

**The United States-Russian Relations in post-Cold  
War Era: the Hidden Cold War in South-Caucasus  
(1991-2008)**

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Submitted to the  
Institute of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science  
in  
International Relations

Eastern Mediterranean University  
June 2009,  
Gazimağusa, Northern Cyprus

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis is going to analyze the United States-Russian Relations during the post-Cold War Era with implications for South-Caucasus, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is believed that in post-Cold War international relations, particularly in South-Caucasus, there is still a fundamental political antagonism between the United States and Russian Federation. Hence, the core questions that the thesis will try to examine are the main reasons behind this rivalry between US and Russia. A clear demonstration of this enmity between two sides became obvious after the war between Georgia and Russia in last summer of 2008. In addition, the reasons and consequences of the war between Russia and Georgia in summer 2008 will be mentioned. Georgia is a country that falls into the Russian “*near-abroad*” foreign policy goal. Inevitably, it will include the revived form of classical strategy of US called “*neo-containment*” of Russia on/over its expansionistic strategy of sphere of influence in post-Cold War era. Of course it is impossible not to mention the reasons behind the US’ strategy of containing Russia, whereby, it was formulated as a reaction to Russia’s intention to recover Russia’s greatness in world affairs and the expansion of its spheres of influence into the “*near-abroad*” at the expense of its neighbor states.

As a result of the disintegration of the USSR, (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), three NIS’s (Newly Independent States) emerged in the South Caucasus; Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. However, these three states faced enormous political, economic and military challenges. Hence, in this context, the political, military, energy, socio-ethnic and economic developments in the South Caucasus will be observed, particularly Georgia as a case study. Within these parameters

indicated above, US, Russian and Georgian foreign policies will be examined in the Post Cold war era. Considerations will be given mainly to the policies taken during George W. Bush's and Vladimir Putin's administrations i.e. (2000-2008).

## ÖZET

Bu tez soğuk savaş sonrası dönemde Sovyetler Birliği dağıldıktan sonra Birleşik Devletler- Rus ilişkilerinin Güney Kafkasya'ya olan etkilerini incelemektedir. Soğuk savaş sonrası uluslararası ilişkilerde Birleşik Devletler ve Rusya Federasyonu arasında köklü siyasi husumet devam etmektedir. Tezin inceleyeceği ana konu Birleşik Devletler ve Rusya arasındaki çekişmenin sebepleridir. İki taraf arasındaki bu çekişmenin en belirgin göstergesi 2008 yazındaki Rus-Gürcü savaşıdır. Tez bu savaşın sebeplerini ve sonuçlarını incelemektedir. Gürcistan, Rusya'nın 'yakın çevre' dış politika amaçlarından etkilenen bir ülkedir. Kaçınılmaz olarak tez soğuk savaş sonrası dönemde Rusya'nın etki alanındaki genişlemeci politikası ve ABD'nin klasik stratejisi olan çevreleme politikasının yeniden doğan şekli olan 'yeni-çevreleme' politikasının Rusya üzerindeki etkisini içerecektir. Rusya'nın dünya siyasetindeki güçlü yerini yeniden kazanma niyetine ve komşu devletlerin aleyhine gelişmekte olan 'yakın çevre'deki etki alanlarına karşı genişlemeci politikasına karşı tepki olarak gelişen ABD'nin Rusya'yi çevreleme politikasının sebeplerini incelemek tezin olmazsa olmazlarından.

Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyetler Birliği'nin yıkılması sonucunda Güney Kafkaslarda üç tane yeni bağımsız devlet doğmuştur. Bu devletler Azerbaycan, Ermenistan ve Gürcistan'dır. Bağımsızlıklarından sonra üç ülke de ciddi siyasi, ekonomi ve askeri zorluklarla karşılaşmıştır. Bu bağlamda Güney Kafkasya'da ve örnek olay incelemesi olarak da Gürcistan'daki siyasi, askeri, sosyo-etnik, ekonomik ve enerji ile ilgili gelişmeler incelenecektir. Yukarıda belirtilen parametreler ışığında soğuk savaş sonrası dönemdeki Birleşik Devletler, Rus ve Gürcü dış politikaları incelenecektir. Çalışma özel olarak George W. Bush ve Vladimir Putin dönemlerindeki (2000-2008) politikalara odaklanacaktır.

## **AKNOWLEDGEMNT**

There are a number of people who greatly provided a support to finish my study. Having the chance to express my gratitude, I would like to thank the government of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus which gave me a scholarship to continue my MA program at Eastern Mediterranean University.

I also want to express my gratitude to my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Erik L. Knudsen for his support, guidance and tolerance in working with me during my research time. I am also very grateful to my distinguished examining committee members, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Sözen and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Woiciech Forysinski for their suggestions, comments and insights.

In particular, I would like to thank my family for their indispensable support, encouragement and inspiration during my study.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The thesis is going to analyze United States-Russian Relations during the post-Cold War Era with impact on the South-Caucasus. It is believed that in international relations, particularly in South-Caucasus, there is a fundamental political antagonism between the United States and Russia. The main reason for recent strained relations in international relations between the United States and the Russian Federation was the renewal of the so-called Cold War stereotypes in the mindsets of top level officials and foreign policy makers in Washington and in Moscow which were based on mistrust and animosity. Hence, the core questions that the thesis will try to examine are the main reasons behind this rivalry between US and Russia. A clear demonstration of this enmity between these two nations became obvious as early as 1991-1992. Lately, political and security developments such as NATO's enlargement, US oil interests in the Caspian-Caucasus basin and US' decision to deploy anti-missile system in eastern Europe once again escalated tensions between Russia and the United States. Moreover, the war between Georgia and Russia in last summer of 2008 is another factor that has contributed to this enmity. Since, it is believed that this war symbolizes the dangerous momentum in relations between US and Russia in the region, under the George W. Bush administration. In addition, the reasons and consequences of the war between Russia and Georgia in summer 2008 will be mentioned. It is also important to point out that

Georgia is a country that falls into the Russian “*near-abroad*” foreign policy goal<sup>1</sup>. Since, it is believed that Russia tried and currently attempting to reestablish its lost spheres of influence over post-Soviet countries, particularly in Georgia; hence, it will include the revived form of US’ classical strategy known as “*neo-containment*” of Russia on/over its expansionistic strategy to bring back its spheres of influence in post-Cold War era<sup>2</sup>. Of course it is impossible not to mention the reasons behind the US’ strategy of containing Russia, whereby, it was formulated as a reaction to Russia’s intention to recapture Russia’s greatness in world affairs as well as in its “*near-abroad*” at the expense of its neighbor states.

As a result of the disintegration of the USSR, (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), three NIS’s (Newly Independent States) emerged in the South Caucasus; Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. However, these three states faced enormous political, economic and military challenges. Hence, in this context, the political, military, energy, socio-ethnic and economic developments in the South Caucasus will be observed, particularly with a focus on Georgia as a case study in the latter part of the study. Within these parameters indicated above, US, Russian and Georgian foreign policies will be examined in the Post Cold war era. Considerations will be given mainly to the policies taken during George W. Bush’s and Vladimir Putin’s administrations i.e. (2000-2008).

## **1.1 Statement of Purpose and Rationale of the Study**

The aim of this thesis is to assess the Russian-American clash of strategic interests in the South Caucasus. Before going into the details of other issues that the

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<sup>1</sup> Russian political figures in Kremlin use the term "near abroad" (*ближнее зарубежье-blichneye zarubezhiye* ) to refer to the fourteen other former Soviet republics that had declared their independence by the time the Soviet Union broke up at the end of 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Note; This US strategy of “*neo-containment*” of the Soviet Union is turned to be in recent years as ... “*to contain Russia within its sphere of influence or what the Russians call it “near-abroad”*”.

thesis will further address, I would like to point out that the purpose of the thesis is to investigate predominantly the policies carried out under the George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin's administrations, i.e. from 2000-2008, regarding the South-Caucasus. Hence, in this context, the thesis will take into consideration the fundamental political and security changes in regional politics towards the Russian Federation and the United States during the last two decades. Furthermore, it will examine Georgia's political, economic and security cooperation with the United States that profoundly includes Georgia's membership initiatives into the NATO bloc. I will provide the examination of the main factors that forced Georgia's politicians to take this decisive step. It is extremely important to study all these issues indicated above, since, the South Caucasus is the region comprised by many ethnic nations. For that reason, Russia's quite fear of "*domino effect*" that makes Russia to make more assertive foreign policy towards its near-abroad - is seen as the only security challenge for all the newly independent states in the South Caucasus<sup>3</sup>.

For this reason, the thesis is also intended to examine an overall process of formation of the Russia's foreign policy under the Vladimir Putin's administration, from 2000-2008, The main issues that paper will try to analyze are the following:

- Foreign Policy Making Process in Russia, Who are the major players in decision making process? Ex-KGB elites, military elites, etc. (Again under Putin)
- Domestic Factors Driving Russia's Foreign Policy, since the collapse of the USSR.
- What are the foreign policy goals? What are the tactics and strategies to achieve them?

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<sup>3</sup> Svante E. Cornell. ( January 2002) Autonomy as a Source of Conflict; Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective. World Politics 54 pp. 245-76.

- External Factors Driving Russia's Foreign Policy, (political, economic and security developments that took place in international politics).
- Russia's Strengths and Weaknesses in the Putin Era. Does the Putin's system really work?

Therefore, within these parameters mentioned above, it is highly important to examine Vladimir Putin's personal approach in foreign policy making process. Since, according to many scholars of international relations, Putin's approach and his policies regarding the global/international politics differ from those of his predecessors, such as Boris Yeltsin. Consequently, Putin very much changed the foreign policy orientation of Russia. Hence, Vladimir Putin's leadership will be examined from a comparative perspective. But the scope of the comparative analysis of the two administrations, (B. Yeltsin and V Putin's administrations) will embrace only the policies carried out by them, precisely regarding the South-Caucasus.

## **1.2 Analysis of US and Russian Foreign Policies from a Comparative Theoretical Perspective**

Throughout the history of the Cold War, it is possible to argue that the US and Russian foreign policies have been dominated by the fundamental principles of mainstream schools of thought such as Realism and Liberalism, in order to define and maintain its primary goals and objectives. The following phase of the study provides conceptual analysis of US and Russian foreign policy examination through the lenses of these two leading theories of international relations.

### **1.2.1 Realism**

According to the main principles of Realism, states in the international system are the major actors being unitary and rational and whose primary goals are

the achievement and maintenance of the state's national security in a so-called anarchic international system at the expense of other states. This anarchic international system is explained by the proponents of realism as a by-product of the absent global government or authority in global politics. Moreover, according to the realists, morality does not and should not play a significant role in decision making. Priority is given to the national interests of the state.

The main proponents of the realist school of thought that has influenced and shaped these fundamental principles of this school are Hans J. Morgenthau<sup>4</sup>. It is also important to mention about contemporary practitioners of this school of thought in US foreign policy making. Diplomats such as George Kennan who served as the United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union (May, 1952-September, 1952) under Truman administration and Henry Kissinger who worked as the United States Secretary of State (1973-1977) and National Security Advisor (1968-1975) under Nixon administration are the two most influential figures that had played a profound role with dealing US Cold War foreign policy. Particularly, policies such as 'containment of communism' and 'realpolitik' are the two major strategies that were officially indoctrinated into US' Cold War foreign policy.

### **1.2.2 US Foreign Policy**

The US foreign policy towards the Soviet Union and the entire international system during the Cold War was dominated by the above mentioned principles of realism. The major policies that were carried out by the US officials towards the USSR during the Cold War era were '*deterrence*' and "*containment*" based on the principles of "*real-politik*". Generally speaking, one could argue that the foreign

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<sup>4</sup> Robert J. Art and Robert Jervis. (Ed) (2005) Morgenthau, Hans J. International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues. New York: Pearson Longman.

policies of both sides during the Cold War fit the realist conceptual model relatively well. Nevertheless, after the collapse of the Soviet Union which brought about the end of the Cold War changed the theoretical basis of the US, as well as, newly formed Russia's foreign policies. Post Cold War US foreign policy was no more based on realism; it shifted from realism to liberalism. However, to be more precise, the US foreign policy is based more on liberalism that is being inspired and decorated by the soft and hard powers such as economic and military might of the state to use them as the tools, means or instruments to achieve its national interests all over the world.

### **1.2.3 Liberalism**

The essential principles of this theory (liberalism) are the opposite of those of realism; states are not major, rational and unitary actors in international relations, favoring the position and the role of international organizations and non-state actors (all were opposed by George W. Bush administration). Regarding the national interests, proponents of liberalism argue that within the international system, there are some other more important issues such as economics, human rights and democracy that foreign policy decision makers must take into concern, instead of being dominated by the political and security issues<sup>5</sup>.

Contemporary US foreign policy goals and strategies such as the promotion of democracy ('new world order' of the George H. Bush and regime change strategy of George W. Bush<sup>6</sup>) and free market economy (Bill Clinton's "Democratic Enlargement and Engagement Strategy" based on Kantian Ideals) through different

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<sup>5</sup> Paul R. Viotti, Mark V. Kauppi & Doyle Michael. (Ed) (1999) Liberalism and World Politics, International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond. Boston: Longman, pp. 200-202

<sup>6</sup> Note: It is important to admit that George W. Bush's foreign policy was based on an ideology which failed to recognize tenets of realpolitik.



strategies and policies are the direct reflection of the primary principles of the liberalism in the United States politics as well as in international relations.

Nevertheless, according to the analysis made above, it is possible to draw a conclusion that in theory, the US post-Cold War foreign policy was based on mixed application of both theories, depending on the leadership in Washington. Each administration certainly had some characteristics of realism as well as liberalism in its foreign policy making process.

#### **1.2.4 Russian Foreign Policy**

In general, the post-Cold War Russian foreign policy similar to the US foreign policy, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, initially was directed more towards the consolidation and maintenance of principles and values of the liberal school of thought. (This was evident under Boris Yeltsin's leadership in Kremlin). However, Russian foreign policy under the Boris Yeltsin's administration and his shaky commitment to the liberal democracy, failed to complete this mission due to certain political and security developments in international relations, mainly, in the relationship between Russia and the United States. Generally, as it was argued by many Russian scholars of international relations, the that US policies of "*renewing Cold War stereotypes*" (NATO's eastward expansion and US' decision to install anti-missile defense system in Europe's eastern borders) in contemporary international relations, led the Russian decision makers especially those under the Vladimir Putin's administration, to refocus and base their political orientation more according to the principles of realism. Putin's assertive foreign policy and pragmatic security engagement with the West are the clear outcomes of this shift.

### 1.2.5 Theoretical Analysis of the Developments in the South-Caucasus

As we know, proponents of realism are the strong defenders of the idea that states must accumulate power in order to achieve and secure its survival and national interests among other states in an anarchic international system. It should be kept in mind that by the time the Cold War ended; the United States was a super power without an enemy. If we follow and apply the power-accumulation rationale of the realism, under this security environment, according to the Pentagon's Defense Planning Guidance Draft proposed by the neo-conservative hard-liners of the George H. Bush administration such as Paul Wolfowitz and Donald Rumsfeld, the US post-Cold War foreign policy must be based on the following goals and strategies:

“ ... Our first objective is to prevent the reemergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration . . . and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power. . . . Our strategy must now refocus on precluding the emergence of any potential future global competitor ...<sup>7</sup>”

The South-Caucasus and the Central Asia are among those regions that have a geo-political and a geo-economic potential that could contribute to Russia's reemergence as a new threat to the United States national and strategic interests in global politics. Recent security, economic and political developments in the region is the clear demonstration of US' efforts to preclude the emerging threat (Russia) in the region.

Undoubtedly, it is possible to state that the leaders of the United States, as well as, the Russian Federation in post-Cold War period were motivated in

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<sup>7</sup> “Excerpts from Pentagon's Defense Planning Guidance Draft 'Prevent the Emergence of a New Rival',” New York Times, March 8, 1992,

formulation of their foreign policies more based on national interests rather than on ideological values.

### **1.3 Outline**

In order to provide the study in an analytical approach, it is divided into six subsequent chapters dealing with different aspects of the thesis. The first chapter of the thesis is an introduction of the study that will illustrate the rationale and purpose of the study. In addition to this, it includes the research questions, the scope of objectives of the study. To be more precise, the first chapter of the thesis will offer a comparative theoretical analysis of the US and the Russian foreign policies in post-Cold War era, according/based on the principles of mainstream school of thoughts such as Realism and Liberalism.

The second chapter offers a general analysis dealing with a formation of Russian foreign policy after the collapse of the Soviet Union during 1990<sup>th</sup>, but with a special focus on V. Putin's administrations. The second chapter will also analyze V. Putin's foreign policy goals, strategies and tactics towards the South-Caucasus.

The third chapter of the research will focus on the process of formulation of the US foreign policy goals, strategies and diplomacy towards the South-Caucasus; particularly under George W. Bush's two term administration<sup>8</sup>.

The fourth chapter will examine the importance of the South-Caucasus for both actors; the United States and the Russian Federation. Accordingly, it will observe economic, geo-political and security significance of the region for the interests of both sides. It also offers an examination of overall US-Russian relations in post-Cold War South-Caucasus, which includes the main issues such as energy

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<sup>8</sup> Note: The second and the third chapters of the thesis by design are conducted in a way that provides a contextual or introductory background to the issues that will be analyzed in chapter four.

politics, geopolitical and security challenges. In this chapter, the positions of different scholars and foreign policy analysis of international relations on US-Russian rivalry will be critically appraised.

The fifth chapter of the study analyzes a development of bilateral relations between the United States and the Republic of Georgia. In addition, the political and security developments in Georgia will be analyzed principally, with implications to the US-Russian relations in the region. The main emphasis will be given to the war during the summer of 2008 between Georgia and the Russian Federation.

Lastly, chapter six (i.e. the last chapter) will bring the thesis to a conclusion with some certain predictions, assessments and assumptions based on the interpretations of observers and scholars of international relations. The last chapter also will provide a reader with updated information about the recent developments in US-Russian relations.

#### **1.4 The United States-Russian Relations in post-Cold War Era: the Hidden Cold War in South-Caucasus (1991-2008)**

By the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, by the end of the Cold War, the remarkable results of these two interconnected and interdependent processes changed the dynamics of the South-Caucasus. The most important issue of the Post Cold War era was about the future relationship between the two Super Powers; the United States and the newly formed the Russian Federation. Many debates and assumptions were made on this issue among scholars of international relations. On the other hand, the conventional wisdom of the time suggested that the next phase of the relations would be based on mutually beneficial cooperation of the

Great Powers<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, due to certain political developments in global politics as well as in regional politics of the South-Caucasus, a cooperation between two sides never materialized and the Russian officials started to revive or re-focus on the re-establishment of the ‘sphere of influence strategy’ that they were practicing once during the Soviet Union era.

If we carefully analyze an article written by the prime minister of the Ukraine, Yuliya Timoshenko, called “*Containing Russia*”, herein, basically, Y. Timoshenko once again indicates and discusses those imperialistic ambitions of the Russian Federation mentioned above, in a more detailed approach. According to Y. Timoshenko’s analysis, the West made a great mistake in terms of relaxing a variety of pressure on Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, whereas, relying on positive and friendly intensions of the Russian leaders, the West and its allies stepped into the new phase of the Cold War, which included the struggle of the great powers over the crucial aspects of our contemporary political and economic life, energy security, and so on. Alternatively, according to her opinion, Western democracy had to continue utilizing on Russia (economic, political and military pressures) until it would have been fully transformed into the western democracy and until its foreign policy would be less aggressive<sup>10</sup>.

Nevertheless, political realities on the ground took place in very contradictory and dramatic ways for both sides. One might say that the new phase of the “*hidden*” Cold War took place between two Super Powers; the Russian Federation and the United States<sup>11</sup>. Consequently, the strategy of preserving and in some cases expanding spheres of influence was once again reconsidered by the foreign policy

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9 James Sherr. (January, 2008). *Russia and the West; A Reassessment*. The Defense Academy of the United Kingdom.

10 Yuliya Timoshenko. (Prime Minister of Ukraine) (2007) *Containing Russia*. The Journal of Foreign Affairs. [www.foreignaffairs.org](http://www.foreignaffairs.org)

11 *ibid*

makers of these two respective countries. In this perspective, as I already mentioned above, the Caucasus and particularly states in the southern part of the region, such as Azerbaijan and particularly Georgia paid enormous attention to the international agenda, particularly the United State's. Consequently, the US as the leading hegemonic power in the world inevitably interfered into the Russia's sphere of influence and attempted to block the Russian attempts to renew its sphere of influence strategy.

The most provocative initiatives of the United States and particularly NATO as well as Georgian government's policies that provoked Russian reaction was NATO's enlargement process. Moreover, Georgia's total political and security commitment to the US government also played a role in this context<sup>12</sup>. In this kind of atmosphere, political and military confrontation between Russia and Georgia over the hidden conflict in Georgia was inevitable and expected outcome in the region. Obviously, certain questions appear on the debate table of many scholars of International Relations.

Hence, furthermore, this thesis will try to investigate the following questions;

- What are the main geo-strategic, geo-political and geo-economic issues in the South Caucasus that led to the US-Russian rivalry?
- What is the current situation of the frozen conflicts during the USSR, i.e. South-Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia?
- What are the long-term consequences of the US-Georgian security cooperation; i.e. NATO enlargement and US economic and military assistance?

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12 Svante E Cornell, Roger N. McDermott, William D. O'Malley, Vladimir Socor, S. Frederick Starr. (2004). Regional Security in the Caucasus; The Role of NATO. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies The Johns Hopkins University,

Finally, considering all these factors mentioned previously above, the last issue that the thesis is obliged to identify is to answer the question such as:

- Are the United States and Russia; stability providers or vice versa?

## **1.5 Methodology**

This research method involved quantitative data analysis based on existing literature such as reviews of books, articles, political TV programs and documents. Primary and secondary sources of information such as books, articles, journals and government documents from various organizations departments were also utilized.

## **1.6 Literature Review**

All these previously mentioned research questions are more or less on the agenda of main leading figures such as politicians, diplomats as well as scholars and analysts of international relations and regional politics. For that reason, by the application of the literature provided by those concerned with the issue of the thesis scholars of international relations, I will conduct my research based on the ideas, assumptions, suggestions and interpretations of these scholars.

One of the most important books that the thesis is based on as a literature will be the *“The Grand Chessboard; American Primacy and Its-Geo-strategic Imperatives”* written by the well-known diplomat and academic Zbigniew Kazimierz Brzezinski<sup>13</sup>, who is more known as anti-Soviet hard-liner and practitioner of real-politik. In this book, the author illustrates the primary components of the US and Russian foreign policies, right after the collapse of the USSR. Moreover, he touches

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13 Zbigniew Brzezinski (October 1997) *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geo-strategic Imperatives*. New York: Basic Books United States National Security Advisor, under the Jimmy Carter’s Administration, (1977-1981).

on security challenges that US will face in coming decades, confronting in the face of a rising Russia and China. In terms of the NATO issue, which is the main factor that the thesis intends to use is the Russia reaction and perception about the NATO expansion into the East and South of Russia. Generally speaking Dr. Brzezinski argues that Russia was almost certain that NATO's military expansion as well as EU's political and economic enlargement process would keep Russians militarily, economically and politically out of its recent spheres of influence, especially from Eastern Europe<sup>14</sup>.

Another great contribution to the literature part of the thesis is provided by the Steven Levine and his book called "*The Oil and the Glory; The Pursuit of Empire and Fortune on the Caspian Sea*", which explains the United States' (particularly NATO's) policies right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to Steven Levine, the United States, NATO and entire western bloc was not intended to include South Caucasian states into the future membership within the North Atlantic Alliance. Instead, they decided to supply financially these countries, in order to help them to sustain economically. The main reason for adoption of this strategy within the Western bloc was to help to prevent the South-Caucasian states from falling into economic dependency on Russia, thereby, diminishing the Russian sphere of influence in the region. Considering inadequate and weak economic, political and military backgrounds of post-Soviet countries right after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was a clear predictable outcome<sup>15</sup>. However, what is important when, considering recent NATO's enlargement policy into the South Caucasus, contrary to the author's arguments, is the analysis of the circumstances, changes and events which led to the profound changes within NATO's goals. Because, as a result

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14 *Ibid.*, pp108-110.

