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UNDERSTANDING RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY: CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES UNDER PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN

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ABSTRACT

The study reveals that Russian foreign policy has undergone various transformations in the 21st century under the leadership of President Vladimir V. Putin. These changes are reflected in Russia's active involvement in international affairs and its response towards the issues in its backyard (Georgia crisis 2008, Crimean reunification with Russia 2014). In terms of realist aims and ambitions, Russian foreign policy discourses indicate certain continuities of the Soviet era, for example, Russia's emphasis on its global power status. What marks the beginning of a new era in Russian foreign policy discourses is the approach of Vladimir Putin. He has transformed the way today's world looks at Russia. While in principle, Russian foreign policy remains focused on the 'multi-polar world' order with a respectable place for Russia, in practice, it is a pragmatic approach to enhance Russian national interest and counterbalance the West in its backyard and former zones of influence in the world. This study looks at the continuities and changes in the Russian foreign policy in terms of its national interest, Russian Identity and its stance on various international issues.

KEYWORDS: *Realism, National Interest, Identity, Pragmatism, Security, Foreign Policy*

INTRODUCTION

In August 1999 President Boris Yeltsin appointed Vladimir Putin as his Prime Minister. Later that year on 31 December 1999, Yeltsin declared him as his successor and the acting president of the Russian Federation. Vladimir Putin secured victory in the succeeding presidential elections. His rise to the highest post of the Russian Federation was quick and left scholarship incredulous about his little known elusive personality (Nicholson 2001: 867-884). From 2000 to 2008, he stayed as president and then in March 2012 and in 2016 he has again won the presidential elections. His long-term as President has brought metamorphic changes in many spheres of foreign policy and improved Russian image from 'sick man of Eurasia' to 'a power to reckon'. This study is intended to look into major changes in foreign policy under his leadership which turned the wheels of met geographies and world geopolitical consciousness into believing Russia's 'bounce back' on the international stage.

Russia after the cold war was left economically and politically weak and the military was the only arena where it still had a dominant position which was declining against US's technological advancements but was still above the rest of the world. Political elites during the 1990s realized it so they further focused on military modernization and strategic advancements to regain an important position in world affairs for Russia which was sliding down from world geopolitical scales (Lo 2002: 20-78).

So, that urge to make Russia 'matter' again is what Putin has inherited from his predecessors but his approach has been pragmatic, multi-dimensional and wider than them in many respects as analyzed in following pages.

UNDERSTANDING RUSSIAN 'NATIONAL INTEREST' UNDER VLADIMIR V. PUTIN

Jeffery Mankoff (2009) argues that a state's self-identity and its recognition in the international system; whether as a nation-state or empire or a revisionist power, forms the intellectual framework that shapes important decisions about the employment of power. According to him, the same is true about the national interest of a country; which is a subjective understanding of what is going to benefit various actors in the state. National interest is a dynamic concept. Over a certain period, preferences and goals of a country undergoing transformation due to changed internal and external environment. Given Russian history of communism pyramid structure of power-sharing, its 'politburo' (CPU's top decision-making body) and president enjoyed near discretionary powers in respect with the foreign policy. And even before that the nature of Bolshevik revolution gave rise to the 'Messiah' culture (Shlapentokh 1992: 2-45) in Russian politics resultantly the personalities of the following presidents had a great influence on foreign security policy in general and defining national interest in particular i.e. Lenin's 'Dual task', Stalin's 'socialism in one country', Khrushchev's 'peaceful coexistence', Brezhnev's 'détente', Gorbachev's 'perestroika and glasnost'.

In 1990, Russia came out as a legitimate heir of the former USSR following the end of the cold war and the demise of the former USSR. Despite its total shift from the communist system to the democratic setup, the position of Russian president still remains very powerful and as de facto superior to the legislative council. In the times of political instability and economic wreckage, a well defined Russian national interest seemed a farfetched idea. Consequently, for almost a decade Russian foreign policy remained in flip flops, lacking a coherent vision (Lo 2002: 1-28). During his first term in the office, Yeltsin and his foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev called for integration with the western economic and security institutions. But later on disillusioned with the US's unilateral domination of the world especially its interference in CIS, color revolutions and Kosovo crisis, boosted the sect of leadership which favored superpower role for Russia in post-cold war world order. Later foreign minister Yevgeni Primakov propagated the super power role for Russia (Lo 2002: 29-69). Russian policy makers were confronted with newly emerged challenges in the Russian backyard viz., ever sinking economy, terrorism, US hegemony and CIS countries turning towards its former foes and were more interested in maintaining distance from their Soviet identities. It took almost a decade to stabilize the Russian economy and politics.

