

# Russiagate: A Double-Edged Sword for US-Russia Relations in the Process of Changing the International Order and Mapping a New Geopolitical World

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Although US-Russia relations have been discussed on both sides as an important agenda item in policy-making discussions, not enough attention has been paid to this issue in the international academic and intellectual community. This study aims to analyse this issue from a theoretical and pragmatic perspective, providing a more realistic understanding to underpin policy-making decisions in the context of the uncertainty and instability of a changing international order. The new confrontation between the United States and Russia has revived aspects of the Cold War, where the balance of power was maintained through nuclear weapons. An arms race without treaties and concrete US-Russian negotiations would threaten the international order more than ever before. The US-Russia relations are still adversarial with both sides' competition in geopolitical relations to preserve the balance of power. This study argues that geopolitical competition has accelerated the arms race toward deterrence and containment. US-Russia relations remain one of the most important, but rarely discussed, issues in contemporary academic scholarship.

*Keywords:* US-Russia relations, international order, realism, geopolitics

US-Russia relations are decisive in many aspects of the international order, particularly in area of global security. Andrey Kortunov, Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council, summarized the conclusions of CSIS and RIAC experts at a meeting last year: Russia and the United States want to deter and contain each other; this makes engagement and deconfliction, as well as coordination in needed areas, much more essential. Kortunov has assumed that the Ukraine crisis caused the downturn in US-Russia relations, while Russia's successful intervention in Syria has allowed the two countries to coordinate approaches and share information (Kortunov, 2017a). He emphasizes that, in an atmosphere of geopolitical tension and mutual distrust, coordination has a direct impact on global security, stabilizing the relationship, and building a buffer against conflict in the future (Kortunov, 2017b). He has pessimistically predicted that US-Russia relations will worsen further. The United States and the European Union will this year increase pressure on Russia through economic sanctions, military deterrence, and information warfare. Russia will respond in kind, although the balance of power is significantly skewed in the West's favour (Kortunov, 2018a). Kortunov argues that it is a priority for Russia and the United States to continue to cooperate on the issue of nuclear missiles (Kortunov,

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2018b). His comments suggest that US-Russia relations are still adversarial; he anticipates competition in geopolitical relations, with the West implementing military and economic containment against Russia and Russia reacting defensively to preserve the balance of power.

The West regards the Crimean event as an offensive military occupation and this has changed the geopolitical balance after NATO enlargement. Russia's geopolitical counterattack, during the Putin era, has obviously intensified the military confrontation between NATO and Russia. In an atmosphere of mistrust between the United States and Russia, Russian diplomats and politicians have focused on the possible break-up of the EU. The former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, RIAC President Igor Ivanov, has described EU-Russian relations as moving from "romanticism" to "pragmatism", anticipating that:

There will be objections, as the fundamental issues of European security cannot be discussed without the United States or outside the NATO context. However, neither Russia nor Europe can afford to wait for the United States to sort out its domestic political crisis and be ready for serious discussion. The United States and NATO do not have a monopoly on the dialogue surrounding European security—the issues are too diverse and too important to be handed over to a third country or organization (Ivanov, 2018).

For example, energy is a security issue for both sides. Energy can connect the interdependence of the EU and Russia as an integrated economic space, despite the difficult Ukrainian scenario. Vladimir Likhachev, the Deputy Director of the Energy Research Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences believes that restoring and further developing the energy dialogue between Russia and the EU will require both sides to search for compromises and a balance of interests (Likhachev, 2017).

During the US 2016 presidential elections, Russians demonstrated their preference for Trump, who expressed admiration for Putin more than once. Unexpectedly, Trump was elected and his opponents labelled his relationship with Russia "collusion". From that point on, the idea of Russian meddling in Western elections spread like the plague. Generally speaking, the Russians don't have a permanent or deep-rooted sense of anti-Americanism or anti-Westernism. In fact, the Western-Christian and Eastern-Slavic cultures share a national identity. This is a central argument in determining national direction. Globalization has overthrown many Cold War totalitarian regimes, including the Soviet Union. Globalization has become the ideological tool for the geopolitical expansion of Anglo-Saxon culture. The Russian people are patriotic and support Putin in restoring the country's dignity. After Putin came to power in 2000, he launched his "Turn to Asia" strategy and adopted the "Eurasianism" concept to integrate ethnic groups and appease Chechen war separatists. Until the Ukraine crisis in 2014, the majority of scholars and politicians reflected Western culture and didn't support Putin's balance of national development. The Russiagate scandal convinced Russian intellectuals that Putin was the only figure who could manage so many controversial issues, both domestically and also internationally.

