

Vladimir TRAPARA¹

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN U.S.-RUSSIAN RELATIONS AS THE KEY FACTOR IN POST-COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Abstract: The author explains why he considers Russian-American relations the key factor in international relations, even after the end of the Cold War. In spite of the Soviet collapse and Russia's abandonment of the communist ideology, the rapprochement between the two powers has not occurred yet. The basic cause lies in the incompatibility of their identities, which is being continually reproduced. The change in distribution of power in the international system at the end of the Cold War – transformation from the bipolar into a unipolar system – made international relations less stable and predictable and therefore, more prone to the eruption of a new world conflict, especially with a relative rise of Russia's power in the first decade of the 21st century that made it capable of confronting Washington's hegemonic plans in a more assertive way. Nevertheless, although during the last 25 years Russian-American relations were characterized by a constant rivalry, they went through changes having both warmer and colder stages. Due to these changes, conclusions about the impact of various conditions in U.S.-Russian relations upon international relations in general (and position of Serbia in particular) can be derived as well as (relying on IR theories) predictions about what necessary is for the success of the two powers' rapprochement in the future.

Key words: United States, Russia, Cold War, rapprochement, identity, unipolarity.

¹ Vladimir Trapara, Research Associate, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade. The paper has been carried out within the project "Serbia in contemporary international integration processes – foreign policy, international, economic, legal and security aspects" of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, No. OI 179023 for the 2011-2015 period.

Introduction: the importance of research into contemporary Russian-American relations

As a relatively young scientific discipline, international relations theory had its golden age during the Cold War, when all contemporary schools of thought were established. Relations between the two superpowers were an unavoidable topic of the period, being a determining factor of international relations. The development of IR theory in the United States was fueled by the Cold War efforts. In the post-Cold War era, new IR theories – not necessarily American, or Western – were formulated. However, U.S.-Russian relations were unfairly marginalized as their subject, while some other events and processes became dominant fields of interest. Recent events in the Ukrainian crisis removed any doubt that relations between United States and Russia should once again become a dominant field of IR theory research. They ought to be used as a testing ground for new theories as well.

The key importance of contemporary U.S.-Russian relations for general international relations is both practical and theoretical. The practical one is derived from possibly the most important lesson that history teaches us: *as long as the recent great war remains unfinished by a comprehensive political solution acceptable to all relevant actors, there can be neither a stable international system, nor world peace.* The Cold War was not a war in the purest sense, but by the depth of enmity between rivals, the energy it required from them, and the consequences for broader international system – it was comparable to any great world conflict. The fact that its conclusion did not bring forth a comprehensive solution acceptable to all relevant actors (especially Russia and the United States) is devastating for contemporary international relations. Not only is international politics today burdened by the unfinished nature of the Cold War, but also by various unresolved issues from the First and the Second World War, which were kept frozen during the Cold War.²

That the Cold War remains unfinished, in the sense that there is no real rapprochement between its participants yet, we can conclude from Charles Kupchan's definition of *rapprochement*. According to him, in the case of rapprochement states abandon military rivalry, agree to resolve their disputes peacefully, and establish mutual expectations of peaceful coexistence.³ Several indicators tell us that the relations between contemporary Russia and the United States do not match this definition, thus these two states still perceive one another as a geopolitical threat. There is no agreement between them on how European

² See Sergei Karaganov, "The Magic Numbers of 2009", *Russia in Global Affairs*, No 2, April-June 2009, Internet, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_1303626/4/2014

³ Charles A. Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace*, Princeton University Press, 2010, p. 2.

(and global) security regime should look like: the two states are members of opposed military alliances (NATO and CSTO), while common security institutions (UN and OSCE) work with serious difficulties due to this disagreement. Russia and the U.S. face difficulties in disarmament and arms control (examples: ACFE Treaty blockade, missile defense issue), while the very fact that they negotiate these issues at all proves their rivalry – why would two countries negotiate disarmament if they do not feel threatened by one another's arms? The two powers have different views on resolving many current "hot" and "frozen" conflicts, while at the same time they do not hesitate to use force to resolve them in their own favor, sometimes helping opposite sides in civil wars.

To overcome the Russian-American rivalry and to solve disputed issues derived from the unfinished nature of the Cold War, a research into the two powers' relations is necessary. Its theoretical importance lies in the older IR theories failure to predict and explain the end of the Cold War. Thus, the explanatory power of the new theories should be tested on contemporary U.S.-Russian relations in order not to repeat such mistake, so that the reality of contemporary international relations (the key factor of which are the U.S.-Russian relations) could be successfully captured by the theory. The absence of Russian-American rapprochement in spite of Soviet Union and communism's disappearance is an enigma which poses a challenge to any IR scholar. There is one more reason why the research into contemporary U.S.-Russian relations is important. As most of IR theories are obsessed by types of international system and their influence upon the behavior of states and the outcomes of their interactions, the type of contemporary international system is especially interesting. In this system, both the U.S. and Russia have special places – the U.S. as a superpower, and Russia as an ordinary great power. In the following chapter we discuss this one and other theoretically significant issues connected to post-Cold War Russian-American relations.

