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"The United States and Russia in the new world order: from "Reset" to "new
Cold War"

Research Question:

"Different understanding/disagreements about world order that gives us a
new Cold War"

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Introduction

The relationship between the Russian Federation and the United States has been under critical analysis since their confrontation during the Cold War. Indeed, this thesis has the main object of understanding their bilateral relation and what are the effects on the formation of a new world order. Thus, the subject of this thesis is how the behavior of both the Russian Federation and the United States, domestically and in the international community, can influence world order construction and if it can account as a New Cold War. In addition, the comparative analysis method is used, since there is a comparison of facts and information about the two countries and the status of their relationship throughout the years up until nowadays. Consequently, this will be useful in understanding the main topics of agreement and disagreement and if Cold War rhetoric is still there, which in turn can lead to assessing if the current situation can be defined as a “new Cold War”.

The investigation further explains how the United States and Russia different understanding of world order has influenced their bilateral relations throughout the years, since we can assess that they have been historically opponents. In fact, they have always had, and keep having up to today, different views on how to shape the world order, which is something that was also reflected by the Cold War. On one side, the United States being the superpower that sets the norms and values other states have to follow. On the other side, Russia wants a multipolar world order, in which there is more adjustment to great powers and where the principle of non-interference and state sovereignty are respected.

The thesis is structured on three chapters that follow a specific line of thinking. The first chapter starts off with a brief introduction to what is considered to be world order. Then, it is presented the three main international relations school of thought, which can provide an efficient tool to address the different attitudes states embodies for their own view on world order. There is a comparison between authors and their different perspective of world order that can provide for a broader understanding of this topic. For the purpose of this thesis, the liberal and realist theory are useful to explain the behavior of U.S. and Russia in the international community. The first chapter further looks into the single states and how they behave. The United States is a liberal actor, but the paragraph that talks about it focuses more on the critics to American liberal foreign policy, because it is more functional to the scope of the thesis. Therefore, it concentrates more to demonstrate the negative consequences of a liberal agenda, rather than just illustrating why it is considered a liberal country. On the contrary, the Russian Federation is said to be a realist actor and the paragraph on Russian realist approach to foreign policy aims at demonstrating the reason why Russia is considered a realist actor, since one of its main goal has been that of restoring its status of great power.

The second chapter follows with a more detailed analysis on the national security documents of the United States and the Russian Federation. It follows that, after an overview of what is world order and how a liberal and realist actor can affect the behavior of the state in world order construction, which is reflected in those documents. In fact, a detailed analysis of their national security strategies offers an understanding of why they

took certain decisions, domestically and internationally, thus why they want to shape the international order in a certain way. In addition, if there was not a previous focus on liberalism and realism of both countries, this could be hardly achieved. Furthermore, those documents comprehend national goals and threats and what policies the state has to adopt in order to achieve those goals and prevent, and eventually tackle those threats. The chapter contextualizes the current situation of the two countries of when the national security documents were issued, which exemplifies even more the comprehension of why the United States use, as an example a policy of interventionism – even if it has to act alone in given situations, while the Russian Federation strongly supports non-interference and multilateral actions. Although the documents show that when it came to common threats, the two countries have found good basis for bilateral cooperation, at the same time it has often brought collision of different national interests and security. To this purpose, the second chapter offers a comparison between the national security strategy of the United States and the national security concept of the Russian Federation, with tables that facilitate the reading of similarities and differences.

The third and final chapter continues with retracing the status of the relation of the two countries, from the first reset in U.S.-Russian relationship until Trump administration. It focuses on what was the level of their relation after the end of the Cold War and what were the hopes for the future of their relationship. How their relationship has functioned throughout those years has been a consequence of various factors, among which there are the national security concept. The latter have played a key role in influencing the U.S.-Russian bilateral relation. In fact, common threats were a driving force for cooperation, others were not. Although their political and diplomatic dialogue might have been interrupted for reason explained in the chapter, there are few things that kept working. Non-proliferation regime and fighting terrorism are an example of fields where the two countries cooperated, while for national security reasons American missile defense system has been an area of disagreement since the outbreak of the Cold War. The chapter addresses new relevant discoveries, such as the U.S. withdrawal from important treaties that were the backbone of the non-proliferation regime. It finishes with a case study that aims to show how the two countries address an international crisis, which underlines the different approaches the Russian Federation and the United States have on shaping world order and how they create their spheres of influence.

Chapter 1

1.1 *Existing theories of world order*

According to *Oxford English Dictionary* the definition of world order is “a system controlling events in the world, especially a set of arrangements established internationally for preserving global political stability”. Throughout the course of history, the international system has been characterized by the alternation of order and disorder, at times they have even coexisted. Nation-states have tried to maintain order and stability, but it has not been an easy task to accomplish, since they set as priority the pursuit of their national goals and they had different views of how it should be shaped, ending up with clashes and wars between them. The theories of international relations are used to analyze the behavior of nation-states, to predict their actions and if they would cause imbalances in the order.

There are three main theories that scholars use to address State’s attitudes in shaping the world order: realism, liberalism and constructivism. The realist school considers states as the principal and sole actors in the international arena, they are rational actor and their main goals are to achieve security, pursue their national interests and struggle for power. The difference with the other schools is that realists would undertake all the necessary measures to achieve their goals, especially security, that would undermine the importance of norms and rights. Realists consider the international system as anarchic, which leaves states with no choice but to strive for power. Plus, if an international community was to be formed, it would address national interests and strategies.

The liberal school focuses more on individuals than states, that is also the reason why to them the protection of rights is more important. It does agree that the international arena is anarchical, but conflicts are to be avoided and mitigated though the creation of institutions. The survival of the state is important, but it is more fundamental to preserve the set of rights every individual has, those rights should then be respected by others, through the promotion of norms that are widely accepted by the international community. This concept applies even when liberalism is adopted as foreign policy. Certainly, this is not enough to survive in an anarchical international system, thus states seek peace and prosperity with cooperation among them.

The constructivist school emphasizes the idea that cooperation and conflict is reliant on shared understandings of the relations among actors. The order is a set of norms which form the practices that will form a social practice. For constructivists international politics is socially constructed through a process of interactions among states. Therefore, anarchy acquires meaning if states act as if the order was anarchic. Then, the world order depends on the norms and rules of behavior states choose to follow, constructing a collective identity

based on the power of culture and ideas. It follows that if a state is more or less aggressive it would depend on the state's identity.

There are different theoretical approaches addressing the issue of world order formation, as well as different authors that provide for different views on how to comprehend its evolution. Richard Haass has explored the dynamics of what has happened to the world order after World War II in his book "*A World in Disarray*" (2017), where he outlines the major historical episodes that led our system to the point where we are now. Before going deep into his analysis, Haass gives his own definition of world order: "it is best used and understood in a neutral, descriptive way, as a reflection of the nature of the international relations at any moment. It is a measure of the world's condition. It includes and reflects arrangements that promote peace and prosperity and freedom as well as developments that do not. (...) the term order implicitly also reflects the degree of disorder that inevitably exists. One can have world orders that are anything but stable or desirable"¹.

The author notices that order in the international system was not guaranteed nor was close to be achieved, especially after the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, Haass notices that during the Cold War there were some factors that led to stability. First, there was a balance of military power given by the two alliances that were put in place, namely NATO and the Warsaw Pact, which pointed out that an attempt of war in Europe was going to be costly and not assuring the win. Equally important was the readiness to act directly when a militarily intervention was needed. The author marks as an example the Berlin blockade by the Soviet Union and the response of the Berlin airlift. Second, the Soviet Union and the United States realized that a clash between them would have involved nuclear weapons and that it would have not created any winner. Therefore, nuclear weapons strengthened the balance of power, fading away the desire of armed conflict. Third, a further element providing stability were the mechanism implemented to oversee the agreements and if they were respected. What emerges from this is an understanding that the world order can be achieved by agreeing of what constitutes a global issue and creating some kind of global governance. For this reason, Haass perceives the world order formation by dividing it by "topics of discussion", once those are individuated it follows the creation of order and stability. In fact, the post-World War II period – or World Order 1.0 – had some aspects that need to be addressed by the international community, which further led to a new equilibrium and stability. An example can be the need to implement norms and rules that regulated international financial and economic transactions, such as promoting free trade, open markets and economic prosperity.

Different from Haass is Kissinger's idea of global order, which is based on the division of the world into regions, each one of them has different understandings of what is wrong or right. Kissinger does not believe in the existence of a world order, but it does believe in the practical, not moral, system of independent states

¹ R. Haass, *A World in Disarray, American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*, 2017.

created at the Westphalia peace conference. Here, it first emerged as a concept the territorial integrity of states, which included non-interference into other states' domestic affairs and the liberty of a state to choose its religious vocations. The negotiators were not aware at the time that they were creating ground rules that were accepted and applicable worldwide. However, Kissinger underlines an important point: the Peace of Westphalia did not include countries outside Europe, indeed it did not take into consideration Russia nor China. In fact, Russia was consolidating its order on the basis of opposite principles – that instead were now integrated into Europe's version of world order – with a single authoritarian ruler, committing to the Orthodox religion and expansionist ambitions. China had its own vision of order based on the Emperor's range, meaning that sovereignty of states did not exist, but it was the Emperor the sole entity that possessed political, cultural and religious decision-making². Another different order can be found in the Islamic world. After conquering and unifying the Arab world, Islam expanded toward North Africa and parts of Asia and Europe. Its concept of world order varied greatly, it wanted the world to be unified under a single legitimate governance and the holy Islamic religion. The lack of an important variable made it hard to have a vision of world order that would overcome geographical boundaries, as the author says “the idea of world order was applied to the geographic extent known to the statesmen of the time—a pattern repeated in other regions. This was largely because the then-prevailing technology did not encourage or even permit the operation of a single global system. With no means of interacting with each other on a sustained basis and no framework for measuring the power of one region against another, each region viewed its own order as unique and defined the others as “barbarians”—governed in a manner incomprehensible to the established system and irrelevant to its designs except as a threat. Each defined itself as a template for the legitimate organization of all humanity, imagining that in governing what lay before it, it was ordering the world³.”

Then, the major difference between Haass and Kissinger is their perspective on how they analyse world order transformation. Plus, while Haass identifies equilibrium and stability in the system by sharing common issues among actors of the international system, which in turn have as a consequence created the mechanisms and norms accepted by the international community that oil the system. Kissinger believes that today's world order is synonym to a Westphalian system. Therefore, it has substituted the anarchical nature of the international system with principles accepted by the international community. This shared system has guaranteed free trade, stable international economic system, peaceful settlement of international disputes and war conduct. However, both agree that after the two World Wars the United States have acquired the role of the international leader. Another matter of agreement is the fading role of the United States and the unipolar world order. Haass says that it is true that the U.S. gained advantage from the situation of its economic and military wealth, but its influence was starting to fade away with the increasing emergence of other powers that would generate a more

² H. Kissinger, *World Order*, Penguin Books, 2014.

³ *Ibid*, page 10.

limited international consensus on what constitutes legitimacy in rules and principles. The world order was in need of new norms and rules on how States should behave in the international system, considering that the figure of the United States was stronger than ever and willing to help other countries to seek peace and internal stability, through the messianistic vision it embodied in exporting democracy around the world and humanitarian interventions, starting with “weak states” – regarded as failed states. The latter is defined by Haass as “a failed state is simply the extreme version of a weak state, one in which governmental authority effectively collapses, leading to chaos, the rise of local gangs and militias ruling over parts of the country, or both”⁴. On the other side we have Kissinger saying the United States has greatly contributed to the evolution of the world order, providing military and economic support to the rest of the world, albeit a country asked for it or not. This makes it inevitable that the order would be challenged someday, because the order that was established by Western countries – with their perspective on what the universal principles are to be accepted worldwide – would be challenged by those who have a different idea of how the world order should be regulated and what are the principles that should be universally accepted. In addition, the rules set out by the West have not always enforced effectively.

The two authors have then different plausible solutions to this situation of emerging rising powers that can challenge the stability and equilibrium of the international system reached by the United States. Richard Haass assumes it is necessary the involvement of global governance in establishing efficient regimes that can fill the global gap created by the new challenges faced by states at the international level. Thus, to sustain a stable world order it is necessary to find new norms and principles that are accepted by the international community. Since not everyone shares the same priorities and preferences of the United States, the influence the United States has diminished. Haass refers as well to all those domains in which global governance – and the international leader United States – have lacked in eroding the global gap and thus creating internationally accepted norms and principles that address emerging international issues. For example, climate change, cyberspace, global health – something we have experienced recently with the spread of COVID-19 – space, immigration and many more⁵. Kissinger individuates a plausible solution in a reconstruction of the international system, with a coherent strategy for a world order that unifies the various regions, “a world order of states affirming individual dignity and participatory governance, and cooperating internationally in accordance with agreed-upon rules, can be our hope and should be our inspiration⁶”. Since Kissinger identifies the United States as the international leader who shapes the world order, a quest to it would be the identification of universal principles on the basis of the recognition of other regions’ history, cultures and history, mainly because shaping the world order cannot be done by only one country. The Westphalian system has to be

⁴ R. Haass, *A World in Disarray, American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*, 2017.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ H. Kissinger, *World Order*, Penguin Books, 2014, page 279.

modernized by transcending the ideals of just one region or nation⁷. Therefore, Haass concludes with identifying in the new challenges of the international system as wrecking its structure, because it was unprepared to face them and the threats that came along. Therefore, the world order is far from stability, it is evidently characterized by multipolarity – even though the United States do not accept this vision of the world – and decision-making is divided among many more countries than it was before, destabilizing the system even more⁸.

A common feature of the two authors brings up another vision of world order, one that analysis the topic of accommodating rising powers and that of multipolarity of the world order. Recently, the accommodation of rising powers has become an important topic of discussion among scholars, which brings into the picture a different perspective on world order. Those rising powers are often related to the five countries known under the acronym BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Their economies are rapidly growing, China, for example, might outgrow both militarily and economically the United States. Therefore, given past experiences of economic strength leading to armed conflicts, the main issue relies on the possibility that their improvement of military capabilities could one day determine claims of new global leadership. Here, the theory of accommodation comes in handy, because it would obtain a peaceful international order. The scholar T.V. Paul defines accommodation as “involving mutual adaptation and acceptance by established and rising powers, and the elimination or substantial reduction of hostility between them. The process of accommodation in international politics is exceptionally complicated, as it involves status adjustment, the sharing of leadership roles through the accordance of institutional membership and privileges, and acceptance of spheres of influence: something established powers rarely offer to newcomers⁹”. Therefore, to accommodate a rising power means to give to it the status and perks of a great power, recognizing its sphere of influence, but does not mean a lack of competition. Obviously, if the competition leads to armed conflict, it is not a peaceful accommodation and there would not be accepted norms and rules. Over time, accommodation might lead to the replacement of the current dominant power by the rising power or a sharing of the obligations and rights without escalating into war.

The author T.V. Paul in his book “Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present and Future” (2016) goes through the dominant international theories to analyse the structural changes and status accommodation in the international system. Realist theories do not repeatedly talk about peaceful power transition or talk about accommodation of rising powers, the factor taken into consideration in realist theory is the balance of power. Thus, it is the balance of power considerations that can make the dominant power to accommodate and accept a rising power. However, if a challenger of the status quo arises war or the threat of war can still be used to

⁷ H. Kissinger, *World Order*, Penguin Books, 2014.

⁸ R. Haass, *A World in Disarray, American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*, 2017.

⁹ T.V. Paul, *Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present and Future*, 2016, page 4.

restore equilibrium, the aim behind this coercive strategy is to dissuade from starting a war, because the costs of it are too high. This is so because when the balance of power exists and equilibrium is sustained over time, no other rising power can become powerful enough to change the world order through war. Furthermore, there are other two strategies that can be used to avoid war between great power, which are: containment and deterrence. The containment strategy is based on the assumption that the challenger can be “contained” by different intimidating mechanisms, such as economic and political deprivation. Instead, deterrence serves to prevent the challenger to start a war because the cost-benefits analysis will discourage it. Realist theory does not include in the picture the possibility of a dominant power to reduce its military capabilities in the long run and that it might not be able to use none of the coercive mechanisms to prevent structural changes of the international system.

Liberal theories address peaceful change in a more effective manner, allocating to international institutions, economic interdependence, democratic peace theory and a liberal international economy the solution to a peaceful change in world order. As it is well known that the United States is the liberal dominant power in the international system, John Ikenberry argues that international peaceful orders can be achieved through a liberal hegemon that successfully binds the other powers in an institution with rules and norms¹⁰. Indeed, international institutions that work effectively can provide for collective security and avoid wars, but since it is based on economic interdependence and democratic peace theory, states do not go to war against each other. Here, accommodation of rising power is important and dominant democracies should accommodate non-democratic challengers and vice versa. As a matter of fact, in practice this is not the case, dominant democracies do not accommodate non-democratic states and they prefer intervening with the use of force. Constructivism focuses on ideas and security communities as the solution to be applied to power transition and accommodation of rising powers. The difficulties encountered by this theory is to adopt this idea of communities to regions outside Western Europe, since the latter has experienced power transition through war and now only seeks peaceful changes. Apparently, constructivists have not discussed non-western norms that rising powers might consider more rightful than western norms. Constructivist theory believes what will make great and rising power to not go to war against each other would be that changing norms and ideas would make war less desirable¹¹.

An even more different perspective of world order is taken by Reich S. and Lebow N.R., they analyse the hegemonic function of the states who claim global leadership. The previous three authors all agree on thing: the international order of the 21st century has a hegemon and this hegemon is the United States, they have just focused on other aspects of world order. How a hegemon is important in global leadership is explained by

¹⁰ J. Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraints, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*, 2001.

¹¹ T.V. Paul, *Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present and Future*, 2016.

both realists and liberals, they believe the hegemon is the sole that can provide leadership and security, because power grants influence to the hegemon, which it can be used to perform certain functions together with its material capabilities. Hegemony is understood as international leadership conferred to a state who owns disproportionate capabilities compared to other states in the international system. Reich S. and Lebow N.R. identify three critical functions a hegemon has to undertake to sustain the economic and political order. The first one is agenda setting and it is the capacity of the hegemon to lay out what can be considered a policy issue that concerns economic, social, political and security concerns. Those issues have to be brought up in the discourse of regional or global organizations and in order to be effective agenda setting requires the adoption of the proposed measures. The second is custodianship, which refers to the management of the international economic system.

Realists tend to conceive hegemony on material capabilities a state possesses, indeed the United States' military power confers to it a form of domination in the system. Other realists see hegemony as the result of legitimacy, not in the sense of the most powerful state dominates, but in terms of acquiring consent by other states to have political and economic leadership. Constructivists draw a line between influence and power as two distinct things, in fact the status of hegemon or great power is conferred upon a state when it respects the rights and duties of the international system. Therefore, since Russia has not respected its obligations in respect to other actors, it has lost the status of great power¹². Liberals perceive hegemony in a different way. Robert Keohane's hegemonic vision is that "order in world politics is typically created by a single hegemonic power" and "the maintenance of order requires stability"¹³. Plus, the hegemon relies on its economic might and soft power to build an international regime that facilitates cooperation, relying on the concept of emphasizing norms, rules and decision-making processes over coercion and subornation¹⁴. John Ikenberry describes the liberal leadership of the United States as successful, because it was able to build an effective multilateral system, with international institutions and it provided global services, free market and security. This American hegemony has helped Western countries to prosper and albeit the hegemony of the United States has been criticized and challenged, it cannot be considered as a crisis of the liberal system but of its governance, "the current crisis is one of authority within the old hegemonic organization of liberal order, not a crisis in the deep principles of the order itself. It is a crisis of governance. (...) As a result, the character of rule in world politics has been thrown into question"¹⁵. Ikenberry argues that the United States will have to give up some duties and privileges and to achieve an agreement that let it remain a hegemon.

¹² G. Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order*, Cambridge University, 2004.

¹³ R. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the Modern World*, Princeton University, 1984, page 3.

¹⁴ J. Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, Princeton Press, 2011.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, page 6.

Reich S. and Lebow N.R. realize that realists and liberals have many aspects in common, especially becoming aware that if the world order will see a change from unipolarity – therefore United States hegemony in the international system – to multipolarity, it would be a consequence of the American decline and the rise of other dominant powers. This is also true, if one thinks to when in the 1970s, international relations scholars were concerned that American hegemony was disappearing – due to American economic decline – and the economic growth of Japan and Germany could threaten it. Among them there were few that believed a war with Japan could break out¹⁶.

1.2 American concept of liberal world order

As it was during the Cold War, today Russia and the United States have two different approaches and visions on how to shape the world order, which is also reflected in their actions. It is acknowledged by the international community that the United States is a liberal actor, both at domestic and international level. At the same time, scholars ask themselves whether a liberal approach to international politics can be considered as a good strategy. Thus, scholars have their own point of view and take into consideration different aspects of U.S. behavior. To better comprehend how liberalism influences the actions of the United States abroad, I will take three different points of views from three different authors.

The first one is Christopher Layne, who wrote “The Peace of Illusions – American Grand strategy from 1940 to the Present” (2007). The aim of the author was to analyze the American strategy adopted in the international system, demonstrating the assumption that American grand strategy coincides with its role as extraregional hegemon, which is contradictory to what Mearsheimer assumes in his book “The Tragedy of Great Power Politics” (2014), where he states that the U.S. is a regional hegemon and in other regions acts simply as an offshore balancer. Then, it is a key piece of the puzzle to know the definition of what is American grand strategy by Layne: “the story of American grand strategy over the past six decades is one of expansion, and that strategy’s logic inexorably has driven the United States to attempt to establish its hegemony in the world’s three most important regions outside North America itself: Western Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf. That is, the United States has aimed for “extraregional” hegemony. (...) The U.S. rise to global dominance has been enabled by extraordinary geopolitical fortune, but Washington deliberately has strived for that hegemony since the early 1940s. Washington’s ambitions were not driven by the cold war but transcended it”¹⁷. Moreover, Layne wants to illustrate that over time this grand strategy is going to provoke a geopolitical backlash, making the United States feel less secure, even though U.S. policymakers believe that the American core values are safe only in an international order undermined by U.S. hegemony and opened to absorb American ideology and economic dominance. To have a clear understanding of why this grand strategy of

¹⁶ G. Friedman, *The Coming War with Japan*, 1991.

¹⁷ C. Layne, *The Peace of Illusions – American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present*, 2007.

extraregional hegemony inevitably will cause repercussions on the United States, Layne uses a neoclassical realist approach because he considers that structural realism does not predict America's pursuit of extraregional hegemony. The United States is a unique example of great power grand strategy, mainly because since it has started it has never been secure than any other great power. It is undeniable that the territory of the United States has never been threatened, so it is not an easy task to explain American pursuit of extraregional hegemony, although U.S strategists have perceived the international system as not secure and threatening. Here, neoclassical realists are essential, since they do understand that the world is complex and there are no simple explanations for the pursuit of grand strategies, but they understand the importance of historical context and details.

Therefore, Layne wants to outline the theory of extraregional hegemony to explain the behavior of the United States during the last sixty-more years. As stated before, U.S. policymakers believe that the international system is not a safe environment and to make it more secure it is needed American hegemony. Realists most basic assumption concerns the anarchic nature of the international system that creates an unsafe environment in which great powers relation is continuously struggling for power and security in order to achieve their survival. However, Layne presents the differences of defensive and offensive realism because the two diverge on an important question: if the pursuing hegemony is a wise grand strategy for great powers. Defensive realists believe that states should not try to maximize their power, but only to maximize their security by sharing power among two or more powers, which in turn it is more favorable for peace and stability than the concentration of power in just one power. As the name says, defense brings more advantages, simply by being confident that other great powers would not attack, because defense makes them feel secure and give up on expansionism and offensive militarism and tend to focus more on mutual cooperation. Additionally, there are two reasons why defensive realists believe that a great power that seeks power maximization and hegemony ends up being less secure. First, it weakens the domestic economy, it is expensive to enlarge its power, even if it succeeds it would generate a strategic overstretch. Second, other great powers are going to prefer joining forces among them to defeat the hegemon, rather than aligning with it. The answer provided by defense realists to those great powers willing to seek hegemony, which take hold in non-liberal states, is economic interdependence and democracy. Offensive realists believe that since security is scarce in the international system, logically great powers have to pursue expansionist and offensive strategies to increase their power. Defensive and offensive realists both agree that obtaining security is the number one goal of great powers' grand strategies, but they differ in how much power a state needs in order to be considered safe. Thus, for offensive realists is impossible to know how much power is needed, and as Mearsheimer defines offensive realists "the pursuit of power stops only when hegemony is achieved, (...) the best way to ensure their security is to achieve hegemony now, thus eliminating any possibility of a challenge by another great power"¹⁸.

¹⁸ J. Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 2001.

Therefore, seeking hegemony is the best way to gain security, for two main reasons: first, the power achieved by the hegemon will dissuade other from challenging it; second, hegemony grants certainty and security also for future distributions of power in the international scenario. However, global hegemony is too ambitious for offensive realists and it is out of reach, a great power can become a hegemon in its own region.

Subsequent to this comparison, Layne applies those two theories to the case of the United States, it turns out that following both defensive and offensive realism the United States would not undergo extraregional hegemony. Consequently, a fair doubt arises how did the United States manage to gain hegemony outside its region. As it was mentioned above, the author uses historical events to explain extraregional theory – as neoclassical realists – and he states that “European hegemony failed, because the distribution of power in Europe was multipolar: other great powers could – and did – coalesce to muster sufficient countervailing power to defeat aspiring hegemons. The United States on the other hand, succeeded in attaining regional hegemony because when its expansion gathered steam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was expanding into a power vacuum. No great powers – either regional or extraregional – were capable of opposing – much less stopping – U.S. hegemonic expansion in the Western Hemisphere. (...) The United States’ pursuit of regional hegemony was a smart strategy because it was essentially unopposed. The pay-offs in security and economic gain were high, and the costs were negligible”¹⁹. Nevertheless, what is stated by defensive realists is still correct and applicable to the U.S. case: the pursuit of hegemony is self-harming, the United States should not seek extraregional hegemony because it would encounter opposition coming from Eurasian great powers that it did not meet in Western Europe. Additionally, Mearsheimer has described the role of the United States in other regions as that of an offshore, as predicted by both offensive and defensive realism, but Layne does not see it in this way. Mearsheimer says that the United States became a regional hegemon and it stops there and because of its geographical position, it cannot seek extraregional hegemony. To sustain this position in the international system, the United States acts as an offshore balancer with respect to other regions, such as Europe and East Asia, by using the strategy of buck-passing – if a rising hegemon in one of those regions arises the United States will let great powers in that area deal with the situation and balancing against it²⁰. Layne underlines that the United States could have acted as an offshore balancer if post-World War II and post-Cold War American policymakers did favor a multipolar international system, adding that “because it is a buck-passing strategy, offshore balancing is viable only in a multipolar international system. Offshore balancing is a lot like football: if you want to pass the buck (or ball) there has to be someone to catch it”²¹. In addition, it is important to underline that the United States do not want a multipolar world order – while an offshore balancer should do – and it considers itself as the sole solution to multipolar instability. The intention to maintain a unipolar world order was reinforced in the revised draft of the Defense

¹⁹ C. Layne, *The Peace of Illusions – American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present*, 2007.

²⁰ See note 7.

²¹ C. Layne, *The Peace of Illusions – American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present*, 2007.

Planning Guidance (DPG) of the first Bush administration and in the National Security Strategy of 2002, in both text it was stated the unwillingness to go back to a period characterized by multiple military powers balancing against each other, while global peace was awaiting. Once clarified that it is quite improbable that the United States play the role of offshore balancer – for reasons above explained – it was clear the global hegemonic ambitions the U.S. wanted to pursue. Christopher Layne lays out some examples among which there are: the Pentagon’s DPG for fiscal years 1994-1999, where it is stated that U.S. grand strategy is that of maintaining American hegemony by precluding the emergence of other rival great powers in Europe and East Asia. This hegemonic grand strategy was undertaken by the following presidents and written down in the following National Defense Strategies.

