terrorism but it also paved the way for a closer cooperation between the CIS members and US, a kind of cooperation that Russia could not thwart. CSTO has not established relations with NATO but with SCO. In 2007, the CSTP Secretariat and SCO Secretariat signed a memorandum for coordination.<sup>87</sup> To increase the efficiency of CSTO, there was Coordinated East European Allied Forces of Russia and Belarus, Caucasus Allied Forces of Russia and Armenia, together with the Collective Rapid Deployment Force for Central Asia.<sup>88</sup>

To counter the US expanded military activities due to the global war on terrorism, Russia focused on its military power to balance the US advance. Russia also set up an air force at Kant airfield in Kyrgyzstan in 2003 and it signed an agreement for permanent military base with Tajikistan in 2004. Russia also used the energy as a foreign policy tool. It offered through Gazprom (the largest Russian energy company) to invest for different energy projects in Uzbekistan to boost up the Russian-Uzbekistan bilateral relations, including other CIS and European countries. Russia also offered incentives to the CIS

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<sup>87</sup> Ivan Safranchuk, (2008), 167.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 165.

countries by supplying its natural resources at domestic rates below the international prices. When the CIS members tried to pursue a policy unfavourable to Russia, Russia pressures them with an increase of the energy prices. In the race for whose foothold is most significant and dominant in the CIS zone, remains among the geopolitical priorities for Russia.

The Eurasian Economic Union (EurAsEC) has been another Russian integration project aimed to establish somehow an imposed consensus and a good will on the members, a mixture of coexistence, mutual benefits and interests. Russia's economy is bigger than the other CIS countries, energy, gas and arms trade have been important tools of its economic strength. Bilaterally Russia offered different packages, such as Belarus \$2 billion, Armenia \$500 million, \$300 million to Mongolia, \$2 billion to Kyrgyzstan.<sup>89</sup> It also set up a special assistance fund of \$10 billion, 75 % of which comes from Russia, and 15 % comes from Kazakhstan.<sup>90</sup> Regarding the economic realm, the US and EU also have poured their economic assistance to the GUUAM members and all CIS countries. This study argues that both US and Russia have tailored their integration processes to suit and meet their interests, especially in terms of sphere of influence. The literature on the Russian policy toward CIS is surrounded by pessimism, doubts or optimism about the continued efforts for sphere of influence policy. In the political crises of Moldova, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, Russia demonstrated it is the central player assuming the responsibility to settle the crises and capable of ensuring stability.<sup>91</sup> With Belarus and Kazakhstan, Russia established the Customs Union.<sup>92</sup>

To maintain a credible dominance Russia tries to be the central economic and security power associated with the element of cultural and historical ties within CIS, and the protection of the Russian speaking people living in the CIS countries. Russia's political

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<sup>89</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Sphere of Interest, not Influence," *The Washington Quarterly*, 32:4, (October 2009), 17.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>91</sup> See Ceslav Ciobanu, "NATO/EU Enlargement: Moldova and the 'Frozen and Forgotten Conflicts' in Post-Soviet States," July 22, 2014, United States Institute for Peace, Washington D.C.

<sup>92</sup> "Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus Sign Treaty Creating Economic Union," *Radio free Europe Radio Liberty* (RFE/RL), 29 May, 2014.



doctrine towards CIS zone has been based on few declared rules, such as the CIS members should refrain from participating in alliances and blocs directed against Russia or any other CIS member; and to maintain reached agreements in the framework of CIS in the field of economic, political, defense and mutual agreements on military facilities.<sup>93</sup> In addition Russia set up certain 'red lines' not to be crossed, such as the CIS countries' membership in NATO; the deployment of foreign military bases on their territories and the use of military force by these countries without Russia's authorization.<sup>94</sup>

The post-September/11 changed a little these 'red lines'. Russia accented to the US military bases in Uzbekistan and Kirgizia necessary for counter-terrorist operations only.<sup>95</sup> Russia also did not contradict to the presence of the US military instructors in the Georgian Army within the framework of retraining and rearmament program. It can be concluded that Russia though weaker than USSR has been equally as the US in pursuit of carving out its influence to defend and project its interests as a great power.

Another matter that significantly soured the US-Russian relations was the wave of colour revolutions towards the CIS countries and Russia itself. The 'colour' revolutions were another serious test to Russia's stand toward CIS and a test for the US-Russian relations. Moscow considered the 'colour' revolutions as “joint US and local pro-American forces conspiracies with a view to changing regimes in CIS countries and replacing them with pro-Western political figures.”<sup>96</sup> Another view of the 'colour' revolutions is that they aimed to reach the main 'colour' revolution-Russia itself.

Taken together, CIS is a Russian geopolitical project with military and economic mechanisms, struggling for more efficiency and reliability in order to be the preferable

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<sup>93</sup> See James Greene, Russian Responses to NATO and EU: Enlargement and Outreach,” Briefing Paper, Chatham House, (June 2012); and Stephen Blank, “Beyond the Reset Policy: Current Dilemmas of U.S-Russian Relations,” *Comparative Strategy*, 29:4, (2010), 333-367.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> See Thomas Ambrosio, “Insulating Russia from a Color Revolution: How the Kremlin Resists Regional Democratic Trends,” *Democratization*, 14: 2, (2007): 232-252.

choice for the CIS countries and to prevent an EU-NATO's expansion. In addition, a CIS coalition also serves as a 'security belt' and strategic depth for Russia.

#### **4.6 The US-Russian Confrontational Postures in CIS: The 'colour' revolutions vs. the frozen conflicts**

This section is an elaboration of the CIS' colour revolutions and the US-Russian posture towards such scenario. The colour revolutions meant replacement of pro-Russian political elites with the pro-US/NATO political elites. These significant events had the Western support but not the Russian approval. As a consequence they were countered by Russia's frozen conflicts in these countries, as attempts to counter each other's influence projection between the US and Russia. Basically, three colour revolutions took place in Georgia (2003), Kirgizia (2004), and Ukraine (2005). The 'tulip' revolution in Kirgizia overthrew the pro-Moscow leader in Bishkek, continued in Andizhan and threatened to revive the radical extremists.<sup>97</sup> Between 1999 and 2000 the Kirgiz and Uzbek Armies were able to put down the actions of the extremists. The 'rose' revolution in Georgia 2003-2004 started when Eduard Shevardnadze (Gorbachev's foreign minister before the breakup of USSR) became Georgia's president for ten years. The result of the Georgian revolution in November 2003 replaced Shevardnadze with Mikhail Saakashvili, a US educated lawyer who had the US approval but not Russia's. Russian administration named the revolution a 'coup', but Georgia called it a revolution. Russia dedicated the upheavals in Georgia to the George Soros Open Society Institute, which had found the youth activist movement (Kmara) and the TV station Rustavi-2.<sup>98</sup> Whereas in Ukraine, the overthrow of Leonid Kuchma through the 'orange' revolution in 2004, the replacement of pro-Russia Kuchma with the pro-Western leader meant a political earthquake for Russia's position in

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> See Robert Horvath, "Putin's Preventive Counter-Revolution' Post-Soviet Authoritarianism and the Specter of Velvet Revolution", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 63:1, (2011), 1-25.

CIS, for it represented a 'geopolitical defeat and a vulnerable political order.'<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, the new Ukrainian president, Yulia Timoschenko declared in her words "As soon as the Ukrainians finish our 'Orange Revolution,' we will give our 'Orange' attitude to Russia. Something needs to be done there also."<sup>100</sup>

In 2005 an anti-government started even in Russia with the protest of pensioners but gradually grew bigger and turned into a political crisis. To counter the anti-government movement, the Russian government created a youth group street and turbulence-oriented, physically capable of overthrowing the anti-constitution coup and prepared for the battle of the ideas to back up and support the government.<sup>101</sup> In addition, Russia adopted the concept of "sovereign democracy" to counter the concept of "colour" revolutions. According to the 'sovereign democracy' concept, every country has the right to pursue democracy according to the country's traditions and values and not imposed from outside. The official Russian stance towards the colour revolution can be represented in the opinion of the then Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, who stated that "Russia would react negatively 'to exports of revolution' to CIS states, no matter [where] and what colour-pink, blue, you name it."<sup>102</sup>

The tactic of colour revolutions was countered by the tactic of frozen conflicts. In the case of Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia are provinces of the Georgian territory which demanded for independence. Russia supported their call for independence but not Georgia which tried to bring them back into Georgia by force, and it resulted into the Russian-Georgian war in 2008. However by March 2015, these two Georgian provinces have already declared independence and Russia has signed a security treaty with South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Taken together, the whole cycle of colour revolutions and frozen conflicts demonstrate that Russia strives to avoid erosion of its geopolitical position by

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> "Council on Foreign Relations Inaugural Annual Lecture on Russia and Russia-American Relations," *Federal News Service*, 13 January, 2005.

preventing an American-led NATO expansion in the former Soviet Union area.<sup>103</sup> This brief illustration manifests clearly, that while Russia considers CIS as Russia's rightful sphere of influence, the US considers it as a region of sovereign countries who should remain independent on who and how they choose to ally with. It means a sphere of influence for both, yet this study argues that, to Russia's status CIS is vital and strategic for its own survival as a regional power, while to US it means a further expansion of its sphere of influence.

#### **4.7 NATO's Expansion into CIS**

Russia's attempts to manoeuvre the NATO's membership of the CIS countries has fueled and triggered Russia's assertiveness. To NATO it means expansion and weakening Russia in terms of security, status and its sphere of influence. To Russia, it is vital in every meaning, in economy, security, threat, and its status as a pole in international affairs. NATO's expansion into the Baltic countries, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania on March 2004 brought NATO's military bases close to the Russian borders and created bilateral discords between Russia and the Baltic countries. Furthermore after the Baltics' experience, the GUUAM team of CIS became the next target of NATO's package.

NATO's proposals to reach into CIS have already created a confrontational level between the US and Russia. The GUUAM team has expressed its aspirations to join NATO and to prevent this Russia established mutual beneficial bilateral relations with these countries. Romania proposed to join GUUAM in 2000 which would make GUUAM more legitimate.<sup>104</sup> In addition, Zbigniew Brzezinski supported the Romanian proposal and stated that "this organization's door shall be opened for other countries also-Turkey, Bulgaria, Poland."<sup>105</sup> Also, in the same year GUUAM issued a statement to Russia, that

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<sup>103</sup> Emmanuel Karagiannis, "The Russian Interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea Compared: Military Performance, Legitimacy and Goals," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 35: 3, (2014), 416.

<sup>104</sup> Flemming Splidsboel-Hansen, "GUUAM and the future of CIS military cooperation," *European Security*, 9:4 (2000), 92-110.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

it should remove its military bases from Moldova and Georgia. As a counter-response to GUUAM's alignment, Russia transformed the Customs Union into Eurasian Economic Community (EEC), a larger economic union with the centre in Moscow. While it became obvious that CIS has become divided into pro-US/West and pro-Russia teams, it is important to note, that GUUAM was allowed close cooperation with different international organizations and was also granted recognition as a coalition by the Western front. Allen Lynch argues that "NATO expansion threatens not so much Russia's material interests as Russia's fragile post-Soviet international identity, according to which, Russia remains a great power worthy of the mantle of the USSR or Imperial Russia."<sup>106</sup>

And in the opinion of Sergei Karaganov,

"the West has consistently sought to expand its zone of military, economic and political influence through NATO and the EU. Russian interests and objections were flatly ignored. Russia was treated like a defeated power, though we did not see ourselves as defeated. A softer version of the Treaty of Versailles was imposed on the country. There was no outright annexation of territory or formal reparations like Germany faced after World War I, but Russia was told in no uncertain terms that it would play a modest role in the world. This policy was bound to engender a form of Weimar syndrome in a great nation whose dignity and interests had been trampled."<sup>107</sup>

The frozen conflicts are Russian political manoeuvres to keep under control certain political crises inside the GUUAM countries. Ukraine was threatened with separatism from Crimea and Transdnistr, Georgia was threatened with the same issues Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh province. Through such separatist movements within the GUUAM team, Russia tried to weaken the independent foreign policies of these countries and keep them hostage to Russian manipulation.<sup>108</sup> At the current time of the writing, Crimea has become part of the Russian Federation, and South Ossetia and Abkhazia are already independent provinces recognized by Russia, but not

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<sup>106</sup> Allen C. Lynch, "The Realism of Russia's Foreign Policy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53:1, (2001), 17-18.

<sup>107</sup> Roger Cohen, 'Russia's Weimar Syndrome,' *New York Times*, 1 May 2014.

<sup>108</sup> Kornly K. Kakachia, "Will GUUAM and EEC bury the CIS?", *PERSPECTIVE*, 11: 2, (November-December 2004), 4.

by the Western front. By means of such frozen conflicts within the GUUAM team these countries cannot become EU or NATO members.

Regarding Moldova, Russia has aimed “to prevent its unification with Romania, keep Moldova within Russia's strategic sphere of influence as a strategic crossroad between the Black Sea and the Balkas; maintain there considerable infrastructure of military bases, and maintain communication facilities with the Trans-Dniestr region.”<sup>109</sup> Russia also supported the Trans-Dniestr claims for succession from Moldova with its 14<sup>th</sup> Army base in Moldova and there was no Western reaction to such Russian behaviour. This meant a signal to the Moldovan government and Russia's position toward the unconditional defense of Trans-Dniestr. As a consequence, Moldova bowed to the Russian pressure and joined CIS in 1992, under the same circumstances Georgia joined in 1993.<sup>110</sup>

While these is a brief picture of Russia's assertiveness in CIS, a NATO's direction for expansion into CIS has created an assertive Russia even within the US-Russian bilateral relations. This chapter showed certain selective evidences to prove that sphere of influence policy was pursued by both US and Russia towards the CIS area in the post-Cold War. There are two important factors in this story, firstly NATO and EU's influence seem to be more credible in the eyes of CIS countries; secondly throughout the post-Cold war, Russia concentrated its influence projection in this area based on goodwill, concessions, and pressures to maintain its influence, unlike the USSR tactics. The Ukrainian revolution in 2013 brought serious implications for it triggered a Russia more assertive, determined and self-reliant than ever. But this has come parallel with a NATO determined to include in the alliance any CIS country that wants to join. It is hard to say at the moment how will this scenario end or unfold, and it has become a game of two

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<sup>109</sup> Fiona Hill & P.Jewett, “Back in the USSR' Russian Intervention in the Internal Affairs of the Former Soviet Republics and the Implications of the United States Policy Toward Russia,” (Cambridge, JFK School of Government, (January 1994), 61.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

assertiveness, Russian and American, but it is a clear evidence of the US-Russian rivalry for influence projection in the former Soviet area.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

This study's assessment of the post-Cold War US-Russian spheres of influence, maintains that the US' institutions have provided a more credible and more experienced influence, governance, and democratization infrastructure compared to Russia's institutions. To rectify this Russia has focused on the strategic involvements such as with Iran, North Korea, Syria, and this has provided Russia with a significant influence and status. Russia is aware that Europe is already entirely integrated within EU and NATO institutions. At the current course of the events Russia cannot prevent this. But it will try to project its influence by keeping CIS out of EU and NATO by all means possible, together with carving out a different set of security and economic coalitions with China, CIS countries, current allies, and expanding these coalitions' membership. If not through institutional integrations like the US, then in bilateral level, especially with the strategic countries.

In the duel for influence between US-NATO and Russia-CIS, the sphere of influence includes deterrence, security, and strategic stability. Russia's growing assertiveness has created NATO's and Baltics' concerns about what may be Russia's next move towards the Baltic countries. It remains to be seen, but it is certain that Russia is not comfortable with NATO's encirclement around Russian borders. A frozen conflict has already been created in Ukraine, and the Baltic countries, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania have already expressed such concerns.

Finally, this study determines that, historically the great powers have usually fought because they could not agree on a certain area of influence or shape of influence. Russia cannot agree with NATO's expansion over the whole Europe, especially in CIS, and US

cannot accept Russia's attempts to organize a new zone of influence in CIS, Central Asia and beyond it. This study holds that as much as the two want to remain on the cooperative side, the contest for influence turns them into rivals, making it impossible to subordinate the contest for independently-led zones of influence to the much acquired mutually assured security. US has always been concerned with preventing important powers like Russia, Germany, China, Japan from the going it alone and from gaining mastery over a significant orbit of allies that could threaten the US-led world order. But the revolution in Ukraine has already triggered a Russia determined to build a coalition that Russia can lead independently. While for the US, CIS is a region of independent countries that have the right and should be allowed to choose foreign policy direction independently, to Russia it is a zone of non-interference for any outside power. Taking away CIS from Russia means a direct geopolitical challenge to Russia.

The Ukrainian revolution was the first challenge to such Russian influence in CIS which has turned into one of the most critical post-Cold War confrontations between the US-led West and Russia, because it threatens to fragment the rest of Russia's influence in this zone. This issue is discussed in the coming chapter.



## CHAPTER 5: THE UKRAINIAN REVOLUTION AND THE US-RUSSIAN RIVALRY FOR INFLUENCE



Map 5.1: Ukraine<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the recent Ukrainian Revolution and the changes it brought into the US-Russian bilateral relations. The time frame chosen for this revolution is November 2013 until the current time of this writing, 2016. This is a contemporary event that proves sphere-of-influence is an approach as historical as contemporary. To understand the Ukrainian Revolution and its importance for the US-Russian influence projection in the post-Soviet area, this chapter is divided into these sections: an assessment of the Ukrainian Revolution, the confrontational aspect of the Ukrainian government with the pro-Russian rebels for an independent eastern Ukraine; the expansion of the Ukrainian crisis from a domestic one into a global one between Russia and the whole Western front;

<sup>1</sup> Niles Williamson, "February cease-fire collapses as fighting re-erupts in eastern Ukraine," *New for Revolution*, June 4, 2015, available at <https://newsfortherevolution.wordpress.com/tag/ukraine-civil-war/>.

an assessment of the European Union's stand and its relations with Russia; then an assessment of the US-Russian rivalry for influence in this case and the possible fallouts of this event.

Although the internal instability as the outcome of the revolution continues and a political solution is not yet in sight, an argument of this chapter is that Ukraine's role in the post-Cold War has become as crucial as Germany's role in the Cold War. Who gets Ukraine on its side, can pave the way for influence over the whole CIS. For this reason neither Russia nor US allows the other to have it all. The continuation of this crisis remains to be seen, but the US-Russian contest for influence projection will most probably lead to either a federalization of Ukraine into Eastern-Western parts, despite the attempts of Ukrainian government to prevent the dissolution, or a frozen conflict with Donetsk and Lugansk provinces demanding for independence. There are proposals from the US side to arm Ukraine to make it capable of withstanding Russian military strength and economic pressures. There are also other voices to keep Ukraine as a neutral buffer zone between Europe/Western front and Russia. Both these are unacceptable choices for Russian geopolitical perception because Ukraine's loss matters to Russia's survival as a pole in international affairs.

The current NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in the Munich Security Conference stated that the situation in Ukraine is critical, therefore "a strong NATO is essential if we are to engage Russia with confidence. A constructive NATO-Russia relationship would benefit the Euro-Atlantic community. And the entire international order. But international rules must be respected-not rewritten. And certainly not violated."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> NATO Archives, "Secretary General: Situation in Ukraine is critical NATO supports peace efforts," 07 February, 2015.

While Putin has stated that ‘with Ukraine our partners crossed the red line.’ And Theo Sommer describes the contemporary nature of international politics in words that deserve to be quoted,

“The world is out of joint, and there is nobody to set it right. Under the violent impact of Islamism, state structures in Middle East and North Africa are unravelling. Wars of religion wake up parts of Black Africa. Perilous confrontations are building up in the Asia-Pacific region. And 25 years after the end of the Cold War in Europe, armed conflict has returned to Old World-hybrid, not total war, but violent nevertheless.”<sup>3</sup>

The Ukrainian revolution meant a replacement of the pro-Russian elite with a new pro-Euro/Atlantic government and complete independent integration course from the Russian CIS integrations. On one side it is the right of Ukraine to choose its preferred course freely, on the other side it is related to the great powers’ influence projection policy and the sense of security in the neighbourhood belt. In terms of securing the neighbourhood influence and making sure no threat is posed at such close range, the US and Russia are equally concerned. Therefore, the Ukrainian revolution 2013-2016 is another evidence to prove that the US-Russian sphere of influence strategy goes on.

## **5.2 The Ukrainian Revolution**

This section provides an account of the Ukrainian crisis at the domestic level. Firstly, the Ukrainian-Russian bilateral relations have not been smooth since 1991 when each had its own independence. Ukraine throughout the post-Cold War has been amidst a foreign policy dilemma, whether integration into the Western structures, re-orientation towards Russia or a stance in between the first two options.<sup>4</sup> This study agrees with the opinion that “States are free to choose their foreign policy path but also forced to certain actions.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Theo Sommer, Executive Director of Security Times, “The Limits of Summitry: Is G7 still fit for purpose in a changing geopolitical landscape?” *Security Times*, (June 2015). 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Filippou Proedrou, “Ukraine’s foreign policy accounting for Ukraine’s indeterminate stance between Russia and the West,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 10:4, (2010), 444.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 445.

Throughout the two decades of post-Cold War Ukraine has been wrestling with domestic and economic issues. It is a big country with a population of 47 million people and it continues to serve as the main Gazprom's gas transit route to Europe. Through historical interpretation that Ukraine used to be part of Russia or Soviet Union, its nationalistic pursuit for distinctiveness in culture, language, and history turned a source of cooperation into a source of tension and conflict.<sup>6</sup> In 1991, under Kravchuk's administration there were friendly terms of the Ukrainian-Russian bilateral relations. Gradually Ukraine's will for independent economic self-reliance and foreign policy created on Russia the impression that it wants not only to be independent but even to challenge Russia's dominance in CIS.<sup>7</sup> The Trilateral Agreement on Nuclear Weapons in 1994 between US, Russia and Ukraine was a process of negotiations between 1991 and 1994, which convinced Ukraine to send all its nuclear weapons to Russia.

Until the Orange Revolution of 2004 Ukraine was closer to Russia. The 2004 revolution shifted Ukraine's prospects to the EU-NATO integrations, nevertheless it has not completed yet neither a complete integration within EU and NATO nor a complete alignment with Russia. Ukraine has been dependent on Russian gas and it is the main route of the Russian gas into Europe. Russia is also the second market of Ukrainian goods after the EU market. Domestic divergence between the integration with the West and closer relations with Russia has constantly created an unstable internal political condition due to an impossible attachment with the Western vector or detachment from Russia. The powerful actors from the Eastern and Western part of the country have played their agenda too. The US and EU preferred not to alienate the relationship with Russia to make Ukraine a NATO member, but the 2013 revolution has changed such political scenario. There are different voices though, to arm Ukraine sufficiently so it can deter Russia

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<sup>6</sup>Paul D'Anieri, "Nationalism and International politics: Identity and sovereignty in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 3:2, (1997), 7.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. 12.

militarily, or to keep it neutral country between Russian and Europe. Yet the aftermath of 2013 revolution has raised the level of mutual US-Russian assertiveness to a level unseen before.

The Ukrainian revolution in November 2013 was a consequence of the Russian-European Union geo-economic competition over Ukraine and it meant the success of the 'Euromaidan' protests. It is another case of influence projection through a colour revolution and frozen conflict in the CIS. Prior to the Ukrainian revolution there was a number of different initiatives that seemed to be leading towards the current scenario. The EU and NATO partnership packages to the CIS countries met with Russia's countermeasures to deter these partnerships. The Ukrainian revolution caused an assertive Russia, but it was the Georgian NATO membership in 2008 which created a turning point of Russia's perception towards the US' role in CIS. Although the Georgian membership in NATO ended with the Russian-Georgia war in 2008, it is still an open option for NATO.

In 2009, EU offered an Eastern Partnership to six CIS countries in order to make these countries ready for the Western institutions, starting firstly with Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> Russia too on the other side tried its attraction packages with gas deals and prices, and created a Russia-led alignment in Eurasia. Attempts for the Ukrainian membership in both economic alignments for the country's balance seemed impossible because Ukraine is important for the Western-Russian geopolitical projects.<sup>9</sup>

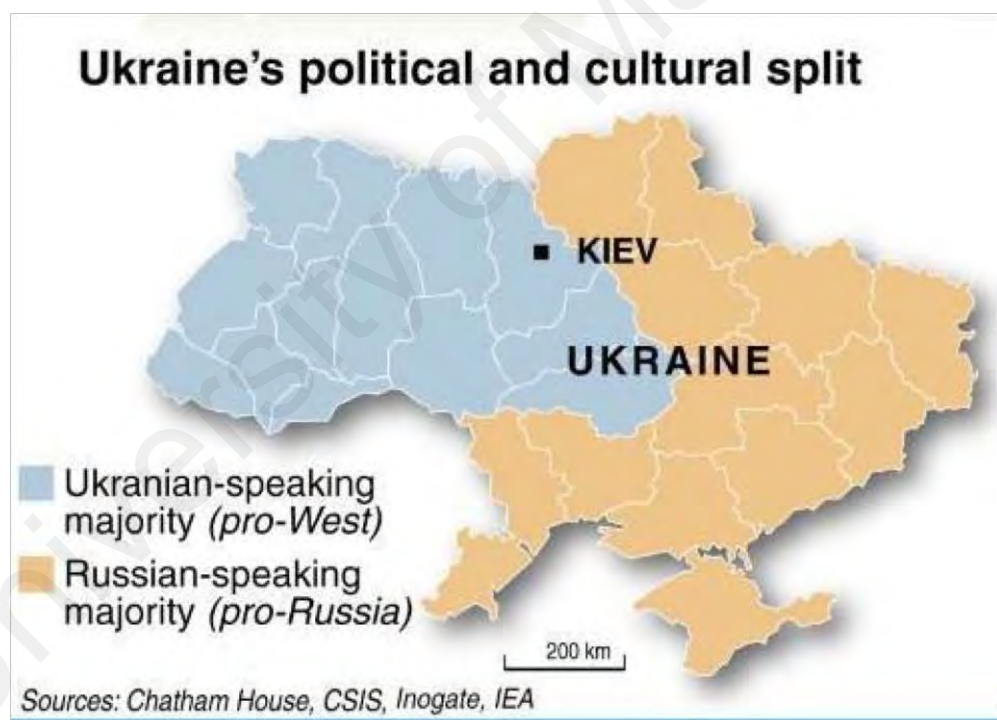
There are many reasons that make Ukraine and CIS so essential for Russia. Firstly, almost all of the neighbouring countries between Russia and Europe are already into EU or NATO, which means out of Russian political influence and NATO's presence right at the borders. Furthermore, Ukraine has the intention of attracting the anti-Russian

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<sup>8</sup> See Samuel Charap and Mihail Trotskiy, "Russia, the West and the Integration Dilemma," *Survival*, 5, (December 2013-January 2014), 49-62.

<sup>9</sup> Daniella Scharzer and Constanze Stelzenmuller, "What is at stake in Ukraine: Europe and the United States Need To Do What It Takes to Protect the Right of the Eastern Partnership Countries to Choose their Future," *Europe Policy Paper* 1, The German Marshall Fund, 2014, USA.

coalition out of Russia's control and probably rivalling Russia in a near future. To deter these possible future scenarios, the course of a frozen conflict<sup>10</sup> within Ukraine is preferable. The Ukrainian government cannot afford to grant independence to the pro-Russian separatists in Donbass, Lugansk but it agreed to offer a degree of autonomy within the Ukrainian law and sovereignty. Such tactical response of the Ukrainian government intended to grant autonomy to Donbass and Lugansk in order for this not to be extended over the other provinces in eastern Ukraine, but also to keep these provinces autonomous within Ukraine and prevent their independence's status. Nevertheless a frozen conflict seems to have been created already through the Russian-speaking provinces. As a frozen conflict, Ukraine cannot be a member of EU and NATO.



**Map 5.2: Ukrainian internal split<sup>11</sup>**

<sup>10</sup> Frozen conflict refers to a province within a country demanding or declaring for autonomy or independence. Nagorno-Karabakh an Azerbaijani province being part of the Armenian territory, Donetsk, Donbass and Lugansk currently in eastern Ukraine, Transdnistria in Moldova, these are regions that aim to breakaway from the countries where they are, and so far Russia has supported their independence, as such these provinces mean frozen conflict between Russia and the countries of these provinces.

<sup>11</sup>Paul Craig Roberts, Institute for Political Economy, "The New Russia", available at <http://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2014/03/14/new-russia/>.