15 Steven Levine (2007) *The Oil and the Glory; The Pursuit of Empire and Fortune on the Caspian Sea*. Random House Inc



of this I would call an unexpected strategy within the Western world, there can be a great possibility of direct confrontation of two major nuclear powers; United States and Russia.

Svante E. Cornell's book called "*Small Nations and Great Powers; A study of ethno-political conflict in the Caucasus*"<sup>16</sup>, is another very valuable book which in my opinion allowed me to provide a detailed analysis of the conflicts among small ethnic groups in Caucasus, claiming territorial adjustment. The author goes into the details of legal basis of territorial disputes between Russia and other states of the Caucasus, during the process of disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1990<sup>s</sup>. It also provides legal analysis of inter and intra ethnic conflicts in the region, such as war over the Nagorno-Karabakh and conflicts in two break away Georgian enclaves; South-Ossetia and Abkhazia.

In terms of literature that contributed to the analysis of the formulation of Russia's post-Cold War foreign policy, I have used two books; one written by Evgeny Primakov called "*The World without Russia? To What Leads Sightedness*"<sup>17</sup> and the other one is "*The New Russian Diplomacy*"<sup>18</sup> written by Henry Kissinger and Sergei Ivanov.

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16 Svante E. Cornell (2001) *Small Nations and Great Powers; A study of ethno-political conflict in the Caucasus*. England : Curzon: Richmond, Surrey

17 Evgeniy Maksimovich Primakov. (2009) *The World Without Russia? To What Leads Political Sightedness*. Moscow: Russian Newspaper p. 178 (Translated from Russian: *Mir Bez Rossii? K Chemu Vedet Politicheskaya Blizorukost*)

18 Foreword by Henry A. Kissinger and Igor S. Ivanov. (2002) *The New Russian Diplomacy*. Brookings Institution Press and Nixon Center

## CHAPTER 2

### THE FORMATION OF THE RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE PUTIN'S ADMINISTRATION

#### 2.1 The concept of Foreign Policy in International Relations

It is very important and will be practical to provide brief definitions of the concepts of foreign policy and decision making according to the scholars of international relations, since the study is intended to provide an analysis of the formulation of the Russian foreign policy after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In addition to this, it will be constructive to consider the perceptions of the leading Russian political elites, such as Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, regarding the formation of the foreign policy and its process in the post-Cold War era.

According to the scholars of international relations such as Charles W. Kegley Jr. and Engene R. Wittkopf .... foreign policy is *“the goals that officials representing states seek abroad, the values that underline those goals, and the means or instruments used to pursue them”*<sup>19</sup> In Russia's case, state goals abroad, the strategies, means and instruments to achieve those goals abroad changed from leader to leader. The main reason for this unstable and uncertain status of Russia's foreign policy, after the collapse of the USSR was the lack of a clear identification of the new post-Cold War Russia's national interests or what we call in diplomacy *“raison d'être”* that states usually do have.

Nevertheless, in his own words, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Igor Sergeyevich Ivanov (1998 –2004) argues that the Russian Federation

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<sup>19</sup> Charles W. Kegley. Jr. and Engene R. Wittkopf.(1997) World Politics. Trend and Transformation. 6th edition. New York: St. Martin's Press..

under Putin's two term administration in the Kremlin has successfully completed a formative period of Russian foreign policy. His argument is strengthened by the reference he made to Russia's New Foreign Policy Concept Approved by the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin, in June, 2000<sup>20</sup>. This document provides general understandings of Russian foreign policy, its primary goals and strategies that Russian foreign policy makers, security officials as well as the top level officials in the Kremlin were supposed to implement in Russian foreign policy decision making. In this context, the interpretation of the draft allows the reader to realize that V. Putin made it clear to understand the essential meaning of those goals of the Russian foreign policy which are in essence directed towards a reconsideration of Russia's role in international politics. These following sentences are the demonstration of the Russian foreign policy according to the draft approved by the president of the Russian Federation. And in it, V. Putin stated:

“ ... Ensuring reliable security of the country and preserving and strengthening its sovereignty and territorial integrity and its strong and authoritative position in the world community, as would to the greatest extent promote the interests of the Russian Federation as a great power and one of the most influential centers in the modern world is necessary to the growth of its political, economic, intellectual, and spiritual potential ....”<sup>21</sup>

Consequently, the execution of Russian foreign policy according to and based on the criteria mentioned in the draft, inevitably brought about the reestablishment and adoption of a new foreign policy based on “*statism*”. For the Kremlin, the statist foreign policy is not something newly invented. Russia has experienced already this type of foreign policy making process under Tsarist Russia, before communism took place in Russia.

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<sup>20</sup> “*The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*” approved by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, in 2000 [www.in.mid.ru/ns](http://www.in.mid.ru/ns)

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

For that reason, before examining the formation of the Russian foreign policy under the Putin's regime, in the second chapter of the research, I would like to provide a relatively brief analysis of the process of foreign policy formation under Yeltsin's administration in order to present a comparative examination of the V. Putin's administration, which adopted almost the same image of Tsarist government.

## **2.2 In the Pursuit of a New Foreign Policy and Identity Status**

The collapse of the Soviet Union as well as the end of the Cold War at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century erased many substantial issues in international politics that created the areas of friction between two super-powers. On the other hand, these two events created new challenges and opportunities for the actors in the international system, particularly for the economically and militarily downsized Russia. After all, a bi-polar system of the world was no more a valid factor in international relations; it was replaced by an uncertain period of time in world politics. Geostrategic interests of the great powers had to be reconsidered along side with those new challenges and opportunities. In the case of Russia, as a result of these two interconnected events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; Russia appeared to be the most victimized state, facing enormous political, socio-economic and other challenges on its internal and external affairs. Particularly, during this period of time Russian political elites from different political backgrounds were fighting with so called "*identity crisis*" in its foreign policy making process<sup>22</sup>. As the author of the book called "*Russia in search of itself*" James H. Billington has stated "*No nation ever poured more intellectual energy into answering the question of national identity than Russia*<sup>23</sup>" since the collapse of the

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22 Andrei Piontkovsky (January, 2006) East or West? Russia's Identity Crisis in Foreign Policy. Foreign Policy Center,

23 James H. Billington (2004) Russia in search of itself. London: The John Hopkins University Press..

Soviet Union. Hence, the period from 1990 until 2000 probably could be named as a course in pursuit of a new foreign policy and identity status for the newly formed Russian Federation. More importantly, leaders of the country were also concerned about the future position of the Russian Federation in regional and in international affairs. Many would probably argue that the Russian political elites had the intention to restore the same influential status that they once assumed during the time of the Soviet Union<sup>24</sup>. Obviously, this mission for a new identity and foreign policy faced many obstacles for its realization, reflected primarily as a result of domestic as well as external discourses.

### **2.2.1 Domestic factors**

On the domestic level, the problems raised were a result of an enormous power struggle among different political parties; all having their own diverse agendas for the formation of new Russian identity and its foreign policy making. In general, questions were concerned about the new direction(s) of Russian foreign policy. Although, political parties had diverse political orientations towards Russia's future political identity and its foreign policy making, they had one and very common belief about Russia's role in international politics. This belief was based on the idea that Russia still, after the collapse of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), retained enough capacity to act and to pursue its interests in the international arena under the status of a Great Power.

A continuation of domestic economic stagnation which in fact brought about the breakdown of the entire Soviet system was another factor that must be taken into the consideration along side with other domestic issues that the Russian Federation

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24 Yuliya Timoshenko (Prime Minister of Ukraine) (2007) Containing Russia. The Journal of Foreign Affairs. [www.foreignaffairs.org](http://www.foreignaffairs.org)

had to face in the early 1990<sup>s</sup>. One might argue that domestic economic and political discourses have no impact on the formation of foreign policy; on the other hand I would argue the opposite. One of the dimensions of the domestic level of analysis shows that the formation of the Russian foreign policy in the middle of 1990<sup>s</sup> was based on strengthening the military and the economic capacity of the state which have been seen as the primary requirement or prerequisite for the future role of Russia as a Great Power in world affairs. It is obvious that, in this context, there is a causal/relational connection between economic might of a state and state's foreign policy goals<sup>25</sup>. Principally, this approach was clearly demonstrated under Putin's administration that I will be discussing later.

### **2.2.2 External factors**

When it comes to the external problems of the Russian Federation during 1990<sup>s</sup>, Russian officials were literally forced to reformulate its relations towards the entire world, particularly, towards the newly independent states that once were members of the USSR. Failure of the political, socio-economic and the military interdependence among these states and between them and Russia inevitably created an enormous political, socio-economic and security power vacuum in the Caucasian and the Central Asian regions. Within these parameters, it is important to stress the fact that the Russian ultra-nationalist leaders such as V. Jirinovski and communist party leader G. Zyuganov attempted to somehow recapture political influence and the military domination that Russia once had. Consequently, it further escalated their relations, by creating instability in the territories of CIS (Commonwealth Independent States). The war over the Nagorno-Karabakh, the conflict over the

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25 Foreword by Henry A. Kissinger and Igor S. Ivanov (2002) *The New Russian Diplomacy*. Brookings Institution Press and Nixon Center

disputed territory in Moldova known as Transnistria, the war between ethnic minorities in Georgia and the war against so-called “terrorists” in Chechnya are the clear indications of Russia’s direct and indirect violent militarized attempts to keep intact its presence in its near-abroad<sup>26</sup>.

To confront a combination of domestic and external challenges in Kremlin, Boris Yeltsin was the first democratically elected president of the newly formed Russian Federation who faced this instability in the 1990<sup>s</sup>.

### **2.3 Yeltsin’s Legacy: Promise or Perils?**

*“Let's not talk about Communism. Communism was just an idea, just pie in the sky”<sup>27</sup>*

**Boris Yeltsin**

As was argued by the author of the book called *“Yeltsin’s Russia; Myths and Reality”*, Lilia Shevtsova stated ... to understand Russian foreign policy and post-communist Russian behavior in international relations, one must analyze it in a historical context. The process of formation of the Russian foreign policy during 1990<sup>s</sup> embraced the characteristics of more than seven decades of the communist legacy associated by the despotism in its nature. Moreover, a trauma of the Cold War which born a sense of hostility against the Western world is another factor that should be taken into account. Consequently, an eradication of this communist legacy and mentality from the minds of political elites as well as from the Russian public was the crucial necessity to direct Russia into the democratic path<sup>28</sup>. Accordingly, the

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26 Mykola Kapitonenko (2009) Resolving Post-Soviet “Frozen” Conflicts; Is Regional Integration Helpful? The Caucasian Review of International Affairs. Vol. 3 (1). CRIA

27 [www.icelebz.com/quotes/boris\\_yeltsin/](http://www.icelebz.com/quotes/boris_yeltsin/)

28 Lilia fedorovna Shevtsova. (November 2007) Russia Lost in Transition: Yeltsin and Putin legacies. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

panacea for all these factors was seen in the emergence of a strong and democratic leader who would be able to destroy an old communist regime/legacy and lead the people to prosperity and democracy.

Generally speaking, it seemed that the political directions that Russian authorities had chosen to pursue after the disintegration of the Soviet Union were more or less strengthened under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin. Boris Yeltsin was the first popularly elected president of the newly established Russian Federation on 10 July, in 1991, who promised his nation to bring an end to the Soviet regime and its dramatic political and economic consequences. In this context, it is important here to mention Yeltsin's view of Russia in domestic and international politics.

Right after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin's administration inherited from the USSR a newly formed state with an enormous political and economic disorder in its internal affairs. Externally, Russia also had to respond to a number of questions, such as dealing with its hopes for sphere of influence and security issues. Generally speaking about Yeltsin's ambitions, many scholars would argue that Boris Yeltsin and his regime had no clear-cut goals or well defined long term strategies concerning the status of the newly established Russian Federation in the international system<sup>29</sup>. This uncertainty and the lack of clear-cut consensus within Yeltsin's cabinet can be best explained by the existence of the communist hard-liners and anti-Western oriented advisors surrounding Yeltsin in his cabinet. Politicians such as spymaster Evgeny Primakov and hard-liner Defense Minister Pavel Grachev sharply influenced B. Yeltsin's shaky commitments to the democratic principles and liberal/economic reforms in transition that Yeltsin was intended to

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29 Lilia Shevtsova (May, 15, 1999) Yeltsin's Russia; Myths and Reality. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace



implement from the beginning<sup>30</sup>. Only the single common vision that was holding them in the cabinet regarding Russia's role internationally was that Russia was still capable of acting as a great power in world politics. This vision is best understood under the Russian word and concept known as "*derzhavnichestvo*" (powerful i.e. state), used mostly by the Russian politicians in the State Duma. However, the strategies and policies to restore Russia's international position as a Great Power were principally different.

Nevertheless, it was clear that under Yeltsin's administration as well as by the initiatives of Andrey Kozyrev as a minister of foreign affairs (1990-1996), Russian political elites composed by oligarchs made a strategic decision to integrate Russia into the Western institutions. It must be noted here; that to great extent oligarchs/business elites of Russia around Yeltsin such as Vladimir Gusinsky, Boris Berezovsky and others who had a great influence in decision making regarding the domestic and foreign matters of the country. Consequently, many scholars would agree to the fact that Yeltsin's ambitions and initiatives towards "*democratization*" process (as one of the primary goals of Russian foreign policy during 1990<sup>th</sup>) materialized partly due to the pressure and impact that oligarchs/business elites had on Yeltsin. Since, considering the fact that during this time, Russia had experienced great domestic-economic depression, it was hoped by the oligarchs that the Russian economy might re-emerge with Western or US provided financial aid. Obviously, one must make a conclusion that one of the primary foreign policy objectives of Yeltsin such as the need to integrate with the West was based on this expected Western financial assistance. Moreover, in this context, there was a very unrealistic but surprisingly and widely accepted prediction among the international scholars

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30 Daniel Treisman (1999) *After Yeltsin Comes... Yeltsin* Daniel Treisman is an assistant professor of political science at the University of California at Los Angeles and author of "*After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia*" (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press)

(particularly of Russian origins) that Russia in the near future might become a potential member of NATO, (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). However, these new foreign policy directions preferred by the B. Yeltsin's regime didn't succeed, primarily because of a serious opposition initiated by his political opposition. Moreover, domestically, the population's reaction to the "*democratization*" process was more or less unenthusiastic. Especially, it became obvious after the first elections held in the Duma in 1993 and in 1995. As a result of these elections, majority votes were taken by the nationalist party headed by Vladimir Volfovich Jirinovski and communist party under Gennady Zyuganov. In this context, as a result of these two elections in the Duma, pressures on B. Yeltsin's regime were increased by his communist and nationalist counterparts. Evgeny Primakov, pro-communist hard-liner was appointed as a prime minister of the Russian Federation under Yeltsin's presidency. Hence, many Russian scholars argued that from this period, Russian foreign policy took a more conservative and nationalist approach rather than a liberalized approach<sup>31</sup>. Although it is a debatable argument, many scholars would agree that behind this kind of strategic decision to follow an integration course into the Western institutions taken by Yeltsin's administration, lays the confusion and the lack of any other clearly formulated strategy during this time that would be identified as new Russian foreign policy priorities<sup>32</sup>. To conclude Yeltsin's foreign policies, I would say that Yeltsin was trying to cooperate with the West but at the same time ignoring the rules of "*real politik*", meaning, he failed or simply ignored to recognize the economic and military disparity between the West and Russia in post-Cold War era which was very obvious. As a result of it, he failed to find an accurate

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31 Peter Shearman (2001) *The Sources of Russian Conduct; Understanding Russian Foreign Policy*. Review of International Studies.

32 Report of the Russian Working Group (2000) *U.S.-Russian relations at the turn of the century*. (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace/Moscow: Council on Foreign and Defense Policy)

international status for Russia and redefine Russian foreign policy. In addition, many scholars of international relations argue that, this unsuccessful transition was caused partly as a result of weak Western response (particularly under George H. Bush administration) to an ongoing Russian transition from communism into the western oriented liberalism<sup>33</sup>. It might be assumed that as a result of a successful transition under Yeltsin's regime, today's Russia would had a more friendly and liberal foreign policy towards the entire world, principally towards the United States

Yeltsin's role as it was expressed once by Lilia Shevtsova being "*mutually exclusive roles of democrat and tsar*" didn't last long. Indeed, Yeltsin, partly because of his troubled health situation and partly as a result of more serious challenges for his personality, shifted the power unexpectedly to another more unpopular and authoritarian leader<sup>34</sup>.

## **2.4 Putin's Russia - Back to the New Authoritarianism!?**

*"Russia will not soon become, if it ever becomes, a second copy of the United States or England –where liberal value have deep historic roots"*

*"Russia is a part of European culture. Therefore, it is with difficulty that I imagine NATO as an enemy"*<sup>35</sup>

### **Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin**

Generally speaking, as I previously indicated the political developments that took place under the B. Yeltsin's administration, could not be considered as

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33 Dimitri K. Simes (December, 2007) Losing Russia; The Costs of Renewed Confrontation (President of the Nixon Center and Publisher of The National Interest) Foreign Affairs, [www.foreignaffairs.org](http://www.foreignaffairs.org)

34 Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov (2004) Between Dictatorship and Democracy; Russian Post-Communist Political Reform Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

35 [http://www1.law.nyu.edu/eecr/vol9num\\_onehalf/feature/nationalsecurity.html](http://www1.law.nyu.edu/eecr/vol9num_onehalf/feature/nationalsecurity.html)

extremely radical changes in the Russian foreign policy. Instead, all those developments one more time ensured that the elites of Russian politics were able to pursue more or less the same course as Russia pursued once during the Cold War period. Hence, during this decade after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia's political experience can be characterized as a shift or fluctuation in regime; initially, escaping from the communist despotism and then again back into autocracy. This argument can be best explained by the emergence of an unknown, hard-liner and ex-KGB officer Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin in the Kremlin, when first in 2000 he assumed executive power of the cabinet.

#### **2.4.1 Putin's rise to the Kremlin**

There are several factors that sharply contributed to the rise of V. Putin to power. One of the most important factors is the war in Northern Caucasus in Chechnya that was unfavorably concluded under the Yeltsin's legacy and renewed again by V. Putin. Basically war was initiated again to get public support within Russia. Also war was seen as a main instrument of Putin's propaganda system to achieve public and political support within the country. Consequently, V. Putin was perceived by the public as the savior of the Russian nation, protecting national territories and interests. On the other hand, the so-called second war in Chechnya that was renewed by Putin had another more important dimension in Russian politics. Bearing in mind the territorial structure and composition of the Russian Federation which is composed by many ethnic and minority groups, the victory in the war against Chechen separatists was a necessary outcome, in order to stop the "*domino effect*" all over the Northern Caucasus and in other regions (*oblasti*) of the Russian Federation.

Another relatively important factor that contributed to Putin's rise in Kremlin was his personal background as a tough hard-liner, KGB agent that was able to confront any obstacles on Russia's way<sup>36</sup>. In my and in many scholars' opinions, these two factors played a crucial role for V. Putin's two term presidency in the Kremlin. Moreover, parallel with this, considering the socio-economic turmoil and psychological depression of the public within the Russia during that period, a leader with all the characteristics mentioned previously was a crucial necessity.

In terms of the democratization in Russia under the Putin's administration, its position has been further worsened, taking under the control a freedom of speech and all other components of liberal democracy.<sup>37</sup> I would say the process of de-democratization (or as it was described by Putin a 'managed-democracy')<sup>38</sup> was a clear evidence to explain an overall position of democratic process under V. Putin. Moreover, an economic freedom that the "*oligarchs*"<sup>39</sup> of B. Yeltsin's epoch enjoyed was ended, due to the pressure that Putin initiated against them. Since, it was believed that oligarchs' economic might was producing political and economic countermeasures to the Putin's administration. However, these all are the concerns regarding the developments in domestic politics that Putin brought. Since, the paper is concerned about the foreign policy formation under the Putin's administration, it is more important to mention something about Putin's personal views of the international system, hence, Russia's position in this system.

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36 Peter Rutland (2006) Oil and Politics In Russia. Philadelphia: Wesleyan University. September, Paper prepared for the American Political Science Association annual convention

37 Lilia Shevtsova and Antonina W. Bouis. Putin's Russia. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

<sup>38</sup> Robert Fulford (July 15, 2006) *Putin's 'managed democracy'* Financial Post <http://www.financialpost.com/scripts/story.html?id=db354535-5a5a-4458-985c-89e61be9910f&k=994>

39 **Note;** The oligarchs has been used to describe a small number of Russian businessmen who came to prominence under President Boris Yeltsin. They tended to achieve vast wealth by acquiring Government assets very cheaply during the privatization process started by the Yeltsin government. <http://knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Oligarch/>

## 2.4.2 Putin's Understandings of Foreign Policy

Before getting into the details of Putin's foreign policy goals and thus tactics and strategies to achieve them, I thought, it will be very useful to provide V. Putin's general perception regarding the role which foreign policy plays in state's affairs. Accordingly,

“ ... Russia's foreign policy is both an indicator and a determining factor for the condition of internal state affairs. Here we should have no illusions. The competence, skill, and effectiveness with which we use our diplomatic resources determine not only the prestige of our country in the eyes of the world, but also the political and economic situation inside Russia itself ...<sup>40</sup>”

## 2.4.3 Putin's Strategy of “breath-catching” -”peredyshka”

Initially, when Putin's first term started, he gave a very positive message regarding relations outside of Russia. It was clear enough that a political, economic and military partnership with the West was among his foreign policy priorities. Particularly, Putin was intended to rebuild cooperation with the West, which was harshly damaged during NATO's military campaigns<sup>41</sup> in the Balkans<sup>42</sup>. At first, it seemed for many Russian observers that Putin accepted the economically and militarily dominant role of the United States and its allies in world affairs. On the other hand, following certain developments in Russia's internal affairs, Putin's views turned to be contradictory compared with those which initially he had stated. This duplicity in Putin's nature is clearly explained by a policy of “*breath-catching*”, in Russian word known as “*peredyshka*”. The implications of this strategy into the concept of foreign policy provided statesmen with an additional period of time to

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40 Foreword by Henry A. Kissinger and Igor S. Ivanov (2002) *The New Russian Diplomacy*. Brookings Institution Press and Nixon Center

<sup>41</sup> Isabelle Facon (April, 2008) *The West and post-Putin Russia; does Russia “leave the West”?*. Maitre de recherch e. Fondation pour la Recherche Strategique.

<sup>42</sup> Note: Recently, political developments in Kosovo (Unilateral Declaration of Independence and positive Western response) further strained US-Russian relations in global politics

recover its lost status. Consequently, under these circumstances, foreign policy took an image of more a pragmatic or uncertain and fluctuating paradigm. In the case of Putin, he wanted a period of time to redefine Russia's position internationally, with this strategy, it took about one decade. Obviously, parallel with this, originally, one of the most central foreign policy goals of Putin was to regain Russia's predominant role in international politics, following a step by step process.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, he simply rejected any global hegemonic/dominant player in world affairs that might rival or could undermine Russia and rather wanted to conduct relations in a multipolar world system, under the equal Great Power statuses. Hence, his approach with respect to western countries, particularly towards the United States was based on pragmatic engagement.