Konstantin Khudoley, Professor of European Studies at the St. Petersburg State University School of International Relations has analysed new aspects of the relationship between Moscow and Washington; these emerged after the adoption of the Act to Counter America's Adversaries through Sanctions in August 2017. The new law is an act of revenge, carried out by American elites to damage President Donald Trump, whom they view as alien. From Russia's point of view, this law has affected the mechanism through which foreign policy decisions are coordinated with the United States. Direct bilateral negotiations with the United States are preferable for Russia and more likely to succeed. If an intermediary is needed, the European Union, India, or China could play this role. Arms limitation is an area where Moscow and Washington have some chance of reaching an agreement. Another issue of key importance is cyberspace security. One explanation for the harsh

sanctions is the belief of American elites that Russia tried to interfere with the US presidential election. This factor cannot be underestimated; it is absolutely necessary for Russia to seek discussions with the US. Another important aspect of China's relationship with the US is that it is void of ideological components. While criticizing US policy, China avoids anti-Americanism. It builds its identity on opposition to Japan, rather than the United States. Far from reducing its ties, China has broadened them in all areas to the maximum extent—in trade, economy, and the humanitarian sphere. Naturally, the new conditions call for new methods of negotiation and discussion. As it is very important to maintain a dialogue with the American political class, Congress, and civil society, the role of public diplomacy and debates will increase significantly, given that Russia needs to explicitly explain its position to the US and search for common ground. It is difficult to begin such discussions because prominent American politicians avoid contact with Russia (Khudoley, 2017).

At a time of great uncertainty in the US-Russia relationship, the *National Interest* has taken a close look at the inherent risks and opportunities. The September/October 2017 issue of the *National Interest* features a symposium with eleven experts, all answering the question, "Is there a real chance to improve US-Russia relations in a way that serves US interests, or is the relationship doomed to confrontation?" (TNI, 2017). Dmitri Simes views the current mutual hostility as threatening an explosive confrontation that could destroy American (and Russian) civilization. For this reason, the United States should explore normalizing its interactions with Russia. Washington should do this from a position of strength and seek a narrow dialogue to avoid an unintended military confrontation. The US and Russia need to manage their differences more effectively and work together where their interests and priorities overlap (Simes, 2017). Graham Allison has suggested that President Trump could improve relations with Russia in ways that would advance American national interests by going back to Cold War fundamentals. The first responsibility of an American president is to protect and defend the United States of America. Just as in the Cold War, Americans and Russians today share a vital national interest in averting a nuclear war (Allison, 2017). Zalmay Khalilzad assumes that, for the United States, managing Russian decline requires pursuing a balance-of-power approach to minimize the risk of escalation. The Trump administration is right to build up US defences and to push the Europeans, who collectively have a much bigger economy than Russia, to do more for their own defence. Washington should *negotiate and cooperate with Russia and* be sensitive to Russian interests, exploring areas in which both sides can benefit from improved relations. These issues could include dealing with terrorism and containing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missiles, and cyber technology (Khalilzad, 2017). On these points of discussion, the US experts consistently suggest that the dialogue should go back to the fundamentals of nuclear limitation, as in the Cold War balance of power. This gives the Trump administration an opportunity to normalize US-Russia relations so as to promote US national interests and avoid nuclear confrontation.

Russiagate is the new transitional event after the Ukraine crisis. New sanctions have been introduced by Trump's opponents, including the political elites and US mainstream media, who believe that Trump is Putin's puppet and will sell out the national interest to strengthen the legitimacy of his own presidential power. Many Russian elites believe that the US prefers to deter and contain Russia to maintain the balance of power. Both countries need to shape external enemies to consolidate allies, raise military budgets, and expand the weapons market. However, Russia doesn't want to fall into a Cold War trap. It is trying to get rid of the shackles of the New Cold War, even though the Russian elites acknowledge that the confrontation between Russia and the United States has lasted for a long time. Sergei Karaganov has proposed the following idea: Russian politicians and diplomats try to convince the Trump administration that the two countries have mutual interests and should

cooperate. This will help to stabilize global security because many international issues must be resolved through US-Russian cooperation. A joint approach to the denuclearization and nonproliferation of nuclear and mass destructive weapons could be the next approach to contact restoration. This approach depends on whether or not Trump can prove that he has not colluded with Russia.

This paper aims to analyse the US-Russian relationship in three steps:

(1) The United States insists on human rights as a principle of American foreign policy. For this reason, humanitarian intervention through force is legitimate. The liberal world is a US contribution and the United States will maintain its dominant role there. By contrast, Russia insists on the foreign policy principle of non-interference with the sovereignty of others; it denies that military force has any role beyond OOH resolutions and the concerns of sovereign states. Both countries implement foreign policy from a realist perspective, but they have different attitudes about military intervention. Will the international order be maintained or redirected in their own preferred directions?

(2) In the tense US-Russian relationship, geopolitical expansion is supported by military force. The arms race thus will accelerate as a form of deterrence. The two countries will strengthen their deterrent defensive systems while also developing military industries that can compete in the international weapons markets. A dialogue needs to resume limiting weapons and reducing the nuclear arsenals. However, Russiagate has impeded the process of normalization in US-Russian relations because Trump is suspected of having colluded with Russia; this means that he has no legitimacy when talking to Russia.