In the beginning of 2013 there was an oscillation of Ukraine's foreign policy between an association agreement with EU and an agreement of trade union with Russia, but in the final moments, the then Ukrainian Prime Minister Victor Yanukovich accepted the deal offered by Russia because Russia offered better incentives, such as letting go off all the Ukrainian loans, and low energy rates.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, Yanukovich's decision to accept Russian offers caused mass protests in the Kiev's Independence Square who protested against government's choice. The revolt was fuelled further by the pro-Western opposition and the nationalists who used the revolt for an earlier ousting of Yanukovich.<sup>13</sup>

From November 2013 until February 2014, the daily mass protests in the Kiev's Independence Square grew violent from time to time. As a result the attempts to keep hold of office became weaker and the Ukrainian parliament voted to oust Yanukovich. By February 21, 2014 Yanukovich fled Kiev and a pro-Western opposition came in government. The new interim government was led by President Piotr Poroshenko who came in power immediately after Yanukovich, which meant the replacement of a pro-Russian leader with a pro-Western leader. To the West the overthrow of Yanukovich was the will of the Ukrainian people, but to Russia it was a coup backed by the US-led West.<sup>14</sup> This event has created a serious rift between Russia and the West and in the bilateral US-Russian relations unlike before in the post-Cold War era.

When it became apparent that the Ukrainian government adopted the pro-EU and pro-NATO course, the Russian self-defense forces appeared in Crimea to protect the pro-Russian population from the nationalists and the radicals. Pro-Russian local militants in the eastern provinces of Ukraine assisted by Russian volunteers opened a confrontation with the new Ukrainian government and a confrontational aspect developed between Russia and Ukraine. On March 16, a referendum was held in Crimea and over 80%

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<sup>12</sup> Daniella Scharzer and Constanze Stelzenmüller, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "The Ukraine Crisis and the Resumption of Great Power Rivalry," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 19, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> "Russia's Motives in Ukraine," *Strategic Comments*, 2014, pp. viii-ix.

favoured joining Russia. Crimea event changed the borders of Ukraine and the revolution itself caused a fragmentation of the Ukrainian society. Differences between the eastern and western parts of Ukraine grew deeper as the leaders of the eastern and western parts started to play a political role in the country. Crimea's annexation is still perceived by the Western front as an act of aggression that broke the international law, whereas as the will of the Crimean people in accordance with the international law, by Russia.

The new Ukrainian government called for reducing the usage of Russian language, culture and identity inside Ukraine. For this reason Russia responded by taking Crimea off the limits for the new Ukrainian government and joining it into the Russian territory because of its significance to Russia's posture in terms of strengthening the Black Sea Fleet, access to the Black Sea, and to prevent NATO's presence in Crimea.<sup>15</sup> Crimea project was assisted by Russian Special Forces who thwarted the Ukrainian forces tactically without an open confrontation. The view of the Russian stand on Crimea is expressed in the opinions of policy makers and academics who emphasize that "Russia's foreign policy stance has changed: the policy of endless concessions to the detriment of its national interests has fortunately come to an end. In the 1990s, we did not have any foreign policy stance. We ceded national interests one after another, destroying the country."<sup>16</sup> In the aftermath of the Ukrainian revolution this rhetoric has become the assertiveness of the Russian administration.

The new government that emerged from the elections in 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2014, found an internally unstable Ukraine divided between the eastern and western parts. Ukrainian government's diplomacy to keep the country united has clashed with the pro-Russian rebels' activities in the eastern part. The regional separatist tendencies have always been a potential threat to the internal stability of Ukraine since its independence in 1991.<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> See Alexei Fernenko, Alexei Mukhin, Sergei Mikheyev, "Crimea: What to expect from Ukraine and the West," Valdai Discussion Club, Moscow, 24 March, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> See Gwendaol Sasse, "The 'New' Ukraine: A State of Regions," *Regional & Federal Studies*, 11: 3, (2001), 69-100.



aftermath of the Ukrainian revolution has produced two different opinions, the Russian opinion that with or without Russia Ukraine is divided in two; and the Western opinion that the Ukraine revolution has turned into a dangerous post-Cold War crisis.

In terms of diplomacy and legitimacy, the new Ukrainian government was recognized by the US and EU, and new format of political-diplomatic engagements started between Ukraine and Russia. There are opinions that, despite the conspiracy theories claimed by Russia, the EU policy makers were reluctant to approach Ukraine in its programs because of the significance it holds for Russia, but it was Yanukovich himself who sought an association agreement with EU.<sup>18</sup> Also it was Yanukovich who in the last moments chose to align with the Eurasian Union because of the pressures and incentives coming from Russia.

The risk of country's internal fragmentations led the new Ukrainian government to seek closer ties with Western side. In his statement to the US Congress, the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko urged the US not to let Ukraine alone in facing the Russian aggression,<sup>19</sup> and it should be implemented the guarantee offered to Ukraine under the Budapest Memorandum.<sup>20</sup> The Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk called Crimea's annexation as an 'international crime' and elaborated three options for Ukraine to deal with Russia's confrontation: firstly, to deter and contain the Russian troops militarily but this seems an impossible scenario because the Ukrainian troops are not properly equipped and trained; secondly, a peace process participated by US, EU, Ukraine and Russia; and thirdly a Russian policy to create another frozen conflict in Ukraine.<sup>21</sup> Also Ukraine, EU and the US view Crimea's case as illegal and as Russia's interference

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<sup>18</sup> Daniela Schwarzer & Constanze Stelzenmuller, "What Is At Stake In Ukraine: Europe and the United States Need To Do What It Takes to Protect the Right of the Eastern Partnership Countries to Choose their Future", *European Policy Paper 1/2014*, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Washington DC.

<sup>19</sup> Remarks by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to the U.S. Congress, Speaker Petro Poroshenko, September 18, 2014, Council of Foreign Relations, New York.

<sup>20</sup> Budapest Memorandum was treaty between US, Russia, Britain, France and China that they become the guarantors of the defense of the Ukrainian sovereignty and borders in exchange for Ukrainian transfer of its nuclear weapons to Moscow.

<sup>21</sup> Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk on Ukraine's Challenges, A Conversation with Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Transcript. Interviewed by Tomas Graham, Managing Director, Kissinger Associates, September 24, 2014, New York, Council on Foreign Relations.

in the Ukrainian independence.<sup>22</sup> Yet, Russia views it as the free will of the Crimean people for self-determination expressed in a referendum in which majority voted for pro-joining Russia.

Crimea as a province has always been a Russian-speaking province, it was transferred to Ukraine in 1954 by the USSR and it became part of the Russian Federation in March 2014. The skilful Russian exercise in Crimea alerted the Western front, Europe, Baltics, the Nordic countries and NATO. A security build up initiated with increase of troops, military exercises by Russia and NATO-European side to manifest their military strength and as a show of power. Finland a non-NATO member mobilized its reservists, Sweden participated with NATO troops in military exercise, and a closer cooperation began between the Nordic and the Baltic countries to boost up their defenses in case of an aggression. Recently, the NATO summit in Warsaw, May 2016 declared the placement of four battalions in Poland and each Baltic country. Russia too will deploy four battalions facing Poland and the Baltics. Kaliningrad also is strengthened with troops and weapon deployments.

This study's frame attempts to address a historical approach in light of critical current events. Based on the data collection and interpretations of scholars and policy makers from all the players that relate to this study, it has not been an easy task. Also there is a difference between conceptual and practical sphere of influence conduct. This study argues that the Ukrainian crisis, (along with the Syrian crisis and the NATO's expansion towards CIS) represent serious challenges to the US-Russian bilateral relations for several reasons. Firstly both are players of ambitious defense strategy and spheres of influence; secondly each wants to operate freely in its relevant orbit of influence. Ukrainian revolution made Russia to rise as a military power and a politically independent-minded player.

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<sup>22</sup> The UN Resolution on Territorial Integrity of Ukraine, 68<sup>th</sup> Session, 80<sup>th</sup> Plenary, Item 33 (b)m Territorial Integrity of Ukraine, Council for Foreign Relations, March 27, 2014.

In the eyes of US and West, Russia is trying to destabilize the Ukrainian transitional government. And in the eyes of Russia, interference in CIS represents a 'red line' which the West crossed by offering EaP partnership and NATO membership to Ukraine and Georgia. CIS countries have become the target of West and Russia, to be approached through different integration formats, to establish strategic partnerships, free trade agreements, regional cooperation and institution-building. Both Russia and the Western fronts are offering these partnerships to the CIS countries, which has turned into a region of duel for influence projection between the West and Russia, because geopolitically one's advances will mean the other side's disadvantages and loss of influence in the CIS region. As a CIS area, it is vital to Russia, and as rules written by the Western hemisphere it is vital to the US. For this reason, the situation of Ukraine has unleashed confrontation and almost an open hostility between West and Russia.

Internally, the western part of Ukraine has always preferred Western orientation, and the eastern part has been more inclined towards the vector of cooperation with Russia. A pro-Russia government causes the displeasure of western Ukraine and a pro-Western government triggers disagreement from the eastern Ukraine.<sup>23</sup> Violence and military conflict between the Ukrainian regime and the pro-Russian forces in the provinces of Donetsk, Lugansk, and Donbass have been taking place since when the revolution started. These provinces opted for independence referendums from Ukraine and the government declared them as rebel operations.<sup>24</sup>

The number of casualties has kept increasing since the confrontation between the government and the rebels started. So far, two cease-fires have taken place, Minsk I on September 14 and Minsk II on February 2015 ceasefires, calling for withdrawal of troops and of heavy weapons from the lines of the battlefield. According to the first cease-fire

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<sup>23</sup> Mykola Riabchuk, "Ukraine, not ready for divorce," *The New York Times*, March 5, 2014; John J. Mearshemier, "Getting Ukraine Wrong," *The New York Times*, March 13, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> James Sherr, "A War of Narratives," in *The Russian Challenge*, edited by Keir Giles *et.al*, Chatham House Report, The Royal Institute of International Affairs RUSI, London, (June 2015).

between the Ukrainian government and the pro-Russian rebels, the pro-Russian rebels agreed to withdraw troops and halt attacks on the eastern Ukraine, while Ukrainian government agreed to grant autonomy to Donbass and Lugansk to prevent this from spilling further and to prevent independence of these provinces. By November 2014 Donetsk, Lugansk and Donbass voted for independence and on December 2014, Ukraine held parliament elections. Between 2014 and 2015 the military clashes between the Ukrainian government and the pro-Russian separatists continued. The separatists were able to advance their positions in Donetsk, Lugansk, Debaltseve, Mariupol, even targeting the Donetsk International Airport.<sup>25</sup> In this situation, Ukraine wanted to prevent the dissolution of the country but it seems weakened and it was not ready to handle the US-Western geopolitics. On the other side, Russia has become concerned with the protection of its interests, security and influence along its borders. According to John Schindler, the National Security Agency officer, the war in Ukraine is “hybrid, special, and an amalgam of espionage, subversion and terrorism.”<sup>26</sup> However, in the eyes of the Russian administration it was the West the one that provoked Russia with its interference in Ukraine. Nevertheless it has remained an open vague confrontation, neither ceasefire, nor autonomy or independence, neither a united nor a fragmented Ukraine, each side blaming the other for the incomplete political settlement status.

This study argues that the secret political game to get Ukraine continues by both the US and Russia although with caution and prudence. Russia supported the wish for independence of the eastern provinces but refrained from granting them acceptance. It is necessary to add that EU and US did not anticipate such Russian reactions in Crimea and its support for the eastern provinces, despite Russia’s declarations about an unacceptable level of interference in its ‘near abroad.’<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Ukraine has been itself internally

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<sup>25</sup> Matt Finucane, “Russia’s non-linear approach to war in Ukraine,” Opinion, *Russia Direct*, June 16, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>27</sup> Neil MacFarlane & Anan Menon, “The EU and Ukraine”, *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 56:3, (May 2013), 97.

divided because “the Western Ukraine preferred a European direction and projects, while east Ukraine with a large Russian population ranged between ambivalence about, and resistance to, the shift to the West.”<sup>28</sup> Somehow each side, Russia and the US/West is making use of this internal Ukrainian dilemma. Another factor contributing to the domestic Ukrainian dilemma stands based on the import-export trade. Ukraine’s 33% of the external trade is with EU and 29 % of it with the Customs Unions, while 25% of the Ukrainian exports goes to EU and 30% of it goes to the Customs Union.<sup>29</sup>

Ukraine and the CIS members would prefer good relations with both US and Russia, Eastern and Western sides, but the US-Russian geopolitical designs force them either one or the other. Geographically they are closer to Russia, dependent on its gas and energy supplies. Whatever the structure of the international affairs, it will not change the significance of Ukraine and the former-Soviet zone for Russian foreign policy. Stephen Aris describes Russia’s policy toward CIS as a ‘targeted strategy’ focusing on cooperation with countries that are more inclined to cooperate with Russia through small regional organizations.<sup>30</sup> Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) had the aim of cooperating the military exercises, defense policies, and military cooperation between the members. In 2009, CSTO created Collective Operational Reaction Force (CORF) to counter the Ukrainian and Georgia’s aspirations to enter NATO and to be at par with NATO’s forces in size and equipment.<sup>31</sup> An ‘Interaction 2009’ and ‘Interaction 2010’ exercises were conducted among the CIS members to facilitate military cooperation between the troops, and to ensure CSTO becomes an efficient and reliable CIS defense force.<sup>32</sup> Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) is another organization established

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 98.

<sup>29</sup> Nicu Propescu, “EU-Russia: Overcoming Stagnation”, Brief Issue 3, European Union Institute for Security Studies, (January 2014), 4.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Aris, “Russia’s Approach to Multilateral Cooperation in the Post-Soviet Space,” Analysis, *Russian Analytical Digest*, 76, (15 April 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Transcript, President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, Opening remarks at meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, December 10, 2010, The Kremlin, Moscow, available at [en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/9780](http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/9780); and, “Leaders of five CIS states inspect Central Asian military drills,” October 20, 2009, *UzReport*, World, available at [news.uzreport.uz/news\\_1\\_e\\_67048](http://news.uzreport.uz/news_1_e_67048).

in 2001, where Russia's purpose is to remain the central economic partner for the members and to counter the Western economic isolation and to improve its economic ties with China.<sup>33</sup> There was an "Agreement on Cooperation" between Russia's VTB and Bank of China and energy deal among many other agreements signed by the two countries. In 2010, Russia scored a successful integration of Belarus and Kazakhstan into a single customs tariffs centred in Russia because Kazakhstan and Belarus are the strongest CIS economies.<sup>34</sup>

These initiatives illustrate Russia's attempts to organize and maintain the CIS as a sphere of influence within its leadership. Not all the CIS countries have accepted such sphere, many are sceptical about Russia's interference into their internal affairs through these institutions. However, Russia has tried to rectify this scepticism and reluctance for their membership through bilateral political and economic concessions. This highlights that Russia did not give up the great power psychology and the CIS as its sphere of influence, but it tried to maintain such sphere through cooperation and good will, political-economic concessions based on consensus and mutual benefit.

The Ukrainian revolution is an event still going on, with no clear political solution in sight yet, and the atmosphere has become tensed politically and militarily. Furthermore the internal confusion of Ukraine between Russia, West and itself increases the Ukrainian vulnerabilities to the internal threats and external pressures. Meanwhile the attempts for constitutional and institutional reforms cannot succeed without settling the internal disagreements with the eastern provinces.

Different formats of negotiations and dialogue have taken place, Minsk format, Normandy format and Geneva format, yet none has been able to reach a breakthrough or

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<sup>33</sup> Eric Draitser, "The Geopolitics of the Eurasian Economic Union," June 3, 2014, *CounterPunch*, available at: [www.counterpunch.org/2014/06/03/the-geopolitics-of-the-eurasian-economic-union/](http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/06/03/the-geopolitics-of-the-eurasian-economic-union/); see Nikolay Murashkin, "China, Russia and the new great game in Central Asia," *Russia Direct*, September 18, 2013, available at [www.russia-direct.org/analysis/china-russia-and-new-great-game-central-asia](http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/china-russia-and-new-great-game-central-asia).

<sup>34</sup> Arevik Mkrtchyan, "The Customs Union Between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan: Some Evidence from the New Tariff Rates and Trade Flows," October 7, 2013, *Forum for Research on Eastern Europe and Emerging Economies (FREE)*, available at [freepolicybriefs.org/2013/10/07/the-customs-union-between-russia-belarus-and-kazakhstan-some-evidence-from-the-new-tariff-rates-and-trade-flows/](http://freepolicybriefs.org/2013/10/07/the-customs-union-between-russia-belarus-and-kazakhstan-some-evidence-from-the-new-tariff-rates-and-trade-flows/).

common ground because it is a complex geopolitical scenario fueled further by mutual assertiveness of the major powers to whom the Ukrainian political orientation represents a geopolitical interest for them, concretely US-EU, Russia. This complex geopolitical ground involves the territorial integrity of Ukraine which should be defended, the self-determination of the pro-Russian provinces which demand for independence, the Russian perimeters of sphere of influence in the CIS region, and the pursuit for expansion of NATO and EU into what Russia perceives as its historical rightful sphere of influence.

According to Igor Zevelev, the current Russia wants to strengthen its sphere of influence over CIS because it is disappointed with the European and Western policies towards Russia.<sup>35</sup> Zegelev also adds that the current Russian statist who lead the country see US as “a nation that circumvents international law in order to maintain a unipolar world order and retain its supremacy in all spheres. US is also seen as an instigator of regime change and ‘coloured revolutions.’”<sup>36</sup> On the other side, the Western views denounce Russia’s stance and claim that Russia intends to manipulate the internal conflict of Ukraine and other CIS countries in order to prevent them from joining the Western institutions of NATO and EU. A proponent of this view, Svante E. Cornell suggests that the Western front of EU and NATO should not focus their efforts only in Ukraine, instead “they should stand up for the ‘unrecognized states’ created out of Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Transdnistria and the Crimea’s Referendum for annexation, by acknowledging Putin’s regional ambitions and taking care of the frozen conflicts through international mechanisms.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Cornell calls these unrecognized states as “black holes in international politics for they are not subject to international law, but magnets for illicit activities, from the smuggling of drugs and arms to nuclear proliferation.”<sup>38</sup> Contrary to this view, other opinions like Stephen Khinzer states that “Western support

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<sup>35</sup> Igor Zegelev, “The Russian World Boundaries”, *Russia in Global Affairs*, 7 June, 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Svante E. Cornell, “Crimea and the Lessons of Frozen Conflicts”, Commentary, *The American Interests*, March, 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

in Ukraine aims to spread democracy but also to intimidate Russia, and Russia is responding to that threat.”<sup>39</sup>

This study holds that regarding the significance of the Ukrainian revolution for the US-Russian influence projection policy, Ukraine’s status means what the status of Germany meant between the US and USSR. Germany was the ambitious country that initiated two world wars, it dared to challenge the other great powers even militarily. While Ukraine is significant in terms of its size, population and a proximity between Russia and Europe, and its impact for any great power’s influence projection over the CIS area. It was necessary to cooperate with the USSR to deter Germany in 1941, it was necessary to cooperate with Germany to deter USSR throughout Cold War, it is necessary to cooperate with Ukraine to keep Russia under control in the post-Cold War just like it is necessary to keep Ukraine in order to maintain control over the CIS area and security for Russia’s side. This scenario happens because an unchallenged sphere of influence remains vital to all the powers. The contest over who could get Germany turned US-USSR relations into an adversarial frame, and the contest over who gets Ukraine cannot be overcome by any other common threat. This is another crisis and evidence where mutually assured security cannot prevail over the contest for influence.

A set of measures undertaken by each side is perceived as provocative to the other. For instance, NATO’s readiness to grant membership to the Balkan countries was described by the foreign minister Sergei Lavrov, as ‘a provocation’.<sup>40</sup> Also upgrading the Baltic countries’ infrastructure, and creating a Rapid Armed Force of 40,000 troops in Europe to protect East European countries from Russian provocations has resulted in Russian countermeasures to balance NATO’s tactics, and overall not changing its stance and support for the pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Stephen Kinzer, “Putin’s Push into Ukraine is rational,” *The Boston Globe*, Opinion, February 25, 2015.

<sup>40</sup> “NATO’s planned Balkan expansion a ‘provocation’: Russia’s Lavrov,” *Reuters*, September 29, 2014.

<sup>41</sup> Gerard O’Dwyer, “Nations Respond to Russian Buildup in Baltics,” *DefenseNews*, April 12, 2015; Bill Van Auken, “NATO reveals plan for deploying 4,000 troops on Russia’s borders,” October 30, 2015, World Socialist Web Site, available at <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/10/30/nato-o30.html>; Stephen J. Blank, “Imperial Ambitions: Russia’s Military Buildup,”



By consequence, a determined pro-Russian separatists movement in eastern provinces may lead to an uncontrollable disintegration of Ukraine. There have been different attempts to integrate CIS under Russia's leadership. Russia has tried to manoeuvre to its advantage certain political crises inside the GUUAM countries. However, prior to the Ukrainian revolution, the Russian tactics were based on good will, cooperation, both pressure and concessions. The Ukrainian revolution became the point where Russia's assertiveness enhanced and it triggered an interventionist Russia determined to keep its sphere of influence in CIS unchallengeable.

The event of the recent Ukrainian revolution, the shift of Ukrainian foreign policy toward Western orientation triggered Russia's determined assertiveness to prove that it continues to be a great power in the world affairs. The deputy foreign minister Alexander Grushko stated that "Georgia's and Ukraine's membership in NATO alliance would be a huge mistake with serious consequences for the pan-European security."<sup>42</sup>

Ukraine has been threatened with separatism from the pro-Russian separatists in Donbass, Donetsk and Lugansk; Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia was threatened with the same issues from Abkhazia and South Ossetia until March 2015 when these two Georgian provinces gained independence, an independence recognized by Russia but not by US, NATO and EU.<sup>43</sup> A peace treaty was signed between Russia and these two provinces on 18 February, 2015. Through such separatist movements within the GUUAM members, the independent foreign policies of these countries have been weakened and easier to be dominated and controlled by Russia.<sup>44</sup> In the case of frozen conflicts or crises within the CIS, the Russian peacekeepers in these zones have prevented

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*World Affairs Journal*, May/June 2015, [www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/imperial-ambitions-russia's-military-buildup](http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/imperial-ambitions-russia's-military-buildup).  
<sup>42</sup> "Nato denies Georgia and Ukraine," *BBC News*, 3 April, 2008, available at [news.bbc.co.uk/2/1/1/Europe/732876.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/1/1/Europe/732876.stm).  
<sup>43</sup> Heather Saul, "Putin signs deal calling for almost complete integration of South Ossetia into Russia- on anniversary of Crimea annexation," *Independent*, 20 March 2015; Eric Jones, "Abkhazia Signs Treaty with Russia," February 2015, *Foreign Intrigue*, available at [foreign-intrigue.com/2015/02/abkhazia-signs-treaty-with-russia](http://foreign-intrigue.com/2015/02/abkhazia-signs-treaty-with-russia).  
<sup>44</sup> Kornly K. Kakachia, "Will GUUAM and EEC bury the CIS?" *PERSPECTIVE*, 11: 2, (November-December 2000), 4.

violence, but it has even made them less inclined to make peace.<sup>45</sup> These events highlight the fact that the CIS states remain vulnerable to Russia's power.

The picture of the events that have taken place and the measures undertaken by Russia and US to counter each other is too broad, however the above mentioned scenario illustrate clearly the theme of this study, the ongoing sphere of influence struggle between Russia and the US. Furthermore, based on the above mentioned description of events, this study argues that interference in one's sphere of influence comes with interference in internal affairs of the other countries. Such explanation has relevance with the current Ukrainian and Syrian crises, a scenario which represents access points for influence projection to the US and Russia, but a threat to their statehood for Ukraine and Syria.

The consequences of the Ukrainian crisis are described as a complete reversal of the post-Cold War system where "Russia has returned to geopolitics, the assertion of sphere of influence, and confrontational stance with the West."<sup>46</sup> John J. Mearsheimer is of the opinion that West provoked the confrontation with Russia in Ukraine.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore Mearsheimer adds that

"just like during the Cold War, US did not think Cuba was right to ally with Soviet Union, so Russia does not think Ukraine is right to ally with US, but the weaker countries must tread carefully when they deal with powerful neighbours and powers, therefore it is Ukraine's responsibility to tread cautiously between the US and Russia, and it is not Western and US' necessity to accommodate Ukraine's foreign policy orientation."<sup>48</sup>

This study agrees with Mearsheimer's argument and adds that when it comes to the great powers' sphere of influence and geopolitics, abstract rights and international law principles of self-determination, intervention or non-intervention are not clearly stated principles and this fact creates collision between the powers and are at brawl with the weaker states.<sup>49</sup> As this study determines, NATO's enlargement policy and its desired

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Joerg Forbrig, "A Region Disunited? Europe Policy Paper 1, Central European Responses to the Russia-Ukraine Crisis," The German Marshall Fund of the United States, (2015), 1.

<sup>47</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the US Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, (September/October 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

expansion into CIS, the Ukrainian shift of foreign policy orientation and the Syrian crisis are three strong evidences of incompatible interests that have caused a collision course and seriously complicated the Russian relations with the Western front and US. An accommodation of these three issues on mutual beneficial strategic terms has not been possible yet, because on the three these issues geopolitics, deterrence and sphere of influence prevails over the mutually assured security.

### **5.3 The Implications of the Ukrainian Revolution for the Russian-Western Relations**

This sections elaborates on the consequences of the Ukrainian revolution for the Russian-Western front relations. It created not only an internal conflict between the new Ukrainian government and the pro-Russian rebels in the eastern part of the country, between Ukraine and Russia, but it became an international crisis just like the Syrian crisis because it brought at surface the Western/US-Russian assertiveness for spheres of influence. The US pursuit of undisputable hegemony in every region and sub-region of the world politics is clashing with the Russian interests in an area considered by Russia as its rightful area of influence. Russia is concerned with the country's strategic depth and needs a buffer zone for its protection, this needs to be considered in order to obtain a Western-Russia political solution.<sup>50</sup> Ukraine became a cross-purpose of geopolitical designs for influence between these two fronts, for it symbolizes not only a challenge to Russia's great power status but even future insecurity.<sup>51</sup>

Since this study is examined through the prism of influence, it agrees with the work of Edy Kaufmann, who claims that there are direct and indirect spheres of influence for US

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<sup>50</sup> Uwe Klusmann, "Chess in a Minefield: The Global Implications of the Ukraine Conflict," *Spiegel*, February 20, 2014, online at [www.spiegel.de/international/world/the-geopolitical-implications-of-conflictin-ukraine-a-954724.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/the-geopolitical-implications-of-conflictin-ukraine-a-954724.html); Denali Marsh, "Why is Russia so interested in Ukraine?", *The Global State*, (January 11, 2015), online at [theglobalstate.com/popular/why-is-russia-so-interested-in-ukraine/](http://theglobalstate.com/popular/why-is-russia-so-interested-in-ukraine/).

<sup>51</sup> George Friedman, "Russia's Strategy," *Stratfor*, Geopolitical Weekly, April 24, 2012, online at <https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/russias-strategy>; and George Friedman, "Russia Examines Its Options for Responding to Ukraine," *Stratfor*, Geopolitical Weekly, March 18, 2014, online at <https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/Russia-examines-its-options-responding-ukraine>.

and Russia. Kaufmann defines the 'sphere of direct influence' as "a geographic region characterized by the high penetration of one superpower to the exclusion of other powers and particularly of the rival power."<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, Kaufmann describes East Europe and Latin America as subsystems of US and Soviet Union. Kaufman's work refers to the Cold War era. This study holds that, in the post-Cold War, to Russia CIS represents a sphere of direct influence, and to US it is a sphere of indirect influence.

William C. Wohlforth concurs with the opinion that "in the current international system there has been a 'return of realpolitik' for throughout the post-Cold War main events such as the post-1990s, terrorism, and globalization, the great powers' geopolitics is back."<sup>53</sup> This study agrees with this opinion and adds that also the great powers' sphere of influence is back. What caused Russia's assertiveness is the perception of its policymakers about the expansion of economic and military Western institutions into its sphere of influence at Russia's expense.

Prior to the Ukrainian revolution, despite agreements and disagreements to follow Russia's lead or not, Russia tried to be the dominant country in CIS and manoeuvre it through all means, from the gas and energy prices to the fragile structures of economic and confidence building measures. Also until the Ukrainian revolution, Russia did not act as an interventionist state in CIS. In the case of the Five Day War with Georgia, it was the first test that Russia demonstrated it is willing to resort to force if its influence over CIS is threatened or rivalled.<sup>54</sup> Georgia, a US ally, attempted to return the Georgian territory Abkhazia and South Ossetia provinces which had aligned with Russia. Except for the Georgian event, Russia tried establish its leadership in CIS based on trust, goodwill and different forms of bilateral or multilateral cooperation and coercion. After the

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<sup>52</sup> Edy Kaufmann, *The United States and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, (Croom Helm: London, 1976), 11.