The constants and variables in the post-Cold War U.S.-Russian relations

The key constant in U.S.-Russian relations during both the Cold War and the post-Cold War period is the incompatibility of the two states' national identities. The persistence of this incompatibility is the underlying reason for the absence of their rapprochement. Namely, Russia-U.S. identity opposition manifested itself during the Cold War as ideological contradiction between capitalism and communism only on the surface. Russia's transition from socialism to capitalism revealed deeper foundations of this incompatibility. To discover its elements, David Campbell's performative theory could help. According to this theory, the identity of a state is not given and fixed, but is constituted in relation to some

difference and threat: “self” is constituted in relation to “other” which is a threat to our identity because it is an “alternative mode of being”.⁴ Foreign policy is the central practice here, because it “draws” identity boundaries, by presenting ideational threats as exclusively external (territorial).⁵ Domestic actors – holders of alternative identity interpretations – are “excluded” by their linking with foreign actors capable of endangering “us” physically, so that the society is disciplined and homogenized around specific identity interpretation.⁶ These boundaries become fixed over time, making the identity more stable and influential to foreign policy, which reproduces it on and on.⁷

To Campbell, every state is an “imagined community”, for it lacks “prediscursive foundations” – there is nothing identity could be based on until foreign policy constitutes it in relation to the threat of the “other”. However, not all states are equally “imagined”, for some of them are based upon (as a replacement for prediscursive foundation) the identity of certain people (ethnic group) which formed their national state. This is not the case with the United States, for it is a completely artificial state, made of people of diverse origin who came to live on certain territory. Campbell thus says the U.S. is “imagined community *par excellence*”.⁸ A consequence of this is a very rigid identity, based on ideological homogenization, rooted in Puritan political ethos, which used to be extremely intolerant towards the different and not eager to make compromises.⁹ Campbell views entire U.S. history as a process of reproduction of the identity based upon individualism as the supreme value, where the Cold War is only a stage.¹⁰ According to the predictions of performative theory, the

⁴ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-75.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

⁸ “No state possesses a prediscursive, stable identity... Yet for no state is this condition as central as it is for America. If all states are ‘imagined communities’, devoid of ontological being apart from the many and varied practices which constitute their reality, then America is the imagined community *par excellence*. For there never has been a country called ‘America’, nor a people known as ‘Americans’, from whom a national identity is drawn. There is a United States of America, and there are many who declare themselves to be ‘Americans’... but ‘America’ only exists by virtue of people coming to live in a particular place... more than any other state, the imprecise process of imagination is what constitutes American identity. In this context, the practices of ‘foreign policy’ come to have a special importance. If the identity of the ‘true nationals’ remains intrinsically elusive and inorganic, it can only be secured by an effective and continual ideological demarcation of those who are ‘false’ to the defining ideals”. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 145. “In the history of U.S. foreign policy – regardless of the radically different contexts in which it has operated – the formalized practices and ritualized acts of security discourse have

Soviet Union is only represented as a security threat, while it was in fact a political one, for its model of society was opposed to the model deeply rooted in U.S. identity.¹¹ Moreover, the famous foreign policy document from the beginning of the Cold War, NSC-68, states that the problem lies not only in the Soviet Union and communism, but in the dangers stemming from the anarchic international system.¹² Thus, the United States very early undertook the mission it has been trying to accomplish in the post-Cold War period: getting rid of international anarchy and establishing a new world order based upon universal (in fact American) values.

All actors whose behavior contributes to the continuation of international anarchy, and whose values are contradictory to the American model are considered as a threat to the U.S. identity and should be eliminated. Therefore, it is not unusual that post-Cold War Russia is a “pain in the neck” to Washington. Its identity is in many ways incompatible with the American one, in spite of the abandonment of the communist ideology, for it is still opposed to the project written down in NSC-68 – which the U.S. would stick to unrelated to the existence of communism and the Soviet Union. Russia is a country that is historically used to living with differences – as an imperial multiethnic state on the inside (contrary to the U.S. as a “melting pot” that denies internal differences), as well as on the outside, as a country that borders, clashes and cooperates with various great and regional powers which promote different values and visions of the order (contrary to the U.S., a country that is used to imposing order in Western hemisphere without the necessity to coexist with other great powers). In this sense, the

worked to produce a conception of the United States in which freedom, liberty, law, democracy, individualism, faith, order, prosperity and civilization are claimed to exist because of the constant struggle with an often violent suppression of opponents said to embody tyranny, oppression, anarchy, totalitarianism, collectivism, atheism, and barbarism”. David Campbell, “The Biopolitics of Security: Oil, Empire and the Sports Utility Vehicle”, Internet, http://www.david-campbell.org/wp-content/documents/Biopolitics_of_Security.pdf 26/4/2014, p. 948.

¹¹ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, op. cit., p. 159.

¹² The NSC-68 document from 1950 says, among other things, that the purpose of the United States as nation is “to ensure the integrity and vitality of our free society, which is founded upon the dignity and worth of the individual... There is a basic conflict between the idea of freedom... and the idea of slavery... The implacable purpose of the slave state to eliminate the challenge of freedom has placed the two great powers at opposite poles”. However, there is not only concern about the Soviet threat: “In a shrinking world, which now faces the threat of atomic warfare, it is not an adequate objective merely to seek to check Kremlin design, for the absence of order is becoming less and less tolerable... One is a policy which we would probably pursue *even if there were no Soviet threat*. It is a policy of attempting to develop a healthy international community. The other is the policy of ‘containing’ the Soviet system. These two policies are closely interrelated and interact with each other”. David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, op. cit., p. 25 (emphasis added).

competition of values on the world stage is something normal and desirable to Russia, which reveals the origin of its conflict with U.S. universalism.¹³ To protect its values' uniqueness in this competition, having in mind its very precarious position between Europe and Asia, Russia insists on being a strong state on the inside, and on the outside one of the several great powers that together (in "concert") participate in the management of the multi-centric world order.¹⁴ This is at odds with American endeavor to eliminate international anarchy and the independent role of any other great power in international relations.