(3) Is Russiagate beneficial or dangerous for US power? Various arguments indicate that the internal split is too serious for the US to achieve consensus on a consistent foreign policy. The domestic and external standoff have caused the international community to worry about instability and insecurity in the international order and to make changes to the geopolitical map to adapt to the new international arena. Can Trump prevent the decline of US power? Could a rising power like China replace a declining power like America? Trump must consider resuming US-Russian relations if he is to achieve his “America First” goal and “make America great again”.

As the world becomes more dangerous in future, Sergei Karaganov, Dean of the School of World Economics and International Affairs at the Higher School of Economics of the National Research University, sees *nuclear deterrence as the only explanation for why the world never plunged into nuclear conflict during the Cold War and has not gone down that path, even though we are now living through a new Cold War that is even worse than the previous one*. Treaties play a stabilizing role. The problem is that they can fall apart, one after another. The new world order will be based on new military-political foundations. There are likely to be twelve nuclear states, at a minimum. This can hardly be called good news (Karaganov, 2017).

Given the changing world, this study argues that academic scholarship underestimates the role played by US-Russian relations in global security. It sets out to analyse how Russiagate affects bilateral relations and global security in both theoretical and policy debates. Without policy debates and explanations of conditions, academic analysis cannot always reflect the regime’s demands for efficient and timely national development and the pursuit of national interests. In other words, unlimited nuclear weapons, international terrorism, and climate change now threaten human existence more than ever before. The United States takes these threats more seriously than revisionist regimes like Russian and China do, or rogue states like North Korea and Iran, US enemies that possess nuclear weapons. From this point of view, how can the United States deal with nuclear weapons without Russia’s cooperation? Developing a new model for US-Russian relations will be the most

challenging task for Washington elites accustomed to winning after World War II and being the world's sole superpower after the collapse of the USSR.

### **Main Arguments of the Liberal International Order: Is the American Century Over?**

The former US Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Affairs and Harvard University Professor Joseph Nye, a co-author with Robert Keohane of the theory of neoliberalism, has stressed the need for the US to maintain a dominant role in the liberal world, where many countries have shared prosperity and security since World War II. Nye assumes that America's soft power plus military power will offer the benefits of democracy and openness as public goods to the liberal world, while the rising power of China and the declining power of Russia cannot afford them. He believes that because public goods are good for everyone, the United States should not give up its responsibility to help the liberal world survive. In such arenas, the withdrawal of the liberal international order will lead to human disasters.

As Joseph Nye has written,

The liberal international order that emerged after 1945 was a loose array of multilateral institutions in which the United States provided global public goods such as freer trade and freedom of the seas and weaker states were given institutional access to the exercise of US power. The United States continues to possess more military, economic, and soft-power resources than any other country. The United States will remain the world's leading military power for decades to come, and military force will remain an important component of US power. A rising China and a declining Russia frighten their neighbours, and US security guarantees in Asia and Europe provide critical reassurance for the stability that underlies the prosperity of the liberal order (Nye, 2017).

For more than a century, the United States has been the world's most powerful state. Now some analysts predict that China will soon take its place. Does this mean that we are living in a post-American world? Will China's rapid rise spark a new Cold War between the two titans? Joseph Nye explains why the American century is far from over and what the US must do to retain its lead in an era of increasingly diffuse power politics. America's superpower status may well be tempered by its own domestic problems and China's economic boom, he argues, but "its military, economic, and soft power capabilities will continue to outstrip those of its closest rivals for decades to come" (Nye, 2015). Nye praises the role the US has played in protecting the international order and providing public goods after the Second World War.

The central fact of international politics is anarchy, the lack of a common sovereign authority able to settle disputes and establish order. This has meant that throughout history, states have been forced to fend for themselves, protecting and advancing their national interests as they see fit, embracing whatever policies and temporary partnerships seem expedient. Life in such a self-help system is precarious. (Rose, 2017)

In the theory of realism, political scientists believe that anarchic circumstances, when no authoritarian government is able to establish an international order to control sovereign states within the international system, constantly cause human disasters. It is therefore difficult to maintain real security through self-help. The sovereign state is the basic element of the international community; many sovereign states prefer to sacrifice some autonomy to build a common security institution that can help them all. In this situation, there must be a leader who has a higher moral understanding of justice and equality, and a strong ability to bring sovereign states together to share prosperity and security and avoid selfishness. The neorealists have not only adopted the realist theory of anarchism but have also revived it by adding the function of multilateral institutional organizations to ensure better governance. The neoliberals share liberty as one of their most treasured values,

but admit that liberty in the anarchic international world should be prevented through strength, for example by using military force. This idea can be seen in Nye's argument above.

The neoliberal concept has also featured in Trump's new national security report. Trump has outlined a plan with four main pillars: to protect the homeland, promote American prosperity, achieve peace through strength, and promote American influence (Strong, 2017). He has emphasized the fact that America's core principles, enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, are secured by the Bill of Rights, which proclaims the country's respect for fundamental individual liberties, beginning with the freedoms of religion, speech, the press, and assembly.