<sup>53</sup> William C. Wohlforth, "The Return of Realpolitik: The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers," *Foreign Affairs*, (May/June 2014).

<sup>54</sup> George Friedman, "The Russia-Georgian War and the Balance of Power," *Stratfor: Geopolitical Weekly*, (August 12, 2008), online at [https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/russo\\_georgian\\_war\\_and\\_balance\\_power](https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/russo_georgian_war_and_balance_power).

Ukrainian Revolution it became more determined to defend its status quo in CIS even by military means if necessary.

There are three different dimensions of the Ukrainian revolution and its outcome. At the domestic level, there is serious confrontation between the Kiev government and the pro-Russian provinces in the eastern part; regionally there is a EU's disagreement with Russia's interference in the Ukrainian affairs; internationally, it is the US and its open-door NATO policy vs. Russian assertiveness and determination to make sure CIS remains Russia's zone of influence for security and economic purposes.

#### **5.4 The Consequences of the Ukrainian crisis for the EU-Russia Relations**

This section provides a brief account of the EU-Russian relations that reached at this point in the current Ukrainian crisis. The EU-Russian relationship started with the Agreement on Trade, Commercial and Economic Cooperation in 1989, and throughout the post-Cold War both these actors went through thorny transformations for a stable economic improvement, but also for individual integration spheres.<sup>55</sup> During the first decade, EU was viewed as an institution that brings better relations and better economy with Russia. But the Bulgarian introduction of the visa regime with Russia meant for Russia loss of an ally and loss of Slav sphere.<sup>56</sup> In 2003, Russia and EU participated in the joint Concept of Four Common Spaces (economy; freedom, security, justice; external security; culture, science, education) and the relations were immensely improved.<sup>57</sup> The kind of relationship that has taken place has been something in between allies and opponents. Due to sphere of influence mind-set each has been cautious with the other, but also mutual cooperation, benefits, and reciprocity.

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<sup>55</sup> Alexey Gromyko, "Russia and the European Union: The Dynamics of the Relationship," in *Russia-European Union: Potential for Partnership*, Report 11, (Moscow: Russian International Affairs Council, 2013), 5

<sup>56</sup> See "The European Union and Russia: Close Neighbours, Global Players, Strategic Partners," European Commission, External Relations, Brussels, 2007; "Russian-Bulgarian Mutual Travel Agreement Takes Effect," Press Release, 19 May, 2002, online at [es.mid.ru/en/web/guest/maps/bg//asset\\_publisher/10DICiVBpk4q/content/id/557118](http://es.mid.ru/en/web/guest/maps/bg//asset_publisher/10DICiVBpk4q/content/id/557118).

<sup>57</sup> Alexey Gromyko, 2013, 7.

The Russian perception that the EU's enlargement policy reshape Russia's economic influence and relations with its allies triggered a conflict of interests.<sup>58</sup> At the second decade of the post-Cold War Russia shifted its view about EU, it started to consider its expansion further Central East Europe and especially into CIS as a policy that curtails Russia's vital economic interests in CIS and the rest of Europe.<sup>59</sup> The energy sector became crucial for the country's political and geopolitical projects, and for the economic strength. Also state ownership of the strategically important sectors of the economy became important, along with the introduction of 'sovereign democracy' concept to counter the appeal of outside democracy. The wider environment where Russia could exert its economic and political influence could be reshaped by EU and NATO's expansion. Therefore by the second decade of the post-Cold War these two expansions were perceived as curtailing Russia's status as a great power and its perimeters of influence.

The EU on its part continued its support and expansion waves toward Russia's allies in different stages. In 2003 Moldova rejected the Russian-proposed Kozak plan in Transdnistria and accepted proposals coming from EU and US, and their diplomatic interventions.<sup>60</sup> In 2004 the EU signed Eastern Partnership Strategy as a continuation of its New Neighbourhood Policy to Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, and Action Plan with Georgia and Ukraine.<sup>61</sup> In 2009 EU offered Eastern Partnership toward six CIS countries.<sup>62</sup>

These EU economic and cooperation packages increased Russia's concerns. James Greene describes these EU steps as "a tailored, dedicated strategic effort to influence

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<sup>58</sup> See James Greene, "Russian Responses to NATO and EU Enlargement and Outreach," Briefing Paper, (London: Chatham House), June 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Laurynas Kasciunas, "Opinion: What can stop Russia?, August 7, 2014, *DELFI, The Lithuania Tribute*, online at [en.delfi.lt/opinion/opinion-what-can-stop-russia.d?id=65494680](http://en.delfi.lt/opinion/opinion-what-can-stop-russia.d?id=65494680); Kozak plan meant an exchange of Transdnistria to Moldova for a Moldovan obligation to never join the EU and NATO.

<sup>61</sup> Seda Birol, "Importance of the Partnership Agreement and Eastern Partnership with Ukraine for the EU," Analysis, *International Relations Centre for Politics and Research*, Hazar Institute, (December, 2013).

<sup>62</sup> Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, Prague, 7 May, 2009, Council of the European Union, online at [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107589.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107589.pdf); Eastern Partnership, Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 9 September, 2014, online at [www.urm.lt/default/en/eastern-partnership](http://www.urm.lt/default/en/eastern-partnership).

political and economic developments in countries in the western CIS region and southern Caucasus- and bring them into a zone where European standards apply.”<sup>63</sup> Russia too on its part, pursued its tailored strategy towards its ‘near abroad’, focusing on three targeted plans: “firstly to ensure the failure of democratic experiments in Ukraine and Georgia; secondly to prevent the progress of CIS countries toward the NATO and EU membership; and thirdly to re-establish the Russian predominance in CIS as a Russian sphere of influence.”<sup>64</sup> It is necessary to state that EU did not understand or consider that whether USSR or Russia, the Russian’ geopolitics continued to view the EU and NATO through zero-sum geopolitical point of view, just like the EU and US’ perception about Russia’s efforts to maintain primacy in the CIS. The optimism of the first decade about the policy of merging the internal democratic development of Russia with the West was replaced by the second decade’s course of strengthening Russia’s USSR assets and capacities, not a renewed Soviet Union but a strengthened Russia’s status. The events mentioned above prove the Russian and the EU efforts to expand their influence through institutions, integrations, political and economic means.

The aftermath of the Ukrainian Revolution 2013 became a collision between the EU-Western front and Russia in the military and economic realms. Noteworthy here is that both the EU and US had the approval of the country’s elite that came into power, but not Russia’s acceptance to interfere in a sphere of its predominance. Between the EU and Russia, each of these two players aims and hopes to keep the whole Ukraine on its sphere of influence. Therefore, both Russia and EU use to their purpose the support of the eastern and western Ukrainian elites. The West offered full diplomatic, economic and military support to the Ukrainian government and Russia is doing the same for the pro-Russian separatists in the eastern provinces.

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<sup>63</sup> James Greene, “Russian Responses to NATO and EU Enlargement and Outreach,” Briefing Paper, *Russia and Eurasia Programme*, June 2012, London: Chatham House, (June 2012),7.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.11.

Such opposite positions between the EU and Russia regarding the Ukraine's choice reversed the previously cooperative and friendly political atmosphere. Firstly EU named Russia as the aggressor,<sup>65</sup> then downgraded the relations between the two unlike ever before in the post-Cold War. NATO also stopped its cooperation and the Western leaders suspended the bilateral meetings with Russia except German Chancellor Angela Merkel who tried temporarily to be a mediator between EU and Russia.<sup>66</sup> After the failure of Minsk I and II agreements for ceasefire, Germany also started issuing stronger tone in condemning Russia's behaviour. Moreover, Russia was suspended from its participation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council.<sup>67</sup> It was also suspended from the high-level meeting delegates and from its accession in the Organization for Economic, Cooperation and Development (OECD). Therefore there was a united Western front condemnation and of the Western international institutions against Russia's capture of Crimea and its support for the pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine.<sup>68</sup>

Financially, the US and EU issued sanctions to Russian officials, companies and almost all of its industry sectors with the expectation that through inflicting economic pain Russia would either give up its stance on Ukraine or the economic downfall would create a powerful mass protest and a regime change.<sup>69</sup> The EU is also planning for an energy diversification independent from Russia.<sup>70</sup> Russian economy felt the impact of the sanctions but not at the extent of giving up its geopolitical stance.

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<sup>65</sup>“Ukraine Labels Russia ‘Aggressor State,’” January 27, 2015, *Voice of America*, online at [www.voanews.com/content/ukrainian-soldiers-killed-in-war-torn-east/2614942.html](http://www.voanews.com/content/ukrainian-soldiers-killed-in-war-torn-east/2614942.html); Alexander Clackson, “Russia or America: Who IS the real Aggressor?,” *Global Research*, March 11, 2014, online at [www.globalresearch.ca/russia-or-america-who-is-the-real-aggressor/5372882](http://www.globalresearch.ca/russia-or-america-who-is-the-real-aggressor/5372882); George Soros, “Europe must not treat Ukraine like another Greece,” 3 April 2015, *The Guardian*, online at [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/03/europe-ukraine-another-greece-eu-russia-us](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/03/europe-ukraine-another-greece-eu-russia-us). <sup>351</sup>Matt Milham, “NATO suspends all cooperation with Russia amid Ukraine crisis,” April 1, 2014, *Stars and Stripes*, online at [www.stripes.com/news/nato-suspending-all-cooperation-with-russia-amid-ukrainecrisis-1.275625](http://www.stripes.com/news/nato-suspending-all-cooperation-with-russia-amid-ukrainecrisis-1.275625).

<sup>66</sup> Matt Milham, “NATO suspends all cooperation with Russia amid Ukraine crisis,” April 1, 2014, *Stars and Stripes*, online at [www.stripes.com/news/nato-suspending-all-cooperation-with-russia-amid-ukrainecrisis-1.275625](http://www.stripes.com/news/nato-suspending-all-cooperation-with-russia-amid-ukrainecrisis-1.275625).

<sup>67</sup> Council of Europe Assembly suspends Russian members,” *Reuters*, April 10, 2014; Dmitry Trenin, “The Ukraine Crisis and the Resumption of Great Power Rivalry,” 2014,

<sup>68</sup> Pamela Falk, “U.N. General Assembly condemns Russia's actions in Ukraine,” *CBS News*, March 27, 2014, online at [www.cbsnews.com/news/un-general-assembly-condemns-russias-actions-in-ukraine/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/un-general-assembly-condemns-russias-actions-in-ukraine/).

<sup>69</sup> Polina Devitt, “Lavrov accuses West of seeking ‘regime change’ in Russia,” *Reuters*, November 22, 2014.

<sup>70</sup> Frederic Simon, “EU plans major offensive to diversify gas supplies,” 2 June, 2015, *EURACTIV*, online at [www.euractiv.com/sections/energy/eu-plans-major-offensive-diversify-gas-supplies-315019](http://www.euractiv.com/sections/energy/eu-plans-major-offensive-diversify-gas-supplies-315019).



Militarily, the US-led NATO and the whole Western countries defined Russia as ‘the aggressor’ and ‘the adversary’, a country with expansionist ideas. This study argues that Europe is completely a NATO and an EU bloc, CIS is the only battleground for influence between West and Russia. Among academics like Stephen M. Walt<sup>71</sup>, Dmitri Trenin<sup>72</sup>, there is the opinion that the Ukrainian revolution has brought back the rivalry between US-EU and Russia and this rivalry will take the shape of sphere-of-influence. This study agrees with Trenin’s view who states that “this new battle for influence is very real and will have major implications beyond just Ukraine. The confrontation will take some time to lead to an outcome and neither the time frame nor the result can be foreseen at this point.”<sup>73</sup> While Stephen Walt writes in his essay that “Putin’s manoeuvrings look like a failure only if you believed his goal was to dismember Ukraine completely or re-create the old-Soviet Union. By contrast, if you think his primary objective was to keep Ukraine from joining a U.S. led ‘sphere of influence’ in CIS, then his handling of the crisis looks adroit, ruthless and successful.”<sup>74</sup> Ivo Daalder *et.al* also imply the intensification of rivalry for influence by stating that “Russian success would fatally undermine Ukraine’s stability and embolden Kremlin to further challenge the security order in Europe. It might tempt Russia to use the doctrine of protecting ethnic Russians and Russian speaking people in seeking territorial changes in Baltics.”<sup>75</sup>

This study asserts that to achieve the goal of an independent Ukraine or a federalized Ukraine, it has been costly for both US and Russia. Yet, to Russia, Ukraine is more vital than to the West, as such Russia will go to great lengths to ensure Ukraine does not become a EU or NATO member because the loss of Ukraine would mean Russia’s gradual dislodge as a dominant security and economic center in CIS.

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<sup>71</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “No-Bluff Putin,” *Foreign Affairs*, Argument, June, 2014.

<sup>72</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “The Ukraine Crisis and the resumption of Great Power Rivalry, July 9, 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “No-Bluff Putin,” *Foreign Policy*, Argument, June 4, 2014

<sup>75</sup> Ivo Daalder, Michele Flournoy, John Herbst, Jan Lodal, Steven Pifer, James Stavridis, Strobe Talbott, Charles Wald, “Preserving Ukraine’s Independence, Resisting Russian Aggression: What the United States and NATO Must Do,” Report, *Atlantic Council*, Washington D.C., February 2015.

In the second decade Russia focused on a deeper reintegration of Eurasian sphere through the fragile institutions of CIS' Customs Union and CSTO by means of advance intelligence and careful coordination between the Russian government and the elites of the countries that are more inclined to cooperate with Russia. These have also been the tactics of the Western front, and in CIS, Ukraine is a battleground for influence between the US and Russia as it was Germany between the US and USSR. As a consequence, this study argues and agrees with opinions expressed by many academics like James Greene, John Mearsheimer, Stephen Walt that the Western interference in Ukraine revived the sphere of influence with Russia and that as far as Ukraine is concerned, Russia's competition for influence with the West has become a struggle of necessity not of choice. K. J. Holsti argues that "although the norm of nonintervention remains firmly established as one of the foundations of the modern state system, great powers have frequently developed doctrines to justify their interventionary activities, particularly within areas of regional domination."<sup>76</sup> It is also necessary to emphasize that Russian influence tools are different from Western influence tools, regarding concessions and pressures, coercion and attraction of the packages the two offer to their client states. During the Cold War, the USSR measures were more rigid to maintain Warsaw Pact as its sphere, in the post-Cold War Russia attempted more liberal steps towards CIS and CSTO.

On the other side, the US and Western view is that Russia is not interested in a genuine settlement in the Ukrainian case, instead it is looking for a frozen conflict, as such a united Western front must stand up to deter Russia's aggression. Somehow this shows a political-militarized rivalry for spheres of influence. This study argues that influence is closely linked with deterrence because through sphere of influence the great powers can deter each other. In strategic terms, the EU's and NATO's advantage are a challenge to Russia's great power status just like the US, Europe and NATO are concerned with the

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<sup>76</sup>K.J. Holsti, *International Politics*, (New Jersey: Simon & Schuster, 1975), 198.

challenges posed by Russia's assertiveness. For this purpose the Western front feels the need to address this challenge. This study highlights that the threat at this point of the Russian-Western confrontation is not about a military threat to Ukraine, CIS or Europe, or Russia and the US. The threat in this scenario relates to the spheres of influence in these areas. Michael Howard stated in his article in 1958 that "the negotiation of a Russian military withdrawal in return for an equivalent military withdrawal by the West, will remain a standing challenge to the statesmen of Western Europe and the United States."<sup>77</sup> Since both the US and Russia are also great powers with a sphere-of-influence foreign policy approach, this study suggests that it is necessary to draw the lines of such influence in order to minimize the level of conflict between these two countries and the rate of casualties on the strategic areas of influence where such conflict takes place, -as in Syria and Ukraine currently. It is not a clear-cut line of sphere of influence like in the Cold War because there is an international economic interdependency, deals of different sectors and stable diplomatic relations between the CIS countries and the US, and between Western countries and Russia. It is the major powers- concretely US and Russia- (China too) who want to clarify the area of US dominance and Russian dominance. (and Chinese dominance). And this refers to sphere-of-influence strategy.

## **5.5 The Significance of the Ukrainian Crisis for the US-Russian Relations**

This section addresses the current Ukrainian crisis and its consequences for the US-Russian rivalry over whose ally is Ukraine going to be, including the role played by these two countries in this case. It is an ongoing crisis with no solution in sight yet, because there is no agreement on the reciprocity and lines of influence between the US and Russia. Throughout the history of the US-Russian relations, there has been divergence and convergence of interests but this thesis argues that the Ukrainian revolution produced an

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<sup>77</sup> Michael Howard, "Disengagement and Western Security," *International Affairs*, 34: 4, (October 1958), 469.

irreconcilable divergence of interests. After Russia, Ukraine is the second largest country in CIS and Europe. And it is strategic about whose sphere of influence is CIS and Eurasia going to be. By proximity it is between Europe and Russia, by historical and past affiliations it has been part of Russian sphere of influence, which is why Russia has constantly viewed its relations with the CIS countries as relations among fraternal peoples, rather than as foreign relations. Nevertheless, even after the Cold War, though weaker than the USSR, Russia's integration efforts for the post-Soviet countries continued.

The shift of the Ukrainian orientation alerted Russia, and has created a confrontational US-Russian and Ukrainian-Russian relations. Despite Minsk I and Minsk II agreements for ceasefire, violence and insecurity in Ukraine have intensified.<sup>78</sup> Minsk I and Minsk II were two proposals rather than two real ceasefires. Both these proposals laid down certain agreed upon conditions and demands on the Ukrainian regime and the pro-Russian separatists, to withdraw from certain lines on the front and limit the use of heavy weapons.<sup>79</sup>

The US continues to support the Ukrainian regime with different mechanisms in order to boost up the Ukrainian forces, military and defense packages to deal with the attacks coming from the pro-Russian rebels such as Trust Funds and Joint Working Groups on Defense Reforms.<sup>80</sup> Russia also keeps pouring its supports for the pro-Russian separatists by sending technical aid, advisors, equipment, and support for their independence.<sup>81</sup> An escalatory spiral has occurred because the US and Russia want to deter each other the advantage in Ukraine. This thesis is of the opinion that Ukraine is as significant between the US and Russia as Germany between the US and USSR. Whoever gets hold over

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<sup>78</sup> Yulia Karabkina, "For Ukraine, Minsk II is just as flawed as Minsk I," *Russia Direct*, February 24, 2015.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, "Distinctive partnership between Ukraine and NATO," online at [mfa.gov.ua/en/about-ukraine/euroatlantic-cooperation/ukraine-nato](http://mfa.gov.ua/en/about-ukraine/euroatlantic-cooperation/ukraine-nato); Joint statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, 13 May, 2015, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, online at [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_119425.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_119425.htm).

<sup>81</sup> Mathew Schofield and Nancy A. Youssef, "Russia 'sending more war equipment to rebels,' 25 August, 2014, online at [www.stuff.co.nz/world/europe/10311413/Russia-sending-more-war-equipment-to-rebels](http://www.stuff.co.nz/world/europe/10311413/Russia-sending-more-war-equipment-to-rebels).

Ukraine can gain control over the CIS and Central Asian affairs, and can deter Russia. To Russia, gaining or losing Ukraine is decisive for Russia's status as a pole in the international affairs. The Deputy Secretary General of NATO, Alexander Vershbow describes Russia's aggression against Ukraine as not "an isolated incident, but a game-changer in European security. It reflects an evolving pattern of behaviour that has been emerging for several years, despite our efforts to reach out to Russia and build a cooperative European security system with Russia."<sup>82</sup>

Although since its independence in 1991 Ukraine itself preferred a foreign policy away from Russian orbit, its policy orientation kept shifting between West and Russia, according to the different political elites leading the country and different pressures or concessions being offered from the West and Russia. Both Russian and the West have pursued a gradual consistent approach to keep Ukraine and CIS on its side.

Ukraine declared its intentions of becoming a NATO member in 2002 and in June of the same year Ukraine and NATO signed the Memorandum of Understanding for Host Nation Support.<sup>83</sup> This was a Ukrainian policy to avoid its membership into the Russian-led CIS integration structures of CSTO and the Eurasian Economic Community. To counter such Ukrainian move, Russia established an agreement for a gas intermediary called RosUkrEnergo (RUE) with the Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma in 2004.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless NATO and Ukraine continued the discussions about a possible integration within the alliance. In May 2006, a Ukrainian-US plan to hold an Exercise Sea Breeze was cancelled after the authority customs in Crimea refused the US' SS *Advantage* to unload its deployment logistics.<sup>85</sup> The exercise was cancelled and by 6 June 2006 the Crimean Parliament declared Crimea as a NATO-free zone, and on June 8, 2006, the

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<sup>82</sup> NATO Archives online, Deputy Secretary General: "Russia's aggression is a game-changer in European security," 02 February 2015.

<sup>83</sup> NATO Archive, NATO-Ukraine Action Plan, 22 November, 2002, online at [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_19547.htm?](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_19547.htm?test.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/putin-kuchma-started-shady-rosukrenergo-2-305080.html)

<sup>84</sup> Taras Kuzio, "Putin, Kuchma started shady RosUkrEnergo," October 24, 2009, *KyivPost*, online at [test.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/putin-kuchma-started-shady-rosukrenergo-2-305080.html](http://test.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/putin-kuchma-started-shady-rosukrenergo-2-305080.html).

<sup>85</sup> James Greene, 'Russian Responses to NATO and EU Enlargement and Outreach', Briefing Paper, Russia and Eurasia Programme, London: Chatham House, (June 2012):15.

Russian Parliament issued warnings that Ukrainian membership into NATO would cause negative consequences in the relations between two fraternal peoples.<sup>86</sup>

As this study illustrates, the US-Russian initiatives and steps to maintain the allies they already have and expand them through bilateral and integrational relations prove the central argument of the study- their mutual assertiveness and pursuit for spheres of influence. Russia on its side cannot tolerate a rival's economic and political foothold in CIS. The aspirations of Ukraine, Georgia, and other CIS countries for NATO membership have been a serious source of rapprochement between US and Russia, and since 2014 until this time of writing it continues to be a source of confrontation.

It is unclear whether Crimea's annexation was a spontaneous response, a reactionary tactical manoeuvre to the Ukrainian revolution, or a long pre-planned preparation by Russia's side. Nevertheless it is considered by the US as an imperialist intention and action. As a result, NATO and EU agreed to boost up forces and defense posture in the East Europe for the countries feeling intimidated or threatened by Russia's actions.<sup>87</sup> There was the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) approved by president Obama to strengthen the defense of the Eastern European countries; Trident Juncture Exercise in October 2015 which Russia countered with snap exercises; the SM-3 missile defense in Romania was installed and is operational, the missile defense in Poland is on the way; NATO's Brilliant Jump Exercise in 2016 with a Very High Readiness Strong Force of 7000 troops.<sup>88</sup> Also as NATO decided to deploy one battalion in each Baltic country and Poland, on the other side, Russia's Defense Minister also declared Russia's intent to establish three military divisions facing each Baltic country. The economic sphere of influence has been complementary of the political-military sphere of influence. Sergei Lavrov expresses his concern about the EU' expansion, by saying "We [the Russians] are

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>87</sup> NATO to boost special defense forces to 40,000-Stoltenberg, *Russia Today* (RT), 24 June, 2015, online at <https://www.rt.com/news/269389-nato-europe-rapid-force/>.

<sup>88</sup> Steven Pifer, "Expect Intense Russian Pushback on NATO," *Newsweek*, May 17, 2016.

accused of having spheres of influence. But what is the Eastern Partnership, if not an attempt to extend the EU's sphere of influence.”<sup>89</sup> Elias Gotz describes Russia's approach towards Ukraine as a four-pronged strategy: annexing Crimea based on the reasoning to protect the Russian-speaking people; secondly keeping the provisional Kiev government off-balance; thirdly, fomenting unrest in the eastern part of Ukraine, and lastly, pressing the Kiev government to grant more independence to the autonomous provinces in the eastern Ukraine.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore the diplomatic and economic sanctions on Russia will mean some costs, but not a change of Russia's regional policies.<sup>91</sup> The academics agree with the growing of Russia's assertiveness in CIS, but while they relate it to realism, security, imperialism, or breaking of the international rules, this study relates it with the sphere of influence viewpoint.

The dialogue that somehow contributed to the two cease fires of Minsk I and Minsk II, called for the withdrawal of heavy weapons and withdrawal of rebel forces from the front lines across the provinces where the battles are happening. But there has been no political breakthrough yet because each side aims gaining territory on the ground, whether the US-Russia level or the Ukrainian government and the pro-Russian separatists' level, the target is all of Ukraine or eastern-western Ukraine. In strategic terms both Ukraine and Syria mean to Russia the final frontiers of its sphere of influence in CIS and Middle East. These events have produced serious disagreements between the US and Russia and have escalated the Ukrainian and Syrian crises into confrontational atmosphere between the US and Russia. Doug Badow maintains that, “Ukraine needs peace, Europe needs stability, Russia needs security and US needs hegemony.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Pop, V. (2009, March 21). “EU expanding its ‘sphere of influence’ Russia says,” *EU Observer*. Online at, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/27827>, March 21, 2009.

<sup>90</sup> See Elias Gotz, “It's Geopolitics, stupid: explaining Russia's Ukraine policy,” *Global Affairs*, 1:1, (2015), 3-10.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>92</sup>Doug Badow, “US and NATO Should End New Cold War with Russia,” American Committee for East-West Accord, New York, May 21, 2016.

This study argues that the contest for influence that the US and Russia are trying to exercise in CIS is manifested in the action-reaction cycle of *color revolutions* vs. *frozen conflicts*. US on its part has tried to become involved in the settlement of political-military conflicts and support the democratic colour revolutions, whereas Russia has offered its support to the frozen conflicts. In response to NATO's and EU's enlargement Russia has adopted the thesis of 'divided Russian people,' which grants Russia the right to defend the Russian people wherever they live, due to the fact that after 1990s there were millions of Russian people living in Ukraine, Crimea, and other neighbouring countries.

The Ukrainian revolution, having the US and Western support triggered Russia's annexation of Crimea, which was denounced by the West. John Kerry, the US Secretary of State called it a '19<sup>th</sup> century behavior,' Britain and other European countries likened it with Hitler's annexation of Sudetenland before starting the war.<sup>93</sup> As a result the US suspended the high-level meetings, dialogue, and cooperation between the whole Western front and Russia. Although they resumed back in October 2014 with the appointment of the new NATO Chief Jens Stoltenberg, still the atmosphere of the relations has continued to be highly tensed and suspicious.

The aftermath of Russia's assertiveness has been criticized and rejected by the US/West, because if Russia succeeds in establishing an orbit of influence led by Russia, it will probably change the current world order into a Western system led by US and Europe and a non-Western system led by Russia and China. In his speech in 2009, the vice president Joe Biden claimed what is supposed to be the official US administration's stance towards Russia that "We will not agree with Russia on everything. For example the United States will not recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. We will not recognize sphere-of-influence. It will remain our view that sovereign states

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<sup>93</sup> Reid J. Epstein, "Kerry: Russia behaving like it's the 19<sup>th</sup> century," 3 February, 2014, Blog, *Politico Now*, online at [www.politico.com/blogs/politico-now/2014/03/kerry-russia-behaving-like-its-the-19th-century184280](http://www.politico.com/blogs/politico-now/2014/03/kerry-russia-behaving-like-its-the-19th-century184280); Simona Kralova, "Crimea seen as 'Hitler-style' land grab," 7 March 2014, *BBC News*, online at [www.bbc.com/new/world-europe-26488652](http://www.bbc.com/new/world-europe-26488652).



have the right to make their own decisions and choose their own alliances.”<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, this study argues that sphere of influence has been the central vision of the US, Russia and all great powers’ foreign policies, all the times. While the US remains in pursuit of hegemony through fragmentation of rivals’ influence, it has led to Russia’s assertiveness not to cede another part of its zone of influence.

This study suggests that the political solution has two ways: either allow Ukraine to run its foreign policy and be in good terms with both US and Russia, something Ukraine can achieve through its own diplomatic skills; or if US and Russia want to compel Ukraine to become one’s ally not the other’s, then the outcome will be the disintegration of Ukraine. Only a reciprocal understanding between the US and Russia can prevent Ukraine’s dissolution. A settlement about this or how to achieve this has not been reached yet, and negotiating such a settlement remains a standing challenge between the US and Russia. NATO’s and EU’s entrance in CIS remains unacceptable to Russia, because it does not allow EU’s economic power and NATO’s military strength to penetrate into CIS. The Russian foreign minister’s opinion which can be taken as the official stance of Russian politics, stated in his article that,

“Russia has no claims to any special rights in international relations, but nor should we be put in the position of being led either. Full equality, including in the realm of threat analysis and decision making, is an indispensable factor. One distinctive feature of Russia’s foreign policy is that we are beginning to uphold, perhaps for the first time in our history, our national interests in full, using all our competitive advantages. We now have enough resources for addressing various key tasks of the country simultaneously: retooling the economy, solving social problems, modernizing the Armed Forces, strengthening foreign-policy instruments, and supporting Russian businesses on international markets.”<sup>95</sup>

This leads to another finding of this study: in the respective zone of influence where one has dominance, another power or rival will not be allowed into it, one’s influence will not be shared with another rival power. The US cannot allow Russia’s equality within

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<sup>94</sup> Helene Cooper & Nicholas Kulish, “U.S. rejects ‘sphere of influence’ for Russia,” *New York Times*, accessed at [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/07/world/europe/07iht-07munich.20001384.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/07/world/europe/07iht-07munich.20001384.html?_r=0).