As said before, Layne explanations to U.S. grand strategy is through extraregional hegemony, “it is a neoclassical realist theory of U.S. grand strategy that incorporates systemic and domestic variables. Systemic factors constitute the permissive conditions for U.S. expansion. Domestic factors – Open Door economic and ideological expansion – explain the motives underlying American grand strategy, why United States has behaved as it has”²². Therefore, it is in contrast with offensive realism, because hegemony is not only determined by the structure of the international system – anarchy makes great power seek hegemony for their survival – it was a decision undertaken by the United States to pursue extraregional hegemony in Europe after World War II. There are three conditions to meet in order to follow this strategy with a successful outcome: first the United States needed a significant competitive advantage over other great powers in the international system. Second, great powers arise where there are no strong competitors, so the United States had to make Western Europe its main ally. Third, United States had to be a regional hegemon in the Western Hemisphere, since a great power has to become a hegemon to its region before aspiring to become a global one, which explains why the European great powers failed to establish extraregional hegemony. Plus, European powers were focused on dealing with each other, they could not go overseas to successfully establishing extraregional hegemony and they did not conquer their region either. On the other side, while European powers were fighting against each other, the United States had the time to become the hegemon of its own region and then took advantage of the vacuum created after the World War II and the end of the Cold War to establish as hegemon in Europe and East Asia.

Those were the systemic factors that provided the perfect conditions for the United States to become an extraregional hegemon, but there were also the domestic factors of Open-Door economic and spreading of ideology. Layne considers the Open-Door factor as the best explanation to how American policymakers saw U.S. interests and threats to their interests – “Open Door imperatives tipped the scale of grand strategic choice against offshore balancing and in favor of extraregional hegemony”²³. The Open Door theory derives from

²² C. Layne, *The Peace of Illusions – American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present*, 2007.

²³ *Ibid.*

William Appleman Williams and it explains at best the expansionist ambition of the United States to achieve extraregional hegemony, it says that it is true the U.S. came out of World War II as strong and powerful – matching its international expansionist ambitions – but it was precisely for attaining its political, economic and ideological interests that were the main driving forces, as much as creating an international political environments shaped by its norms and rules. Thereby, the goal of the United States was to create an Open Door world order based on two pillars: the first one is economic, which means that states had to be open for American penetration through an open international economy; the second one is political and ideological, by spreading democracy and liberalism all over the world. These two pillars converge into one critical point: U.S. grand strategy depends on the Open-Door assumption that economic and political liberalism cannot flourish at the domestic level if it is not safe at the international level. Here, ideology plays a fundamental role in sustaining the Open-Door grand strategy of the United States, which is why Washington felt threatened by ideologically hostile great powers in Eurasia that could dominate and threaten democracy.

Furthermore, Layne finds the first part of American expansionism as primarily economic, Open Door expansionism was aimed at opening markets to American goods with lower trade tariffs, so as to increase U.S. economic strength and influence. Once it was achieved, it followed the political and ideological ambition to create spheres of influence in other regions that could guarantee security and stability in the international system. Indeed, American policymakers saw the Open Door grand strategy as: a way to stop instability and wars, which are bad for conducting trade and financial transactions, as a mean to create an international political environment in favor of trade and investments and making the United States the hegemonic stabilizer in those regions where it had economic interests and it wanted to exercise its political influence. Obviously, it follows that for a state to be open to trade and investments, it had to be a liberal democracy. “This set a pattern for U.S. grand strategy. The antidotes to closure are economic development and democratization abroad. And, if that has not worked, as a last resort the Open Door has mandated U.S. intervention (covert or military) to remove or block the coming to power of regimes whose policies are or would be inimical to openness, and to prop up friendly regimes”²⁴. It is the main reason the United States misinterpreted the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution that led to hostility between Soviet Union and U.S. after the end of World War II, or with Germany and Japan during World War II, although it was also a matter of fearing their nationalist governments would opt for closing their economies, avoiding the American economic and political penetration in their domestic affairs.

The United States affirms that the Open-Door grand strategy and the economic openness that comes with it is an essential mean to stability and peace in the international level. Nevertheless, it is conducted more because it is in the best American interests to keep fueling its economic well-being and domestic political stability.

²⁴ C. Layne, *The Peace of Illusions – American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present*, 2007.

The economic Open Door develops the same benefits as the theory of economic interdependence and democratic peace: first, by giving all states equal access to international markets, it removes cause for international competition and war, states will become wealthier by trading and not by fighting to get access to a certain territory. Second, since they will become wealthy, states would not go to war against each other, otherwise they will disrupt the trade routes they have created. Third, it provides security for the United States, because states will achieve their domestic economic and political stability. There is a link between economic and political Open Door that each strengthen the other, spreading democracy is a key American interest, which reinforces peace, stability and openness, which in turn reinforces U.S. security. The political Open Door is the expression of Woodrow Wilson's liberal approach to international politics: first, the conviction that the domestic politics of a state determines whether the international politics is peaceful or warlike; second, the belief that the United States can be safe only in an international system constituted by states whose domestic politics is the same of the U.S. one and if there some states that do not mirror the U.S., it can be resolved by using American power to transform illiberal states into democratic ones. Layne affirms that Open Door economic and political goals could not be realized without American hegemony and there are two reasons why the pursue of those aims caused the United States to adopt a hegemonic grand strategy. First, the economic and financial supremacy, reached by the United States after World War II, was the moment in which the U.S. could achieve Open Door economic goals by creating an open international economic system. Second, the United States acquired militarily supremacy that could maintain order and stability in the international political system, plus its hegemonic role functioned as deterrent for closure strategies of some other powers, which could threaten the international economic system.

Finally, whenever the United States became a great power and a hegemon in its own region, it sought to take advantage of the vacuum created after World War II to realize the Open-Door world order with the economic, militarily and political means, where it acquired. Layne starts off with two realists' approaches – defensive and offensive realism – to find an explanation of such a phenomenon, but both lacked an important feature that could justify the American hegemonic grand strategy. The domestic variables were missing upon completion of the framework. The defense of domestic core values – democracy and open markets – were the driving forces that pushed the United States to undertake a path toward extraregional hegemony. Especially, one of the main reasons the United States has pursued a hegemonic grand strategy resides in the American belief that domestic stability cannot be achieved if the international system is in chaos, which in turn favor the rise of certain states with different ideologies that can threaten open door economy.

John J. Mearsheimer, the author of "the Great Delusion – Liberal Dreams and International Realities" (2018), analyzes first liberalism at the domestic level and then he explains the results of adopting liberalism at the international level. He considers fundamental the discussion of how liberalism functions inside a country in order to distinguish it from the way it operates in the international system. Inside countries liberalism is a

positive force, since it protects individual rights, while on the other hand, outside countries liberalism ends up creating more instability and less safety, plus it risks undermining liberalism at home. For this purpose, Mearsheimer takes two variants of political liberalism: *modus vivendi* liberalism and progressive liberalism. The two have similar features – they emphasize individualism, the importance of inalienable rights, tolerance and the need of a state to maintain public order – but they also have two important differences: individual rights and the presence of the state. *Modus vivendi* liberalism says that rights are all about individual freedom and they do not want government interference, instead progressive liberalism care about individual freedom but they also believe in rights that are helped by the intervention of the government. Mearsheimer concludes the comparison realizing that in modern societies, progressive liberalism triumphs over *modus vivendi* liberalism, something predictable given the changes occurred throughout the world that needed states to build institutions concerned with social engineering, thus with more intervention of the state. The author identifies three driving forces for progressive liberalism win. The first one is the industrial revolution, it brought major economic and social changes and local authorities were not able to manage the situation. The second one is nationalism, states have an incentive to stimulate in their people a strong sense of nationhood, which requires the intrusion of the state via social engineering. Nationalism creates a strong link between state and citizens, as a consequence the state will provide for their welfare and security, this expectation citizens have reinforced the inclination of nation-state to intervene and promote democracy and rights. The third one is the need to maintain peace through large military forces. The state has to fill the military defenses to provide for security. Mearsheimer concludes that national security inevitably promotes individual rights and large-scale social engineering and that is the reason why progressive liberalism is triumphant. Consequently, the author uses the term political liberalism because progressive and political liberalism are synonym.

Mearsheimer indicates that there are two main problems linked with two of its main features: the importance it attributes to inalienable rights and the relevance given to individualism. Indeed, the first problem is that it wrongly states that human beings are solitary individuals, instead they are social beings born in social groups or societies and shape their identities as a group before they can identify their individualism. In this way, liberals are underestimating the influence nationalism has over the people of every country. “Liberalism’s fate is therefore bound up with nationalism. Although these two isms differ in important ways, they can coexist inside a country’s borders. But when they are at odds, nationalism wins almost every time. In short, nationalism places serious limits on liberalism’s influence, including its emphasis on natural rights”²⁵. The second problem concerns individual rights and the claim that they are inalienable, and everyone should recognize their universality and importance. Mearsheimer says that it not a compelling story, because their impact has limits, even in those states where liberalism is deeply rooted in culture. The nationalism problem

²⁵ J. Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion – Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, 2018.

is analyzed deeply by the author because it poses one of the biggest limits to liberalism, as said before, they can coexist but when they come at contrast, nationalism wins.

The nationalism problem mentioned before lies in the fact that a state represent the highest-level of social group, it is also a collection of people who have many things in common and are bound to the group, so individuals live as part of the state, which significantly shapes their identities and behavior. “Thus it is no surprise that the world is populated with nation-states, the embodiment of nationalism”²⁶. Then, Mearsheimer sets out three points that lighten the relationship between nationalism and liberalism: first, nationalism is present in every country – the world is made of nation-states – liberalism is not everywhere; second, since nationalism is so strong in every country, liberalism has to coexist with it, otherwise it would be impossible to have a liberal state that is not a nationalist state or nation-state; third, liberalism loses when confronted with nationalism. To Mearsheimer the understanding of the concept of nationalism is fundamental, it provides a reason for which liberalism as international policy has its fallacies, “nationalism is a theory that explains how people around the world are organized socially and politically. It holds that the human population is divided into many different nations composed of people with a strong sense of group loyalty. With the possible exception of the family, allegiance to the nation usually overrides all other forms of an individual’s identity. Furthermore, members of a nation are deeply committed to maximizing their nation’s autonomy, which means they prefer to have their own state”²⁷. Liberalism and nationalism can coexist in a state, although liberalism cannot be present in a state without nationalism, it is quite the opposite for nationalism. We live in a world filled with nation-states, thus with nationalism, but not every nation-state is a liberal country. Nevertheless, even if a clash among liberalism and nationalism would see the latter winning, liberalism is still a powerful ideology. However, Mearsheimer draws a line on one important aspect of this matter, in a state that comprehends one nation and has a thick culture, nationalism would not interfere with liberalism, as the case of the United States. On the contrary, nationalism and liberalism would be more in conflict when there are hostilities between different social groups residing in a multinational country, because it is difficult to promote equal rights and tolerance when groups are hating each other and the strong social group discriminates against the weaker one – as Israel does toward the Palestinians. Those are the circumstances that favor the prevalence of nationalism, liberals overpraise the importance of individual rights and nationalism is closer to human nature and makes individuals feel as part of a community, which in turn makes a society stronger.

Aside from nationalism, Mearsheimer outlines other features that crack liberalism’s ideology. The universalistic vision of inalienable rights is misleading, there cannot be a universal agreement – except for the right of survival – on what constitutes the good life and on what rights should be considered inalienable or which one should take precedence. Plus, rights cannot be universally be at the core of every political system,

²⁶ J. Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion – Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, 2018.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

such as the case for illiberal states. It has to be taken into consideration that it can arise a situation in which the population has to choose between their personal security and their rights, where it will be chosen security and the rights to survival. In fact, when it comes to external threats, especially when a threat is extended over a long period of time, states will undermine some individual rights favoring national security. Once again, rights cannot be universal due to the nationalist concept of sovereignty, for which every state in its own territory can determine which rights matter and how much they count. Similarly, in the international system nation-state will prioritize their nationals over foreigners. Even among liberals themselves argue over what rights matter the most, then it is no surprise “Even the staunchest advocates of individual rights are usually willing to limit, even disregard, rights in a supreme emergency. When an individual’s or a country’s survival is at stake, rights cannot be allowed to get in the way of doing whatever is necessary to endure”²⁸. There are two examples used by Mearsheimer. First, Russia has a preference of order and political stability over rights, it is no revelation that it has become more authoritarian. Second, in the West the commitment to individual right is not so firm and steady, United States leaders have violated individual rights when they thought it was for a greater cause or for an emergency. Racism in the U.S. was tolerated until the mid-1960s and even if today American society does not accept racism anymore, it has barely vanished.

Notwithstanding, the issues associated with liberalism, a liberal state has five important features that avoid its collapse. First, states are characterized by different factions that compete for power, but a balance of power attitude could harmonize the factions and make less appealing to gain power. In the case in which there is a more powerful faction, it will play by the rules and get elected. Second, the presence of crosscutting cleavages, which are usual in liberal states, solve the issue of multiple interest that constitute political views, so that factions will compete on a topic and be on the same line on another, stopping the attempts of a faction to overrule the state. Third, people in the society depend on each other on the economic level, a civil war would undermine this solidarity and damage the society. Fourth, nationalism creates a strong bond between citizens and the state, given the history and culture they share. There will always be differences among citizens of a society, but liberal democracy will be an element of national identity, serving as deterrent for a faction to take permanent power and end democracy. Fifth, a liberal democracy embodies the feature of a deep state with a strong bureaucracy, protecting the state from threats to the existing political order. Time will make a society more interdependent among its members, there will always exist different factions, but it does not mean that the liberal state is going to collapse for that. This was an overlook of liberalism at the domestic level, it is another thing when it is adopted at the international level.

It is clear that liberalism at home embraces and promotes individual rights, hence a state would do everything it takes to protect them and ensure they are protected. One might think it should be the same thing for a state

²⁸ J. Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion – Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, 2018.

willing to adopt a liberal approach to foreign policy. Indeed, Mearsheimer sees a state deeply committed to individual rights is likely to promote them in the world and intervene whenever those rights are threatened in other countries, “that formidable state will end up embracing liberal hegemony, a highly interventionist foreign policy that involves fighting wars and doing significant social engineering in countries throughout the world. Its main aim will be to spread liberal democracy, toppling authoritarian regimes in the process, with the ultimate goal of creating a world populated solely by liberal democracies”²⁹. This interventionism ensures that as many people as possible can enjoy individual rights, which leads to an active policy of regime change of those illiberal states, to replace them with liberal democracies. A liberal state would seek hegemony because it is compelled by a sense of obligation it has on protecting those universal rights in other countries, if the state sees those rights violated. Since a liberal state protects its citizens rights, it perceives that a liberal democracy is the best way for every country to safeguard those rights. Here, nationalism plays an important part in shaping a liberal state behavior internationally “one particular aspect of nationalism – a deep-seated sense of superiority over other nations – helps reinforce a liberal state’s belief that it can affect fundamental change all over the world. This combination of nationalist chauvinism and liberal idealism is plainly reflected in the frequent claims of American policymakers who see the United States as having special qualities that enable it to instruct and transform other less fortunate countries”³⁰.

There are other reasons for which a liberal state wants to spread liberal democracy on the world, it is to protect individual rights, it causes peace and safeguards liberalism at home. Two are the theories that best represent the willingness to spread democracy: the democratic peace theory and economic interdependence theory. The first one assumes that democratic states would not go to war against each other, on the contrary they will settle the disputes peacefully via international institutions, which set international rules regulating the intra-states behavior. The second states that being a liberal country leads to an open economy, therefore an open international economy generates prosperity for every state, making them economically interdependent among each other, undermining any possibility of going to war. A state decisive to undertake liberal hegemony has to be aware of the costs that come with it. Spreading liberal democracy around the world it is not an easy task, but it is not cheap either, especially given the endless wars a liberal hegemon has to fight for protecting human rights and spreading liberal democracy. Militarism arises as a consequence of this deeply commitment, which will bring nothing more than instability in the international system. The armed conflicts, that saw the liberal hegemon involved, have usually failed leaving the state rescued and its citizens more messed up. Instability is similarly carried out when the liberal hegemon interferes in the internal affairs of other countries, particularly illiberal ones, because in diplomatic engagements it would not consider their interests and just think it knows what is best for them. It is important to underline that when a liberal hegemon will do more damage to its own country, militarism brings along a powerful national security state that is willing to violate citizens’ rights for

²⁹ J. Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion – Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, 2018.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

accomplishing its goals. Mearsheimer uses two examples that suit the description of how damaging the United States has been in its pursuit of liberal hegemony: it has destabilized the Middle East and it helped create a crisis between Russia and Ukraine, plus it has weakened some citizens' civil liberties for its national security agenda. This militarist intervention has been facilitating by the introduction of the principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P). It was issues for a good cause, to prevent the inactivity of the international community facing a huge humanitarian crisis, but it has been misinterpreted and it has been used as an excuse to intervene in other countries.

Liberal hegemony has also serious consequences on sovereignty, an important norm of international relations that should reduce the risk of war. However, a liberal hegemon has violated the sovereignty of other states for vital security reasons and self-interest. By now it should be clear that liberal hegemony brings instability and instead of preventing wars it causes more, but a further distinction has to be made military intervention would not be used in major powers, but it will be in weak states. Indeed, Washington has been promoting human rights and liberal democracy in both Russia and China, but it ended up deteriorating the relations between them, they perceive it as an attempt of regime change in their countries. The United States cannot invade neither China nor Russia, their military capabilities make the idea of an American intervention vanish, but it did not happen the same for the interventionist idea of stabilizing the Middle East. American policymakers were convinced the U.S. had the just capacities to establish stable democracies that could turn out as new allies for Washington and could help with sensitive matters, such as nuclear proliferation in the region, but they failed. "Washington's performance in Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Libya and Syria has been dismal. Not only has the United States failed to protect human rights and promote liberal democracy in those countries, it has played a major role in spreading death and disorder across the greater Middle East"³¹. Mearsheimer assumes it was foreseeable the failure, not only because it is extremely complicated to do social engineering on a large scale and it is not even because the United States did not even know anything about the culture of those countries, where it intervened, but it was certain that the violation of their sovereignty and right to self-determinate themselves would have cause resentment and insurgencies, particularly in an age of strong nationalism.

Although it has been said that pursuing liberalism abroad will undermine liberalism at home, Mearsheimer goes deep into this question. A liberal hegemon that pursues ambitious goals abroad has to implement a strong national security strategy, which weakens liberal values and institutions at home. This happens mainly because a militarized state has to rely on secrecy and deception. It is well known that in a liberal democracy transparency of the government is at the base of its well- functioning and it makes the government accountable to the citizens, but secrecy does put a limit to transparency. The interventionist policy gives a reason for leaders

³¹ J. Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion – Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, 2018.

to lie to its citizens and to distort the reality of the events, so that public support keeps supporting military interventions. Deception campaigns are fundamental for a liberal hegemon, because it inspires its people to fight and die in war, which otherwise would not be an easy task. A consequence is going to be the erosion of civil liberties, because in extreme situations the liberal state would have to choose between security and civil liberties, policymakers would definitely prefer security. Mearsheimer presents three examples, where the Bush and Obama administrations have undermined civil liberties for an external threat. First, the right to privacy, that says that the government cannot gather information on an American citizen without the permission of a judge, was undermined after 9/11 the Bush administration surveilled American citizens until 2007, it collected personal emails, text messages and phone conversation. When a federal court ruled that the gathering of data without approval was illegal, the Obama administration told the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (or FISA) to ignore the ruling. Second, due process was disregarded when the United States started to suspect of terrorists in Afghanistan and for this reason the Bush administration created a virtual gulag in Guantanamo Bay, denying the right of a due process to detainees, it also sent certain prisoners to countries that cared less about human rights to be tortured and interrogated. Third, the Obama administration felt they could not release or prosecute fairly the prisoners at Guantanamo, neither it wanted to make new ones, so it decided to kill them when they were caught, where drones played a fundamental role in the assassinations.

Mearsheimer assumption that liberalism at the international level is not a good idea comes from an analysis of first what is liberalism and how it is implemented at home, and then given its core assumptions what it would lead to once it has been adopted at the international level. The result is a liberal state that pursues hegemony to stabilize the international system, bringing peace and spreading the liberal ideology. For assuring peace worldwide is essential the protection of individual rights every human being should have, to accomplish such task the liberal state becomes an interventionist state that would use its military force if it deems it necessary. This interventionist policy brings other negative consequences such as the disrespect of the international norm of sovereignty and the erosion of individual rights at home, due to a stronger national security strategy. At the end, liberalism if taken abroad causes more instability, wars and less protection to rights, than its aim to live peacefully in an international world full of democratic liberal countries.

The third author taken into consideration for this analysis of American liberalism is Andrew J. Bacevich with his book “Washington Rules – America’s Path to Permanent War” (2010). The author focuses on how the combination of two important features describe the United States role in the international system. The first one is the conviction that the world relies on the United States to make norms accepted by the international community and to be responsible for their effective implementation, the so-called American credo. The latter forces the U.S. to maintain great military capabilities for any need of intervention. The second one is the sacred trinity, another conviction that the international system will be in peace and stable is for the United States to possess three things: to maintain a global military presence, to have the necessary means for a global power

projection and to tackle existing or future threats with a policy of global interventionism. The two summed together constitute the essence of American way of shaping the world order and it precisely defines the Washington rules on which the international community has to consent and obey.

The American credo has been subscribed by every presidency since Truman and even if Obama was perceived as a fundamental change for the United States, he was no exception. It is composed of four claims: first, the world has to be shaped and organized; second, the United States is the sole country possessing the capacity to shape and enforce the world order; third, the U.S. mandate includes the articulation of those norms that shape the order, they are certainly American norms which are applicable worldwide. Fourth, the international community accepts and understands this reality, because they want the United States to lead. It follows that when the United States acts as regulator in the international system, it is exempted from those norms it expects other to follow. Another important claim is the continuous presence of American military bases to facilitate intervention overseas, this military presence is essential for the protection of American freedom, even in places where there is not an actual menace to it. Additionally, it is a way to protect the interests of the international community as well, hence they should not see the American military power and its global presence as a threat, but as a resource of reassurance and stability. Washington takes for granted that other countries and their citizens go along with it, but Bacevich makes a good example comparing two very similar situations that have a different outcome. It takes as example the possibility that a rising power's – in this case China – defense minister announces a plan to improve the military capabilities of his country. On the list results an increase of Chinese military spending to the level of exceeding the defense budget of other great powers summed together, the negotiation of new access agreements and overflight right for the facilitation of humanitarian interventions, create military bases in strategic and sensitive areas, etc. Certainly, the Chinese defense minister would warn other countries not to see this program as a threat, China is just trying to contribute to the peace and stability of the international system. Nevertheless, there would be some countries – United States, Russia and Japan – that would think such military enlargement has peaceful purposes. Bacevich compares this fictional Chinese military program with an existing American one. The United States spend more than the rest of the countries on its military, it has more troops stationed abroad than the rest of the world and many other things.

This comparison aimed at underlying an important fact that leads to what is defined as semi-war. The United States' military spending, its military deployment abroad and its commitment to intervene – as every doctrine implemented by every president since Roosevelt enunciated the Monroe Doctrine embodies – reflect the concern of always being threaten, even if there is no concrete danger. The American credo and the sacred trinity perpetrate the United States to a condition of enduring national security crisis. Bacevich reconnects the first usage of the concept semiwar to James Forrestal at the beginning of the Cold War, which showed his anticommunist obsession, “semiwar defines a condition in which great dangers always threaten the United States and will continue doing so into the indefinite future. When not actively engaged in hostilities, the nation

faces the prospect of hostilities beginning at any moment, with little or no warning. In the setting of national priorities, readiness to act becomes a supreme value”³². A fundamental part in fomenting this situation is played by semiwarriors, they want the sustainment of high levels of military spending. They see the likelihood of a threat even when it is evident there is none, they not only pressure for enhancing existing military capabilities, but also for the development of new ones. Plus, the changing environment surrounding the United States with more complex problems strengthen the semiwarriors conviction the world needs an ever-greater American engagement. Bacevich writes on how those principles became part of American national security consensus, because they are part of a standard story line portraying the succession of presidential administrations. It is true that every president who sat foot in the White House put its personal stamp on its administration, but a president has never had a fresh start because it has inherited problematic of previous governments. Moreover, the president of the United States ends up as a mean through which power is exercised, especially on matter of national security where semi-warriors take the lead. Bacevich recognizes Eisenhower was the exception to the rule, because he realized the role of those semiwarriors and how they managed to possess a lot of power and influence in their hands, simply by perpetuating a national security crisis. President Eisenhower did not realize that he was their accomplice, but he wanted to alert citizens of their existence and that their national security initiatives were delivering new institutions and habits, which were less close to American values.

The author considers two important figures as semiwarriors par excellence that contributed to the creation of an enduring legacy, Allen Dulles and Curtis LeMay. During the 1950s, they gave prominence to two organizations whose role was fundamental in defining how Washington operated, Dulles was in charge of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), while LeMay managed the Strategic Air Command (SAC). This comes with no wonder, given the historical period and the paranoia of a communist takeover. Dulles took office as director of CIA in 1953, Eisenhower indulged Dulles’ certainty that covert actions could have an advantage over the Soviet Union, the Congress gave him the necessary funds and within a decade Dulles had achieved his goal: the establishment of a network of U.S. diplomatic missions across the world, firmly convinced that covert operations should increase in number. Bacevich describes him as “an authentic patriot, who viewed the Cold War as a righteous cause. No reason exists to question the sincerity of that conviction. Yet the atmosphere of permanent crisis he encouraged created large opportunities both to advance the well-being of the Agency and to satisfy his own personal ambitions”³³.

The American diplomatic mission put in place in the strategic areas of Washington’s interest had another scope: to acquire the capacity of projecting American power into places of concern to favor the Washington consensus. On the other side, LeMay focused on increasing overt operations through the increment in readiness

³² A.J. Bacevich, *Washington Rules – America’s Path to Permanent War*, 2010.

³³ *Ibid.*

of long-range aerial attacks able to destroy entire societies. LeMay gave SAC a new look, before it could drop bombs on few Soviet cities, later it could attack more than 3,200 targets. “LeMay’s conception of deterrence implied an element of outright intimidation. (...) SAC was all about the pursuit of absolute certainty, providing an iron-clad guarantee of unleashing the furies of nuclear destruction whenever and wherever required. (...) LeMay’s aim was to secure the peace by demonstrating SAC’s unquestioned and overwhelming dominance, creating, in the jargon of nuclear strategy, a first-strike capability”³⁴. Semiwarriors were able to get their way by convincing citizens and policymakers communism was the problem, persuading Americans there is nothing more important than national security. CIA and SAC were capable of creating a cult of global activism, which laid the foundation for what turned out to be the Washington consensus.

The important aspect of Bacevich’s book is that it gives a deeper outlook of American leadership in the international system. Instead of focusing on a reinterpretation of old school international relations theories to find the one which adapts better to the peculiar case of the United States, the author bets everything on the combination of the American credo and the sacred trinity, which constitute the Washington rules. Anyhow, without the key role of the semiwarriors in the picture, it would have been harder to consolidate the continuous need to concentrate the domestic and international attention on national security. It is important to bare this framework in mind, because Bacevich explains an important phenomenon: the reason why the United States continued to engage interventionist “humanitarian” missions, when there were clear examples of their ineffectiveness and their destructive effects on both the domestic and international field.

Therefore, the Vietnam War resulted in a failure for the United States and it seemed the American credo and sacred trinity were discredited. The war trigger opposition on behalf of some prominent figures, such as Senator Fulbright, who wrote the book “The Arrogance of Power” where he exposed the defective U.S. approach to global leadership. The thing he questioned the most was the ability the U.S. to create stability in other countries, especially in a small underdeveloped Asian country, marking American policymaker as not seeing the world as it actually was. Another figure criticizing the war was General Davis Shoup. He said the United States had turned a militaristic and aggressive nation and there was someone to blame it on those people profiting from a continuous state of war – the so called semiwarriors. “Together with Fulbright, he drove home the point that the credo and the trinity had not been handed down from Mount Sinai. Alternatives to the Washington rules did indeed exist. Whether Washington would seriously entertain those alternatives was another matter”³⁵. The Vietnam war had also triggered citizens public protests due to the loss of faith in the American credo and sacred trinity as well by the American people. The Vietnam War brought up journalistic charges to CIA’ illegal conduct of spying on American citizens and it brought a big change, the federal government authority to order citizens to serve in the military. Thus, with the Vietnam war the sacred trinity

³⁴ A.J. Bacevich, *Washington Rules – America’s Path to Permanent War*, 2010.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

was at stake. First, in 1973 joining the U.S. military became voluntary, which made power projection harder and based on the ability of the government to induce young Americans to join voluntarily. Second, the withdrawal of American troops from Southeast Asia gave rise to a justified doubt: the need of continuing U.S. global presence. Third, Vietnam was a failure it seemed to have drained the willingness for global interventionism, in 1973 it passed the War Powers Resolution, which stated that the United States could go to war only in response to a direct attack or declaration of war.