In the shadow of Second Chechnya War, Putin was appointed as the Prime minister and later the successor of Yeltsin. He was elected as president in March 2000. Vladimir Putin was faced with the same questions at international sphere but he had more favorable environment than Yeltsin. Russian polity and economy were stable. Vladimir Putin was a lesser known figure in the world political circles before becoming the president, so there were far less generalisations made about his personality and behavior (Dyson 2001: 329-346). After coming to power he claimed that Russia's great power status was an essential priority but it should not be on the cost of its special relations with West in general and the US in particular (Putin 2001).

Vladimir Putin tended to broaden the horizon of Russian national interest not only being competitive visa vies the West to secure a greater role for Russia at the world stage. Instead of competing against West in the post cold war world order Putin promoted to economize the foreign policy. His major challenges were to reconcile strategic ambitions with the

need for economic modernization. In his first two terms, all his decisions were having this broad vision which was clearly lacking during Yeltsin's time. He came with a broader approach and place for Russia in world affairs (Lo 2002: 30-111). He diversified Russian contacts with other countries rather than sticking to the cold war obsession of West. He paid visits to emerging countries like China and India. One of the continuing factors of Russian national interest even under Putin is to claim a great power status in the world. But the methodology he has applied to achieve it is remarkably different from his predecessor. While Yeltsin talked in classical realist terms of balancing West, Putin talks of cooperating with the West in global issues. Putin's pragmatic eurasianism claims that Russia is a great power of Asia and Europe. Putin came with the realization that Russia by its mere existence is a unique power transcending continents therefore his restatement of Russian national interest was putting Russia on the world stage as a powerful state rather than just defining Russia visa vies western powers (Lo 2003: 45-178). During Yeltsin administration despite Russia lacking the capabilities to challenge the US it kept on responding with cold war balancing mentality where as Putin has successfully avoided that gap of Russian actual capacity and claims. He has avoided using cold war vocabulary to define Russian position against west which is no longer relevant. For example during recent Syrian crisis instead of blaming the US for neo-imperialism and being high headed (as in 90s Russia reacted against the US actions in Angola and Kosovo crisis) he used the sentences like "it could increase the violence and start a new wave of terrorism" (Putin2013). He did oppose any kind of military intervention in Syria by the US led forces and vetoed against it in the UNSC (United Nation Security Council).

In short under the Putin administration rhetoric of Russian national interest has undergone a transformation from being first, west-centric to global. Secondly, Russian approach towards its superpower status has become less in speaking and more in action under Putin's leadership. Russia's efforts to reclaim its superpower status are the continuities Putin has inherited from his predecessors, but his strategy to achieve it is what differentiates him from them. At the same time, he is strongly against any intervention by the west in the Russian backyard and Russian 'realpolitik' remains active in CIS states. He is in favor of a striking soft balance between geo-strategic ambitions, economic modernization and securing a leadership status for Russia (Putin 2007).

IDENTITY DEBATE IN RUSSIAN POLICY UNDER PUTIN

Geographical historical conditions have always played a substantial role in forming an entity's worldview. These conditions shape the culture and identity of a particular landmass' population. GertjanDijkink argues that Russian empire from the ancient times was the result of peasant traditions, a bond of the man with the land and isolationism which resulted into 'fear of the outsiders' (Dijkink 1996: 95-98). According to him the precise question of what and who is a Russian has never found a definite answer. During the times of Peter The Great in the 16th century when he tried to modernize Russia like Western European countries, a gap between the pragmatic elites and conservative masses got created regarding the identity of Russia (Riasanovsky 2005: 222-238). And With the passage of time, many competing conceptions of identity emerged in Russian intellectual spaces like, ideology of the state, socio-ethnic identity of the people, identity perceptions of the Russian intelligentsia. At the early stages, a 'Russian' was the one who simply belonged to the territory of the Russian empire. But later the efforts of the Czarist rulers to 'secularise' Russia (especially after the annexation of the Tatar areas) to check the rising nationalist element in Russian discourses (which they perceived as a threat to the empire) started identity question in Russia (Dijkink 1996: 99-107).