Generally speaking, after a very clear analysis of Putin's foreign policy goals tactics and the strategies to achieve them can be best classified in the following ways. First we must understand that Russia under the Putin's administration did not have a very well formulated view of foreign policy, rather can be explained as an 'opportunistic foreign policy'. More precisely, Russian foreign policy was personalized by Putin's personal ambitions and initiatives. Having said this, Putin's professional background can't be considered to be as an experienced politician or diplomat. His well-known KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoj Biezopasnosti<sup>44</sup>) background inclined him to make and execute the comprehensive policies that established a strong state and centralized bureaucracy that made Russia's international reputation even worse. Secondly, a lack of long-term strategies to achieve goals is another factor in Russian politics under Putin's leadership. Rather,

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43 Yuliya Timoshenko (2007) Containing Russia. Prime Minister of Ukraine. Journal of Foreign Affairs. [www.foreignaffairs.org](http://www.foreignaffairs.org)

44 KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoj Biezopasnosti) – Committee of National Security. Recently redefined to be as FSB Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnoti Rossiyskoy Federaciyi) – Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation.

Russian foreign policy was simply based on an expansion of spheres of influence, particularly, to renew the Soviet pressure on post-Soviet space.

Another policy that Russia decisively pursued under Putin was to increase close neighbors' energy dependency on Russia's energy sources. Obviously, most of Europe including neighbors such as Turkey and post-Soviet NIS (Newly Independent States) are the main targets of this strategy, considering their rising population and the energy dependency in the near future. Third factor is the process of decision-making in foreign policy itself was undermined by the institutionalized structure of the government, which belonged to the president only. This outcome was successfully achieved by Putin's personal reforms in domestic policy; the policy known as "*centralization of an executive power*". In this case, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' role as a chief executor of foreign policies was completely diminished, and became more like an advisory apparatus. Accordingly, the nature of the Russian foreign policy is more associated to be an assertive rather than constructive.

Nevertheless, it is possible to draw up a list of the main foreign policy strategies that the Russian foreign policy makers throughout the history used to follow in a period of weakness and uncertainty. One of the best examples from the Russian history is the Gorchakov's thirty years period in office. Evgeny Primakov (a Foreign Minister of Russian Federation during Yeltsin's regime in the Kremlin) compared Russia's weak position during 1990<sup>th</sup> with the period of 1856 when Russia was defeated in Crimean War. Accordingly, during that period of time, the Russian empire didn't have some visible alternative policies to overcome its weak international position and thus was bound to give up its great power status. However, according to Primakov, Gorchakov proposed certain contradictory policies to retain



and maintain Russia's great power status internationally. Accordingly, I would like to indicate some of Gorchakov's as well as Primakov policies and strategies that were applied under Putin's presidency in the Kremlin and still are possible to apply to the Russia's position in post-Cold War era.

First policy is to pursue more pro-active foreign policy in international relations; instead of withdrawing and isolating Russia from global politics, particularly vis-à-vis the great powers. Nevertheless, Russia under B. Yeltsin followed exactly the opposite strategy. This strategy was ignored by Yeltsin and actively pursued by Putin in the Kremlin.

The second strategy is to conduct more multifaceted and comprehensive foreign policy with respect to other great powers in international relations. In this context, it is possible to realize that Putin during his presidency in Kremlin attempted to achieve a balance of power in international relations among the great powers, by building close ties with so called 'rogue states' or the "axis of evils". Close relations with Iran in the Middle East and strategic partnership in Central Asia with the members of Shanghai organization are the main indicators of this strategy used by Putin. This strategy obviously was directed against the interests of the United States in world politics. Consequently, partly, this approach in Russian foreign policy has led to the frustration of US-led assertive unilateralism and has established a multipolar system in global politics. The centerpiece of this strategy is to diversify Russia's foreign connections to cultivate a balance in power asymmetry that occurred by the end of the Cold War between two ex-super powers.

The third strategy that Gorchakov used and which is applicable today in contemporary Russian politics is to pursue Russia's national interests through the intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, WTO and G8 (relying

on Russia's privileged position such as having a veto-power as a permanent member of UN). Obviously, to get its place among other great powers within these clubs, the Russian Federation will always use its nuclear arsenal as a bargaining chip that symbolizes Russia's great power identity even nowadays. Therefore, Primakov suggested that Russia must follow a development of its nuclear capacity in order to regain and maintain its great power status.

To conclude the analysis of compatibility of historical strategies in contemporary Russian foreign policy, it is important to mention the fact that to successfully accomplish all these strategies and policies, Russian leadership, like Gorchakov said almost one century ago – has to push internal reforms – mainly economic, military and political in order to grasp the fruits of these tactics and political maneuverings.

Therefore, the following sections of the chapter illustrate Russia's major concerns in its external as well as in domestic affairs. The sections also provide analysis of the policies carried out under Putin administration performed as a response to these developments.

## **2.5 Major Concerns of the Russian Foreign Policy**

When we discuss Russian foreign policy, it is always associated with the East-West confrontation and cooperation policies throughout the era. Hence, the legacy of Cold War relations between the Warsaw Pact and the NATO bloc became an inevitable part of the contemporary relations between newly formed Russian Federation and the West. According to the Defense Minister of Russian Federation, Sergei Ivanov, the post-Cold War relationships between two ex-Cold War rivals

were characterized to be “*certainly not enemies but, probably, not allies yet*”<sup>45</sup>. Since, many elements of the Soviet foreign policy still were being incorporated into the modern Russian politics. Consequently, a contemporary Russian foreign policy, in terms of a geo-strategy, is a continuation of Soviet foreign policy; expanding and defending its spheres of influences. Furthermore, I would like to provide and analyze the vital interests thus concerns of the Russia’s foreign policy in international diplomacy.

### **2.5.1 The EU’s and NATO’s enlargement processes - Russia’s Reaction**

Bearing in mind an existing Russian antagonism towards the West, in this context, the European Union (EU) enlargement process as well as NATO’s expansion into the post-Soviet space further escalated the assertiveness of Putin’s foreign policy. In this parallel, it will be constructive to indicate Moscow’s view of NATO’s enlargement according to and based on Russian sources.

As a minister of foreign affairs (1996-1998) and prime minister of Russia (1998-1999), Evgeny Maksimovich Primakov in his book called “*The World without Russia? To What Leads Political Sightedness*”<sup>46</sup> Evgeny Primakov describes the Russian points of view regarding NATO’s expansion into the territories of the post-Soviet Union. Accordingly, he argues that as a result of the transition of world politics from a uni-polar to the multi-polar system, brought about the temporary failure of the block structure of the western alliance (i.e. an overall capability and potential of NATO itself). Consequently, he claims that NATO’s expansion into the Russia’s sphere of influence which is conceptualized in Russian foreign policy as the

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45 Defense Minister of Russian Federation, Sergei Ivanov. Taken from one of the speeches he gave in TV news.

46 Evgeniy Maksimovich Primakov (2009) *The World Without Russia? To What Leads Political Sightedness*. Moscow: Russian Newspaper p. 178 (Translated from Russian: *Mir Bez Rossii? K Chemu Vedet Politicheskaya Blizorukost*)

“*near-abroad*” was aimed to rebuild the previous preeminence of the NATO bloc by involving and recruiting a new members which are more obedient and more willing to perform the sweeping policies of the alliance. Hence, according to author of the book, the countries such as ex-members of the Soviet Union; Georgia, Ukraine Poland and Czech Republic were meant to be under this category. In his arguments Primakov claims that any of the core members of the NATO such as France, Germany, Italy or UK would not allow an installation of anti-missiles defense system on their soil, principally to escape direct confrontation with the Russian Federation. This was the first and a common argument provided by the Russian scholars and officials regarding NATO’s expansion.

A second argument regarding the NATO’s eastward expansion is based on the Russian political elites’ assumptions, whereby the latter were convinced that in the case of successful accomplishment of these two developments in the region (EU enlargement and NATO expansion), it will inevitably isolate Russia from almost the entire world<sup>47</sup>. However, during this time, Russia was not able militarily and economically to afford itself a demonstration of power, in order somehow to oppose or influence the process of EU’s and NATO’s expansions<sup>48</sup>. Indeed, what was happening during this time was missed by many policy makers of the West; Russian officials were more deeply concerned by the accumulation of economic strength. In addition to these developments, NATO’s decision to establish an anti-missiles defense system in Central Europe, forced Russia further to reconsider its foreign policy vis-à-vis the West.

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<sup>47</sup> Alexander Rahr and Nikolai N. Petro (2005) *Our Man In Moscow* (Program Director of the Kurber-Center for Russian and CIS affairs at the German Council on Foreign Relations and coordinator of the EU-Russia Forum and Professor of Political Science at the University of Rhode Island.

<sup>48</sup> John T. Rourke. *Taking Sides; Clashing Views in World Politics*. Mc-Graw Companies.

### 2.5.2 Relations with the Near-Abroad

The Russian approach to define and to defend its spheres of influences is indoctrinated into the foreign affairs under the concept called (*blizhneye zarubezhye*) “Near Abroad<sup>49</sup>”, developed under the leadership of Evgeniy Primakov, a Prime Minister of Russian Federation appointed by B. Yeltsin. This so-called “Near-Abroad” conception of the Russian foreign policy embraces the territories of the former Soviet Union such as South-Caucasus and the Central Asian regions. According to Russian politicians, the countries laid within the Russian near-abroad, carry potential threats to the Russia’s overall security, including external and internal. To understand an importance of the countries in Russia’s near abroad for Russia’s national security, it is important to understand the implications of the regions to Russia’s geopolitics. Russian officials see the post-Soviet area as a single security complex interconnected and interdependent to each other (This perception of Russian strategists will be analyzed in more details in chapter 4). Therefore, Russian foreign policy towards these countries in the near-abroad line is based on a mixture of cooperation and domination. Initially, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the main Russian strategy that was intended to be achieved was to set up its permanent influence and presence by creating an interdependent common organization linked to security, political and economic institutions. The idea of establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States organization (CIS) which was supposed to have its military, economic and political cooperation components is the clear reflection of Russia’s imperialistic ambitions in its near-abroad. Consequently, in this context, it is obvious enough that NATO’s eastward expansion fundamentally undermines of those Russian interests in the region of post-Soviet Union.

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49 The “Near Abroad” the 14 countries of the former Soviet Union, is a term launched by the Russian Foreign Ministry in the early 1990s to denote a special zone of influence for Russia (see Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000).

### **2.5.3 Energy Concerns of the Russian Federation; Leverage Tools!?**

Presently, as it becomes more obvious that Russian foreign policy armed by an economic leverage against its counterparts in near-abroad was brilliantly orchestrated by the V. Putin's administration. One certainly can argue that for the most part, Russia's global role in international relations has re-emerged principally because of an economic boom - as a result of increase in the prices of oil - which took place in Russia during Putin's years in the Kremlin. This was based on the energy politics that Kremlin played very well. Production and transformation of oil and gas resources in Russian economy became a significant factor for Russian foreign policy.

As one of the great achievements of the American policy of diversification of oil suppliers - BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) pipeline project is the foremost one of the central issues in Russian energy politics in near-abroad. The main purpose of this project was to halt the Russian energy monopoly in post-Soviet area. The emergence and realization of this idea for Russian Federation was one of the crucial factors that provoked Russian opposition to the BTC pipeline. For many years, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and by the emergence of the newly independent countries in the Central Asia and Caucasus, Russia was playing a role of economic mediator, meaning, by buying Asian and Caucasian oil and gas resources for a lower prices from the land-locked countries such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan and selling the same natural resources to the European and world markets by higher prices, using its very strategically important pipeline namely Novorossiysk, which passes through the territories of Chechnya. This kind of policy by Russia towards these countries was and is realized through different political maneuvers, of course, enjoying its military and political domination in the regions,

particularly in the Caspian basin. Nevertheless, although, after a long lasting political row between White House and Kremlin<sup>50</sup>, recently the Kazakh parliament approved the decision to transfer Kazakh crude oil resources through the BTC pipeline. However, this issue is still on the agenda of these countries, mainly, due to the Russian influence and opposition to the Kazakhstan's insertion to the project<sup>51</sup>. This kind of negative reaction by Russia, also, was partly due to the active role of the United States in the project as well as in the region, whereas, the United States provided financial assistance to the construction of the BTC oil pipeline through Turkish officials. The plausible reasons behind the United States' ambitions and initiatives towards this strategy can be best explained by the policies of George W. Bush administration that were directed to the diversification of the United State's as well as European Union's current and future energy dependency on the Russian oil and gas resources. One might say that there is an urgent need for this diversification of energy resources, since, Russia recently demonstrated it's political leverage on the energy politics vis-à-vis Ukraine, whereas the latter was left several times by Russia without oil and gas resources in the heart of winter in 2007 due to the Ukraine's opposition to buy oil and gas resources from Russia by new increased prices<sup>52</sup>. In addition to these negative developments between Ukraine and Russia, there was a painful consequence on Europe as well, since Ukraine indeed was/is a transit monopoly country. It seems that one of the major objectives of V. Putin to develop the European Union as a major energy market and principal source of foreign investment is to be achieved through Russia's monopoly on natural resources.

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50 Zeyno Baran (July, 28. 2006) Lithuanian Energy Security: Challenges and Choices. Hudson Institute

51 Michael Denison. Kazakh Decision to Join BTC Pipeline May Alter Delicate Regional Dynamics. Leeds University. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4025> May, 2009.

"Kazakhstan Joining Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline Project". <http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=12615472&PageNum=0> May, 2009.

52 Peter J. Duncan "Oligarch", *Business and Russian Foreign Policy; From Yeltsin to Putin*. Published by Center for the Study of Economic and Social Change in Europe. October, 2007.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

### **2.6.1 Pros and Cons of V. Putin**

To finalize this chapter, I would like to answer my final question, which is whether V. Putin's foreign policies were effective or not; generally speaking, although, V. Putin's regime and policies are widely interpreted by the scholars of international relations as authoritarian, on the other hand, his foreign policies improved Russia's position in the international system to the considerable degree; the fact which is very welcomed by all the Russians as well as unwelcomed by its traditional adversaries. Under the Putin administration, the Russian Federation became an active member of the G8 organization; a club of great leading industrially advanced powers in international relations.

Economic resurgence and maintenance of stable economic growth is another indicator of Putin's success.

It is also possible to claim that Putin effectively restored Russia's harmed or vanished relations with other regional great powers such as Latin American countries, Middle Eastern Countries, China and India.

On the other hand, worsening relations with the Western bloc as a result of conflict which aroused in last summer between Georgia and Russia is one of the primary shortcomings of V. Putin's regime. The reason for this is simply based on the rising security challenges all around the world, particularly around Russia. The Russian Federation has a neighboring country such as China with an enormously rising economy and unpredictable political future. According to many scholars of International Relations of realist school of thought, to confront this "*giant power*" in the future will inevitably force Russia to cooperate with the West.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE FORMULATION OF US POST-COLD WAR FOREIGN POLICY: WITH IMPLICATIONS TO THE SOUTH-CUCASUS**

#### **Introduction**

Since, this study is concerned primarily with Russia's policies in the South Caucasus and its impact on US-Russian relations in the post-Cold War era; the third chapter of the thesis is intended to offer an analysis of the US post-Cold War foreign policy with regard to the Russian Federation., Further, it provides a brief examination of George H. Bush and Bill Clinton's policies. However, the central focus will be on the policies carried out under George W. Bush during his two term administration in the White House (2001-2009). In examining each administration's policies towards Russia, the chapter will concentrate on the three general policy issues; promotion of democracy, economic assistance and security cooperation and the impact of these policies on other developments in the South-Caucasus. Moreover, the study is intended to offer an analysis of US's post-Cold War goals and strategies with respect to the post-communist Russian Federation.

#### **3.1 Analysis of Perceptions on US post-Cold War Foreign Policy**

The United States foreign policy after the end of the Cold War particularly under George H. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations has been the subject of long-standing debate among the scholars of international relations. Since, the complete political disintegration of the Soviet Union by December of 1991 a wave of uncertainty was not only apparent to Russian foreign policy, but also analogous to

US foreign policy makers, at least for a short period of time. The end of the Cold War forced the political figures in the White House to define a new foreign policy that would no longer be based on the ideological struggle, typical to the Cold War era confrontation. Rather, initially<sup>53</sup>, new US foreign policy priorities factored in unstable political and economic relations towards the entire world based on new realities such as globalization and clash of civilizations. Moreover, the impact of domestic economic and other social issues on foreign policy making also must be stressed. With respect to the US' policies towards Russia and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in the post-Soviet period, the US lacked clear cut policy alternatives in its foreign policy making process mainly due to political and economic instability and uncertainty in the region. This phenomenon can be best explained by Washington's policies towards the Russian Federation and its neighboring countries during 1990<sup>s</sup>, which further will be discussed in details.

Among the others, Michael Cox in his book called "*US Foreign Policy after the Cold War; A Superpower without a Mission*<sup>54</sup>", provides certain criticisms of US' scholars of international relations dealing with the American post-Cold War foreign policy and its priorities. Accordingly, in the early 1990<sup>s</sup>, there was a widely accepted apprehension as well as a perception that the US had lost its mission in world politics after it lost its major Cold War adversary; the Soviet Union. Obviously, there was a crucial need for a defined policy in order to replace containment. However, according to Michael Cox, what was important during this period of time was to acknowledge that the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union did not have to necessarily mean a complete withdrawal or US

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53 Note: Since, later, policy of "Promotion of Democracy and Liberal Values in International System" can be seen as an ideological factor in foreign policy making, which actually was a case under Bill Clinton and George W. Bush Administrations.

54 Michael Cox (1995) *US Foreign Policy after the Cold War; Superpower Without a Mission?* London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs. pp. 1-5

isolation from world politics<sup>55</sup>. Rather, it can be best explained as an ‘ambivalent position’ of US foreign policy towards Russia during that period of time. Actually, Russia as well as the entire international system went into a ‘transformation period’ in world affairs. Consequently, what is important here is to consider the next step that the White House officials thought to be the most important policy dealing with a newly established global political system. Moreover political figures in Washington were concerned more about the potential role of the Russian Federation in these new circumstances. To observe and examine the US response to all these developments is the core hypothesis of this chapter.

### **3.2 Rationale for American Grand Strategy**

It is argued by many scholars of international relations that the key factor to comprehend the foreign policy of the great powers is to understand their grand strategy objectives pursued in world politics. Accordingly:

“ ... Grand strategy is the global vision and the set of principles framing the foreign policy of great powers” in world politics ...<sup>56</sup>

In the case of the United States, throughout the Cold War, one of the most important objectives of the US grand strategy for foreign policy was to contain the communist Soviet bloc and push for arms control and to pursue peaceful coexistence. The realization of these policies was the prerequisite for the establishment and maintenance of democratic, liberal and free market economy in international system.

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55 ibid

56 Laura Neack. (2003). *The New Foreign Policy; US and Comparative Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*. London. New York, Toronto, Oxford, Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Inc.. pp. 140-145.

Hence, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, an unexpected collapse of the USSR led the United States to emerge as the only non-Eurasian super power in Eurasian continent for the first time in history. Further, he states that:

“ ... America's global primacy is directly dependent on how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent is sustained ...<sup>57</sup>”

Certainly, one of the most significant elements of the US foreign policy during 1990<sup>s</sup> was to complete an “*unfinished mission*” of the Western bloc all over the world which was started at the beginning of the Cold War. This mission was an important part of US grand strategy and was based on maintenance of principles of democracy with a capitalist system based on a free liberal economic market. Therefore, according to National Security Advisor under President Bill Clinton (1993-1997) Anthony Lake, the US saw the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union as an opportunity to reformulate its traditional policy known as “*containment*” into something new, such as into “*enlargement of world's free community of market democracies*”<sup>58</sup>.

Obviously, the means, tools and the policies to accomplish this so-called “*unfinished mission*” through the democratic enlargement process in world politics were fluctuating from one to another administration, but still formulating their foreign policy goals and strategies according and based on constant principles of US sustained traditional foreign policy. Hence, in the following sections, the thesis will illustrate and examine the policies carried out by the Clinton administration and then will refocus on George W. Bush administration, by indicating their pros and cons

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57 Zbigniew Brzezinski (October 1997) *The Grand Chessboard-American Primacy and Its Geo-strategic Imperatives*. New York: Basic Books pp. 30  
58 Anthony Lake (1993) *From Containment to Enlargement*. *Disam Journal*.. pp. 68-71

that have led to the current animosity between US and Russia in world affairs, particularly in the South-Caucasus.

### **3.3 George H. W. Bush and New World Order**

Generally speaking, the end of the Cold War was a crucial change and period in the history of foreign affairs, particularly for countries such as United States and Russia that for more than six decades confronted each other ideologically, militarily and economically. The transformation of world politics into the new type of relations among the actors in the international arena was the biggest challenge for the leaders of the great powers such as United States as well as for secondary great powers such as the Russian Federation. Obviously, this period of transformation had its positive and negative characteristics: such as dealing with certain security threats as well as new opportunities for every actor in the transformed international system. Of course, for the United States, the main threats to its national security during this period of time was based on the future status and threat of so-called Russia's "loose nucs" which could fall into the hands of extremely unpredictable Russian military and political elites as well as black-marketers<sup>59</sup>. To prevent the spread of nuclear warheads all over the world has been the serious challenge for the policy makers in Washington and the Pentagon during the first decade after the end of the Cold War.

When the Cold War was ended and the USSR finally dissolved, as the first leader to face these changes and challenges in the White House was the President George H. Bush. Generally speaking, he attempted to reformulate a new course for American post-Cold War foreign policy by declaring a "*new world order*" based on the promotion of democracy, human rights, and free trade all around the world.

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59 O'Neal Michael J. (2004) Russian Nuclear Materials, Security Issues. Encyclopedia of Espionage, Intelligence and Security,. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3403300663.html> April ,2009

Accordingly, George H. Bush was bound to conduct a peaceful transition from the past to his “*new world order*”, however, by ensuring that no potential rival for American leadership, national interests and security would emerge in the world affairs, particularly in post-Soviet area. This strategy is best illustrated by the initiatives of the Pentagon in the document called “*Regional Defense Strategy for 1990<sup>s</sup>*”, under the supervision of neo-conservative hardliners such as Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and Pentagon’s Under Secretary for Policy Paul D. Wolfowitz<sup>60</sup>.

The premise of “*Defense Planning Guidance*” draft was based on the common perception that as a result of the Soviet’s defeat, the US had emerged as the only militarily dominant power in world politics that could and should impose its will globally to restructure the entire international system. The following short excerpt from the document is the clear demonstration of overall direction of neo-conservatives during George H. Bush administration<sup>61</sup>.

“... Our first objective is to prevent the reemergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration . . . and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power. . . . Our strategy must now refocus on precluding the emergence of any potential future global competitor  
...<sup>62</sup>”

Moreover, what type of system, the nature of relationships between/among the great actors in international relations will shape his “*new world order*” was another phenomenon in George H. Bush administration. Since, the United States

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60 Patrick E. Tyler (March 8, 1992) U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop A One-Superpower World. Special to The New York Times.

61 Although, George H. Bush was not a neo-conservative political figure, impact of neo-conservative hard liners on his administration was very obvious.

62 “Excerpts from Pentagon’s Defense Planning Guidance Draft *Prevent the Emergence of a New Rival* New York Times, March 8, 1992,

undoubtedly was the only super power militarily and economically capable and willing to monitor global affairs, leading the Western world, this perception of the American leadership in world politics was more precisely expressed by Charles Krauthammer, a columnist for the Washington Post newspaper and Time magazine in his article called “*Unipolar Moment*” published by The Council of Foreign Affairs. He explained a new geopolitical structure of the world politics in following way:

“ ... The true geopolitical structure of the post-Cold War world ... is a single pole of world power that consists of the United States at the apex of the industrial West. Perhaps it is the more accurate to say that the United States and behind it the West. ... <sup>63</sup>”

Nevertheless, one should certainly admit the fact that one thing increasingly seemed certain that the US’ foreign policy opinion within the Bush administration was divided. It was more evident with regard to the Bush cabinet’s Russia policy.