Nevertheless, this situation did not last long, particularly after the end of the Cold War that found the United States as the sole superpower in the international system. Bacevich once again in trying to explain how the situation turned upside-down in favor of the restoration of the American credo, again the answer could be found in the semiwarriors. “Defenders of the Washington rules rallied, intent on restoring consensus, control, and legitimacy. They quietly but firmly excluded from serious consideration views that smacked, however remotely, of being heretical. They dismissed the charge coming from the Vietnam War’s most vehement critics that the war itself testified to something essential about U.S. policy and American society – that Vietnam, in the words of Martin Luther King, had been “but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit³⁶”³⁷. Notwithstanding the fact that the Vietnam War was a humiliating defeat where lots of young American lost their lives, the rebuttal of what happened succeeded in restoring American global leadership and the credo. American political parties tacitly consented to swipe away the events of the Vietnam War from public discourse and they both restored the preexisting national security consensus. It came out this whole situation that what happened during the Vietnam War was *sui generis*, by 1980s it was concluded that Vietnam had to be forgotten and American global leadership had to be reaffirmed.

Bacevich concludes with a final transition. After the Cold War the red menace disappeared, the American global leadership could not end up in the same way. Indeed, from that moment on advocates of the Washington rule believed the United States had to face new challenges. The author supports this assumption with the testimony of Madeleine Albright, she was a UN ambassador and has served as Secretary of State, but her contribution to diplomacy was not excessively thick, on the contrary she simply was a proponent and exponent of the Washington consensus, where she played a defensive and supportive role of American global leadership. Bacevich defines four Albright’s statements that picture the transition to post-Cold War Washington rules. First, she wanted to underline she had different points of view from other in her circle, “My mind-set is in Munich. Most of my generation’s is Vietnam”³⁸, in this way she wanted to highlight the triumphant Munich’s memory than get stuck in the failure of Vietnam, which was counterproductive. Second, she perceived the common thought of the indispensability of American leadership, because American have historical purposes which empowers the United States to act, it provides for a justification of American interventionism. Talking

³⁶ Martin Luther King, *Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam*, April 1967.

³⁷ A.J. Bacevich, *Washington Rules – America’s Path to Permanent War*, 2010.

³⁸ Elaine Sciolino, *Madeleine Albright’s Audition*, *New York Times Magazine*, September 22, 1996.

about the possibility of launching new air attacks on Iraq, she commented “if we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further (...) into the future”³⁹. Third, Albright further explained the proper role of the military power, concerning a possible intervention in the Balkans, where the Serb dictator Milosevic was threatening to invade the region. Albright in order to push General Colin Powell to take action, she asked him why the U.S. has these superb military capabilities if it does not use them. Fourth, in a television interview she was asked about if the deaths of thousands of Iraqi children’s death due to the sanctions imposed on the regime of Saddam Hussein were worth it, she did not deny it, on the contrary she confirmed it by saying “It’s a hard choice, but I think, we think, it’s worth it”⁴⁰. All her views on these matters were widely shared and remained at the core of the Washington consensus. Albright ensured the maintenance of the principles American policymakers will further use for American global leadership and she ensured that Washington consensus could be preserved for future American administrations.

1.3 Russian realist approach

There is worldwide consensus over the realist approach undertaken by the Russian Federation in international relations. During the Cold War the Soviet Union was in a favored power position, alongside the United States, where the two divided the world in two poles exercising their spheres of influence. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, due to internal weaknesses and inability to accommodate the needs of its ethnic minorities for greater autonomy and independence⁴¹, the Cold War came to an end and with it the power projection USSR had acquired, leaving Russian policymakers with the only scope of getting back their great power status. However, Western countries thought the dissolution of the Soviet Union could bring a change toward a more liberal world order, filled with liberal democratic countries, as it was also conceived by Fukuyama in his book “The End of History and the Last Man” published in 1992. As things turn out, Russia is far from embracing a liberal ideology. Western countries arrived at the conclusion that Russia would have joined them, because they did not take into consideration important historical factors that have shaped and continue to shape Russian domestic and international approach.

Thus, Angela Stent in her book “Putin’s World – Russia Against the West and With the Rest” (2019) lays out what are the persistent factors in Russian Foreign Policy. One important factor is geography. Russia has a vast territory for an important reason, it has only one natural border, the Arctic Sea, the various territorial conquests were made for amplifying its borders to protect Russia. It is characterized by an enormous climate diversity,

³⁹ Interview on NBC-TV, *The Today Show with Matt Lauer*, February 19, 1998. <https://1997-2001.state.gov/statements/1998/980219a.html>

⁴⁰ Interview on *60 minutes*, May 11, 1996.

⁴¹ A. Stent, *Putin’s World – Russia Against the West and with the Rest*, 2019.

which makes large parts of the country inaccessible in winter, it makes growing season short and there is scarcity of warm ports, reason why Crimea is so important to Russia, the Black Sea Fleet is located over there and it is an important Russian asset. The vast territory has brought difficulties in communication and has impeded a homogeneous economic development. Russia is a rich country in natural resources, but they are in not ideal locations, reason why Soviet leaders moved part of the population to Siberia even if it meant losing lives. Russia has suffered from its economic backwardness in respect to its European counterparts, which made Stalin impose industrialization and forced agricultural collectiveness that was not very helpful. Another important factor to take into consideration is that given the large territory and the many people living in it, it was not easy to manage and govern them. Hence, the solution adopted in Russian history was to govern with an iron hand, with tough penalties to those who opposed the ruler, contributing to a collective memory that is reflected in today's realist approach. "When Putin accuses the West of trying to "break up" Russia and impose an agenda that is inimical to the country's real interests, he appeals to the dual legacies of superiority and inferiority complexes that for centuries have shaped Russia's view of its role in the world"⁴².

Stent argues Russian modern approach to international relation can be understood if one takes into consideration the historical and the identity components. The author decided to separate the two concepts, because each one of them gives a different glimpse of Russian realism. While the historical factor was presented above, now it is necessary to understand how Russians' research for a new identity can be determinant in comprehending Russia's approach. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russians have found themselves deprived from a national identity, especially for those living in the pos-Soviet countries. Even if there had been attempts to define a new national identity, such as the commission instituted by Boris Yeltsin in 1996, no result was found. Another try was made in 2007, when it was created an international organization called "Russia World" headed by Vyacheslav Nikonov. The organization had the aim to promote Russian culture and language worldwide, defining as Russian whoever speaks Russian and is attached to its culture, with no ethnic discrimination. Aside from this, Russian identity was bound up by two important things: their sense of imperial destiny, which comprehends ruling over those around them, and feeling different from the West, being more Eurasians "what it meant to be Russian was the belief in the superiority of a communal, collective way of life, as opposed to the competitive individualism of the more developed European countries"⁴³.

The Soviet ideology, derived from the writings of Karl Marx, shaped the USSR and its international approach. Lenin believed that imperialist countries would implode for colonial competition and proletariat revolutions taking over and defeating their oppressors. Though, under Stalin the Soviet ideology took a more nationalist path, putting first Russian national interests and the conviction European countries should accommodate to

⁴² A. Stent, *Putin's World – Russia Against the West and with the Rest*, 2019.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

them. Only with Gorbachev's New Thinking the Soviet Union was willing to embrace mutual interdependence between West and Eurasia. Gorbachev line was followed by Yeltsin and his foreign minister Kozyrev, whom adopted a pro-Western approach. The reason behind this decision was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the need to get back on their feet, with no controversies coming from outside, even if it went against the tradition of Russia uniqueness and greatness. On the other hand, it was not a shared view, in fact in 1996 Yeltsin replaced the foreign minister and put Yevgeny Primakov. Primakov is associated to the "Primakov doctrine", where he takes a realist position and amore Eurasian focus in Russia's foreign policy strategy. This new approach consisted in returning to Russia's status of great power, observing Russia's national interests, favoring a multipolar world order instead of American unipolarity. It was important to also concentrate on reestablishing good relations with Russia's near abroad – the post-Soviet space – by improving the new-born Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). From this, Putin has built his own Russian idea, focusing more on the need to secure those Russians that were left out after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Indeed, "the central argument is that, since the Soviet collapse, there is a mismatch between Russia's state borders and its national or ethnic borders, and that this is both a historical injustice and a threat to Russia's security. After the Soviet collapse, twenty-two million Russians found themselves outside Russia, living in other post-Soviet states. Russia, in Putin's view, has a right to come to the defense of Russians under threat in the post-Soviet space"⁴⁴. Therefore, the new idea actually resumes the old Russian idea: Russia is unique, superior to the West, it has a right and duty to defends Russians and its lands, especially those that were part of USSR and the West represents a threat to national values and interests.

Putin wanted to restore Russia greatness and he perceived foreign policy as interconnected with domestic factors. During his first term, he was committed to a greater economic integration with the West, plus relations with the latter were improving, especially with the United States – after 9/11 – and with Germany. The situation turned upside down, when Putin realized the West wanted Russia to start a democratization process. During his second term, civil liberties were restricted for security reasons. After the color revolutions Putin appointed Vladislav Surkov for a transition to "managed democracy". Surkov underlined the importance of sovereignty over democracy and there should not be any interference from outside powers in Russia's domestic businesses. Additionally, the rise of oil prices and the GDP growth gave Putin more self-confidence and determination to no fall under West will. When the Ukrainian crisis outbroke, Russia felt it was in conflict with the West. Hence, Stent concludes by saying "Putin has skillfully appealed to tsarist and Soviet nostalgia to emphasize Russia's rightful unique place in the world and his own part in restoring Russia's rightful role as great power. (...) He defends Russia's right to restore the global role it lost after 1992"⁴⁵. This is the starting point of understanding Russian realism.

⁴⁴ A. Stent, *Putin's World – Russia Against the West and with the Rest*, 2019.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Neil MacFarlane contemplates the many versions of realism and assumes that many would accept some basic realist characteristics. The state is main actor in international relations, which is unitary rational entity governed by no supreme authority, in fact it operates in an anarchic environment where a state as to compete with another one for resources, counting on its own means and provide for its own security. There is a strong connection between wealth and power, indeed it is important to possess the necessary economic instruments, in order to maximize a state's utility and gain independence. Nevertheless, the distribution of capabilities in the system is not even nor fair, so there are states that cannot provide for their own security and have two options: bandwagon with a threat – a more powerful state – or balance against it, the best choice would be the one who can provide the highest level of security. There is also a dynamic aspect to take into consideration, the changes in the distribution of power over time, it mainly concerns the role of rising powers in trying to acquire resources. On the other hand, the declining power has to save as much as it can through preventive war, retrenchment or appeasement⁴⁶. MacFarlane has his own realist perspective “my perspective on realism is minimalist and nondeterminist. It is realist in the belief that states in general act in a self-interested fashion to further their own ends (survival, welfare) in an anarchic system. They seek to retain or expand their power and control over resources. They are sensitive to their relative position in the system and to trends affecting that position”⁴⁷.

After MacFarlane outlines the basic assumptions of realism, he proceeds with answering whether the realist theory can be applied to Russian foreign policy. Concerning Russia's near abroad, it was predictable that Russia was going to expand its influence at their expense, given its economic and militarily superiority. Additionally, as even Russian analysts have argued, if Russia was able to resume its leadership on the post-Soviet region, it could regain its great power status. As realists assume, Russia would use any mean possible to control the former Soviet republics, indeed it was Russia has been doing, for many economic, political, social and security reasons. Concerning Russia and the West, McFarlane starts off by saying that during the Cold War the Soviet Union retained an important position as one of the two poles in the international system. However, this position started to erode in the 1980s, when internal crisis and economic backwardness led to a reconceptualization of its role in the international system, it also had to withdraw from its commitments to Eastern Europe and the Third World. In this situation, a realist approach would suggest balancing against the United States and its Western allies, but the problem was that Russia was not powerful enough to do it, so it turned towards China, which had similar problems with the West and was an emerging power. Anyhow, China had its own national interests and it might have been problematic, since China's economy was growing and it could aim at absorbing some former Soviet republics, so Russia had to opt for appeasement and cooperation, which explains the “New Thinking” approach and the close ties with the West. It was also a matter of strengthening Russian leadership in the face of its internal opposition. A realist explanation is contradictory,

⁴⁶ N. MacFarlane, *Realism and Russian Strategy after the Collapse of the USSR*, 1999.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

the influence on post-Soviet space can increase tensions with the West, but as their interests are growing in those newly independent states and their willing to expand, Russia would act again in its national interests, securing its borders and Western states would end up balancing against Russia, instead of cooperating with it.

Another perspective can be derived by Neil MacFarlane's analysis on "Realism and Russian Strategy after the Collapse of the USSR" (1999), where he focuses on the period that goes from 1991 to 1996. During this period, Russia had to reassert itself the status of great power and assure its position as regional leader in the former Soviet space, at the expenses of the newly formed Republics. Indeed, the realist approach toward national and regional interests did play in favor of the Russian Federation. On the other hand, Russia's role in the international arena was declining to a point in which it had to choose between balancing and bandwagoning, a defensive realist approach. Thus, Russia found difficult to balance off the West, while confronting a divorce with former USSR and a domestic economic crisis, which reduced its power projection in the international system – while during the Cold War it withhold a powerful role as balancer – leaving no choice but to seek for more cooperation with the West, not implying a surrender to them, but a moderate withdrawal from the confrontational rhetoric and policies of the Cold War. This situation has led to a tension between two strategies of the Russian agenda, "the two strategic agendas are in tension with each other. Russian behavior follows the predictive propositions of realism within the former Soviet region. It is not entirely consistent with predictions derived from Russia's changing position in the global balance. (...) it has abandoned the liberal internationalist focus of its foreign policy and is behaving in an increasingly confrontational manner. In particular, it has been unwilling to curbs its regional ambitions in order to stabilize its relations with the United States and NATO"⁴⁸. The main issue relied on the prevalence of national and regional interests over closer ties with the West, especially, given NATO expansion toward East Europe and the different interests Russia and the West have, which goes hand in hand with the different means used to achieve those same interests, which as MacFarlane notes "it strongly resembles the classical realist approach to cooperation, whereby states cooperate to the extent that, and as long as, it suits them"⁴⁹. This departure from western cooperation was fueled by the Primakov Doctrine and its priority to find new centers of cooperation in the Eastern part of the world, such as with China, India and the Middle East.

Other scholars emphasize the importance of ideology in shaping the theories of international relations and take Russia as an example, "the impact of ideology on international relations knowledge can be summarized in the following way. As a state-related institution, national ideology influences knowledge formation through a proposed interpretation of historical events, institutional arraignments, and funding"⁵⁰. Russia's realist policymakers rely on the need to secure the internal stability of the country from external threats. They see the

⁴⁸ N. MacFarlane, *Realism and Russian Strategy after the Collapse of the USSR*, 1999.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ A. P. and P. A. Tsygankov, *National ideology and IR theory: Three in carnations of the "Russian idea"*, 2010.

promotion of liberal democracies and western values as more a struggle for maintaining Western spheres of influence and they propose that Russia should concentrate in strengthening its international position through the consolidation of regional ties. Concerning the regional influence, realists defend the position of Russia's power projection. Once again, the reference as turning point toward Russian realism is the Primakov doctrine, underlying the importance of other key international actors, such as China and India, because it was more important in a realist perspective to have flexible alliances in all geopolitical directions⁵¹.

Another point of view to explain Russian realist approach is the justice factor, as Mikhail Troitskiy writes “by putting justice at the center of the decision-making process, an actor or a group of actors attributed primary importance to what happened in the past or the inherent nature of other actors, as opposed to the current status quo or an ideal state of affairs as enshrined in law. (...) During the 1990s and the early 2000s, Russia has been an illustrative example of justice-laden approach to the formulation and execution of foreign policy guidelines”⁵². Indeed, this justice was represented in Russian rhetoric by being recognized as equal to Western countries, given the key role it played during World War II, it is a major nuclear power and contributed to non-proliferation efforts and it acts as a bridge linking the West and East. Troitskiy says that there are several reasons why the concept of justice has impacted Russia in a way that it turned its foreign policy more pragmatic, therefore realist. First, it is acknowledged that Russia was weakened after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the United States was left as the sole superpower, which in turn made Russia realize it would be difficult to receive an equal treatment from the West, given the bigger influence the U.S. had. Second, Russia had to reorganize what constituted a threat to its national security and recognize the need for a tactical cooperation with the United States. Third, Russia needed a certain level of flexibility in order to assess its official position on separatist regimes in regions of its interest, such as Transnistrian Republic, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Fourth, Russia failed in gathering allies that could support its vision of a just world order, mainly after NATO expansion toward ex-Soviet Republics. Fifth, Russia could not become an alternative of the current concepts of international justice. Consequently, Russia tries to establish its great power status and to retain freedom of maneuver, which made policymaker took a turn for realist approach. However, even if in the first term of Putin Russia was looking for more cooperation with the West, also for fighting together international threats – such as terrorism – but the response of the West to Russian attempts to embrace Western liberalism were not satisfactory, complaining about unfair treatment. Thus, justice rhetoric came back with Putin's second term, where it coincided with anti-Western sentiment, the willingness to create a multipolar world order and prioritizing Russian national interests, especially concerning its near abroad⁵³.

⁵¹ A. P. and P. A. Tsygankov, *National ideology and IR theory: Three in carnations of the “Russian idea”*, 2010.

⁵² M. Troitskiy, *Going “Relativistic”: The Changing Vision of “Just International Order” in Russian Foreign Policy*, 2008.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2

2.1 Strategies of World Order Construction

The end of the Cold War marked an important win for the West, where democracy, market-oriented economy and liberal values could be the solutions to international instability and consequently prevail in the international system, find home in the post-Soviet space and then in other regions of different nature than the Western hemisphere. However, things turned out differently than what was expected and among the many factors that contributed to a different historical course, the interactions between the United States and the newly born Russian Federation were definitely decisive. Indeed, even though the collapse of the Soviet Union was harsh and an economic, political, socio-cultural crisis had to be addressed, the Russian Federation remained the main opponent to the United States' hegemony and at the same time its main sidekick – at least this is how the United States has been treating Russia – for common international issues.

Therefore, it is important to take under analysis the national security documents issued by Russia and the United States, to comprehend why they took certain decisions at home and abroad and how their relations can be compared to a ride on a rollercoaster. Those documents provide a general overlook of what is the international situation in the year of their release and how to pursue national interests and guarantee national security at the same time. For the Russian Federation it meant reconstructing a national identity and its status of great power, while maintaining its spheres of influence and being able to conduct an independent foreign and domestic policy. Moreover, it has been repeated in every national security concept of the Russian Federation the willingness to advance a multipolar world order, where international law is respected by every state, especially the principle of non-interference, and where no regime is overthrown and the United Nations its organs and Charter are the sole supranational entities entitled to have a say. For the United States it meant carrying the weight of being a global leader that wants to export democracy and liberal values to other countries, which would bring great advantages for American economy, given the positive connotation assumed by American administrations to democracy and open markets for American goods. In addition, the United States took advantage of the situation to maintain and improve their military might and military presence abroad, as necessary condition to the common interests of the inhabitants of the international system which are peace, stability and military intervention when deemed necessary.

2.2 National Security Strategies of the United States of America

There are many similarities among the National Security Strategy (NSS) documents of the United States, although there are some differences that will be addressed. In addition, there are redundant characteristics

uniting the documents from 1994 up to 2017, which are the importance of the American military might, the messianistic and exceptionalist vision of the role of the United States in the international system and the adoption of a liberal foreign policy. American militarism is evident from the very first lines of the documents, where it is repeated several times how important the military power of the United States is to maintain peace and stability in the international system, plus it is able to deter any possible threat to American national security. The messianistic and exceptionalist vision of the U.S. concerns its role as unilateral leader of the international system and being the sole country who can do so “to navigate the shoals of the world’s new dangers and to capitalize on its opportunities. American assets are unique: our military strength, our dynamic economy, our powerful ideals and, above all, our people. We can and must make the difference through our engagement; but our involvement must be carefully tailored to serve our interests and priorities”⁵⁴. The documents are clear about the willingness to adopt a liberal foreign policy, because it goes hand in hand with their vision about U.S. role in the world. Thus, the United States wants to export American values and idea through a democratization process, since President Clinton believed in the liberal theory of democratic peace – democracies do not go to war with each other. He had the vision of how the international order had to be shaped and directed, he wanted to work on having more democratic countries that are willing to cooperate and install good trade relationship with the United States. Consequently, these three elements coincide with a fourth one: maintaining American military presence abroad. As President Clinton said during his speech at the UN 50th anniversary in 1995, today there are other enemies the international community face, which are terrorists, international criminals and drug trafficking, the world is becoming increasingly interdependent and there are more common opportunities and common enemies that have to be faced together to increment the changes of succeeding. Once again, he underlined that the American well-being depends on the well-being of other countries and the United States shall play a strong role overseas, and where cooperation is not met, the United States will act alone⁵⁵.

Indeed, American interventionism comes from adopting a liberal approach to foreign policy, it started during U.S. participation to the two World Wars and kept growing through American presidencies. The Clinton administration followed this path with its “Freedom Agenda”, where it was outlined the importance of making America safer by exerting U.S. leadership abroad and the need to adapt and construct global institutions – which would provide security and increase economic growth for the international system – it follows the need to export liberal ideals and democratic values to the world. However, even though democracies would not be adopted easily by all the countries, it is important that democratic countries proliferate, “while democracy will not soon take hold everywhere, we know that the larger the pool of democracies, the better off we, and the entire community of nations, will be. Democracies create free markets that offer economic opportunity, make

⁵⁴ A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, The White House February 1995, preface page i.

⁵⁵ President Clinton speech at the United Nations 50th anniversary, June 26, 1995. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?65896-1/united-nations-50th-anniversary>

for more reliable trading partners, and are far less likely to wage war on one another. It is in our interest to do all that we can to enlarge the community of free and open societies, especially in areas of greatest strategic interest, as in the former Soviet Union”⁵⁶.

The discourse on American interventionism, military might, and liberal foreign policy is an important question that highly influences how the United States acts in the international system and shapes world order. As it was mentioned in the first chapter, the book “Washington Rules – America’s Path to Permanent War” (2010) written by Andrew J. Bacevich focuses on how the combination of two important features - the American credo and the sacred trinity – perfectly describes the United States actions to shape global order. Hence, the American credo positions the United States as unilateral decision-maker and at the same time as a court where it plays the role of both judge and jury that deliberates on what is right and wrong and the other countries have to consent and obey. The sacred trinity is the combination of the those same three elements that can be found everywhere – from national security strategy documents, presidential campaigns or speeches to discourses of the secretary of state and from lower-ranking officials – global military presence, possessing the necessary means for global power projection and tackling existing or future threats with a foreign policy of global interventionism⁵⁷.

Thereby, the essence of every U.S. national security strategies is the vision of helping create a world order filled with an international community of market democracies – opened to American exported goods – containing and deterring threats to national and international security – two broad categories that comprehend improving military capabilities and missile defense, enlarging NATO and maintaining military presence abroad. The national security strategy documents have all a broader ideal concept on how to shape the international community, thus world order, which is advancing U.S. interests through engagement and enlargement. Indeed, all the above-mentioned U.S. strategic interests are served if the community of democratic and free market nations is enlarged. American strategy for democratic promotion focuses on the consolidation of those states that were making fundamental changes toward democratic regimes and the broadening of U.S. commitment to help them. For achieving national security objectives, it is important to work with other democracies to cooperate together on security and economic issues, and gaining their support continuing the process of democratic enlargement. Then, the core of the strategy is to help democracy and market-oriented economies to expand and survive in those countries where security concerns prevail – the NSS of the Clinton administration often mention Eastern European countries - “nowhere is democracy’s success more important to us all than in these countries. (...) As long as these states continue their progress toward democracy and respect the rights of their own and other people, that they understand the rights of their

⁵⁶ A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, The White House February 1995, page 2.

⁵⁷ A.J. Bacevich, *Washington Rules – America’s Path to Permanent War*, 2010.

minorities and their neighbors, we will support their progress with a steady patience”⁵⁸. Consequently, it is important to mobilize international resources to support democratic transitions and to strengthen the pillars of civil societies. The efforts to ensure the success of emerging democracies is complemented by attempts to guarantee basic human rights on a global scale. Finally, the support of a global movement towards democracy requires a pragmatic and long-term commitment, achieving the accession of other countries in the community of market democracies.

Furthermore, attention is drawn on the decision to when and how to employ U.S. force, which is something that should not be underestimated. Indeed, among national security strategy documents, as it has already been said, fall within American national interests and security strategy military intervention and consequently the need to have a well-equipped and well-trained U.S. armed forces. Therefore, the NSS documents contain a section on “Deciding when and how to employ U.S. forces”. Here, it is specified that military intervention has to be selective, relying on three basic categories of national interests, which can merit the use of force. First, it involves American vital interests, which are of survival, security and vitality of its national entity – such as the defense of U.S. territory, citizens, allies and economic well-being – mentioning once again, the U.S. will have no problem to undertake unilateral actions. Second, includes cases of important, not vital, interests are at stakes – not of national survival, but affect the national well-being. Obviously, military forces can be used only if it advances U.S. interests, they are likely to accomplish their objectives and if the risks are proportionate to the interests and of course if they have tried other means to achieve the same purpose. Third, it involves humanitarian interests, albeit the use of military forces is not the best solution to these situations, but it can be helpful for certain cases. Few examples can be, when a humanitarian catastrophe hinders the ability of civilian relief agencies to respond, or when the need for relief is urgent and the military is the sole with the capacity to respond quickly. Therefore, the decision to intervene militarily or not depends primarily on national interests. This section underlines and better explains an important factor that makes more clear U.S. behavior abroad, thus in specific areas where American vital or survival interests are at stake, use of force will be decisive and, if necessary, unilateral, while in situations of less immediate threat, military engagement must be targeted selectively. Obviously, it is written that the United States will seek the help of its allies or of relevant international institutions, especially if it concerns their interests as well, but once again, if American national interests are at stake, it will act alone. This willingness to act alone if deemed necessary is strictly linked to American military presence abroad, it has to be ready to defend common international interests as well, to enhance deterrence and encourage allies to commit and share responsibility.

Many are the things that fall in the basket of what is considered a threat to national security, something not that different from other countries, especially Russia, as it will be shown later. The documents list what are

⁵⁸ A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, The White House February 1995, page 28.

the threats and what can be done to tackle them. However, every NSS document progressively adapts to the moment the country is living and as a consequence the responses can vary. The following tables will show how the American administrations – from the enter into office of the first Clinton administration until Trump administration – addressed threats coming from outside the domestic sphere:

Table 1

	Proliferation of nuclear and WMD	Fighting terrorism	Fighting drug trafficking
1st Clinton adm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation existing arms control agreements • Efforts for new agreements, both regional and multilateral level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving U.S. intelligence • Coordination among executive branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving U.S. intelligence • Coordination among executive branches • Build institutions, destroy trafficking organizations and stop supplies
2nd Clinton adm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as before • development of national missile defense • NSS '00: Five-Year Interagency Counterterrorism and Technology Crime Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as before • Presidential Decision Directive 62⁵⁹ • NSS '00: enhancing law enforcement and intelligence efforts, diplomacy, economic sanctions, use of military force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as before • Extend crime control beyond U.S. borders • Protect borders with more inspections • U.S. National Drug Control Strategy
1st Bush adm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive counterproliferation efforts • Strengthen nonproliferation effort • Effective responses to the effects of WMD use • Adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities of today's terrorists and rogue states • Improve intelligence capabilities and coordination with allies • Increase military capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as before • Build better and more integrated intelligence capabilities • Coordinate with allies • Continue to transform U.S. military forces to ensure prompt responses. 	

