

East-West Relations in Post Cold War Era: Confrontation and Cooperation

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Abstract

The study delves into the complex and evolving dynamics of post-Cold War East-West relations, analyzing patterns of cooperation and confrontation between the two blocs. Rooted in Hans Morgenthau's Realism, the research aims to discern the nature of foreign relations, identify underlying factors, and assess prospects for increased cooperation. Methodologically, it combines literature review and qualitative analysis, scrutinizing historical accounts, diplomatic analyses, and political discourse. Thematic analysis is employed to categorize confrontational and cooperative elements. The legacy of the Cold War, marked by ideological differences and power struggles, paved the way for the post-Cold War era, characterized by globalization, rising US dominance, and the emergence of China. While cooperation is evident in counter-terrorism efforts, such as joint initiatives to prevent nuclear terrorism, confrontation is prominent in instances like Russia's military aggression, cyber warfare, and energy coercion. Notably, the conflict between Ukraine and Syria strained relations, with Russia's annexation of Crimea and involvement in the Syrian war causing international concern. The study acknowledges the challenges posed by evolving technological, environmental, and social factors, and underscores the importance of moving beyond confrontation to foster mutual cooperation. It calls for a shift from class struggle and power aspirations to collaborative efforts that align with global interests, emphasizing stability through reconciliation and shared objectives. In this context, the study urges both Eastern and Western leaders to recognize the imperative of collective action in the 21st century, advocating for a future defined by cooperation rather than conflict.

Keywords: East-West Relations, Post-Cold War Dynamics, Cooperation and Confrontation, Geopolitical Shifts, Global Security Challenges

Introduction

Since the end of the cold war, the United States-Russia relationship has alternated between cooperation and confrontation. The US helped Russian President Boris Yeltsin win re-election. The US and the international community have provided substantial assistance to the Russian government. Russian troops have served under the tactical command of United States officers as Bosnian peacekeepers. Russian foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov successfully brokered the re-entry of US weapons inspectors into Iraq to deal with that country's attempt to build an arsenal of destructive weaponry. However, the instances of cooperation and confrontation seems tied to specific instances where both countries' interests or those of their allies.

Since foreign policy may be conceptualised, at least in part, as adaptive behaviour, it seems clear that the changing international context of the post-cold war environment requires adaptation to face the new issues and problems it raises. This study examines how the East and West have adjusted to this new environment. The traits and patterns of policymaking that are evolving in reaction to the transition from the Cold War to the Post-Cold War are examined in this book. The work examines the participants and clarifies instances involving foreign policy.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

This research is guided by the following objectives:

- i. To discern the nature of foreign relations between the Eastern and Western blocs in the aftermath of the Cold War.
- ii. To pinpoint and examine the fundamental causes of the current situation of East-West relations.
- iii. To assess the prospects for fostering increased cooperation between these two blocs.

Theoretical Framework

Hans Morgenthau's classical Realism offers a concise approach to this study. The keystone of Morgenthau's classical Realism is the concept of power; that is, of interest defined in terms of politico-economic and military capabilities.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study combines a comprehensive literature review with qualitative analysis to illuminate the intricate dynamics of post-Cold War East-West relations. The foundation of the research is built upon an exhaustive review of scholarly literature, encompassing historical accounts, diplomatic analyses, and political discourse. This literature review serves as a vital backdrop, facilitating an understanding of the underlying factors and evolving patterns in East-West interactions. The qualitative approach enables the identification of nuances that contribute to the complex nature of the relationship.

Furthermore, thematic analysis is employed to categorize the identified confrontational and cooperative elements. This process draws inspiration from Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis, enabling the identification of recurring themes within the data. By meticulously analyzing these themes, the study uncovers patterns of power dynamics, conflicting interests, and shared challenges that have shaped the East-West dynamic.

Discussion

The Soviet Union (now Russia) and the United States were the two most powerful nations in the world for the majority of the second half of the 20th century. The "superpowers of the world" were these two federations. The Western Allies and the Soviet Union formed an alliance during World War II out of necessity due to the threat of escalating fascism in Japan, Germany, and Italy as well as the possibility of a global conflict. The United States and USSR were only ever allies because they shared a more powerful opponent; they never truly trusted one another. These two nations developed a deep level of mistrust for one another after the Axis was overthrown because of their radically dissimilar beliefs.

Beginning with the second Red Scare and culminating with the August Coup, a coup d'état attempt that destabilized the Soviet Union and later led to its disintegration, this conflict, often known as the Cold War, lasted from about 1946 to 1991. John Lewis Gaddis, a well-known Cold War historian, stated at the start of the post-Cold War era that while the details of the new era are still unknown, it is clear that it will be very different from the Cold War era and that this signifies a significant turning point in world history.

The new world of the post-Cold War era is likely to have few if any, of these [Cold War] characteristics: that is an indication of how much things have already changed since the Cold War ended. Historians will certainly regard the years 1989-1991 as a turning point comparable in importance to the years 1789-1794, 1917-1918, or 1945-1947; precisely what has 'turned,' however, is much less certain. We know that a series of geopolitical earthquakes have taken

place, but it is not yet clear how these upheavals have rearranged the landscape that lies before us. Day by day continues to reveal the true identity of the East-West post-Cold War world.