Liberty, free enterprise, equal justice under the law, and the dignity of every human life are central to who we are as a people. These principles form the foundation of our most enduring alliances, and the United States will continue to champion them. Governments that respect the rights of their citizens remain the best vehicle for prosperity, human happiness, and peace. In contrast, governments that routinely abuse the rights of their citizens do not play constructive roles in the world. (Abrams, 2017)

According to Trump,

Today, competing with tyrannies like China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran, there is a powerful *real politik* argument for freedom. When it comes to defeating jihadis and other forms of Islamist extremism, we should remember that Islamists—even Islamist extremists—have ideas and arguments that must be defeated by better ideas and arguments, and cannot be defeated solely by police truncheons (Abrams, 2017).

Trump's view involves a real ideological competition between justice and evil in a dyadic world. Extremist organizations and totalitarian states such as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran are the enemies of the United States, which is the only saviour capable of protecting human values such as dignity, freedom, liberty, democracy, and civil rights. In other words, even though they are sovereign states, human values are more important than individual units in the international community. The United States could use its strength to keep the peace and defeat these evils. Obviously, Trump aims to legitimize future military actions, powered by the idea of neoliberalism. Reactions can therefore be expected from those tagged states that emphasize sovereignty, as the only representatives of the international system. We can see an ongoing fight between sovereignty and liberty in the changing international order.

Ethics and international law are important issues in international decision-making. Humanitarian intervention is the threat or use of force across state borders by a state or group of states aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied (Macklem, 2008).

Human rights in the international order are concerned with the question of whether humanitarian intervention needs to be authorized by the UN Security Council, in which the five permanent member states, including the United States, Russia, China, the UK, and France, have very different views on how to resolve conflicts and disasters and maintain order through international institutes. Both Russia and China insist that the sovereign government must authorize UN solutions, while the United States has carried out humanitarian intervention by force during the past century. It has formulated US foreign principles up to now.

As Graham Allison has pointed out, over a decade that began in 1895 with the US secretary of state declaring the United States "sovereign on this continent", America liberated Cuba; threatened Britain and Germany with war to force them to accept American positions on disputes in Venezuela and Canada; backed an

insurrection that split Colombia to create a new state of Panama (which immediately gave the US concessions to build the Panama Canal); and attempted to overthrow the government of Mexico, which was supported by the United Kingdom and financed by London bankers. In the half century that followed, US military forces intervened in “our hemisphere” on more than 30 separate occasions to settle economic or territorial disputes in terms favourable to Americans or oust leaders they judged unacceptable (Allison, 2015).

According to the first principle of political realism presented in *Politics Among Nations* (Morgenthau, 1973, 1948), politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. Selfishness and lust for power are the basic components of Morgenthau’s picture of human nature. Morgenthau outlines three ideal types of policy and the ideologies associated with them. The status quo policy concentrates on maintaining power; imperialism seeks to obtain more power and the policy of prestige demonstrates power (Cesa, 2009). Morgenthau felt obligated to develop a theory to guide international politics. This “realist” theory was based on interest, power, and morality. It was also dependent on statesmen, human volition, and a weighing up of variables to construct the “national interest”. Providing specifics and clarification later became the self-appointed task of the neorealists, who wished to improve the realist program by studying the growing international structures in their proliferation and complexity and delineating the “regimes” that have kept these structures in motion. Some of the leading contributors to this school of internationalism were Robert O. Keohane, Joseph Nye, Jr., and Kenneth N. Waltz (Myers, 1997).

Morgenthau was a leading political realist post-war intellectual in the field of international relations. In his 1949 article, “The Primacy of the National Interest”, Morgenthau criticized the Truman Doctrine for “placing universal moral principles (e.g., the promotion of freedom and democracy) above the national interest as the standard for US foreign policy, and in the 1960s he became a vocal opponent of the Vietnam War”. Following Morgenthau’s legacy of dissent on US foreign policy, a group of international relations scholars (including prominent realists) in the US academy published a piece in *the New York Times* in September 2002, warning the US government that war against Iraq would not be in the national interest (Sears, 2017). From this point of view, some US scholars oppose war even if it meets the demands of national interest, because realists believe that in the deeper context of moral principles, war has no real winners and promotes no real national interests. The neorealists add morality to maintain the US national interests. For other competitors, such as Russia and China, American morality does not represent the ultimate in ethics; it can lead to dual standards when solving international issues. They advocate negotiations through dialogue to find common ground in disputes.

The above arguments remind us that different ideological disputes continue to define the future leadership of the international order. All sovereign states tend to regard their own national interests as the highest moral standard, but the US still challenges totalitarianism. The US admires some other human rights above sovereignty; Trump used the term “principled realism” as central to an international order based on realism; the problem is how to achieve that. Obviously, some states with different ideologies regard the US as a destroyer of sovereignty, because they believe that the United States attempts to be dominant in the international order by weakening their credibility through so-called soft power, via NGOs. This leads to chaos in their domestic order. Idealists believe that establishing international can help to achieve peace. The OOH is the most important international organization representing sovereign states; it represents the connection between idealism and realism.