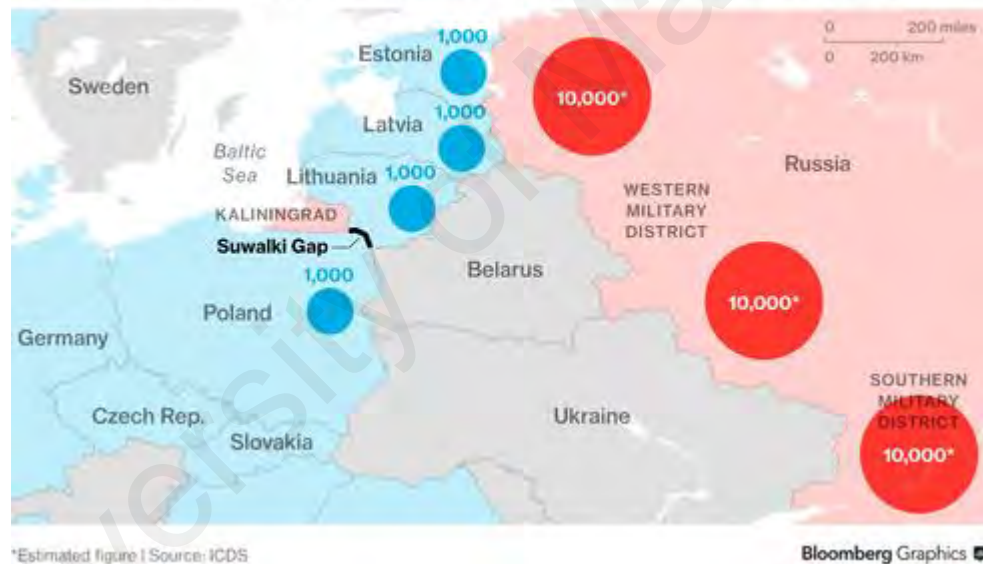
<sup>95</sup> Sergei Lavrov, “The Present and the Future of Global Politics,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, (May. 2007), available at [http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/in\\_8554](http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/in_8554).

NATO because within NATO, because the US wants an undisputable Western hemisphere leadership. On the other side, Russia does not accept to share its influence and status in CIS with US or anyone else. Any political solution needs an international guarantee and mutual recognition of each other's strategic interests and privileges.

Both Russia and NATO allies in Europe, especially countries in border with Russia- Poland, Lithuania, Estonia have decided to strengthen the number of troops, weapons as a form of defense from each other, due to the concern of another Crimean event.

### Future Forces

Russian plans for military expansion along its European frontier dwarf NATO's



Map 5.3. Russian Buildup<sup>96</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Henry Meyer, "Putin's Military Buildup in the Baltic Stokes Invasion fears," *Bloomberg*, July 7, 2016.

## Baltic Buildup

National and NATO troops in the region are significantly outnumbered by Russia's



**Table 5.1: NATO-Baltic Buildup<sup>97</sup>**

Looking through the great powers' level, both the US and Russia have set up some norms for the institutions which they lead, norms between the 'ins' and the 'outs'. This is accompanied with interference in other countries' affairs versus interference in a great power's sphere of influence. The CIS countries are independent and sovereign countries, they pursue their national interests. Sergey Markedonov explains that "CIS is a core territory of Russia's sphere of influence, and NATO's expansion into CIS is a serious concern, because firstly it is a military coalition, and secondly, Georgia and Ukraine see their NATO membership as defense from Russia."<sup>98</sup>

The CIS countries have tried to be independent as well as to find common ground with both the US and Russia. Ukraine and Georgia are the two main US allies in this region, but through energy prices and projects and through assisting the separatist movements in both these countries, Russia has managed to manoeuvre somehow these two countries' foreign policies, not completely independent from Russia's power and influence. Recently, in June 2016, there was a violent clash between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, with some casualties. Nagorno-Karabakh is an Armenian territory

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Transcript by Russia Direct with Sergey Markedonov, Associate Professor at Russian State University for the Humanities, "What are the Kremlin's 'red lines' in the post-Soviet space? August 19, 2015.

under Azerbaijan's administration. Each claimed that the provocation came from the other, and Russia interfered immediately with diplomatic channels to settle the provocation, to prevent it from spilling further, also to prevent the need for the US' or international interference to settle the situation.

This chapter found out that the CIS members have fluctuated between the Russian and US support. Although the GUUAM members intended to prioritize the relations with US over Russia, the growth of Russia's strength and assertiveness has made the GUUAM and CIS members to pursue a more balanced foreign policy orientation between the two competing centres of gravity, Russia and the US.<sup>99</sup> Being a military and an energy power, Russia is trying to demonstrate that no other power can impose its will on Russia or can curtail Russia's geopolitical interests and influence. And to US, a partnership with Russia is crucial because of Russia's presence in Central Asia, bordering Iran, having close relationship Iran, North Korea, and Syria.

Jim Nichol describes the US-Russian bilateral relationship as 'one of the 21<sup>st</sup> century centres of influence in the world.'<sup>100</sup> But NATO's expansion towards CIS and the Ukrainian revolution have shaken the ground of a mutually assured security between these two countries. It has been called a 'new cold war,' or probably the coming of a new war in Europe. This study argues that in essence, the set of policies, principles, deterrence, propaganda etc, all these have been the great powers' mechanisms to serve or to prevent a curtailment of their spheres of influence.

However, while Russia has demonstrated in its reactions and responses that the colour revolutions, NATO and EU expansions into the CIS are 'red lines' or non-negotiable concessions for Russia, US also on the other side has been equally interested on a Euro-Atlantic membership package for Ukraine and all the CIS countries.

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<sup>99</sup> Kornely K. Kakachia, Will GUUAM and EEC bury the CIS? PERSPECTIVE, 11:2, (November-December 2000).

<sup>100</sup> Jim Nichol, "Russian Political, Economic, and Security Issues and U.S. Interests," Congressional Research Paper, Washington D.C., (October, 2008), 31.

As a consequence, it is not possible to gain more than a limited cooperation between the US and Russia regarding interference into the political leadership of a sphere of influence. Both Russia and the US have observed with great interests the political movements in Europe, CIS and Middle East. The pursuit for absolute security has been translated into offensive-defensive measures by both sides, making the establishment of mutually assured security impossible. As a consequence, the US' pursuit of unchallenged hegemony might lead to a Russia with CIS and east Ukraine, and a Russia with China and BRICS. Also recently, Turkey seems to be interested in a closer relationship with Russia after the coup it went through in July 15, 2016. This coup has caused different nuance of caution and distrust between Turkey and West, leading it to look for closer bilateral level with Russia. This elaboration was needed because it is closely linked with the Ukrainian revolution and the tense atmosphere it has created between the US and Russia. It has become a borderline of containment, deterrence and influence projection between the US and Russia, whose continuation remains to be seen.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

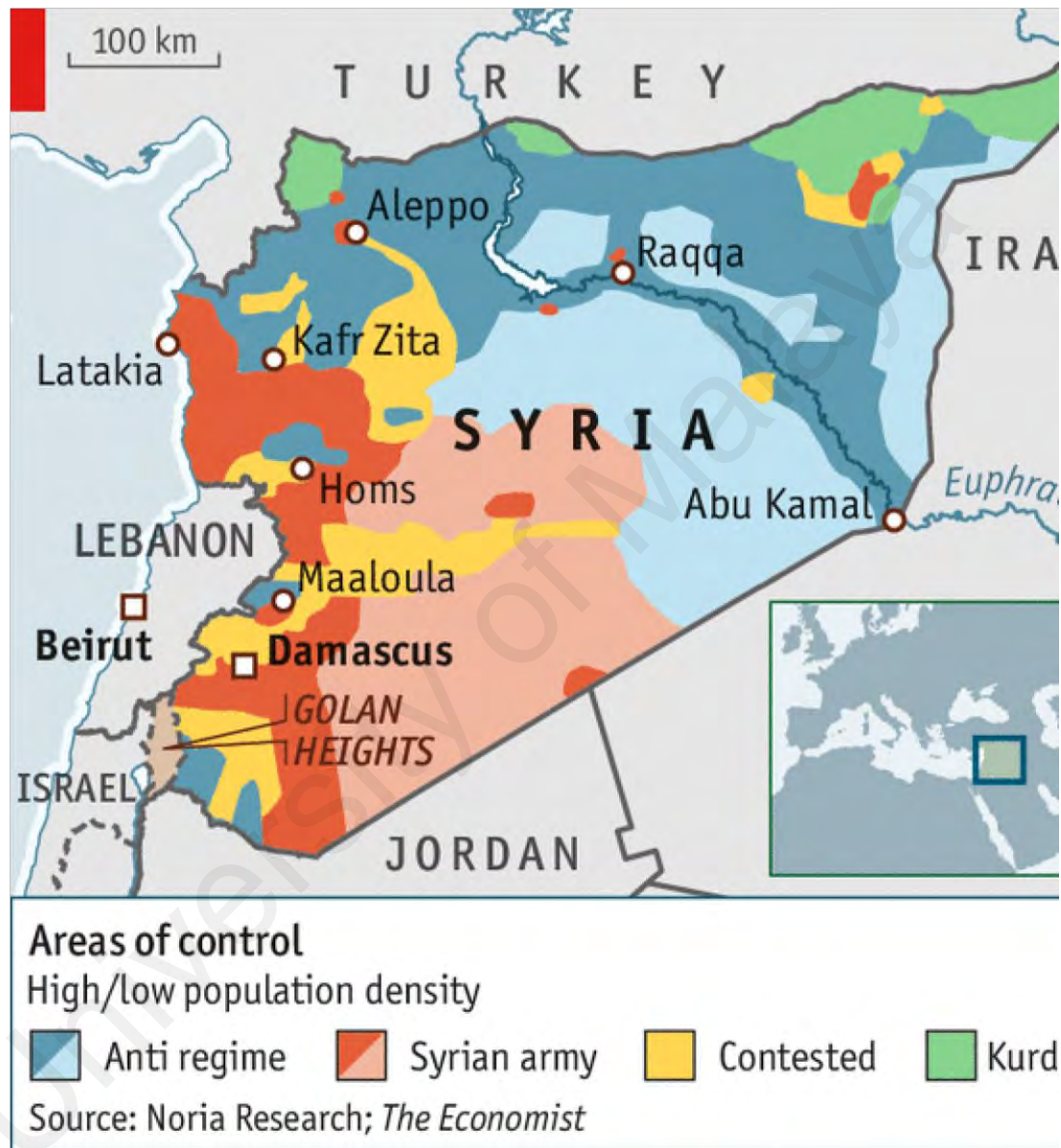
Prior to the Ukrainian revolution the sphere of influence was combined with the mutually assured stability, but the Ukrainian revolution in November, 2013 brought a new era of the US-Russian sphere of influence because it strengthened the need to make clear the line of the US' dominance and the line of Russian dominance. This study agrees with the opinion expressed from Andrei Tsygankov who states that Russia has developed its strategic visions, its conception of threats, foreign policy objectives and means to achieve them, in the context of its relationship with the West.<sup>101</sup> To Russia, a US interference in Russia's sphere of influence is unacceptable. To US it is considered as Russia's interference into the CIS internal affairs. An observation of this study is that the US

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<sup>101</sup> Andrei Tsygankov, (2005) "Vladimir Putin's Vision of Russia as a Normal Great Power," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 21: 2, (2005), 135.

institutional influence has been more successful and more credible than Russia's geographic influence, and Russia is trying to balance the lack of institutional influence through the Custom Union, Eurasian Economic Union, and CSTO in CIS, and non-Western institutions like BRICS and SCO. US is the leader of the institutions that have outlined the international rules and laws, the general framework of the world politics. Feeling provoked at its sphere of influence, Russia's recent assertiveness has tried to answer with tougher response by establishing alignments with China and other tactical manoeuvres in international politics to prove that it is a member of the great powers' group. The Ukrainian Revolution revived Russia's assertiveness to become an independent pole of power in the international system rather than to be integrated with the Western front. And the US is equally determined to continue its democracy expansion policy through NATO and EU. The event still goes on.

## CHAPTER 6: THE US-RUSSIAN CONTEST FOR INFLUENCE IN THE SYRIAN CRISIS



**Map 6.1: Syria<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> “Syria’s civil war: The ebb and flow of the horror”, *The Economist*, April 19th, 2014, available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21601001-while-each-side-makes-minor-gains-and-losses-overall-bloodystalemate>.

## **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter conceptualizes and assesses the US-Russian divergent approaches in the case of the Syrian crisis, including the different layers of this crisis. Specifically the time frame of this case study refers to March 2011-July 2016, the current time of this writing. Just like the Ukrainian and NATO case study this is also a contemporary event, but used as another evidence that highlights the continuity of a historical concept, the US-Russian spheres of influence. Because the US and Russia stand on the two opposing sides of this crisis, the prospects for the desired mutually assured security or strategic partnership are limited and almost impossible. This chapter consists of four main parts: a brief conceptual framework of this chapter; a detailed account of the Syrian crisis: the domestic, regional, and international dimensions of this civil war; the US and Russian clash of interests in this crisis, their interventions and disagreements.

An internal Syrian matter turned into a different geopolitical consideration for all the players involved and Syria turned into a key piece in the Middle East where the interests of these two major players can be either strengthened or erased. But this study argues that the only players that can change the shape of the outcome in the current scenario are either at the domestic level through an agreement between the regime and the opposition, or at the international layer of this case, an agreement between the US and Russia. Iran may want to protect its ally and Gulf-Turkey may want to protect the opposition, but they cannot pull off such critical tasks without the support of the great patrons, the US and Russia. Russia stands by its allies, the Syrian regime and Iran, which is defined by the West as the Axis of Resistance. And the US supports the opposition-Gulf-Turkey alignment. This study argues that each of these two alignments, without being backed up by a great power, none would be able to open such battlefield and prolong it. None of these domestic and regional players is capable of driving the course of its implications without the support of US or Russia. Involvement of the regional players expanded the



perimeters of the internal Syrian regime-Opposition conflict, but what sustains it until now is the involvement of these two countries on the two opposing sides of the story.

The Syrian crisis itself started as an uprising of the masses in March 2011. The government's use of force to suppress demonstrators in Daraa created an opposition and its armed reaction. From demands for better economy and reforms, the opposition's movement turned into an insurgency aiming to overthrow the government by force. By 2012, the insurgency was followed by a counterinsurgency, a government's military campaign to defeat the insurgents who aimed to topple it by force.<sup>2</sup> For almost five years the country has plunged into a civil war, with no breakthrough neither in the diplomatic area nor on the battlefield. Neither victory, not defeat, nor cease-fire has been possible yet, putting at risk even Syria's survival as a sovereign state.<sup>3</sup> Except for the clashes between the regime and the opposition, it turned into a Sunni-Shia conflict, with many terrorist and violent conflicts in the name of Sunni or Shia inclination. The Islamic State also has turned into one of the most violent terrorist groups in Syria, Iraq, Middle East, and violent acts across the world. Many countries in Middle East went through uprisings, overthrown regimes and terrorist activities, but Syria is the country in which Russia decided to interfere, to prevent losing its significance in the Middle East.

There are many players involved in this crisis, offering their support to the warring parties and each declares that Syria's future must be decided by the Syrians, yet every one interferes into it according to the sectarian and political leaning that serves its interests. The Sunni opposition is supported by the US, Europe, Turkey and Gulf, and the regime is supported by Iran and Russia, including China. This study argues that due to the Russian interference and its support for the regime, the Syrian regime has not fallen like the other regimes in Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. To Russia it means

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<sup>2</sup> See "Syria's Mutating Conflict," *International Crisis Group*, Middle East Report 128, Brussels/Damascus (August 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Translated from Arabic by Carla Miza, "Syria's civil war will soon dissolve the country's sovereign borders," Opinion, *The National*, June 29, 2015; Columb Strack, "Syrian government no longer controls 83% of the country," Country Risk, *IHS Jane's* 360, 23 August 2015, online at [www.janes.com/article/53771/syrian-government-no-longer-controls-83-of-the-country](http://www.janes.com/article/53771/syrian-government-no-longer-controls-83-of-the-country).

maintaining the only client state in Middle East and the Mediterranean Fleet in the naval port of Tartus as the only post-Soviet geopolitical asset in the Middle East. Furthermore, after the Ukrainian revolution, Russia is determined to maintain the post-Soviet geopolitical assets and client states.

The central theme of this chapter is the impact of the Syrian crisis upon the US-Russian relations and the impact of US and Russian roles in the Syrian crisis, because it is another case study that manifests mutual US-Russian assertiveness for maintaining and building their influence as the major powers of the international system. Russia's assertiveness to demonstrate it is a significant great power in the international power structure clashes with the US' foreign policy for global hegemony. Currently, both the Syrian crisis and the US-Russian disagreements remain irreconcilable differences that are still ongoing confrontations, with no political solution in sight, neither between the regime and the opposition in Syria, nor between the two main powers involved in this conflict, US and Russia. This study suggests, that Syria must come out as an independent state, whatever the regime, not a divided one.

## **6.2 The Struggle for Influence Projection through the Syrian Crisis**

Before any further elaboration, the conceptual framework of this study revolves around the great powers' proxies and interventions, because except for the institutions and integrations, proxies and interventions are also other mechanisms through which the great powers can translate their power into influence. The contemporary US-Russian disagreements come from disagreed level of domination and influence over the outcome of the Syrian crisis. Stephen van Evera argues that clash erupts when the great powers force each other to accept own definition of what is right.<sup>4</sup> For this reason it has been impossible to reverse Russia's assertiveness in the case of Syria, (and Ukraine too) despite

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<sup>4</sup> See Stephen van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, 15:3, (Winter, 1990-1991), 7-57.

the US attempts to convince Russia that a political transition of Syria serves both Russian and Syrian interests. In the current deterrence by denial posture, one's friendly regimes are unfriendly for the other. Regarding the conceptualization of the Syrian crisis in relation to the roles of US and Russia, Patrick M. Reagan associates six arguments with the interventions in the civil wars:

“first, that interventions are not effective in decreasing the duration of a civil war; second, that interventions are associated with increased violence between the warring parties; third, that it is unclear as to whether supporting rebel factions increases or decreases their likelihood of their victory prior to the start of negotiations with the regime forces; fourth, that partitioning may or may not be efficient in shortening civil wars and preventing violence; fifth, that interventions may or may not promote democratic transition; and sixth, that distanced negotiation is sometimes, but not always, preferable to military intervention.”<sup>5</sup>

This study agrees with Reagan's observations in the context of the Syrian crisis, but when it is added to it the impact of the US-Russian involvement and their disagreements, it becomes another factor for the prolonged crisis. It is true that intervention has not decreased or resolved the civil war, because in this case US and Russia are competing for maintaining an ally and Syria as part of their respective orbit of influence, whether Russia through Assad's regime or US through a new post-Assad regime. Regarding the angles how to look at the Syrian crisis, this study agrees with Moffitt's opinion who states that the Syrian conflict falls within five distinct spheres:

“first, a domestic Syrian sectarian battle between the broader Sunni population and the Alawite minority population with longstanding political power; second, a popular uprising against an authoritarian regime fuelled by the Arab Spring; third, a regional power struggle between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims; fourth, a decades-old conflict over regional influence between allies of the United States and allies of Iran; and fifth, a reignited debate, reminiscent of the Cold War, between the United States and United Nations Security Council nations over the boundaries of international participation and intervention within domestic conflicts.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Patrick M. Reagan, “Interventions into Civil Wars: A Retrospective Survey with Prospective Ideas,” *Civil Wars*, 12:4, (2010), 456-476.

<sup>6</sup> Sean Moffitt, “United States' Military Interventions into Civil Wars,” Research Paper 190, (2013), 8. online at: [http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/summer\\_research/190](http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/summer_research/190)

Nevertheless this study adds that the Syrian crisis started not as a sectarian or Sunni-Shia power struggle, it started as mass protests demanding for better life, and domestic political-economic reforms, gradually it expanded into the other dimensions observed by Moffitt. Basically this case study falls within the category of great power-proxy relations. The US wants the departure of Assad's regime and power for the brutal crackdown it has exercised on the opposition,<sup>7</sup> and Russia is interested in the survival of the regime because whatever leader may replace Assad, it will not be to Russia as supportive as the current leader, but also because the opposition has not been less violent than the regime.<sup>8</sup> Therefore between Russia and the Syrian regime it is a matter of mutual convenience. Moreover Syria has been a loyal ally to Russia since the Cold War era.

Russia's attempts to establish strategic alignments to demonstrate that it is a pole in the international affairs has meant alignments with countries defined by the US and EU as rogue regimes. Russia's stance as a steadfast ally to the Syrian regime and its alignments with the other rogue regimes has characterized it as an anti-US foreign policy, yet on the other side it has served Russia's credibility with the other political alignments. Western doors seem close for Russia due to its independent political stance in the Ukrainian and Syrian crises, but the non-Western institutional and bilateral options have been offered to Russia for cooperation with it. One of Russia's objectives of its international engagement activities has been to substitute the lack of credible institutional influence with strategic geographic influence, and to prove through tactical commitments that for any conflict in the world Russia matters. Recently Russia seems to have established good bilateral relations with important countries like India, Turkey, Iran and China, partnerships that can balance Russia's Western isolation and deterrence.

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<sup>7</sup>Paul Salem, "End Game Against ISIS Will Require Departure of Assad," 10/08/2014, *The WorldPost*, online at [www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-salem/remove-sisi-remove-assad\\_b\\_5953540.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-salem/remove-sisi-remove-assad_b_5953540.html); Paul R. Pillar, "Why Syria's Assad Must Not Go- Yet," February 5, 2015, *Consortiumnews*, online at <https://consortiumnews.com/2015/02/05/why-syrias-assad-must-not-go-yet/>.

<sup>8</sup>Jonathan Marcus, "Russia sets its sights on Middle East," 21 April, 2015, *BBC News*, online at [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32383365](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32383365); Peter Eltsov, "Why Putin supports Assad," April 4, 2013, *Fikra Forum*, online at [fikraforum.org/?p=3189#.VIPXsHYrLIU](http://fikraforum.org/?p=3189#.VIPXsHYrLIU).

In the Syrian crisis, Russia accepts the legitimacy of the Syrian regime rule based on the belief that despite how imperfect the government in any country, the change must come from within, expressed in national reforms and elections, and not imposed by force from internal and external actors. Meanwhile the US has offered legitimacy and recognition to the opposition. Whereas in the case of Ukraine, Russia on the contrary to the US, reluctantly recognized the new government, but it also recognizes the right to self-determination and self-defense of the pro-Russian rebels. When the Syrian uprising started in 2011, when it was not yet at critical level, the Russian foreign minister claimed that the situation in Syria “did not present a threat to international peace and security but considerable consequences for Middle East region could result from an interference in the Syrian internal affairs.”<sup>9</sup> Roy Allison states that “Russia is reluctant to break with a long-term political base in Middle East maintained through ties with Assad’s security elite.”<sup>10</sup> And Aleksei Malashenko describes the relationship between Syria and Russia as “the last remnant of Soviet politics in the region.”<sup>11</sup> Russia also wants to avoid in Syria a scenario same as in Libya. Viewed from influence point of view, an overthrow of Assad would jeopardize Russia’s arms trade, loss of a long-standing ally, and its hold on Tartus naval port which hosts the Russian Mediterranean Naval Fleet. The coming in power of the opposition largely supported by Sunni, Gulf and West would mean loss of these assets for Russia.

This study argues that the scope of every great power’s interference in its proxies is about sphere-of-influence. Interference on one side relates to the intentions and objectives of the great powers. On the other side, it relates to the status quo of the domestic situation in a certain crisis. The Syrian crisis’ domestic status quo required and invited the regional players and the great powers’ interference, who tried to shape the capabilities and

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<sup>9</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Bloomberg Full Transcript of Sergey Lavrov Interview, June 1, 2011, available at: [archive.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/BB345B48652D15E7C325782C002F506C](http://archive.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/BB345B48652D15E7C325782C002F506C).

<sup>10</sup> Allison Roy, “Russia and Syria: explaining alignment with a regime in crisis,” *International Affairs*, 89: 4, (2013), 803.

<sup>11</sup> Tom Balforth, “In Syria, Russia Seeks To Preserve Middle East Foothold,” 22.03.2012, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty* (RFE/RL), online at [www.rferl.org/content/in\\_syria\\_russia\\_seeks\\_to\\_preserve\\_middle\\_east\\_foothold/24523022.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/in_syria_russia_seeks_to_preserve_middle_east_foothold/24523022.html).

intentions of the local conflicting sides according to their interests towards the Syrian and Middle Eastern situation. In the struggle of who will emerge as the dominant player at the domestic, regional and international level, the political settlement depends only on the US-Russian agreement. Even though the domestic players are supposed to be the main players in the ground, none of the warring sides can prolong its military, logistics, weapons and strategies in the battleground without the support of its relevant supporting great patron. The regime, the opposition, the Kurds, even ISIS and al-Nusra fronts, each needs the source where the support is coming from, none of these groups can stand on its own.

### **6.3 The Syrian Crisis, March 2011-August 2016**

This section provides a description and analysis of the civil war in Syria. The time frame chosen is March 2011 to the current time of this writing, 2016. Bashar al-Assad continues to be the Syrian president for another third term, though his ruling has become very fragile and weaker due to the attacks from different opposition groups and the IS. The territory under the regime control has shrunk gradually, and it is mainly concentrated in the coastal area. The shape of the conflict also keeps changing between the Kurdish, IS', rebels' and regime's areas from one battle to another. Different interpretations have emerged about this situation. Kenneth Pollack defines the Syrian conflict as "an inter-communal civil war, a struggle for power among a variety of different groups."<sup>12</sup>

Prior to the uprising, Syria was a well-established secular multi-ethnic country, with a population of twenty seven million people, led by al-Assad family since 1970. Hafez al-Assad seized power from a coup within the Baath party in Syria from 1970s until 2000s,

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<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Pollack, "Breaking the Stalemate The Military Dynamics of the Syrian Civil War and Options for Limited U.S. Interventions", *Middle East Memo*, 30, Brookings: Saban Center, (August 2013), 1.

when it was proceeded by his son, Bashar al-Assad.<sup>13</sup> The ruling elite belongs to the Alawite group.<sup>14</sup> In 2011, different waves of protests swept across many Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen. These protests started as the peoples' demands for better economic standards and domestic democratic reforms. Gradually these demonstrations were perceived as threats for the traditional establishments in Iran and Gulf countries.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, what started as demonstrations against the regimes' policies turned into movements to overthrow those regimes.<sup>16</sup> In Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, the former regimes were violently substituted by new governments and new leaders, and were replaced with new forms of violence, chaos, divisions and terrorism.<sup>17</sup> Each country went through a bloody civil war with a huge number of casualties, depopulation of many areas inside these countries, increased number of refugees, changes in constitution and efforts to make the countries fit the transformation process.<sup>18</sup>

In this new emerging Middle Eastern scenario, Russia aims strategic presence and commitment in every new geopolitical interaction that takes place, and the US aims pre-eminence in the security of every region. According to Aleksandr Kononov, president of the Moscow-based Institute of Strategic Studies, Russia will not remain indifferent to how the new Middle East emerges.<sup>19</sup> The Syrian crisis continued as a spill-over effect of the other uprisings, the difference is that unlike the other uprisings, the Syrian regime and its leader have not fallen yet. This situation has created a confusing situation over Middle

<sup>13</sup> Ben Atherton, "Timeline: Syria and the Assads," 9 March 2012, *ABC News*, online at [www.abc.net.au/news/2012-03-09/syria-and-the-assads-timeline/3876706](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-03-09/syria-and-the-assads-timeline/3876706);

<sup>14</sup> Alawite group is a Muslim group, a Shia offspring. Since the Ottoman empire time Alawites were treated as second class citizens, forced to live in communities separated from the Sunni population. Their social standing improved when Hafez al-Assad came in power in 1970s and it comprises of only 12% of the Syrian population, settled along the coastal area of Syria.