Geographically, the Russian empire transcending continents brought various ethnocultural communities under its fold. Distinctive geographical location gave it a unique identity and place in the world which denies a Russian integration with any of the surrounding entities. Despite the efforts of its rulers at various times, Russia failed to get blended in the so called mainstream Europe, the reason being its distinctive values and systems. When Gorbachev talked about 'Common European Home' it represented the long -standing longing in various Russian rulers to integrate Russia with the Europe. But just like many of his predecessors, he failed to bring substance to such claims. At the same time in Western discourses, Russia was a sphere where their conception of 'the other' used to materialize (Groys 1992: 1-13). Throughout the history, Russian values and way of life's distinctiveness from the western culture were highlighted in western philosophy rather than emphasis upon the commonness.

After the former USSR disintegrated, its unique identity as an ideological counter stream to the western capitalist system had also gone with it. Debate on Russian national identity had become more complex than ever. The two most debated questions in Russian intellectual discourses, what is Russia? And who is a Russian? On the second question, an interesting response from the state emerged. Within a night's time, Russia had fourteen new neighbors with Slavic- Russian minorities living in the most of them. On one hand, Russian Diasporas in all these countries faced the question of belongingness and on the other hand state was clueless about the solutions of this ethno-cultural crisis (Billington 1992: 345-356).

At a domestic level demand for the security of these 'separated brethren' grew intense and from there onwards, Russian indulgences in it is near abroad are usually justified in the name of the 'protection of Russians abroad'. It gave birth to a new dimension in Russian discourses on identity. Identity became a geopolitical tool in Russian foreign policy (Duncan 2005: 1-39). Whereas on the first question Russia still struggled to define itself visa vies the rest of the world in general and west in particular. Amidst this heated debate on the identity question, three streams of thought emerged into the scene with their different approaches on the question. First, this approach had its proponents favoring going back to Russia's superpower status. They considered balancing west and Russian prosperity in the military sphere. They emphasized the status and respect the former USSR commanded in the world and wanted the same for Russia. The second stream of thought led by the then president Yeltsin was of pragmatic leaders favoring complete integration of Russia with the Western security and economic institutions for a developed and modern Russia. The third school of thought was of eurasianists, they focused upon the unique historic, cultural and political evolution (Smith 1999: 481-494). For them, Russia is a great country transcending continents and it should enjoy the status of an inclusive Eurasian power. Vladimir Putin is closer to the third school (Lo 2002: 11-17).

The first question Putin had to confront after ascending to the leadership was of overcoming the 'Otherness of Russia' syndrome in western geopolitical consciousness and he put efforts in this direction by his pro-western stand on the economic front and even after 9/11 pledging wholehearted support to the so-called US 'war on terror' (Loughlin, Tuathail et al 2004: 3-34). His decision to hold Winter Olympics in Sochi was the most recent step in this direction. His efforts have claimed mixed reactions from the west in the last decade. More recently due to the Crimean crisis, all seems to have gone in vain. Because Russian otherness is deep-rooted in the western consciousness and given their troubled history, optimistic agendas to gain any fruit seems the matter of decades and centuries rather than of years. The Yeltsin administration struggled for common moral principles to govern the society and define the state at world level

in post-soviet space. But political instability, economic doldrums, and pre-soviet and post-soviet legacies never allowed a single well-defined identity to get a form.

Putin had come to the scene of a new world where economic emergence, technological advancements, and soft power had come to play a greater role in forming a country's identity. Today's Russia has transformed from being a nearly failed state to a (re) emerging power. Protection of Russians in the backyard, ethnocultural links with Serbia and use of identity as a geopolitical tool continue to be the dominant factors in Putin's security policy (Kassianova 2001: 821-839). Under his leadership, Russia has claimed a respectable image in the world sphere. Earlier the debate on Russian identity had been euro-centric but in today's multi-polar world a country has to accomplish at economic, technological, demographic, and international humanitarian etc fronts to gain respect and Vladimir Putin has demonstrated Russian readiness for playing a responsible power's role (Putin 2007). In such a scenario and given the troubled history, Russian friction with the West is quite obvious. Though the scores with western Europe still plays a central role in many Russian foreign security policy decisions Russia has expanded in other directions to garner world's attention especially taking up stands in UNSC. Definition of Russian National identity has been broadened under Putin's leadership.