⁵⁹ A more new and systematic approach which reinforces the mission of U.S. agencies dealing with terrorism. PDD/NSC 62 Protection Against Unconventional Threats to the Homeland and Americans Overseas, 22 May 1998.
<https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd/pdd-62.pdf>

Table 1.1

	Natural disasters, threats of subversion	Regional stability	Iran, Iraq, & DPRK
1st Clinton adm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace operations • Containment and prevention of localized conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Europe’s security • U.S. military presence • U.S. led NATO’s operations – ex. Yugoslavia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual containment strategy • Presence in the region • Iraq: must comply with Security Council resolutions. U.S. support oppressed minorities → Operations Provide Comfort and Southern Watch • Iran: change the behavior of the government, especially stop acquiring WMD
2nd Clinton adm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as first Clinton administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NATO enlargement establishment of MAP⁶⁰ → 1999 new members: Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland • U.S. led NATO operation’s – ex. Kosovo 	
1st Bush adm.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NATO enlargement → NATO adopted the “Big Bang Plan”⁶¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening alliances • Establishing new partnerships with former adversaries • Innovation in the use of military forces • Modern technologies

⁶⁰ NATO established the Membership Action Plan (MAP) process, which provided guidelines advice, assistance and practical support tailored to the individual needs of aspirant countries wishing to join the Alliance. Participation in the MAP does not prejudice any decision by the Alliance on future membership. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_37356.htm

⁶¹ Representatives of the 19 NATO member countries signed Protocols of Accession, which once ratified will allow seven new states to join NATO. The accession protocols are amendments to the North Atlantic Treaty, NATO’s founding document, that will permit the seven invited countries - Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia - to become parties to the Treaty and members of NATO. <https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2003/03-march/e0326b.htm>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missile defense system • Improvement of intelligence collection
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Table 2

	Proliferation WMD	Fighting Terrorism	Iran, Iraq & DPRK
2nd Bush adm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement ballistic missile defence • “Proliferation Security Initiative⁶²” (PSI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening alliances and international cooperation • Democracy⁶³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ending tyranny and promoting democracy • Winning and ending the war in Iraq and Afghanistan • Assuring Iran complies with its NPT obligations • Keep fissile material out of the hands of rogue states and terrorists • Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI)⁶⁴ • Regional cooperation to confront the situation and the threat the Republic of Korea poses.

⁶² The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) is a global effort that aims to stop trafficking of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their delivery systems, and related materials to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern. The PSI is an innovative and proactive approach to preventing proliferation that relies on voluntary actions by states that are consistent with national legal authorities and relevant international law and frameworks. PSI participants use existing authorities -- national and international -- to put an end to WMD-related trafficking and take steps to strengthen those authorities as necessary. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/t/isn/c10390.htm>

⁶³ “Democracy is the opposite of terrorist tyranny, which is why the terrorists denounce it and are willing to kill the innocent to stop it. Democracy is based on empowerment, while the terrorists’ ideology is based on enslavement. Democracies expand the freedom of their citizens, while the terrorists seek to impose a single set of narrow beliefs. Democracy sees individuals as equal in worth and dignity, having an inherent potential to create and to govern themselves. The terrorists see individuals as objects to be exploited, and then to be ruled and oppressed”. A National Security Strategy of the United States of America, The White House, March 2006. <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss2006.pdf?ver=2014-06-25-121325-543>

⁶⁴ The GTRI locates, tracks, and reduces existing stockpiles of nuclear material. This new initiative also discourages trafficking in nuclear material by emplacing detection equipment at key transport nodes. A National Security Strategy of the United States of America, The White House, March 2006. <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss2006.pdf?ver=2014-06-25-121325-543>

Table 3

	Climate change	Int. crime	Prevention of Genocide	EU security
1st Obama adm.	Active global cooperation	Active global cooperation	Active global cooperation	
2nd Obama adm.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Ukraine and its citizens • Deter Russia from further aggressions and impose sanctions and use other means

Table 4

	China	Russia
Trump administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement America First strategy, to counteract the economic challenges and threats China poses • Protect U.S. intellectual property • Renew America's competitive advantage, especially against China – ex. Trade war • Renew capabilities, modernize U.S. nuclear arsenal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement America First strategy, to counteract the economic challenges and threats Russia poses • Protect U.S. intellectual property • Renew America's competitive advantage • Renew capabilities, modernize U.S. nuclear arsenal • Sanctions • Withdrawal from the INF & JCPOA

Table 1 has to be contextualized in the aftermath the end of the Cold War, where the attention is shifted from fighting communism and its spread to new challenges, thus fighting terrorism and drug trafficking. However, even though in tables 3 and 4 those threats are not present, it does not mean they are no longer posing a threat to the security of the international community and the national security of the United States, it is just a representation of year passing and the arising of new challenges. In fact, in table 3 international crime is used as a broad category that contains drug-trafficking and terrorism, but the Obama administration had no new responses and focused more on other new threats. It has to be pointed out that the first Obama administration

did work on European Union security and the blank cell means nothing new nor different was done from Clinton and Bush administrations. A similar pattern of responses can be noted between the Clinton and the Bush administrations, albeit during the Bush administration the fight against terrorism was taken to the next level and it became the war on terror, President Bush did not adopt different policies to fight it than it did the Clinton administration. Instead, in Table 4 only two threats are listed, and it is not because other issues are not taken into consideration in the NSS '17, but rather because again not much has changed except the attention posed on China and Russia. Indeed, “China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence”⁶⁵.

For what concerns domestic issues, the goals to be achieved are similar throughout American administrations and they are enhancing security at home and abroad, promoting prosperity, and promoting democracy and human rights. The following tables will show what policies the American administrations – from the enter into office of the first Clinton administration until Trump administration – implemented to achieve national security goals:

Table A

	Promoting prosperity	Energy security	Promoting democracy & Human rights	Environment & Sustainable development
1st Clinton adm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing U.S. competitiveness • Enhance access to foreign markets • Export control reform • Promoting open market economies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venezuela becomes new supplier • Diminish dependency on oil imports from Middle East 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting emerging democracies (ex: Ukraine) • Adherence to universal Human Rights & democratic principles • Humanitarian assistance programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forge an international consensus on climate change • Achieve increased compliance with the Montreal protocol • Implement the Program of Action on Population Growth⁶⁶

⁶⁶ The International Conference on Population and Development of 1994 (ICPD) Program of Action was remarkable in its recognition that reproductive health and rights, as well as women's empowerment and gender equality, are cornerstones of population and development programs. In addition, it marked a fundamental shift in global thinking on population and development issues <https://www.unfpa.org/events/international-conference-population-and-development-icpd>

2nd Clinton adm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active engagement in world economic forums (ex: G-8, G-20, WTO etc) • 304 trade agreements signed • New dialogues with APEC → promoting open trade systems • Strengthening financial coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase research for alternative fuels • Develop high energy-efficient buildings, transportations, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising foreign governments • Aiding international relief agencies • Diplomacy • More engagement • 2000 Warsaw Declaration⁶⁷ 	
1st Bush adm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement policies that encourage business investment and innovation • Lower taxes & incentives work & investment • Investments in health & education • Promote free trad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the expansion of sources & types of energy supplied • Cut emissions with key industries • Promote renewable energy production & clean coal technology • Increase spending on research • Assist developing countries, especially major greenhouse emitters such as China & India 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak out about violations of Human Rights (HR) • Use foreign aid to promote freedom • Make freedom & democratic institutions key elements in bilateral relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide aid to countries that met the challenge of national reform • Improve effectiveness of the World Bank • Open societies to commerce & investment • Aid agricultural development • Emphasize education • Secure public health
2nd Bush adm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting markets & integrating developing countries • Working though WTO & bilateral/regional Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) • Reforming the international financial system to ensure stability & growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ending tyranny • Help new democracies to respect HR, respond to their citizens, exercise effective sovereignty & limit the reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening, integrating & diversifying energy markets • Work with resource-rich countries to increase their openness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing on zero-emission coal-free plants, revolutionary solar & wind technologies.

⁶⁷ In June 2000, 106 countries meeting in Warsaw endorsed the Warsaw Declaration, which defines the practices and norms agreed as essential for the establishment and consolidation of democracy. The Declaration laying out criteria for democracy and pledging to help each other remain on the democratic path. <https://community-democracies.org/warsaw-declaration/>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening international financial institutions 	<p>of the government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote democracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speak out about HR violations Use foreign aid Applying sanction to oppressive regimes Working with IOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build Global Nuclear Energy Partnership to work with other nations to develop & deploy advanced nuclear recycling & reactor technologies 	
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Table B

	Promoting prosperity	Promoting democracy & HR	Energy security	Environment & sustainable development
1st Obama adm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening education & human capital: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve education at all levels Invest in science, technology, engineering & math education (STEM) Increase international education & exchange Achieve balanced & sustainable growth Shift to greater demand abroad Save more export more Open foreign markets to American goods & services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring new democracies respect HR of their citizens Practicing principled engagement with non-democratic regimes Supporting the rights of women & girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide incentives for clear energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase investments in development Invest in the foundation of long-term development Invest in renewable energy

2nd Obama adm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing for sustained economic growth • Expanding access to early childhood & affordable higher education • Promote international financial transparency • Provide affordable health care 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop American fossil resources • help other countries to transition to low-carbon emissions • Help Ukraine to reduce its dependence on Russian energy supplies 	
Trump adm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rejuvenate domestic economy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce regulatory burdens - Promote tax reforms - Improve American infrastructure - Reduce deficit - Support education & apprenticeship programs • Promote fair economic relationships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New trade agreements - Counter unfair trade practices - Counter foreign corruption - Facilitate new market opportunities • Attract investors & innovators 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace energy dominance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce barriers - Promote exports - Ensure energy security - Attain universal energy access - Further American technological edge 	

The administrations focused on those four areas of action, believing they would play a fundamental part in improving the United States economic performances and would consolidate its leading role in shaping the world order to be more liberal, open for trade and embracing the respect for human rights and embody

democratic values. Generally speaking, and as shown by table A & B, the American administrations did not differentiate much on the policies they wanted to implement to achieve a given goal, albeit each one has set its NSS document to follow a certain path. The presidents of the United States had different visions on how to shape world order and where to focus their attention.

Thus, president William J. Clinton took office in 1994 and he entered the White House with a specific task: restoring the American Dream. Each year, the Clinton administration released a national security strategy document, where it was outlined how the United States was going to achieve its national interests and security goals. The path he wanted to follow was based on believing that America could be strong at home, if first was strong abroad, implying that the United States had to actively engage in world affairs to promote U.S. interests “our nation can only address this era’s dangers and opportunities if we remain actively engaged in global affairs”⁶⁸. In the last NSS document of the Clinton administration the preface praises the achievements of the United States as leader of the international system and it expresses gratitude to live in a prosperous and safe country. Given this premise, the United States’ engagement in international affairs has to grow to maintain this prosperous status, to protect the peace and promote security. Additionally, there is no security without prosperity, which brings the United States to increase its efforts to promote the spread of global markets.

George W. Bush administration issued the “National Security Strategy of the United States of America” document on September 2002, where the path undertaken by Bush is a deeper focus on terrorism – considering the events of 9/11 – but it has the same propositions: the United States enjoys the position of unmatched military capabilities, great economic performances and political influence, which enables it to shape the international system to satisfy its national interests and at the same time help out its allies and all those states that want to seek a democratic path. This favorable position of the United States comes of great advantage to it, since American internationalism will not be stopped, on the contrary it reflects the union of American values and national interests. The continuation of progress and a safe international environment are political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states and respect for human dignity. The second NSS document was issued in 2006 at a time where American engagement resulted in committing the United States to the war on terror. Consequently, the document follows a new path, one that could adapt to wartime. This document is important to understand how the concept of American interventionism was strengthened as much as American willingness to export democracy. Indeed, the document praises how the United States has been fighting against terrorism and promoting freedom and democracy, which is the reason why the United States did not choose the path toward isolationism and retreat, but rather kept leading the international system toward open markets, free trade and democracy. Therefore, the United States have joined with the Afghan people to take down the Taliban regime, it has focused the attention of the world on the dangers of WMD proliferation,

⁶⁸ A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, The White House February 1995, preface page iii.

it has stood on the side of democracy in the Middle East and it has cultivated cooperative relations with the major powers of the world.

Coming to the two Obama administrations, the first National Security Strategy document of Obama's first presidency was released May 2010 and sets the base of how President Obama wanted to govern the country. In fact, differently from the two previous American administrations, America can exert influence and be powerful depending on the domestic policies of the country, which means that contrary to Clinton and Bush, in the NSS '10 it is important to focus on domestic policies to be more influential and powerful abroad. In the introduction written by President Obama it recites "our strategy starts by recognizing that our strength and influence abroad begins with the steps we take at home. We must grow our economy and reduce our deficit. We must educate our children to compete in an age where knowledge is capital, and the marketplace is global. We must develop the clean energy that can power new industry, unbind us from foreign oil, and preserve our planet. (...) Simply put, we must see American innovation as a foundation of American power"⁶⁹.

The 2017 National Security Strategy issued by the Trump administration is different from its predecessors. The document positions the national interests of the American citizens, not the United States itself, as top priority of national security goals. In fact, Trump based off its presidential campaign – and won the 2016 elections – by using the slogan "America first". In the introduction of the document an American First National Security Strategy is defined as "based on American principles, a clear-eyed assessment of U.S. interests, and a determination to tackle the challenges that we face. It is a strategy of principled realism that is guided by outcomes, not ideology. It is based upon the view that peace, security, and prosperity depend on strong, sovereign nations that respect their citizens at home and cooperate to advance peace abroad. And it is grounded in the realization that American principles are a lasting force for good in the world"⁷⁰. It has the promise of creating new jobs, growing the economy and American leadership, and strengthening the military sphere. Additionally, the NSS '17 is concerned with the issue of illegal immigration and thus its new goals are to strengthen border control and immigration policy – something not present in previous documents. "The United States affirms our sovereign right to determine who should enter our country and under what circumstances. The United States understands the contributions immigrants have made to our Nation throughout its history. Illegal immigration, however, burdens the economy, hurts American workers, presents public safety risks, and enriches smugglers and other criminals"⁷¹.

⁶⁹ National Security Strategy – The White House, May 2010, page 1. <http://nssarchive.us/national-security-strategy-2010/>

⁷⁰ National Security Strategy of the United States of America – The White House, December 2017, page 1. <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2017.pdf>

⁷¹ National Security Strategy of the United States of America – The White House, December 2017, page 9. <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2017.pdf>

2.3 National Security Concepts of the Russian Federation

The Russian Federation did not issue as many National Security documents as the United States, but it is comprehensible given the situation the country was facing due to the recent collapse of the Soviet Union. The president of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin had a clear national issue he had to face: the need to reinvent the country, plus there were the issues of what it meant to be a Russian citizen, thus finding a new Russian identity for its citizens, and resolve the deep economic crisis that was eroding the country and its people. Moreover, President Yeltsin had to take into account the geopolitical transformation happening in its neighbourhood and what were the implications of the end of the Cold War on it. At the beginning of his presidency, the West was the centre pole for economy, civilization development and international affairs, which meant that Russia had no other choices than to try to cooperate as much as possible with the Western countries to gain economic benefits. Indeed, Yeltsin and his Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev – whom was pro-Western and shared their liberal democratic ideals – worked hard to cooperate alongside the United States and to receive western investments. He had to embrace a new approach toward the West, one of constructive international cooperation at regional and international level, also through means of the United Nations and other international organizations. Consequently, it was clear the Russian Federation had to concentrate on economic, diplomatic, military and other means, to lay down the foundations for an equal partnership with the other countries where Russia needs, and interests are taken into consideration⁷².

During his presidency, Yeltsin changed its foreign ministers according to the domestic political turmoil certain policies were creating. The domestic opposition of Yeltsin and Kozyrev was coming from conservatives who did not agree with how Kozyrev was handling the relationship with the United State, nor with other countries, recalling it to be bad for the Russian Federations national interests. When Yeltsin appointed as new Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov. The latter shifted to a new approach, from a pro-Western to a nationalist and multipolar one. Indeed, Primakov was against United States unilateral leadership in the international system and he wanted to substitute this supremacy with a multipolar world order, where Russia could play a key strategic and influential role⁷³. Once again Yeltsin appoints a new Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, who made a U-turn back to having a pro-Western approach to foreign policy, seeking a rapprochement between Russia and the West, mainly with Europe. Although, he criticized the NATO-US military operation in Yugoslavia in 1999, perceiving it as the willingness of the United States to impose their ideas⁷⁴.

⁷² T. Shakleina & A. Melville, *Russian Foreign Policy in Transition – Concepts and Realities*, 2005.

⁷³ A. Cohen, *The Primakov Doctrine: Russia's Zero-Sum Game with the United States*, the Heritage Foundation, December 15, 1997.

⁷⁴ A. Bondarenko, *Prominent Russians: Igor Ivanov*, RussiaToday. <https://russiapedia.rt.com/prominent-russians/politics-and-society/igor-ivanov/>

The above brief presentation of the situation in the Russian Federation during Boris Yeltsin presidency makes simpler the understanding of what the national security priorities and goals were. Thereby, the national security priorities were to mainly two: to ensure Russia's security, its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and securing Russia's position as great power and maintaining its spheres of influence. An important goal present in all National Security Concept documents of the Russian Federation is the willingness to shape the international system to be multipolar, annulling United States' hegemony and unilateral leadership. It is a priority for Russia as well to stop the proliferation of WMD and the threats coming from terrorist activities, ethnic clashes and drug trafficking. The Russian Federation takes into consideration all those new factors and it feels responsible, as great power and together with UNSC members, to maintain the international system safe and stable.

Among the four National Security Concept (NSC) issued, the main goals and threats remain the same, while the structure changes with the arrival of Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin. Those goals comprehend Russia's national interests, which is strictly linked to the protection of Russian citizens and Russia from any external or internal threats. The NSC documents aim at strengthening democracy, creating rule-of-law, social state and maintaining public harmony, inviolability of constitutional system and of Russia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's national interests comprehend economic prosperity and growth, assuring high standard of living for its people. Concerning the international environment, Russia's national interests are to uphold its sovereignty and strengthening its status and position as great power and be an influential figure for a multipolar world order, develop equal and advantageous relations with all countries. In addition, Russia's interest is to fight terrorism, including international one. Russia has a vision of an international community where the only supranational entity that can overrule over it is the United Nations, also because Russia plays a great role in it while in others it is not the case. In addition, every NSC document contains a part on how important is to implement an active foreign policy that supports the achievement of the Russian Federation's priorities and follows the guidelines to shape the world order toward multilateralism.

As time passed, the NSC documents of the Russian Federation adapted to the situation that came up. Indeed, in the National Security Concept approved by Presidential Decree No. 24 of 10 January 1997, what was considered a threat to national security was the actual political and economic domestic Russian situation and the spread of crime, terrorism and the diminishing potential of technological research and the exodus of specialists and intellectuals abroad. On the other side, the threats at the international level are: states and inter-state associations that lower the role of existing mechanisms of ensuring international security – OSCE and UN – the danger of weakening Russia's role in the international system, the strengthening of NATO, the appearance of military basis near Russian borders, proliferation of WMD and terrorism.

The Russian Federation planned to tackle this situation by forecasting and addressing external and internal threats, enhancing sovereignty and territorial integrity, improving the system of state power and federal power, equal cooperation between Russia and major powers and the strengthening of non-proliferation regime. Russian integration in international economy could be achieved with the creation of favorable conditions to export Russian goods and by creating a common economic space for the Member States of the CIS. Concerning domestic economic issues, the Yeltsin presidency thought it could be helped by ensuring compliance with the law, strengthening state regulation and approve the required measures to overcome the consequences of the economic crisis. Plus, the development of competitive industries and the expansion of the market of science-intensive products was a problem that needed attention and resolutions. The Russian Federation has to fight corruption and organized crime by strengthening the role of the state, law-enforcement system and develop mutually beneficial international cooperation in the sphere of law-enforcement, especially with CIS countries. The military sphere falls within the national interests of the Russian Federation, where it is important to ensure an adequate response to threats, even though it prefers other responses first – diplomatic, political and economic. In fact, before it will decide to use military force, it will first use means of crisis management and if proven ineffective or exhausted then military force can be applied. In the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation there is always mentioned how it will always act in accordance to international law, even when the security and national interests of the country are at stake.

During the first mandate of President Putin a National Security Concept of the Russian Federation was issued on the 10th of January 2000 and approved by Presidential Decree No. 24. Here, Putin had to manage a deep economic crisis, protect Russian interests when it came to be dealing with the West, while at the same engaging in good relationship with it, given the need to integrate Russia in world economy and to jointly tackle international issues. In fact, the NSC '00 states how Russia's goal is to secure individual, society and the state against external and internal threats and it contains the major arguments of Russia's foreign policy. The introduction of the concept sums up the world situation at that time, hence after the end of the Cold War two tendencies were developed. The first is the strengthened economic and political position of certain significant actors in the international system, the second is the creation of international relations based on the domination of Western countries led by the United States, which conform to a unipolar international system. It is recognized that Russia is one of the major countries in the world, rich of history and cultural traditions, notwithstanding some domestic issues, it still plays a fundamental role in the international arena, with prospects for integration in the economic international system and greater cooperation for those shared global issues, such as nonproliferation of WMD.

As mentioned above, the NSC of '97 and '00 have the same goals, national interests and domestic and international threats. The structure might have changed, but the content has not. Indeed, Russia's national interests are balanced with the main goal to protect Russian citizens and the country from any external or

internal threats. Therefore, it aims at strengthening democracy, creating rule-of-law, social state and maintaining public harmony, inviolability of constitutional system and of Russia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's national interests comprehend economic prosperity and growth, assuring high standard of living for its people. Concerning the international environment, Russia's national interests are to uphold its sovereignty and strengthening its status and position as great power and be an influential figure for a multipolar world order, develop equal and advantageous relations with all countries. In addition, Russia's interest is to fight terrorism, including international one.

Then again, the external dangers threatening Russia are the weakening of Russia's political, economic and military influence in the world, the strengthening of military-political blocs and alliances – referring to NATO's expansion eastward – the possible appearance of foreign military bases in proximity of Russian borders, the proliferation of WMD, weaking of the CIS integration process and territorial claim against the Russian Federation. The concept seeks to implement the national security of the country by following those tasks, as written in the NSC '00⁷⁵:

- Forecasting and identifying external and internal threats to national security in a timely manner;
- Implementing operational and long-term measures for preventing and neutralizing internal and domestic threats;
- Ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Russian federation and the security of its border space;
- Developing the country's economy and pursuing an independent and socially oriented economic policy;
- Overcoming the scientific, technical and technological dependence of the Russian federation on external sources;
- Ensuring within Russia the personal security of individuals and citizens and their constitutional rights and freedoms;
- Streamlining the system of state authority in the Russian federation, federal relations, local self-government and the country's laws, shaping harmonious interethnic relations, strengthening law and order and preserving the social and political stability of society;
- Ensuring strict observance of the legislation of the Russian federation by all citizens, officials, state bodies, political parties, and public and religious organizations;
- Ensuring Russia's equal and mutually advantageous cooperation primarily with leading states of the world;

⁷⁵ National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, MFA Russia, Approved by Presidential Decree No. 24 of 10 January 2000, https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/589768

- Raising and maintaining the state's military potential on a sufficiently high level;
- Strengthening the regime of nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles;
- Taking effective measures to detect, prevent and suppress espionage and subversive activities of foreign states, directed against the Russian federation;
- Radically improving the ecological situation in the country.

For the economic sphere, Putin's presidency seeks to establish favorable conditions for the international integration of Russian economy, expanding the markets to sell Russian products and creating a separate and single economic space with the members of the CIS.

Among the priority areas of government, a new, and not present in previous NSC, segment is dedicated to environmental activity, which are⁷⁶:

- Rational utilization of natural resources and the inculcation of an ecological culture among the population;
- Preventing environment pollution by increasing the degree of safety of the technologies connected with the burial and utilization of toxic industrial and domestic wastes;
- Preventing radioactive pollution of the environment and minimizing the consequences of previous radiation accidents and disasters;
- The ecologically safe burial and utilization of decommissioned arms, primarily atomic submarines, nuclear-powered ships and vessels, nuclear ammunition, liquid rocket fuel, and atomic power plant fuel;
- The environmentally safe and non-hazardous storage and destruction of chemical weapon stocks;
- Development and introduction of safe production technologies, a search for methods of practical use of ecologically clean energy sources and the adoption of urgent environmental protection measures in ecologically dangerous regions of the Russian federation.

The ambition to shape a multipolar world order has not faded away, on the contrary it became more solid and complementary to strengthening the key mechanisms of multilateral governance, primarily through the framework of the UN Security Council. Russia just wants to participate in global and regional economic and political entities, where its national interests are safeguarded and where progresses on arms control and proliferation of WMD can be improved. Plus, it is expressed how The Russian Federation prefers using diplomacy to prevent conflict, but when it cannot do so, its national interest require to have sufficient military

⁷⁶ National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, MFA Russia, Approved by Presidential Decree No. 24 of 10 January 2000, https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/589768

power for its defense. At the same time, it must possess nuclear arsenal for deterrence and defense. It is important to ensure coordination and cooperation with the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States. To ensure the effective national security of the Russian Federation, it is necessary a Russian military presence in regions of strategic importance where it is appropriate and mandated by an international treaty, also to be ready to fulfill its obligations to contribute shaping the military-strategic balance of forces in key regions. In addition, the NSC '00 cuts out a part for the protection of national border, where the major tasks are to establish legal and regulatory base, countering attempts of any kind to expand into Russian territory by other states, suppressing the activity of transnational organized crime and illegal immigration and carrying out collective measures to ensure the security of the border space of the member states of the CIS.

The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation to 2020 it was approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 537 on May the 12th, 2009. In the general provisions of the document are recognized the successes of the Russian Federation in increasing the quality of life of its citizens, preserving its sovereignty and territorial integrity and it has restored the nation's potential to enhance its competitiveness and defend its national interests as an important actor in an evolving multipolar international order. In addition, the preconditions to respond to internal and external threats to national security were set out. In the globalized world we live in, the Russian Federation recognizes the vulnerability of all the members of the international community to new threats and challenges with an increasing tendency to find solutions on a regional basis excluding non-regional powers, which contradicts the multilateral world order Russia wants.

As stated in the previous national security concepts, the Russian Federation acts in accordance to the principles of international law and on security institutions that are essential for a stable international system, such as the United Nations and its Security Council. It is important for the Russian Federation to increase its multilateral interactions with G-8, G-20, Russia-India-China (RIC), BRIC, CIS, European Union and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The relation with NATO is more complicated, since its intentions to expand the alliance's military presence near Russia's borders is still hangs in there, nevertheless Russia is open to develop relations with NATO of equality and in the interests of strengthening the security of the Euro-Atlantic region. Their relation will depend on accommodating to Russia's national interests when engaging in military-political planning. Concerning the relation with the United States, Russia is committed to build a valuable and equitable strategic partnership with it, basing it on shared interests and each other spheres of influence.

The strategic goals of national defense are the prevention of global and regional wars and conflicts and realizing strategic deterrence in the interests of ensuring the country's military security. Military security is ensured by the improvement of the military organization and defensive potential of the state. The Russian Federation considers threats to its military security certain policies adopted by leading foreign countries, which are directed at achieving predominance in the military sphere, mainly in terms of strategic nuclear forces. The

main threats to national security in the sphere of state and public security are considered the investigative or other activities by foreign special services and organization, and those activities conducted by terrorists, organized crime and extremists. To offset those activities the long-term goal is to reinforce the role of the state in the fight against criminality, corruption, terrorism and extremism. In addition, it will be important to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement organs and special services. Therefore, to ensure state and public security the Russian Federation will undertake the following measures:

- Improving the structures and activities of federal organs of executive power
- Creating mechanisms for the forecasting and neutralization of social and interethnic conflicts
- Increasing social responsibility of bodies providing state and public security.

An important element for the security of the Russian Federation is the protection of its state borders, which are threatened by international terrorist and extremist organizations, hence it is necessary the creation of high-technology and multifunctional border complexes.

The improvement of the quality of life of Russian citizen is another strategic goal that once achieved will complement the others. The Russian Federation is committed to reduce social and material inequalities, to stabilize the population size and improve the demographic situation. It is equally important to include in this category food security and the guaranteed provision of high-quality and accessible medications. This concept lists the following measures as a counteract to threats to national security, regarding the quality of life:

- Improving the national system of human rights protection
- Assisting the growth of well-being and reducing poverty and income inequalities
- Creating the necessary conditions for living a healthy lifestyle, plus the stimulation of birth rates and reduce death rates
- Ensuring the preservation of cultural and spiritual legacy of the Russian culture
- Guaranteeing accessibility of information technologies and information on various issues

A strategic national security objective consists in Russia's entry into the ranks of the top five countries by size of GDP, which will enhance the integration process into world economy. This progress can be achieved by developing a national system of innovation, increasing the productivity of labor, modernizing priority sectors of the national economy – including education, science, culture, technology and healthcare – and improving the banking system. Threats to this sector of national security are linked to unfair competition toward Russian goods, falling economic growth rates, trade imbalances, the contraction of budget revenues and energy security. Linked to the economic sphere and catalogued as national security priorities are education, science, culture, technology and healthcare are other for the Russian Federation, which To prevent threats to economic security the Russian Federation will implement these socio-economic policies:

- Perfecting structures of production and export, with antimonopoly regulation
- Developing a national system of innovation to implement highly effective projects and high-technology economic sectors
- Strengthening financial markets and increasing the liquidity of the banking system
- Developing the industries of information and telecommunications technologies, computer technology resources, electronics, telecommunications equipment and programming.