### **3.3.1 Relations with Unpredictable Russia; Question of Eastern Europe**

Under the initiatives of the Secretary of State James Baker, under the Bush administration, Bush’s main objectives towards Russia at the time were all concerned about the security and limitation of the Soviet nuclear arsenals in Russia as well as in other newly independent post-Soviet countries such as Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belorussia. The allocation of nuclear warheads in four different geographically located post-Soviet countries represented a more serious threat to the national security of the US than it was during the Cold War<sup>64</sup>.

George H. Bush, unlike his successor Bill Clinton, was to certain extent a supporter of Michael Gorbachev; with whom he believed US had to work closely,

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63 Charles Krauthammer (1991) *The Unipolar Moment*. Journal of Foreign Affairs..

64 James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul (2003) *Power and Purpose; US Policy Towards Russia after the Cold War*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press... pp-41-50

since, it was believed by Bush and his advisers in the cabinet that it would be much easier to deal with a ‘centralized power’ rather than with fragmented and unpredictable ultra-nationalist hard-liners or communists political figures claiming power in Kremlin. According to critics of George H. Bush, such as Clinton advisor Strobe Talbot, argued that

“ ... Bush had been much too enthusiastic in his ‘support’ for President Gorbachev’s attempt to preserve the essential structure and integrity of the Soviet Union, rather than to support a cause of self-determination ...”<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, the Bush administration by providing a limited and cautious support for Gorbachev, hoped to achieve reforms stronger than Gorbachev’s “*perestroika*” and “*glasnost*”. The main part of US financial assistance to Russia was long-debated and well known as ‘Nunn-Lugar’ bill or “*Cooperative Threat Reduction*” program which aimed to accomplish the denuclearization plan of the Soviet nuclear arsenals<sup>66</sup>. According to Congressman Len Aspin, CTR program was another form of national defense strategy of defeating or weakening adversary’s nuclear capacity.

In terms of US view of Russian domestic affairs under Bush administration, the US was in favour of the “status-quo” with the respect to the post-Soviet states. It was advised by Bush’s national security advisor Brent Scowcroft that the US should “avoid involvement in Soviet domestic political wars<sup>67</sup>”; this statement most probably was referred primarily to Russia’s policies towards the newly independent states in the Caucasus and Central Asia during this period of time, whereby, United States was considering this states to be as a Russian backyard in the post-Cold War period. Nevertheless, in early 1990<sup>th</sup>, during the George H. Bush administration,

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65 Michael Cox (1995) *US Foreign Policy after the Cold War; Superpower Without a Mission?* London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, pp. 56-57

66 *ibid.*, pp. 50-55

67 *ibid.*, pp. 21-23



Congress has enacted a “*Freedom Support Act*” through which the United States was attempting to promote an independence of new states in the CIS, by providing humanitarian and financial packages<sup>68</sup>. However, interestingly enough, unlike the independence of Caucasian and Central Asian post-communist states, the Bush administration vigorously pursued the independence of the Baltic States such as Estonia Latvia and Lithuania from Russia<sup>69</sup>. The main reason behind this strategy was that the US throughout the history of the Cold War had never formally recognized a legal incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet’s territorial jurisdiction and integrity<sup>70</sup>. Moreover, geo-political analysis of the region demonstrates that a complete independence of the Baltic States from Russia would considerably isolate Russia and end its influence in the Baltic region. Hence, the importance of the Baltic States carried out a more serious implication for security arrangement of the Europe as well as the NATO alliance. Nevertheless, it was rightfully pointed out by the New York Times’ reporter Thomas L. Friedman that:

“ ... The Bush administration after nearly three years has established a consistent pattern in responding to changes in the Eastern bloc; it rarely catches the first train, but it rarely misses the last one ...<sup>71</sup>”

This kind of ‘non-interventionist stance’ and ‘differential policy’ of the US under Bush administration towards other newly independent post-communist republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia was explained and justified by Bush during his speech given to the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet, whereby he stated:

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68 Jim Nichol (2006) Central Asia;Regional Developments and Implications for US Interests CRS Report for Congress.. pp. 2-4

69 **Note:** It is important to mention that there was a considerable degree of pressure on the Administration as well as Congress from the well organized Baltic-American population in the United States.

70 John Joseph Lapinski, J.D. (Fall 1990) A Short History of Diplomatic Relations between the United States and the Republic of Lithuania. Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences. Volume 36, No.3 -

71 Thomas L. Friedman (1991) Arms Talks: A Warm Up. New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/10/world/arms-talks-a-warm-up.html?sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>

“ ... In Moscow, I outlined our approach: We will support those in the center and the Republics who pursue freedom, democracy, and economic liberty. We will determine our support not on the basis of personalities but on the basis of principles. We cannot tell you how to reform your society. We will not try to pick winners and losers in political competitions between Republics or between Republics and the center. That is your business; that's not the business of the United States of America ...”<sup>72</sup>

Hence, in this context, according to some analytical observers, the Bush administration's foreign policy towards the Russia's internal politics as well as towards the newly emerging independent republics can be best explained to be as an ambivalent and “*wait and see*” strategy<sup>73</sup>.

What was more important to deal with for the Bush cabinet was the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the heart of the Eastern Europe which was another challenge of Bush's ‘new world order’. Particularly, the issue of the self-determination throughout the Eastern Europe was centerpiece of his foreign policy. In addition to this, the reunification of Germany which was closely related to the withdrawal of the Soviet troops was another issue that Gorbachev and Bush took a great time to reach a consensus. It is important therefore to indicate the interests and concerns of the parties involved in the issue of reunification of Germany; since, there was a lack of clear consensus with respect to the Germany's political and territorial reunification among the core members of the NATO alliance such as UK, France and the United States as well as between NATO and Warsaw Pact which was soon to end.

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72 George H. W. Bush (August 1, 1991) Remarks to the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of the Ukraine in Kiev, Soviet Union.  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=19864&st=new+world+order&stl=>

73 Note: It should be noted that at the time of the dissolution of the USSR, the United States government recognized as legitimate the pre-Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact 1933 borders of the country (the Franklin D. Roosevelt government established diplomatic relations with the Kremlin at the end of that year. Because of this, the George H. Bush administration openly supported the secession of the Baltic SSRs, but regarded the questions related to the independence and territorial conflicts of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the rest of the Transcaucasus as internal Soviet affairs.  
<http://georgianwar.blogspot.com>

The Bush administration's position towards the reunification of the Germany was clearly articulated by Bush and his National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft in following way;

“ ... We had been considering the international context of German reunification and drawn up four principles to frame our approach to the issue. To be acceptable to the United States, unification must respect the principles of self-determination no matter what the Germans chose; be consistent with Germany's membership in NATO and EC; be gradual and peaceful and regard the interests of other Europeans; respect the principles of Helsinki regarding the inviolability of existing borders and allow the possibility of peaceful change ...<sup>74</sup>”

Nevertheless, according to Brent Scowcroft, a successful reunification of East and West Germany as well its potential membership in NATO would provoke in Russia a sense of strategic defeat in post-Cold War period. For the Soviet Union, Germany represented a greater importance than the Baltic States, because it was a symbol of the Cold War and the location of the Soviet's most consolidated military existence in the heart of Europe. Thus, this factor too was very crucial for the NATO alliance, particularly for the United States who wanted to see a united Europe and Germany as a member of NATO. Nevertheless, Bush made it clear by adding that those four principles declared by him will and should occur:

“... due regard for the legal role and responsibilities of the allied powers”, explaining that “I hoped this would help to reassure Britain and France as well as the Soviet Union that their concerns would be addressed ...<sup>75</sup>”

With respect to the Britain's concerns towards the reunification process, it is important to mention that the Britain throughout its political history as well the entire Europe was/is known as a traditional advocate and promoter of the “*balance of power*” strategy among the European powers. Hence, Germany's reunification in the European continent would pose a serious strategic and security threat to the Britain's

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74 George Bush and Brent Scowcroft (1998) A World Transformed. Vintage Books, A Division of Random House. Inc. New York. p. 197

75 *Ibid.*, pp. 198-201

national interests in continental Europe. Thus, initial opposition of Britain to the German reunification under Margaret Thatcher rooted in this rationale was obvious. Undoubtedly, the same logic could be applied to the France; Germany's neighboring country with dramatic diplomatic and military history vis-à-vis Germany which goes back to the first German unification in 1871 as a result of France' defeat in Franco-Prussian war. Nevertheless, Bush successfully convinced the European powers who unanimously endorsed Germany's reunification in their external affairs by reorienting their strategic policies towards Germany based on four principles reinforced by the Bush administration. It is also important to mention that the subsequent consensus was possible to achieve, as far as the Soviet's intentions and ambitions in Europe was a common threat to all European powers.

The main reason for examining and indicating all these political and security developments that took place in Eastern Europe between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1990<sup>s</sup> are based on the argument that they had direct strategic security implication on the entire Caspian-Caucasus region. Bearing in mind the fact that Russian geopolitical influence in Eastern Europe, particularly in Germany was dramatically vanished, the Soviet inability to retain its previous position in Eastern Europe literally forced the Gorbachev's regime and later Yeltsin and Putin to reestablish and develop Russia's sphere of influence in the Caspian-Caucasus regions, declaring the region Russia's ultimate and strategically crucial "*near-abroad*". At this point, Russia could not afford a further retreat. Moreover, the national uprisings and ethnic-territorial conflicts among the minority groups in Northern and Southern Caucasus<sup>76</sup> in early 1990<sup>s</sup> claiming the right of self-

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<sup>76</sup> Note: The War between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh, uprising in Chechnya and civil war in Tajikistan are the crucial conflicts that led to Russia's fear.

determination thus an independence from Moscow once more increased Russia's military and political concentration in the region.

### **3.4 Clinton Administration - Missed Opportunities!?**

The presidential change in the United States as a result of 1992 elections whereby Bill Clinton assumed the presidency in Washington as the first US' post-Cold War president, inherited from the George H. Bush's administration probably one of the most difficult tasks to be accomplished in US foreign policy in post-Cold War period. As it was noted by George H. Bush's National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, the Clinton administration was pursuing a "*peripatetic foreign policy at prey to the whims of the latest balance of forces*".<sup>77</sup> Accordingly; this meant that the Clinton's team - from the first days in the cabinet - lacked a comprehensive strategy in its foreign policy making towards the newly formed post-Cold War global politics. Consequently, this phenomenon in Clinton's administration caused his advisers to establish the cabinet's global vision and strategy to meet new opportunities as well as challenges of the post-Cold War that consequently would enhance US national security and interests abroad, which were yet to be defined. Under the supervision of Clinton's National Security Adviser Antony Lake, one could argue that the Clinton cabinet successfully developed a new strategy that would guide the US' post-Cold War foreign policy abroad as well as at home. This strategy was known as "democratic enlargement". According to director of Eisenhower Center, Douglas Brinkley, the new foreign policy of the Clinton administration was based on the establishment of four vitally important goals for the United States as well as for international community – "a) *to strengthen the community of market democracies,*

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<sup>77</sup> Douglas Brinkley (1997) Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine Foreign Policy, No. 106. pp. 113-114

b) to foster and consolidate new democracies and market economies where possible, c) to counter the aggression and support the liberalization of states hostile to democracy and d) to help democracy and market economies take root in regions of greatest humanitarian concern”<sup>78</sup>. All these principles and goals of the Clinton administration were indoctrinated into Clinton’s foreign policy strategy under the so-called Clinton Doctrine. In terms of Clinton’s Russia policy under this framework, it was not certain within this context how to approach Russia or where Russia fits into this scheme.

Bush and Clinton had many similarities and differences in their personal approach to the foreign policy making. They both were strong believers about the role of the international system based on structures, international law, treaties and alliances. Nevertheless, unlike George H. Bush’s cautious course towards Russia, Clinton’s administration changed this course, adopting more a pro-active policies to engage Russia. One of the closest associates of Clinton in his government Strobe Talbott expressed his view of Russia in following way:

“ ... Russian Federation represents for the United States ... the source of raw materials, market for American goods and a junior partner of the United States in international arena ...”<sup>79</sup>

This view of Russia of the Clinton administration was fundamentally different from previous predecessors in Washington. Again, unlike the advisers in G. H. Bush’s cabinet, Clinton and his advisers adapted a more pro-active position in every internal political and economic issue of the newly formed Russian Federation. Since, Clinton and Talbott who was the chief architect of Clinton’s Russia policy strongly believed that the character of political regime which was to be formulated

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78 Douglas Brinkley (1997) Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine Foreign Policy, No. 106. pp. 116-117

79 Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott (March 18. 1996) Support for Democracy and US National Interests. US Department of State Dispatch [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1584/is\\_n12\\_v7/ai\\_18319826/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1584/is_n12_v7/ai_18319826/)

during this period of transformation as well as the democratization of Russian Federation was the key element to determine future character and directions of the Russia's foreign policy. Hence, from this point of view, future relations with chaotic and unpredictable Russia as well as with an economically rising communist China in Eurasian continent were the major and unavoidable concerns that the foreign policy makers in Clinton administration had to deal with. Particularly, questions regarding Russia and its economic and political future were varying in the mindset of policy makers in Washington. However, bearing in mind the trauma of the Cold War in the hearts of US foreign policy makers, mutual residual distrust was very obvious and pertinent at this time concerning the future unknown intentions of the Russian leaders. Questions such as whether, Russia will try to maintain the Soviet mentality and legacy or will attempt to abandon it, by integrating itself with the Western political system was the main debate inside the Clinton administration. Hence, it was not an easy task to formulate a clear cut foreign policy course towards Russia, based on mutual respect and trust.

### **3.4.1 Clinton and his Promotion of Democracy Politics**

Generally speaking, from an ideological point of view, Clinton was well known as a "*liberal – Wilsonian - internationalist*" as he once publicly described himself<sup>80</sup>. Clinton's commitment to the democratic values, their promotion and spread all over the world was the core ingredient of his approach in the formulation of US foreign policy during this period of time<sup>81</sup>. Thus, the idea of democratic enlargement was indoctrinated into Clinton's foreign policy agenda under the legal

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80 James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul (2003) *Power and Purpose; US Policy Towards Russia after the Cold War*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press. pp. 89

81 Michael Cox, John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi (2000) *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts*. Oxford University Press.

document known as “*A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*” which was published in February, 1995<sup>82</sup>. Moreover, Clinton advisers in his cabinet were all strong proponents of a democratic peace thesis and its application in post-Cold War US foreign policy. Russian specialist and journalist Strobe Talbott who had an extensive influence on Clinton’s Russia policy expressed his view on democracy promotion strategy of Clinton administration in following way;

“ ... There is still a place for the hedgehog in the terrain of U.S. foreign policy. We will advance all the objectives I just enumerated, and others as well, if we also strengthen associations among established democracies and support the transition to democracy in states that are emerging from dictatorship or civil strife. Democracy, in short, is the one big thing that we must defend, sustain, and promote wherever possible, even as we deal with the many other tasks that face us ...<sup>83</sup>”

To enforce and promote this idea of “democratic enlargement” through the establishment of democratic institutions needed appropriate strategies and mechanisms. Since the implosion of the Soviet Union had led to the emergence of fourteen newly independent states in the regions of Central Asia and South-Caucasus, post-communist states with the Russian Federation in the center inevitably became the primary targets of Clinton’s foreign policy strategy of democratic enlargement. According to one of the statements made by the chief architect of the Clinton’s Russia policies Strobe Talbott:

“ ... An investment now in the heroic efforts of these new democracies to restructure their economies will pay dividends down the roads ...<sup>84</sup>”

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82 William J. Clinton (February, 1995) *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*. White House.

83 Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott (March 18, 1996) Support for Democracy and US National Interests. US Department of State Dispatch.. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1584/is\\_n12\\_v7/ai\\_18319862/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1584/is_n12_v7/ai_18319862/)

84 William G. Hyland (1999) *Clinton’s World; Remaking American Foreign Policy* London : Praeger, Westport, Connecticut,.. pp. 84-85



In contrast with George H. Bush who preferred to build close relations with Michael Gorbachev, Bill Clinton literally from his first day in White House decided to support Boris Yeltsin dealing with him through personal diplomacy. Although Yeltsin's political background was not encouraging any hopes for future democratic prosperity in Russia, on the other hand, he was the only democratic leader of the time preferred by the Russian public. One of Clinton's major objectives dealing with Russia was to increase a provision of financial assistance to Russia and to other post-communist states in the regions of Caucasus and Central Asia (which started during G. H. Bush's period) through various international financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and G-7. This was very crucial assistance to the post-Soviet countries provided by the United States, taking into account the Russian dramatic economic melt-down in early 1990<sup>s</sup>. Since, Clinton's so called "Kantian ideals"<sup>85</sup> to establish market oriented democracies in post-Soviet region, particularly in Russia were based on the idea that democratic Russia and surrounding her emerging democracies would best serve the national interests of the US by enhancing its national security. Hence, Clinton strongly believed that Yeltsin was the only potential leader who could successfully apply the political and economic reforms in the period of Russia's democratic transition and lead Russia to prosperity and democracy.

Nevertheless, certain political developments in internal as well as external affairs of the Russian Federation under Yeltsin's regime negatively reflected on the US-Russia relationship. A significant problem was Yeltsin's war in Chechnya that had led to the deterioration of personal as well as state level relations between two sides. (To be discussed in details in the next paragraph)

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 87-91

### 3.4.2 US' national interests in South-Caucasus and in Caspian Basin

US' national interests regarding the region and the countries in the southern part of the Russia's "*near-abroad*", caused the Clinton administration to make it clear to understand that the region, particularly the Caspian basin as one of the primary objectives of the energy industry of the US foreign policy. Bearing in mind the role and impact of MNC's (Multi-National Corporations) in the political economy of the United States, Clinton was enthusiastically pursuing the interests of oil companies, by seeking drilling rights in the Caspian basin and elsewhere<sup>86</sup>. Hence, considering the growing energy dependency all around the world, the Clinton administration's policy towards the region started and ended with a policy of 'diversification of oil suppliers into the American market in order to reduce its dependency on Middle Eastern oil reserves. This position of the Clinton cabinet was best articulated by the words of the undersecretary of state in 1997 Strobe Talbott in his speech addressed at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in July 21, 1997. He argued that:

“ ... If economic and political reform in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus does not succeed, if internal and cross-border conflicts simmer and flare, the region could become a breeding ground for terrorism, a hotbed of religious and political extremism and a battleground for outright war. It would matter profoundly to the United States if this were to happen in an area that sits on as much as 200 billion barrels of oil. That is yet another reason why conflict resolution must be job number one for U.S. policy in the region: it is both a prerequisite for and an accompaniment to energy development ...<sup>87</sup>”

Moreover, Clinton personally having conversations with the presidents of three Caspian member states such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, had

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86 Michael T. Klare (2004) *Blood and Oil: The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC pp. 132-133.

87 Talbott, Strobe, , "A Farewell to Flashman," Address at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Baltimore, Maryland, July 21, 1997, <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/nis/970721talbott.html>

expressed his view and the objectives of his foreign policy on energy politics in the Caspian-Caucasus region. By stating:

“ ... In a world of growing energy demand, our nation cannot afford to rely on any single region for our energy supplies. By supporting states in the region to develop their untapped oil reserves, we not only help them to prosper, we also help diversify our energy supply and strengthen our national security ...”<sup>88</sup>

Thus, following and carefully analyzing these statements of the Clinton administration, one can certainly draw the conclusion that US involvement into the Russian “*near-abroad*” was a forward step by the administration. For that reason, the US under Clinton’s leadership was engaged almost in every conflict resolution processes in the regions of Central Asia and Caucasus, primarily through the active participation in OSCE (The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and UN (United Nations) which were closely involved in these regions. The primary reason behind this political engagement through the conflict resolution process was very obvious. Since, any conflict or instability in these regions would be representing a key obstacle for American national security and interests. In this context, taking into account all these concerns of the US in the region, the Clinton administration had made a resolution of the ‘frozen’ post-Soviet conflicts (such as war over the Nagorno-Karabakh and the issue of Abkhazia and South Osetia in Georgia) in the South-Caucasus called by top foreign policy priority as “strategically vital issues in the region for the interests of the United States”. Therefore, according to Strobe Talbott:

“ ... The first aim of U.S. policy is to settle ethnic and other conflicts that hinder political progress and put economic development at risk. Conflict resolution must be job one for U.S. policy in the region. Hence “the success of political and economic reforms there could

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88 Visit of President Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan, statement by the press secretary, the White House, 1 August 1997. <http://clinton6.nara.gov/1997/08/1997-08-01-visit-of-president-heydar-aliyev-of-azerbaijan.html>

stabilize the region and open up a valuable trade and transport corridor along the old Silk Road between Europe and Asia ...<sup>89</sup>”

In addition, US’s concerns in the region were not limited only to the Southern tier of the Caucasus; Clinton has expressed America’s concerns with respect to the security developments in the Northern part of the region. Particularly, Clinton’s reaction to the war over Chechnya started by Yeltsin brought about serious worsening of relations between Russia and United States. It became clear after the OSCE summit held in 1999, when Clinton clearly stated that:

“ ... He would only send the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty – signed by 30 OSCE heads of state – to the US Senate for ratification if Russia reduces its forces in Chechnya ...<sup>90</sup>”

Nevertheless, Clinton’s tough rhetoric was fruitful by producing a considerable degree of pressure on Yeltsin over Chechnya, Clinton while was careful in order not to weaken Yeltsin’s position in the Kremlin. Since, Clinton was very concerned by the resurgent Russian nationalists in Russian Duma (White House) whose possible triumph into power would be catastrophe for Clinton’s Russia policies during that period of time. Hence, according to Pavel Felgenhauer an independent analyst in Moscow, in order to answer to the question how serious the West is going to be on the issue of Chechnya, he simply stated that:

“... It depends on priorities. Getting a Russian agreement on the ABM (nuclear reduction treaty) is much more important for the Clinton administration than some kids being killed in Chechnya ...”

President Clinton even went so far as to compare Yeltsin and his campaign with the Abraham Lincoln, stating that “*Yeltsin, like Lincoln, is saving the union*”<sup>91</sup>

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89 Sonia Winter (July 09, 1997) Central Asia; U.S. Says Resolving Conflict A Top Priority. <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1085693.html>, May, 2009

90 Gregory Feifer (1999) West, Russia Spar over Chechnya. The Russia Journal,. Vol. 2, No. 39

91 Zbigniew Brzezinski (November 10, 1999) Why the West Should Care About Chechnya. Wall Street Journal, .

### 3.4.3 Energy Politics of the Clinton Administration

The most successful part of Clinton's energy politics in Caspian basin and South-Caucasus was the establishment of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline passing through the territories of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, which fundamentally undermined Russia's as well as Iran's geo-political and geo-economic interests in the region<sup>92</sup> (Figure 1) Moreover, bearing in mind the hostile relationship between Iran and US, it should be emphasized that the Clinton administration's involvement in the region basically eradicated any possible Iranian dominance in the region, which was quite visible since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Hence, according to many scholars of international relations, Clinton's involvement in the region through the consolidation of US energy politics which was based on the establishment of pipeline infrastructure, consequently allowed him to be more engaged in security as well as in political matters of the states in the region.



**Picture 1: Construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline**<sup>93</sup>

92 Svante E. Cornell, Mamuka Tsereteli and Vladimir Socor, (2005) Geo-strategic Implications of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline. Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program – A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center. pp. 20-25 [www.sais-jhu.edu/caci](http://www.sais-jhu.edu/caci) ; [www.silkroadstudies.org](http://www.silkroadstudies.org)

93 <http://www.btc.com.tr/eng/project.html>

On the other hand, it is important to stress that the ‘reduction of Western oil dependency’ policy of the Clinton administration was perceived by the Kremlin in completely different way. Russian opposition to Clinton’s approach to reduce American reliance on the Middle Eastern oil reserves was based on the idea that this strategy was a pretext to interfere into the Russian sphere of influence, which is in my opinion was a quite rational response. According to reliable sources, the Russian political elite considered Russia’s position in the region as a ‘privileged actor’ and the ‘main if not the only intermediary between the states in the region and external actors. Hence, no other country would be allowed to establish a presence in the region that could rival Russia’s national interests’<sup>94</sup>. Nevertheless, during Clinton’s years, the United States didn’t realize seriously enough the long-term implications of Russia’s negative reaction.