The concept behind Trump’s “principled realism” has four main organizing principles: protecting the American homeland, protecting American prosperity, preserving peace through strength, and advancing US

influence. “Economic security is national security”, as he has said. Trump describes his vision of national security as putting “America First”. In other words, “Economic vitality, growth and prosperity at home” are “absolutely necessary for American power and influence abroad”. The National Security Strategy is supposed to guide an administration’s priorities for global engagement, economic bargaining, and demonstrations of military strength (Gearan & Mufson, 2017). This means that the US takes responsibility for maintaining the liberal international order and meets the demands for US dominance and privileges. In the basic cognition of the ontology of realism, it has limited scope for all human welfare. Even so, all sovereign states attempt to promote military power to protect their national interests without ethical morality because national interests are set up as the highest standard for sovereignty. We can see that the geopolitical race is an extension of neorealism. Trump maintains morality as the principle underpinning foreign policy.

### **The Geopolitical Race Between Russia and US Decides Their Influence on the World**

Both the historical and geographical aspects of the concept of geopolitics were developed in 1899, when the idea was originally proposed by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellen. It was the world view of Western imperialists who aimed to expand the European geographical sphere of influence to the rest of the world in order to seize more resources. It therefore indicates the hierarchical relationships in the European centralized ontology. The concept was extended by the Nazis to mean a fight for more territory. Given this expansionist context, the term “geopolitics” was out of favour until the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, used it to define the global contest between the United States and the Soviet Union (O’Tuathail, 1998).

Geopolitics can be used as a theoretical research tool in the field of political rhetoric to make foreign policy decisions. From this diplomatic viewpoint, the word of geopolitics analytically frames the policy-making process in terms of national interests rather than ideology. During the Cold War period, Kissinger defined it as an approach that focused on the requirements of equilibrium, emphasizing the “balance of power”. Secondly, the meaning of geopolitics assumes that geographical factors influence most national interests; this is taken for granted by policy-makers aiming to ensure global security and a military presence in various regions. Halford Mackinder has defined it as the exploitation of armed forces by economic wants and geographical opportunities to obtain political objectives (Gray & Sloan, 1999).

The dominant geopolitical view arose from the European-American experience and was then projected onto the rest of the world and into the future theory and practice of world politics. To think about the geopolitical framing of foreign policies is to recall the doctrines enunciated by various US presidents, from Monroe in 1823 through Truman in 1947, and G. W. Bush in 2002. The Monroe Doctrine initially involved three geopolitical imperatives relating to the US foreign policy: The Americas were closed to further European colonization; the United States must avoid becoming involved in wars in Europe; and the US government would regard efforts made by any European power to expand its empire into the Western hemisphere as a threat to the United States itself. During the Johnson and Reagan presidencies, this doctrine was invoked to justify the US military intervention in many parts of the Latin America. John Agnew has envisioned world politics by regarding the modern geopolitical imagination in multiple ways, rather than as a simple reflection of competing geopolitical and national interests and the “identities” of fetishized states (Agnew, 2003).

Ratzel’s study of the way in which human society is shaped by the natural environment has not only led to the sub-field of political geography but has also fed into the study of strategic studies, both in its Anglo-American and Nazi manifestations. The historical trend was from smaller peripheral to larger continental

states. Technological developments from the age of discovery had benefited both sea and land powers. Maritime technology had allowed the states of Western Europe to circumnavigate the physical barriers that had penned them in and turned the ocean from an obstacle to a highway. At the same time those at the Eastern margins—Russia—had succeeded in conquering the pivot area of central Asia (Ashworth, 2011).

Eurasia is home to most of the world's politically assertive and dynamic states. All of the historical pretenders to global power originated in Eurasia. The world's most populous aspirants to regional hegemony, China and India, are in Eurasia, as are all the potential political or economic challengers to American primacy. Eurasia accounts for 75 percent of the world's population, 60 percent of its GNP, and 75 percent of its energy resources. Collectively, Eurasia's potential power overshadows even America's. Eurasia is the world's axial supercontinent. A power that dominated Eurasia would exercise decisive influence over two of the world's three most economically productive regions, Western Europe and East Asia. A glance at the map also suggests that a country dominant in Eurasia would almost automatically control the Middle East and Africa. With Eurasia now serving as the decisive geopolitical chessboard, it no longer suffices to fashion one policy for Europe and another for Asia. What happens with the distribution of power on the Eurasian landmass will be of decisive importance to America's global primacy and historical legacy (Brzezinski, 1997).

Eurasianism and geopolitics have become theoretical and doctrinal manifestations of the geomentality of Russia's foreign and security policy establishment. Political thinking about the importance of geographical space has strong intellectual and academic roots in Russia. The idea of Eurasianism emerged in 1920 and re-emerged in the 1990s. The decision on NATO enlargement helped Eurasianist ideas to emerge as the dominant doctrine in Russia's foreign and security policy. The NATO enlargement issue united Russia's political class in their opposition to this policy. The 1999 NATO-Yugoslavia war convinced the majority of Russians that Eurasians had always been right in their criticism of the West, NATO, and the Russian Liberals (Tchantouridze, 2001). Afterwards, the Russian authority has begun to adopt defensive realism to formulate its foreign and security policy. This direction has made the Russian president powerful, as several presidencies have resisted Western geopolitical expansion through NATO enlargement and economic sanctions against Russia. The distrust between the West and Russia have consolidated Eurasianism as a national identity and broadened its development in the East under the strategy of "Pivoting to Asia".