RUSSIAN RESURGENCE: PROACTIVE FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS GEORGIA (2008) AND CRIMEA (2014)

The pro-West foreign policy of the Yeltsin administration was brought into question by the eurasianists and the nationalists in the Russian legislature on a variety of issues ranging from sanctions on Iraq after the Gulf war to the American interference in the Central Asian republics, Colour revolutions and the NATO expansion in Eastern Europe. The Putin Administration adopted a more pragmatic attitude to consolidate Russian position without risking the deterioration of its relations with the US. Following this pragmatism, Russia maintained a principled position on international law and the international institutions like the UN and its agencies. The biggest challenge came in the form of 'color revolutions' in many former Soviet states where the US and its Western European allies supported the popular revolts against the authoritarian leaders of Georgia, Ukraine, and Kirghizstan. On the other hand, NATO's eastward expansion was viewed as Western hostility towards the post-soviet Russia. These two factors were fundamental in the mid -2000s apparent shift in the Russian foreign policy away from its earlier pro-US attitude.

The visible re-emergence of Russia on the international stage was highlighted during its unilateral actions in Georgia crisis of 2008 and later the military intervention to unite a Ukrainian province of Crimea after the pro-Russia referendum results in Crimea (2014). In 2003 a pro-West government came to power in Georgia and since then the diplomatic ties between Russia and Georgia were under strain. Russia vehemently opposes any Western incursion in its 'backyard'. The situation became conflicting and resulted into a war when the autonomous provinces of Georgia; South Ossetia and Abkhazia declared their independence and Russia crossed the border to support their claim. Russia recognized the independence of these states whereas Georgia considered the Russian attack aviolation of its sovereignty. The international community did not recognize the independence of these states. Russia since 2008 has maintained the military presence in both the areas as a preventive measure against Georgia regaining the control of these territories. The European Union, the US, and the Georgian government have alleged these territories as 'occupied territories' by the Russian Federation. This stance on Georgia reflected a break from the pro-West policy of the Yeltsin or the later, early 2000s policy of Putin to not antagonize the West. His pragmatism has contributed to Russia's ascendance on the

global power hierarchy which has manifested itself through Russian policy decisions in the case of Georgia, Ukraine and most recently in Syria.

In 2014 another situation arose in Ukraine when Crimea; a Ukrainian province with Russian speaking majority held a referendum to decide its future to stay with Ukraine or to join the Russian Federation. When 95 percent of the Crimean population voted in favor to join Russia, Russian army crossed to the border and assimilated Crimea into the Russian Federation. Rejoining of Crimea into the Russian Federation has opened up new avenues of debate among scholars about the repercussions/impacts of this event upon the European security scenario and Russian security discourses in years to come. Some of the policy-makers and scholars have called it 'the gravest threat to European security and stability since the end of cold war' (Rasmussen 2014) while others have seen it as the ending chapter of the unipolar world order (Radyuhin 2014: 4-7) and some have also indicated towards the beginning of a 'new cold war'. Which one of these narratives is going to succeed or not in best explaining Ukraine crisis, will be answered in the coming future. But the unfolding of the events in Ukraine has surfaced following arguments for debate; first, the whole confrontation and deadlock between Russia and the US -led west reminds us of the cold war locking of horns between then superpowers the former USSR and the US. It has prompted many in diplomacy to mark it as the beginning of a 'new' cold war. Secondly, the nature of Crimea joining the Russian Federation through a democratic process has put the US and its allies in jeopardy and dilemma because them being the self - proclaimed champions of democracy, they actually cannot oppose a democratic referendum, but their choice of a strong opposition to the Crimean reunification with Russia has in fact exposed western double standards on democracy and peace of which Russia has always accused them. Thirdly, in the case of Ukraine crisis, the modern neo-liberal weapon of 'economic sanctions' of the US and EU seems to be failing to check Russian behavior because of the energy dependence of some of the largest EU countries upon Russia (Ahmad 2014: 10-15). The power structure in Europe is undergoing transformation, where a resurgent Russia under Putin is trying to expand its wings and inviting resistance from the reluctant status quoist powers.

In a way the Ukraine crisis has served as an opportune platform for Putin to display Russia's readiness to claim its equal power status at world level just as post-9/11 then American president Bush's declaration of 'war on terror' came as an opportunity for Putin to start a business with the US-led western countries. He has managed to utilize the inherit weakness of western realism being ignorant about the domestic realities of a country. Outgrown Western impatience with the plan to steal Ukraine away from the Russian shadow by overthrowing the Viktor Yanukovych government ended up empowering the opposition extreme right-wing groups into the main decision making. Their decision to derecognize Russian as the first language of the people of Crimea sparked the row which ended with 95% of the Crimean population supporting the decision to join Russian Federation in a referendum. Crimea had never been the part of Ukraine before 1954 when Soviet premier N. Khrushchev gifted it to Ukraine as a gesture of goodwill. Crimean population share closer cultural ties with Russia than Ukraine and when they felt threatened with annihilation under the new regime people opted for Russia (Radyudin 2014: 4-8).