#### **3.4.4 NATO Dilemma in Clinton’s Foreign Policy**

Parallel to Clinton’s energy politics, another major development that occurred during Clinton’s years in Washington was the establishment of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) and the Partnership for Peace program (PfP) between NATO, Russia and the newly independent countries in the post-Soviet regions<sup>95</sup>. Of course, one could argue that this policy of the Clinton administration which was to counter and weaken Russia’s sphere of influence by strengthening military cooperation with the states of the South-Caucasus harmed US-Russian long-term relations. Nevertheless, the Clinton’s administration from the beginning had very optimistic expectations about the Russia’s reaction with regard to NATO’s eastward

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94 Bulent Gokay (Ed.) (2001) *The politics of Caspian oil*. New York: Palgrave Publishers Ltd pp. 139-145

95 James E. Detemple (Autumn/Winter, 2001-2002) *Military Engagement in the South Caucasus*. JFQ Forum, p. 68

expansion. This point of view of the Clinton administration could be best explained by taking into account an awareness of the Clinton's advisers in the cabinet about Russia's weak position in international politics whereas Russia was unable politically to promote a serious response to US policy. The principal reason for the limited and low-scale military engagement was the presence of the Russian military bases in the region under the CIS framework that represented a serious challenge for the US national interests in the region and of course to the regional stability. In this context, according to the critics of Clinton's NATO policies, PfP program that assumed to foster military cooperation between the Western bloc and Russia was an unsuccessfully formulated strategy of the Clinton administration in order to appease Russian political opposition to NATO's eastward-expansion that was viewed as a threat to Russia's national security. However, it was argued by the Russians that the elimination of traditional Cold War "buffer-zone" between West and Russia as a result of NATO's enlargement program, Russia would be contained within its own borders. This was very precisely expressed by the former foreign minister of Russian Federation Andrei Kozyrev, whereby he stated that NATO's expansion into post-Soviet regions was a clear "continuation of a policy aimed at containment of Russia<sup>96</sup>".

Bearing in mind this negative perception of the Russian political figures, Clinton administration was accurately trying to explore and develop appropriate ways for NATO's expansion that consequently would not be perceived by Russian political and military ranks as a strategic defeat in the post-Cold War era. Another negative perception that Russians had with respect to the NATO's eastward expansion was that West did not really believe in a successful integration of Russia

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96 Bulent Gokay. (Ed.) (2001) The politics of Caspian oil. New York: Palgrave Publishers Ltd p. 151

into the western world. This view was best expressed in 1997 by Anatoly Chubais, influential ideologist in Russia's privatization process under Yeltsin administration, who argued that:

“ ... Frankly, the politicians who support this decision to enlarge NATO believe that Russia is a country that should be put aside, a country that should not be included in the civilized world – ever ...”

Moreover, NATO enlargement damaged Clinton administration's relations with the liberal reformers in Yeltsin's administration who were crucially important for Clinton to successfully accomplish Russia's transition into the capitalist free market system. The policy of NATO enlargement was very confusing for liberal reformers who had positive expectations from the West.

An overall concerning the policies carried out under the Clinton administration towards Russia and the South-Caucasus throughout 1990<sup>s</sup>, many scholars of international relations would argue that this period will be remembered as a period of missed and lost opportunities for both sides. Although, Clinton had laid down the foundation for future US political, economic as well as military engagement in the region, at the same time certain elements of his foreign policy, particularly during his second administration in White House, undoubtedly provoked Russian animosity and distrust towards the West. Hence, the cornerstone of this distrust between Moscow and Washington was the NATO's enlargement policy into post-Soviet countries which was promised by the leaders of West Germany and United States that by successful reunification of Germany and its membership in NATO, alliance will not expand further<sup>97</sup>.

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97 Michael R. Gordon (May, 1997) The Anatomy of a Misunderstanding. New York Times <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/25/weekinreview/the-anatomy-of-a-misunderstanding.html> April, 2009



### **3.5 George W. Bush - Re-emergence of Neo-Cons and the US' Strategy of Assertive Unilateralism**

According to many scholars of international relations, George W. Bush came into office more skeptical than any of his predecessors since the end of the Cold War, about the significance of the international law, treaties, alliances and the idea of global governance. Basically, he believed that with the end of the Cold War, outdated multi-lateral as well as bi-lateral treaties no longer needed or at least had to be amended. Undoubtedly, this kind of stance of the Bush administration also had its negative consequences with regard to the administrations Russia policy.

Yet, before assuming power, George W. Bush as a candidate for presidency alongside with his advisers such as Russian specialist Condoleezza Rice promised to put an end to the 'honeymoon period' between United States and Russia which existed during Clinton's years in Washington. Particularly, as it was echoed by Condoleezza Rice:

“ ... The problem for United States policy is that the Clinton administration's embrace of Yeltsin and those who were thought to be reformers around him has failed”, because, “U.S. support for democracy and economic reform became support for Yeltsin. His agenda became the American agenda ...<sup>98</sup>”

Accordingly, although, the Bush administration's intentions to decisively support 'Nunn-Lugar Bill' to secure, to limit and to weaken Russia's nuclear capacity, the main goal of Bush's foreign policy towards Russia was to finish US' full commitment to Russia's internal economic and political transition. One could possibly argue that this kind of stance of the Bush administration towards Russia originated from Russia's increasing power and consequent growing status in international relations, since, Putin assumed power in the Kremlin. For that reason, when it came to Russia's

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98 Condoleezza Rice (January/February, 2000) Promoting the National Interest Campaign 2000. Foreign Affairs., p. 8

position in international relations, Condoleezza Rice explained it through the lenses of the ‘realpolitik’, arguing that:

“ ... The United States needs to recognize that Russia is a great power and that we will always have interests that conflict as well as coincide ...<sup>99</sup>”

Therefore, the US needed to pursue a more realistic and strategic policy towards Russia. And if it will be necessary, to see the Russian Federation as a new rival to US interests in the region. Accordingly, as it became obvious later, US’ policy towards Russia was to ‘counter’ Russia’s attempts to reestablish its sphere of influence in post-Soviet region. Nevertheless, underlying principles of Bush’s Russia policy were based on the ‘power asymmetry’ between US and Russia, (as a part of neo-conservative agenda) which allowed Bush to act unilaterally in certain circumstances. If we carefully examine a speech made at the Citadel, in 1999, by governor George W. Bush called “*A Period of Consequences*”; Bush very precisely explained his future intentions towards Russia by giving example the Anti-Ballistic Defense Treaty. The following statement is excerpt from his address:

“ ... My administration will deploy anti-ballistic missile systems, both theater and national, to guard against attack and blackmail. To make this possible, we will offer Russia the necessary amendments to the anti-ballistic missile treaty – an artifact of Cold War confrontation. Both sides know that we live in a different world from 1972, when that treaty was signed. If Russia refuses the changes we propose, we will give prompt notice, under the provisions of the treaty, that we can no longer be a party to it. I will have a solemn obligation to protect the American people and our allies, not to protect arms control agreements signed almost 30 years ago ...<sup>100</sup>”

From Russia’s perspective, the US’ policy to deploy anti-missile defense system in Poland and in Czech Republic once again demonstrated US’ assertive unilateralism and willingness to ignore Russia’s concerns in international politics. Referring to the arguments made by US’ influential officials, Russian analysts argue

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99 Condoleezza Rice (January, 3, 2001) Redefining U.S.-Russian Relationship. Foreign Affairs.. p. 6  
100 Governor George W. Bush (September, 23, 1999). *A Period of Consequences*. At Citadel,

that Russia would have to accept its incapability to oppose US' decision to deploy the anti-missile defense system in Central Europe by the same manner as it did accepted the US' withdrawal from Anti-Ballistic Defense Treaty in 2001.

It is important to understand the main motives behind the US' decision to vigorously pursue this strategy. Although, US officials explain the reasons behind this strategy as to intercept incoming Iranian missiles aimed at Europe, according to many scholars of international relations, there are some other more important factors that consequently caused to take this decision. Accordingly, in post-Cold War era, although, the United States has enormous, incomparable and the largest military budget in the world, the officials in the White House understood that Russia still possessed nuclear arsenals that were proportionate to US nuclear potential, capable to destroy immediately any adversary.

Hence, installation of American anti-ballistic missile defense system in Europe would provide the United States with essential reconfiguration of American military presence in Europe, in order to strategically encircle Russia and unable its nuclear arsenals.

Moscow clearly understood the possible dramatic consequences of all these developments for Russia. First of all, Russia's prestige as a great power which was achieved due to its nuclear capacity in international relations will be diminished at maximum. Russian Federation will not be militarily able to confront the United States and to protect its interests in global politics. Russia's clear response with respect to Poland's and Czech Republic's decisions to agree on deployment of anti-missile defense system on their territories was openly articulated by Putin, when he argued that:

“ ... I discussed this matter too with the Polish Prime Minister. If such systems are deployed on Polish territory or attempts are made to

use them to neutralise our nuclear missile potential, this would upset the strategic balance in the world and would be a threat to our national security, and we would have no choice in such a situation but to take countermeasures, including possibly retargeting our offensive missile systems against the sites we consider to pose a threat ..<sup>101</sup>

Therefore, he stated that:

“ ... If this system is established, we will be forced to make an appropriate response. In such a situation we probably would be forced to retarget our missiles against the sites that represent a threat. But it is not we who are creating these sites. We are asking that this not go ahead, but no one is listening. We are giving a clear warning right from the start that if you take this step this is the response you can expect from us ...”<sup>102</sup>

Nowadays, this dilemma of deployment of anti-missile defense system in Europe is still on the agenda of two respective countries, however, under two different administrations; Barak Obama and Dmitry Medvedev. Still there is no clear outcome after a several top level meetings between the countries. Russia’s proposal to install the same defense system in Azerbaijan, Gabala radar station which is rented by Russia from Azerbaijan and which is closer to Iran is rejected by the United States. Moreover, Putin had proposed another plan, in which he stated that:

“ ... Also, as another possible plan, Moscow has proposed that part of the anti-missile defence shield - joint system between Russia, the U.S. and the EU - could potentially be placed in the South of Russia ...”<sup>103</sup>

There is a lot to do for the presidents of two countries to achieve consensus on this issue, since, each side’s view on the approach is totally different<sup>104</sup>.

Nevertheless, coming back to the analysis of Bush’s and his advisers’ 2000 presidential campaign’s rhetoric, it was quite predictable and obvious that the upcoming relations between the two sides, taking into account all these developments

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<sup>101</sup> Lorna Thomas (5/20/2008) U.S.-Russia Missile Defense and Russian Military Resurgence. Global Politician. <http://www.globalpolitician.com/24770-russia-military>

<sup>102</sup> *ibid*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>104</sup> Note: More information about the current position of both sides regarding the issues mentioned above are provided in conclusion chapter number six.

mentioned above, would be more strained than ever before, since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

By assuming power in 2000, George W. Bush brought back to his cabinet an old team of neo-conservative figures such as the Vice President Dick Cheney, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz and the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. All of them had served together previously in the administrations of Ronald Regan and George H. Bush. Undoubtedly, considering in mind an impact of advisers throughout the history of the United States, a presence of the neo-conservative hard-line advisers in the key positions of the first administration of George W. Bush probably was one of the main factors that had led to a fundamental reconsideration of US foreign policy directions defined by the Clinton government during 1990<sup>8</sup>. It should be kept in mind that the neo-conservative figures in the Bush cabinet lost their influential position, once a second Bush administration's revised Russia policy was predominantly managed under the supervision of Bush's National Security Adviser and second term secretary of state Dr. Condoleezza Rice<sup>105</sup> as well as Bush himself.

In order to understand more precisely the objectives and strategies of the Bush administration from 2000 to 2005, I believe it would be constructive to briefly provide the fundamental principles of the neo-conservatives in US politics that in fact has direct political and security implications on the relationship between US and Russia.

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105 *ibid.*, pp. 334-335

### **3.5.1 An Impact of Neo-cons in Bush cabinet**

Neo-conservatives have a long narration in American political history. In contemporary political history of the United States, particularly in post-Cold War epoch, they have laid a theoretical foundation of the idea known as American “global hegemony” in world politics. The application of this theoretical approach in US post-Cold War foreign policy established a strategy of unilateral use of force and rejection of past agreements by the United States of America in international relations. The main dimension of neo-conservative foreign policy is the export and promotion of American imposed democracy all around the world, by any means; including military, political and economic.

In this context, it must be emphasized that particularly the emergence of this development (i.e. the idea of unilateralism) has led to other areas of friction between US and Russia in post-Cold War period, whereas; Russian political elite preferred more to operate under a multi-polar system of world politics. It is also should be pointed out that by the time when George W. Bush took power, Russia had already faced the presidential change by V. Putin in the Kremlin. Hence, Russia’s multi-polar approach towards/in world politics was strengthened under Putin’s regime in Kremlin, whose foreign policy is described to be more assertive than his predecessor’s.

### **3.5.2 Events of 9/11 and its influence on George W. Bush’s Foreign Policy**

The events of September 11, 2001 were a crucial and turning point in the history of the United States as well as world politics. The tragedy of the twenty first century has many dimensions. On the one hand, this catastrophe of the American nation literally forced Bush and his advisers to reorient US foreign policy priorities.

Consequently, Bush came up with certain strategies and policies such as “*pre-emptive strike*” and “*war on terrorism*” which was indoctrinated into national security strategy under the declaration of ‘National Security Strategy of the United States’ published in White House in 2002<sup>106</sup> and with a new terminology called the “*Bush Doctrine*”. According to John Lewis Gaddis the premise of the “*Bush Doctrine*” was that it represented “a sweeping shift in US grand strategy since the Cold War ended<sup>107</sup>”. Unlike any other doctrines in US political history, the “*Bush Doctrine*” wasn’t oriented specifically toward one region, but rather globally against states which he called the “axis of evil<sup>108</sup>” such as Iran, North Korea and Iraq and so on. A fundamental premise of the “Bush Doctrine” was that United States would fight preemptively against the global terrorism in every part of the world and against those states that by any means supported those terrorists, thereby, threatening US national interests and security. In this context, it should be noted that many scholars of international relations have seen “Bush Doctrine” as a proactive policy of US in promoting ‘democracy’ in Third World countries through the ‘regime change’ and ‘transformation policy’.

On the other hand, the dramatic events of 9/11 was an important moment and the clear opportunity for the neo-conservative figures of the Bush’s cabinet, in order to realize their strategy of global leadership or hegemony once initiated after the end of the Cold War in early 1990<sup>s</sup> under George W. H, Bush administration. Taking into account an influence of public opinion on US foreign policy, the events of 9/11 cultivated a public support for neoconservative agenda of the Bush administration.

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106 George. W. Bush. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. The White House, September 2002

107 John Lewis Gaddis (December 1, 2002) A Grand Strategy of Transformation. Foreign Affairs

108 Ivo H. Deaelder and James M. Lindsay (May, 2003) The Bush Revolution; The Remaking of America’s Foreign Policy. Brookings Institution.. pp. 22-25

### **3.5.3 Era of Rapprochement between US and Russia: Terrorism as a common threat!?**

Parallel with this, it would be constructive to observe another dimension of the 9/11 events in US foreign policy which had a direct implication on the US-Russian relationship in world affairs. The new stance of the Bush administration's foreign policy known as "*Bush Doctrine*" which reshaped (albeit briefly) US national security strategies brought a period of a new 'strategic cooperation' between United States and Russia over the war against terrorists' network such as Al-Qaida and Taliban all around the world, particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although, Clinton's personalized relations with Yeltsin were criticized by Bush's advisers during that period of time, nevertheless, the leaders of the two countries established their personal friendship more or the less on the same level as their predecessors. Putin was the first foreign president who displayed his country's sympathy for the 11 September events. Following two Joint Statements of the leaders of US and Russia in October 21 and November 13 in 2001<sup>109</sup>, parties pledged themselves to cooperate between each other based on mutual respect. In addition to this, the United States and Russia signed another new "Joint Declaration on a New Relationship between United States and Russia" in May, 2004<sup>110</sup>, which was assumed to achieve and foster new strategic relations between the parties in twenty first century. Moreover, it should be emphasized that Putin's decision to support the US in the worldwide anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan and Pakistan had surprised many observers in international

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*109 Joint Statement by President Bush and Putin* October 21 and in November 13, 2001.

White House, Office of the Press Secretary

*110 Joint Declaration on a New Relationship Between the United States and Russia* (May 24, 2002)

[http://moscow.usembassy.gov/joint\\_05242002d.html](http://moscow.usembassy.gov/joint_05242002d.html)



relations. Putin's famous 'five point plan'<sup>111</sup> to support US led an anti-terrorism operation was very crucial development between White House and the Kremlin. Furthermore, the Moscow Treaty of Strategic Reduction which was signed in 2003 was another direct reflection of the forthcoming rapprochement between US and Russia. What is more important to mention here is that the war against terrorism also had its security implications to the countries in the South-Caucasus, since; Russia was already involved in so-called 'regional war on terrorism' in Northern Caucasus against Chechen rebels. Explosions of civil buildings in the heart of Moscow, Buinaksk and Volgodonsk and later the events in Beslan located in northern part of the Osetia where a seizure of a school with more than a thousand of children in summer 2004 became 9/11 tragedy in the history of Russian people. In addition to this, Russia's fear was concerned more about the spread of Islamist fundamentalism in the region capable to create instability to Russia's internal and external security. Thus, cooperation between two sides against terrorism gave Putin a free-hand over the war in Chechnya, whereby, the west and particularly the United States initially had expressed a negative response on it.

Nevertheless, to be more realistic, a shaky collaboration between US and Russia on counter-terrorism during this period of time was achieved as it was argued by Dimitri K. Simes primarily "*due to shared fundamental interests, rather than a common ideology or mutual sympathy*"<sup>112</sup>.

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111 Michael A. McFaul. *U.S.-Russia Relations After September 11, 2001*

"Russian government would (1) share intelligence with their American counterparts, (2) open Russian airspace for flights providing humanitarian assistance (3) cooperate with Russia's Central Asian allies to provide similar kinds of airspace access to American flights, (4) participate in international search and rescue efforts, and (5) increase direct assistance -humanitarian as well as military assistance -- to the Northern Alliance and the Rabbani government in Afghanistan".  
<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=840&prog=zru>

112 Dimitri K. Simes. (November/December 2007) *Losing Russia; The Cost of Renewed Confrontation* Foreign Affairs Journal. pp. 43-44

### 3.5.4 US foreign policy in South-Caucasus under Bush Administration

Considering all the developments mentioned previously in international relations, particularly in US-Russian relations, Washington under Bush's leadership increased its military, economic and political engagement in the region of Caspian and South-Caucasus, since 9/11. Overall speaking about the security implications of the Bush's foreign policy towards the Caspian-Caucasus region, Bush's policies in the region are almost the continuation of the policies once initiated by the Clinton administration, however, decorated and aspired with more ambitious policies and objectives to be achieved. Unlike Clinton who avoided direct US military engagement in the region, rarely on the institutional level (i.e. within the framework of NATO), Bush administration initiated a more pro-active military engagement through NATO policies. These policies and objectives of the Bush administration became very obvious after Bush's speech given in the State Union Address in 2002, whereby he declared the main priorities of the US post-September foreign policy. According to many scholars, Bush in his speech placed an emphasis on the promotion of individual liberty all around the world, his foreign policy came to be associated as to be a 'regime transformer'<sup>113</sup> in every politically instable country of the international system. The so-called "*color revolutions*" in post-Soviet countries such as Ukraine and Georgia are the best examples of Bush's so-called 'regime change and transformation' approach in his foreign affairs. An underlying principle of this approach was based on the idea that by establishing democratic governments in post-Soviet space through the "color-revolutions", Russia will be squeezed geopolitically. Obviously, this is another unwanted factor in US-Russian relations that recently have led to another major but this time ideological discrepancy between two

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113 James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul. (2003) Power and Purpose; US Policy Towards Russia after the Cold War. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press... pp-14-15

sides; since, taking into account multi-ethnic composition of the Russian Federation; officials in the Kremlin were considerably worried about the developments in these countries. A fear of “*domino-effect*” is the main aspect for Russia’s negative awareness.

Consequently, it is important to draw a conclusion by carefully examining and analyzing the developments that have led to the recent incomprehension and antagonism between the United States and Russia. Obviously, relations between two sides have become strained particularly under George W. Bush and V. Putin administrations. The main reason for the United States was the resurgent Russia and its policies that in a way proved to be an obstacle to the US’ national interests. Particularly, Russia’s sympathy towards Iran (arms sales to Iran) and its nuclear program is one among other grievances that US is concerned about. US’ unilateral withdrawal from the ABMT (Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty) during George W. Bush’s period in power as a response to the North-Korean decision to launch a controversial rocket is another factor that harmed further relations between two sides; since, according to many international political observers the ABMT treaty was the only factor or indication symbolizing and ensuring Russia’s status as a “great power” in international relations.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Examining the evolution and the formulation of the US post-Cold War foreign policy from George H. Bush to George W. Bush, throughout the two decades, three administrations, although, had different views of Russia, they had shared more or less a common idea regarding the US’ position in global politics. The idea of “New World Order” which was generated under G. H Bush, a policy of

“Democratic Engagement through Enlargement” of the Clinton administration, and finally the well known as the “Bush Doctrine” of George W. Bush’s team are the strategic policies that were oriented and indoctrinated in US foreign policy since the collapse of the Soviet Union in order to achieve and maintain the US leadership in world affairs. Nevertheless, due to certain obstacles, such as mainly appearance of Russia’s growing position as a great power in world affairs as well as the emergence of other regional powers, forced US to enter into the era of multi-polar system. Certainly, many have benefitted from this change in US politics, but also many became more vulnerable for instability in international system, whereby, US was providing a ‘security-umbrella’ for many actors in world politics.

In terms of US’ Russia politics, Russia throughout the history was and will be one of the most important actors in international politics that US will have to face, considering its strategic and historical depth for Europe as well as for other Asian actors. Today, it is already becomes more difficult to deal with Russia, taking into account Russia’s renewal of its nuclear arsenal and modernization of its military capacity. Officials in Washington are more concerned with all these developments in Russian internal security affairs, since, Russia is the country bordering partly with Europe, Asia as well as with the Middle East. Consequently, any instability in Russian affairs or any improvement in its security affairs has a direct negative or positive effect on US national security and interests in global politics.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOUTH-CAUCASUS FOR RUSSIA AND THE UNITED STATES**

#### **Introduction**

The following chapter of the thesis will discover and illustrate a geo-strategic significance of the South-Caucasus from economic, security and political perspectives, in order to provide a clear understanding of the developments of last two decades in the region that have led to an existing antagonism between US and Russia. Particularly, strategic objectives and policy approaches of two great powers in the region will be analyzed from a comparative perspective in order to provide a clear comprehension of the recent situation of the region.

#### **4.1. Geo-strategic and Geo-political Significance of the region**

##### **4.1.1 Historical Comprehension of the Region**

To address and examine the significance of the Caspian-Caucasian region for the parties involved there, particularly for the Russian Federation is impossible without analyzing it in a historical context. From a geo-political standpoint, the South-Caucasus is located in an extremely uncomfortable and strategically important position representing the bloody crossroads where the interests of great empires clashed for centuries. Hence, throughout the history the region has been surrendered and influenced by the brutal policies of the major empires, such as the Russian to the north, the Persian in the south and the Ottoman from the west. Squeezed between these regional powers, the region throughout the history as well as in contemporary

post-Cold War epoch was a hotbed for long-lasting wars along with “*frozen conflicts*”<sup>114</sup> between external as well as internal actors.