Realist and imperialist frames have dominated analyses of Russia's foreign policy under the leadership of Vladimir Putin. In one concept associated with defensive realism, Russia has been viewed as a status quo great power state seeking to preserve its position in the international system by maintaining the balance of power threatened by the US. From this standpoint, Russia's decision to annex Crimea stemmed from its desire to contain and balance the US. Prior Western activities, such as NATO's enlargement, prompted Russia's pushback when the opportunity presented itself. In another argument informed by offensive realism, Russia has been portrayed as a revisionist power harbouring aggressive intentions and pursuing the goal of power-aggrandizement. According to the theory of offensive realism, Russia's decision to invade Crimea was rational and expected, as it allowed the Kremlin to acquire the requisite strategic control over a vital military security asset (Omelicheva, 2016).

Robert Dannenberg, Frank J. Cilluffo, and Sharon L. Cardash (2014) have argued that the Crimea event should be understood through a geopolitical analysis of Putin's Russia. Russia moved to annex Crimea; the speed and audacity of the action shook Eastern Europe and surprised the West. The West used economic sanctions to counterattack, resisting the influence of geopolitical change after the collapse of the USSR. Putin views sanctions as an opportunity to rebuild areas of the Russian economy that have suffered since the collapse of the Soviet Union and to reverse the increasing emphasis of the Russian economy on exporting commodities

and importing manufactured goods. Putin wishes to use sanctions to change the world's macroeconomic paradigm. He has begun his own "Pivot toward Asia", finding an increasingly sympathetic audience in China. The Ukraine is the first step in Putin's campaign to reject the West culturally, economically, and strategically, in favour of a genuine and meaningful pivot toward the East. To make it all work, however, he needs China, Iran, and India—which is one reason why the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is more important than people give it credit for. In any case, Putin calculates that one important element in Russia's ability to withstand Ukraine-related sanctions is his personal relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping, along with a series of economic and energy agreements. Finally, Putin is putting a lot of energy into building up the Eurasian Union as a regional counterpart to the EU and an instrument for Moscow to use to exert influence over its neighbours (Dannenberg et al., 2014).

In other words, Russia's geopolitical strategy plays a key role in strengthening its power in the regions. The Black Sea gives Russia navy ports for its Black Sea Fleet and the ability to construct pipelines to Europe; these enhance Russia's influence on Europe and the Middle East and strengthen Russia's national security. Russia relies on this energy supply to support its federal budget. Energy is considered to be the most important strategic resource leveraging geopolitical influence. After the Crimean event, the Western block regarded Russia's actions as a form of aggression. For this reason, they launched a series of economic sanctions to pressure Russia. Western economic sanctions have strengthened the liberal ideological and military block but hampered the construction of Russia-EU gas pipelines and collaboration in other areas, such as fighting international terrorism. President Putin decided to boost his Asian strategy through a "Pivot to Asia" and has therefore promoted Russian geopolitical influence in the Asian Pacific Region. This strategy is helping Russia develop the economy of the Far East Region to integrate it better into North Eastern Asia, through which its path extends to South Asia. Russia has promoted its role in the Korean Peninsula and intensified the geopolitical wrestling among China, Japan, and the United States. Russia and China have used this new situation to work more closely together to map peace-route plans in international conflict regions. This approach could provide a similar arena for pursuing Russia-US relations.

The added external pressure on the Russian oil and gas industry stems from the increased EU and US sanctions announced on 12 September 2014, which specifically target Russia's energy, defence, and financial industries. The oil and gas sector is affected by the limited access to financing and by limitations on technology transfer for unconventional and offshore developments. While the sanctions have specifically focused on exploration and production from offshore and unconventional resources in Russia, their effect has spread through the entire oil and gas industry. In response to sanctions, the Russian government and industry operators have intensified their focus on partnerships with Asia-based interests. When the South Stream gas pipeline to Europe was cancelled, an immediate alternative for Russian gas was proposed by President Putin—a sub-sea pipeline under the Black Sea to deliver gas to Turkey. In addition to replacing the South Stream project with this Turkey-bound gas pipeline, Russia and China have signed a memorandum of understanding on 9 November to build another gas pipeline. The new pipeline, "Altai", will connect Russia's West Siberian fields to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. The pipeline will run to the West of the Power of Siberia ("SilaSibiri") pipeline announced in May 2014, which connects East Siberian fields to China's Eastern provinces (Global Data, 2014). The gas pipeline has guaranteed Russia-China relations and deepened the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination.