<sup>15</sup> Abdulkhaleq Abdullah, "Repercussions of the Arab Spring on GCC States," Research Paper, Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, May, 2012. Doha, Qatar.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Veeramalla Anjaiah, "Three years on: IS it an Arab Spring or Islamist Fall?, Opinion, *The Jakarta Post*, December 2013; James Phillips, "The Arab Spring descends into Islamist Winter: Implications for U.S. Policy," Washington D.C.: Heritage Foundation, December 20, 2012, online at [www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/12/the-arab-spring-descends-into-islamist-winter-implications-for-us-policy?mobile](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/12/the-arab-spring-descends-into-islamist-winter-implications-for-us-policy?mobile).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Tom Balmforth, "In Syria, Russia Seeks to Preserve Middle East Foothold," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, March 22, 2012, available at: [www.rferl.org/content/in\\_syria\\_russia\\_seeks\\_to\\_preserve\\_middle\\_east\\_foothold/24523022.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/in_syria_russia_seeks_to_preserve_middle_east_foothold/24523022.html).

East and a new confrontational aspect for the US-Russian and Gulf-Iran relations. This study holds the opinion that the Syrian regime has not fallen yet due to Russia's interference. Certainly the weak and divided opposition has played a role in this outcome too, but Syria is the only uprising in which Russia decided to interfere. Also unlike the other countries involved in uprisings, Syria had a large arsenal of chemical and biological weapons until 2013, and it hosts the Russian Mediterranean Fleet in Tartus. Moreover, the post-Ukrainian Revolution has contributed to a significant Russian assertiveness and determination, not only to prevent another loss of its remaining geopolitical assets but even to expand them. The Russian decision makers claim that Russia does not stand pro-Assad's regime but it stands against the policy of interference in other countries' affairs, and it should be up to the Syrian people to voice their support for the regime through elections.<sup>20</sup>

To the US' view, the current Syrian regime must depart because it has conducted immense casualties and destruction in the country. The fighting between the regime and the opposition has become more violent and determined to overthrow the other due to the fact that each feels backed up by a great power's support. Throughout the five years of the crisis the opposition continues to insist on the departure of president Assad and his team from the Syrian politics as the main non-negotiable condition to end their fight, while the president Assad has refused to step down. William Engdahl describes the Syrian crisis as a geopolitical chess game into which the sovereignty of Syria as an undivided independent nation is at stake.<sup>21</sup> While Sean Moffitt argues that civil wars have multiple centres of authority and this has relevance with the current Syrian situation.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> "Russia vows to block Western intervention in Syria," 1/18/2012, USA Today News, online at [usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2012-01-18/Russia-syria-intervention/52645122/1](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2012-01-18/Russia-syria-intervention/52645122/1); Fyodor Lukyanov, "Russia Will Not Change its Position on Syria," *The Middle East Pulse*, December 17, 2012, online at [www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/russia-goals-syria.html#](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/russia-goals-syria.html#).

<sup>21</sup> F. William Engdahl, "Putin's Geopolitical Chess Game with Washington in Syria and Eurasia," July, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Sean Moffitt, 2013.



Before assessing the US-Russian contest for influence in Syria, it is necessary to understand the escalation of this crisis. The Syrian crisis per se has expanded the dimensions at three levels: domestic level between the regime and the opposition, later the Islamic State too; the regional level between Sunni Gulf-Turkey and Shia Iran (backed by Hezbollah); and the international layer between the US and Russia. Therefore it is necessary to elaborate on each of these three layers, and to note that each player has adopted an aggressive security policy blaming the other for aggressiveness, and justifying its stance under a different principle of the international law. These principles such as, the human rights' protection, and intervention vs. the sovereignty remain ambiguous. National self-determination clashes with the international rule that states are sovereign and the integrity of each state and its borders must be respected.<sup>23</sup> Also prohibition of the use of force vs. self-defense remain contradictory international laws with no clear frame and specifics.<sup>24</sup> And this study explains that each of the players in the Syrian crisis has picked up any of these contradictory international laws to justify its actions. Somehow all countries in the world are heterogeneous, and these principles could serve to inspire the minorities in all countries to opt for the self-defense of their self-determination movement or to claim independence because they are dissatisfied with the current government's policies. Even though these principles tend to be implemented according to case specific rather than as a common recipe for all the events, still the international law does not clarify such ambiguities.

## **6.4 The Domestic Layer**

### **6.4.1 The Regime**

Prior to the uprising, there were intellectual forums calling for liberalism and democracy but the regime ignored them. The Syrian uprising started in March 2011 when

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<sup>23</sup> Dr. Jur. Eric Engle, "Humanitarian Intervention and Syria:", *Barry Law Interview*, 18:1 (Fall 2012),144.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

the regime's security forces arrested a group of youths who wrote in wall the same slogan as in Tunisia 'The people want the downfall of the regime.'<sup>25</sup> Every tentative from the masses was put down with force by the regime, which turned the uprising into a bigger, stronger, more violent and more determined movement. As the revolt of the masses grew, the leading intellectuals became the leaders of the organization speaking on behalf of the opposition.<sup>26</sup> Also the foreign fighters and organizations spoke on behalf of the opposition, whose scope was and still remains the departure of Assad era. The Syrian president refused to step down and offered concessions which in turn were refused by the uprising, meanwhile his departure from power became the main non-negotiable concession for the opposition and the main challenge for a common ground between the regime' and the opposition's negotiations.

Throughout the five years of the Syrian crisis, the scale of atrocities reached heights and no proposal coming from the UN, Russia or the US could reach a cease-fire on the ground or a breakthrough. Until at this point of time, the Syrian regime has been able to withstand the internal and external pressures because of Russia's support and Iran too. It is necessary to add a viewpoint which this study agrees with, that "the uprisings were firmly focused on domestic and national issues, to which the rival concern of Arabism and Islam was secondary. Islamist movements will need to adjust their ideological message in this direction."<sup>27</sup>

The map of the crisis has kept changing according to the areas controlled by the regime, the rebels, the IS, the Kurds, and the contested areas. In the beginning of the crisis, the Syrian army was in control of the sky and Syrian territory, and its heavy bombardment over the opposition-hold areas.<sup>28</sup> The army has been backed by Iranian and

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth O'Baggy, "The Free Syrian Army," *Middle East Security Report 9*, Institute for the Study of War, Washington D.C. (March 2013).

<sup>26</sup> "Anything But Politics: The State of Syria's Political Opposition," *Middle East Report*, 146, International Crisis Group, Washington D.C., (October 2013).

<sup>27</sup> Katerina Delacoura, "The 2011 uprisings in the Arab Middle East", *International Affairs*, 88:1, (2012), 63-79.

<sup>28</sup> "Bombardment of Syrian city continues," 15 February, 2012, *Al-Jazeera*; Rima Abushakra, "Syrian regime's Bombardment of Aleppo Kills Hundreds in a Week," December 13, 2013, *The Wall Street Journal*; *al-Araby al-Jadeed* staff, "regime bombardment kills 2,382 civilians in Syria's Idlib: Monitor," 26 August 2015; "Syria: full scale of carnage becomes apparent in wake of Azaz

Hezbollah forces, and by the Russian presence and deployments since September 2015. Therefore, the regime forces have been able to survive and to launch successful offensives and counteroffensives in Deraa, Palmyra, Homs, and Aleppo. The US on the other side has been reluctant to provide all the required military and financial support to the opposition due to the fear of the rise of extremists within the opposition, the concern of the September 2013 chemical attack in Damascus, and the concern about the safety of the chemical arsenal. The battle has escalated on both sides, but through the five years of the crisis, the Syrian regime has maintained the momentum, and it has constantly used heavy punishment for the rebels' hold areas with artillery, bombardment and government militias groups.

In 2011, the Syrian President stated "Syria is the hub now in this region. It is the fault line and if you play with the ground you will cause an earthquake....Do you want to see another Afghanistan or tens of Afghanistans? Any problem in Syria will burn the whole region. If the plan is to divide Syria that is to divide the whole region."<sup>29</sup> The official stance of the American side can be traced in the opinion of the US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman who states that "an orderly transition that removes Assad from power is in our national interests, and this is the right objective."<sup>30</sup> Delegitimization of the Syrian regime by the West and the Arab countries took place in this crisis.<sup>31</sup> The Arab League, Turkey, and the Western front offered to the opposition the place of the Syrian regime in their meetings. It has become apparent that prolonging the Syrian conflict is weakening and tearing apart all the players involved, because of the mixed signals and independent agendas. Abdulaziz O. Sager writes in his analysis paper that the Munich Security Conference considered the international community paralyzed

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bombardment," the guardian, 16 August, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Gilligan, Damascus and Ruth Sherlock, Antalya, Turkey, "Bashar al-Assad: I won't waste my time with Syrian opposition," 30 October, 2011, *The Telegraph*, online at [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/8858667/Bashar-al-Asad-I-wont-waste-mytime-with-Syrian-opposition.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/8858667/Bashar-al-Asad-I-wont-waste-mytime-with-Syrian-opposition.html).

<sup>30</sup> Project on Middle East Democracy, "Hearing on U.S. Policy towards Syria," United States Senate, Washington D.C., November 9, 2011, online at [pomed.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/POMD-Hearing-on-U.S.-PolicyTowards-Syria1.pdf](http://pomed.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/POMD-Hearing-on-U.S.-PolicyTowards-Syria1.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> "The Opposition Government and the Legal Battle over the Representation of Syria," Translated from Arabic by Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, Doha, Qatar, April 2013.

in the Syrian case. The current state of play seems to be focused on dislodging Syria slowly, since different teams within Syria are supported by different external players, gradually leading to the collapse of the regime.<sup>32</sup>

Until the Russian direct involvement in Syria, the regime weakened significantly, its army, territory losses and the world opinion was that the days of the regime were numbered. Russia's direct military interference to boost up the status of the regime turned the tide of the conflict. The violence has not ended, but the regime has progressed in many areas once held by the rebels, al-Nusra, or IS militant groups. The proposals for ceasefires and cooperation between the US and Russia and between the regime and the rebels have not succeeded because each wants to have further advances in terms of territorial gains. In February 25, 2016 there was a fragile cease-fire between the regime and the rebels, and the US-Russian agreement to attack the terrorists areas with IS and Jabhat al-Nusra. While the fighting decreased temporarily, there were still reported sporadically clashes between the regime and the rebels' side, and disagreements between US and Russia. Because to the US opinion, Russia was attacking the US-backed rebels as an excuse of fighting terrorism. Whereas to Russia's opinion, the US has not clarified who are the moderate rebel groups. As a consequence the interests continue to be incompatible, because Russia intends to keep Syria as its influence asset in Middle East and US aims a post-Assad Syria.

However the direct Russian involvement with troops, military equipment and support in Syria demonstrated that Russia decided to intervene in this crisis to defend its ally, to defend its influential role in the Middle East and to create a coalition led by Russia, but also on cooperative terms with the coalition led by the US. But as a form of interference and cooperation based on Russia's terms, defending Russia's influence projection in Syria and Middle East. This has raised concerns because both the US' and Russia's Syrian and

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<sup>32</sup> Dr. Abdulaziz O. Sager, 'Establishing a 'Military Council' in Syria,' *Gulf Research Paper*, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, February 2013.

Middle East agendas remain either ambiguous or secret and contradictory because each wants to maintain an independent engagement and dominance in the Middle Eastern affairs. Such Russian assertiveness means that when it comes to its interests, it will interfere in its own terms, through a mixture of finding common ground with the US as well as keeping its influence assets. In the case of Syrian and Ukrainian crises, on one side the conflict is denied legitimacy, on the other side it is institutionalized through the different coalitions led by US and Russia, as a form of deterring each other.

The regionalization and the internationalization of the conflict is needed by both the regime and the opposition to survive, because Syria stands at the intersection of every major strategic axis in the Arab East.<sup>33</sup> With Russia's and Iranian support, the regime is trying hard to keep under control the way the intervention keeps unfolding. The political-military weight has been on the side of the regime, the diplomatic weight has been on the side of the opposition. The regime built 40 local truces with the rebel groups in Damascus and Homs as a strategy to gain domestic and international legitimacy.<sup>34</sup> The current Syrian situation continues to be the same throughout the five years because it continues to be impossible a reconciliation of the opposing sides at the domestic and international level.

#### **6.4.2 The Syrian Opposition**

This section illustrates the opposition's role and its complexity, how it was created and sustained, a process that still is supported by the Western coalition. The purpose of this scenario has been to replace the current regime with a post-Assad regime, which means the replacement of a Russian client state with an American client state. Despite the fragmented opposition, it has been equally concerning and cautious to keep under control

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<sup>33</sup> Steven Heydemann, "Syria's Uprising: sectarianism, regionalization and state order in the Levant," FRIDE & Hivos: Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2013), 3.

<sup>34</sup> Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud & Mary Beth Dinikiti, "Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response," Report, Congressional Research Service, (September, 2014), Washington D.C. 14.

the strength of the extremist groups and to coordinate the existing command networks. The efforts and determination to bring democracy in Syria and build a democratic Syria has been replaced by chaos, anarchy and violence.

The Syrian opposition consists of different militia groups with various political and sectarian leanings,<sup>35</sup> such as the Syrian Revolutionaries Front, Harakat Hazm (Resoluteness Movement), Islamic Front, Free Syrian Army, Jabhat al-Nusra, Ahrar al-Sham, al-Qaeda affiliated militias, and recently, the Islamic State. Jabhat al-Nusra and al-Qaeda militias were designated by the US as Foreign Terrorist Organizations for being mostly dedicated to terrorist agenda.<sup>36</sup> It is necessary to emphasize that the reporting of the news and evidences has often been contradictory on the sources coming from every angle, Western, Arabs, Russians, Gulf, (Ukrainians), from the regime and the opposition's side, and so on. The refusal of Bashar al-Assad to step down fuelled a more aggressive opposition because of the different opinions in the Syrian affairs, also because the opposition had powerful external support.

However the opposition has remained weak, divided into many fractions despite receiving international support and backing, recognition and legitimacy. Jonathan Steele states that the Syrian opposition is categorized in six groups:

“1) Free Syrian Army which is internal; 2) Syrian National Council also internal; 3) Syrian Democratic Forum combined of internal and external people; 4) international opposition in key cities like Homs, Hama, Idlib called as Local Coordination Committees; 5) internal opposition in Damascus and Aleppo including the National Co-ordination Committee, Building the Syrian State, the Popular Front for Change and Liberation; and lastly, the US, West, Turkey, GCC and most members of Arab League excluding Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon.”<sup>37</sup>

The opposition's bases within and outside Syria continue to contest for finance, weapons, sponsors, and power within the Free Syrian Army. To organize these divisions,

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<sup>35</sup> See Ken Sofer, “The Structure and Organization of the Syrian Opposition,” May 14, 2013, *Center for American Progress*; “Guide to the Syrian rebels,” 13 December 2013, *BBC News*, online at [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003).

<sup>36</sup> Nada Bakos, “Terrorist group fills power vacuum among Syria rebels,” *CNN News*, January 10, 2013, online at [edition.cnn.com/2013/01/09/opinion/bakos-syria-al-qaeda/](http://edition.cnn.com/2013/01/09/opinion/bakos-syria-al-qaeda/); Michael R. Gordon and Anne Barnard, “U.S. Places Militant Syrian Rebel Group on List of Terrorist Organizations,” *The New York Times*, December 10, 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Steele, “The Syrian Crisis: victory, survival or compromise?” *NOREF Seminar Paper*, June 2013, Norwegian Peace building Resource Center.

the Supreme Military Command was created in 2012, as a framework for an institutional capacity with three main purposes: to assert a more significant authority and power; to unite all the divisions among rebel groups under the SMC command; and to distribute critical resources to the rebel-held communities.<sup>38</sup> The Joint Command and General Command were created to facilitate the SMC tasks.<sup>39</sup> Saudi Arabia and Qatar could not be united together in the Joint Command, because each had the misperception that the other aims to gain more influence.

The Five Fronts Command divided Syrian into five fronts: eastern front, western or middle front, northern, southern and Homs front, but it also improved the strategic insights and the tactical operations of the opposition battlefield.<sup>40</sup> SMC was created in Turkey in 2012, to serve as the defense ministry of the Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC) with the participation of almost 260 rebel commanders.<sup>41</sup> Both SOC and SMC were fully supported by the West, US and Gulf countries. Furthermore Saudi Arabia consolidated the fourteen Military Councils into operational headquarters, named as Chain of Command.<sup>42</sup> A strong emphasis was laid on the prevention of the extremists from gaining centres of power in Syria.<sup>43</sup> Gradually the fighting capability of the opposition improved into including the two main strategic concepts of battlefield operation, 'war for airports' and 'war for artillery and missiles.'<sup>44</sup> Moreover by 2013, the offensives of the rebels aimed to hold territory and keep Assad's military actions off balance, which means take position, withdraw, hit-and-run; shifting the lines of the battle from Daraya, Damascus to concentrate on holding the eastern districts of Damascus.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See Elizabeth O'Bagy, "The Free Syrian Army," *Middle East Security*, Report 9, (Washington D.C.: Institute for the Study of War), March 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Marwan Qabalan, "The Armed Syrian Opposition: Common Aim but No Vision," Research Paper, (Doha: Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies), August 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Weiss, "The Syrian Gulf War," 27 March, 2013, *NOW*, online at <https://now.media.me/lb/en/commentaryanalysis/the-syria-gulf-war>.

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth O'Bagy, "The Free Syrian Army," 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Rania Abouzeid, "Who Will Control The Syrian Rebels' Guns?" *The New Yorker*, June 14, 2013.

<sup>44</sup> "Central operations room directs every battle inside", *Oka2 News*, January 7, 2013, translated from Arabic.

<sup>45</sup> O'Bagy, p. 24.

A post Assad era has been the purpose of the US, EU and Gulf's support for the opposition from the beginning of the Syrian uprising. The opposition has not been able to harmonize its battles and it has not been successful to seize the strategic parts of Syria, such as airports, or any of the critical cities like Aleppo, Damascus and Homs, because it could not coordinate tactically the hierarchy of the leaders of different factions within FSA. FSA has been 'a fractious array of rebel groups' classified in local battalions and 'franchise brigades'<sup>46</sup>.

According to different sources, there are secret bases of the opposition based in Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.<sup>47</sup> Joseph Holliday states that "in a comparison of the Syrian and the Libyan armed resistance, the Libyan opposition was able to secure an area from which to organize and operate, Benghazi, but the Syrian armed resistance was not able to secure a terrain for such a purpose."<sup>48</sup>

The opinion that the opposition's actions have not been well-coordinated and this has been the major reason of its failures until now is widely accepted. But according to Kenneth Pollack, "the opposition's foreign backers have insisted that the weapons and other resources they provide to be used in specific locations or to attack designated areas- and they withheld their support when the opposition tried to use its resources to fight in other regions."<sup>49</sup> Therefore Pollack adds that, and this study agrees with, the operations that the foreign powers have demanded and supported have less to do with victory or defeat of one or the other, but with protecting their own specific interests. The Syrian opposition was assisted by the US, Europe and Gulf Cooperation Council from the start, with support, recognition and weapons as mechanisms to become an organized armed opposition, but every militia group carried within an internal split according to

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<sup>46</sup>Rania Abouzeid, "The Jihad Next Door," June 23, 2014, *Politico Magazine*, online at: [www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/al-qaeda-iraq-syria-108214\\_full.html#.VIQYp3YrLIU](http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/al-qaeda-iraq-syria-108214_full.html#.VIQYp3YrLIU).

<sup>47</sup> "Turkey sets up secret anti-Assad rebel base with Saudi Arabia and Qatar-reports," 28 July, 2012, *Russia Today* (RT); Regan Doherty and Amena Bakr, "Exclusive: Secret Turkish nerve center leads aid to Syria rebels," *Reuters*, July 27, 2012; "Turkey, Gulf states establish secret Syria base," July 27, 2012, *Al-Akhbar* Management, online at [English/al-akhbar.com/node/10363](http://English/al-akhbar.com/node/10363).

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Holliday, "The Struggle for Syria In 2011, An Operational And Regional Analysis," *Middle East Security Report 2*, Institute For The Study of War, Washington D.C., (December, 2011), 17.

<sup>49</sup> Kenneth Pollack, .5



membership, sectarianism, country and political leaning. This has become controversial issue, the difference between the opposition's violence and fight to bring down Bashar al-Assad and to build a democratic Syria, or the intention to let the Syrian situation wide-opened with a spill-over effect in the other weak or war-torn Middle East countries. The chaos caused from the toppling by force of Ghadaffi in Libya and its aftermath probably contributed to a more cautious approach in the Syrian case. The Syrian situation has been either an intentional or unintentional consequence. However as the whole Middle East seems involved in chaos, it has opened the way for pro-Russia and pro-US surviving regimes and the new emerging ones.

In the United Nations Security Council, Russia and China vetoed three times the US' resolutions for military strike in Syria and even the US' draft for humanitarian aid to the Syrian crisis.<sup>50</sup> The resolution that would create the ground for military presence and military strike on the Syrian regime when the chemical attack in Damascus took place was vetoed by Russia who succeeded to negotiate an exchange of the issue for dismantling and sending the chemical arsenal outside Syria with a non-US military campaign. Also the Syrian government agreed to oblige to such agreement as condition to prevent a military strike on its soil.

The questions of how to intervene and to what extent have not found implementation on the ground yet. It has been impossible to unite the fighting front of the opposition because every brigade of jihadists has followed whoever is financing it, thus the chaos is grappling in Syria at the expense of the Syrian people. Individual donors from Gulf have encouraged the funding of the Syrian rebel groups and their ideological and extremist agendas which has fracturing further the opposition and adding into the picture another violent team with political goal, the ISIS.<sup>51</sup> In addition to the violence between the regime

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<sup>50</sup> David Lev, "U.S. 'Disgusted' With China, Russia Veto on Syria Resolution," *Arutz Sheva Israel News*, 2/4/2012, online at [www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/152413#.VIQbinYrLiu](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/152413#.VIQbinYrLiu).

<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Dickinson, "Playing with Fire: Why Private Gulf Financing for Syria's Extremists Rebels Risks Igniting Sectarian Conflict at Home", *Analysis Paper*, 16, (Washington D.C: Saban Centre at Brookings), December 2013.

and the opposition, another ruthless team joined the crisis in Syria, the Islamic State, whose political vision has been different from the Syrian regime and the Opposition.

#### **6.4.3 The Islamic State (IS)**

This section elaborates on the role of the Islamic State in relation to the prolonged violence and crisis in Syria, in order to connect it further with the regional layer, then with the international dimension of this crisis. The literature about the recent Syrian crisis claims that the jihadists have been growing stronger in Iraq and Syria, and ISIS is an example that must not be ignored. Recently, due to the Russian interference in the Syrian crisis, the ISIS has become weaker, it has been defeated in Palmyra, Raqqah, Homs, Aleppo is on the way to be freed from the ISIS foothold, but it is a contested area with rebels fighting against the government, ISIS and al-Nusra. For this reason Aleppo city has recently become the reason that the US and Russia called for negotiations and ceasefire. In political terms it meant the rebels and the US want to hold the status quo. Yet the military campaigns of the regime supported by the Russian force has been accompanied by the Syrian regime claims to liberate all of Syria from the terrorists and from the rebels. Therefore, the negotiations between the US and Russia to coordinate their military actions against ISIS and al-Nusra, and to establish a joint military headquarters command centre in Amman, Jordan, have been a welcomed dialogue but difficult to be implemented because the interests remain incompatible.

Basically the American and Russian military campaigns have aimed advances in the territorial hold, because the numerous arguments associated with the interference in the Syrian situation, the party that gains the territory is the winning party.(The same point stands on the Ukrainian crisis, the territory between the Ukrainian government and the pro-Russian rebels) The rebels supported by the Kurdish group, US and Sunni countries have also conducted military campaign against ISIS and have often cooperated with the

regime forces against the ISIS. By itself, ISIS grew out of al-Qaeda in Iraq with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi claiming to be the leader of ISIS.<sup>52</sup> ISIS considers itself as a state of Islamic Caliphate, not as insurgents.<sup>53</sup>

This study argues that the Syrian crisis until now has resulted in such a chaos, that it seems to represent an opportunity for each player to establish its political-military presence in Syria, either at domestic, regional or international level. The Islamic State was collecting its forces months prior to the elections in Syria for joint political-military operations to establish a 'caliphate', firstly through gaining territory by force, then establishing governance within that territory.<sup>54</sup> To achieve this purpose, the IS has eliminated with violence every resistance. It grabbed by violence and force Mosul in Iraq, and Raqqa in Syria. Through these two cities in Iraq and Syria, IS attempted to establish a holistic system of governance with religion, education, and infrastructure projects.<sup>55</sup> And in June 2014, the same month when Bashar al-Assad won a third term, the Islamic State claimed its goal of establishing an Islamic caliphate across the Sykes-Picot border agreement between Iraq and Syria.<sup>56</sup>

This study also argues that, Iraq and Syria have been long-established states and neither ISIS nor other extremist teams should be supported or allowed to eradicate the borders of the states, in Middle East or elsewhere. IS even established an English language publication magazine called *Dabiq* as attempts to legitimate its governance and its vision as a caliphate. The publications of this magazine started in May 2014, to legitimate its violence, the territory it seizes and the political control in Syria and Iraq.<sup>57</sup> It has also focused on recruiting citizens and troops from different countries in the world,

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<sup>52</sup> "Syria Iraq: The Islamic State militant group," 2 August, 2014, BBC News; Sean Nevins, "Interview: Who Is ISIS Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi?", online at [www.mintpressnews.com/interview-who-is-isisleader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-ali-hashem-knows/203265](http://www.mintpressnews.com/interview-who-is-isisleader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-ali-hashem-knows/203265).

<sup>53</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, "ISIS is Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won't Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015.

<sup>54</sup> See Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud, Mary Beth D. Nikitin, "Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response," Report, (Washington D.C: Congressional Research Service), September 2014.

<sup>55</sup> Rani Greha, "Invasion of Mosul may backfire on ISIS in Syria," June 13, 2014, *The Middle East Pulse*; Jessica Lewis McFate, "Here's all of the area that ISIS control," *Business Insider*, March 5, 2015.

<sup>56</sup> Meghan Tinsley, "ISIS's Aversion to Sykes-Picot Tells Us Much About the Group's Future Plans," April 23, 2015, Muftah, online at [muftah.org/the-sykes-picot-agreement-isis/#.VIQni3YrLIV](http://muftah.org/the-sykes-picot-agreement-isis/#.VIQni3YrLIV).

<sup>57</sup> Erminia Voccia, "The Great Battle of Dabiq": Behind The Power of ISIS Propaganda, *Mediterranean Affairs*, 6 March, 2015.

and it bulldozed a part of the modern border (part of Sykes-Picot agreement) between Iraq and Syria. To win the contest with the other militant groups in Syria, ISIS executed the political activists and citizens who opposed ISIS' activities and vision. A pro-Opposition group Syria Untold demonstrated against ISIS' activities and vision. A pro-Opposition group Syria Untold demonstrated against ISIS in Raqqa city (the centre of ISIS in Syria just like Mosul in Iraq) with the slogan "Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently."<sup>58</sup>

The US' coalition tried to deal with the ISIS' violence and to bring Russia into this frame. Although Russia shares same assessment about the ISIS' violence and its regional-global implications, it has refused to be united with the US in its campaign against ISIS. This study maintains that the campaign against terrorism has been used as a tool for further territorial gains in Syria, either by the regime supported by Russia or by the opposition supported by the US-Gulf coalition. The victory and the outcome of the crisis in Syria, (even in Ukraine) depends on the territorial gains by the domestic warring parties, supported by the external incompatible agenda between the US and Russia- which is Syria and Ukraine, as assets of influence projection in CIS and Middle East. Also, until the current time of this writing, both President Putin and the Russian administration have confirmed their support for the Syrian regime.

Until September 2015, the Syrian regime weakened significantly in terms of territorial losses, casualties, and army defectors. Russia's decision to intervene in Syria with troops and support to boost up the Syrian regime position is based on the belief that the Syrian regime is the legitimate actor in the Syrian crisis. It was an intervention with the request from the Syrian regime, required to defeat ISIS.<sup>59</sup> The Iranian support on the ground was no longer sufficient to deter the constant attacks from ISIS, al-Nusra, and the different

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<sup>58</sup> Charles C. Caris and Samuel Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria", *Middle East Security Report* 22, Institute for the Study of War, July 2014, (Washington D.C): 179. Also "Raqqa Is being Slaughtered Silently...For How Long? Statement by the Raqqa Media Office.