Picture 1: South-Caucasus; Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia<sup>115</sup>

Moreover, although Samuel P. Huntington in his famous article, “*The Clash of Civilizations?*”<sup>116</sup> has described the entire region as the ‘fault-line’ between religious groups, in my opinion this is an incorrect assumption. Rather, considering a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multicultural composition of the region, it is quite possible to identify the core source of the conflicts and chronic instability in the region which is based on the ethnic-territorial issues inspired by nationalism, whereby, religion remains on the periphery. Thus, the brilliant application of “*divide and rule*” strategy of the great powers throughout history, instability and the conflicts has never been removed from the region, mainly, because the region was always on the agenda of the great powers, each pursuing its own national interests. For this reason, in the contemporary Caucasus, including northern and southern parts of the region, it is possible to draw up the main issues that regional and external

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114 Note: Conflicts remained frozen mainly during the Cold War and by the initiatives of the Soviet leaders to sustain and maintain relatively stable relations among/between the parties involved in these conflicts.

115 [www.payvand.com/news/06/nov/Caucasus-Map.jpg](http://www.payvand.com/news/06/nov/Caucasus-Map.jpg)

116 Samuel P. Huntington. (2004) *The Clash of Civilizations*. Foreign Affairs. Vol. 72, No. 3

powers involved in the region had/have to face and confront the consequences derived from these issues. According to R. Craig Nation, to understand present-day sources of instability in the entire region, he classified the issues in four different categories such as; a) *Regional and Territorial Instability in the region*, b) *Islamic Radicalism*, c) *Embedded Criminality* and lastly d) *Strategic Resources*<sup>117</sup>. Accordingly, the author claims that all these four factors mentioned above generated areas of friction between the Russian Federation and the United States over their policies. Hence, it can be said that all these policies of the significant powers in the region in the twenty first century remind a revival of the old “great game” in Eurasia.

#### **4.1.2 Pre and Post Soviet Legacy of the Region**

Throughout the existence of the Soviet Union, the entire region was under the territorial integrity of the USSR. Consequently, the political dissolution of the USSR brought about a sweeping shift in the geo-political division of the region. Hence, in the contemporary international system, the Caucasus became geo-politically divided into two parts, representing northern and southern parts of the region. Nowadays, the Northern Caucasus is comprised of a number of small ethnic nations still under the territorial jurisdiction of the Russian Federation. However, countries in the South-Caucasus such as Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia achieved their full independence from Russia in the beginning of the 1990<sup>s</sup>. Moreover, we also have to admit that the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in an enormous geo-political vacuum in the region to be filled by the regional as well external actors, such as Iran, Turkey and Europe.

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117 R. Craig Nation. (February, 2007) *Russia, The United States, and The Caucasus* Strategic Studies Institute pp. 3-5

Each state in the Southern Caucasus has its own uniqueness and is subject to the national interests of the external powers, in terms of its geographic location and abundance of natural resources, which turned to be representing the most attractive factors of the region. However, it must be emphasized that the Southern Caucasus in particular has a crucial implication for strategically vital security calculations of the Russian Federation. Since, Russia officially has made it clear in its military doctrine that the countries in post-Soviet space are the primary targets of the Russian foreign policy in its “*near-abroad*”. Accordingly, Russia is the only and the most privileged actor in the region in relations with external powers<sup>118</sup>

## **4.2 Geo-economic Implications of the South-Caucasus**

### **4.2.1 Oil and Gas Resources of the region**

After the demise of the USSR, in contemporary politics, the region has acquired more importance mainly due to its transportation lines<sup>119</sup> connecting continental Europe with Asian continent. In addition to this factor, the region’s enormous capacity of oil and gas resources is another aspect of its importance. Consequently, because of these developments in the region, the Caspian-Caucasus region has attracted external powers’ competitive engagement over vast natural reserves, thereby, creating instability and a crossroad of vital interests. According to the reliable sources; the Caspian-Caucasian region is the second largest region possessing oil and a considerable amount of gas reserves in the world after the Middle Eastern reserves. Total amount of oil and gas reserves of the region is clearly indicated on the tables 1 and 2 below.

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118 Bulent Gokay. (Ed.) (2001) *The politics of Caspian oil*. New York: Palgrave Publishers Ltd pp.139-145

119 **Note:** Particularly the role of Georgia will be examined in detail, since; Georgia is the only South-Caucasian country having access to the Black Sea, which is vitally important for the US security implications vis-à-vis Russia.



**Table 1: Energy Information Administration. Caspian Sea Region; Survey of Key Oil and Gas Statistics and Forecasts. July, 2006<sup>120</sup>.**

<b>OIL</b>						
The Caspian Sea Region contains proven oil reserves estimated to be between 17 and 44 billion barrels, comparable to Qatar on the low end and the United States on the high end.						
Reserves (Billion Barrels)	Country	Proven Oil Reserves <sup>1</sup>			Total	
		Low	High	Possible <sup>2</sup>	Low	High
	Azerbaijan	7	12.5	32	39	44.5
	Iran	0.1		15		15.1
	Kazakhstan	9	29	92	41	61
	Russia <sup>a</sup>	0.3		7		7.3
	Turkmenistan	0.546	1.7	38	32.546	33.7
	Uzbekistan	0.3	0.594	2	32.3	32.594
	<b>Total Caspian Sea Region</b>	<b>17.246</b>	<b>44.194</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>167.246</b>	<b>194.194</b>
In 2004, regional oil production reached roughly 1.9 million barrels per day, comparable to South America's second largest oil producer, Brazil. By 2019, production is forecast to reach between 3 and 5 million barrels per day, which exceeds annual production from S. America's largest oil producer, Venezuela.						
Production (Thousand barrels per day)	Country				Low	High
		1992	2000	2004	2010	
	Azerbaijan	222	309	319	789	1290
	Iran					N/A
	Kazakhstan	529	718	1,221	748	2400
	Russia <sup>a</sup>	0	0	0	200	
	Turkmenistan	110	157	260	475	1000
	Uzbekistan	66	152	150	225	1000
	<b>Total Caspian Sea Region<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>927.3</b>	<b>1,335.9</b>	<b>1,950.2</b>	<b>2,437</b>	<b>5,890</b>

**Table 2: Gas Resources<sup>121</sup>.**

<b>GAS</b>						
The Caspian Sea Region's proven natural gas reserves are estimated at 232 trillion cubic feet, comparable to Saudi Arabia.						
Reserves (tcf)	Country	Proven Reserves		Possible Reserves		Total Reserves
		Azerbaijan	30		35	
	Iran	0		11		11
	Kazakhstan	65		88		153
	Russia <sup>a</sup>	N/A		N/A		N/A
	Turkmenistan	71		159		230
	Uzbekistan	66.2		35		101
	<b>Total Caspian Sea Region</b>	<b>232</b>		<b>328</b>		<b>560</b>
	Regional production reached approximately 4.9 tcf in 2004, comparable to the combined production of S. America, Central America, and Mexico. In 2010, the governments of the Caspian Sea region expect their countries to produce a total of 9.61Tcf, more than the 2004 production from the entire Middle East					
Production (tcf/y)	Country	1992	2000	2004	2010	
		Azerbaijan	0.28	0.20	0.19	0.6
	Iran					
	Kazakhstan	0.29	0.31	0.56	1.24	
	Russia <sup>a</sup>					
	Turkmenistan	2.02	1.89	2.07	4.24	
	Uzbekistan	1.51	1.99	2.12	3.53	
	<b>Total Caspian Sea Region</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>4.40</b>	<b>4.94</b>	<b>9.61</b>	
	<sup>1</sup> Proven reserves are defined by the EIA as those volumes of oil and gas that geological and engineering data show with reasonable certainty to be economically recoverable under existing economic and operating conditions. <sup>2</sup> Possible reserves are less precisely quantified and are defined here to include other reserves found through extensions, divisions, and new discoveries <sup>3</sup> Other estimates (EIA/IEO 2004): 3.2 million bbl/d (Ref. Case, not including Russia), (World Oil, 10 March 2004); 3 million bbl/d <sup>a</sup> Only Caspian area oil and gas production **Source: Reserves, OGJ; Production, EIA; Forecasts, Interfax, EIA, IEA, CERA, SKRIN, APS Review					

Nevertheless, the existence of vast capacity of oil and gas resources in the Caspian basin didn't necessarily mean a rapid growth of the region. There were many obstacles in the region for successful completion of oil and gas extraction. The

120 [http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/caspian\\_balances.htm](http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/caspian_balances.htm)

121 *ibid*

primary obstacle for the countries in the Caspian basin on the eve of their independence was a lack of appropriate exploration equipment. Obsolete equipment from the Soviet Union's time was no more reliable and even impractical under the new conditions of the oil and gas industry in the region<sup>122</sup>. All these factors have created another issue such as a crucial need for a substantial amount of capital and investment in order to easily exploit those reserves. It was obvious that none of the Caspian states, except Russia, could afford to independently exploit its oil and gas resources without the support of Russian Federation or any other external actor. Nevertheless, these problems were solved by the leaders of the Caspian states - attracting FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) to be involved in development of oil and gas industries in the Caspian basin. It should be kept in mind by reader that this initial phenomenon in the energy politics of the region (lack of necessary means in the hands of oil and gas rich countries of the Caspian basin) will be discussed below as a factor that have led to escalation of tensions between Russia and other littoral states of the Caspian basin.

### **4.3 Russian interests in the region: Consolidation of Its Presence**

This section will be examining Russian interests and accordingly its policies in the region after the demise of the Soviet Union, briefly under Boris Yeltsin's and predominantly under Vladimir Putin's administrations. It is important to examine Russia's approach towards the countries and respectively the key causes of their leaning policies towards the West. Therefore, it is vitally important to observe in what ways Russian officials were and are willing to respond and manage this obstacle on their way.

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122 Bulent Gokay. (Ed.) (2001) The politics of Caspian oil. New York: Palgrave Publishers Ltd pp. 23-24

### 4.3.1 Safeguarding a Sphere of Influence

Among the scholars of international relations, it is generally known that Russia has a very unstable and insecure environment with potential and real security concerns across its border-lines. This perception of scholars of international relations is based on the argument that Russia surrounded by militarily weak and politically unstable states such as newly independent countries of the Caspian-Caucasus and the Central Asian regions could spread instability into Russia's internal affairs. For that reason, for centuries, the Caucasus region has never lost its importance for Russia's vital national security interests. In this context, to understand the region's importance for Russia, we must understand the logic of Russian geo-politics. According to George Friedman, geo-strategically and geo-politically the Russian Federation confronts three different border-lines such as border with Western Europe, Asian Siberia and Central Asia and Caucasus. Among them, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Caucasus and Central Asia turned to represent the most vulnerable border-lines for security calculations of Russian military strategists<sup>123</sup>. Geo-strategically speaking, during the times of the Russian Empire as well as during the establishment of the Soviet Union, the Caspian-Caucasus region served as a buffer-zone for Russia's southern border. For that reason, the unexpected collapse of the Soviet regime, the modern Russian Federation became geo-politically insecure. Particularly, the loss of the South-Caucasus for Russia meant a potential increase of Turkish (as NATO factor) as well as Iranian influences in the region with alongside the US' intentions in the region. In addition to this, the subsequent strategic defeat in Eastern Europe (loss of Eastern Germany, the Baltic States, Poland and Russia's leverage over Ukraine), caused officials in Moscow to attempt to regain Russian

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123 George Friedman. (October, 15. 2008) Geopolitics of Russia; Permanent Struggle Stratfor. p. 7 [www.stratfor.com](http://www.stratfor.com)

preponderance in Central Asia and in the Caucasus, mainly through a robust foreign policy and coercive diplomacy.

As I have mentioned earlier, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, states in the Southern-Caucasus achieved their full independence from Moscow, each inheriting unresolved ethnic-territorial conflicts in its soil<sup>124</sup>. Taking advantage of Russia's weak position in international as well as in domestic affairs at the beginning of 1990<sup>s</sup>, small ethnic nations as well as other Soviet Socialist Republics of the USSR (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia) saw this period as an opportunity in their history to obtain full independence from imperial Russia based on the right of 'self-determination'. Nevertheless, this phenomenon in the region created instability in Russia's southern borders; in the South-Caucasus. Although, Russia formally recognized the sovereignty of these nations, Russia's conservative political officials in the Kremlin had never given up Russia's aspiration for an international mandate and special rights in the regions of Caucasus and Central Asia. This Russian point of view was many times expressed and claimed by many officials in Moscow. A pure demonstration of this Russian desire occurred first in 1993, during Yeltsin's presidency in Kremlin, whereby, Boris Yeltsin openly requested from the international community to recognize Russia's privileged status, hence, stated that:

“... The time has come for authoritative and distinguished international organisations, including the UN, to grant Russia special powers of a guarantor of peace and stability in former regions of the USSR ...”<sup>125</sup>

Later, this view was once again articulated by another Russian political figure from the Duma, former First Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Federov under Putin's administration, but this time in a more strident way, claiming that:

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124 Note: Azerbaijan-Armenia, War over Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia, internal conflict between Georgia, Osetia, Abkhazia and Adzharia.

125 Reger E. Kaner. (2005) *The New Security Environment; The Impact on Russia, Central and Eastern Europe*. England: Ashgate Publishing Limited... pp. 170-171

“ ... Today we are speaking more or less openly now about our zones of interests. In one way or another we are confirming that the post-Soviet territory is such a zone. In Yeltsin’s time we were trying to wrap this in a nice paper. Now we are saying it more directly: this is our territory, our sphere of interest ...”<sup>126</sup>

These statements of high level politicians in the Kremlin inevitably raised certain questions such as; how effectively and through what policies and strategies the Russian Federation consolidated its presence in the region? And if it was consolidated so far, how successfully has she provided stability in the region? Also, through what strategies, policies and mechanisms will stability in the region be achieved, or can’t be achieved? And, in what ways those strategies, mechanisms and policies of the Russian Federation are contradicting to and challenging the interests of the United States and other regional powers’ in the region?

Before examining all these issues mentioned above, it is important to provide perceptions of some influential geo-politicians and policy makers in Russia, such as A. Bogaturov and V. Kremenyuk regarding the role of the US’ foreign policy towards Russia and its “*near-abroad*”. Since, it is believed by observers of the Russian policies that the main reason for Russia’s aspirations to regain its influence in the region is based on US’ claims to pursue its national interests in the region, by following a close political, economic and military engagement with the states of the South-Caucasus. Accordingly, Bogaturov and Kremenyuk argued that:

“ ... The United States and the NATO members firmly and consistently are destroying the geo-political foundations of the Russian Federation, which could at least in theory, allow Russia to hope acquire the status as the number two power in world politics that belonged to the Soviet Union ...”<sup>127</sup>

Thus, accordingly, the policies of the United States in the region are seen to be based on the establishment of:

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126 O. Pavliuk and I. Klympush-Tsintsadze. (2003) *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*. East-West Institute. p. 268

127 A. Bogaturov, V. Kremenyuk. (2002) *Foreign Security and National Security of Contemporary Russia; 1991-2002*. Moscow: Russian International Studies Association.. Volume 3. p. 232

“ ... the new organization of the European space that is being engineered by the West is, in essence, built on the idea of supporting, in this part of the world, new, relatively small and weak national states through their more or less close rapprochement with NATO, the EU, and so forth ... ”<sup>128</sup>

To begin by examining these questions, I would like to start first by examining Russia’s approach and attempt to build a security-based infrastructure in the region with the sole purpose of involving all the post-communist states of the Soviet Union. This approach of Russian officials was aimed at creating an umbrella political, economic and security organization obviously dominated by Russia, whereby, countries in the region and their foreign policies inevitably would be linked and influenced directly to/by the interests of the Russian Federation in the region. One of the most visible and principal institutions that were established in early 1990<sup>th</sup> was the organization of Commonwealth of Independent States, established in December 9, 1991, in Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Belarus. In May, 1992, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, parties under Russian leadership established another security institution called CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization operating under the framework of CIS, which was seen by western observers as counter-organization to a NATO. It should be noted that these institutions indeed were established with the sole purpose of promoting a peaceful transition of the former Soviet republics towards their full independence. Unfortunately for the members of CIS club, according to Reger E. Kanet:

“ ... Yet, it soon became clear that many in Moscow saw the CIS as a means by which the Moscow would be able to reassert a dominant presence ... ”<sup>129</sup>

For that reason, considering this rationale of Russian strategists towards the Caspian-Caucasus region, countries of the South-Caucasus such as Georgia and Azerbaijan

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128 *Ibid*, p. 235

129 Roger E. Kanet. (2008) *The Return of Imperial Russia; Russia and Its Neighbors*. Arms Control Disarmament and International Security. Occasional Paper..

refused to take a part in these organizations, which consequently, led to withdrawal of Russian military bases from Azerbaijan and lately from Georgia. It is also must be pointed out that the rejectionist policy of the Georgian and Azerbaijani governments with respect to CIS legitimacy in their affairs, further escalated tensions between Russia and states in South-Caucasus.

Further, taking into account the Russian attitude vis-à-vis these states that are formally 'out' of CIS as well as 'in' CIS, I would like to draw up a Russia's list of clear cut policies and strategies implied for them. The following policies are the most observable ones:

- Reestablishment of Russia's sphere of influence in the region through close participation in 'peacekeeping operations' devoted to resolve disputes within/between conflicting parties in the region<sup>130</sup>. The war over the Nagorno-Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia and Georgia's internal instability over Abkhazia, Adzharia and Ossetia are the clear examples of this approach. By preserving its dominant position in 'peacekeeping approach' strategy, Russian leaders without difficulty have controlled and influenced all the political and security developments of the region.
- To consolidate Russian 'military bases' in the region through the 'peacekeeping approach' strategy. Although, it is possible to admit that this strategy was partly successful and partly not. Since, a country such as Azerbaijan<sup>131</sup> was the only country that resisted Russian military presence in its territory, whereby, Georgia was literally forced

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130 John J. Maresca. *The International Community and the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh*. p. 77

131 Note: It turned to be successful due to the former President Abulfaz Elchibey's opposition to base Russian military in Azerbaijan. His close ties with Turkey and his Pan-Turanism background are the central explanations for this opposition.

to accept the Russian military presence due to Russian blackmail over the resolution of Georgia's internal ethnic disputes<sup>132</sup>. Nonetheless, these circumstances have changed since the last war between Georgia and Russian Federation in August 7, 2008, whereby, Abkhazia and South-Ossetia were 'granted' their full independence from Georgia by/under Russia's security guarantee. This strategy was once again proved by the words of the former Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Pavel Grachev, who served from 1992-1996 during Yeltsin's regime in Kremlin, when he stated that:

“ ... The strategic importance of the Black Sea-Caspian regions may slip out of Russia's hands in case our troops withdraw from the area ...<sup>133</sup>”

- To ensure Russia's economic domination in the region. This strategy involved an establishment of free economic zone under the framework of organization of Commonwealth of Independent States. This policy would enable Russian federation effectively control energy politics of the region which is seen as a vital source of economic prosperity of the region.

The next phase of this chapter will illustrate how and in what ways these strategies confronted the interests of the United States in the region, particularly in Georgia, where, three break away territories of the republic of Georgia were used by Kremlin in order to achieve its goals. For that reason, first I will examine main motivations behind the US' involvement in the South-Caucasus and in Caspian basin and at the same time will point out the areas of friction between two sides throughout the process.

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132 *Ibid.*, 77

133 *Izvestiya Newspaper*, Moscow, 27 February, 1993.



## 4.4 US Involvement in the Caspian-Caucasus Region

### 4.4.1 An Overall Appraisal of US Engagement in the Region

The United States throughout its political history had never been actively involved in the affairs of the Caspian-Caucasus region. Obviously, America's cautious involvement in the region started after the end of the Cold War. Hence, one could indeed argue that the United States is completely a new factor in this region, but very promising in the eyes of people of the region.

To understand the progress of America's involvement and engagement policies in the region, Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna argued that US' policies and interests in the region initially were based on the principle of "*nice-to-have*". That consequently, due to certain economic, political and security developments in global politics as well in regional politics, resulted in a "*need-to-have*" principle<sup>134</sup>. Accordingly, the US did not (or least didn't want) to consider the region as vital to the interests of its foreign policy, rather, just accepted the region as a Russian backyard that couldn't be penetrated. This perception of Washington was clearly demonstrated by George H. Bush administration's policies, which preferred to deal with centralized and stable Russia, rather than with fragmented political fractions, comprised by ultra-nationalists and communists with anti-western orientations<sup>135</sup>.

An alternative explanation for evolution of US' policies in the region is illustrated by Michael T. Klare in/by providing more credible arguments. Although, it has never been officially stated by Washington, among the others, Michael T. Klare, author of the book "*Blood and Oil; The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum*", argues and interprets an

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134 Olga Oliker, Thomas S. Szayna. (2003) Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asian and Caucasus; Implications for the U.S. Army. Rand, pp. 219-220 [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org)

135 Note: For more details of this information look at Chapter 3, pp. 5-12

overall evolution of the US' political and security engagement in the region as the extension of the "*Carter Doctrine*"<sup>136</sup> into the post-Soviet Caspian-Caucasus region. The main cause of this extension according to author is the growing instability in the Middle East and its impact on security of oil exportation to the world market, particularly to the US' market, since the United States is the world's largest energy consumer. Hence, as it was argued in the previous chapter, that US' concerns in the region are based on the policy of 'diversification of oil suppliers' into the American market – in order to lessen US' dependency on Middle Eastern oil reserves - by developing and extracting the Caspian and Central Asian natural resources<sup>137</sup>.

This perception of US interests in the region was once again confirmed by well known diplomat Zbigniew Brzezinski. According to Dr. Brzezinski, the importance of the South-Caucasus, particularly Georgia's implication for US' national interests is based on two key factors. Firstly, as was previously mentioned a Georgia's geo-political standpoint which provides a guarantee to the western oil and gas multinationals to be involved in drilling and transportation of the Caspian oil and gas resources. Secondly, he argues that there is a moral issue behind the US engagement in the region. Taking into account the communist-oriented political history of the states in the region; countries such as Georgia and Azerbaijan are small emerging democracies under grave Russian pressure. Consequently, he argues that there is a sort of repetition of the events that happened during the Cold War between Finland and the Soviet Union. Obviously, the United States as a staunch defender of

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136 The doctrine was a response to the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, and was intended to deter the Soviet Union—the Cold War adversary of the United States—from seeking hegemony in the Persian Gulf. After stating that Soviet troops in Afghanistan posed "a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carter\\_Doctrine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carter_Doctrine)

137 Michael T. Klare. (2004) *Blood and Oil; The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC pp. 132-134

democracy all around the world - would not like to see the same political developments in the Caspian-Caucasus region.

Based on all these arguments provided above, one could certainly draw a conclusion that the energy politics of the US foreign policy under Clinton and later under the G. W. Bush administrations was designated as one of the national security interests; hence, unavoidably forcing US to perform a more pro-active role in the region. In this context, it should be stressed that US' engagement in the region was further strengthened through the NATO's PfP policies (Partnership for Peace) and later through the principles of the "*Bush Doctrine*", that consequently have led to limited but establishment of the US military bases in the region (will be discussed below in more details). Nevertheless, as it was already analyzed in previous chapter, from a comparative perspective, although, Clinton administration laid down the fundamental elements of US engagement in the region, the US under Clinton's leadership pursued less active engagement policies and tried to avoid a direct US military involvement in the region, rather than George W. Bush, who intensified the US approach to Caspian-Caucasus region.