Russia-China relations have been deepened and strengthened in recent years. As *The Diplomat* reported last year,

During the Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia, his counterpart Vladimir Putin agreed upon multiple joint statements, vowing to deepen the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination. China gained Russia's support on the North Korea issue in May and both sides emphasized their absolute agreement on a "non-military solution" multiple times. Both sides believe that the current international system is moving towards multi-polarization. The rise of emerging markets and developing countries has become an irresistible historical trend (Wu, 2017).

Kissinger is the only geopolitical practitioner who manages to get President Trump's undivided attention. He had been, so far, the top facilitator of a dialogue—and possible reset—between Washington and Moscow. This is part of his remixed balance of power or Divide and Rule strategy—which consists in prying Russia away from China, with the ultimate aim of derailing Eurasian integration. The Russia-China strategic partnership—uniting the Pentagon's avowed top two threats to America—does not come with a formal treaty signed with pomp and circumstance. There's no way to know what deeper terms Beijing and Moscow have agreed upon during those innumerable Xi-Putin meetings (Escobar, 2017). From the vantage point of Kissinger's balance of power, the US needs to destroy the relationship between Russia and China because Moscow cannot defeat Washington militarily. Both Russia and China are pursuing geopolitical influence to develop their own domestic economies; the US will be deprived by this. Kissinger came up with a successful diplomatic policy to unite China to contain Soviet Union; China also used its buffer status to implement reforms, incorporating Western capitalism to alleviate poverty and create better standard of living. Now rising China can improve its influence through economic growth than use its leverage to promote its own geopolitical status in the international order.

In recent years, since the Russian president Putin accelerated his "Pivot toward Asia" strategy, economic integration with China has become a foreign policy of Russia. Western economic sanctions have destroyed the US-Russia relationship, making Russia develop new economic transactions under the sanctions by promoting integration with the Eurasian regions and East Asia. The Eurasian Economic Union and the One-Belt-One-Road economic plan are Russia and China's bilateral and multilateral integration plan, given geopolitical considerations. China also worries about US containment and tends to promote the coordinated China-Russian comprehensive strategic partnership as a way of facing international challenges, not only from the United States, but also from international terrorism, extremism, separatism, and beyond. The geopolitical race among Russia, the US, China, and non-state organizations have driven the world map into unpredictable chaos, from the unipolar to multilateralism. This new system includes many emerging economies that are participating in the process of decision-making in the more complicated and controversial international community.

### **Russiagate Reflects the US's Russian Phobia and Accelerates the Global Arms Race**

Paul Craig Roberts has criticized the Russiagate scandal as the result of freedom of the press and the American people, who have been misled by the mainstream media for a long time. He has written, the orchestration of "Russiagate" proves that the CIA, the NSA, and the FBI are so corrupt and unaccountable that they comprise the greatest threat to the American people in the entire history of America. The only solution is to break these agencies into a thousand splinters, as President John F. Kennedy intended, and rebuild them from scratch with total transparency. No more protecting their vast crimes under the cloak of "national security". The orchestration of Russiagate is proof that the alleged "national security agencies" are an anti-American force

detrimental to our survival as a free people. The criminals in the FBI, CIA, and DNC must be investigated, indicted, prosecuted, convicted, and imprisoned—or freedom in America is forever dead. One question with which we are left is why the mainstream media has failed in its investigating and reporting responsibilities, instead serving as a cheerleader for the orchestration known as Russiagate? *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *NPR*, *CNN*, and the rest are serving as public relations agents for Russiagate (Roberts, 2018). According to this view, Trump is not the culprit of Russiagate; instead, the national security agencies have controlled the direction of the regime and the mainstream media hypes various events to decide who can seize power in this country. The election of Trump was due to populism rather than capitalism. This trend has made the traditional elites and oligarchs uncomfortable, as well as obstructing their foreign policy.

Mate assumes that the controversy over alleged Russian meddling and the Trump campaign's collusion has consumed Washington and the national media. Yet nearly one year later, there is still no concrete evidence of its central allegations. There are *claims* by US intelligence officials that the Russian government hacked emails and used social media to help elect Donald Trump, but there has yet to be any corroboration. However, the focus on Russia has utility far beyond the Clinton camp. It dovetails with elements of state power that oppose Trump's call for improved relations with Moscow and are willing to deploy a familiar playbook of Cold War fear mongering to block any developments on that front (Mate, 2017). Why is it that Russiagate cannot impeach Trump but is making his decision-making process more authoritarian?

Mates sees Russiagate as a political attempt to obstruct a reconciliation between US and Russia. There is no evidence that can prove that Russia meddled in the 2016 presidential elections. If President Trump wins the mid-term elections, this will strengthen Trump's legitimacy when it comes to improving relations with Russia. If we consider Soviet reforms on glasnost and perestroika, we will see that the collapse of the Soviet Union took place during the reconciliation between Reagan and Gorbachev, who attempted to use the Western system to provide freedom and democracy. As Nye said, globalization is not a trade agreement; it is America's soft power, used to protect the liberal order from the totalitarian world of communism. A new Cold War encompassing the contemporary US-Russia relationship will generate new military operations and an arms race between the US and Russia; the original Cold War led to a bipolarity, in which the Soviet Union was the main opponent of the US. The post-Cold War world is a unipolarity in which the United States is the superpower and Russia is the declining power. Russia still possesses a lot of nuclear weapons to provide strategic deterrence. In other words, a confrontation will consolidate Russia's patriotic sentiments and become a reason for Russia to develop weapons of mass destruction. The United States has similar reactions, although Russian elites will try to convince the United States that the future international order will be more dangerous in a tense scenario involving unlimited nuclear arsenal treaties, and may suggest launching dialogues to discuss this issue.