Those policies will be supported by the improvement of state regulation of economic growth, through the introduction of an active state anti-inflation, currency, exchange rate, monetary-credit and taxation-budgetary policy to support the real economy and the stimulation and support the development of a market of innovation, high-tech production and the development of dual and special purpose technologies.

As in every national security concept, the achievement of the Russian Federation's priorities is supported by an active foreign policy, which is focused on seeking agreements on common interests with other states, basing it on a bilateral and multilateral mutually beneficial partnership relations. Russia acts in the international system from a position of favoring joint participation in the reinforcement of international mechanisms for nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and WMD and what contravenes the United Nations Charter. The aim of the Russian Federation is to preserve strategic stability and equitable strategic partnership and to do so it will:

- Fulfill existing treaties and agreements on the limitation and reduction of arms
- Engage in further discussion of questions surrounding the reduction of nuclear potentials
- Intend to continue assisting the reinforcement of regional stability
- Consider international peacekeeping to be a viable instrument for the resolution of armed conflicts in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter
- Participate in efforts led by the UN and other International Organizations to relieve natural and man-made catastrophes and crisis situations.

In this concept it is underlined that in order to maintain strategic stability and equitable multilateral interaction in the international system, the Russian Federation will undertake all necessary efforts to maintain parity with the United States in the area of strategic offensive arms, in the case the United States will implement a global "lightning strike" concepts.

The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation approved by Presidential Decree No. 683, dated 31 December 2015 starts by recognizing the results of the previous national security concepts. What has been previously achieved guaranteed the safeguard of national security and socioeconomic development of Russia, plus its independence and territorial integrity. Russian economy has improved against the odds of an instable

world economy and the imposition of economic sanctions. Furthermore, it is recognized the key role played by the Russian Federation in resolving the important international problems, settling military conflicts and ensuring strategic stability and the supremacy of international law in interstate relations.

This national security concept has a different outlook on foreign politics and international relations and the role of the Russian Federation and focuses its attention on the challenges of shaping the world order to be multipolar. Indeed, the strengthening of Russia's place in the international system and the implementation of an independent foreign and domestic policy is opposed by the United States and its allies, who try to maintain their dominance world affairs. Another matter of concern for a new polycentric world order is the growth of global and regional instability, which is accompanied by an increased role of force and aspiration to build and modernize offensive weaponry and deploy new types of it to weaken international security. It is equally concerning the non-observance of the principles of equal and indivisible security in the Euro-Atlantic, Eurasian and Asia-Pacific regions, plus militarization and arms-race processes are developing in regions close to Russian borders. In addition, the continuous buildup of the military potential of NATO and its global functions violating international norms, the expansion of the alliance and locating its military infrastructures closer to Russian borders remain a threat to national security, as much as the siting of components of US missile defense system in Europe, Asia-Pacific region and the Near East pose a threat to Russia's national security. Moreover, the West attempts to counter the integration process and creating tensions in the Eurasian region, it exerts a negative influence for the realization of Russia's national interests, as much as the support provided by the European Union and the United States to the anti-constitutional coup d'état in Ukraine, which lead to instability in Europe and Russian borders.

This practice of overthrowing legitimate political regimes and provoking instability and conflicts is spreading and new "hot spots" and zones not controlled by any states' authorities are expanding. There is a continuous risk of the increasing number of countries possessing nuclear weapons, a new threat comes from the intensifying confrontation in the global information arena, where some countries aspire to use information and communication to achieve their geopolitical objectives.

With the above described international situation, in order to protect national interests and security the Russian Federation is concentrating its efforts on strengthening internal unity and stability and it is adopting an open, rational and pragmatic foreign policy, but always in the respect and conformity of international law. The long-term national interests and strategic national priorities are⁷⁷:

⁷⁷ National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, approved by Presidential Decree No. 683, 31 December 2015
<http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>

- Strengthening the country's defense, ensuring the inviolability of the Russian Federation's constitutional order, sovereignty, independence, and national and territorial integrity;
- Strengthening national accord, political and social stability, developing democratic institutions, and refining the mechanisms for cooperation between the state and civil society;
- Raising living standards, improving the population's health, and ensuring the country's stable demographic development;
- Preserving and developing culture and traditional Russian spiritual and moral values;
- Increasing the competitiveness of the national economy;
- Consolidating the Russian Federation's status as a leading world power, whose actions are aimed at maintaining strategic stability and mutually beneficial partnerships in a polycentric world.

The national interests are the same as the previous national security concepts. Russia's national interests are safeguarded by an active foreign policy that aims at creating a stable and enduring international system based on principles of equality, mutual respect, noninterference in other states' internal affairs, mutual and beneficial cooperation and political settlement of global and regional crises. Therefore, the Russian Federation is increasing its cooperation with its partners within BRICS, RIC, SCO, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, G-20 and other international institutions. Plus, the development of good relations, bilateral and multilateral, with the members of the CIS, progresses have been made for the formation of the Eurasian Economic Union. The Russian Federation is developing important strategic partnership with China and India with the intent to build reliable mechanisms of support of regional stability and security in the Asia-Pacific region. It is also developing political, trade and economic, military-technical cooperation in Latin America, Africa and their regional associations.

Notwithstanding some disagreements, the Russian Federation advocates for the consolidation of mutually beneficial cooperation with European states and the European Union, the harmonization of the European integration processes and the formation in the formation of an open system of collective security. The same applies to the United States, where Russia wants to establish a full-fledged partnership with it following common interests. The Russian Federation preserves strategic stability with the following actions⁷⁸:

- Contributes to the preservation of the stability of the system of international law and the prevention of its fragmentation, attenuation, and selective application resulting in instability and conflicts;
- Honors international treaties and agreements in effect in the sphere of arms limitation and reduction and participates in the drafting and conclusion of new accords corresponding to national interests;

⁷⁸ National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, approved by Presidential Decree No. 683, 31 December 2015
<http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>

- Is prepared for further discussion of a reduction of nuclear potentials based on bilateral accords and in multilateral formats and also contributes to the creation of fitting conditions permitting a reduction in nuclear arms without detriment to international security and strategic stability;
- Contributes to the strengthening of regional stability through participation in processes of a reduction and limitation of conventional armed forces, and also through the development and application of confidence-building measures in the military sphere;
- Considers international peacekeeping an effective instrument for settling armed conflicts, and participates in it and advocates the strengthening of this institution strictly in accordance with the principles of the united nations charter;
- Contributes to the formation of a system of international information security;
- Participates in activities pursued under the aegis of the united nations and other international organizations to deal with natural and manmade disasters and other emergencies, and also in rendering humanitarian aid to countries affected.

Although there are similar patterns and features throughout all the national security documents, there is an evolution in the priorities and strategy of the Russian Federation, as shown by the following table:

Table a

	NSC '97	NSC '00	NSC '09	NSC '15
Goals/national interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinventing the country • Finding a new Russian identity • Reconciliation with the West, especially USA • Territorial integrity • Cooperation with newly independent former Soviet states 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening democracy and rule of law • Economic prosperity • Positioning Russia as great power • Protecting national borders • CIS integration process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multipolar world order • Increase multilateral interactions • Entering in the top 5 countries by size of GDP → integration into world economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the status of great power • Increased cooperation with Asia & Middle East
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep socio-economic crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighting terrorism • Nuclear proliferation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NATO enlargement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multipolar world order is threatened by the West • Increased global and

				regional instability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NATO → attempts to compromise Eurasian integration process • Overthrowing regime practices
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Table a demonstrates that even though national security interests, priorities and threats are the same, every document has a different degree of importance attributed to them. Therefore, if something is not mentioned in a cell, it is not because it is not present in the document, but rather it has “less” importance. Indeed, the main priority in the NSC ’97 is find a new equilibrium after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, where economic aid for the West played a major role. When Putin entered the Kremlin, he brought alongside with him his pragmatism. Therefore, there were more technical improvements that came first, as strengthening democracy and the rule of law. The Russian Federation was already witnessing problems with terrorism, but when it involved other countries – namely the United States – it was time to engage with international efforts. The vision of a multipolar world order has always been part of the Russian Federation national security strategies, for a number of reasons, but primarily for countering American hegemony in the international system. In the third document, it all became clearer and after Putin managed to take out of certain situations the Russian Federation, he could concentrate more on strengthening multilateral frameworks. NATO enlargement has always been a threat to Russia’s borders and stability in the post-Soviet space, but in that period, there were circumstances in which NATO and U.S. interference were particularly challenging Russia’s spheres of influence and relations with former Soviet states. Indeed, this problem was consolidated in the fourth document, where it coincides with the Color Revolutions – which would be addressed in chapter 3. The last document shows how intensified the increased role of the Russian Federation allows it to create new fields of cooperation, when the West has closed its links with Russia. Plus, it concerns the threats posed by a prolonged liberal foreign policy that has brought nothing but instability in the international system.

2.3 Comparative Analysis

The above analysis should provide a clear understanding of how the Russian Federation and the United States have different views on world order construction and what is their role in the international system. After the end of the Cold War both faced the same set of new challenges, while at the same time they had to reevaluate

their national interests. This period had a different impact on the two countries. The United States empowered itself with an even greater consciousness of its superiority, which fuelled the engine of a unilateral actor who seeks to stimulate a domino effect of democratic regimes – ironic, since the Soviet Union tried to do the same, even though it was going in the opposite direction. On the contrary, the newly born Russian Federation had to confront an economic and socio-cultural crisis that was affecting its domestic prosperity and international influence. Russia had to tackle the domestic crisis, improve the relations with the other countries, especially with the USA, enter the international market to sell Russian goods and most of all protect its border, sphere of influence and maintaining a partnership with post-Soviet countries.

The two countries set their respective national security documents up in a way that clarifies why they assume a certain behaviour and why they want the international system to be influenced in a way that better works to pursue national interests. The following table will show how Russia and U.S. shape the world order according to what their national security documents contain.

Table I

<p style="text-align: center;">United States Unilateral</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Russia Multipolar</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every NSS document states how the U.S. will have no remorse in acting alone – even using force – when it deems it necessary • The documents stand out the messianistic & exceptionalist vision & behaviour of the U.S. • American military might equals the inability of other countries to match American military capabilities, which result in believing to be the only country who can lead the international system with consequential interventionist policies. • The economic contributions the U.S. makes to certain IOs – NATO, WB, IMF, etc. – automatically confers to it a greater degree of international leadership the U.S. is not willing to give it up. • Liberal Foreign Policy → exporting democracy & liberal values, which results in breaching the principle of non-interference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every NSC writes that Russia wants a multipolar world order, for three main reasons: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To counter U.S. hegemony 2. A multipolar world order will consider Russia’s interests and to be considered an equal partner of the U.S. when dealing with international issues 3. There should not be IOs where not all countries are included – NATO and WTO until Russia’s admission in 2012. • Strengthening multilateral governance, primarily through the United Nations framework → it is important for Russia, it is au pair with the U.S. • Enhancing the integration process of the Eurasian region • Russia constantly speaks up about the importance of non-interference in other states’ internal affairs.

Therefore, the United States opt for cooperation with other countries and every document says how much it is important having good relationship with every region, it knows that international issues cannot be solved by a single country, but at the same time if it has to take a unilateral action, which might involve the use of military force, it will do so. This is a consequence of having a messianistic and exceptionalist vision of itself that coincides with American military might and interventionism. On the other hand, Russia prefers a multipolar world order where its great power status can flourish, it can influence and achieve its national security goals with no intromissions from other countries. The latter is also the reason why Russia advocates for non-interference and considers the UN as the only valid international institutions where there can be discussion on common problems.

The relationship between the Soviet Union, then the Russian Federation, and the United States has always been complicated. The two countries over the years have struggled to find common grounds where their relationship could flourish and benefit the international community. In their national security concepts, both underline the willingness to cooperate with each other with future hope of improvements, although as it will be shown in the next chapter, they have tried but it was hardly achieved. Additionally, the documents contain similar threats to national security:

Table II

United States	Russian Federation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proliferation of nuclear weapons & WMD • Fighting terrorism & international crime • Regional stability • Climate change • Energy security • Europe's stability & security • Economic prosperity • Promoting Human Rights & democracy • Foreign intelligence collection of data • Cyber security & space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proliferation of nuclear weapons & WMD • Fighting terrorism & international crime • Regional stability • Climate change • Energy security • Europe's stability & security • Economic prosperity • Strengthening Human Rights & rule of law • Foreign intelligence collection of data • Cyber security & space

Thus, Table II shows how much threats to national security are the same in both countries. The lists in the table are a result of a post-Cold War situation that has not changed, on the contrary it has increased the degree of dangers countries face nowadays, especially these two. There are areas where they have cooperated since it was a common threat, such as the proliferation of WMD and terrorism. In fact, the national security documents contain the same approach to non-proliferation, which consists in strengthening existing agreements and creating new ones, plus both agree on enhancing international cooperation to tackle the problem of nuclear proliferation and terrorism. However, they have issues on cooperating on cyber security

and space – which it gives grounds to think of a Cold War 2.0 – they have different vision on regional stability, because they protect their own spheres of influence, and Europe’s security. The United States concentrates on consolidating Euro-Atlantic security, expanding near Russia’s borders, while Russia tries to integrate and cooperate more with the European Union. Disagreements arise between the two, when American promotion of Human Rights and democracy has often collided with Russia’s interests, especially when it has involved post-Soviet countries. Economic prosperity revolves around domestic economic issues that both countries face and the collection of data by foreign intelligence is a common issue, at times it was a matter of argument against one another, which weakened the status of their relationship.

Nonetheless, there are other areas of threats to national security contained in the documents, albeit they differ:

Table III

United States	Russian Federation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iraq, Iran & DPRK • Post-Soviet countries nuclear arsenals • China & Russia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NATO expansion • U.S. withdrawal from ABM treaty • U.S. ballistic missile defence program • Protection of national borders • Foreign countries trying to weaken Russia’s role

Table III illustrates the ultimate differences between the two countries and their national security documents. Worth of notice is the importance the Russian Federation attributes to national borders. It was explained in chapter 1; how much Russia needs to secure its borders after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Before Soviet countries were, such as Ukraine, were functioning as a border protection for the Russian Federation, after 1991 and the civilized divorce, the Russian Federation sought to protect its borders from NATO, disliking any attempt to include countries near its border to join Western organizations – where Russia was not a member – and the idea of western military bases nearby. This is something the United States does not deal with, although the American NSS ’17 addresses the issue of border control for illegal immigration, but it cannot be compared to Russia’s situation. Therefore, for the same reasons, a threat to Russia’s national security is NATO expansion, as it has been since NATO’s first expansion project. Other two major problems are United States’ missile defence program, which it has caused disagreements between the two countries, because the U.S. wanted to develop a BMD program, while Russia did not approve of it and feared it could threaten its security. Then, the United States has had major issues with Iraq, Iran and North Korea, the latter especially during Trump’s administration. The problem relied on nuclear proliferation, missile tests, terrorism and supporting terrorism. At the beginning of Clinton’s administration, the president had to deal with those post-Soviet countries that were left with nuclear bases and nuclear arsenal, but it was a question solved with the help of the Russian Federation, whom brought them back to Moscow. The last point for the United States concerns

the document issued by the Trump administration, where Russia and China become a threat to national security due to their growing international relevance, which threatens U.S. leadership (Table 4).

Chapter 3

3.1 U.S.-Russian relationship through the four resets

The different views on world order construction has had repercussions on the status of the relationship between the United States and the Russian Federation. Even though, they have made several attempts to improve relations, their diverse national security interests have caused disagreements and often a closure of diplomatic dialogues. Indeed, American-Russian relations can be compared to a ride on a rollercoaster, it had – and still has – its ups and downs. From the end of the Cold War onward, there were many expectations of improving their relationship and Russia had high hopes to be finally recognized as an U.S. equal. Throughout the years, their bilateral relation has experienced many issues – domestic and international – which were a driving force for their cooperation. Russia and the United States were able to mature and develop a way to deal with each other through the 90s going into the 2000s, but it has always depended on the personal ties and connection of the leaders – as it was the case between Clinton and Yeltsin, Putin and first Bush Administration – underlining the lack of institutional links between the countries. As a consequence, in those Western organizations, where Russia was not a member, American administrations have sought to build strong bilateral relations, but that were not enough to satisfy Russia's need to be treated as an equal U.S. partner. A priority of the four resets was to increase the number of stakeholders on both sides in order to figure out a way to improve relations. Nevertheless, there are several reasons why, notwithstanding the attempts and efforts made, there were many fields of non-cooperation, where their divergent opinion on a variety of issues and expectations not met, led to deterioration of their relationship. Their relationship has seen four resets, which meant to start all over again from scratch with new demands for the future of their cooperation.

3.2 The first reset: George W. H. Bush administration (1989-1993)

The first reset in U.S.-Russia relations history started with the administration of George W. H. Bush. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin took over the leadership of the newly formed Russian Federation. For the United States it was important to carefully approach Russia and to start with the right foot. American officials perceived Boris Yeltsin as the man who could lead Russia to modernization, change the economy to be market-oriented, thus Russia had the possibility to become more liberal and democratic country. However, at the beginning the U.S.-Russia agenda was limited and what their interests in having a good relationship

diverged. Indeed, George W. H. Bush administration had one big concern: to denuclearize post-Soviet countries – Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan – leaving only Russia as a nuclear power. Instead, for Russia it was important to integrate into Western economic structures to receive their investments – given Russian domestic economic situation – plus it wanted to maintain its great power status and to be recognized as such. In November 1991, Senator Lugar and Sam Nunn created the Nunn-Lugar act, it was a program that became law a month later, it established a fund of \$1.87 billion from the Department of Defense to former Soviet states⁷⁹, it was “designed to help the states of the former Soviet Union handle responsibly weapons of mass destructions”⁸⁰. This program was not only aimed at securing the dismantlement of their nuclear capabilities, but also to provide economic assistance to those scientists – and their families – left unemployed, considering the worries of American officials that they could sell their knowledge to states willing to acquire nuclear capabilities⁸¹.

To undertake the right path for efficient bilateral cooperation, another agreement followed. In May 1992, Secretary of State James Baker and the foreign ministers of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan signed the Lisbon Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) protocols – previously signed by Gorbachev and Reagan in July 1991⁸² – which commits Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine to denuclearize and to enter the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In addition, Baker proposed to commit the United States and Russia to reduce the number of strategic nuclear weapons. It emerged also the possibility of a new Marshall plan to help Russia and post-Soviet states to not fell under communist rule once again. However, both Congress and Bush were reluctant to allocate more than \$480 billion for their assistance, but with “Operation Provide Hope” the United States could provide for medicine and food aid for sixty-two cities. At the end, the Bush administration was criticized for not sending enough economic aid to ex-Soviet countries, since Russia’s economy was disastrous, which were linked to failing Bush administration’s policies on democracy promotion in Russia and its near abroad⁸³.

3.3 The second reset: Bill Clinton administration (1993-2001)

Every American President that came after the end of the Cold War had sought ways to cooperate with the Russian Federation. There could be no continuity in the path toward installing good and solid foundations, because who came next complained about how badly things were handled previously. In addition, by this time

⁷⁹ P. I. Bernstein & J. D. Wood, *The Origins of Nunn-Lugar and Cooperative Threat Reduction*, 2010.

⁸⁰ Speech by the Senator Sam Nunn at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, August 20, 1995.

⁸¹ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014.

⁸² Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms. The treaty prevented the signatories to deploy more than 6,000 nuclear warheads atop a total of 1,600 inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and bombers. <https://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/treaties-between-united-states-america-and-union-soviet-socialist-republics-strategic-offensive-reductions-start-i-start-ii/>

⁸³ A. Stent, *Russia’s Economic Revolution and the West*, 1995.

it was clear that the actors withheld a selective partnership – they cooperated when they needed to fulfil their national interests. Plus, Russia was not evolving as a western-style democracy and it was even more clear that the United States had no real influence on Russia’s internal evolution. Indeed, when Bill Clinton came into office, a new reset begun. The Clinton administration had implemented a liberal foreign policy, believing that Russia’s path toward democracy was a prerequisite for peaceful relations, following the claims of democratic peace theory – democracies do not go to war against each other.

The Clinton administration wanted Yeltsin to stay in power, as he was the only solution to prevent a communist regime comeback. Here, behind the necessity of Yeltsin to remain the leader of the Russian Federation, there is the personal ties developed by Yeltsin and Clinton, which convinced the latter that Yeltsin could not fall, otherwise the second reset and the premises of a good partnership would fall with him. Indeed, during the second reset Clinton, relying on its ties with Yeltsin, took many steps forward concerning fields of cooperation. Thus, nuclear proliferation has been something where the United States and Russia – previously the Soviet Union – had agreed on, which is the reason why the Clinton administration completed the work initiated by George W. H. Bush in denuclearizing Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine. Unfortunately, it could not go further than this, since Yeltsin was pressured by domestic opposition to American policies – reason why the Duma never ratified START II⁸⁴.

Missile defence is where Russia and the United States disagreed the most and kept disagreeing, as it was the case during George W. Bush administration. The Clinton administration was discussing a new national missile defence system, albeit it contravened the ABM treaty⁸⁵ – signed in 1972 by U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. Here, the two opponent sides confronted each other. On one side, Russia was not happy with a U.S. attempt to deviate from the Treaty, because with the ABM treaty Russia still enjoyed superpower status and was an U.S. equal and was afraid to lose that equilibrium reached. On the other, the Clinton administration was still interested in a regional theatre missile defence (TMD) – it did not breach the ABM Treaty – which could shoot down shorter-range missiles, but not long-range Russian missiles⁸⁶.

Another topic of disagreement has been Iranian nuclear program, because Russia and the United States had different historical backgrounds with Tehran. Russia supported Iranian nuclear program, it claimed it had pacific purposes. Moscow and Tehran relations improved in 1989, when Russia decided to help Iran to build the Bushehr nuclear reactor and Russia begun selling weapons to Iran⁸⁷. The latter decided not to exert a strong

⁸⁴ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014.

⁸⁵ The two parties of the treaty were permitted to deploy two fixed, ground-based defence systems of 100 missile interceptors each. It was negotiated as an effort to control the arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/abmtreaty>

⁸⁶ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014.

⁸⁷ M. N. Katz, *Iran and Russia, the Iran Primer*, October 11, 2010. <https://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/iran-and-russia>

Muslim influence on Russia's neighbouring countries, a geopolitical factor Russia has always taken into consideration. The United States and Iran had a complicated relation that worsen over time. In 1953, U.S. and British intelligence joined forces to overthrow a democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh – creating strong resentment and mistrust against the United States. Few years later, the United States started a nuclear cooperation with Iran, providing Tehran with nuclear capabilities. Their relationship turned to the wrong path after the 1979 Iranian revolution, where protestors blamed the U.S. to be the “Great Satan”⁸⁸. Tensions between Russia and the United States arose with Russia's increasing support for Iranian nuclear program, which in turn upset American officials. The United States did not like Russia's help for the construction of the Bushehr power plant – initiated by German and French companies in 1975. Plus, Washington perceived Iran's interest in nuclear energy suspiciously, because the country already possessed considerable natural resources that could satisfy its needs⁸⁹.

As negotiation over Iran were not going any further, new developing in Euro-Atlantic security framework made the two countries take opposite sides on this topic. The Soviet Union created the Warsaw Pact⁹⁰ in contraposition to NATO, a western security alliance, but when it was no longer in place, some Russian liberals were favourable of a Russian integration with the West and its structures. Therefore, the Clinton administration had offered Russia G-7⁹¹ membership and a special relation with NATO, through the NATO-Russian Permanent Joint Council (PJC) instituted in 1997. In addition, it started the negotiation process of the admission of Russia in the World Trade Organization⁹² (WTO). In 1994, the European Union signed a partnership and cooperation agreement with Russia⁹³. However, Russia was disappointed because it did not receive full membership into Euro-Atlantic institutions, rather it felt like it was not an integration process, but just Russia accepting the agenda laid out entirely by the West. The latter had two options, either to integrate into western security structures Central Europe – going against the will of Russia – or to reassure Russia that it had a say in those structures and a role to play in the Euro-Atlantic architecture, even though to Russia this was still not a winning game. Moscow perceived NATO and its potential expansion toward Central Europe as a threat, even though NATO reiterated that its enlargement was not directed against Russia. Moreover, when in 1994

⁸⁸ I. Ekmanis, *the history of US-Iran relations: A timeline*, *The World*, January 03, 2020. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2020-01-03/history-us-iran-relations-timeline>

⁸⁹ J. Goldgeier & M. McFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy Toward Russia After the Cold War*, 2003.

⁹⁰ Formally the Warsaw Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, established in 1955, was an organization offering unified military command to the contracting parties: Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania. It collapsed in 1991, coinciding with the “civilized divorce” of the Soviet Union. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Warsaw-Pact>

⁹¹ G-7 stands for Group of Seven industrialized nations. It was created as an annual gathering of political leaders to discuss and exchange ideas on a variety of global issues. The members are: US, UK, Germany, Canada, Japan, France and Italy. It became the G-8 with the entrance of the Russian Federation, but in 2014 it was expelled after Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine, which the members claimed it violated Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. <https://time.com/5657375/what-is-g7/>

⁹² The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations, created in 1995.

⁹³ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014.

NATO created the Partnership for Peace Program (PFP) to all Warsaw Pact members and CIS⁹⁴ countries, Russia was not that happy about it, because it would signify that every country could sign a bilateral agreement with Russia – as Ukraine did in 1994 – bypassing the Kremlin. Consequently, things worsened when NATO started to discuss about enlargement⁹⁵.

Nevertheless, toward the end of the Clinton administration the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia made the Balkans a new topic of disagreement, even though Bosnia was something were they sought to cooperate. Thus, with the breakdown of Yugoslavia, the Serbian leader Milosevic supported Bosnian Serbs over doing an ethnic cleansing against Muslim Bosnians, including the massacre of eight thousand people in 1995, where the United Nations did not intervene. However, in 1995 an intervention of NATO – led by the United States – ended the conflict through the Dayton Accords. Signs of fractures U.S.-Russia cooperation arrived in 1999 with NATO intervention in Kosovo, where the majority of Muslims claimed their independence. The two situations created in Bosnia and Kosovo showed Moscow's struggle to either be an ally to NATO or to oppose its presence in the Balkans, plus "Yeltsin supported UN and NATO policies in the Balkans only with extreme reluctance, repeatedly pointing out to Clinton that this support for actions against Milosevic came at great domestic cost to his administration and to him personally"⁹⁶. Clinton himself believed it could not pressure Russia too much or it would lose its support over fighting Serbs. Notwithstanding the difficulties, NATO worked hard to secure Russian support and cooperation – given also Russian foreign minister Kozyrev, a pro-Western, who was willing to cooperate with the United States. Indeed, Bosnia was seen as a success in U.S.-Russian relations⁹⁷.

In mid-1990s the situation was getting complicated as NATO began the enlargement process, Kozyrev was replaced by Primakov, who was more nationalist, and Russia was suffering from an economic crisis. During this period, Yeltsin was under domestic pressure to stand up against the United States and to be treated as equals, he changed foreign ministers frequently and substituted Primakov with Igor Ivanov in 1998, whom insisted it could be found a solution to the Kosovo issue. The disagreements over Kosovo were the lowest point of U.S.-Russian relationship. In 1999, Primakov turned around the plane that was headed to Washington, because he heard that NATO bombed Serbia, breaking relations between Russia and NATO. In the same year, the second Chechen war outbroke, and the Clinton administration was under domestic pressure to condemn Russia actions in Chechnya. At this moment, Yeltsin changed its attitude toward the United States and relations deteriorated even further, determining the end of the second reset⁹⁸.

⁹⁴ Commonwealth of Independent States created in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is a regional intergovernmental organization, it encourages cooperation in economic, political and military affairs and has certain powers relating to the coordination of trade, finance, law-making and security. Its members are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. <http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/index.php/commonwealth-of-independent-states>

⁹⁵ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, page 42.

⁹⁷ I. Daalder, *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America's Bosnia Policy*, 2000.

⁹⁸ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014.