Accordingly, the United States successfully established its firm position in the region, through different policies (principally establishing pipeline infrastructure through energy politics, ex: construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline) and created sufficient leverage instruments in order to contain Russia's attempts of re-consolidation in the region, (mainly through the policies of CIS). Within this parallel, American support behind the GUAM, the union established by the leaders of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova, countries that have resisted to join CIS and widen their close political, economic and security ties (i.e. dependency) with Russia is one of the policies that has clearly undermined the Russia's approach in the

region. A development of bilateral relations between GUUAM and the United States were further strengthened by a number of Joint Statements that were made in Yalta summit between the heads of state and government of the GUAM member states and the United States. Particularly, the US' financial support to the member countries of the organization increased, in order to achieve a visible progress - "in combating international terrorism, preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related technologies, combating organized crime, and confronting other global challenges"<sup>138</sup>. It should be also pointed out that the US' close relationship with the member states of the GUUAM serves the best interests of the United State in these countries. According to former ambassador of the USA in Ukraine, Steven Pifer:

“ ... The USA is interested in maintaining a dialogue with GUUAM. That is the organization that might promote regional development, creation of a free-trade zone, solution of security issues, such as countering drug trafficking or protection of the pipeline from the Caspian region ... ”<sup>139</sup>

#### **4.4.2 Financial Dimension of US' Cooperation Policies towards the South-Caucasus**

In early 1990<sup>s</sup>, George H. Bush's administration policies towards the region were carried out through the “*Freedom Support Act*” a strategy initiated by the US Congress. Later, under Clinton's leadership in 1999, Washington proposed another project towards the entire region initiated by the Congressman Sam Brownback and known as the “*Silk Road Strategy Act*”. A more recent US aid program to Georgia was conducted through “*USAID*” (United States Agency for International Development)<sup>140</sup>. Basically, according to officials in the Washington, the sole purpose of all these strategies of the White House during 1990<sup>s</sup> with respect to the

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<sup>138</sup> 2003-07-04 Joint Statement United States-GUUAM <http://www.guam.org.ua/node/698>

<sup>139</sup> National Security and Defence. (2001) *GUUAM: Realities and Prospects* Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies № (19) <http://www.uceps.org/eng/journal.php?y=2001&cat=85>

<sup>140</sup> <http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/bj2001/ee/ge/>

South-Caucasus was to bolster financially the newly emerging independent countries in post-Soviet South-Caucasus – to help them to – “strengthen democratic government, resolving regional conflicts, promoting friendly relations with the United States, advancing market reforms, developing the economic infrastructure between states in the region and supporting U.S. business interests and investments”<sup>141</sup>.

From this perspective, it was argued by Archil Gegeshidze, that the fundamental basis for US-Georgian cooperation in the region is based on US geopolitical interests in the region which are directed against Russia’s neo-imperial ambitions in the South-Caucasus. Obviously, it is possible to admit the fact that due to its pivotal geo-strategic location - having access to the Black Sea and providing transportation connections between West and Caspian states’ oil reserves – Georgia received the largest portion of US-led aid through FSA, USAID and SRSA. According to the statistics provided by the US government, a total amount of financial packages provided by US government to support the democratization process in Georgia through the FSA, SRSA and other American Aid Programs, during 1994-2001 was about \$ 1, 7 billion which is significant amount of financial package for such a country with a small population and weak economy<sup>142</sup>.

#### **4.4.3 Military Dimension of US’ Cooperation Policies towards the South-Caucasus**

Until the events of September 11, 2001, a security dimension of the cooperation between the United States and the states in the South-Caucasus was conducted under the framework of the PFP (Partnership for Peace) policy of the

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141 Erik Hotmire (Contact). (March 23, 1999) Brownback Silk Road Strategy Act Passes Senate Foreign Relations Committee Today. Washington DC: For Immediate Release. [www.brownback.senate.gov](http://www.brownback.senate.gov)  
142 US Department of State, *Background Note: Georgia* <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5253.htm>

NATO, initiated during Bill Clinton's administration in Washington. Based on the arguments made by scholars of Caucasian studies, NATO's PfP program was based on the idea of promoting of potential political and security conditions – on the basis of developing bilateral relations between NATO and parties to the program - that would certainly guarantee an eventual membership of the parties in the NATO alliance. This rationale of the PfP was further strengthened when first in 1995 a “*Study on NATO Enlargement*” was published. According to the main principles of the study, NATO through its Partnership for Peace program had to expand its membership for the new members which in return would positively contribute to the overall security of the Europe<sup>143</sup>. Therefore, the US' decision to further deepen its strategic ties and enlarge its formal military ties with the newly established independent countries in the South-Caucasus became clear in November 2002, at the Prague Summit, whereby, the heads of state and government of the NATO member states (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) unanimously took a decision to launch an ‘*Individual Partnership Action Plans*’ with the post-Soviet countries in the Caucasus as well as in Central Asia<sup>144</sup>. According to official sources of the NATO alliance, under this initiative, the NATO alliance and the countries that are primary subject of these plans are expected to achieve the following objectives:

“ ... Objectives covered fall into the general categories of political and security issues; defense, security and military issues; public information; science and environment; civil emergency planning; and administrative, protective security and resource issues ... ”<sup>145</sup>

The Republic of Georgia was the first party among the others, who joined the NATO's “*Partnership for Peace*” program in March 23, 1994, and the “*Individual*

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143 *Study on NATO Enlargement*. (1995 and updated in 2000) <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/enl-9501.htm>

144 *Individual Partnership Action Plans* <http://www.nato.int/issues/ipap/index.html>

145 *ibid*

*Partnership for Action Plans*” in 29 October, 2004<sup>146</sup>. Obviously, this is another reflection and indication of the Georgia’s extreme desire to prevent itself from Russia’s pressure in the region.

#### 4.4.4 Aftermath of September 11 Attacks - US Position in the Region is Straightened!?

The most tangible America’s self-insertion and military infiltration into the Caspian-Caucasus region with alongside of policies mentioned above took place after the events of 9/11, 2001, when George W. Bush announced a global pre-emptive war on terrorism. Considering an ongoing Russia’s so-called ‘regional anti-terrorism campaign’ in Northern-Caucasus against Chechen rebels and thus consequential spread of the terrorist activities in the South-Caucasus, particularly in Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge region<sup>147</sup> bordering with Chechnya, caused officials of the Georgian government to make a request for US sponsored anti-terrorism activities all around the world.



Picture 3: Georgia and the Location of Pankisi-Gorge<sup>148</sup>

146 [http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=454&info\\_id=9680](http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=454&info_id=9680)

147 “The US interim charge d'affaires, Philip Remler, told Georgian media that terrorists connected to al Qaeda might be hiding in Pankisi. This and similar claims gave the Bush administration a way to link the mission to train Georgian forces with the global war on terrorism”. Paul Quinn-Judge (2002) *Jihad Comes to Georgia*, Moscow: Time Journal  
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,203349,00.html>

148 [www.cdi.org/terrorism/georgia\\_map.jpg](http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/georgia_map.jpg)

Basically, the US response was positive. Bush administration's reaction to the situation in Georgia was based on the establishment of "*Train-and-Equip Program*"<sup>149</sup>, aiming at assisting militarily and financially Georgian military forces to successfully conduct counter-terrorist operations in Pankisi Gorge. Through Georgian "*Train-and-Equip Program*", the United States has sent to Georgia hundreds of its military advisers and limited military equipments to provide a logistic assistance for Georgian military staff in their military training programs.

#### **4.5 Russia's Attitude in the context**

Author of the book "*Putin's Diplomacy; Russian Judo in World Politics*", Sergey Morozhov argues that initially Moscow was willing to accept Washington's global leadership and become its partner under the condition that the United States would accept Russia's key position in post-Soviet area.. Nevertheless, this expectation of the Russian federation was never realized; except of course during a very brief period of collaboration in fight against Taliban and Al-Qaida. Washington under George W. Bush's second administration openly rejected to consider Russia's interests in the region, by further strengthening its military ties in the region. Hence, I believe, in this context, it is important to provide Russia's reaction to the developments in US-Georgian relations, in order to understand and indicate Russia's grievances with respect the US' foreign policy in the region. Since, according to security analysts, US military engagement in Georgia was to some extent enabled by Kremlin, whereby, Putin decided to give the '*green light*'<sup>150</sup> for US military engagement policies carried out in the region. According to Roger E. Kanet, one of the main reasons behind this abandonment of '*anti-Americanism*' stance in Putin's

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149 *Georgia Train and Equip Program* (G TEP) <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/gtep.htm>  
150 Note: For more details look at Chapter 3. US Foreign Policy Under George W. Bush, pp. 23-31



administration was Russia's long-lasting and costly war over Chechen rebels; whereas, Putin hoped to achieve '*burden-sharing*' in its policy of controlling the Central Asian and Caucasian states at the expense of the United States.<sup>151</sup>.

Another more important reason that motivated Moscow to foster a rapprochement period between US and Russia was the Kremlin's perception that due to these collaborations between US and Russia in the region, international community/system, particularly the United States would accept and formulate their foreign policy strategies based on and according to the principles suitable with multi-polar system of global politics that Putin's administration was actively pursuing since its first day in Kremlin. Although, in short-run, Moscow has gained from this short-lived rapprochement period between US and Russia, in long-run perspective, Putin's decision to move towards the United States was contradictory to Russia's own interests in the region.

Consequently, all these political and military developments under the framework of US-led anti-terrorism war in the region, particularly in Georgia, have led to another area of friction between the US and the Russian Federation in the South-Caucasus. Since, although US efforts were directed solely against the Taliban and Al-Qaida terrorists' networks in Eurasian continent, Russian military and political personnel were all concerned about long-term consequences of the US' establishment of military bases (although it has only a training mission on its soil) in Russia's immediate "*near-abroad*". This Russian perception of US presence in the region was clearly expressed by Defense Minister Sergei B. Ivanov by referring to

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151 Reger E. Kaner (2005) *The New Security Environment; The Impact on Russia, Central and Eastern Europe*. England: Ashgate Publishing Limited. pp. 53-57

the announcement made by Nicolas Burns, whereby, latter stated that “Caucasus and Central Asia are within the NATO’s sphere of interests”<sup>152</sup>.

“... Russia fully supported decisions by Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to allow American forces to use bases in those countries for the war to topple the Taliban and hunt Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Those bases remain important to American and NATO efforts to pacify and rebuild the nation ... But we have always been proceeding from the fact that those bases exist solely for the period required for the final, definitive stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan,” he said ...<sup>153</sup>

On the whole, Russian officials claim that US taking advantage of Russia’s ‘*good faith*’ during this existing crisis time in the region, thereby, consolidating geopolitical interests of the United States in the region of Russia’s traditional zone of influence. Following this rationale of Russian military and political ranks, according to Yury Baluyevsky, Russian high level officer in the Russian Ministry of Defense:

“... The United States was expanding its economic, political and military presence in Russia's traditional zones of influence, which is the top national security threat for Russia ... thus... Russia now faced even greater military threats than during the Cold War and that the nation needed a new military doctrine to respond to these challenges ...<sup>154</sup>

Until now, this chapter (Ch. 4) analyzed and illustrated the main factors, reasons and the causes that have led to the recent antagonism and the points of friction and disagreements between Russia and the United States on several matters. The next chapter of the thesis (i.e. the fifth) will examine the main causes of the war in last summer of 2008 between Georgia and Russian Federation. Accordingly, it is commonly shared idea among the scholars of international relations that this war was a point of explosion over many issues in world as well in regional politics between the United States and the Russian Federation.

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152 NATO: Caucasus, Central Asia Within Sphere Of Influence (9 May 2002) RIA Novosti <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/27c/007.html>

153 Thom Shanker. (October 10, 2003) Russian Official Cautions U.S on Use of Central Asian Bases. New York Times

154 Vladimir Isachenkov (February, 2007). Baluyevsky Call U.S’ Expansion a Threat. The Moscow Times, Associated Press

## CHAPTER 5

### GEORGIA; CLASH OF US' AND RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC INTERESTS

#### Introduction

Since, the present study has focused on the US-Russian relations in post-Cold War Era with implications for the events in South-Caucasus such as “five-day war” in summer 2008 between Russian Federation and Georgia, I would like to move our attention to a brief discussion dealing with formulation of US-Georgian bilateral relations that had direct security implications on US-Russian rivalry in the region. In addition, the causes of war between Georgia and Russia in August 7, 2008 are addressed in this chapter. Since, it is believed that this war symbolizes the dangerous momentum in relations between US and Russia in the region, under the George W. Bush administration. It is also must be pointed out that, for the first time, since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Moscow had demonstrated Russia’s willingness to perform a role of a revisionist state, at least in its near-abroad. In this context, it would be constructive to refer to Zbigniew Brzezinski’s assumption about Russia’s role in its immediate near-abroad. According to Brzezinski:

“ ... Russia is/will be too weak to regain imperial domination over the region or to exclude others from it, but it is/will be too close and too strong to be excluded ...”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski. (October 1997) *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geo-strategic Imperatives*. New York: Basic Books United States National Security Advisor, under the Jimmy Carter’s Administration, (1977-1981). P. 148

Accordingly, this chapter will examine the sequence of political and security developments in the region that will illustrate the overall security environment of the region.

## **5.1 Assessment of the Political Developments in the Region**

### **5.1.1 Renewal of Cold War Stereotypes!?**

In an examination of the post-Cold War US-Russian cooperation and confrontation policies in international relations, particularly in the Caspian-Caucasus region, it is obvious that the relationship between these two countries went through the scope of confrontation and normalization policies over the past eighteen years. The main reason for recent strained relations in the region between the United States and the Russian Federation was the renewal of the so-called Cold War stereotypes in the mindsets of top level officials and foreign policy makers in Washington and in Moscow which were based on mistrust and animosity. From the Russian perspective, there are three main concerns or developments in the regions of post-Soviet Union, predominantly, in South-Caucasus that can best explain this so-called renewal of Cold War mistrust, rivalry and antagonism.

First is the beginning of NATO's expansion in early 1990<sup>s</sup> into the Russia's sphere of influence, under the Clinton administration. The second is the US' decision to install anti-missile defense system in the heart of Europe, under the George W. Bush administration. And lastly, the degree of US support for the so-called '*color revolutions*' in Ukraine and in Georgia and increased interests in Azerbaijan are the core factors that fostered traditional enmity in the minds of Russian political figures in Kremlin. Consequently, it can be argued that due to these developments in the

region, a ‘new line of containment strategy’<sup>156</sup>, has already been drawn between two great powers under completely new/old circumstances and conditions of the twenty first century, including new challenges and opportunities. Traditional symbols and the regions of ‘confrontation’ between two super powers during the Cold War period were the Persian Gulf, Middle East and a divided Germany. However, in contemporary politics, according to many analysts, a ‘traditional line of containment’ shifted from Germany to Poland and the Czech Republic<sup>157</sup> and from the Middle East to the Caucasus<sup>158</sup>, representing a new border of the “*hidden*” Cold War between Russia and the United States.

## **5.2 Georgia: US Preferred Number One Country in the South-Caucasus?! Reasons and Motivations behind This Trajectory**

In order to examine the evolution of US-Georgian relationship, it is very important to understand that the main factors and causes that have led to mutual political and security commitment between the United States and Georgia in late 1990<sup>s</sup>. It is also important to note that, on the contrary, Georgia’s alignment towards the West has further escalated the tensions between Georgia and Russia. All these matters were clearly demonstrated after so-called ‘Rose Revolution which took place in Georgia, when Michael Saakashvili took power in 2003. This and other matters are going to be discussed below in more detailed form.

### **5.2.1 Early 1990<sup>s</sup>**

The literature of international relations suggests that since its independence, Georgia was always characterized as a country with a lack of security and instability

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<sup>156</sup> Many scholars of IR describe traditional US’ policy of containment in contemporary politics as the “neo-containment”.

<sup>157</sup> Washington’s decision to deploy a Missile Defense System in Poland and Czech Republic

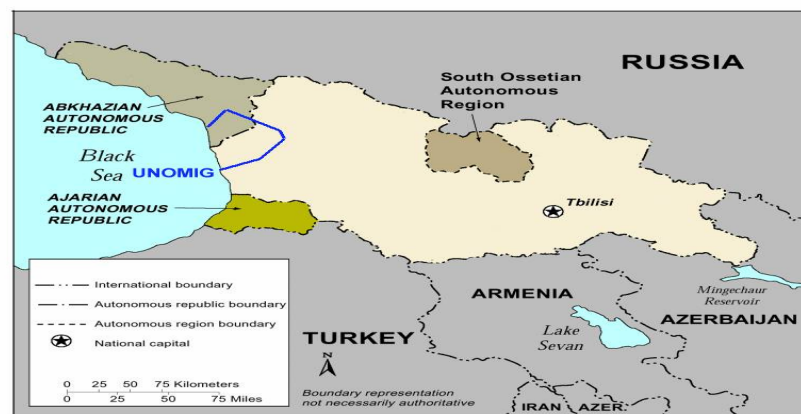
<sup>158</sup> The War in Georgia in August, 2008 and Russian massive retaliation is another factor worsening relations between US and Russia.

in its external as well as internal affairs in the region. Georgians like other nations in the region had experienced a brutal form of transformation to its independence. In order to understand what specific role Russia had played in the affairs of two Georgia's break away regions such as Abkhazia and South-Ossetia, we should go back to early 1990<sup>s</sup> when the collapse of the Soviet Union brought about significant territorial changes in the region.

When the Republic of Georgia first proclaimed its independence in 1991, under the leadership of Zviad Gamsakhurdia and lately under the administration of Eduard Shevardnadze, military and political officials of the Georgian government were deeply involved in a civil war – government by confronting separatists regimes from Abkhazia, Adjara and South-Ossetia, which tried to take (inspired by Russia) advantage of internal instability in Georgia in order to obtain full independence from Georgia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, these three Georgian enclaves were given the status of 'autonomous republics' within the Georgia's territorial integrity and as subjects of Georgia protected/governed by constitution. Nevertheless, leaders of these enclaves were always seeking for a convenient moment and ways in order to completely separate themselves from Georgia's political and constitutional authority. Obviously, this policy had been backed and motivated by Russia's political and military support.

Since 1991, when Georgia gained its independence, Russia has retained significant influence over the country. Two ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain unresolved, with Moscow's decision to issue Russian passports to people in both regions raising questions about the real role of Russian

peacemakers<sup>159</sup>. Russian military bases in the regions of Adjara and Djavakheti meant that both were effectively outside the control of the Georgian government in Tbilisi. As I already had analyzed the importance of Georgia for Russian Federation in chapter four, to underscore this view, stability in South-Caucasus was/is the main prerequisite for internal stability and territorial integrity of the entire Russian Federation, particularly for Northern-Caucasus, where, Russia for a decade militarily tried to prevent the realization of ‘*domino-effect*’.



**Picture 2: The Republic of Georgia: Abkhazia, Adjara and South-Ossetia<sup>160</sup>**

Some scholars of Georgian studies claim that during that time, the West, particularly the United States didn't give serious attention to the ongoing internal processes in Georgia, other than providing financial packages in order to prevent Georgia from becoming a failed state. Obviously, a lack of Western, and particularly United State's participation in conflict-mediation initiatives in the region during that period of time<sup>161</sup>, gave Russia a ‘free-hand’ to consolidate its presence in the South-Caucasus. Moreover, the Georgian government, under the leadership of Eduard Shevardnadze was literally speaking forced to accept the imposition of Russia's will

<sup>159</sup> Jim Nichol. (July, 2007) Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; Political Developments and Implications for US Interests. CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service. Order Code: RL33453

<sup>160</sup> : [www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0807/S00102.htm](http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0807/S00102.htm) June, 2009

<sup>161</sup> Note: It should be admitted that, in early 1990s, the US had no major national interests in Georgia that could substantially bring about US' pro-active engagement in the region.

by joining the CIS and accept Russian military concentration in its region according to the provisions of the Dagomys Accords that established a tripartite peace-keeping force, including Georgian, Ossetian and Russian troops<sup>162</sup>.

George Hewitt in his article called “*Georgia; A Danger to Itself and Trans-Caucasian Stability*” argued that the Western attitude has changed towards the political and security developments in South-Caucasus, predominantly in Georgia’s internal affairs, since it became clear that the Georgia’s internal political and security stability is the key prerequisite for peaceful transportation and diversification of Caspian oil and gas resources through Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.<sup>163</sup> In addition to this, according to Shireen T. Hunter, although it was not addressed publicly, the US’ policy shift towards the region, particularly towards Georgia was gradually spurred up on the mid of 1990<sup>s</sup> under Clinton’s leadership due to Russia’s assertive reintegration policies in the region (as well as in Georgia) that threatened Georgia’s as well as other regional countries’ territorial integrity<sup>164</sup>. (For a more detailed analysis of US’ foreign policy in South-Caucasus, see. Chapter 3) Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that US’s energy politics in the region didn’t really represent accurate American national interests, and had been often overestimated by many scholars of international relations<sup>165</sup>. Indeed, as Stephen J. Blank argued, Washington’s economic interests (oil industry and energy politics) in the region

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<sup>162</sup> George Hewitt (August, 2008) Abkhazia and South-Ossetia; Heart of conflict, key to solution. George Hewitt is professor of Caucasian languages at London's School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) [www.abkhaz.org](http://www.abkhaz.org)

<sup>163</sup> George Hewitt. (November, 2008) Georgia; A Danger to Itself and Trans-Caucasian Stability. [www.abkhazworld.com](http://www.abkhazworld.com)

<sup>164</sup> Shireen Hunter (1994) The Transcaucasus in transition: nation-building and conflict. Washington D.C. Center for Strategic and International Studies.

<sup>165</sup> Gary K. Bertsch, Cassidy Craft & Scott A. Jones and Michael D. Beck. (200) Crossroads and Conflict; Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia. New York: Routledge. P. 18



didn't precede over US' geo-strategic goals<sup>166</sup>. This perception of the author was once again approved by Stephen Sestanovich, who served as an Ambassador-at-large and Special Adviser to the Secretary for the new independent states to United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, when he stated:

“ ... We cannot and should not look at Caspian energy policy in isolation from our overall goals for the region. Our promotion of an economically viable East-West Eurasian transport corridor to bring Caspian energy resources to international markets is part of a larger strategy that supports peace and stability, democracy and respect for human rights, market economic reform and development, openness toward the United States and to U.S. business, and the region's integration into Euro-Atlantic and global institutions ...”<sup>167</sup>

Moreover, states in Southern Caucasus were also in favour of the 'internationalization' of the conflicts, which intensified the need for a presence of the Western mediators in conflict resolution processes.

Consequently, based on the arguments provided by the scholar of Russian studies Oksana Antonenko, in this context, it is possible to argue that Russia's role in creating a shift in Georgia's alignment towards the West was very apparent<sup>168</sup>. In other words, it was Georgian government's reaction to Russia's advanced position and a lack of impartial role in peacekeeping efforts in Georgia and elsewhere in the region and a policy of supporting by all the means separatist movements in Georgia – that greatly contributed to recent Georgian and Azerbaijani governments' pro-western stance as well as the need to search for neutral Western parties to take part in conflict mediation.

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<sup>166</sup> Stephen J. Blank (June, 2000) U.S. Military Engagement with Transcaucasia and Central Asia. Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=113> (accessed in June, 2009)

<sup>167</sup> Svante E. Cornell (2001). Small Nations and Great Powers; A study of ethno-political conflict in the Caucasus. England : Curzon: Richmond, Surrey

<sup>168</sup> Achim Wennmann. (2006) Renewed Armed Conflict in Georgia?; Options for Peace Policy in New Phase of Conflict Resolution. PSIO Occasional Paper Number 3, Geneva, p. 20

The central explanation for Russia's support behind the secessionists' movements in Abkhazia and in South-Osetia was/is based on the following assumption.