Post-Cold War conflict between the U.S, as a power aspiring to achieve a mono-centric new world order based on universal values, and Russia, that defends its value uniqueness and great power status, supporting multi-centric world order and competition among values – is not a coincidence, but the expression of deep incompatibility of the two powers' identities, which is reproduced throughout the whole post-Cold War period, thus being a constant element in Russian-American relations.¹⁵ The key variable in these relations is

¹³ Lionel Ponsard says: "What Russian geography has taught us is that the immensity of the Russian territory, stretching from Europe to Asia, and the consequent heterogeneity of that territory and the people living there, has been the ground for an identity that includes *the consciousness of plurality and the acceptance of differences*. In other words, the Russian identity cannot be that of the Russian people in its ethnic sense only; it must embrace a dimension that is broad enough for all the inhabitants of the Russian territory to identify themselves with". Lionel Ponsard, *Russia, NATO and Cooperative Security: Bridging the Gap*, Routledge, 2007, p. 31 (emphasis added)

¹⁴ Andrei Tsygankov at many places cites Russian statesmen for the recent period, who (regardless of context and their personal ideological orientation) underline the necessity of Russia's status as a strong and independent power, treated as such by others (the West above else), in order to preserve its survival and uniqueness. Check several examples. Kozyrev: "...it appears that some Western politicians, in Washington and elsewhere, envision Russia not as an equal partner but as a junior partner. In this view a 'good Russian' is always a follower, never a leader". (the article in *New York Times* from 1994, quoted in Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, op. cit., p. 68). Primakov: "Russia is both Europe and Asia, and this geopolitical location continues to play a tremendous role in formulation of its foreign policy... Geopolitical values are constants that cannot be abolished by historical developments" (from the first official press conference as foreign minister, p. 93). Putin: "Such a country as Russia can survive and develop within the existing borders only if it stays as a great power. During all of its times of weakness... Russia was invariably confronted with the threat of disintegration". (addressing Federation Council in 2003, p. 129). Putin: "For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly that should be gotten rid of... they see it as a source and guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of any change". (the article in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* from 1999, p. 131). Putin: "Russia is a country with a history that spans more than a thousand years and has practically always used the privilege to carry out an independent foreign policy. We are not going to change this tradition today". (the Munich speech from 2007, p. 171).

¹⁵ For the summation of characteristics of this incompatibility, see: Vladimir Trapara, "National Security Strategies of Russia (2009) and the United States (2010): A New Stage in the Reproduction of Incompatible National Identities", *The Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 1149, January-March 2013, p. 18.

distribution of power between Russia and the United States, and in the international system in general. Namely, what makes the post-Cold War international system different from the Cold War one is the transformation from bipolarity to unipolarity. What are the consequences of this for Russian-American relations and international relations in general? Within realist school of thought in IR theory, there is a general agreement on the stability of bipolar system,¹⁶ while scholars disagree on unipolar system regarding this issue.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the post-Cold War unipolar system is unique in that it contains two ordinary great powers (Russia and China), besides a superpower (the United States), which makes this system similar to Randall Schweller's tripolar system¹⁸ and John Mearsheimer's unbalanced multipolar system,¹⁹ which are extremely unstable. Following this logic, I will treat the post-Cold War unipolar system as relatively unstable and easily transformable into something else, but also prone to the outbreak of war between the great powers.

Two mentioned scholars – Schweller and Mearsheimer – belong to offensive realism. Mearsheimer is an offensive neorealist, and Schweller is an offensive neoclassical realist.²⁰ Offensive realism's basic assumption is that there are revisionist powers in international system (influenced by insecurity in the anarchic international environment, or by internally caused dissatisfaction with the existing order), bent on establishing (world or regional) hegemony and remaking international order according to their own designs.²¹ From offensive realism's

¹⁶ For Kenneth Waltz's arguments, see: Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars, Spring 1988, pp. 620-624. Mearsheimer and Schweller mostly agree with Waltz. See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Norton, New York, 2001, pp. 337-347; Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, p. 44.

¹⁷ Neorealists mostly see this system as unstable, because great concentration of power within it is seen as a threat by other states and forces them to take measures to restore the balance of power. However, neoclassical realist Wohlforth considers this system as the most stable one, for within it "one state's capabilities are too great to be counterbalanced". William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World", *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Summer 1999, pp. 5, 9, 22.

¹⁸ Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest*, op. cit., pp. 41-56.

¹⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, op. cit., pp. 344-346.

²⁰ Neoclassical realism differs from neorealism in that it explains behavior of states not only by systemic level of analysis, but also by unit level (factors which belong to the state – unit of the system). See: Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy", *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 1, October 1998, pp. 144-172; Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited", *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Winter 2000-2001, pp. 128-161.