3.4 The third reset: George W. Bush (2001-2009)

The second reset and its hopes of improving relations between Russia and the United States had vanished, when terrorism constituted a new topic of disagreement, because the Clinton administration did not recognize Chechens as a terrorist threat to Russia. In December 1999, Yeltsin resigned and named Vladimir Putin as his successor. Clinton and Putin met in 2000 and international terrorism was brought up in the conversation. The problem for the United States was that it could not cooperate with Russia over terrorism, while at the same time criticizing it for its actions in Chechnya.

George W. Bush entered the White House in 2001, simultaneously Putin got comfortable in the Kremlin. Putin is pragmatist and he soon realized that Russian economy could be helped by western investments and facilitate Russian economic modernization process. Consequently, finding ways to cooperate with the United States was important. On the other side, Bush recognized Russia as a great power and wanted to foster and normalize relations with it. When they thought things could not start to fall apart, a spy scandal proved them wrong and both countries expelled fifty-three diplomats. In June 2001, Putin and Bush met for the first time at Ljubljana, Slovenia. During the summit, Putin warned Bush about an incoming terrorist threat, since the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance leader was killed, and he announced the arrival of a big terrorist threat. Plus, they discussed about Russia joining WTO, missile defence and NATO enlargement⁹⁹.

The third reset started on Putin's initiative, when 9/11 hit the United States hard, Putin took a chance to help the United States and called Bush to offer his support, especially since Russia enjoyed having a strategic advantage on dealing with terrorism and could provide good advices. Bush administration wanted to strike back at the Taliban but needed a secure passage for its supply routes to Afghanistan and to establish military bases in Central Asia. Moscow was divided over whether it would support the establishment of American military bases in Central Asia, but at the end it opted for supporting and helping out the United States. With the great help and support Russia provided to Washington and to the Bush administration, Putin had high hopes and expectations on the post 9/11. He expected to be considered as an equal partner in the American Global War on Terror and to be treated as such. Moreover, Putin wanted the United States to recognize Russia's struggle against North Caucasus Islamist terrorists as American struggled with Al Qaeda. This recognition of Russia's struggle came when in October 2002 a group of Chechen's terrorists seized a theatre in Moscow¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁹ NTI, *Bush-Putin Summit, November 2001*, December 1, 2001. <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/bush-putin-summit/>

¹⁰⁰ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014.

As it was preannounced in the electoral campaign, George W. Bush was determined to exit the ABM treaty. In December 2001, the Bush administration announces the U.S. withdrawal from the treaty. As Russia has always opposed such manoeuvre, the international community did not know how Putin would react. Putin's reaction was muted, he condemned it as a mistake, but he was still committed to continue cooperation with the United States. Bush and his administration knew they had to give to Russia something after the withdrawal that could reassure Putin. So, during Bush first visit to Moscow in 2002, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) or Moscow Treaty was signed, it was a reduction of the aggregate number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads. The Bush administration sought a way to not antagonize Russia after their withdrawal, which turned out as a success for the third reset.

As said before, Putin's first years at the Kremlin were focused on cooperating with the United States, he wanted to join NATO and iron out one of the main issues in U.S.-Russian relations. However, the Bush administration was not interested in offering NATO membership to Russia and it looked for other platforms where Russia and NATO could cooperate. The PCJ was not that effective – as seen with the Kosovo situation – so it was established the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) at a NATO Summit in Rome, 2002. At the same time, Bush administration was looking for other ways to enlarge NATO eastward, which of course would undermine U.S.-Russian relations. In the eyes of the Bush administration NATO enlargement was not against Russia, but more focused on defeating the new face of evil: terrorism. In fact, the second round of NATO enlargement was not for worries of cross-border invasions but rather for worries of Balkan dictators and Islamic terrorists¹⁰¹. It was necessary to pursue the vision of a Europe united and free, which would not harm Russia. Therefore, NATO established the Membership Action Plan (MAP) process, which established guidelines for aspirant countries to become eligible for membership. The question was whether to include Baltic states – Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. Indeed, in 2002 NATO adopted the “Big Bang Plan” offering invitations to Baltic states and to central European states – Romania, Bulgaria and Slovenia – to join in 2004. As a consequence, Russia resentments toward the United States increased, first it did not receive the recognition it expected after 9/11, now it ignored Russia's interests.

The third reset managed to go through some adversities, thanks to the relationship established by Putin and Bush. There were hopes of improvement, but things turned for the worse with the Iraq war. The “Freedom Agenda” adopted by the Bush administration had the goal to strengthen democracy and promote peace around the world, ending tyranny¹⁰². Certainly, this did not meet the approval of the Kremlin, especially because Russia moved to a path where it sustains non-interference in other countries domestic issues. Moreover, the United States did not like the ties Russia had with those states who it considered “Rogue states”, namely Iran,

¹⁰¹ E. Rhodes, *Transforming the Alliance: The Bush Administration's Vision of NATO*, 2003.

¹⁰² Fact Sheet: President Bush's Freedom Agenda, The White House Official site: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/freedomagenda/>

Iraq and North Korea, and for this reason it pushed Russia out of it and pressured it to stop doing businesses with them. New tensions between the two countries shifted toward disagreements over the Iraq war. While the United States acted once again unilaterally in the name of their national security interests, the Russian Federation had two main interests in Iraq: economic and the promotion of multipolarism. The Soviet Union supplied arms to Saddam's regime during the Iraq War with Iran, which confers to Russia an historical role in the region. Russia's economic interests concern Russian oil companies that have contracts to develop Iraq's oil fields, which involves as well as the price of oil, something Russian economy depends on¹⁰³. Obviously, Russia wants to counter American unilateral actions and reliance on military force and it promotes a multipolar world order where Russia plays an important role and its interests are considered as much as American ones, as in the case with Iraq war.

Although, the United States once again were not taking into consideration Russia's priorities and interests. American Freedom Agenda was trying to overthrow leaders of Russia's neighbouring countries and in its sphere of influence, which would in turn create instability in the region. After the 1991 Gulf War, Russia and the United States have dealt with Iraq through the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)¹⁰⁴, but they have never found a common pace over the Iraq question. What comes after are a series of event that further divided the UNSC over Iraq, which started in 1997, when Iran challenged UN inspections to prevent Saddam from acquiring WMD¹⁰⁵.

3.4.1 U.S.- Russia relations through the Colour Revolutions

Russia stands for the principle of non-interference and the respect of state sovereignty and it supports the creation of a multipolar world order. However, when it comes to its national security interests, mainly border protection and the stability of the Eurasian region, things get complicated. In fact, disagreements that continuously created hatred between the Russian Federation and the United States are concerned with NATO enlargement and its interest in post-Soviet countries and U.S. has interference and support for a greater degree of independence for post-Soviet states. This issue was emphasized with the Colour Revolutions.

¹⁰³ A. Cohen, *Russia and the Axis of Evil: Money, Ambition, and U.S. Interests*, The Heritage Foundation, February 26, 2003. <https://www.heritage.org/testimony/russia-and-the-axis-evil-money-ambition-and-us-interests>

¹⁰⁴ The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security. <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/>

¹⁰⁵ Saddam Hussein violated sixteen United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) – The White House official site. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/decade/sect2.html>

Clinton and Bush administrations often stated that the Cold War ended and the relationship with Russia should not be seen in zero-sum terms. On the contrary, many times they were proven wrong because it might have been the case of the United States competing with Russia over creating spheres of influence in the post-Soviet space, which coincides with American global agenda, only this time the U.S. wanted to impose it on Russia and treat it like a not equal partner. This attitude was reinforced, and convinced Moscow to be true, when the attention of the United States moved from Iraq to where the Colour Revolution were. At the same time, they were involved in multilateral cooperation to deal with frozen conflicts in the Eurasian region, the Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria and those in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The frozen conflicts in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia compromise Georgia's territorial integrity and are part of the causes of the first Colour Revolution. Russia's relations with Georgia are historically tense and with the dissolution of the Soviet Union Georgia entered into chaos and it is when South Ossetia and Abkhazia declared their independence, which resulted in an armed conflict with Tbilisi. When it ended more than 200 thousand Georgians were ethnically cleansed and Russian peacekeeping troops remained in both regions¹⁰⁶. The United States had strategic interests in Georgia, for its geographic location, which enabled the U.S. to use it for counterterrorism operations, and the close ties with its president Shevardnaze, Georgia became one of the world's largest recipients of American democracy assistance and the Bush administration worried about the upcoming 2003 parliamentary elections¹⁰⁷. When in December the elections took place the OSCE's office of Democratic Initiatives and Human Rights (ODIHR) sent their observers to control the situation. Protests broke out when the ODIHR report declared that "the 2 November Parliamentary elections in Georgia fell short of a number of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. The elections demonstrated that the authorities lacked political will to conduct a genuine democratic process. This resulted in widespread and systematic election fraud during and after election day, most obviously in Adjara and Kvemo Kartli regions"¹⁰⁸. There were three charismatic leaders of the street demonstrations, one of them Saakashvili and his supporters entered the parliament carrying roses – which is why it was named the rose revolution – interrupting the session and shouting that the current president Shevardnadze had to go. Russian foreign minister Ivanov persuaded Shevardnadze to accept a compromise, but he did not accept it and he was forced to step down. The new presidential elections of 2004 saw Saakashvili winning, concluding the first colour revolution as a success with little violence, which sent a message to other post-Soviet countries that followed the lead.

¹⁰⁶ P. Collier & N. Sambanis, *Understanding Civil War, Volume 2 Europe, Central Asia and Other Regions*, The World Bank, 2005. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/373981468308066282/pdf/344110v20PAPER101Official0use0only1.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ OSCE's official website <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/57867>

Putin's reaction to the rose revolution in Georgia became more prominent when Saakashvili often underlined his aspirations about Georgia joining the West and it was clear to Russia that it would no longer have the same kind of relationship it had with the previous Georgian president Shevardnadze. At that time, it was clear that the same situation could happen after Ukrainian presidential elections, which were up next. Ukraine has been a priority in Russia's national interest and had too many interests, the majority of oil exports to Europe pass through Ukraine, the Black Sea Fleet is in Crimea and the population is composed of Russians. On the other hand, the United States have targeted Ukraine as a sample for American global agenda and democratic regime changes, since the Clinton administration and his economic aid to Ukraine to strengthen an effective democratic transition and the creation of democratic institutions. However, Russian influence in Ukraine was inevitable and there were groups of corrupted oligarchs strictly connected to the political environment that created a situation of non-transparency and non-democratic political regime. Young Ukrainians were complaining how the government was behaving and they started to protest demanding to oust President Kuchma. Kuchma chose as his "successor" Viktor Yanukovich, who was approved and supported by Moscow, which is the reason why the Kremlin got involved in the political campaign in order to avoid the elections results in Georgia. The United States did not set back and got involved as well in Ukrainian presidential elections, especially to have transparent elections. As it happened in Georgia, the presidential elections saw Yanukovich as the winner, although the NGOs indicated Yushchenko as winner after they checked the votes. As a consequence, people gathered in the streets asking for new elections. As protests grew, international support increased and European diplomatic efforts reached the Ukrainian Supreme Court, who declared the elections null. The new elections saw Yushchenko as the winner and in 2005¹⁰⁹, he became the president, which given its pro-Western attitude was considered by the United States another success for the Freedom Agenda. Ukraine, as it will be addressed later on in this chapter, remains a topic of contention between the Russian Federation and the United States, where the latter seeks to implement its Freedom Agenda and thus it competes against Russia, while Russia considers the U.S. a threat to its borders and spheres of influence. In the end, it all resembles old Cold War rhetoric.

The next on the list was Kyrgyzstan, a country of Central Asia. The country has a strategic geopolitical position and it has important natural resources, which attracted both Russia and the United States' attention. Kyrgyzstan followed the path of many post-Soviet states and became authoritarian and corrupted, which led the outbreak of mass protests after what appeared to be a falsified parliamentary election in 2005. New elections were run and Kurmanbek Bakiyev won. Not surprisingly Kyrgyzstan's 2005 presidential election was not a hot topic between Moscow and Washington. On the contrary, Bakiyev wanted to strengthen relations with Russia and did not express dissent about Russia's military base in Kant, southern Kyrgyzstan. For the Bush administration

¹⁰⁹ The Orange Revolution and the Yushchenko presidency, *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-Maidan-protest-movement>

Kyrgyzstan was considered as another win for the Freedom Agenda and another prove of how well it was operating, and it was important as military base for Afghanistan operations¹¹⁰.

The piece of domino fell in Uzbekistan, where its leader Karimov tried to maximize its utility by maintaining good relations with both the United States and Russia, but not getting involved too much. As Putin agreed to, the Bush administration had military bases in Uzbekistan as well for his war on terrorism, but Karimov did not like American criticism on Uzbekistan human right records and Moscow did not like Uzbekistan move to join GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova), a multilateral organization of the post-Soviet space without Russia. Uzbekistan faced serious problems with Islamic extremists, and this can be linked to Uzbek violations of human rights, many were killed or prisoned because considered extremists. While Moscow supported Karimov oppressive polices, the United States was following its goal of democratic promotion. American pressure was not well seen in Tashkent, which is why after the Andijon crisis the U.S. military base was closed. The crisis was the triggering factor of the revolution, where as a consequence of the violent suppression of protests in the Andijon area and the arrest of twenty-three businessmen, and this manoeuvre by the government resulted in an uprising that broke into the prison and freed the prisoners¹¹¹. The protests moved to the streets but were violently repressed and were silenced. Uzbekistan refused to receive an international commission of inquiry, while Russia and SCO supported Karimov. At the end, the United States lost their military bases, while Russia signed a Treaty of Friendship with Uzbekistan.

3.4.2 Growing tensions and the final strike

The colour revolutions could prove how effective the Freedom Agenda was in a time where the United States involvement in Iraq was diminishing its stance in the international system. On the contrary, the Russian Federation was growing domestically and internationally, in fact for the first time Russia assumed the chairmanship of the 2006 G-8 summit. Putin was disappointed by how things turned out after the 2001 reset and he decided to focus the country's attention to Europe, China and the other BRICS countries. In these fraught times, the United States were divided between those who favoured a rapprochement with Russia and those who had a more hostile attitude and wanted to improve ties with Ukraine and Georgia, in a way to diminish Russia's influence. Many believed that Russia's criticisms are well-founded due to the restrictions on the freedom of expression and electoral choice, plus he decided to shut down the provision of gas on 2006 New Year's Eve. In addition, there were two assassinations, one of an influential opposition journalist and

¹¹⁰ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014.

¹¹¹ Uzbekistan: The Andijon Uprising, *International Crisis Group*, 25 May 2005. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia/uzbekistan/uzbekistan-andijon-uprising>

human rights advocate Anna Politkovskaya and the other of Alexander Litvinenko, whom was conducting some investigations.

At the 2006 Vilnius Conference, Vice President Cheney talked about the importance of democracy and he praised the commitment of the Baltic and Central European states, plus Ukraine and Georgia, to embrace democracy. He also added “None of us believes that Russia is fated to become an enemy. A Russia that increasingly shares the values of this community can be a strategic partner and a trusted friend as we work toward common goals. In that spirit, the leading industrialized nations will engage Russia at the Group of Eight Summit in St. Petersburg this summer. We will make the case, clearly and confidently, that Russia has nothing to fear and everything to gain from having strong, stable democracies on its borders, and that by aligning with the West, Russia joins all of us on a course to prosperity and greatness”¹¹². The Russian media responded to the Vilnius Conference by linking it to the start of a new Cold War and associating the speech to Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech¹¹³. Russia was also taking into consideration the United States old style geopolitical competition with Russia in the Eurasian region, using the Freedom Agenda as an excuse. Indeed, there was not only an interest to use the strategic geographic position of post-Soviet countries for fighting terrorism, but they were also important for energy diversification, given their oil-rich element. What came next was the articulation by the Russian Federation of a juxtaposition of the Freedom Agenda, the Sovereign Democracy. Russia had said many times how much important to it is the principle of sovereignty and non-interference, which are linked to shaping a multi-polar world order. This concept was developed by the deputy chief and prime ideologue of President Vladimir Putin's administration Vyacheslav Surkov with the intention of reinforcing the concept of national sovereignty, where Russia’s democracy could not be questioned. “Sovereign democracy was not only conceived as a rebuff to the Freedom Agenda and a counter ideology to Western democracy promotion. It was the essence of what was emerging as a major element of Russia’s soft power project – to challenge the universality of the Euro-Atlantic historical experience and claim that Russia’s political system, derived from its unique history, was as legitimate as that of the United States or Europe”¹¹⁴.

In support of what the Russian Federation stands for, Putin used the Munich Security Conference as a platform to criticize American unilateralism. He starts by saying that unilateral actions and aspiration to world supremacy have caused nothing good, on the contrary it has caused human tragedies and created new poles of tensions. Putin underlines how unipolarity, exercised by the number one promoter of democracy and human rights, is nothing like democracy, because “democracy is the power of the majority in light of the interests and opinions of the minority”. The national security documents of the Russian Federation underlines how Russia

¹¹² Vice President's Remarks at the 2006 Vilnius Conference, Reval Hotel Lietuva, Vilnius, Lithuania, May 2006

<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/05/20060504-1.html>

¹¹³ V. Isachenkov, *Cheney speech angers Russians*, *The Spokesman Review*, 6 May 2006.

<https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2006/may/06/cheney-speech-angers-russians/>

¹¹⁴ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014, page 142.

behaves following international law and how important is to adapt world order to the demands of today's society, which a unipolar world order cannot satisfy and has developed a behaviour of misconduct, concerning the respect of international law. During the speech, Putin stresses how the United Nations are the sole international actor who can make decisions to use military force as a last resort – something written in every Russian national security document – which cannot be substitute by NATO nor the European Union. The speech also mentions how NATO enlargement is a serious threat to the Russian Federation, since it does not need to accept new members to modernize the organization¹¹⁵.

The reaction of the Bush administration was undermined by other important issues that needed to be addressed with the help of the Russian Federation. As it follows from national security documents, Russia and the U.S. had few differences in what constituted a threat to national security, which often coincided with what constitutes matter of disagreements. The Iran question and missile defence are two of those topics where they have different opinions that clash. The United States has a strong conviction that Tehran wants to acquire nuclear weapons, although Iran has helped the U.S. with the Afghan war. Russia had the same worries, but it was more interests in the economic partnership the two have and because an attack to Iran could cause high tensions in the North Caucasus. Moscow has supported Iran and tried to ease UN resolutions against Iran and opposed new sanctions¹¹⁶.

Missile defence is a contended topic since the Cold War and has not changed overtime. New tensions arose when Washington approved sites for missile defence components in Poland and Czech Republic in 2004. In 2007 the United States announced other agreements to open military bases in Bulgaria and Romania. The Kremlin reaction was the announcement of its own program to counter U.S. missile defence deployments, although the latter has always specified how American missile defence was not target at Russia. In 2007 Putin announced the suspension of Russia's participation to the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, which since its ratification has placed limits to the numbers of troops that could be deployed in Europe¹¹⁷.

Kosovo was the subject of divergences between the Russian Federation and the United States – as addressed in paragraph 1.2 – but it came back whenever in 2004 there were new ethnic violence between Serbs and Kosovars¹¹⁸. From the very beginning, Moscow has been against Kosovo independence, because it could have

¹¹⁵ Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, Munich, 10 February 2007. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034#sel=15:1:L13,15:24:3rk>

¹¹⁶ S. L. Mayers, *Russia Says It Opposes UN Sanctions on Iran*, *New York Times*, 26 August 2006. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/26/world/middleeast/26russia.html>

¹¹⁷ K. Reif, *Russia Completes CFE Treaty Suspension*, *Arms Control Association*, April 2015. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2015-04/news-briefs/russia-completes-cfe-treaty-suspension>

¹¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Failure to Protect: Anti-Minority Violence in Kosovo*, March 2004. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/07/25/failure-protect/anti-minority-violence-kosovo-march-2004>

implications for other unrecognized states, and blocked the Ahtisaari Plan¹¹⁹. After Russia vetoed the UN decision on Kosovo with no other solution, in February 2008 Kosovo declared its unilateral independence. Kosovo's independence was recognized by the United States, many European countries and few others, while it was found illegal by those countries facing their own separatist issues, namely Russia, Spain, Slovakia, Serbia, Cyprus, Greece and Romania¹²⁰.

Relations between the Russian Federation and the United States hit one of their lowest over the 2008 Georgia crisis. Since the rose revolutions tensions between Moscow and Tbilisi were never smoothed and tensions started to grow after Georgia expelled four Russian spies in 2006. In July 2008, the two countries began to hold military exercises near Georgian border. At the same time, Russia was using Kosovo as a justification for South Ossetia and Abkhazia right of independence from Georgia, increasing peacekeeping operations there and the distribution of Russian passports. Both kept provoking the other, until on August 7, 2008, Georgia stroke an attack against South Ossetia's capital, which killed both Ossetes and Russian peacekeepers. Russia responded by marching with its troops into Georgia and the fighting began. Obviously, Russia quickly overpowered the smaller Georgian army and a cease-fire was declared. Then, Russia declared recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. During this short war, Russian and the United States military troops came very close to facing each other. Here Cold War came back, not only the two countries came close to a face off, but the war of wars used not only by the media made the anti-Russian feelings to come back, as much as an anti-American one, where Russia had enough of American engagement and blamed it for planning the war¹²¹.

3.5 The Fourth Reset: Obama administration (2009-2017)

The first Obama administration sat foot in the White House in a moment where U.S.-Russian relations had reached the bottom. Nevertheless, the United States wanted to improve relations with Russia, as written in the NSS '10. Therefore, the fourth and last reset happened during Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's meeting with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Geneva, 2009, where Clinton gifted Lavrov of a small box containing a red button that symbolically represented a "reset button". Contemporary to Obama's settlement in

¹¹⁹ "The Ahtisaari plan is a compromise that offers Kosovo Albanians the prospect of independence, Kosovo Serbs extensive rights, security and privileged relations with Serbia, and Serbia the chance to put the past behind it once and for all and realize its European future. It is the best recipe for the creation of a multi-ethnic, democratic and decentralized society and fits within the European Union's multi-ethnic project for the Western Balkans, which ultimately offers the prospect of accession". Report of the International Crisis Group, 14 May 2007. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/balkans/kosovo/kosovo-no-good-alternatives-ahtisaari-plan>

¹²⁰ P. Vallely, *The Big Question: Why are so many countries opposed to Kosovo gaining its independence?*, Independent, 19 February 2008. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/the-big-question-why-are-so-many-countries-opposed-to-kosovo-gaining-its-independence-783977.html>

¹²¹ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014, page 168-174.

Washington, the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2008 in the Russian Federation resulted in what is called a “tandemocracy” in which there is joint rule by the President and the Prime Minister. The Russian case saw Dmitry Medvedev as president and Vladimir Putin as Prime Minister, who in conformity with the Constitution left the presidency after his second term. Hence, the Obama administration had to find a way to deal with this tandem and both political figures, but at the end it decided to concentrate more on building stronger ties with president Medvedev. The main goal for Obama rapprochement with Medvedev was involving Russia in key national security issues: non-proliferation, Afghanistan and Iran – topics covered in their first meeting in London, April 2009. Both presidents were optimistic for the new path the relationship between the two country was taking, where new progresses and cooperation could be achieved¹²².

This was a starting point for cooperating in key areas of interests. The first of them was nuclear non-proliferation and arms control. This is a topic very important for both countries and it has always been a priority of their foreign policy and national security strategies. Plus, for the Russian Federation has been one common ground where it has always been a U.S. equal. Many Cold War agreements were about to expire, and START I could not be replaced, because of the low status of U.S.-Russian relations. However, with the great start between the two new presidents, in Prague, April 2010, a New START agreement was signed, marking one of the biggest nuclear arms agreements¹²³. This new agreement limited their nuclear arsenal, bringing economic savings, and contained verification measures that made the relationship more transparent. Then, two priorities were Afghanistan and Iran. The Obama presidential campaign contained remarks on withdrawing as soon as possible from Afghanistan and Russia could be useful to achieve this goal. Although Russia has always had an ambivalent attitude toward the U.S. Afghan campaign, because it feared Islamic extremism near its borders, at the July 2009 Moscow Summit Medvedev and Obama signed an agreement for providing reliable supply routes to Afghanistan¹²⁴. Their cooperation over Afghanistan grew, becoming one of the biggest accomplishments of the fourth reset¹²⁵. The Obama administration wanted to use another approach with Iran as well, one where it did not want to isolate Iran, on the contrary it wanted to engage with it. Here, Russia could play an important role, as Medvedev did when he decided to apply sanctions to Iran after he saw the satellite imagery of a secret Iranian uranium enrichment facility, saying that “Russia’s position is clear: sanctions rarely lead to productive results, but in some cases sanctions are inevitable”¹²⁶. Indeed, Russia

¹²² Remarks by President Obama and Russian President Medvedev after Meeting, THE WHITE HOUSE, 1 April 2009.

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-and-russian-president-medvedev-after-meeting>

¹²³ President Obama Announces the New START Treaty, THE WHITE HOUSE, 26 March 2010.

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2010/03/26/president-obama-announces-new-start-treaty>

¹²⁴ The first day of the Russian-American summit in Moscow concluded with the signing of multiple documents addressing ballistic missile defence, strategic arms, and cooperation in nuclear issues and issues related to Afghanistan, Kremlin.ru, 6 July 2009. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/45101>

¹²⁵ A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014.

¹²⁶ Medvedev signals openness to Iran sanctions after talks, CNN politics, 24 September 2009.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/09/23/us.russia.iran/index.html>

proceeded and supported UNSC Resolution 1929 that imposed a new set of sanctions on Iran, financial controls and arms embargo¹²⁷.

The Obama administration as slowly reduced American presence in the post-Soviet space, which was helped by how the areas developed after the colour revolutions – as for example in Ukraine where Yanukovich won the 2010 presidential election. One of the main disagreements between the Russian Federation and the United States remains NATO. The latter remains a national security issue in all national security concepts of the Russian Federation, albeit with the new reset the ministerial talks were resumed through the NATO-Russia Council. However, this apparent appeasement of U.S-Russian relations came to an end, when Putin came back as President of the Russian Federation in May 2012.

The fourth reset was coming to an end with a new topic of disagreement: the Arab spring. What happened in the Arab world since 2010¹²⁸ is a clear representation of how profoundly diverse the United States and Russia Federation visions of world order construction are. On one side, there is the American view that comprehends the responsibility to protect principle and humanitarian intervention – which fuel American interventionism – plus its support of popular revolts against authoritarian regimes. On the other side, Russia embraces the importance of respecting state sovereignty and non-interference in domestic issues of other states. In addition, Russia does not approve American engagement, because of the actual situation that it left in Iraq and fear repercussion of regime change in the Middle East for its national security and its borders. Indeed, when the Obama administration decided to take the sides of the protests, Putin did not want to lose the ties installed with the leaders and feared for Islamist fundamentalism. The Syrian crisis is what brought more tensions between the two countries. Russia did not want to lose its ally in the Arab world Bashar Al' Assad nor it wanted to lose its influence in the region, with NATO ousting him. Russia refused to take actions against its last ally in the region and vetoed UNSC resolution that wanted to remove Assad and kept supplying Syria with what it needed.

The ultimate breaking point that culminated with the Ukrainian crisis arrived after three major issues in U.S.-Russian relations. The first one is linked to Putin's decision to grant temporary political asylum to the National Security Agency (NSA) Edward Snowden¹²⁹. This was a strategic choice that question the United States surveillance activities, especially by its European allies. In fact, it was revealed that the NSA was collecting information on Chancellor Merkel and German citizens. The second issue concerns Syria, which was creating disagreements between Russia and USA over how to end the civil war and what to do with President Assad.

¹²⁷ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2010/sc9948.doc.htm>

¹²⁸ It started with a Mohamed Bouazizi who set himself on fire to protest against police brutality and authoritarian regime in Tunisia, December 2010.

¹²⁹ Edward Snowden: Leaks that exposed US spy programm, BBC news, 17 January 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-23123964>

Russia's goal was to keep Assad in power and not letting the United States get involved in a regime change and democratization process. A new forum for confrontation over Syria surged, when chemical weapons were used outside Damascus and killed more than a thousand people on August 2013. American officials and Obama believed it was Assad who launched the attack, while Russia attributed it to the rebels. The United States were pressured to launch a military strike on Syria, but Putin was astute and used international platform to avoid it from happening. Therefore, at the G-20 Summit in St. Petersburg in September 2013, Putin underlined that the attack was launched by the rebels. Then, he used the *New York Times* to outline once again how wrong it would be if the U.S. will use force, creating disequilibrium, instability and a new wave of international terrorism¹³⁰. Furthermore, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov proposed that the United Nations should seize control and remove chemical weapons from Syria, which was approved by UNSC Resolution 2118¹³¹. The last issue before the Crimean annexation were the Sochi Olympics, simply because Sochi was located in a dangerous part close to the border of Georgia and Abkhazia and there were reporting of corruption and incompetence for the games, plus critics concerned the law passed by the Duma in June 2013 that penalized pro LGBT propaganda.