Vladimir Putin has accused western arrogance and containment policy for the crisis in Ukraine. He questioned the Western motives behind the coup in February 2014 when even after the settlement between then-president Viktor Yanukovych and the opposition parties was reached with Western and Russian intermediation the opposition took the power through a coup. Vladimir Putin has displayed yet again the continuous Russian commitment to defend its interests in

its backyards at all costs (Putin 2014). Putin has also accused the US and its Western allies of having double standards on democracy by citing the parallel between the situations in Kosovo and Crimea. During his address on Crimean reunion, he said, "....Moreover, the Crimean authorities referred to the well-known Kosovo precedent-a precedent our western colleagues created with their own hands in a very similar situation, when they agreed that the unilateral separation of Kosovo from Serbia, exactly what Crimea is doing now, was legitimate and did not require any permission from the country's central authorities. Pursuant to Article 2, Chapter 1 of the United Nations Charter, the UN International Court agreed with this approach and made the following comment in its ruling of July 22, 2010, and I quote: "No general prohibition may be inferred from the practice of the Security Council with regard to declarations of independence," and "General international law contains no prohibition on declarations of independence." Crystal clear, as they say..."[1] (Putin 2014)

Reunion of Crimea into Russia has also benefitted Russian geostrategic interests in the region with the port of Sevastopol going back to Russian Navy giving it access to the eastern Mediterranean. Even sanctions seem to be of little use for the US in the case of Russia because of the energy dependence of many of its allies upon Russia and world economy already being down on a spiral (Stracansky 2014). The Crimean rejoining of the Russian Federation has only marked the beginning of Ukraine crisis Putin has parliament's support even military action in Ukraine if the need arises in near future. At the same time as Russian minority in the south and eastern parts of faces the fear of getting targeted by the national government of Ukraine and are also demanding to be reunited with Russia, a domino effect can be expected in the surrounding post-soviet states as well. Some of the states with Russians as the majority are also NATO members. So, these ongoing crisis has set the bigger questions related to the security of Russia and the Russians into a motion in future to come.

With Russia and the US-led west engaging in a direct confrontation with each other in Ukraine has brought the civil war to the heart of Europe (Ahmad 2014: 10-14). If Ukraine breaks up then Russia and NATO will be directly facing each other, and Russian policy of keeping buffers between Russia and enemies will suffer. On the other hand, western powers cannot afford to engage in just another civil war at their own door-steps, especially against the country upon which their huge dependence in energy sector exists. Western promotion of democracy and peace was earlier occurring in the countries located away from European or US borders so even Western support to the opposition right wings or in certain case 'good' militants was not directly affecting stability and peace in Europe or US but if extremism takes the benefit from Ukraine crisis it would be capable of creating troubles on either side well within the borders of Russia or its western counterparts. Moreover, the cold war and its confrontations are long gone. Today's Russia is capitalist and economies are integrated into a world system and there is no economic ideological friction between Russia and the West. Unlike cold war era now reconciliation is not a farfetched dream. European powers cannot afford to overlook Putin's Russia as it has been doing since the collapse of the former USSR.

[1] The Russian President Vladimir Putin during his address at the ceremony held during the Crimean re-joining into the Russian Federation on 18th March 2014 URL: http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889

CONCLUSIONS

The nature and circumstances of the former USSR's collapse left Russia and the whole former socialist bloc into economic decline. Former Soviet allies turned toward the only option of the US; IMF and WB. Russia amidst its acute economic decline turned towards its former enemies for structural adjustments and economic rebuilding. Despite economic trade and cooperation, cold war political flashpoints remained in the Russia-US relations along with the cold war mindset of tackling these frictions. US unilateral actions in the post-soviet space/s, colour revolutions in Eastern Europe, Kosovo crisis, NATO's eastward expansion along with US discretionary actions in crisis-ridden African countries frustrated the Russian administration.

The coming of Vladimir Putin has marked the beginning of a new era in Russian security discourses; he has brought decisive transformations in the Russian security outlook since his first tenure as the President of the Russian Federation. Detailed analysis of the possible influencing variables of the security policy like national interest, identity, the 'Russian backyard', security doctrines, Russian geopolitical vision etc under Putin's leadership shows drastic discontinuities in Russian relations with the world. Putin has diversified the Russian foreign policy by reaching out the new poles of power in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Due to several historical and geostrategic factors Western Europe and the US still occupy the central position in the Russian 'realpolitik' but at the same time Russia once again is looking for a global position on the world stage and when faced with the resistance from the status quoist powers the deadlocks, frictions and even political confrontations are bound to come as we are witnessing in the case of the Ukrainian deadlock or difference of stands over Syria.