<sup>59</sup> Bill Chappell, "Russia Begins Airstrikes in Syria After Assad's Request," September 30, 2015, *NPR News*, [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org); Guy Taylor, "Russia emerges as key player in new round of Syria diplomacy," *The Washington Times*, August 18, 2015.

rebels' factions. This study maintains that the Russian behaviour is characterized by a politically independent-minded, cooperative, yet independent when it comes to Russia's position in world affairs. It created its own coalition to defeat IS (with Iran) and it has also offered negotiations to establish a common assessment with the US-led coalition against IS, but Russia is doing this in its own terms, according to what suits Russia's interests in the Middle East region. It is trying to find common ground with the US, both want to settle the threat that IS has exposed for their interests in Syria, and the regional-international dimension of the terrorist activities and recruitments. Nevertheless, each is doing this while preserving its own interests in the Syrian situation, which is about influence projection in Middle East. As the dynamics of the Syrian crisis keep changing, the intense fightings and explosions between the Syrian regime, opposition and ISIS continue, along with the regional players' willingness to continue investing in the conflict. The current outcome has become a vicious cycle with anger, mood swings and short-term successes militarily or politically.

## **6.5 The Regional Dimension**

As the Syrian crisis intensified, it produced a regional sectarian power struggle and diverged away from the other Arab uprisings, although it did not start as a sectarian crisis, but from the grievances of a social class who felt ignored and oppressed by the regime. The regime will remain the ally of the players that support its survivability.<sup>60</sup> The tide of the conflict has been shifting between one side and the other at different moments. All the players have been waiting for a shift on the military balance on ground, and a political settlement between US and Russia. There has been a constant influx of weapons to the warring local players from external supporters in order to tilt the balance against the other

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<sup>60</sup> "Syria's Metastasising Conflicts," Middle East Report, 143, International Crisis Group, June 2013, Belgium.

and gain the momentum. On the other side, the Sunni opposition calls for cutting ties with Iran and Hezbollah is a course favored by the West and Gulf.

This part analyses the position of the central regional players, Iran, Gulf, Turkey, and Israel. However it is important to stress that the support of the regional players has to do with their influence interests in Syria, not about Sunni-Shia differences. According to the news and reports, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and the West have supported the opposition with weapons, funds, and training centers.<sup>61</sup> Iran and Russia have done the same for the regime. The regional players have meddled to bend the events to their purposes, but they are not capable of performing a leadership role. In the Friends of Syria meeting in 2012, the Saudi foreign minister proposed for arming the opposition with weapons, Qatar and Tunisia wanted troops from Arab states in the Syrian ground, Britain ruled out military intervention, US, Turkey and France remained silent.<sup>62</sup>

This study agrees with Geneive Abdo's opinion that the current situation in Middle East is about the proxy contests for influence between regional and international players to advance their own economic and geopolitical interests.<sup>63</sup> This has led to the re-emergence of the sectarian course in the Muslim world. Thomas Pierret, a Syrian expert, argues that Syria's conflict has reshuffled the regional alignments with no clear cut sectarian dividing lines, often against the preferences of the regional states. This thesis argues that there is no indication that a post-Assad government will lead to a better outcome, or a better situation different from the current one or Assad's time. The reality has shown that the campaign for democracy by violence has led to anarchy and chaos, therefore it has cast doubts on the external interference and has proven that the current chaos has been worse than the dictators. The events in Iraq, Libya, Egypt, and the other

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<sup>61</sup> Satoru Nakamura, "Saudi Arabian Diplomacy during the Syrian Humanitarian Crisis: Domestic Pressure, Multilateralism, and Regional Rivalry for an Islamic State," *Institute of Developing Economies*, Japan, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Andrew Rettman, "'Chaotic' Meeting Exposes Divisions on Syria", *EU Observer*, February 25, 2012, <http://euobserver.com/24/115376>, (accessed March 11, 2012).

<sup>63</sup> Geneive Abdo, "The New Sectarianism: The Arab Uprisings and the Rebirth of the Shia-Sunni Divide", *Analysis Paper*, (Brookings, D.C: The Saban Center for Middle East Policy), April 2013.

Middle Eastern countries where the democracy was attempted to be imposed by force, have become war-torn countries, prolonged civil wars, and internal sectarian fragmentations.

### 6.5.1 The Iranian Position

This part elaborates on the Iranian policy and strategy towards the Syrian crisis, because in relation to the Syrian crisis it has been almost as significant as Russia's role. Will Fulton, *et. al.*, in the report titled "Iranian Strategy in Syria" state that the Syrian regime has been supported by the Iranian pro-government shabiha militias, Lebanese Hezbollah, and the Iraqi Shi'a militants, whether in the form of weapons, funds or well-trained forces.<sup>64</sup> The Iranian Quds forces have been responsible for Iran's external operations, and in the Syrian crisis it has been concerned with managing the Iranian activities in Iraq and Syria. The Iranian forces also contributed their assistance for the Syrian regime through the involvement of Iraqi Shia militants and Hezbollah Lebanese. In 2012, an Iraqi militia named Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas Brigade (AFAB) was formed confirming the presence of Iraqi Shia fighters in Syria but also stating that the membership within it was divided into Syrian Shia and Iraqi Shia 'mujahidin'.<sup>65</sup> While the Hezbollah General Hassan Nasrallah admitted in October 2012 that "there are Hezbollah fighters in Syria but not directed by the Hezbollah's leadership."<sup>66</sup> Another proof of the Iraqi Shia presence was in 2013, when an Iraqi Shia militant Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq was killed in Syria, and his body was transferred to Iraq under the supervision of the Syrian regime and Iraqi security forces, and his funeral was held in Baghdad under the protection of the Iraqi forces.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See Will Fulton, Joseph Holliday, Sam Wyer, "Iranian Strategy in Syria," A Joint Report by AEI's Critical Threats Project & Institute for the Study of War, Washington D.C., May 2013.

<sup>65</sup> Suad al-Salhy, 'Iraqi Shi'ites flock to Assad's side as sectarian split widens,' *Reuters*, June 19, 2013.

<sup>66</sup> 'Hezbollah fighters killed in Syria will 'go to hell', saying the former leader,' *Al-Arabiya*, February 26, 2013.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Knights, "Iran's Foreign Legion: The Role of Iraqi Shiite Militias in Syria," The Washington Institute, Policy Analysis, June 27, 2013; Yasir Ghazi and Tim Arango, "Iraqi Sects Join Battle On Syria on Both Sides," *New York Times*, October 27, 2012.

Will Fulton *et.al* analyses the involvement of the Iranian militias, Hezbollah Lebanese and the Iraqi Shia fighters in the support of the Syrian regime<sup>68</sup>. In this report it is stated that both Iranian Quds Forces (IRGC-QF) and Iranian Ground Forces (IRGCGF) have assisted the Syrian regime with training, specialists and weapons, and they were both designated by the US Department of Treasury as groups participating in the violent oppression of the Syrian people.<sup>69</sup> The former Syrian Prime Minister Riad Hijab had stated in a news conference in 2012 that ‘Syria is occupied by the Iranian regime. The person who runs the country is not Bashar al-Assad but Qassem Suleimani, the head of Iranian regime’s Quds forces’.<sup>70</sup> While a close ally to the Iranian Supreme Leader, former IRGC official and current head of pro-Khamenei think-tank Ammar Base, stated in a Basij university gathering that “Syria is the 35<sup>th</sup> province [of Iran] and a strategic province for US. If the enemy attacks us and seeks to take over Syria or [Iran’s] Khuzestan, the priority lies in maintaining Syria, because if we maintain Syria we can take back Khuzestan. However if we lose Syria, we won’t be able to hold Tehran”.<sup>71</sup>

Until the direct involvement of Russia in September 2015, the Iranian regime tried to take into consideration both options, support for the Syrian regime as well as preparing for the post-Assad’s possibilities and how to maintain its influence and assets even in a post-Assad Syria. Kayhan Barzegar in “Iranian position on Syria”, argues that the Iranian rivals viewed the Syrian issue from the balance of power angle. The Syrian crisis meant for Iran two opportunities: “firstly to come out of its geostrategic isolation through establishing good relations with the nationalistic states in Middle East; and secondly to deal with the Iranophobia feeling, prevent it from being seen as a threat in the region.”<sup>72</sup> However the Syrian crisis took an unpredictable different course, a scenario in which the

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<sup>68</sup> Will Fulton, Joseph Holliday, Sam Wyer, “Iranian Strategy in Syria,” A Joint Report by AEI’s Critical Threat & Institute for the Study of War, May 2013, available at [www.understandingwar.org](http://www.understandingwar.org).

<sup>69</sup> See Patrick Christy, Robert Zarate, “FPI Fact Sheet on Iran’s growing Non-Nuclear Threats,” The Foreign Policy Initiative, October, 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Karim Sadjadpour, “Iran: Syria’s Lone Regional Ally,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C. June, 2014.

<sup>71</sup> “Khamenei’s crony: If Syria, the 35<sup>th</sup> province of Iran falls, Tehran falls,” National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), Foreign Affairs Committee, February 15, 2013.

<sup>72</sup> Kayhan Barzegar, “Iranian position on Syria” in *Regional Perspectives on Syrian Crisis*, SETA, Ankara Round Table, 2012.



two Iranian objectives could not be completed. It also became an Iranian concern about how to deal with the changes in Syria and with the Syria's future. While Iran constantly maintained its support for the Syrian regime, it also wanted to be prepared for a post-Assad Syria.

Another matter that triggered Iranian influence point of view was the fact that the opposition connected the collapse of Syria with the collapse of Iran.<sup>73</sup> Such view expressed by the opposition created the necessity for the balance of power condition between Iran and the Gulf. Syria has always been a strategic ally to Iran but when the opposition started to view the civil war as a transformation for Syria and anti-Iranian, then Iran started to view it as a zero-sum game, more assertive not to lose its ally. Furthermore for Iran, Syria is a line of communication with Lebanese Hezbollah.<sup>74</sup> The Syrian regime has been supported to survive and grasp the power and territory again by the entire Shia team of Iran, Hezbollah and the Iraqi Shia. On the other side, Gulf wants to contain the growth of Iranian power in Middle East. Heinrich Boll Stiftung describes Shiism as 'a burden for Iran when it comes to forging ties with the Arab world'.<sup>75</sup>

The direct Russian military intervention in Syria to prevent the regime's fall has been the most significant factor in the current Middle Eastern situation and a game changer in this whole scenario. The Ukrainian revolution and the sanctions imposed on the Russian economy have created a more assertive Russia in the world affairs. In the Syrian situation its interference meant a significant support for Iran and Syrian regime, a closer Russian-Iranian relations regarding the Syrian and ISIS matters, and a balanced position with the US-Opposition-Gulf coalition. Russia even sold S-300 air defense missiles to Iran, a deal that for very long was opposed by the US and Israel. After the Ukrainian revolution, the NATO's enlargement and expansion of its European Phased Adaptive Approach, Russia

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>74</sup> Joseph Holliday, "The Struggle for Syria in 2011: An Operational and Regional Analysis" Middle East Report 2, Institute for the Study of War, 23

<sup>75</sup> Bakr Sidqi, "The Syrian Revolution and the Role of Turkey-Statehood and Participation," Heinrich Boell Foundation, Beirut/Middle East, March, 2014.

feels it must prove it is an independent pole in international affairs. As such it will build coalitions that suits Russia's interests and sphere of influence only. Despite the mounting pressure and casualties caused by the war in Syria, seems like only the military victory will decide the political settlement of the situation. For this reason, each Russia and the US, Saudi Arabia and Iran, are closely watching the territorial gains and losses in the ground.

### **6.5.2 Turkey's position on Syria**

In the post-Cold War, Turkey pursued a foreign policy of boosting its international geopolitical position as a Muslim democratic country, and improved its intelligence and military activities with allies. In 1999, EU considered Turkey as a candidate country. Turkey tried to have close social and economic relation with both EU and Middle East countries by pursuing the strategies of 'zero problems with neighbors' and 'strategic depth.'<sup>76</sup> With Syria, Turkey went through hostile relations during the post-Cold War due to the Syrian irredentist claims over the province of Alexandretta.<sup>77</sup> And the second decade replaced the previous hostility with cooperative economic and diplomatic relations between Syria and Turkey, after Syria gave up its claims on Alexandretta. Turkey itself started to grow into an active regional player from boosting its trade and investment links worldwide, into being an active mediator in the different conflicts and fractious politics of the Middle Eastern countries. It pursued the policy of cultivating good ties with Gulf as well as with Syria, Iran, EU, NATO, and Russia to boost up its global influence.<sup>78</sup> The Arab uprisings shaken such foreign policy posture for Turkey and in the case of Syrian crisis the Prime Minister Erdogan granted its support to the Sunni

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<sup>76</sup> Soli Ozel & Behlul Ozkan, "Turkey: illusions versus reality," in *Geopolitics and Democracy in Middle East*, (2015), 90.

<sup>77</sup> Alexandretta province, otherwise known as Hatay, located in the Mediterranean coast, between Syria and Turkey, is one of the disputable borders that emerged in 1920, in which Ottoman Empire's rights over the Middle Eastern parts were annulled. In 1937 the League of Nations offered a joint French-Turkish supervision of Alexandretta, in 1939 according to a referendum the Alexandretta population voted pro-joining with Turkey. While Syria declared it as a Turkish-French conspiracy and has never cedes its claims over Alexandretta.

<sup>78</sup> See Gonul Tol, "The 'Turkish Model' in the Middle East," *Middle East Institute*, December 14, 2012, online at [www.mei.edu/content/?Turkish-model](http://www.mei.edu/content/?Turkish-model)-middle-east-0.

Opposition's side.<sup>79</sup> Turkey's good relations with all these countries relied on good ties with specific leaders, until when the Arab Uprisings changed the leaders and the structure in Middle East. Turkey's policy of maintaining a zone of influence in Middle East made it participate as a mediator or as an actor in the Middle Eastern issues before and after the 2011 uprisings, including positioning itself as a crucial player between the Muslim world and the transatlantic bloc. Regarding Syria, Sedat Onal describes Turkey's position as a constant engagement with Syria through signing a number of deals on many issues to improve the democratic reforms and closer relations.<sup>80</sup> Until the event of Cast Lead operation of 2008-2009 in which 10 Turkish citizens were killed by the Israeli forces, Turkey even interfered to improve Syria's relations with Israel. Therefore there was an evolution of Syria-Turkey relations and the demand for democracy, freedom, better economy came from within the Syrian society.

Prior to the uprising the two countries had stable relationship, after the uprising Turkey was forced to choose a stand either by the regime or by the opposition, and it chose the opposition side due to the violence and bloodshed caused by regime. Among the regional actors, Turkey was the player that tried to be cautiously involved, it was against a direct military intervention, but it offered "a territorial base and facilities to the military and political opposition and supply routes for weapons and money provided to the Syrian opposition by countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar."<sup>81</sup> On one side it has constantly offered proposals calling for a solution to the Syrian crisis, on the other side it has been one of the channels for training the opposition's fighters and a channel for the flow of weapons to the opposition.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Nathalie Tocci, Omer Taspinar, Henri J. Barkey, Eduard Soler I Lecha, Hassan Nafaa, "Turkey and the Arab Spring: Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy From a Transatlantic Perspective," *The German Marshall Fund of the United States & Institut Affari Internazionali, Mediterranean Papers Series*, 2001.

<sup>80</sup> Sedat Onal, "Turkish Position on Syria," in *Quo Vadis? Regional Perspectives on the Syrian Crisis*, SETA, April, 2012, Ankara, Turkey.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Seibert, "Is Turkish camp the Syrian rebels' HQ?", *TheNational*, September 5, 2012; Itamar Rabinovich, "Israel's View of the Syrian Crisis", *Analysis Paper*, 28, November 2012, (Washington D.C: The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings), 11.

<sup>82</sup> "Officials: Turkey, Jordan provide land channels for arms shipment to Syrian opposition," *Today's Zaman*, March 18, 2013; Ellen Knickmeyer, Maria Abi-Habib and Adam Entous, "Advanced U.S. Weapons Flow to Syrian Rebels," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 2014.

On October 2012, the Turkish Grand National Assembly approved the deployment of armed forces, but the target behind this approval was Syria.<sup>83</sup> According to this decision, the Turkish government granted itself the authority to deploy armed forces in ‘foreign countries’ where and when the government sees fit.<sup>84</sup> This approval happened due to certain claims that in Akkade village in the border with Syria a Syrian mortar killed five Turkish citizens and the Turkish government blamed the Syrian government.<sup>85</sup> Moreover there were other incidents that brought the militarization of the Turkish policy toward Syrian regime. On June 2013, a Turkish fighter jet was shot down from Syria, this changed the rules of operations in the southern frontier by deploying Patriot air defense missiles and NATO troops of the US, Germany and Dutch crews in the Syrian-Turkish border.<sup>86</sup> This study asserts that all the players involved deny they have provided weapons to their respective sides, but that is one of the factors contributing to no military or diplomatic breakthrough yet.

In relation to the Syrian situation, Turkey became a refugee host of 1.2 million Syrian refugees, a training base for the opposition and an important actor for the international front against the Syrian regime and IS. While Turkey’s relations with the Syrian regime and the opposition have been clear, Turkey’s relations with ISIS have been ambiguous. Different sources stating an ambiguous link between Turkey and ISIS movements and operations, with a huge number of ISIS recruiters entering through Turkey. In a conversation held at Harvard, Joe Biden stated that “Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the UAE had promoted “a proxy Sunni-Shia war’ and ‘poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens of thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad except

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<sup>83</sup> “Turkish parliament approves military intervention in Syria,” *Watcher Times*, October 4, 2012; Ash Ilgit, Rochelle Davis, “The Many Roles of Turkey in the Syrian Crisis,” 28 January, 2013, online at [reliefweb.int/report/turkey/many-roles-turkey-syrian-crisis](http://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/many-roles-turkey-syrian-crisis).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>86</sup> Andrey Fomin, “Syria: Apocalypse Cancelled,” *Voltaire Network*, 23 December 2012, online at [www.voltaire.org/article176983.html](http://www.voltaire.org/article176983.html); Stephen Wallace, “Status of Foreign Deployments,” American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, John Hopkins University, April 29, 2014, online at [www.aicgs.org/issue/status-of-foreign-deployments/](http://www.aicgs.org/issue/status-of-foreign-deployments/).

that the people who were being supplied were al-Nusra and al-Qaida and the extremist elements of jihadist coming from all parts of the world.”<sup>87</sup>

Turkey is as concerned with its posture in the Middle East affairs, as it is concerned with the Kurdish population which demand for independence from Turkey.<sup>88</sup> The Kurdish movement for independence has been deterred by Turkish high-level offensives, and according to some opinions Turkish policy has been ‘waging war against IS, but also destroying the PKK.’<sup>89</sup> Many important events such as the Syrian crisis, the Arab uprisings changed Turkey’s ability to project a regional stability favourable to Turkey’s interests and raised new tensions in relations that were once steadily improving, such as Iran, the Gulf States, Iraq, and Russia. On one side Turkey is caught between Iran and Gulf and it wants good relations with both. On the other side, Turkey supports reaching a compromise with Iran regarding the Iranian nuclear program, but Turkey also opposes the Syrian regime, an Iranian ally, Iranian ally, and it also clashes with the Gulf states about which opposition forces should be assisted.<sup>90</sup>

Turkey’s position in the Syrian case is another proof that the leaders of the two different coalitions are the US and Russia. Turkey cannot lead the Sunni coalition it is inclined to without the support and approval from the US. So is with Iran which cannot lead the Iranian-Syrian regime alignment without Russia’s support. Therefore this whole complex scenario has been fuelled by the regional players, and led by the international players, all due to the contest for influence. As the scenario keeps unfolding with different complex events, Turkey tried to be on good terms with both US and Russia, until last year when it shot down a Russian plane between the Syrian-Turkish border. That event severed the Turkish-Russian relations creating concerns for a possible Russian retaliations. But

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<sup>87</sup> Patrick Cockburn, “Whose side is Turkey on?, *London Review of Books*, 36: 21, (November, 2014): 8-10.; Patrick Cockburn, “Turkey accused of colluding with Isis to oppose Syrian Kurds and Assad following surprise release of 49 hostages,” *Independent*, 22 September, 2014; Sounak Mukopadhyay, “ISIS may have built base in Turkey, Iran cautions,” *International Business Times*, August 21, 2015,

<sup>88</sup> Neil Arun, “Turkey v. Islamic State v. the Kurds: What’s going on?, *BBC News*, 12 August 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Nuh Yilmaz, “Syria: the view from Turkey,” *European Council on Foreign Relations* (ECFR), 19 June 2013.

the recent coup that tried to overthrow the current Prime Minister Recep Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister has soured its relations with the US and the opposition figure living in the US. As a result Turkish leader has sought for a closer personal relations with Russia. Again this is a scenario with unpredictable events, but the recent coup attempts against Erdogan have also pushed Turkey closer to Russia and suspicious with the Western stance towards Turkey. The possibility that the Turkey and Russia might become allies or partners with common ground on many issues seems very likely.

### 6.5.3 The Gulf's Position

Regarding the Gulf's role in the Syrian crisis, it keeps pushing for its own regional alignments just like Iran and Turkey, but the policies of promoting the Sunni opposition in order to promote a decisive influence in Middle East have also created sectarian lines. Gulf has interfered to support the Sunni side and prevent Iran from gaining influence, Iran has pursued the same policy versus the Sunni side. Gulf position refers mainly to Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and they need to cooperate with Turkey to deliver what they want.<sup>91</sup> Emile Hokayem describes Saudi Arabia's role as trying to establish itself as the leader of the Sunni world, but Hokayem argues that "Gulf states do not know how to project power", and "they do not have an expert, successful intelligence".<sup>92</sup> The Gulf relations with Russia have had weak economic relations because the Gulf does not export energy to Russia, and because in terms of arms trade, Gulf prefers to buy weapons from the West. Even for the security umbrella Gulf has been more inclined to cooperate with the US. The low oil prices coming from the Gulf countries and the economic sanctions affected the Russian economy in 2014. Russia called for diplomatic engagements with Saudi Arabia to address the oil prices. (also with the European countries to ease the sanctions) Relations

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<sup>91</sup> Saban Kardas, "Turkey and the Gulf Dialogue in the Middle East," TESEV, Foreign Policy Programme, 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Emily Hokayem, "Quo Vadis? Regional Perspective on the Syrian Crisis?", Ankara Round Tables 1, (Ankara: SETA): 65-67; Yaroslav Trofimov, "Unscathed by Mideast Turmoil, Gulf Monarchies try to Lead Arab World," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 16, 2015.

have somehow improved, but neither the oil prices nor the economic sanctions are yet at the level required to boost up the Russian economy, although Russia is balancing this through alliance with China, and different economic deals with different countries, such as Japan, India, ASEAN countries, and Brazil. Regarding Syria, there are different opinions about the Saudi's and Gulf's roles. Emile Hokayem describes that for 'Saudi Arabia, Syria has long been more than a nuisance but less than a strategic threat'.<sup>93</sup> Michael Karadjis argues that while Saudi Arabia and Qatar have relatively played a role in funding and promoting sectarianism in the Syrian opposition, such a role has been greatly exaggerated and misunderstood.<sup>94</sup> Bassma Kodmani and Felix Legrand argue that,

“In the Middle East, funding is overwhelmingly from Islamic sources and brings with it a conservative agenda. Money circulates through complex channels, some of which are controlled by governments but many of which are managed through private business and religious networks. These networks were first established in the late 1970s and early 1980s to support the Islamic resistance in Afghanistan against Soviet occupation, and have been re-activated during conflicts in the Balkans, Algeria, Yemen and Iraq over the last three decades. While some of the funds are channelled with the blessing of the governments of Gulf countries, thus making them directly responsible for the Islamization of the resistance, these networks are often richly endowed with private resources and are in some cases too powerful for governments to confront, even if they chose to.”<sup>95</sup>

As the picture remains complicated and still unknown about the course of the Syrian crisis, according to the data collected here, this study asserts that in Middle East the uprisings have resulted in anarchy and uncertainty and there is a generally accepted view that 'anarchy has proven worse than dictatorship'.<sup>96</sup> Michael Karadjis supports this view and adds that although there is a state-connected Islamic funding, the funding of the 'Islamist groups' comes overwhelmingly from non-governmental 'Islamist networks'.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Emile Hokayem, "Syria and Its Neighbors", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 54: 2, (2012), 12.

<sup>94</sup> Michael Karadjis, "The Gulf and Islamism in Syria: Myths and Misconceptions," LINKS, *International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, June 2014.

<sup>95</sup> Bassma Kodmani & Felix Legrand, "Empowering the Democratic Resistance in Syria," Arab Reform Initiative, September 2013, available at [www.arab-reform.net/empowering-democraticresistance-syria](http://www.arab-reform.net/empowering-democraticresistance-syria).

<sup>96</sup> "Anarchy VS. Stability: Dictatorships And Chaos Go Hand In Hand," *Spiegel*, 10.09.2014, online at [fortunascorner.com/2014/10/09/anarchy-vs-stability-dictatorships-and-chaos-go-hand-in-hand/](http://fortunascorner.com/2014/10/09/anarchy-vs-stability-dictatorships-and-chaos-go-hand-in-hand/); Peter H. Koepf, "Is anarchy worse than dictatorships?" *The Atlantic Times*, June 19, 2015.

<sup>97</sup> Michael Karadjis, "The Gulf and Islamism in Syria: Myths and Misconceptions," LINKS, *International Journal of Socialist*

This study asserts that the contest for influence through proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia/Gulf has destabilized the Middle East and has spread beyond just the Middle Eastern countries. Ana Echague describes Qatar's role towards the uprisings as "Given its geopolitical profile and authoritarian nature, Qatar was never going to be a cheerleader for democracy, but in supporting certain factions over others, it has in fact further aggravated regional tensions and helped sound the death knell for what started out as promising popular movements."<sup>98</sup> Also Saudi Arabia's role is described as "Riyadh saw the Arab uprisings as a challenge to regional stability but also as an opportunity to tip the scales against Iran."<sup>99</sup> Peter H. Koepf supports the view expressed by Rainer Hermann, Guido Steinberg and Michael Luders, in their three books in German language. According to the three of these authors, the US and the Friends of the Syrian People Group are responsible for the situation in Syria and Middle East, and they argue that "the US and its allies blithely destroyed the Sunni-Shia balance of power in the Middle East."<sup>100</sup>

This study maintains that the geopolitical landscape created by the shifting alliances and sectarianism in the Middle East and in Syria is not about Sunni-Shia' disagreement from religious point of view, because at the beginning of the Syrian uprising the Gulf countries expressed their support for the Syrian regime amidst attempts for destabilization of the country. Only by late 2011 they started expressing verbal condemnation of the Syrian regime measures. By 2012 the Gulf countries, Turkey, and Iran changed their attitudes towards the Syrian crisis and each other, and started to use sectarianism against the revolution<sup>101</sup>. Different armed militias were formed in Syria by the end of 2012, and it has not been clear who spread the sectarianism in Syria. It does look like the attempts of the players involved aim to keep the Syrian crisis open. The Syrian crisis is another

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*Renewal*, June 2014.

<sup>98</sup> Ana Echague, "Qatar: the opportunist," in *Geopolitics of the Middle East*, Kristina Kausch (Ed.), (Madrid: FRIDE, 2015), 73.

<sup>99</sup> Ana Echague, "Saudi Arabia: emboldened yet vulnerable," in *Geopolitics of the Middle East*, 2015, 77.

<sup>100</sup> Peter H. Koepf, "Anarchy Worse than Dictatorship? The Rise of the Islamic State and the responsibility of Washington and its allies for the civil wars in Middle East," *News: Security Times*, June 2015, 13-14.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Karadjis, "The Geopolitics of the Syrian Uprising", *LINKS International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, <http://links.org.an/mode/299>, 2012.



event that has made the political climate between the US and Russia contentious, this due to the fact that Russia has become as eager as the US to keep the allies that serve its sphere of influence projects. Prior to the Russian interference in September 2015, there were calls for the presence of the Saudi troops on the ground in Syria. After the Russian interventions there have been constant direct negotiations between the US and Russia, and constant fighting between the regime and the rebels and IS. The US' policy for a transitional Syria without Bashar al-Assad and his team versus the Russian policy of not losing another client state after the losses of client states caused by the Arab uprisings, the war against terrorism and the Ukrainian revolution. These events have triggered incompatible political positions with the US in the events discussed in this study. As this study maintains, the political solution can be settled either through the victory or loss between the regime and the opposition and IS, or a diplomatic flexibility between the US and Russia. The role of the regional players is insignificant compared to the role of the major powers, the US and Russia.