The history of the US-Russian Cold War nuclear arms race began after 1945, when the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan to end World War II. On 26 May 1972, President Richard Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev signed the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, which called for the first reductions in the number of nuclear weapons. A second treaty limiting anti-ballistic missile systems was also signed that day. By 1988, the United States and Soviet Union had agreed to a framework calling for dramatic reductions in nuclear weapons. In July 1991, President George H.W. Bush and Gorbachev signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty that locked in those reductions. On 8 April 2010, President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed the New START Treaty in Prague. Russia has 7,300 nuclear warheads, US records show, while the United States has 6,970 (Locker, 2016).

Some scholars, including Sagan, Solingen, Hymans, and Kramer have argued that the longest-standing theory for why states acquire nuclear weapons is external insecurity. This theory predicts that, as states feel greater nuclear or conventional threats posed by other states, they become more motivated to acquire nuclear weapons. The history of nuclear proliferation is therefore a series of reactions to security threats: Germany's World War II nuclear program caused the United States to go nuclear; the American nuclear program caused the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea to go nuclear; the Soviet nuclear program caused Britain, France, and perhaps South Africa to go nuclear; China's nuclear threat caused India to go nuclear; India's threat caused Pakistan to go nuclear. The Arab conventional threat and perhaps the Soviet nuclear threat caused Israel to go nuclear, and the Israeli nuclear program in turn stimulated nuclear programs in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Iran. This is the fundamental arms race dynamic in international relations, closely related to the security dilemma and the spiral model of war. Absent higher levels of insecurity, states wish to avoid the financial and diplomatic costs of going nuclear (Reiter, 2014).

Reiter's research findings indicate that nuclear weapons deployments reassure countries more effectively than alliances, perhaps because foreign nuclear deployments are more credible than written commitments. Nuclear weapons deployed to an invasion target are relatively likely to be used, whereas a target's ally might renege on a written commitment. These findings indicate that effective reassurance may require US nuclear deployments, since forming alliance agreements or deploying US troops might not be enough to steer a state away from going nuclear. Such deployments might fuel arms races, make nuclear accidents and terrorism more likely, and inflame anti-Americanism. Perhaps more importantly, foreign nuclear deployment is not a very feasible option for addressing rogue, anti-American nuclear aspirants like Iran. To deal with potential nuclear proliferators like Iran, the United States and the rest of the international community must consider other options, such as diplomacy and economic sanctions (Reiter, 2014). Reiter has analysed the approaches used to deter rogues state through economic sanctions and diplomatic solutions, which work better than nuclear deployment. Nuclear deployment easily causes nuclear disasters and an arms race. It will not reduce tension or nonproliferation in global regions.

### **Conclusion for Further Discussion**

Many scholars and analysts believe that confrontation between the United States and Russia will continue in the adversarial atmosphere created by the Ukraine crisis and Russiagate. Neither Russian nor US experts believe that Russia or the United States can afford to start a nuclear war, but both sides have to find ways to reduce the escalating tension by agreeing on concrete issues for negotiation and cooperation. The West regards the Ukraine crisis and Russiagate as examples of Russian aggressive geopolitical behaviour, ranging from economy-driven aggression to cybersecurity-based information warfare. The West therefore feels that Russia is challenging their national security; they need to counterattack against Russia's geopolitical ambitions through economic sanctions and military deterrence. This response is creating a new balance of power; it changed after the end of the Cold War and the start of NATO enlargement. The dilemma is that Russia has been too strong to compromise with the US in its geopolitical games, for example in the Ukraine and Syria. What price will the Trump administration pay to achieve normalization with Russia? Putin is very serious about overcoming difficulties related to economic sanctions and low energy prices through a geostrategy involving Asia and the Eurasian regions. The Russia-China strategic comprehensive partnership seems to have deepened in the face of US-Russian adversarial relations. This will give China a broader chessboard to implement its own geopolitical

strategy under the “One-Belt-One Road” economic plan. Russia and China have consolidated their Eurasian strategies to counterattack the Western Liberal International order to meet their national interests and demands. If the United States cannot normalize relations with Russia, North Korea, Iran, and other states will develop nuclear weapons to guard against external threats in an unstable and uncertain world. US-Russia relations therefore determine global security more than any other international relationship. US and Russian experts on both sides have suggested resuming the dialogue to limit nuclear weapons; the balance of nuclear deterrence with the signing of periodic treaties to control the global security has created the present international order. There is less space for Russia to concede. The next move on the chessboard depends on Trump’s ability to stop the Russiagate investigation and cooperate with Russia.

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