Russia had a lot of stakes in Crimea and it has always envisioned a united Eurasian region after the Soviet Union dissolution. The post-Soviet space has always been critical for U.S.-Russian relations, where the United States included post-Soviet countries in the Freedom Agenda, while Russia wanted to protect its borders and its influence in the region. Relations between Russia and the U.S. deteriorated after what appeared to be an Orange revolution 2.0. When Yanukovych became president, he started negotiations to join the European Union. The Russian Federation let go this news without further ado, but when things got more serious and the Kremlin understood the real implications of Ukraine joining the EU – so that it could not be part of the Eurasian Union – it decided to persuade Yanukovych to not do it. As soon as Ukrainians heard about their president decision mass protests broke out in the streets. At this point, the United States decided it was time for them to intervene and help them out. The crisis escalated to violence and some people were killed and Yanukovych decided to anticipate elections and constitutional reforms. After few days, Putin ordered a military exercise near Ukrainian borders, when troops without flag entered in Crimea to protect Russians there. They exposed Russian flags in Sevastopol's municipal buildings and then proceeded around Crimea with a final seizure. Russia initially denied those men were Russian troops, but once it admitted they were, it organized a referendum that could confirm Crimean's willingness to join Russia. After the positive results of the referendum held on March 2014, the Russian Federation proceeded with the annexation, which was not considered legitimate by the international community.

¹³⁰V. Putin, *A Plea for Caution From Russia*, the *New York Times*, 11 September 2013.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/opinion/putin-plea-for-caution-from-russia-on-syria.html>

¹³¹United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118, 27 September 2013. [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2118\(2013\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2118(2013))

It is at this point that the final rupture of the fourth reset and U.S.-Russian relation occurred, the United States involved its allies to impose sanctions on the individuals involved in the Crimean seizure, Russia's membership to G-7 was suspended and certain prominent Russian figures were banned from entering the USA. However, the question did not end there, because a new group of armed men entered South-eastern Ukraine repeating the same scenario as in Crimea, proclaiming the Donetsk People's Republic and Lugansk People's Republic. The United States started to impose a series of sanctions also to those who were not involved with the Crimean seizure, the European Union hopped on that plane too, although Germany was reluctant¹³².

3.6 Trump administration, a new reset?

Moscow had high expectations of Trump victory, because Trump's campaign exposed all the mistakes committed by previous administrations, with the hope of a more realist approach to international relation with no influence of ideologic component¹³³. Trump did not say something negative about Putin, while he many times did with Hillary Clinton, who as questioned many times Russia's President. In addition, Russia was hoping for a new era of closer U.S.-Russian relationship, but since Trump win, there has been something holding him back from engaging to greater ties with Putin: Russiagate. The latter concerns the involvement of the Russian Federation in the 2016 American presidential elections, where there were hacking activities to members of the Democratic Party. Putin has repeatedly discarded any kind of Russian involvement in the U.S. elections. The willingness of Trump to meet and have a constructive dialogue with Putin met the opposition of his cabinet colleagues and Congress, which brought to an overall incoherence towards American policy to Russia. In addition, these contradictions were evident when Congress and Trump's administration kept imposing sanctions on Russia, while Trump kept saying good things about it.

Nevertheless, Trump has reached to Putin several times and the two spoke on the phone. The topics addressed during the phone conversations were about Syria, terrorism, and North Korea, which are arguments that would characterize their future meetings. Indeed, the two presidents met for the first time at the G-20 meeting in Hamburg, July 2017, and Trump said "We look forward to a lot of very positive things happening for Russia, for the United States and for everyone concerned," the US president said as journalists were briefly allowed in to witness part of the meeting. "It's an honour to be with you¹³⁴." This was another platform for discussing

¹³² A. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership – U.S.-Russian relations in the twenty-first century*, 2014, page 285-297.

¹³³ D. Trenin, *The Relationship between the USA and Russia in the Trump Era*, Carnegie Moscow Center, 14 May 2019. <https://carnegie.ru/2019/05/14/relationship-between-usa-and-russia-in-trump-era-pub-79119>

¹³⁴ P. Wintour, *US president and Russian counterpart taking part in highly anticipated sit-down meeting on sidelines of summit in German city*, *The Guardian*, 7 July 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/07/donald-trump-and-putin-exchange-handshake-at-g20-summit-in-hamburg>

about the conflict in Syria and Trump asked again if Russia was involved in the 2016 U.S. election, but Putin denied. They met one more time for a short time on the side-line of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Vietnam, albeit the Kremlin tried hard to set a bilateral meeting that did not happen because of the USA, who did not show flexibility¹³⁵. The year 2017 continued with the US Congress imposed other sanctions on Russia, the Kremlin responded with imposing a reduction to American diplomatic staff in Russia. Then, the tit-for-tat continued with Trump administration decision to close the Russian consulate in San Francisco and Seattle¹³⁶.

During the Helsinki Summit, Trump and Putin met for more than 90 minutes with only their interpreters, thus there is no official record of what they said to each other. At the press conference, Trump equally blamed both states for the status of U.S.-Russian relations, which “kept them apart, separated”. Trump also underlined how he defeated Hillary Clinton without the help of the Russians. Trump took the side of Russia concerning the work American intelligence did and at the same time Putin repeated that Russia did not interfere with the presidential election¹³⁷.

The next important step for the new administration and Putin was to set a new U.S.-Russia agenda. The meetings between Putin and Trump have already laid on the ground some important topics where the United States wants Russian cooperation. The first of those topics is Syrian civil, where both countries are present and are doing air operations. Russia would like to assure U.S. assistance in reconstructing Syria, while the United States wants Russia to restrain Iran presence there. The second important point on the agenda is Ukraine. Even though Volker and Surkov were involved to accomplish a solution for the crisis, there is a stalemate. Third, North Korea can be a new field of cooperation for the two countries, since Russia has supported UN sanctions and it could take a chance to improve its role in the question of North Korea denuclearization. The last point that needs attention and has to be inserted in the agenda is nuclear non-proliferation. This is one of the main fields of cooperation that needed to be updated, since the New START treaty was going to expire soon – in 2021 – and non-proliferation regime pillar treaty was jeopardize by both countries.

President Putin is satisfied with Trump as president of the United States of America, he not only treats Putin has equal and with respect, but he also criticized previous American administration of how poorly they handled

¹³⁵ Reuters Staff, *Kremlin: U.S. to blame for no Putin-Trump bilateral meeting in Vietnam*, Reuters, 12 November 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-trump-asia-usa-russia-kremlin-meeting/kremlin-u-s-to-blame-for-no-putin-trump-bilateral-meeting-in-vietnam-idUSKBN1DC0KO>

¹³⁶ A. Erickson & J. Vitkovskaya, *How the diplomatic fight between Russia and U.S. unfolded*, the Washington Post, 5 September 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/09/01/heres-how-the-diplomatic-tit-for-tat-between-russia-and-the-u-s-unfolded/>

¹³⁷ J. Diamond, *Trump sides with Putin over US intelligence*, CNN politics, 16 July 2018. <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/07/16/politics/donald-trump-putin-helsinki-summit/index.html>

Russia. Plus, Trump has a more pragmatic and realist approach as Putin and the two go along on many questions. U.S. president questions the utility and efficiency of NATO and he decided to cut U.S. contribution to the organization. In addition, Trump launched a trade war with the European Union and China, but more importantly with American long-time ally, which shows a fracture in the West. This overall situation comes of great advantage for Putin and the Russian Federation, which if it seizes the opportunity it could achieve the final rupture of the Western alliance.

3.7 The non-proliferation regime at risk

After the end of World War II, the world had to face a new set of challenges among which there was the threat of nuclear proliferation. The Soviet Union and the United States found common grounds to cooperate and create a complex of international treaties that tried to contain and reduce the possibilities of the proliferation of WMD, which constituted the non-proliferation regime. This has been the main field where the two countries have cooperated, even at the lowest point of their relations. During the Cold War, the USSR and the USA were competing with each other through an arm race – which involved the improvement of nuclear capabilities as well. It arrived a time when they both realized how dangerous it would be to use those capabilities against each, namely during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Nevertheless, that event has brought the two superpowers to get together and sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Then, it followed bilateral talks and agreements on arms reduction, which would put an end to their arms race:

Strategic Nuclear Arms Control Agreements								
	SALT I	SALT II	INF Treaty	START I	START II	START III	SORT	New START
Status	Expired	Never Entered Into Force	Terminated	Expired	Never Entered Into Force	Never Negotiated	Replaced by New START	In Force
Deployed Warhead Limit	N/A	N/A	N/A	6,000	3,000-3,500	2,000-2,500	1,700-2,200	1,550
Deployed Delivery Vehicle Limit	US: 1,710 ICBMs & SLBMs USSR: 2,347	2,250	Prohibits ground-based missiles of 500-5,500 km range	1,600	N/A	N/A	N/A	700

Date Signed	May 26, 1972	June 18, 1979	Dec. 8, 1987	July 31, 1991	Jan. 3, 1993	N/A	May 24, 2002	April 8, 2010
Date Ratified, U.S.	Aug. 3, 1972	N/A	May 28, 1988	Oct. 1, 1992	Jan. 26, 1996	N/A	March 6, 2003	Dec. 22, 2010
Ratification Vote, U.S.	88-2	N/A	93-6	93-6	87-4	N/A	95-0	71-26
Date Entered Into Force	Oct. 3, 1972	N/A	June 1, 1988	Dec. 5, 1994	N/A	N/A	June 1, 2003	Feb. 5, 2011
Implementation Deadline	N/A	N/A	June 1, 1991	Dec. 5, 2001	N/A	N/A	N/A	Feb. 5, 2018
Expiration Date	Oct. 3, 1977	N/A	Aug. 2, 2019	Dec. 5, 2009	N/A	N/A	Feb. 5, 2011	Feb. 5, 2021*

Table taken from the “Arms Control Association” <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/USRussiaNuclearAgreements>

Another important conquest for the non-proliferation regime is the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty signed in 1987. It required the elimination of all ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with intermediate range.

The non-proliferation regime is at stake for two main reasons. First, Trump decided to withdraw from the INF Treaty and second this decision has brought risky consequences for the renewal of the New START. The decision of the Trump administration to withdraw from a pillar of the regime is because the United States charges Moscow of non-compliance of the Treaty, which of course it is a disadvantage for the United States. Russia is found testing and deploying a banned missile system. Trump said that Russia is not respecting the treaty since 2014, although Russia has always denied the accuracy of the American statements. It needs to be taken under consideration the role of China. The latter is not a contracting party to the INF Treaty and therefore it has a competitive advantage over the United States. In addition, the withdrawal stands for the nationalist approach Trump has to foreign policy, which aims to emphasize national sovereignty. After several recalls to stop the non-observance of the treaty requirements, the United States officially withdrew from the INF Treaty on August 2, 2019. Russia and China have blamed the United States for living the world without a treaty that regulates this issue, especially Putin said to this matter “Instead of engaging in a meaningful discussion on international security matters, the United States opted for simply undercutting many years of efforts to reduce the probability of a large-scale armed conflict, including the use of nuclear weapons”¹³⁸.

¹³⁸ S. Bugos, *U.S. Completes INF Treaty Withdrawal*, Arms Control Association, September 2019. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-09/news/us-completes-inf-treaty-withdrawal>

As it was previously mentioned, the New START was one of the main accomplishments of the fourth reset, but is going to expire in February 2021, which is less than a year away, and what has happened with the INF Treaty questions the ability of the presidents of both Russia and the United States to extend the treaty. This treaty can be prolonged up to five more years if both parties agree to do so. However, as Trump's decision with the INF Treaty has proven, the ability to be not limited and constrained by a treaty, therefore having freedom in the military sphere, might be a sufficient element for letting go this treaty. Hence, either they extend the New START or they discuss a replacement treaty. The Russian Federation has offered to extend the New START, but Trump has not responded yet¹³⁹.

The Iranian question has been a topic of disagreement between the United States and the Russian Federation. The American side has blamed Iran to developing nuclear weapons and continuing the uranium enrichment and has sanctioned Iran for this matter. The Russian side has supported Iran and his good intentions of wanting to use uranium for energy purposes. Russia has long history with Iran, there is a great economic bond between the two countries and Russia has been reluctant on imposing sanctions to Iran for its nuclear wrongdoing. In addition, Russia has helped Iran to build a nuclear reactor at Bushehr and it has recently signed an agreement to build more. A breakthrough for the Iranian issues has been the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) reached by the P5+1 country – Russia, USA, France, UK, China and Germany – on July 14, 2015. The nuclear deal was adopted by UN Security Council Resolution 2231, on July 20, 2015. Iran's compliance with terms of the JCPOA will be verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The agreement concerned Iran uranium enrichment, stockpile and to let IAEA to monitor the situation, plus there were annexed to the text American and European removal of sanctions, which it would remain the case if Iran kept complying to the deal¹⁴⁰. What happened with the Trump administration is the withdrawal of the United States to the JCPOA, plus Trump's suggestion to the other contracting parties to do the same.

When Trump entered the White House, he started to criticize how bad the Iran deal was and that “the Iran Deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into”. The Trump administration considers the JCPOA a bad agreement because “the JCPOA enriched the Iranian regime and enabled its malign behaviour, while at best delaying its ability to pursue nuclear weapons and allowing it to preserve nuclear research and development”¹⁴¹. He repeatedly states that Iran was breaching the conditions of the agreement, how it was destabilizing the region and how Trump had to protect the United States from this

¹³⁹ D. Riechmann, *Time running out on the last US-Russia nuclear arms treaty*, *DefenseNews*, 14 May 2019.

<https://www.defensenews.com/smr/nuclear-arsenal/2020/05/24/time-running-out-on-the-last-us-russia-nuclear-arms-treaty/>

¹⁴⁰ The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at a Glance, Arms Control Association.

<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/JCPOA-at-a-glance>

¹⁴¹ President Donald J. Trump is Ending United States Participation in an Unacceptable Iran Deal, The White House – foreign policy, 8 May 2018. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-ending-united-states-participation-unacceptable-iran-deal/>

deal. Therefore, on May 8, 2018, President Trump confirmed the intentions to withdraw the United States from the JCPOA and reinstate U.S. sanctions on Iran. It should be noted that there were other situations at stake, such as the pressure the United States was receiving from Israel. The Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Israeli intelligence has footages of Iran developing nuclear weapons. Obviously, the United States declared the information authentic.

The non-proliferation regime has been an important field of cooperation between the Soviet Union, now Russian Federation, and the United States. It was a reassurance for the European Union that no nuclear conflict could threaten the region, since there were treaties that protected them. However, Trump and his nationalistic policies have thrown away all the efforts that were made and favoured a situation where nuclear weapons can proliferate and endanger international security. Notwithstanding what can be considered Trump administration's mistakes, there is still time to intervene on the New START Treaty or at least to replace it with something new. Nevertheless, it is clear that if China is not involved in non-proliferation and arms reduction agreement, the United States will make no effort to repeal to the situation the international community now faces. Unfortunately, China has no intention to be a contracting party to any of those agreements. Indeed, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said that the Chinese nuclear forces are lower than its national security needs, and a comparison to the United States and Russia cannot be made¹⁴². In addition, in 2020 China has states that a trilateral agreement could happen, but not on their terms and conditions that could disadvantage China, especially since Russia and the United States have planned to modernize their nuclear programs that will surpass China's capabilities¹⁴³.

3.8 Case study: the Syrian crisis

The current Syrian crisis is the best example that can show in practice how the Russian Federation and the United States have different conceptions of shaping the world order. The Middle East has been a battlefield for American and Russian spheres of influence, it has strategic, political and economic importance and among this the Syrian crisis is only a smaller walk through the bigger U.S.-Russian competition in the Middle East. The two countries have similar national interests in the region and that is why they compete with each other for spheres of influence. Syria has geopolitical importance and occupies an important strategic role. The Middle East is in general an oil and gas rich region, but recent excavations in Syria showed the bigger energy potential the country has. The energy interests of the USA and Russia collide, where Russia just wants to keep good economic relations with the region, avoiding American attempt to reduce European energy dependence

¹⁴² China says it won't take part in trilateral nuclear arms talks, *Reuters*, 6 May 2019. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-usa-trump-putin-china/china-says-it-wont-take-part-in-trilateral-nuclear-arms-talks-idUKKCN1SC0MR>

¹⁴³ G. Kulacki, *China is Willing to Negotiate on Nuclear Arms, But Not on Trump's Terms*, *DefenseOne*, 30 March 2020. <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2020/03/china-willing-negotiate-nuclear-arms-not-trumps-terms/164204/>

on Russia by using the Middle East. The region has seen an arms race, where industrialized countries sell their weapons, such as Russia does with Syria.

The Arab Springs that started in 2010 arrived in Syria as well, when pro-democratic protests started in March 2011 in the city of Deraa. The repressive response of the Assad regime and the killings of some protestors brought more people to demonstrate in the streets, demanding President Assad's resignation. The opposition supporters began to fight back with arms to defend themselves and to expel security forces from their local areas. The country descended into civil war as violence escalated and people started to gather creating rebel brigades to fight the government forces for control of cities. The armed rebellion has evolved significantly, and the so-called Islamic State has taken advantage of the chaos and took control of large parts of Syria and Iraq, where it proclaimed the creation of a "caliphate" in June 2014. That year the U.S. led air strikes inside Syria with the aim of destroying the IS. Russia began its own air campaign as well. The civil war has brought a huge humanitarian crisis that it is affecting the Syrian people. As soon as the civil war broke out, the Russian Federation and the United States took opposite sides. Their different attitude and actions toward Syria are a reflection of their perception of world order construction. As an example, the Obama administration tried to form an international coalition for a military strike on Syria, whenever it was reported the use of chemical weapons, but it failed. Here, Russia has played a key part to avoid such a thing. Luckily enough, Russia proposed to let Syria hand over its chemical weapons in exchange of preventing a military strike, which resulted successful.

American involvement has passed three phases. The first it was limited to statements demanding the termination of violence and suggested to the regime to welcome the demands of the protestors. Second, the Obama administration started to pressure the Syrian regime and imposed economic and financial sanctions to President Assad and a number of official. Third, the United States started to menace the use of force, especially when it was used chemical weapons on people. The United States are in favour of democratization processes, especially where it will mean a substitution of an authoritarian regime. Therefore, the American attitude has been in support of the protesters, by enabling them to achieve their demands and obtain a regime change and Assad's resignation. In addition, it wants to prevent the arrival of weapons to terrorists in the region, especially does coming from Iran – other reason why Trump withdrew the United States from JCPOA. The geopolitical goal of the United States in Syria is to diminish the role and influence of Russia and its allies, plus overthrowing the regime of Assad will assure a loss of a close ally to Putin. As a consequence of what was previously said, the United States have interests in breaking the predominance Russia has on European energy market and tries to provide for new alternatives for the European Union.

The Russian Federation, as stated in all its national security concepts and statements, cares about creating a multi-polar world order, without American unilateralism, an order where Russian interests are taken into

account and his role as great power in the international system is fully restored. Russia has worked hard to restore its influence in the Middle East and with certain key allies after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Damascus is a strategic ally for Moscow, thus Putin did everything he could to prevent military intervention in Syria or the imposition of more sanctions on it. If the United States intervene militarily in the state, Russia fears it could give to it an advantage to increase American influence in the region and in the Syrian crisis that could enable the U.S. to overthrow the Assad regime. Russia is implementing its national interests in Syria, which comprehend the economic gains Russia has in protecting the country. The Middle East is the second market of Russian arms exports and it wants to avoid American attempts to take advantage of the new oil discoveries in Syrian soil. Additionally, Russia does not want the U.S. to succeed in overthrowing Assad's regime, because it fears it could be a preview of what could happen in Iran, which would deeply affect Russia's role and influence in the region.

There are different aspects that can be taken into consideration about the competition between the United States and the Russian Federation over Syria. One level of confrontation has been their different statements and discourse, where on one side there was the United States condemning the conflict and the Assad regime, wanting him to step down. The situation heated up with threats of military intervention when chemical weapons were used. On the other side, Russia called for containing certain reactions, it accused the opposition of undermining the regime, killing people and described them as terrorists. The Russian Federation has used its veto power to stop any UNSC resolution that could outset the Assad regime. In the international system, Russia did not limit itself to vetoing American efforts gather consensus on condemning the regime of Bashar al-Assad. The Russian Federation is creating an international scenario, where Russia cannot be excluded in the resolution of the Syrian crisis. However, the United States have imposed sanction on Syria, and it has involved the European Union to do the same. Russia responds to these sanctions with the increase of trade with Syria and it has made several contracts in the area of oil and gas, which would bring money coming. Additionally, Putin has supported the Syria regime militarily, it provides for military experts and military technologies, while the United States arms the opposition that wants to overthrow the Assad regime. Here, it is even more evident the different approached the two countries have always used and are reason for strong contention. The United States are in favour and support of interventionism, democratic promotion and regime change, notwithstanding of the consequences especially when they leave. The Russian Federation is strongly in support of the principles of non-interference and sovereignty, thus it does not want the Assad regime to be overthrown, even if it concerns its egoistic economic and political interests¹⁴⁴.

Although one may question the military bases in Syria and the military presence of the Russian Federation, in 2015 the Assad regime specifically asked for Russian intervention to stabilize the situation and support the

¹⁴⁴ A. Alamailes & S. Yurtsever, *Syrian Crisis in Scope of the U.S.-Russian Competition in Middle East*, September 2018.

regime. Under international law, this intervention is permissible and does not breach article 2 (4) of the UN Charter. In addition, “The International Court of Justice⁷ and the International Law Commission of the United Nations⁸ have both embraced this interpretation. As an expression of territorial sovereignty, every state may permit the stationing of foreign troops in its own territory. In this respect the obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force has not been breached because the Russian military actions are not targeting the incumbent government, in other words the Assad regime”¹⁴⁵.

By the time Trump arrived at the White House, it was clear that the United States were going to accept Assad regime as long as there will be a “deconfliction zone”¹⁴⁶, plus an ongoing communication between the militaries of Russia and USA. When the Assad regime used chemical weapons in 2017, the U.S. responded with air strikes. This move has been repeated in 2018, with a coalition of U.S.-France-UK. On December 2018, President Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal of two thousand troops, which it was an operation that worked slowly. By the end of January 2019, it was said that more than 10% of American equipment was removed. A month later, the White House states that only peacekeeping troops would remain in Syria. However, when the Northern Syria Buffer Zone agreement collapsed after Turkish offensive into North-Eastern Syria, – then replaced with the Second Northern Syria Bugger Zone negotiated between Russia, Turkey and the Syrian government – U.S. forces started to withdraw from many of their bases and camps¹⁴⁷.

Finally, Putin has achieved his long-time goal of being recognized as regional player that has to be taken into consideration in order to resolve the Syrian crisis, but in the Middle East in general. In addition, Assad stays in power and Putin had the chance to improve and modernize Russia’s naval base at Tartus and its air base at Hmeimim. Those bases are important for Russia’s influence in the Middle East and more importantly that is Russia’s second naval base on warm water, which it happens to be in the Mediterranean.

¹⁴⁵ Deutscher Bundestag, *Assessment of Russian, US and Israeli involvement in the Syrian conflict in the light of international law*, 2018.

¹⁴⁶ A. Stent, *Putin’s World, Russia Against the West and with the Rest*, February 2019.

¹⁴⁷ L. Moelson, *America’s Abandonment of Syria*, *the New Yorker*, 20 April 2020.

Conclusion

Whether international relations are witnessing a new Cold War or not has been subject of various debates. Scholars are divided between supporting the thesis of a Cold War 2.0 or claiming it ended in 1991, with an additional assertion that no similarities can be found between the “classic” and a possible “new” one. Indeed, this argument, with no reminiscence, is sustained by the end of the ideological and military confrontation. The most common statement denying a new Cold War, not only relies on the end of ideology conflict, it is founded on the absence of clear world struggle between the two countries. Plus, it concerns also the fact that Russia is now integrated into world economy, which is completely different from the situation the Soviet Union was in. Thus, with the ideology component gone and the non-proliferation regime reducing risks of nuclear confrontation, it started to circulate shared hope that their relation was going to improve significantly. However, as this thesis has shown their relationship could have worked and improved, but several factors led to a complete disintegration of bilateral ties.

Therefore, this thesis has the aim of demonstrating the opposite, with the specific task to provide a deeper understanding on the bilateral relationship of the Russian Federation and the United States and what are the effects on the formation of a new world order and how their behavior, on the domestic and international sphere, can influence world order construction and if it can account as a New Cold War. The thesis has a specific line of thinking that wants to retrace the important steps leading to the answer of the research question. Thus, starting from the critics to the American liberal approach to international relations, the first element that contradicts what was stated above is the permanent status of U.S. semi-war. The latter has not only been used for justifying American interventionism, but also for U.S. attitude toward the Russian Federation, which has fed up disagreements, hatred and antagonism. In addition, it has to be considered that the different ideas of how to shape world order were an important feature of the Cold War, something that is still present up to today and that was plentifully showed in this thesis, as it was the case with the analysis of the national security documents. In fact, following the goals set out in the documents, the two countries have acted accordingly, which caused many disputes between the two states. Plus, even though common global challenges were a good starting point for improving bilateral relations, certain decisions resulted in mistrust and weakening dialogue – an example can be the decision of deploying an American missile defense system and enlarging NATO eastward, Russia strongly disagreed with these action and considered them as a threat to national security.

The national security strategy documents demonstrate what the real problem hides behind the defective status of U.S.-Russian relations. The United States has lacked efficient comprehension to the needs of the Russian Federation. During the Cold War, the United States wanted to maintain its privileged position acquired after the end of World War II and its new network of alliances, considering the ambitions of the Soviet Union as a serious danger, which made the American officials disseminate enmity propaganda against the USSR and

implement a deterrence and containment policy of the Communist phenomena. Once the Cold War was over, the personal connection president Clinton had with president Yeltsin were and index of possible improvement, which could put a definitive end to confrontation – something it was hoped with every new American administration. However, what this thesis continues to establish is a clear proof of how the United States lacked to accommodate the re-emerging of Russia as a great power. Whenever the two powers could not agree on something, or a certain policy challenged the patience of the other, Cold War rhetoric came back into action, where mistrust has pervaded their relation and anti-American and anti-Russian feelings came back in the lives of the two countries. The best example that suits is the campaign against Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election, which looked very much as the witch hunt carried out by McCarthy during the Cold War.

The United States have taken unilateral decisions to withdraw from important treaties, in which Russia and the U.S. were equal. First, it was the withdrawal from the ABM treaty, then the INF treaty and now there are chances that the START agreement or a substitute will not be ratified. Consequently, the non-proliferation regime and all the previous efforts made to maintain it were destroyed and a new arms race is on the way, the same arms race that characterized the Cold War period and threatened peace and stability. Another reminiscence of that period is the wave of American deterrence and containment policy arrived with the imposition of sanctions to the Russian Federation. This was an attempt to limit Russia's influence in its neighborhood and economic growth, reminding it that the West is always ready to weaken its opponents, especially in these times where Western influence and their institutions are diminishing. As it was shown during the Ukrainian crisis, where neither the United States nor the European Union could intervene, showing that in reality their influence is limited. Something similar happened during the Araba Springs, where Russia took the leadership and assured its sphere of influence, making sure its multi polar vision settles down.

There are solid elements that can characterize the status of U.S.-Russian relationship as a Cold War, but those are not new, they are simply a continuation of what was already in place during the “classic” confrontation. The “new” component derives from unprecedented features. The Russian Federation does not want to impose their model to the rest of the world – as the Communist Party had in mind – it is just an alternative to the Western one, which has recently shown economic and political weaknesses. Moreover, while the Soviet Union could not count on important partners, Russia nowadays has enlarged its network of partnership to what is often referred as Russia's pivot to the East, which is contributing to strengthen the Eurasian region and economic ties with Asia. Russia has signed important Free Trade Agreements in the area, it has created the Eurasian Economic Union. This has always been part of Russia's plan to create a multipolar world order that contrasts and substitutes the American unilateralism, but recently it is enjoying success. Another new element is the role China is playing, which favors a redistribution of power towards the East. The economic growth has put China in place where Western countries on one side were more than happy to do business there, but on the other were concern of how its mergence in international relations could affect the Western equilibrium.