#### **6.5.4 The Israeli Position**

Due to the perception of being a small, unique and vulnerable country to the regional geopolitics in Middle East, Israel has always relied on “unilateral, pro-active and preemptive coercive measures in the name of self-defense.”<sup>102</sup> Israel's strategy about the 2011 uprisings in Middle East has been “keeping a low profile and shying away from openly taking sides in the regional upheavals.”<sup>103</sup> Israel is concerned with the positioning of Iran in Syria even in Iraq. Israel has also focused on improving its relations with countries of important geopolitical value, such as the Gulf countries, Egypt, Jordan and US, China and India, EU countries, and Russia. Regarding the Israeli-Syria relations,

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<sup>102</sup>See Chuck Freilich, *Zion's Dilemmas: How Israel Makes National Security Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

<sup>103</sup>Benedetta Berti, “Israel: seeking security,” in *Geopolitics and Democracy in Middle East*, Kristina Kausch (Ed.), (Madrid: FRIDE, 2015), 58.

since the Cold War, especially since the 1967 Six Day War, Syria has conditioned any compromise with Israel based on the Israeli withdrawal from Golan Heights and a solution to the Palestinian question. Syria's determination to regain Golan Heights and an Israeli-Palestinian settlement has been part of the package for an Israeli-Syria settlement throughout Cold War and post-Cold War. In 1970s, to achieve this Syria turned away from Iran and joined the US 'orbit, and it requested the return of Golan Heights as part of the package. This remained an Israeli concern for a long time if Syria would repeat the same diplomatic maneuver.

While the nature of the Israeli-Arab countries relations is known, Syria has been one of the most resistant countries to reach a settlement with Israel on mutual beneficial terms, and after the 1967 war Syria remained persistent in getting back the Golan Heights. In 2007, the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered Syria negotiations and peace proposal to accept the 2002 Arab League's land-for-peace approach, the return of the Golan Heights for a peace treaty with Syria. But the answer of the Syrian regime was 'Golan is Syrian and there is no need for secret offers'.<sup>104</sup>

Therefore Israel pursued the policy of keeping Golan and containing Syria.<sup>105</sup> Also in an interview with the BBC in 2014, the official Syrian stance was clearly highlighted in interview with Bashar al-Assad who expressed somehow the same statement, "there will be no peace unless occupied land has returned 'in full'".<sup>106</sup> Syria has usually confronted Israel indirectly through Hezbollah and the Palestinian factions.<sup>107</sup>

Yet, Syria's purchase of MiG-31E and MiG-29 M/M2 (a deal sponsored by Iran) and its intention to recover Golan Heights remained Israeli concerns. The Israeli view is that a weak Syria is easy to be deterred because it can bring calm to Golan Heights and it can

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<sup>104</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, "Israel and Syria: The Military Balance and Prospects of War", *Working Draft*, (Washington D.C.: Center for International and Strategic Studies, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy), April 2007, 25.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>106</sup> "Syrian President Bashar al-Assad: Facing Down Rebellion," *BBC News*, 12 November, 2014.

<sup>107</sup> Ariel (ELI) Levite, "An Israeli Perspective on Syria," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 9, 2014; Dimi Reider, "Syria: the view from Israel," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 20 June, 2013.

maintain the Camp David order. Regarding the Israeli's position in the Syrian crisis, it seemed to be passive and cautious, interfering in the arms trade between Iran, Syria and Hezbollah, and preventing the terrorists from imbalancing the situation in Golan.

The Israeli administration has been between two schools: one refers to Assad's regime as 'the devil we know' and better than the alternative of a jihadist team coming in power; and the other school holds that the Iran-Hezbollah-Syria axis is a threat to Israel's security, as such the current Syrian regime is a threat.<sup>108</sup> The Syrian opposition wants to break ties with Hamas and Hezbollah, this is a course favoured by Israel. Furthermore the new regime will be more inclined to cooperate with Gulf and Turkey which are less confrontational with Israel. At the moment there is ambiguity who operates along the Golan Heights, and who controls the key military capabilities in that part. A presence of Iranian and its proxy forces in the Syrian part that borders Israel is a cause of concern for Israel's security. In January 2015, the "Operation Martyrs of Quneitra" refers to an Israeli operation that killed an Iranian general and six Hezbollah operatives 'while on a battlefield-circulation visit to the Syrian Golan Heights.'<sup>109</sup>

Related to the Syrian-Iran axis, Israel is also concerned with Iran's nuclear arsenal for it can deter the other nuclear powers, it can provide a diplomatic cover for Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah, and it can trigger a regional nuclear arms race. Michael Herzog describes the Syrian situation "as the war turned predominantly in a conflict between the Syrian regime and its supporters on the one hand and the jihadists on the other, it is best to let the two camps-both extremely hostile to Israel- to fight each other."<sup>110</sup> Whereas Shlomo Ben-Ami describes the Middle East situation as an alignment of moderates (Gulf) and an

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<sup>108</sup> Itamar Rabinovich, 'A new Israeli policy on Syria: Should Israel threaten with intervention? *Order from Chaos: A new foreign policy* Blog at Brookings, February 13, 2015.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Herzog, "Southern Syria: A New Front for Israel? Policy Analysis, *The Washington Institute*, Washington D.C., March 2, 2015.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.,

Axis of Resistance (Iran, Syria, Hamas, Hezbollah).<sup>111</sup> Nicola Nasser describes the Israeli perspective on the Syrian crisis, as a preference for a ‘stable instability.’<sup>112</sup>

Throughout the Syrian crisis, the Israeli stance was not made obvious until the fall of 2013 when the Israeli ambassador in Washington Michael Oren declared that Israel has chosen to ally with Saudi Arabia to undermine the Iranian influence in Middle East, because Israel prefers the bad guys who aren’t backed up by Iran rather than the bad guys who are backed up by Iran.<sup>113</sup> And among the opposition forces, Israel prefers the moderate elements of the opposition and the departure of Assad. Itamar Rabinovich claims four possible scenarios of the Syrian crisis: a protracted continuation of the status quo; regime change; regime collapse by chaos; regime victory.<sup>114</sup> Rabinovich also states that although none of these scenarios would serve all the Israeli interests, Israel’s best option is for Assad’s regime to be replaced by a pro-Western secular regime.

This study argues that as the Syrian crisis continues for almost five years, it has complicated the foreign policies of the regional players, Israel’s as well. A regime change in Syria is an Israeli preferred outcome, yet there is no certainty about what will replace it. There have been different behind-the-scenes diplomatic engagements between Israel and the Gulf countries based on a common assessment of the threat coming from a nuclear Iran and Syria, to deter Iran and to establish better Israel-Gulf relations. However it will continue to be in the form of ‘covert operation in economic and intelligence fields but no official rapprochement.’<sup>115</sup> The Israel’s position towards the Syrian situation can be summarized in the view expressed by Ofer Shelah:

“What is significant is the fact that Syria is becoming the most extreme example of the new world surrounding Israel. National states, some of which (Lebanon, for example) were artificial colonial creations while others had a long history,

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<sup>111</sup> Shlomo Ben-Ami, “The Middle East’s New Game”, August 2, 2011, *Project Syndicate*, available at [www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-middle-east-s-new-game](http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-middle-east-s-new-game).

<sup>112</sup> Nicola Nasser, ‘Israel’s Role in the Syrian Conflict Brought into the Open! Direct Support to al-Qaeda Terrorists’, *Global Research*, December 17, 2014.

<sup>113</sup> Herb Keinon, “Tehran-Damascus-Beirut arc is the greatest danger,” says outgoing Israeli envoy to US Michael Oren,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 17 September, 2013.

<sup>114</sup> Itamar Rabinovich, “Israel’s View of the Syrian Crisis”, Analysis Paper, 28, (Brookings: The Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings), November 2012, 12.

<sup>115</sup> Arutz Sheva, “Report: Israel, Gulf States in Secret Talks over Iran,” Arutz Sheva, *Israel National News*,

are weakening and some are disintegrating. The danger of “large-scale” war, involving capture of Israeli territory, disappears together with the dismantling of these countries. But new dangers are created instead: dangers that are, by nature, grey, decentralized, much harder to decipher. Yet the intensity of these [new] perils is just as great as the dangers we became accustomed to viewing as existential threats for many decades”.<sup>116</sup>

As it is, Syria is not a threat to Israel because its survival as a state is at risk, but the violent fragmentation that has taken place has become a new serious concern for Israel’s security and for its neighbouring countries. According to the Defense minister Moshe Yalon, the Daesh threat is a threat that will pass but the role and the stature of Iran across the region is considered as more concerning.<sup>117</sup>

## **6.6 The International Dimension**

The international layer of the Syrian crisis is the most crucial for that is where the support and backup comes from, which brings the determination to resist against the other side. The regime refuses to step down because of having Russia’s support, and the opposition refuses any ceasefire and to give up the armed resistance because of having the Western and the US’ support. ISIS continues its terrorist ways to establish the Islamic Caliphate. Meanwhile the two regional alignments, Iranian and Gulf-Turkey’s supports are almost insignificant compared to the US and Russian supports. It started between the domestic actors, but only an agreement on slices of influence between the US and Russia can bring a solution to this crisis. (even for the crisis in Ukraine as well) The Syrian conflict is viewed in the context of the US-Russian contest for influence, the rest of the regional and even domestic actors follow one of these two players. The US-Russian concerns for influence projection regarding NATO into CIS, Ukrainian and Syrian crises, is best portrayed in the assessment provided by Snyder and Diesing in their study after analyzing sixteen case studies of crises. They suggest the following:

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<sup>116</sup> Ofer Shelah, “A Question for Israel: What If Syria Becomes the Next Lebanon?” *The Middle East Pulse*, October 7, 2012. Online at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/10/the-limits-of-power.html#ixzz28msay7uq>.

<sup>117</sup> M. Ya’alon, Remarks at the 8th Annual International Conference Israel in a Turbulent Region, Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 16-17 February 2015, available at: <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4480&eventid=8331>.

“the choice between coercion and accommodation during a crisis is a micro-version of a macro-choice that states often face when dealing with each other over the longer term... Whether to be tough and firm in order to deter him, but at the risk of provoking his anger and fear and heightened conflict, or to conciliate him in the hope of reducing sources of conflict, but at the risk of strengthening him and causing him to miscalculate one’s own resolve, is a perennial and central dilemma of international relations.... A rational resolution of this dilemma depends most of all on an accurate assessment of the long-run interests and intentions of the opponent”.<sup>118</sup>

The three case studies analysed in this study display the sphere of influence pattern in the US-Russian bilateral relations and in the contemporary world politics. Regarding the Syrian crisis, recently there seems to be a shift in the tone of rhetoric, in which Saudi Arabia, the US and Turkey have realized that fighting terrorism is more important than ousting Assad.<sup>119</sup> The difference between these two sides has been on the precondition of Assad’s departure from Syrian politics, despite the agreement with the Geneva’s statement on the transfer of power to a transitional government in Syria.

#### **6.6.1 The US’ Position**

Counterterrorism and a nuclear deal with Iran have been the US’ steps of dealing with the uncertainty and chaos that have emerged in Middle East. Although Syria has been mostly known as a Soviet Union ally and Russian ally, the global war on terrorism created opportunities for better US-Syria relation, and US needed as many allies as possible on the Muslim world for its campaign against Taliban and al-Qaida.<sup>120</sup> In 2001, Bashar al-Assad sent condolence message to President Bush. Although Syria offered intelligence cooperation with US, Syria was denounced as a supporter of Hezbollah and Hamas by the Congress, therefore gradually there started the view that Syria supported terrorist camps and terrorist organizations.

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<sup>118</sup> Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations, Bargaining, Decision Making and System Structure in International Crisis*, (Princeton University Press), 254.

<sup>119</sup> Anne Barnard, *New Diplomacy Seen on U.S.-Russian Efforts to End Syrian Civil War*, *The New York Times*, August 11, 2015.

<sup>120</sup> See David W. Lesch, “Missed Opportunities: Cooperation and Confrontation in the U.S.-Syrian Relationship,” Report, (Washington D.C.:The Century Foundation), December 2003.

Prior to the Iraqi war in 2003, the US-Syrian relations were somehow cooperative and calm. Syria cooperated on intelligence information with the US in the war against al-Qaeda during 2001-2003 period, but the Iraqi war changed the Syrian position.<sup>121</sup> The US attempted for Syria's cooperation or at least neutrality in the Iraqi war 2003, while Syria called on the Arab-Islamic world to fight alongside the "fraternal Iraq" in the face of 'savage aggression'.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, the Syrian flow of weapons into Iraq and Syria's training of fighters to send them in Iraq were declared as threats to the coalition forces.<sup>123</sup> The US demanded Syria to stop the training and the flow of weapons and to control the Syrian-Iraqi border and that became the point of hostility eruption between US and Syria.

The US proposal for Responsibility to Protect (R2P) civilians in danger from government's abuses was adopted by United Nations in 2008. In the Syrian crisis, Daniel Byman *et.al* describes the US role as between two choices: to live with a cruel regime though weaker, or overthrow it regardless the consequences.<sup>124</sup> According to some opinions, an assessment of how US can overthrow Bashar al-Assad can go through six options:

"remove the regime via diplomacy; coerce the regime via sanctions and diplomatic sanctions; arming the Syrians to overthrow the regime; engage in a Libya-like air campaign to help an opposition army gain victory; invade Syria with US-led forces and topple the regime directly; participate in a multilateral NATO-led effort to oust Assad and rebuild Syria".<sup>125</sup>

None of these options could work because of the disagreements with Russia. The official stance of the US regarding the Syrian crisis can be traced in the President Obama's policy expressed in his address to the Nation on Syria, saying that

"I will not put troops on the ground in Syria. I will not pursue an open-ended action like in Iraq or Afghanistan. I will not pursue a prolonged air campaign like Libya or Kosovo. This would be a targeted strike to achieve a clear

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ziad K. Abdelnour, "The US-Syrian Crisis Why Diplomacy Failed," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, 5: 10, (October 2003).

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Daniel Byman, *et.al*, "Saving Syria: Assessing Options for Regime Change," *Middle East Memo* 21, (Brookings: Saban Center), March 2012.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. 2.

objective: deterring the use of chemical weapons and degrading Assad's capabilities."<sup>126</sup>

President Obama declared only the use of chemical weapons as a red-line. When the chemical attack took place in September 2013, Russia interfered with a diplomatic manoeuvre to prevent the US military strike, based on the no US military strike exchanged for the Syrian surrender of all its chemical arsenals. In relation to the US disagreements with Russia, regarding the three case studies examined in this research, what has triggered a Russian assertiveness in the Syrian case too is the fact that in the post-Cold War the number of client states for the US increased and for Russia decreased. In Middle East Syria has remained the only client. After 9/11, NATO extended its dimensions and participation into the Middle East through the Mediterranean Program (MD) that included Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritanian, Morocco and Tunisia.<sup>127</sup>

This program although it does not mean formal membership, these countries can contribute to NATO's maritime counter-terrorism in Mediterranean.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, in terms of influence projection, the post-Cold War was an era of geopolitical losses for Russia and geopolitical gains for US. The Ukrainian Revolution triggered the pulse of assertiveness for Russia, becoming more resistant to defend the remaining assets for its influence projection in every region.

In the Syrian crisis, this study asserts that despite the theatre of regime-opposition violent disagreements for who will hold the power in Syria, the campaign how to deal with the Islamic State is mutual, yet again different. Because Russia wants to eliminate the IS threat to defend its influence asset (the Syrian regime), and US wants to defend its influence asset (the moderate Syrian opposition and a post-Assad Syria). Due to the contest for influence projection between the US and Russia, each is placing its own

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<sup>126</sup> President Obama's Address to the Nation on Syria, September 2013, Speaker: Barack Obama, Council for Foreign Relations, New York.

<sup>127</sup> Mediterranean Dialogue was initiated in 1994 because Mediterranean region seemed to be prone to many kinds of political and security threats, it is important to many NATO countries, and its proximity to Middle East. See Yannis A. Stivachtis and Benjamin Jones, "NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: An Assessment," Research Paper, 137, (Athens: Research Institute for European and American Studies, November, 2009).

<sup>128</sup> Christopher Harmer, "Russian Naval Base Tartus", *Backgrounders*, July 31, 2012, Institute for the Study of War, Washington DC.



military operations against IS in Syria, also to defend its own influence asset in Middle East region. While US aims to project the opposition as the only actor in the transitional Syria, Russia wants to ensure the survival of its only influence asset in Middle East. The secret game for influence projection continues.

#### **6.6.2 The Russian Position in the Syrian crisis**

This part analyses the role and involvement of Russia in the Syrian crisis and argues that the Russian involvement is the reason that the Syrian regime has not fallen yet, more than the claimed reason about the opposition's divisions. In any conflict in the world the Russian power projection is driven by three basic objectives: to protect its arms sales, to protect its energy deals, and to maintain its orbit of influence, therefore its allies. Russia's interference in this uprising made all the difference compared to the other uprisings. Hence, the fact that the Syrian regime has not fallen yet is very much related to Russia's support, whose stance has also been backed up by China in the UN vetoes, and by Iran in assisting the Syrian regime financially and militarily.

Despite the fact that Syria has been the traditional ally of Russia since the Cold War, and the journey of Russia-Syria relations has been characterized by moments of intense and lessened political and economic contacts, Russia is concerned with the consequences of the regional imbalances that may come from the fall of the Syrian regime because it affects Russia's capability for influence projection in Middle East. Russia is also concerned with the spread of Islamic radicalism because of its possible spill-over effect in Russia due to the Muslim population in Caucasus. Russia has demonstrated its support and recognition of regime's legitimacy by sending ships with materials that would assist the Syrian regime to survive the crisis. From January-June 2013, there were five naval visits as a political-military demonstration to deter any US' active military engagement

in Syria.<sup>129</sup> Such naval visits were also possibly used to deliver heavy armaments to the Syrian regime forces.<sup>130</sup> The accurate picture of the weapon transfers from Russia and Iran to the Syrian regime, and from US-Turkey-Gulf to the opposition is incomplete, because such contracts are confidential due to the sensitivity of the issue.

The political responsibility of the chemical attack that happened in Damascus on August 20-21, 2013, was explained differently by different sources laying the blame on the Syrian government or on the rebels' side.<sup>131</sup> On the other side Russia has participated in formal and informal talks with different teams from the Syrian opposition and its increased radical forces.<sup>132</sup> The events of the Arab uprisings, the Iraq War 2003, the Afghanistan War 2001, and the colour revolutions in CIS created a perception that Russia is the next target of such regime change.<sup>133</sup> Russian policy makers have named the Arab uprisings as 'US-made', and the US' democracy in Middle East as 'missile-and-bomb democracy'.<sup>134</sup>

Therefore in the cases of Syria, Ukraine, and NATO's entrance in CIS, Russia and US seem to have very limited space for the mutually assured security. According to different interpretations, the Russian assertiveness comes from US unilateralism to advance its geopolitical interests through regime change. Putin in an article in 2012, writes that "soft power methods have been used frequently to develop and provoke extremist, separatist and nationalistic attitudes, to manipulate the public and to conduct direct interference in the domestic policy of sovereign countries."<sup>135</sup> Marek Menkiszak describes the

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<sup>129</sup> Marek Menkiszak, "Responsibility to Protect... Itself? Russia's Strategy Towards the Crisis in Syria", The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Briefing Paper 131, (May 2013), 3

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>131</sup> See Rachel Avraham, "Was Assad Not Responsible for the Chemical Weapons Attack Last August?", April 4, 2014, *Foreign Policy Association*; and Christof Lehmann, "Top US and Saudi Officials responsible for Chemical Weapons in Syria," *NSNBC International*, October 7, 2013.

<sup>132</sup> "Moscow hosts Syria's main opposition group for talks," August 14, 2014, *ARA News*, Pulse of the north, available at [aranews.net](http://aranews.net); Mehdi Chebil "Defeating IS takes priority over Assad" in new Syrian plan," *France24 News*, 19, August, 2015; "Syria opposition demands 'radical change', 24 January 2015, AFP, Cairo; Vitaly Naumkin, "Russia mulls strategy to solve Syrian conflict," June 3, 2015, *The Pulse of the Middle East*.

<sup>133</sup> See George Friedman, "From Estonia to Azerbaijan: American Strategy After Ukraine," March 25, 2014, *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, Geopolitical Weekly; "Russia and the West: The Consequences of renewed Rivalry," Workshop, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), June 2015, Canada.

<sup>134</sup> Courtney Weaver, "Putin criticises 'missile-bomb democracy'," *The Financial Times*, July 9, 2012.

<sup>135</sup> Vladimir Putin, "Russia and the changing world," 27 February 2012, *RT*, online at <https://www.rt.com/politics/official-word/putin-russia-changing-world-263/>

perception of the Russian administration for the US as trying to advance geopolitically by supporting the oppositions by soft power in the targeted countries and by the use of military force to overthrow unwanted governments.<sup>136</sup>

This study asserts that with such perceptions, Russia is determined to accept any scenario in order to prevent the fall of the Syrian regime and the loss of Ukraine and CIS to NATO and EU. As the current Middle East geopolitics stand, the Assad's regime is the only ally left in Middle East and the current Russia refuses any further geopolitical concessions to the Western front. Whereas the US aims to build the capacity of the opposition, a moderate opposition, moderately armed.<sup>137</sup> But it is not clear who is such moderate opposition or its definition. Basically, Russia is not convinced that it will use the Syrian territory and its assets if Assad falls. After almost five years of fighting which brought a deterioration of the Syrian military capabilities, Russia decided to step in when it came the moment that Syrian regime seemed unable to withstand both the IS' and the opposition's attacks.

Regarding the role of UN as the central international organization where it is assumed that all states are equal in terms of legitimacy, this study observed that neither the General Assembly nor the Security Council have been able to contribute any suitable diplomatic atmosphere in the Syrian crisis (or Ukrainian crisis). In October 2011, Russia and China blocked a European drafted Security Council Resolution condemning the Syrian regime and warning of sanctions if the brutal repression of the demonstrators continued.<sup>138</sup> On February 2012, Russia and China vetoed a Western and Arab drafted resolution, which was an Arab League Plan demanding President Bashar al-Assad to pass power to a deputy as a way for transition to democracy, a resolution which was supported by all Security

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<sup>136</sup> Marek Menkiszak, "Responsibility to Protect...Itself? Russia's Strategy towards the Crisis in Syria", *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, Briefing Paper 131, (May 2013), 7.

<sup>137</sup> See Hardin Lang, Mokhtar Awad, Ken Sofer, Peter Juul, and Brian Katulis, "Supporting the Syrian Opposition" Lessons from the Field in the Fight Against ISIS and Assad," (WashingtonD.C.: Center for American Progress), September 2014.

<sup>138</sup> See Roy Allison, Russia and Syria: explaining alignment with a regime in crisis," *International Affairs*, 89:4, (2013), 795-823.

Council members including the BRICS members, except Russian and China.<sup>139</sup> The UN' proposed draft 'Action Group' on Syria for "Syrian-led Transition', with the participation of the major powers, Arab states and representatives of international organizations was favoured by Russia also, expect for the point that it conditioned the transition upon Assad's departure.<sup>140</sup> There were few unanimously adopted resolutions, such as, in April 14, 2012, Security Council unanimously agreed to deploy a team of 30 unarmed men into Syria to monitor a ceasefire;<sup>141</sup> April 21, 2012, a deployment of 300 unarmed military observers were deployed to Syria for a period of three months for a monitoring mission and a ceasefire between regime and the opposition; in July 21, 2012, Security Council agreed to extend the monitoring mission of this team for another one month<sup>142</sup>; and on September 28, 2013, Security Council unanimously agreed a resolution on eradication of Syria's chemical weapons, due to the August 21's sarin gas attack that killed hundreds in Damascus.<sup>143</sup>

It is necessary to take into consideration that both US and Russia while competing to get what they want in the Syrian crisis, they have increased the scope and the scale of assistance to the two opposing sides, which has complicated the possibilities for a ceasefire or an end to the war. The crisis is being prolonged and the fighting has become more intense.

Theoretically and diplomatically, both the US and Russia (and all other powers) have claimed and declared that the international law and the principle of non-interference in other countries' affairs should not be broken. However, as this study observed, the integrations and institutions promoting the international law, peace and security, only

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.799.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.800.

<sup>141</sup> "UN Security Council approves monitors' deployment to Syria, *RT*, 14 April, 2012; Security Council, 6751<sup>st</sup> Meeting, "Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2042 (2012), Authorizing Advance Team to Monitor Ceasefire in Syria," 14 April, 2012, online at [www.un.org/press/en/2012/sc10609.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2012/sc10609.doc.htm).

<sup>142</sup> See Adeline A. Nnenna, "The Syrian Conflict and the Threat of a Leaderless International Community," *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 5:8(1), (July 2014); and, Lois Charbonneau and Michelle Nichols, "U.N. council approves up to 300 Syria truce monitors," *Reuters*, April 21, 2012.

<sup>143</sup> Security Council, 7038<sup>th</sup> Meeting(PM), "Security Council Requires Scheduled Destruction of Syria's Chemical Weapons, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2118(2013)," 27 September 2013, online at [www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc11135.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc11135.doc.htm).

serve the great powers' spheres of influence. Russia's and the US' official positions are against an externally promoted regime change in any country, stating that it is against the principles of the international law and against the UN Charter's principle of non-interference. Yet the option of a fragmented Syria and the option of a fragmented Ukraine are preferred courses by these two countries as far as sphere of influence is concerned. Furthermore a clear support from the outside has made the insurgents or the opposition side (in any country) more intractable and unwilling to consider concessions or cease-fire. In 2011, the Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov stated that "the belief that the foreigners will help us overthrow the regime may be 'contagious'. It could appear among protesters in other countries of the region hoping for assistance from the international community. This would be an invitation to a whole array of civil wars"<sup>144</sup> Putin also in his own words states that "the standards imposed from outside, including, in the Middle East, rather than being a product of society's natural internal developments, lead to tragic consequences, and the best example of this is Iraq".<sup>145</sup> The Security Council resolutions that called for sanctions, military and humanitarian interventions on Syria were vetoed by Russia based on the concern that it would open the way for a US ground boot on the Syrian regime, like in Libya and Iraq.

On the other side, Russia's role in Middle East is being portrayed as a designed policy to reduce the US and Western influence. In addition, to the Russian eyes, the US and West are involved in conspiracy to undermine the Russian interests and areas of influence.<sup>146</sup> This study observed that, different events in the post-Cold War curtailed Russia's legacy of previous good relations with the Middle Eastern countries. Moreover, the rise of the new oppositions in the Middle East countries (including the CIS region)

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<sup>144</sup> See Jack H. Renner and Osita Afoaku, "The Responsibility to Protect: A Comparative Analysis of UN Security Council Actions in Libya and Syria," Policy Analysis, Indiana University School of Public and Environment, 2015; and, Sergei Lavrov, at press conference in Iskhinvali, 26 April 2011, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts: Former Soviet Union, <http://www.bbc.monitoringonline.com> (henceforth BBC).

<sup>145</sup> Ariel Cohen, "How the U.S. Should Respond to Russia's Unhelpful Role in the Middle East," Backgrounder #2662 on Russia and Eurasia, *The Heritage Foundation*, (March 15, 2012): 5.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

mean significant setbacks for Russia's influence in the regions where it has potential influence. As the US remains as determined for a transitional post-Assad as Russia to defend its influence asset (Assad) in Middle East, a contest further supported by the Gulf-Iran contest for regional influence, it has produced a guerrilla-terrorist type of war between all the fractured religious communities, Sunni-Shi'a, Sunni groups and Shi'a groups and a new shape to Middle East geopolitics.

To both US and Russia, sphere of influence is a vital national interest, as such, countering each other's sphere of influence continues to be the secret geopolitical game in this bilateral relation. In whatever other crisis the US-Russian disagreements may be involved, NATO's expansion into CIS, the Syrian and Ukrainian crises are clear evidences that the crisis escalates and prolongs until the US and Russia reach an accord, and the accord is about an influence projection area or ally.

Another factor fuelling further the tensed negotiations between the US and Russia on the Syrian crisis is that they are not focused on cease fire, end of the violence and end of the civil war. Instead it is declared firstly the transitional government must come in power without Assad and his team, then a cease fire and peaceful Syria can emerge. Finally, Russia rejects the solution of a partition where the Syrian regime can be a state along the coastal area, and Russia can keep both the Tartus port and the new Syria. Russia's objective is a full territorial integrity of Syria as a Russian client state, because no other ally will cooperate to accommodate the Russian interests in Middle East like the current Syrian regime.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

Throughout the five years of the Syrian crisis, the internal balance of power has been mostly in favour of the regime, the regional balance of power between Iran and Gulf remains unstable and contentious, and the international balance of power between the US

and Russia is an ongoing competition for influence projection. By 2015, the Syrian regime weakened significantly due to losses in the territory it could control, military equipment and army troops. But by August-September 2015, Russia decided be more assertive of its geopolitical interests in Middle East as a whole, and in the Syrian case particularly through direct support for the regime with troops, presence and weapons. The human cost of the crisis should produce an agreement between the regime and opposition, however neither a de-escalation of the civil war between the regime and the opposition nor a relative stabilization of the situation has taken place. The situation continues to be dominated by the military dimension. Either a breakthrough on the battlefield can bring a breakthrough on the negotiating table, or vice versa.