He has redefined Russian national interest in a changed post-soviet geopolitical space/s and time. In fact, he adopted accommodative approach towards the West during his first term by claiming that though a superpower status was essential for Russian National Interest it should not be on the cost of Russia's special relations with the West. And later continuing his legacy in 2008 President Medvedev proposed a pan-European comprehensive security mechanism to the EU but the constant Western exclusion and denial to recognize Russia as a decisive power in Europe that prompted Russia to assert itself independently.

Using identity discourses as a geopolitical tool continues to figure in Putin's security policy. Serbia has strong ethnic links with Russia and during Kosovo crisis in 90s, the then president Yeltsin protested against the US and EU by accusing them of being inconsiderate of the Serbian and Russian interests. Russia continues to influence the internal affairs of the post-soviet countries of Eastern Europe by citing the protection of Russian minorities living in these states. Putin has justified Crimean rejoining of Russia on ethnic grounds as well (Putin 2014). He is determined to protect Russian population in eastern Ukraine from the Ukrainian government's (post-Crimea) backlash. Putin shares the identity politics and its geopolitical use with his predecessors but under him Russia is actually in the position to act and assert itself visa vies threats to its 'unique' identity and ethnicity amidst a great power game in its backyard.

The Russian honeymoon with the US and the West ended as quickly as it started in post-9/11 circumstances. In 2001 Vladimir Putin extended full Russian support to the US war on terror expecting a free hand in the affairs of post-soviet countries in return and also to justify Russia's anti-terror activities in Chechnya. But disillusioned with the continued US interference in its backyard and NATO's entrance in the post-soviet spaces made Russia to revisit its stands on various issues and the problems accelerated during Georgia crisis 2008. Russia's relations with the US and the West

directly influence its (in) security. The continuing cold war responses and reciprocity in their political relations, despite having strong economic relations puts up trepidation on a hope of a normalized world order post decades after the end of the cold war.

Vladimir Putin has been relatively successful in asserting the Russian security interests vis-a-vis the West and the US. Russian energy exports to the EU countries have not only balanced the equations of economic trade rather they have helped Russia to raise its strategic scales on various issues of confrontation with the US and the West. With increased dependence of EU on Russia for energy supplies and lack of other convenient energy supply alternative has moderated western pressure on Russia on various geopolitical issues. Putin has utilized this weakness of the western countries in recent Crimean crisis.

Putin has been demanding the de-hegemonies world based on the equal relationship between all the states. In his speech during the Crimean reunification, Vladimir Putin accused the US and the West treating the whole world as their laboratory and experimenting with the outside countries on their own discretion. Present Russian ties and increasing cooperation with the alternative poles of power outside Europe reflect a diversified foreign policy to accommodated likeminded countries to unite and resist hegemonic discretionary pattern in the US-led world. Once again Russia emphasis is on balancing the geopolitical scales with its cold war political rival. Russia and the US relations are yet to come out of the 'cold war syndrome'. The ongoing tussle on Ukraine and Syria, and equation upon one issue directly are influencing the other; make the situation appear as just another cold war proxy zero-sum game. Russia has bounced back but has to struggle with the cold war structures, its insecurities and western determinism about Russia being a 'rogue'.

Russia has emerged as a power to reckon with in the last decade and a half. Its western neighbors and the US, due to historical and strategic reasons influence Russian in (security) at a great length. The Russian interactions with the West have been through cordial to confrontational. Even Russian state behavior has been varying from post-9/11's complete westward turn to recent conflict over Ukraine. The level of trust deficit on both the sides might take years to reduce given their long history of animosity and antagonism spreading over decades. But at the same time, Putin's realism in state security just like dominant western foreign policy discourses seems in alignment with the hegemonic realist discourse which is far from being sufficient to respond to the changes through which the field of security is going through. Realist phrases and monologues like 'war on terror' did not sufficiently deter the threat of terrorism. But states' responses to non-traditional threats are still grounded in realist framework. Russia is a resurgent power claiming a decisive position among the future decision-makers of the world but its foreign policy having been embedded in the same realist insecurities, threat perceptions and responses do not actually represent the 'alternative world order'.

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