It was assumed that the Georgia's initial reluctance (and later the decisive decision to withdraw<sup>169</sup>) to join the CIS and to give permission for Russian military presence on its soil is the main factor that led to the Russian decision to destabilize Georgia by violating its territorial integrity. Through the peace-keeping operations in South-Osetia and Abkhazia, Russian policy makers to a certain extent had outmaneuvered and weakened the Georgian position in these two Georgian break-away enclaves. In order to have a more concise explanation of Russian concerns with respect to Georgia's decision to alienate herself from Russia was explained by former National Adviser to former president of Georgia, Archil Gegeshidze. According to Gegeshidze, the complete control over Georgia was/is the only means for domination of the South-Caucasus and Central Asia, which inevitably would enable a dominant power to masterly manipulate the ongoing political, security as well as economic developments of the region. Thereby, he clearly indicated an implication of this factor in Russia's affairs in his article called "*Georgia; In Quest of a Niche Strategy*", where he stated that:

“ ... Russia considers Georgia, first and foremost, as a safety valve that, if under control, would allow Russia to prevent penetration of Turkey's political influence into the North Caucasus, as well as further to the East into Central Asia. Also, control over Georgia provides leverage for Russia to rule out any possibility of future NATO expansion from Turkey into the Caspian Basin. Additionally, a subdued Georgia would ease Russia's goal of obstructing the progress of the East-West energy corridor, as well as hindering the entrance into the Caspian Basin of Western corporate interests.

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<sup>169</sup> Note: This decision was made by Eduard Shevardnadze, whereby his central explanation was that "*Georgia refuses to participate in the Treaty on Collective Security in the CIS, because it only exists on paper and there are no real practical results whatsoever*" quoted from J. H. Saat. (February, 2005) The Collective Security Treaty Organization. Conflict Studies Research Center. <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0C54E3B3-1E9C-BE1E-2C24-A6A8C7060233&lng=en&id=92581> (accessed in July, 2009)

Turkey views Georgia as a gateway to the Caucasus and Central Asia as it aspires to build up trade with the countries in the region, while one of the driving forces of Iran's policy in the region is a perception of Georgia as a port-of-entry state of hostile U.S. influence ...<sup>170</sup>

Hence, according to Gegeshidze, as a result of consequent deterioration of the political and security relations between the Georgian and the Russian governments, Georgia needed a substantial political, financial and moral support from the international community as well as the West, in order to successfully and independently from Russia define the directions of its foreign policy as well as its national interests<sup>171</sup>. Hence, the US was considered by Georgian political and military figures as the potential and principal actor in the region that would/could provide adequate means to counter Russian geo-political and neo-imperial ambitions in the region. Nevertheless, it is important to admit that all these expectations of the Georgian government were not realized, primarily, because the officials in the White House had never considered Georgia as a high priority state. Therefore, the next section of this chapter is intended to offer an examination of US-Georgian bilateral relations and observation of overall process of the formulation of these relations, since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

### **5.3 Regime Change Principle of the Bush Administration; Impact of 'Color Revolutions' in post-Soviet countries, case of the Republic of Georgia**

#### **5.3.1 Political Situation before the 'Rose Revolution in 2003**

Yet, in early 2000<sup>s</sup> Russia could not afford to take a neutral stance towards all the developments that were going on in its "*near-abroad*", particularly in Ukraine and in Georgia, whereby, two successful US backed so-called 'color revolutions' took

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<sup>170</sup> Archil Gegeshidze (2003) Georgia in Quest of a Niche Strategy. Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies. p. 1

<sup>171</sup> Archil Gegeshidze (2003) Georgia in Need for a New Strategic Agenda. Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies.. p.6

place. It is highly unlikely that the United States would take a passive stance, if Russia would try to establish pro-Russian puppet governments somewhere in Mexico or Canada, the countries that are considered to be US' "*near-abroad*"<sup>172</sup>. Of course, the officials in the Washington were very well aware of any Russian response to the political developments in the region bolstered by the Western countries, especially by the United States. This opinion of the White House once was articulated by the former US president Bill Clinton, when he stated that:

" ... You (i.e. Russians) will be more likely to be involved in some of these areas near you, just like the United States has been involved in the last several years in Panama and Grenada and other places near our area ..."<sup>173</sup>

Although, politically the former president of the Republic of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze was oriented towards the establishment of western principles in Georgia such as market oriented liberal economy and promotion of democratic institutions in every aspect of internal and external affairs; the overall political, economic as well as security environment in Georgia in early 2000<sup>s</sup> was catastrophic. Many international observers even went so far as to announce Georgia as a 'failed state' among the other newly independent states in the region. Moreover, when it came to the position of the 'frozen conflicts' in Georgia, it was argued by Achim Wennmann that although, Shevardnadze had initiated several unsuccessful military operations to restore Georgia's authority over Abkhazia, Adjara and South-Osetia throughout 1990<sup>s</sup>, a political position of these 'frozen-conflicts' under his administration was described as in position of '*no-war-no-peace*'.<sup>174</sup> In addition to this, a public support behind Eduard Shevardnadze was evidently losing ground. All

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<sup>172</sup> From the Russian perspective, Georgia and Ukraine were seen as possible in the future puppet governments of the United States.

<sup>173</sup> Elaine Sciolino (February 20, 1994) The World; Contain Your Joy; Russia's Back on the World Stage. The New York Times

<sup>174</sup> Achim Wennmann (2006) Renewed Armed Conflict in Georgia? Options for Peace Policy in New Phase of Conflict Resolution Geneva: PSIO Occasional Paper Number 3, , pp. 5-6

these developments under the Shevardnadze's regime created sociopolitical and socioeconomic instability within the country as well as contributed to strained relations with Russia.

### **5.3.2 Rose Revolution and Its Consequences**

As a result of all these dilemmas mentioned above in Georgia's domestic as well as external affairs, in November, 2003, Georgia had experienced dramatic changes in its political history. Supported by a popular movement, a leader of democratic opposition party Michael Saakashvili leading the 'Rose Revolution' backed by Western countries overthrew the Eduard Shevardnadze's regime. Unlike his predecessor, M. Saakashvili's foreign policy goals were based on achievement of radical changes in Georgia's internal as well as external affairs. Particularly:

- The development of the Russian-Georgian relations based completely on new political, economic and security basis and
- Re-integration and preservation of Georgia's territorial integrity; two interdependent issues were the primary subjects of his foreign policy.
- On the security dimension of his foreign policy, M. Saakashvili is well-known as a staunch defender of the western values with desire to join his country into the ranks of western security and political institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union.

In his miscalculations (as some international observers have interpreted recently) he believed that Georgia's full membership in these western security and political institutions would help Georgia to escape the Russian influence in its affairs as well as in South-Caucasus, by creating a 'balance of power' between Russia and the

United States. He thought this could be a valid assumption; on the other hand, Micheil Saakashvili's approach to achieve this strategy was somehow inappropriate and conflicting with the existing political and security environment in the region. He should have known that offensive military strike against the citizens of Russian Federation in South-Ossetia would provoke a serious Russian disproportionate military strike.

### **5.3.3 The Causes and Consequences of the War between Georgia and Russia over South-Osetia and Abkhazia in 2008**

Although, there are many speculations over the causes of war between Russia and Georgia, on the other hand, according to many scholars of international relations, the war in late summer on August 7, 2008 between Georgia and Russian Federation was the dramatic outcome of Saakashvili's miscalculations in his decision to 'unfreeze' the conflicts in Abkhazia and in South-Osetia by an offensive operation. Though, this rationale of Saakashvili's administration was inspired by the successful reintegration of another Georgian enclave called Adjara, which geographically does not border with Russian Federation. In fact, it could be argued that this was one of the reasons why the Russians remained neutral to Saakashvili's attempts towards Adjara. Nevertheless, it is possible to indicate several analyses of leading observers regarding the motivations, causes and miscalculations of the Georgian officials that consequently provoked the war between two sides.

First of all, it must be emphasized that Micheil Saakashvili provoked the war and acted independently, without the approval of the United States. These facts were once again accepted by the officials in the Washington such as the US House of Representatives Republican Party Congressman Dana Rorabaker when he stated that:

“ ... U.S. intelligence has confirmed that recent fighting in South Ossetia have been initiated by Georgia. On this, in the opinion of Congressman, Russia's position is correct, but the position of the U.S. mistaken in their views. Georgians, and not Russian, violated the truce, and no talk of provocations and other things can not change this fact. .. Russians are right, we are wrong. Georgians began it; Russian put an end to this ...”<sup>175</sup>

In this context, it is important to provide the details of the meeting between Micheil Saakashvili and the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice before military operations took place. According to Helen Cooper and Thom Shanker, Condoleezza Rice privately warned Saakashvili not to launch a war against South-Osetia and Abkhazia that will involve Russia's military intrusion, which Georgia won't be able to win anyway<sup>176</sup>. Although, US warned Georgia's top officials to restrain from the war, according to many observers, Michael Saakashvili's decision to go with war against South-Osetia was based on mixed signals from the Washington<sup>177</sup>.

Nevertheless, it also must be admitted that, unlike the Adjarian case, Russian interference as a reaction to the Georgian military operations in Abkhazia and in South-Osetia was very predictable and had dramatic consequences.

Parallel with this, I would like to provide Russia's goals and strategies during the last conflict between two sides. Since, according to Robert E. Hamilton, Russian military and political officials greatly benefited from the war initiated by Georgia. Hamilton in his article written to the Center for Strategic and International Studies identified several goals that Russians have obtained from the war.

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<sup>175</sup> “United States Exploration confirms the rightness of Russia in South-Osetia” (September, 2008) [www.gazeta.ru](http://www.gazeta.ru)

<sup>176</sup> Helen Cooper and Thom Shanker (August 12, 2008) After Mixed U.S. Messages, a War Erupted in Georgia. The New York Times

<sup>177</sup> *ibid.*

- “First and the foremost gain that the Russians have gained was the end of Georgia’s sovereignty over the two break away territories of Abkhazia and South-Ossetia<sup>178</sup>”.
- “Second goal was to undermine and punish Georgia’s efforts to join the NATO and European Union, thereby, demonstrating to the international community unreliability of the Georgian officials. Partly, this was also a message to other South-Caucasus and Central Asian states to abandon their leaning policies towards the West and aspirations for membership in NATO<sup>179</sup>”.
- “Thirdly, author argues that this was a punishment of the West for its support to Georgia as well as for unilateral recognition of Kosovo”<sup>180</sup>.

Consequently, one could argue that it was a rational choice made by Saakashvili in order to get the west, particularly, the United States militarily involved in the crisis. Nevertheless, Saakashvili should have known that the United States would avoid any military confrontation with Russia. On the other hand, in a long-term perspective, Georgia created new facts on the ground such as Russia’s diplomatic recognition of the two break-away regions of South-Osetia and Abkhazia on August, 26, in 2008. In this case, one might certainly argue that from a geo-political perspective Russia is the clear winner of this war.

Taking into account the dramatic consequences of any conflict in the region It is crucially important for the South-Caucasian states, particularly for Georgia, to understand the long-term implication and consequences of the US’ military engagement in the South-Caucasus through the NATO’s and other bilateral policies.

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<sup>178</sup> Robert E. Hamilton (August 14, 2008) Russia’s Strategy in the War Against Georgia. CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies).

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*.



It is also vital for the leaders of the western alliance to reconsider their geo-political strategies in the region that are suspected towards Russia's ambitions in the region - which are believed to be provoked by the western ambitions. Nevertheless, political leaders such as Michael Saakashvili and his ill-advised decisions such as to start an offensive war against the South-Ossetia and Abkhazia - with the aim of involving two nuclear powers of the Cold War period – must be viewed as unacceptable in contemporary diplomacy.

Although, many western countries have criticized Russia's role in this conflict – arguing that from military point of view - Russia's massive retaliation was somehow 'disproportionate'<sup>181</sup> - the US' decision to remain neutral to Russia's defensive counter-measures with regard to Georgian military units is perceived by international community to be a rational choice. This war was the second (first was during the crisis in Yugoslavia) test of muscles between Russia and the United States, since the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, aftermath of the war, Washington, has immediately intensified military cooperation with the Georgian government by signing bilateral charter on strategic partnership in the fields of defense, trade, energy and in other areas<sup>182</sup>.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

It must be admitted that after two decades since the end of the Cold War, given that Russia lost its influence over the post-Soviet countries, Russia emerged as the clear winner against the West in the struggle over reestablishing its sphere of

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<sup>181</sup> Elis Labott (August 9, 2008) U.S. official: Russia's attack on Georgia is 'disproportionate. [www.CNN.com](http://www.CNN.com)

<sup>182</sup> David Gollust. (January 9, 2009) *US, Georgia, Sign Partnership Charter*. State Department <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2009-01/2009-01-09-voa77.cfm?CFID=256276885&CFTOKEN=58672594&jsessionid=de308b37b9ede9aebc212f7a6d2675b104d3>

influence in the South-Caucasus<sup>183</sup>. In this context, it would be constructive to mention about the current state of relations, including diplomatic, economic relations between Russia and Georgia, since, the Russia's position towards the region, particularly, with respect to Georgia, has radically changed. According to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, Russian Federation will pursue by all means to decrease the probability of South-Caucasian countries from joining NATO. Obviously, as we know, according to NATO's membership requirements – member countries of the “*Individual Partnership Action Plans*” are strongly required to resolve their internal disputes before to be admitted to full membership in the organization. Officials in Kremlin are very well aware of this NATO pre-condition, hence, Georgian government faces uneasy dilemma in its internal as well as external affairs. Either to stop pursuing NATO membership which is quite unbelievable or to accept a lost of Abkhazia and the South-Osetia<sup>184</sup> which is also highly unlikely to happen.

Considering Russia's relatively successful economic growth in last several years as a result of oil and gas export-oriented economy, there are no clear indications that Russia will somehow lessen its presence in the region. Quite contrary, the US' uncompromising decision to install anti-missile defense system in the heart of Europe and the US' decision to further deepen its security ties with the countries in the region are the two key factors that will once again stimulate Russia's willingness to pursue a coercive-diplomacy towards the states in the Caspian-Caucasus region.

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<sup>183</sup> Paul Reynolds (14 August 2008) Winners and Losers after Georgia conflict. World affairs correspondent BBC news website. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7557915.stm> (accessed: June, 2009)

<sup>184</sup> George Hewitt. (November, 2008) Georgia; A Danger to Itself and Trans-Caucasian Stability. [www.abkhazworld.com](http://www.abkhazworld.com)

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **Introduction**

To sum up the entire thesis, I would like to highlight the main points that each chapter of the research had examined and contributed substantially to the entire study.

The first chapter provided with introductory background information to the entire study. Chapter two was primarily conducted to scrutinize the formulation of Russia's foreign policy after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As it was analyzed in chapter two, Russian foreign policy went through a complex level of evolution from Yeltsin's legacy to Putin's era. It also emphasized the sequence of political and security developments in global politics such as NATO's eastward expansion, EU enlargement process and US' energy politics in Caspian basin in order to examine the relevance and impact of these events on US-Russian relations in post-Cold War era.

The third chapter of the study (formation of US' post-Cold War foreign policy) was conducted alongside with the second chapter in order to provide contextual framework for the third chapter that primarily deals with the clash of US' and Russia's strategic interests in South-Caucasus.

Therefore, the issues in the fourth chapter (which is about significance of the South-Caucasus for both powers) were analyzed in accordance and with implication to the analysis made in the second and in third chapters.

The fifth chapter examined political and security developments in Georgia, such as impact of so-called ‘Rose Revolution’ under Micheil Saakashvili’s leadership, Georgia’s initiatives to join NATO and particularly the causes and consequences of war between Georgia and Russia in last summer of 2008. It must be pointed out that Georgia has been examined as a case study and has been viewed as the climax to strained East-West relations since 1990<sup>s</sup>.

Lastly, the sixth chapter provides a reader with the conclusion of the entire study, pointing out the major research questions and hypothesis that initially the thesis was aimed to examine.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, newly emerged states in the South-Caucasus and in Central Asia tried to prevent (to counter Russia’s attempts to reintegrate them) their complete dependence from Russia by creating close political, economic and security ties with the Western bloc. This strategy of NIS was/is quite rational, since, as it was discussed in previous chapters, Russian political and military elites never lost their appetite to reintegrate the post-Soviet countries under Russian political, economic and military domination. Although, the Russian approach towards the Caspian-Caucasus region can be justified through the lenses of realism and under the framework of ‘real-politik’ in international relations, on the other hand, complexity of the region and competitive engagement and involvement of the external powers are the two factors/dilemmas that have to be taken into consideration.

Throughout the post-Cold War period, according to scholars of international relations, the Western world, particularly the United States under Clinton and later under Bush administrations was actively pursuing the policy of isolation of Russia from global politics. This strategy partly was successfully achieved during the first

decade of this period. Undermining Russia's role and its concerns in international relations was to some extent a contradictory policy of the Western bloc, in the sense that the United States consciously revived a sense of antagonism between two sides. Undoubtedly, Putin's assertive foreign policy towards the Russia's "*near-abroad*" is formulated as a reaction to the Western attitude towards Russia and its interests in the region. Russia's strategic partnership with so-called 'rogue-states' or the 'axis of evils' such as Iran, N. Korea and China is another factor directed against the entire West. Lastly, the events of last summer in 2008 are the direct indication of so-called "cold-peace"<sup>185</sup> between the United States and the Russian Federation.

After the Russia's military incursion and consequent invasion of Georgia<sup>186</sup> and destruction of Georgia's strategic military bases such as in Gori that could potentially be used against Russia, it was noted, by many scholars of international relations, whether mistakenly or not, that the contemporary international system is on the brink of a new Cold War<sup>187</sup>. Although, in TV news program called "Frost over the World", Zbigniew Brzezinski was asked questions such as, "what do you think about the issue of Russia and Georgia? And do you think the US' reaction in last war between Russia and Georgia could have been better or should have been stronger? Is there a threat to the return of the Cold War?"<sup>188</sup> His answer was basically 'No', by arguing that neither the United States nor Russia has desire to return to the Cold War.

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185 U.S.-Russian Relations: Avoiding a Cold Peace (1996). Foreign Policy in Focus. An Inter-hemispheric Resource Center and Institute for Policy Studies. Vol. 1, No15.

<sup>186</sup> Note: "George Bush has accused Russia of violating the UN Charter by attacking Georgia in August. The U.S. president was speaking at the 63rd UN General Assembly in New York." "*We must stand united in our support of the people of Georgia. The UN Charter stands for the equal rights of nations, large and small. Russia's invasion of Georgia was a violation of those words,*" [http://www.russiatoday.com/Top\\_News/2008-09-24/Bush\\_Russia\\_violated\\_UN\\_Charter.html](http://www.russiatoday.com/Top_News/2008-09-24/Bush_Russia_violated_UN_Charter.html)

<sup>187</sup> Note: Moreover, it is important to point out that a city Gori maintains a strategic importance due to its location on the principal highway connecting eastern and western parts of Georgia. Hence, an invasion of this city would mean a serious threat to the well being of BTC pipeline.

<sup>188</sup> Aljazeera. Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski in TV Program "Frost over the World" <http://dandelionsalad.wordpress.com/2008/10/11/frost-over-the-world-zbigniew-brzezinski/> (accessed: June, 2009)

Since, although, Russia is a nuclear power, taking into account current Russia's economic capability which is sharply different from that of the Soviet Union is the major factor that would justify Russia's unwillingness and inability to pursue the Cold War ambitions. Personally, I can't agree with his answer, arguing that Russia under Putin's leadership might willingly pursue new Cold War strategies different from a traditional one. Recent Russia's policies aimed at diversification of Russia's foreign connections with the countries on the opposite line to the West, Putin and lately Medvedev simply want to re-establish balance of power between West and East. Hence, involving third parties in US-Russian 'confrontation', there is possibility that a new type of Cold War would emerge based more or less on the same rationale, but with different actors involved in it. According to the statement made by Putin in the interview to the Reuters news agency, it was possible to have a general view about the outset of a new Cold-War confrontation between East and West.

" ... It is already clear that a new arms race is being unleashed in the world. It's not our fault. We didn't start it. Developed countries, exploiting their technological supremacy, channel enormous funds -- several times larger than our disposable means -- into the creation of new defensive and offensive systems. Their expenditure on defence cannot even be compared to what we spend ..."<sup>189</sup>

When it comes to the question of Russian-Georgian relations, as it was demonstrated all the way through previous chapters, Moscow's policies towards the region directed to challenge the 'status-quo' in the South-Caucasus, thereby, to increase the region's vulnerability as well as Russia's presence by any means. Within this context, Georgia became the centerpiece of this Russia's strategy to destabilize the region, primarily, due to its geo-political significance such as having access to the

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<sup>189</sup> Reuters News Agency (2008) Putin Warns of West's "arms race".  
<http://www.reuters.com/news/video?videoId=75851> (accessed: June, 2009)

Black Sea, which is substantially important for strategic and security calculations of NATO bloc.

To finalize this chapter as well as the entire thesis, I would like to draw our attention to the development of new/present relations between the Russian Federation and the United States under Barak Obama's and Dmitri Medvedev's administrations. Prior to Obama's first visit to Moscow, many top-ranked observers and the scholars of international relations in both countries were suggesting various hypotheses regarding possible improvement of new US-Russian strategic partnership and bilateral relations that were deteriorated under Bush's administration. The major issues that the new administrations face are the followings:

- Dealing with the US' access to Afghanistan via Russian territory and airspace, whereby; lately, Russia agreed to allow the United States to ship its weapons to its military bases in Afghanistan across its territory. .
- The installation of US' missile defense shield in Europe which the Russians oppose is another major issue that both sides unwilling to compromise.<sup>190</sup>
- And the question of arms control treaty (limitation of nuclear warheads in both sides) which is expected to be renewed.
- Moreover, Russia's foreign policy towards its neighbors, particularly towards Georgia and Ukraine and Russia's relations with Iran are also issues that are on the agenda of both countries.

According to the chief executive of the Stratfor Dr. George Friedman, Russia's number one goal in this meeting is to get American anti-ballistic missile

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<sup>190</sup> Note: For a detailed analysis of US' anti-missile defense system policy for Europe, look at chapter 3, pp. 65-68

system out of Europe, which is viewed by Russians as the main threat to Russia's national security and its national interests<sup>191</sup>. To the question such as 'is any kind of compromise is possible?' Friedman responded by arguing that generally speaking parties in the Moscow summit could not achieve a consensus on fundamental issues such as Iran's nuclear program, question of Poland and Czech Republic and issue of Georgia's territorial integrity. These are the major issues that are still on the agenda of both countries<sup>192</sup>. In terms of US' access to Afghanistan via Russia's territory, many scholars of international relations suggested that this would cost the United States a huge price such as recognition of Russia's spheres of influence in Central Asia and in South-Caucasus. And this is what the United States unwilling to concede.

In another words, Obama's first visit to Moscow didn't produce any strategic outcome in relations between the United States and Russia, except some 'cosmetic' changes in their relations.

Although, it would sound very naïve, alternatively, according to many scholars of international relations, the most suitable solution for the parties involved in the region is the establishment of 'triangle or triparty-partnership' whereby; the United States, the Russian Federation and the countries of the South-Caucasus would peacefully accommodate their geo-political and national interests. Nevertheless, this option too has some important and uneasy achievable requirements and obligations from the parties involved in this discussion.

One of the most important steps that the Western allies should consider vis-à-vis Russia, with regard to the European security system is to seriously examine and reconsider Russia's suggestions and conditions for cooperation on this issue.

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<sup>191</sup> George Friedman (July, 2009) Interview to the Stratfor. The US-Russian Summit Turns Routine. [http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20090707\\_routine\\_u\\_s\\_russian\\_summit](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20090707_routine_u_s_russian_summit)

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*



On the Russian side, it has been always clear that the United States is always concerned with the level of democracy; with position of human rights, status of democratic institutions and of course the war in Chechnya which was refreshed by Putin. All these issues are primary obstacles that have led to the strained relations between two sides. For that reason, in order to increase Russia's prestige internationally, Moscow has to reconsider its policies with respect to these issues mentioned above.

Finally, it must be admitted that the better relations with Washington will ultimately serve the best interests of the Russian Federation. Officials in Moscow have to accept and realize the fact that Russia is not powerful enough to ignore the Washington's interests in world politics, though, even in Russia's near-abroad.

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