Will the fighting continue for many years? Will Syria disintegrate? Why not yet a decisive intervention in the Syrian conflagration? Who can bridge the two sides together, how? A comprehensive formula depends only on a reasonable approach between the regime and opposition, or between the US and Russia, because there are many rivalries and agendas clashing over Syria. The US' primary scope in this crisis continues to be regime change and Assad's departure, while Russia's scope is Assad's survivability as the most reliable ally to keep Syria part of the Russian orbit of influence. Numerous negotiations are taking place to settle the situation in Ukraine and Syria attempting a major political breakthrough without fragmenting Syria and Ukraine, but also exploiting the negotiations to hold on to the current position in Syria and Ukraine, not to give it up.

Domestically the Syrian crisis is characterized by rivalries at every level, between the local commanders and the exiles, between the militia commanders on the ground, between elements seeking accommodation with the regime and elements seeking to bring it down. This thesis argues that whatever the internal rivalries, they are supported by the regional players, and the regional players are being divided between the US and Russia who stand on the opposite sides of this crisis. Russia because it is more concerned with

its sphere of influence in Middle East, CIS, Europe and elsewhere. US because it is concerned with hegemony and anti-terrorism issues. Such divergence of interests depend on the substance of the negotiations, it also makes mutually assured security impossible for the moment.

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## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This study has examined the US-Russian spheres of influence in the post-Cold War, demonstrating that the concept and the strategy of sphere of influence did not end with the Cold War. To thoroughly examine this theme, this study has relied on a mixture of sources from the US and Russia and of the different actors involved in this scenario to give a balanced assessment, as well as to prove the continuity and contest for influence projection between these two countries. The study includes three different steps: (1) an illustration of sphere of influence along with the mutually assured security; (2) a historical assessment of the US-USSR spheres of influence during the Cold War; and (3) the core argument of the study, the continuity of spheres of influence in the post-Cold War.

Regarding the sphere of influence approach this study determined that it continues to be a constant in international politics and a constant in the US-Russian approach to international relations. Every frame of mutually assured security between these two countries has been subtly conditional upon the recognition of one's relevant orbit of influence. To a great power, sphere of influence means national interest and both US and Russia have equated the security and dominance of their spheres of influence with the country's national interest. Furthermore, for the US and Russia, the pattern of the relationship has been a cycle between mutually assured security and contest for influence projection during and after the Cold War.

As far as the Cold War spheres of influence are concerned, this study has analysed it in terms of NATO vs. Warsaw Pact, arguing that during the Cold War it was basically an institutional form of influence through Warsaw Pact and NATO as a two-way assertiveness to deter and contain each other. An important finding of this part is that, unlike other studies that claim the Cold War was due to incompatible ideologies, deterrence, containment, expansionism and aggressiveness of East or West, this study asserts that the Cold War was a war for spheres of influence, instead ideologies were used

as a tool to support the establishment of East-West spheres of influence. Ideologies are crucial for they shape and run a certain political-economic and social system, but in the level of great powers everything is a tool for the strategy of influence projection.

The third part is the core theme of this study, an illustration of the spheres of influence in the post-Cold War. Both the US and Russia continued the structuring of parallel spheres of influence. NATO expanded, EU as a NATO partner was formed on the basis of the existing previous structures of the Common Market and Western European Union. Russia on its side focused on the CIS and CSTO in the post-Soviet region. These were some of the steps to strengthen their relevant spheres of influence.

Although NATO's and EU's expansion were introduced as not against Russia and not to be viewed as a zero-sum game, Russian administrations perceived the expansions of these two institutions as detrimental to Russia's economic and political relations with the CIS countries. Other evidences of incompatible geopolitical posturing that clearly demonstrate the US and Russian concerns for influence projection and expansion are the NATO's open door policy towards the former Soviet countries, the Ukrainian revolution and the Syrian crisis. Though unequal, the US is the hegemon and Russia is the regional power in CIS, protecting their orbits of influence has been the central focus of all the US and Russian administrations. The difference has only been on the tactics but not on the approach, sphere of influence.

Through the research and the data collected, this study found that these three events alarmed Russian policy makers, at the extent that they have decided to protect all their influence assets, whether in CIS, Middle East, or anywhere in the world. Another finding is that the US influence projection has been more attractive than Russia's projection, and that in the post-Cold War, the US continued the expansion of its institutional influence, while Russia continued its geographic influence through different strategic bilateral relations. These three events correspond to incompatible geopolitical positions where the

US' pursuit for unchallenged hegemony clashes with Russia's assertiveness to defend the areas vital to Russia's influence as a great power in the world. Furthermore, these issues are important for the US hegemony, but vital for Russia's remaining status as a great power. In addition, the rivalry for influence between these two countries has affected the nature of many crises during and after the Cold War. The consequence of such political climate is that it produces different coalitions, which can be confrontationist or concert-based. Despite common causes for concern, such as global war on terrorism, cooperation against ISIS, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, peace and security at global level, both the US and Russia are politically independent-minded players and nuclear powers. At this point of time, there seems to be very little room for a political-diplomatic concert-based framework between the US and Russia, and how it will unfold, remains to be seen and to be analysed by future researches. It is not easy to predict the continuation of the current geopolitical atmosphere, but this study maintains that both these powers have been equally assertive regarding their position in the world affairs, one as a Central Asian power, the other as the global power.

Another finding to be highlighted is that although a sphere of influence is usually asserted by any great power, it also needs a mutual recognition by the major powers, especially between the US and Russia, along with the recognition of the other powers in the international system. In the post-Cold War era, the US and Russia have pursued different approaches toward the international structure. The American approach was to strengthen and expand the leadership of international politics, while Russia's approach has been to gain client states. Such a mosaic of the US-Russian engagements in world affairs proves the sphere of influence point of view. NATO's expansion over the whole of Europe and CIS, the Ukrainian revolution and the Syrian crisis do not threaten directly US or Russia, but they do threaten their spheres of influence and the status they want to uphold in the international hierarchical power.

Another finding of this study is that the international politics has historically revolved around the great powers' schemes for influence projection in the world affairs. The West represents a sphere of influence comprising of the main powers for global geopolitical purposes, but the expansion of NATO around Russia's borders and in CIS increased the pressure in the Russian deterrence, status and influence, which relates to another finding that sphere of influence serves both as a containment and deterrence of a rival. The competitive nature of the US-Russian relations did not change, whatever the strategies and concepts adopted to establish a mutually assured security framework. Whether in a common form or independent form, everything revolved and keeps revolving around spheres of influence projects.

Another issue of significant importance is the personalities who have led these two countries. In the case of Russia, Khrushchev during the Cold War and Putin during the post-Cold War have been more sphere of influence related. While Gorbachev, Medvedev and Yeltsin were mostly oriented towards integration with the West rather than standing as two different equal poles in international affairs. In the case of the US, all the administrations since the Cold War and post-Cold War have been led by the global influence projections, the difference has only been according to the geopolitical changes, basically in terms of which region has been more important or more threatening for the US hegemony. Russia started to take seriously the sphere of influence approach after its hold over CIS was shaken by the possible NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine.

In the post-Cold War, the war on terrorism, the Arab uprisings and the Ukrainian crisis changed the priorities for the US and Russia, the groups and the actors in the political stage. While this bilateral relationship has been analysed through various degrees, emphasis and time frame, this study asserts that the central pattern of this relationship through whatever form of the international distribution of power, has been about influence projection in the world, geographically and institutionally. The two can be

economic partners but impossible to be partners in the political-military realm, because both the military-security and economic means are strong incentives to create a coalition, to sustain and strengthen it. The glue of any coalition building depends on the strength and attraction of the driving factor, whether economic or security-military means.

### **7.1 The Evolution of the US-Russian Sphere of Influence from Cold War to post-Cold War**

As this study traced the sphere of influence approach since the Cold War era, it determined that the parallel structures and objectives of NATO and Warsaw Pact institutions during the Cold War, were continued by another set of parallel structures for spheres of influence in the post-Cold War through NATO-EU and CIS-CSTO-EurAsEc. The institutions of NATO and Warsaw Pact were not created due to the ideology, but both these two institutions and the ideologies they were defending meant the relevant spheres of influence for the US and USSR. As chapter three argues, the Cold War was a war for clash of spheres of influence rather than for clash of ideologies. Instead of ideology, nuclear deterrence and the economic institutions were created by the US and USSR to sustain the two opposite coalitions, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Whereas in the post-Cold War, the US objective of keeping and expanding NATO, and the Russian objective of forming CIS, CSTO and Eurasian Union, prove the continuity of spheres of influence by these two countries and that the two continue to be countries of sphere of influence personality.

In the action-reaction cycle, one's strength is perceived to create insecurity for the other. Here it is necessary to highlight that Russia's stance in the Ukrainian and Syrian crises comes from a sense of vulnerability that threatens its geopolitical interests and triggers Russia to actively defend its interests. This is the central factor for which, the loss of CIS remains an unacceptable geopolitical concession for Russia. On the other side, the

Western institutions are determined to expand their influence in the CIS area through EU and NATO, and over as far in the world as they can reach. Here, the US hegemonic influence needs to keep down its main rivals, Russia and China, but by trying to expand into what they consider as their rightful sphere of influence, the US may trigger a China-Russia alliance attempting to establish their military and economic institutions for an independent influence.

In dealing with Russia, the US has two choices, a Russia with CIS, or a Russian assertiveness that leads to a Russia with China and a Russia forming coalitions with countries that are dissatisfied with US. While Russia aims to establish its geographic influence in global affairs through tactical bilateral relations, such as with Syria, North Korea, Iran, Turkey, Egypt recently, and other allies on other regions, in return it creates the perception that it is pursuing an anti-US policy.

## **7.2 The Contest for Influence and its Significance for the US-Russian Bilateral Relations**

The continuing spheres of influence approach in the post-Cold War has been less aggressive and obvious, but just as competitive as during the Cold War. The three case studies examined here have highlighted the hostilities between the US and Russia, the increased destruction in Syria and Ukraine, and also highlighted the increased tension in the countries caught between Russia and NATO, such as Georgia and the pro-NATO GUUAM countries. To these countries, the crisis means the statehood's survival; to the US and Russia these crises mean assets for influence projection. Regarding the case study of the Ukrainian Revolution, this study determines that strategically Ukraine's significance resembles the case of Germany during the Cold War. To keep under control the situation in Europe it was necessary to deter a country that had started two world wars- Germany. For this reason, a US-USSR cooperation was necessary to defeat Germany in

1941, a US-Western Germany was necessary to deter USSR during the Cold War, and a global NATO is necessary to keep under control the security in every region, in the US terms.

During and after the Cold War, the strategic stability (nuclear deterrence) prevented these two countries from a direct immediate military confrontation with each other. Nevertheless they continuously seek to neutralize each other's influence through institutions and significant strategic bilateral relations. Contest for influence and for crucial access areas brought a confrontational perspective of the US-Russian relations. Why did the measures of the Western camp to isolate Russia in international meetings and institutions, and sanctions not yield positive results? Why did it not make Russia back off in relation to its stance regarding Ukraine, Syria and NATO's expansion in CIS? Because sphere of influence and geopolitics are equally vital to all great powers, and it is necessary to understand the gravity of such threat. To strengthen their sphere of influence, the great powers have used concessions and pressures politically and economically to ensure the acceptance of alliances or proxies. The great powers have also gained interference through the support for certain political parties, movements, and campaigns to undermine the security, political and economic choices of the targeted states or areas, with the purpose of establishing their own influence projection. This thesis argues that all great powers have historically engaged in these activities, including the US and Russia.

Another critical disagreement between the US and Russia has been about NATO's persistence: its adaptation to the changing global political landscape and its expansion have been consistent with the US' preference for absolute influence in the security of every region. George Kennan, the architect of the US-USSR containment policy, in 1998 predicted that NATO's expansion is unnecessary, there is no threat, and it would provoke a confrontation posture with Russia. Academic scholars and doves have been against NATO's expansion, while the hawks have supported it. Here it is necessary to highlight,

that in the field of security and influence, Russia (like China) is not a global power but it is concerned with maintaining its status as a regional power in the regions where they are geographically located. The incompatibility of interests here stands on the point that, neither the US can accept its hegemonic security and influence being challenged, nor can Russia (or China) accept its status as a regional power being curtailed.

Throughout the diverse agreements and disagreements in the post-Cold War, the US and Russia maintained a cooperative form of their bilateral relations. However it is the Ukrainian crisis the event that changed the rules of the game between these two countries. NATO's open door policy to the CIS area continues, the Ukrainian and Syrian crises also are events still unfolding with regularly broken-cease fires. It is difficult to foresee what possible scenarios may unfold, but the pursuit for influence projection remains, whatever the course of these events.

NATO has been an alliance for democracy and protecting democracies, an alliance for the military engagements worldwide; and for the political purposes of deterrence, containment and influence. Due to the confrontation between the Ukrainian government and the pro-Russian separatists, NATO is trying to strengthen the internal unity of the alliance and its military deterrence. On the other side, Russia too is strengthening its military posture to deal with the threat posed by NATO's preparations. This is one of the most serious ramifications of the contest for influence at great powers' level, when it comes to the point of no geopolitical concession. Backing up one's opposite side in any of the three irreconcilable differences being mentioned in this study will only escalate the antagonism, because sphere of influence has been the central goal of all the American and Russian administrations. The difference has only been on the events on the ground. Therefore, establishing a reciprocal mutually assured security has become imperative, and this needs to be done only based on a direct strategic understanding between the US and Russia.



### **7.3 The Rationale of Russia's Assertiveness**

Another finding of this study reveals Russia's assertiveness and the reasons that triggered it. Great powers tailor their geopolitics and influence projection according to the changes that take place in world politics, but also in the context of policies, initiatives, and vulnerabilities of one another. This study traces the rise of Russia's assertiveness since NATO's offer for membership to Georgia. Offering membership to Georgia meant a direct challenge to Russia, which meant that Russia should not consider CIS as its sphere of interest. NATO's influence expansion in CIS started with Georgia, a move supported by both G.W. Bush and Obama's administrations. Also the Ukrainian claims of joining NATO before and after the Revolution are viewed by Russia as detrimental to its security as well as its influence status in CIS.

Therefore, until the time of this writing, this study asserts that the Georgian and Ukrainian offer for memberships were the turning points of Russia's previous partnership-contest position into a confrontational one. While the US views Russia as a geopolitical threat that should be contained, Russia's assertiveness is trying to demonstrate that it is a power that should be recognized and accommodated. The US wants a world order where it is ahead of the other central poles and Russia's assertiveness intends to demonstrate that there is no world order without or against Russia. On the other side Russia is aware that it cannot thwart the US influence but it is determined to defend what influence it is left with, and establish another orbit of influence, probably of a different shape. Noteworthy here is that, the US' pursuit for global influence comes from strength, while Russia's assertiveness for influence in the post-Soviet area comes from insecurity.

#### **7.4 A Question of the Balance between Contest for Influence and Mutually Assured Security**

Finally, the US-Russian relations have been complex in both Cold War and post-Cold War eras. In the context of this bilateral relationship, there has been a duel between the mutually assured security and the sphere of influence. Given the developments of the events being discussed in this study, until the Ukrainian Revolution, the mutually assured security prevailed. After the Ukrainian Revolution, sphere of influence has continued to dominate the political atmosphere between these two countries. This is the reason for which in the great powers' relations, at some point the will for mutually assured security will clash with the powers' ambitions for absolute influence.

As the current international situation stands, there is not much cooperation between the US and Russia at this time, despite the efforts to establish coordination and agreements in the fight against terrorism or in resolving the Syrian and Ukrainian crises. Especially the battle against ISIS seems to be a common battlefield threat, but there is a lack of common assessment regarding their main concerns.

To the Western and US front, the primary concern is terrorism, whereas to Russia, (and China) the primary concern is strengthening the leadership and self-reliance in their respective zones of influence. Russia's assertiveness in the regional issues was rejected by the US, as expressed in the speeches and interviews of different American and European policy makers. Furthermore, as the expansion of the US hegemonic influence in CIS through NATO and bilateral alliances loosens the Russian ties with these countries, the previous domination based on good will is replaced by Russia's tactical manoeuvres to remain the hegemon of the CIS region.

Both EU and the US have supported democracy and self-determination in CIS and Middle East, while the Russian side argues that, the stability of CIS countries is in the interests of Russia more than in the interests of any other country. In Middle East, the

chaos in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and the rest of the troubled Middle Eastern states have shed doubt into the self-determination of the violent extremist groups. All these events have shaped the perception of the US and Russia about each other, which has contributed to serious differences on whether and how to deal with certain threats, such as the global war on terrorism and ISIS, also examined in this study.

To relate it with the subject of this study, it is the great powers' sphere of influence that creates and organizes the summits, institutions, and coalitions suitable for their geopolitical interests, US and Russia concretely. At the current time of this writing, these three events have made the space for mutually assured security much narrower, and the contest for influence projection has prevailed.

## **7.5 Findings of the Study**

Throughout the chapters of this study, the events and the arguments have highlighted different findings. It is important to emphasize that the sphere of influence approach keeps continuing even after the Cold War era and the international system has not been capable of handling and managing the problems of great powers' spheres of influence. The bilateral relations between the US and Russia are much wider than just these three events analysed in this study. There are reasons for mutually assured security as well as reasons of contest for influence projection.

Nevertheless, at present, these two countries are at a troubled state of affairs caused by the EU's and NATO's open-door approach to the CIS countries, the Ukrainian Revolution and the Syrian Crisis. These issues mean incompatible strategic interests and are sufficient to prove the central theme of this study, continuity and contest for spheres of influence between the US and Russia even in the post-Cold War era. Should the US opt for a compromise with Russia on Syria based on a no-Assad's departure and no NATO-EU membership for the CIS countries, or should it continue its influence expansion? Such

negotiations and concessions will continue to be discussed between the American and Russian administrations, and the proceedings vary between hawks and doves, academics and the policy makers. Doves and academics suggest a consideration and accommodation of the other's strategic concerns, while hawks and the policy makers intend to pursue more aggressively the geopolitical considerations and the country's status in the hierarchy of the international power.

This study determined that geopolitically, Ukraine resembles Germany's significance during the Cold War, an argument that has been elaborated in chapters three and four. Great powers have historically fought because of lack of such agreement among them. World politics is basically about the international relations among the primary powers, which claim and ensure that certain territories or states (glued through different factors, economic or security) are under their protection, as such turning these states into their bases and their orbits of influence. It is the great powers' pursuit for influence that shapes the international politics and causes its cycles, this has demonstrated the endurance of Cold War into post-Cold War. Regarding the three issues chosen to highlight the contest for influence between US and Russia, this study determines that negotiating the orbits of influence will continue to be a challenge between the Russian and American policy makers. While the US, NATO and EU strongly claim that the current international rules must neither be challenged nor broken, Russia is of the opinion that it aims neither to lead nor to be led in international politics.

## **7.6 Recommendations**

After every Great War, there have been attempts to re-order the international peace and stability due to the fact that the interests, ambitions and rivalries of the great powers for sphere of influence have shaped world politics, whether through war-frame or peace frame. In the current rivalry for influence between the US and Russia, this study suggests

that regarding the great powers' pursuit for influence, they have the strength and the capability of capturing the approval of the elites of the countries in the regions in which they wish to expand their influence, but it is impossible to get such acceptance from the dominant power in that region. For instance, the West wants to spread democratization, rule of law, democratic governance, and it has the credibility and the approval of the elites of some CIS countries, but it does not have Russia's acceptance of expanding these steps in what is considered Russia's sphere of influence. (the same goes with China) The subordinate countries who have to pursue either one or the other, when caught between the two try to tread cautiously or deal with an internal devastation, like in the case of Syria and Ukraine. Ignoring Russia's acceptance of such expansion into what it perceives as its sphere of influence has triggered a Russian assertiveness and Russian claims that equal partnership cannot exist in terms of unequal power and strength. This perception has been translated into a Russian policy to promote a tighter reintegration of CIS, and to cooperate with China and other allies outside West for self-reliance and independence in its relevant sphere of influence.

Furthermore, this study suggests that there is a need for an international political-legal framework to address concretely certain principles, such as self-defense and use of force, non-interference into other countries' affairs and the responsibility to protect. Because the current international institutions have not provided an accurate picture of these principles, as a consequence, the parties involved in any crisis justify their violence and intervention on behalf of international law. There is not a clear frame of legal basis for intervention by force, self-defense and self-determination, use of force or prohibition of use of force. Despite the principles outlined by the Concert of Europe, League of Nations, and the United Nations, the great powers' schemes for spheres of influence have always broken or bended those rules to achieve their interests. So this study recommends a cautious expansion of sphere of influence that does not lead to a serious US-Russian

confrontation, instead a balance between the US' hegemony and Russia's regionalism. Through this interpretive study, it became obvious that great powers have remained powers-US, China, Russia, France, Germany, UK Japan, and spheres have remained spheres-Middle East, Africa, even Europe somehow strong economically but weak militarily, Asia also) and the powers keep carving up their spheres of influence whatever the structure and the distribution of the capabilities in the international system.

The unfolding of these three events, the approach of sphere of influence and the US-Russian bilateral relations will continue to be analysed in future research, according to how these three events unfold and the new insights to which they give rise.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **TEXT OF MINSK II AGREEMENT BETWEEN GERMANY, FRANCE, RUSSIA, UKRAINE AND THE PRO-RUSSIAN SEPARATISTS.**

##### **A.1 Minsk agreement on Ukraine crisis: text in full**

- Immediate and full ceasefire in particular districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts of Ukraine and its strict fulfilment as of 00.00 midnight (Kiev time) on Feb. 15, 2015.
- Pull-out of all heavy weapons by both sides to equal distance with the aim of creation of a security zone on minimum 50 kilometres apart for artillery of 100mm calibre or more, and a security zone of 70km for MLRS and 140 kilometres for MLRS Tornado-S, Uragan, Smerch and tactical missile systems Tochka U.
  - for Ukrainian troops, from actual line of contact;
  - for armed formations of particular districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts of Ukraine, from the contact line in accordance with the Minsk memorandum as of Sept. 19, 2014
- The pullout of the above mentioned heavy weapons has to start no later than the second day after the ceasefire and finish within 14 days
- This process will be assisted by OSCE with the support of the Trilateral Contact Group.
- Effective monitoring and verification of ceasefire regime and pullout of heavy weapons by OSCE will be provided from the first day of pullout, using all necessary technical means such as satellites, drones, radio-location systems etc.
- On the first day after the pullout a dialogue is to start on modalities of conducting local elections in accordance with the Ukrainian legislation and the Law of Ukraine “On temporary Order of Local Self-Governance in Particular Districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts,” and also about the future of these districts based on the above mentioned law.

- Without delays, but no later than 30 days from the date of signing of this document, a resolution has to be approved by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, indicating the territory which falls under the special regime in accordance with the law “On temporary Order of Local Self-Governance in Particular Districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts,” based in the line set up by the Minsk Memorandum as of Sept. 19, 2014.
- Provide pardon and amnesty by way of enacting a law that forbids persecution and punishment of persons in relation to events that took place in particular departments of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts of Ukraine.
- Provide release and exchange of all hostages and illegally held persons, based on the principle of “all for all”. This process has to end – at the latest – on the fifth day after the pullout (of weapons).
- Provide safe access, delivery, storage and distribution of humanitarian aid to the needy, based on an international mechanism.
- Define the modalities of a full restoration of social and economic connections, including social transfers, such as payments of pensions and other payments (income and revenue, timely payment of communal bills, restoration of tax payments within the framework of Ukrainian legal field)
- With this aim, Ukraine will restore management over the segment of its banking system in the districts affected by the conflict, and possibly, an international mechanism will be established to ease such transactions.
- Restore full control over the state border by Ukrainian government in the whole conflict zone, which has to start on the first day after the local election and end after the full political regulation (local elections in particular districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts based on the law of Ukraine and Constitutional reform) by the end of 2015, on the condition of fulfilment of Point 11 – in consultations and in agreement with

representatives of particular districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group.

- Pullout of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, and also mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under OSCE supervision. Disarmament of all illegal groups.
- Constitutional reform in Ukraine, with the new Constitution to come into effect by the end of 2015, the key element of which is decentralisation (taking into account peculiarities of particular districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, agreed with representatives of these districts), and also approval of permanent legislation on special status of particular districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts in accordance with the measures spelt out in the footnotes, by the end of 2015.

Available at *The Telegraph*, "Minsk agreement on Ukraine crisis", 12 February 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11408266/Minskagreement-on-Ukraine-crisis-text-in-full.html>.



## **APPENDIX B**

### **GENEVA II**

#### **B.2 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release: January 31, 2014 MEDIA NOTE: London 11 Communique

Below is the text of a London 11 communique, released in Geneva, Switzerland.

BEGIN TEXT:

On January 31, Senior Officials from Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States, after having met in Geneva with the Syrian opposition delegation led by the Syrian National Coalition, the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, adopted the following Core Group communiqué:

1. We appreciate the efforts of the Joint Special Representative Brahimi and his team to lay the foundations of negotiations between the Syrian regime and the Syrian opposition delegations. The UNSG has convened the parties to the Geneva II Conference with the aim of achieving a political transition on the basis of the Geneva Communiqué which will preserve the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria. As reiterated by the UNSG at the Montreux Conference, the transition should begin with the formation, by mutual consent, of a transitional governing body with full executive powers, including control over security, intelligence and military apparatuses. The negotiations are to form without delay a transitional governing body with full executive powers in full implementation of the Geneva Communiqué.
2. We welcome the courageous decision taken by the Syrian National Coalition to come to Geneva, and the constructive approach the opposition delegation has adopted throughout the first round of negotiations. We encourage the Coalition to pursue its

efforts in this direction and to keep broadening the basis of the opposition delegation as well as to continue actively reaching out to all Syrians. We are fully committed to support this process.

3. The regime must adopt a clear position by endorsing the Geneva Communiqué and commit to the objective of the Conference as stated in the invitation letter of the UN Secretary General and as requested by the countries present in Montreux. The regime is responsible for the lack of real progress in the first round of negotiations. It must not further obstruct substantial negotiations and it must engage constructively in the second round of negotiations. We ask all those who have influence on it to engage to create the conditions for the process to succeed.
4. We express outrage at the maintaining, by the regime, of its “starve or surrender” strategy which in particular deprives hundreds of thousands of people in the suburbs of Damascus, in the old city of Homs and elsewhere, from receiving food and medicine, and at the arbitrary detention of tens of thousands of civilians. It is all the more important that the Geneva II process lead to tangible and immediate benefits to the Syrian people. We call on the international community to use all its influence to secure full humanitarian access throughout Syria without delay. The regime must let UN convoys have access to the old city of Homs, as proposed by the UN and accepted by the opposition.
5. We condemn in the strongest terms the continued use of “barrel bombs”, ballistic missiles and heavy artillery by the regime against the Syrian people, in full contradiction with the Geneva process as well as basic human rights principles.
6. We reiterate the right of the Syrian people to defend itself. In this vein, we commit to support the opposition groups respecting democratic and pluralistic values, as stated in the national covenant adopted by the opposition in July 2012, recognizing the political authority of the Syrian National Coalition and accepting the prospect of a

democratic transition. We fully back the opposition groups in their action against AlQaeda affiliated groups. We condemn the presence of foreign fighters in Syria, both those fighting with the regime such as Hezbollah and other Iranian backed forces, and those fighting within other extremist groups. We call on the international community to do their part to ensure that the extremists don't deny the Syrian people the opportunity to realize their democratic aspirations.

7. The Geneva II Conference aims to allow the Syrian people to control its future through a genuine political transition. It is of utmost importance that these goals should be reached.

END TEXT

Available at: "Text of London 11 Communique on the Geneva II Conference", Mission of the United States, Geneva, Switzerland.  
<https://geneva.usmission.gov/2014/01/31/text-of-london-11-communique-on-the-geneva-ii-conference/>.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 60/1. 2005 WORLD SUMMIT OUTCOME THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS THE FOLLOWING 2005 WORLD SUMMIT OUTCOME:**

#### **138. RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT**

Responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means. We accept that responsibility and will act in accordance with it. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability.

#### **C.3 Democracy**

135. We reaffirm that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives. We also reaffirm that while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy, that it does not belong to any country or region, and reaffirm the necessity of due respect for sovereignty and the right of self-determination. We stress that democracy, development and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.