²¹ J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, op. cit., pp. 2, 22, 32-36; Schweller says: "Predatory states motivated by expansion and absolute gains, not security and the fear of relative

viewpoint, the continuation of U.S.-Russian rivalry after the Cold War could be easily explained. In unipolar system, the United States has a revisionist policy – it is bent on using its overwhelming power to establish global hegemony, transforming international order from anarchic to hierarchic one. This assumes the elimination of all other independent actors, especially great powers, and turning them into U.S. vassals. On the other side there is Russia, whose ordinary great power status directs it to defensive policy – a policy of *status quo*, in which Russia as one of several great powers wants to participate in world order management along with other centers of power.

The distribution of power between Russia and the United States was also changing during post-Cold War period, leaving behind not insignificant consequences for their behavior and relations, as well as general international relations. During the nineties, Russia was too weak in comparison with the U.S, so its great power status and capability of defending it against American hegemonic designs were in question. Contrary to this, during the 21st century Russia's economic and military power increased, shrinking the gap that separated it from U.S. power.²² This enabled it to lead a more assertive foreign policy, including greater readiness to oppose Washington's expansion. On the other hand, the United States is also more persistent in its revisionism, trying to use its power advantage while it still has it, which makes Russian-American conflict harsher. The only exception in this sense is Obama's "reset" initiative.

Different phases of post-Cold War U.S.-Russian relations: three unsuccessful attempts of rapprochement

Influenced by the mentioned factors, the Russian-American relations during the post-Cold War period passed through different phases. Although constantly competitive, these relations had their "warmer" and "colder" moments. This dynamic can be observed in three attempts of rapprochement, each ending in failure and mutual disappointment, followed by the continuing deterioration of the two powers' relations close to the situation which resembles the Cold War enmity. The introduction to the first rapprochement attempt was Russia's (Soviet Union's) unilateral decision to end the Cold War. In fact, Yeltsin's pro-Western

losses, are the prime movers of neorealist theory". Randall L. Schweller, "Neorealism's Status Quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?", in: *Realism: Restatements and Renewal*, Benjamin Frankel (ed.), Frank Cass, London and New York, 1996, p. 119.

²² Economic indicators clearly prove this. While Russia's nominal GDP at the time of NATO's aggression against Yugoslavia was 47 times smaller than U.S. one, at the time of Russian-Georgian War in 2008 it was "only" 8 and a half times smaller. Source: The World Bank, Internet, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD> 25/3/2014.

course from the beginning of nineties was nothing more than a continuation of Gorbachev's policy of abandoning struggle against the U.S. for the world hegemony, dismantling East-European sphere of influence, and the transition from socialism to capitalism. The new leadership in Moscow appreciated the "end of history" thesis, and viewed liberal democracy as a "wave of the future" which Russia should catch in order to find its rightful place among modern civilized states.²³ This elite's disappointment followed shortly, when it realized that in the American world order designs there was no place for distinctive features of Russia's society (which does not allow simple transplantation of American democratic model), not to mention Russia's independent great power status – on which Moscow would insist even at the time of the most extreme pro-Western policies.²⁴ After only several years, Moscow realized that Washington did not have an intention to treat it as an equal partner, but rather as a defeated Cold War adversary who should completely succumb to the will of the victor. The U.S. was also disappointed – it could not understand why Russia, even after the "end of history", clings to "19th century policies", the idea of unchallenged national sovereignty, great power concert, spheres of influence, etc.²⁵ Its moves towards Russia – that included a delusion of an equality in the shape of Russia's G8 admission and NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council establishment – it saw as truly benign and generous, without understanding why this was not enough for Russia.²⁶

After his victory in the 1996 elections, for which he desperately needed Western support, Yeltsin started to change his course towards the U.S. step by step. The expression of the will to abandon the obviously unsuccessful unilateral attempt of rapprochement was the appointment of Yevgeny Primakov, a politician close to the Eurasian idea and more hard-line towards the West, for the minister of foreign affairs, and later the prime minister.²⁷ The peak in deterioration in relations of the two powers happened in 1999, when NATO committed an aggression against Yugoslavia without UN approval and despite Russian

²³ Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2014, p. 36. According to Tsygankov, the "Westernizers" dominated Yeltsin's administration. They put an accent on Russia's similarity to the West, seeing the West as the most advanced civilization in the world. Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁴ In this paper Andrei Kozyrev – former minister of foreign affairs and the most prominent Westernizer – has already been quoted. He was also the first one who called the post-Soviet area a "zone of special responsibility and interest". (1993) Ibid, p. 84.

²⁵ Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2011, p. 91.

²⁶ Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, op. cit., pp. 15-17.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 26.

opposition. Since Clinton administration condemned similar Russian action in Chechnya later the same year, Yeltsin gave a very critical speech against U.S. policy at Istanbul OSCE summit.²⁸ However, at the end of the nineties Russia could hardly use anything against American policies but words. It was not powerful enough – crippled by transition from the beginning of the decade, anyway, it was severely struck by the 1998 economic crisis, which reduced its GDP to the lowest level since the end of the Cold War. Washington used Russian weakness during nineties to advance geopolitically. It tightly embraced former Soviet East-European satellites (including the three Baltic states which were parts of the Soviet Union), intervened in the Balkan wars to impose control over post-Yugoslav space, and consolidated its presence in the Middle East using the threat from Iraq and Iran as a pretext. The newly elected president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, concluded that Russia needed a break from confrontation with the West.²⁹