Indeed, Chinese domestic politics are heavily criticized by the West, the United States are concerned of Chinese military doctrines and of China not being a contracting party to the treaties that limits nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. This has influenced Trump decisions to dismantle the non-proliferation regime, so the U.S. could compete fairly against China, as much as the trade war wants to contain Chinese economic expansions, which in turn has favored China's decision to partner with Russia in support of a new Eastern alternative. In fact, Russia has joined the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the two countries are growing their influence in Africa, where their trade relations with Africa have increased, they are selling arms and are investing through building infrastructures. Additionally, the case study of this thesis has shown that Russia's influence in the Middle East is growing, in contrast to the diminishing influence of Western countries, constitutes an element of a New Cold War.

With that being said, for the upcoming U.S. presidential elections there are allegations that link Russia's involvement in the 2020 presidential campaign again, which is a wild card for thinking about possible scenarios of how U.S.-Russia relationship can be affected. Nevertheless, two possible scenarios come out. The first one is if Trump is reelected and confirmed for a second term. In this case, either things will stay as they are, or they could worsen. If they stay as they are, Trump and Putin meet occasionally and discuss about future cooperation in Syria, terrorism and North Korea. It might move further and actually materialize into joint actions. Although it is not likely to happen in Syria, since Russia has affirmed its role there and, in the region, while the U.S. has left. Things can fall apart if Trump continues its America first strategy, which can damage bilateral relations, with China as well, strengthening even more the Eastern alternative provided by Russia and China. Plus, if a Russiagate 2.0 can antagonize Congress and the wrong approach with Russia can cause a definitive closure of dialogue.

If Joe Biden wins this election two things can happen. First, there can be an attempt to improve relations with Russia, sign the START or another similar treaty and new grounds of cooperation can be found, but it might depend if an investigation confirms Russia's involvement in the election, but still there can be a new beginning. Second, the Biden administration follows the footsteps of his predecessor in dealing with Russia and China, which can go in different ways, the European Union deciding to take the more profitable option, which is to side with the Eastern alternative, worse trade deals and an arms race with two countries. But again, one might think this is not likely to happen because among Bidens' vision there is a plan to restore American leadership on the world stage, but in reality – as every American leader did before him – it will focus on renewing democratic alliances, which means to strengthen ties with democratic regimes, leaving out Russia and China.

In any case, whatever the outcome of the elections and what the newly elected or re-elected president has to bear something important in mind. In order to avoid continuous confrontations with what appears to be a strong Eastern bloc that has different views than the Western one, the United States needs to adopt a policy of

accommodation to those great powers and new centers of gravity, to effectively cooperate with them to create a multipolar world order that satisfies the interest of as many actors as it is possible to satisfy, without focusing on just one vision that prefers democracy and wants to support regime changes creating further instability. Especially, it has to avoid what has been continuously perpetrated by the U.S. administrations, which is to not consider the Russian Federation as an equal partner and expect it to silently accept a Western agenda laid out by the United States, while Russia has been actively engaged to do the opposite and moving its interests elsewhere, resulting in the international situation we have today. Moreover, if the two countries want to change the status of their relationship, the number of stakeholders that exchange diplomatic encounters has to increase, the relationship between two countries that have played a significant role in international relations cannot rely on the personal ties the two presidents have, because as history has shown, when disagreements between them arise, the two countries cut off bilateral talks creating disequilibrium.

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Summary

The relationship between the Russian Federation and the United States has been under critical analysis since their confrontation during the Cold War. Indeed, this thesis has the main object of understanding their bilateral relation and what are the effects on the formation of a new world order. Thus, the subject of this thesis is how the behavior of both the Russian Federation and the United States, domestically and in the international community, can influence world order construction and if it can account as a New Cold War. The investigation further explains how the United States and Russia different understanding of world order has influenced their bilateral relations throughout the years, since they have been historically opponents.

Throughout the course of history, the international system has been characterized by the alternation of order and disorder, at times they have even coexisted. Nation-states have tried to maintain order and stability, but it has not been an easy task to accomplish, since they set as priority the pursuit of their national goals and they had different views of how it should be shaped, ending up with clashes and wars between them. The theories of international relations are used to analyze the behavior of nation-states, to predict their actions and if they would cause imbalances in the order. There are three main theories that scholars use to address State's attitudes in shaping the world order: realism, liberalism and constructivism. For the purpose of the thesis only the realist and the liberal would be taken under analysis, because they can assess the behavior of the Russian Federation and the United States.

The realist school considers states as the principal and sole actors in the international arena, they are rational actor and their main goals are to achieve security, pursue their national interests and struggle for power. The difference with the other schools is that realists would undertake all the necessary measures to achieve their goals, especially security, that would undermine the importance of norms and rights. Realists consider the international system as anarchic, which leaves states with no choice but to strive for power. Plus, if an international community was to be formed, it would address national interests and strategies. This theory will mainly be used to describe the role and behavior of the Russian Federation.

The liberal school focuses more on individuals than states, that is also the reason why to them the protection of rights is more important. It does agree that the international arena is anarchical, but conflicts are to be avoided and mitigated though the creation of institutions. The survival of the state is important, but it is more fundamental to preserve the set of rights every individual has, those rights should then be respected by others, through the promotion of norms that are widely accepted by the international community. This concept applies even when liberalism is adopted as foreign policy. Certainly, this is not enough to survive in an anarchical

international system, thus states seek peace and prosperity with cooperation among them. This theory best suits the leading role of the United States in the international community.

Furthermore, the concept of world order is addressed by different authors and each one of them has their own view. Richard Haass has explored the dynamics of what has happened to the world order after World War II in his book *“A World in Disarray”* (2017), where he outlines the major historical episodes that led our system to the point where we are now. The author notices that order in the international system was not guaranteed nor was close to be achieved, especially after the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, Haass notices that during the Cold War there were some factors that led to stability. First, there was a balance of military power given by the two alliances that were put in place, namely NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Second, the Soviet Union and the United States realized that a clash between them would have involved nuclear weapons and that it would have not created any winner. Third, a further element providing stability were the mechanism implemented to oversee the agreements and if they were respected. What emerges from this is an understanding that the world order can be achieved by agreeing of what constitutes a global issue and creating some kind of global governance.

Different from Haass is Kissinger’s idea of global order, which is based on the division of the world into regions, each one of them has different understandings of what is wrong or right. Kissinger does not believe in the existence of a world order, but it does believe in the practical, not moral, system of independent states created at the Westphalia peace conference. Therefore, it has substituted the anarchical nature of the international system with principles accepted by the international community. This shared system has guaranteed free trade, stable international economic system, peaceful settlement of international disputes and war conduct. An important outlook on world order is the recent theory of accommodating rising powers, which is addressed by the author T.V. Paul in his book *“Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present and Future”* (2016). Following this recent concept, Reich S. and Lebow N.R. realize that realists and liberals have many aspects in common, especially becoming aware that if the world order will see a change from unipolarity – therefore United States hegemony in the international system – to multipolarity, it would be a consequence of the American decline and the rise of other dominant powers.

Coming to the analysis of the two subject of analysis and how they shape world order, for the case of the United States and the purpose of this thesis, it is important to take those scholars that criticize the American liberal agenda and its unipolarity. John J. Mearsheimer, the author of *“the Great Delusion – Liberal Dreams and International Realities”* (2018) identifies the problem of adopting a liberal agenda at home and abroad is that, at home it embraces and promotes individual rights and the state would do everything it takes to protect them and ensure they are protected. Indeed, a state deeply committed to individual rights is likely to promote them in the world and intervene whenever those rights are threatened in other countries. This interventionism ensures that as many people as possible can enjoy individual rights, which leads to an active policy of regime

change of those illiberal states, to replace them with liberal democracies. A liberal state would seek hegemony because it is compelled by a sense of obligation it has on protecting those universal rights in other countries, if the state sees those rights violated. This concept is strictly linked to the view Andrew J. Bacevich wrote in his book “Washington Rules – America’s Path to Permanent War” (2010). The author positions the United States in a state of permanent semiwar, where there is a condition of great dangers that are threatening the United States and will continue to do so for indefinite future, which is the reason why the United States continued to engage in interventionist “humanitarian” missions.

To fully comprehend Russian realist approach, it is necessary to grasp important factors. One important factor is geography. Russia has a vast territory for an important reason, it has only one natural border, the Arctic Sea, the various territorial conquests were made for amplifying its borders to protect Russia. Russia is a rich country in natural resources, but they are in not ideal locations, reason why Soviet leaders moved part of the population to Siberia even if it meant losing lives. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russians have found themselves deprived from a national identity, especially for those living in the pos-Soviet countries. Putin wanted to restore Russia greatness and he perceived foreign policy as interconnected with domestic factors. Concerning Russia’s near abroad, it was predictable that Russia was going to expand its influence at their expense, given its economic and military superiority. Additionally, as even Russian analysts have argued, if Russia was able to resume its leadership on the post-Soviet region, it could regain its great power status.

After the end of the Cold War, Russia had to reassert itself the status of great power and assure its position as regional leader in the former Soviet space, at the expenses of the newly formed Republics. Consequently, Russia tries to establish its great power status and to retain freedom of maneuver, which made policymaker took a turn for realist approach. However, Russia was looking for more cooperation with the West, also for fighting together international threats – such as terrorism – but the response of the West to Russian attempts to embrace Western liberalism were not satisfactory, complaining about unfair treatment. Russia wants to be considered as an equal actor of international relations, but when such thing does not happen it coincides with anti-Western sentiment, the willingness to create a multipolar world order and prioritizing Russian national interests, especially concerning its near abroad.

After an overview of what is world order and how a liberal and realist actor can affect the behavior of the state in world order construction, which is reflected in those documents. In fact, a detailed analysis of their national security strategies offers an understanding of why they took certain decisions, domestically and internationally, thus why they want to shape the international order in a certain way. Those documents comprehend national goals and threats and what policies the state has to adopt in order to achieve those goals and prevent, and eventually tackle those threats. There are many similarities among the National Security Strategy (NSS) documents of the United States, although there are some differences that will be addressed. In

addition, there are redundant characteristics uniting the documents from 1994 up to 2017, which are the importance of the American military might, the messianistic and exceptionalist vision of the role of the United States in the international system and the adoption of a liberal foreign policy.

Thereby, the essence of every U.S. national security strategies is the vision of helping create a world order filled with an international community of market democracies – opened to American exported goods – containing and deterring threats to national and international security – two broad categories that comprehend improving military capabilities and missile defense, enlarging NATO and maintaining military presence abroad. The national security strategy documents have all a broader ideal concept on how to shape the international community, thus world order, which is advancing U.S. interests through engagement and enlargement. American strategy for democratic promotion focuses on the consolidation of those states that were making fundamental changes toward democratic regimes and the broadening of U.S. commitment to help them. For achieving national security objectives, it is important to work with other democracies to cooperate together on security and economic issues, and gaining their support continuing the process of democratic enlargement. The 2017 National Security Strategy issued by the Trump administration is different from its predecessors. The document positions the national interests of the American citizens, not the United States itself, as top priority of national security goals. In fact, Trump based off its presidential campaign – and won the 2016 elections – by using the slogan “America first”.

The Russian Federation did not issue as many National Security documents as the United States, but it is comprehensible given the situation the country was facing due to the recent collapse of the Soviet Union. The first document had a clear problem it has to be addressed: the need to reinvent the country, plus there were the issues of what it meant to be a Russian citizen, thus finding a new Russian identity for its citizens, and resolve the deep economic crisis that was eroding the country and its people. It also had to consider the geopolitical transformation happening in its neighbourhood and what were the implications of the end of the Cold War on it. This makes clear that the national security priorities were to mainly two: to ensure Russia’s security, its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and securing Russia’s position as great power and maintaining its spheres of influence. An important goal present in all National Security Concept documents of the Russian Federation is the willingness to shape the international system to be multipolar, annulling United States’ hegemony and unilateral leadership.

Among the four National Security Concept (NSC) issued, the main goals and threats remain the same, while the structure changes with the arrival of Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin. Those goals comprehend Russia’s national interests, which is strictly linked to the protection of Russian citizens and Russia from any external or internal threats. The NSC documents aim at strengthening democracy, creating rule-of-law, social state and maintaining public harmony, inviolability of constitutional system and of Russia’s sovereignty and territorial

integrity. Russia's national interests comprehend economic prosperity and growth, assuring high standard of living for its people. Concerning the international environment, Russia's national interests are to uphold its sovereignty and strengthening its status and position as great power and be an influential figure for a multipolar world order, develop equal and advantageous relations with all countries. In addition, Russia's interest is to fight terrorism, including international one. Russia has a vision of an international community where the only supranational entity that can overrule over it is the United Nations, also because Russia plays a great role in it while in others it is not the case. In addition, every NSC document contains a part on how important is to implement an active foreign policy that supports the achievement of the Russian Federation's priorities and follows the guidelines to shape the world order toward multilateralism.

After the end of the Cold War both faced the same set of new challenges, while at the same time they had to reevaluate their national interests. This period had a different impact on the two countries. The United States empowered itself with an even greater consciousness of its superiority, which fuelled the engine of a unilateral actor who seeks to stimulate a domino effect of democratic regimes – ironic, since the Soviet Union tried to do the same, even though it was going in the opposite direction. On the contrary, the newly born Russian Federation had to confront an economic and socio-cultural crisis that was affecting its domestic prosperity and international influence. Russia had to tackle the domestic crisis, improve the relations with the other countries, especially with the USA, enter the international market to sell Russian goods and most of all protect its border, sphere of influence and maintaining a partnership with post-Soviet countries.

The two countries set their respective national security documents up in a way that clarifies why they assume a certain behaviour and why they want the international system to be influenced in a way that better works to pursue national interests. Therefore, the United States opt for cooperation with other countries and every document says how much it is important having good relationship with every region, it knows that international issues cannot be solved by a single country, but at the same time if it has to take a unilateral action, which might involve the use of military force, it will do so. This is a consequence of having a messianistic and exceptionalist vision of itself that coincides with American military might and interventionism. On the other hand, Russia prefers a multipolar world order where its great power status can flourish, it can influence and achieve its national security goals with no intromissions from other countries. The latter is also the reason why Russia advocates for non-interference and considers the UN as the only valid international institutions where there can be discussion on common problems.

The relationship between the Soviet Union, then the Russian Federation, and the United States has always been complicated. The two countries over the years have struggled to find common grounds where their relationship could flourish and benefit the international community. In their national security concepts, both underline the willingness to cooperate with each other with future hope of improvements, although it was

hardly achieved. Additionally, the documents contain similar threats to national security, which show that the post-Cold War situation has not changed, on the contrary it has increased the degree of dangers countries face nowadays, especially these two. There are areas where they have cooperated since it was a common threat, such as the proliferation of WMD and terrorism. In fact, the national security documents contain the same approach to non-proliferation, which consists in strengthening existing agreements and creating new ones, plus both agree on enhancing international cooperation to tackle the problem of nuclear proliferation and terrorism. The United States concentrates on consolidating Euro-Atlantic security, expanding near Russia's borders, while Russia tries to integrate and cooperate more with the European Union. Disagreements arise between the two, when American promotion of Human Rights and democracy has often collided with Russia's interests, especially when it has involved post-Soviet countries. Economic prosperity revolves around domestic economic issues that both countries face and the collection of data by foreign intelligence is a common issue, at times it was a matter of argument against one another, which weakened the status of their relationship. A difference between the documents of the two countries is the importance the Russian Federation attributes to national borders. After 1991 and the civilized divorce, the Russian Federation sought to protect its borders from NATO, disliking any attempt to include countries near its border to join Western organizations – where Russia was not a member – and the idea of western military bases nearby. This is something the United States does not deal with, although the American NSS '17 addresses the issue of border control for illegal immigration, but it cannot be compared to Russia's situation. Therefore, for the same reasons, a threat to Russia's national security is NATO expansion, as it has been since NATO's first expansion project. Other two major problems are United States' missile defence program, which it has caused disagreements between the two countries, because the U.S. wanted to develop a BMD program, while Russia did not approve of it and feared it could threaten its security

The different views on world order construction has had repercussions on the status of the relationship between the United States and the Russian Federation. Even though, they have made several attempts to improve relations, their diverse national security interests have caused disagreements and often a closure of diplomatic dialogues. From the end of the Cold War onward, there were many expectations of improving their relationship and Russia had high hopes to be finally recognized as an U.S. equal. Throughout the years, their bilateral relation has experienced many issues – domestic and international – which were a driving force for their cooperation. Russia and the United States were able to mature and develop a way to deal with each other through the 90s going into the 2000s, but it has always depended on the personal ties and connection of the leaders – as it was the case between Clinton and Yeltsin, Putin and first Bush Administration – underlining the lack of institutional links between the countries. As a consequence, in those Western organizations, where Russia was not a member, American administrations have sought to build strong bilateral relations, but that were not enough to satisfy Russia's need to be treated as an equal U.S. partner. Nevertheless, there are several reasons why, notwithstanding the attempts and efforts made, there were many fields of non-cooperation, where

their divergent opinion on a variety of issues and expectations not met, led to deterioration of their relationship. Their relationship has seen four resets, which meant to start all over again from scratch with new demands for the future of their cooperation.

Every American President that came after the end of the Cold War had sought ways to cooperate with the Russian Federation. There could be no continuity in the path toward installing good and solid foundations, because who came next complained about how badly things were handled previously. In addition, by this time it was clear that the actors withheld a selective partnership – they cooperated when they needed to fulfil their national interests. Plus, Russia was not evolving as a western-style democracy and it was even more clear that the United States had no real influence on Russia's internal evolution. What happened is that there was a transition in the way Russia wanted to approach the West. At first, it was clear the importance of having good relations for receiving western investments and economic aid. However, those policies influence negatively domestic politics, which saw this determination of closer ties with the West, as a subordination to American agenda. Consequently, things started to change and Russian attitude toward the U.S. became more selective and critical how the West dealt with the Kremlin.

In fact, a major issue that characterizes the relationship between the United States and the Russian Federation is the lack of sufficient grounds for cooperation, because at the end there are more topics where the two countries could not agree on rather than the opposite. Indeed, those attempts to improve the status of relations could not succeed in the long term due to the topics where the Russian Federation and the United States kept disagreeing. They argued over missile defense, the Iranian nuclear program, NATO enlargement, Kosovo, the Colour Revolutions, the Ukrainian crisis, spy scandals, Russiagate and the Arab Springs. While what has been, until recently, topics of agreement has been only on non-proliferation regime and fighting terrorism and international crime. There is a high imbalance that leans more toward disputes.

The Clinton and Bush administration have tried to make the relation with the Russian Federation work without succeeding, because they were focused on their conquest to the “Freedom Agenda”, which has often collided with the interests of Russia. They have often reached low points of the relations, due to divergencies, but they left the Obama administration to deal with the aftermath of the 2008 Georgia crisis, which saw Russian and the United States military troops came very close to facing each other. Here Cold War came back, not only the two countries come close to a face off. Obama desired to improve relations with the Russian Federation, in fact, there was the symbolic “reset button” moment in 2008, where there was the will to start all over again. The Obama administration as slowly reduced American presence in the post-Soviet space, which was helped by how the areas developed after the colour revolutions – as for example in Ukraine where Yanukovich won the 2010 presidential election. One of the main disagreements between the Russian Federation and the United States remains NATO. Unfortunately, this apparent appeasement of U.S-Russian relations came to an end,

when Putin came back as President of the Russian Federation in May 2012, because the Arab Spring resulted in a new topic of disagreement, where the two different views on world order clashed as they did before. On one side, there is the American view that comprehends the responsibility to protect principle and humanitarian intervention – which fuel American interventionism – plus its support of popular revolts against authoritarian regimes. On the other side, Russia embraces the importance of respecting state sovereignty and non-interference in domestic issues of other states. In addition, Russia does not approve American engagement, because of the actual situation that it left in Iraq and fear repercussion of regime change in the Middle East for its national security and its borders. Indeed, when the Obama administration decided to take the sides of the protests, Putin did not want to lose the ties installed with the leaders and feared for Islamist fundamentalism. Then, it arrived the Ukrainian and Syrian crisis, both of which showed the beginning of the slow decadence of Western economic and political model, with a consequent loss of international leadership and influence. What the United States managed to do after the Ukrainian crisis is to remove the Russian Federation as member of the G-8, now G-7, group and to impose sanctions to those involved in the Crimean seizure. Nevertheless, up to this date the economic sanctions had affected Russia, but not as much as it was expected and Russia's economy kept growing, mainly for two factors: Russia's pivot to the East and its natural resources.

Moscow had high expectations of Trump victory, because Trump's campaign exposed all the mistakes committed by previous administrations, with the hope of a more realist approach to international relation with no influence of ideologic component. Trump did not say something negative about Putin, while he many times did with Hillary Clinton, who as questioned many times Russia's President. In addition, Russia was hoping for a new era of closer U.S.-Russian relationship, but since Trump win, there has been something holding him back from engaging to greater ties with Putin: Russiagate. The latter concerns the involvement of the Russian Federation in the 2016 American presidential elections, where there were hacking activities to members of the Democratic Party. Putin has repeatedly discarded any kind of Russian involvement in the U.S. elections. The willingness of Trump to meet and have a constructive dialogue with Putin met the opposition of his cabinet colleagues and Congress, which brought to an overall incoherence towards American policy to Russia. In addition, these contradictions were evident when Congress and Trump's administration kept imposing sanctions on Russia, while Trump kept saying good things about it.

Nevertheless, Trump has reached to Putin several times and the two spoke on the phone. The topics addressed during the phone conversations were about Syria, terrorism, and North Korea, which are arguments that would characterize their future meetings. Notwithstanding these appealing premises, Trump's first mandate is ending and nothing was agreed on, on the contrary, Trump in those four years has sought to dismantle the non-proliferation regime, diminished the importance of the Iranian nuclear deal JCPOA and started a trade war with China, who started to get closer with Russia. Thus, Russia and China are building an Eastern bloc that

can provide for a valuable alternative to Western-U.S.-led model, which can accommodate rising powers, their interests and account for a multipolar world order that best suits the current international scenario.

In conclusion, whether international relations are witnessing a new Cold War or not has been subject of various debates. Scholars are divided between supporting the thesis of a Cold War 2.0 or claiming it ended in 1991, with an additional assertion that no similarities can be found between the “classic” and a possible “new” one. This thesis had the aim of demonstrating, through a deeper understanding on the bilateral relationship of the Russian Federation and the United States and what are the effects on the formation of a new world order and how their behavior, on the domestic and international sphere, can influence world order construction and if it can account as a New Cold War. The thesis has a specific line of thinking that wants to retrace the important steps leading to the answer of the research question. Thus, starting from the critics to the American liberal approach to international relations, the first element that contradicts what was stated above is the permanent status of U.S. semi-war. The latter has not only been used for justifying American interventionism, but also for U.S. attitude toward the Russian Federation, which has fed up disagreements, hatred and antagonism. In addition, it has to be considered that the different ideas of how to shape world order were an important feature of the Cold War, something that is still present up to today and that was plentifully showed in this thesis, as it was the case with the analysis of the national security documents. In fact, following the goals set out in the documents, the two countries have acted accordingly, which caused many disputes between the two states. Plus, even though common global challenges were a good starting point for improving bilateral relations, certain decisions resulted in mistrust and weakening dialogue – an example can be the decision of deploying an American missile defense system and enlarging NATO eastward, Russia strongly disagreed with these action and considered them as a threat to national security.

The national security strategy documents demonstrate what the real problem hides behind the defective status of U.S.-Russian relations. The United States has lacked efficient comprehension to the needs of the Russian Federation. What this thesis continues to establish is a clear proof of how the United States lacked to accommodate the re-emerging of Russia as a great power. Whenever the two powers could not agree on something, or a certain policy challenged the patience of the other, Cold War rhetoric came back into action, where mistrust has pervaded their relation and anti-American and anti-Russian feelings came back in the lives of the two countries. The best example that suits is the campaign against Russia’s interference in the 2016 presidential election, which looked very much as the witch hunt carried out by McCarthy during the Cold War. There are solid elements that can characterize the status of U.S.-Russian relationship as a Cold War, but those are not new, they are simply a continuation of what was already in place during the “classic” confrontation. The “new” component derives from unprecedented features. Thus, the Russian Federation does not want to impose their model to the rest of the world – as the Communist Party had in mind – it is just an alternative to the Western one, which has recently shown economic and political weaknesses.

Moreover, while the Soviet Union could not count on important partners, Russia nowadays has enlarged its network of partnership to what is often referred as Russia's pivot to the East, which is contributing to strengthen the Eurasian region and economic ties with Asia. Russia has signed important Free Trade Agreements in the area and it has created the Eurasian Economic Union. This has always been part of Russia's plan to create a multipolar world order that contrasts and substitutes the American unilateralism, but recently it is enjoying success. Another new element is the role China is playing, which favors a redistribution of power towards the East. The economic growth has put China in place where Western countries on one side were more than happy to do business there, but on the other were concerned of how its emergence in international relations could affect the Western equilibrium. Indeed, Chinese domestic politics are heavily criticized by the West, the United States are concerned of Chinese military doctrines and of China not being a contracting party to the treaties that limits nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. This has influenced Trump decisions to dismantle the non-proliferation regime, so the U.S. could compete fairly against China, as much as the trade war wants to contain Chinese economic expansions, which in turn has favored China's decision to partner with Russia in support of a new Eastern alternative. In fact, Russia has joined the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the two countries are growing their influence in Africa, where their trade relations with Africa have increased, they are selling arms and are investing through building infrastructures. Additionally, the case study of this thesis has shown that Russia's influence in the Middle East is growing, in contrast to the diminishing influence of Western countries, constitutes an element of a New Cold War.

With that being said, for the upcoming U.S. presidential elections there are allegations that link Russia's involvement in the 2020 presidential campaign again, which is a wild card for thinking about possible scenarios of how U.S.-Russia relationship can be affected. Nevertheless, two possible scenarios come out. The first one is if Trump is reelected and confirmed for a second term. In this case, either things will stay as they are, or they could worsen. If they stay as they are, Trump and Putin meet occasionally and discuss about future cooperation in Syria, terrorism and North Korea. It might move further and actually materialize into joint actions. Although it is not likely to happen in Syria, since Russia has affirmed its role there and, in the region, while the U.S. has left. Things can fall apart if Trump continues its America first strategy, which can damage bilateral relations, with China as well, strengthening even more the Eastern alternative provided by Russia and China. Plus, if a Russiagate 2.0 can antagonize Congress and the wrong approach with Russia can cause a definitive closure of dialogue.

If Joe Biden wins this election two things can happen. First, there can be an attempt to improve relations with Russia, sign the START or another similar treaty and new grounds of cooperation can be found, but it might depend if an investigation confirms Russia's involvement in the election, but still there can be a new beginning. Second, the Biden administration follows the footsteps of his predecessor in dealing with Russia and China,

which can go in different ways, the European Union deciding to take the more profitable option, which is to side with the Eastern alternative, worse trade deals and an arms race with two countries. But again, one might think this is not likely to happen because among Bidens' vision there is a plan to restore American leadership on the world stage, but in reality – as every American leader did before him – it will focus on renewing democratic alliances, which means to strengthen ties with democratic regimes, leaving out Russia and China.

In any case, whatever the outcome of the elections and what the newly elected or re-elected president has to bear something important in mind. In order to avoid continuous confrontations with what appears to be a strong Eastern bloc that has different views than the Western one, the United States needs to adopt a policy of accommodation to those great powers and new centers of gravity, to effectively cooperate with them to create a multipolar world order that satisfies the interest of as many actors as it is possible to satisfy, without focusing on just one vision that prefers democracy and wants to support regime changes creating further instability. Especially, it has to avoid what has been continuously perpetrated by the U.S. administrations, which is to not consider the Russian Federation as an equal partner and expect it to silently accept a Western agenda laid out by the United States, while Russia has been actively engaged to do the opposite and moving its interests elsewhere, resulting in the international situation we have today. Moreover, if the two countries want to change the status of their relationship, the number of stakeholders that exchange diplomatic encounters has to increase, the relationship between two countries that have played a significant role in international relations cannot rely on the personal ties the two presidents have, because as history has shown, when disagreements between them arise, the two countries cut off bilateral talks creating disequilibrium.