After September 11, Putin saw an opportunity for a new quality in relations with the United States. A new rapprochement attempt followed, this time in the shape of “anti-terrorist coalition”.³⁰ Clear successes were achieved in a short period of time. Russia strongly supported American intervention against Afghanistan, notably by allowing the U.S. to establish military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. U.S.-Russian relations between 2001 and 2003 were much better than they used to be at the end of the nineties. A close personal relationship between the two presidents – Putin and George W. Bush contributed to this.³¹ Nevertheless, this “honeymoon” did not last long, because the real rapprochement between the two states with such a rich history of mutual enmity requires much more than the agreement regarding only one issue – struggle against terrorism. It would be revealed soon that this struggle was nothing more than Washington neoconservatives’ pretext to continue with the expansion of American sphere of influence. In the spring of 2003, the United States invaded and occupied Iraq without the authorization from the UN and despite Russian (and German and French, as well) opposition. This coincided with the consolidation of East-European sphere of influence (the admission of several new NATO members, including the Baltic States), but also an attempt of advancement deeper into the post-Soviet space, where Russia could not remain indifferent.

With the “colored revolutions” in the post-Soviet space a red line was crossed, and this would be the primary cause of failure of the second Russian-American

²⁸ Ibid, p. 45.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 47.

³⁰ Putin hoped this coalition could become a foundation of a new world order. Ibid, p. 69.

³¹ At his first meeting with Putin in Slovenia in 2001, Bush gave his famous remark about how he “looked Putin in the eyes and got a sense of his soul”. Condoleeza Rice, then U.S. National security adviser and the main architect of Bush’s policy towards Russia, assessed that Bush’s confidence in Putin, based on personal relationship, could become a problem. Ibid, pp. 60-62.

rapprochement attempt.³² In both cases of a regime change performed by a pro-Western opposition – Georgia 2003 and Ukraine 2004 (in Kyrgyzstan 2005, however, the opposition that came to power was not pro-Western) – Russia acted with a restraint, but derived some lessons that would produce much more assertive stance in its foreign policy during the second Putin's term. This stance meant more readiness for confrontation with Washington over all issues on which the two countries disagree. This would not have been possible, if the gap in distribution of power between the U.S. and Russia had not shrunk during the first decade of the 21st century, thanks to higher economic growth rates (mostly influenced by increased fuel prices in the world markets) and internal political consolidation in Russia. Controversial moves of Bush's administration in 2007 and 2008 would provoke a sharp Russian response, causing the deterioration in the two powers' relations down to the lowest point since the end of the Cold War.

At the beginning of 2007, Washington started formal talks with Czech Republic and Poland about stationing the elements of American missile defense system in these countries. Claimed to serve as a defense against nuclear ballistic capabilities of "rogue states" (above all, Iran), this missile defense will be viewed by Moscow as a threat to its own strategic nuclear capabilities. Geographic location of this system and U.S. unilateral approach without taking Russian concerns into account instilled fear into Putin's administration that the system is planned against Russia, so that the success of its deployment would give Americans nuclear advantage – it would enable them to make credible threats, even to attack Russia with nuclear missiles, without the fear of retaliation.³³ In February 2007, Putin gave a speech in Munich, in which he strongly attacked American expansionist policy,³⁴ and later that year Russia withdrew from ACFE

³² Colored revolutions were part of Bush's "Freedom agenda", which was about exporting democracy throughout the world as the best path towards the world peace. This way roles were changed compared to the Cold War – while then the Soviet Union was the one to cling to the "limited sovereignty" doctrine, and to interfere in internal affairs of other states in the name of socialism, contemporary Russia defends principles of sovereignty and non-interference into internal affairs, opposing American policy of regime change in the name of democracy and freedom. Ibid, pp. 82-83.

³³ In autumn 2007 Putin compared U.S. missile defense plans with Cuban missile crisis. "Russia compares U.S. missile plans to Cuban crisis", RT, October 27, 2007, Internet, <http://rt.com/news/russia-compares-us-missile-plans-to-cuban-crisis/> 11/2/2014. Russia's fear for its own nuclear capabilities comes from its military doctrine, which reacts to NATO's conventional advantage by nuclear deterrence. On differences between Russian and U.S. nuclear strategies, see Vladimir Trapara, "Perspektive nuklearnog razoružanja u svetlu protivrečnih strategija nuklearnih sila", *Međunarodna politika*, Vol. 63, No. 1145, January-March 2012, pp. 113-118.

³⁴ Putin said: "Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts... One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders

Treaty, which defined quotas for European states' conventional weapons. In April 2008, at NATO summit in Bucharest, it was decided that Georgia and Ukraine should once become NATO members, which caused the alarm in Russia.³⁵ A few months earlier, America and many of its allies recognized Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, won by NATO bombs in 1999, making a precedent for future recognition of territories which seceded from sovereign states, helped by a foreign military intervention. Pro-Western Georgian president Saakashvili fell into a trap in August 2008, when he tried to bring renegade province of South Ossetia back under Georgian sovereignty by force. What followed was a quick response by Russia and a short Russian-Georgian War, after which Moscow recognized independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (another renegade Georgian province), while the U.S. and NATO just stood by and watched. This way Russia demonstrated its readiness to defend its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space against American expansion by all means, including war.

This expansion was temporarily halted due to the Russian assertive response, but also because of the American overstretch in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as under the impact of world economic crisis. Newly elected President Barack Obama therefore made an assessment similar to the one Putin had made eight years ago: that it is time for a break in confrontation with Russia. He initiated the "reset" in relations between the two countries, aiming to improve them by establishing cooperation in areas of common interest.³⁶ He found a good counterpart in Russian

in every way... It results in the fact that no one feels safe. I want to emphasize this – no one feels safe!" "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy", *President of Russia*, February 10, 2007, Internet, http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/02/10/0138_type82912type82914type82917type84779_118123.shtml 29/4/2014.

³⁵ Original U.S. idea was to grant Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine, which did not happen due to German opposition. At NATO-Russia Council summit, which followed, Putin criticized the decision of NATO allies to count on Georgia and Ukraine's membership, commenting that "Ukraine is not even a state". Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, op. cit, pp. 163-168. After Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, there was sense in recalling this comment, which at the same time was a warning what the prospects for Ukraine are if it chooses to become a NATO member.

³⁶ Obama firstly used an expression "reset" on December 8, 2008, in an interview on NBC television. He justified the significance of improving relations in areas where the two sides can agree (such as struggle against terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation) by the economic growth of Russia during the last few years, which enabled it to have an assertive foreign policy. "Obama wants 'to reset U.S. – Russian relations'", *RT*, 8 December, 2008, Internet, <http://rt.com/news/obama-wants-to-reset-us-russian-relations/> 29/4/2014. Vice President Joe Biden paraphrased him in Munich in February 2009, when he said that "...it's time to press the reset button and to revisit the many areas where we can and should be working together with Russia". "Remarks by Vice-President Biden at 45th Munich Conference on Security Policy", The White House – Speeches and Remarks, Internet, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-vice-president-biden-45th-munich-conference-security-policy> 29/4/2014.

president Dmitry Medvedev – personal relations between the two presidents once again became the foundation of good relations between the two states, which during the period that followed (2009-2012) reached an all-time high since the beginning of nineties.³⁷ A positive Russia's response to Obama's initiative could be partly attributed to the catastrophic impact of world economic crisis upon Russia as well, so that using American problems to further deepen the confrontation against it was not a cost-effective policy choice.³⁸ What also could be the main Russia's motive to embrace the "reset" was an expectation that this time the U.S. is really ready to recognize Russia as an equal partner, and to build a multi-centric international order with it. The "reset" indeed had many positive accomplishments, such as signing a new treaty on strategic nuclear disarmament – New START, broadening the cooperation over Afghanistan, common approach towards the Iranian nuclear program, as well as Russia's membership in the WTO. Above all, the "reset" brought in a new spirit of cooperation, that had been absent from the Russian-American relations for almost twenty years.

However, this rapprochement attempt was also short-living and ended in failure. Although this time American side was the initiator, it was not ready for real concessions to Russia. Thus, these positive accomplishments were mostly results of Russia's unilateral appeasement. New START was signed in April 2010 only after Russia gave up on its request for legally binding clause on the connection between offensive and defensive weapons to be included in the treaty; eventually, this clause was written in the preamble.³⁹ Obama's abandoning of the missile shield in Czech Republic and Poland was "rewarded" by Russia with a support to tightening sanctions against Iran, but what Russia really got from this deal was a new American missile defense plan – European Phased Adaptive Approach – which in the long run would be more effective than the old one, proving a bigger threat to Russia's strategic capabilities.⁴⁰ The missile defense issue proved itself to be an insurmountable obstacle on the path towards further U.S.-Russian rapprochement and success of the "reset". Nevertheless, what

³⁷ Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, op. cit., pp. 216-217.

³⁸ Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, op. cit, p. 115.

³⁹ "Twists and Turns on Way to Arms Pact with Russia", by Peter Baker, *The New York Times*, March 26, 2010, Internet, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/27/world/europe/27start.html> 30/4/2014.

⁴⁰ This project was initially planned in four phases. In the third one already (2018), the midrange interceptors would be deployed in Poland. The fourth phase (abandoned in 2013) was especially contested by Russia, because it envisaged intercepting intercontinental ballistic missiles. On these phases, see "Fact Sheet on U.S. Missile Defense Policy: A 'Phased, Adaptive Approach' for Missile Defense in Europe", The White House – Statements and Releases, Internet, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/FACT-SHEET-US-Missile-Defense-Policy-A-Phased-Adaptive-Approach-for-Missile-Defense-in-Europe/ 30/4/2014.

decisively pushed the U.S.-Russian relations down the slope were the developments in the Middle East in 2011. Russia and the U.S. failed to agree on the common approach regarding the wave of regime changes throughout the region, called the “Arab Spring”. Russia abstained from voting in the UNSC on resolution which implicitly allowed the U.S. and its allies to intervene militarily against Libya in March 2011, which was the peak of the “reset”. Harsh Russian condemnations of this intervention and forced toppling of Gaddafi, followed by a resolute resistance to a similar scenario in Syria, shattered the achieved spirit of cooperation between the two powers. Putin’s return to the presidential post in May 2012 symbolically marked the end of “reset”, given his intentions to stop appeasing Washington, as well as suspicious personal views of him in Obama administration, compared to those of Medvedev.

The second Obama’s term instead of “reset 2.0” brought further decline in U.S.-Russian relations.⁴¹ It started with the “war of laws” – Magnitsky Act in the U.S. and Dima Yakovlev law in Russia, continued with “the Snowden case”, and further complicated with U.S. threats by the military intervention against Syria in the summer of 2013, with a pretext of an alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government. The intervention did not happen due to Russia’s resolution not to allow it (resistance in the UNSC, deployment of warships in the Eastern Mediterranean), but also thanks to its diplomatic actions in September, when it influenced Damascus to relinquish its chemical weapons. The newly elected Iranian president, Hassan Rouhani, used this opportunity to initiate improvement in relations with the United States, which Washington could not ignore. American Middle-Eastern geopolitical offensive (against Syria and Iran) was halted, leaving northern Black Sea coast as the only area without clear boundaries between U.S. and Russia’s spheres of influence. The biggest country whose territory is completely in Europe is situated in this area – Ukraine.

The Ukrainian crisis began in November 2013, when massive street protests erupted in Kiev and other bigger cities against president Yanukovich’s decision not to sign an agreement on association with the EU. As a representative of a pro-Russian Party of Regions in this over identity deeply divided country, Yanukovich won completely free and fair democratic presidential elections in 2010, moving the “Ukrainian teeter”⁴² further away from the pro-Western course of his predecessors from the “Orange revolution”, towards clear commitment to military neutrality of the country. Facing the prospects of ruining economic

⁴¹ See Vladimir Trapara, “Odnosi Sjedinjenih Država i Rusije u Obaminom drugom mandatu”, *Međunarodna politika*, Vol. 64, No. 1151, July-September 2013, pp. 55-59.

⁴² On the “Ukrainian teeter”, as an expression for alternating pro-Russian and pro-Western forces in power in Kiev, while both are compelled to have a balanced policy of neutrality, see Dragan Petrović, *Geopolitika postsovjetskog prostora*, Prometej, Novi Sad, IIPE, Belgrade, 2008, pp. 50-62.

relations with Russia, which saw this EU's offer to Ukraine as an obvious attempt to drag this country away from Russia into the Western and anti-Russian geopolitical bloc of states, Yanukovich did not have a choice other than to refuse this offer. It initially seemed as if the situation would calm down, for Moscow promised Ukraine significant financial aid, while Yanukovich left the open door for the EU accession under more favorable conditions. However, he made a number of authoritarian mistakes (restriction of rights to protests, refusing to put on the agenda opposition constitutional reform proposals, persistent keeping of former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko in jail...), that caused new radicalization of protests in January and February 2014. These protests resulted in dozens of victims on both sides. An agreement on premature elections, transitional government and constitutional reform was finally brokered by the officials of several European states and signed by Yanukovich and the opposition leaders, only to be brutally breached on the very next day, as the right-wing extremists took control over protests. A coup was staged in Kiev, bringing to power opposition leaders (including fascists from the Western part of the country), and compelling Yanukovich to flee to Russia.

For a while, as the crisis progressed, Russia was relatively sustained. It started getting involved after the coup and certain anti-Russian measures taken by new authorities in Kiev which caused the revolt in pro-Russian Southeastern provinces of Ukraine. Moscow's announcement that it could intervene militarily in the case of violations of her nationals' rights was sufficient to deter Kiev from military option when Crimea, a peninsula which had been a part of Russia until 1954, decided to return to its motherland. Putin could not ignore the referendum in which an overwhelming majority of Crimean citizens voted in favor of joining Russia, so it annexed Crimea. A new crisis – the fiercest one hitherto – in U.S. (West)-Russian relations began. The West imposed some symbolic economic sanctions against Russia, and threatened with tougher ones, but was not ready to intervene militarily to stop Russia's involvement in helping Eastern parts of the country to avoid inclusion into Western sphere of influence and achieve some kind of federalization of Ukraine. It remains to be seen whether the future developments of the crisis will bring the final demarcation between the spheres of influence by diplomatic compromise, or the violence will escalate. Putin's speech after Crimean annexation tells us that Russia is resolute to have even more assertive policy from now on.⁴³

⁴³ In this speech, Putin said: "With the disappearance of bipolar system, the planet has not become more stable... Our Western partners led by the United States in their practical policies prefer not to be guided by international law, but the law of the stronger... They are convinced that they are chosen and exceptional, that they should decide the world's fate, that only they can always be right... They constantly try to push us (Russia) into some corner because we have an independent position, because we defend it, because we call the things their right names and we are not

From Obama's speech that followed in Brussels, it can be concluded that the U.S. is aware of its incapability of penetrating deeper into Russia's sphere of influence by military means, but that it believes it is on the right side of history, and that sooner or later political changes will happen in Moscow, bringing to power forces more preferable to Washington.⁴⁴ It is obvious that a longer period of the U.S.-Russian confrontation is ahead of us, with no another rapprochement attempt in sight, at least until the end of Obama's term in 2016/2017. For the real rapprochement, some conditions are necessary. The U.S. identity, as it is a stronger power and is less ready for a compromise, should change to become more compatible with the Russian one. Accordingly, a radical and permanent turn in foreign policy is needed. The factor that could cause this turn in the future is probably the growth of China, which may be seen as a threat both in the United States and Russia.

Conclusion: the consequences of the state of U.S.-Russian relations for general international relations and the position of Serbia

From the history of ups and downs in the post-Cold War relations between United States and Russia it can be concluded – in fact repeated – that they were better only when Russia unilaterally appeased Washington's demands. Nevertheless, those periods wouldn't bring upon more stable international relations, because the real step towards equal partnership and the establishment of a more just multi-centric world order has never taken place. On the contrary, period of better U.S.-Russian relations used to be bad for general international relations. Several small countries even became victims of Russian-American harmony: Yugoslavia (sanctions) in 1992, Afghanistan (intervention) in 2001, Iran (sanctions) in 2010, and Libya (intervention) in 2011. No better were periods when Russia opposed American policy verbally, but without enough power to make

hypocrites. But, everything has its limits. And in the case of Ukraine, our Western partners have crossed the line, behaving roughly, irresponsibly and unprofessionally... Today it is necessary to cut with hysteria, to give up on Cold War-like rhetoric, and to admit what is obvious: Russia is an independent, active participant in international life; like other states, it has national interests which have to be taken into account and respected". "Обращение Президента Российской Федерации", *Президент России*, March 18, 2014, Internet, <http://kremlin.ru/news/2060330/4/2014>.

⁴⁴ "Ukraine is not a member of NATO – in part because of its close and complex history with Russia. Nor will Russia be dislodged from Crimea or deterred from further escalation by military force. But with time, so long as we remain united, the Russian people will recognize that they cannot achieve security, prosperity and the status that they seek through brute force". "Remarks by the President in Address to European Youth", *The White House*, March 26, 2014, Internet, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/26/remarks-president-address-european-youth30/4/2014>.

some bolder move. This is why Yugoslavia paid the price in 1999, when it entered the war against NATO, counting on Russia's support, only to be failed when Russia assisted NATO in pressure against Belgrade to accept the withdrawal from Kosovo. On the other hand, periods when Russia relied on its rising power to strain relations with the U.S. would bring upon some sense of balance. It was good for the small countries and territories that stood in the way of American expansionism: in 2008 South Ossetia and Abkhazia were saved, in 2013 Syria, and in 2014 Crimea, while it still remains to be seen what happens with the rest of Ukraine (in particular, its Eastern part).

How the changes in state of U.S.-Russian relations affected Serbia and what could it expect of their recent deterioration? As Serbia in the observed period did not have a constant foreign policy, we can answer this question only if we take into account changes in its priorities which occurred occasionally, but also by considering identity base which made some elements of Serbia's foreign policy constant. During the nineties, Serbia reproduced through its foreign policy the identity of a border state between the East and the West, for which predominance of the West over Russia was not a favorable condition.⁴⁵ Serbia was severely punished for its attempt to keep its independent course and refuse some political demands made by the only remaining superpower which would transform it into a marginal country of a "New Europe". Moreover, Russia was the accomplice in the punishment while it had good relations with the U.S. However, Serbia's foreign policy during nineties had a special quality – it was assertive in defense of the country's national interests, which encouraged the U.S. to accept some compromise solutions for the design of post-Yugoslav space. In 2000 a new elite comes to power in Belgrade, ready to make a pro-Western turn. Such move was logical in the period when Putin attempted its rapprochement with the United States. However, the new government could not give up on defense of some national interests, especially regarding Kosovo and the Republic of Srpska, which would slow down the process of Serbia's alignment with the West.

With Russia rising and its increasingly assertive stance during the second Putin's term, the new government in Belgrade (Koštunica's) saw the opportunity to start a gradual departure from the West in the direction of neutrality, even an openly anti-Western stance after Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence. However, Koštunica was replaced by a more conciliatory Boris Tadić, who brought Serbia back to (mildly pro-Western) neutrality, for which Obama's "reset" was a favorable condition. In 2012 Serbian Progressive Party came to power and has been trying to keep a neutral course during the ongoing deep fall

⁴⁵ See Vladimir Trapara, "Istok ili Zapad?: lažna dilema Srbije", in: *Strateški pravci razvoja i utvrđivanja položaja Srbije u savremenim međunarodnim odnosima*, Marko Nikolić i Dragoljub Todić (eds.), Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, 2014, pp. 329-346.

in Russian-American relations. Does it have a chance of success, given that it is facing a strong pressure by the West to align with it in this increasingly severe East-West division? It does, but only under several conditions.

First, Serbia's foreign policy should again be assertive in promoting national interests, by showing both the East and the West that it would be persistent in their achievement, even if there was some price to pay for it. This is the only way Serbia could deserve foreign actors' respect and assume the region's central player position. Second, Serbia is in Western, not in Russian sphere of influence. Any openly anti-Western course could be perilous for it. Belgrade should do everything to present its neutrality in a way not explicitly provocative for the West – if it does not help its plans, then it should also refrain from damaging them. Third, the distribution of power has changed, and it is still changing. The United States is not anymore so dominant compared to Russia (and in the international system in general) so as to brutally treat Serbia like it did it in nineties. This leaves Serbia wider space to protect its neutrality and national interests by relying on Russia (although not too much, in order not to provoke the West). What Serbia must not allow – now that Russia has grown stronger and the East-West division sharper – is to succumb to temptation to align with the West completely (for example, to join NATO). If this happened, Serbia would voluntarily give up on its national interests which are threatened by the West and supported by Russia. It would simultaneously position itself in the first line of NATO's (whose circle of states it belongs neither historically, nor civilizationally, nor by interest) defense in the case of deterioration in European security. Wise foreign policy with assertive promotion of national interests and a proper analysis of U.S.-Russian relations, their impact upon broader international relations and the position of Serbia in particular, could be a recipe for a success of our country on the world stage.