The Legacy of the Cold War

Reynolds (1992, p. 10) notes that the Cold War, or more accurately the “Era of Cold Wars”, between 1947 and 1991 divided Europe for over 40 years, eventually culminating in the rapid disintegration of the Soviet Union (USSR). When Gorbachev became Russian Head of State in 1988, he realized that he could not keep up with Reagan’s arms stockpile and that the United States “Star Wars” nuclear defense project, whilst far-fetched, would make the Soviets’ nuclear strength irrelevant. The huge extent of Russia’s internal problems; rising alcoholism, depression, and social unrest; combined with an old-fashioned and uncompetitive industrial economy and vast expenditures on client states in Eastern Europe, as well as a long and drawn-out war in Afghanistan, led Gorbachev to present a policy of ‘*glasnost*’ and ‘*perestroika*’, meaning openness and restructuring – leading to a withdrawal of Soviet influence and the independence of many former Soviet states (Bale, 2005, p. 10). The fall of the Soviet Union led to a reunited Germany, a United States withdrawal from Europe and its affairs, and a vast number of new states seeking to ‘rejoin’ the West.

The Post-Cold War Era

The post-Cold War era, according to McFaul (1992, pp. 467–491), is the time period in world history that spans from the Soviet Union's breakup in December 1991 to the present. It has mostly been dominated by the rise of globalization, which has been made possible by the commercialization of the Internet and the expansion of the mobile phone system (as well as nationalism and populism in response). Some academics assert that modernism and ideas of unwavering development have been superseded by the ideology of postmodernism and cultural relativism.

The period has seen the United States become by far the most powerful country in the world and the rise of China from a relatively weak developing country to a fledgling potential superpower in the Far East. Reacting to the rise of China, the United States has strategically sought to "rebalance" the Asia-Pacific region. It has also seen the merging of most of Europe into one economy and a shift of power from the G7 to the larger G20. Accompanying the NATO expansion, Ballistic Missile Defenses (BMD) were installed in East Europe. These marked important steps in military globalization.

Goble (2000) points out that Russia's delivery of two modern warships to China in February 2000 is the clearest indication yet that the post-Cold War era is rapidly coming to an end and that the world is rapidly moving into a new and potentially more dangerous period. This action--which involved the sale of two \$800 million destroyers--suggests that Moscow's re-entry onto the geopolitical playing field will increasingly be directed at challenging the United States. That in turn implies that this re-entry will consist of Russian efforts to mobilize others disturbed by or angry at American power around the world. And perhaps most disturbingly of all, this sale suggests that Moscow and its new allies will increasingly focus on military and economic strength rather than on any extension of democratic values the values many in the West had thought were the defining principles of development in the post-Cold War world. As has been revealed over the years, Moscow and Beijing have entered into an ever-closer strategic relationship. Despite past differences, including military clashes in 1969, the two are now coordinating their military doctrines and staging joint exercises.

Some have dismissed these activities, especially the sale of military equipment, as an example of Russia's continuing search for hard currency and China's inability to produce cutting-edge military goods. (Goble, 2000) and many more have suggested that tensions between the two may ultimately drive them apart. Both these perspectives may ultimately prove to be the case. But when put in the context of other recent Russian actions, the latest Russian sale appears to be part of a broader strategy. Even more often in recent months, Moscow has sought to challenge the United States in Kosovo by its unexpected troop movements to Pristina, Iran, and Iraq, and especially in Europe. Such a stance plays well among many Russians angry at their current situation and eager to find someone to blame.

Confrontations in East-West Relations

Disagreements over the wars in Syria and Ukraine have recently worsened relations between the East and West. Early in 2014, after Viktor Yanukovich, the pro-Moscow president of Ukraine, was ousted from office by violent protests in Kyiv, Crimea became the center of the biggest East-West conflict since the Cold War. A majority-Russian speaking region, including the Crimean peninsula, was taken over by forces with support from the Kremlin. According to Kulesa (2017), as "little green men" armed with Kalashnikovs began to take over government buildings, airports, and other key facilities in the Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula, the rest of the world observed with a mixture of shock and dread. Even though the soldiers wore plain uniforms without insignia, it was obvious that they belonged to the Russian special forces. In a referendum that Ukraine and the West deem illegitimate, the region chose to join Russia. Additionally, Moscow's military occupation and annexation of a portion of its neighbor's territory amounted to a groundbreaking and serious violation of international law as well as the regulations of European security systems (Kulesa, 2017).

According to Chappell (2014), Russia vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution denouncing its annexation of Crimea by defying calls from other countries to respect Ukraine's sovereignty (Herszenhorn and Baker, 2014). Additionally, it started supplying pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region with weapons (Bryant, 2014). By kicking Russia out of the G8, enacting a slew of economic and political sanctions, and ratcheting up military operations to reassure uneasy eastern neighbors, the United States and its European allies went on to isolate Russia (Bershidsky, 2016). Russia's backing for Ukrainian separatists continues uninterrupted despite ongoing diplomatic pressure from the West and the rising economic effects of sanctions and falling oil prices, and diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict have failed to result in a political settlement.

Russia's resumption of its aggression in Europe coincides with a sharp increase in defense spending after decades of decline and underfunding. Pifer (2016) notes that Russia launched a \$700 billion modernization initiative in 2011, three years after its invasion of Georgia exposed glaring gaps in its military capabilities. This initiative includes improvements to its nuclear triad, the acquisition of ballistic missile submarines, the development of new ICBMs, and the establishment of naval bases near the Arctic Circle. Russia has increased its military probing in the air and on the sea dramatically since reactivating its armed forces (Lowe and Golubkova, 2016).

Although the prolonged oil price decline caused Russia to declare in 2016 that it would cut defense spending by 5%, the severe economic headwinds it is currently experiencing are unlikely to materially impede its military modernisation or destabilize its increasingly belligerent posture. According to Monaghan (2016), the reenergized Russian military aids Putin in consolidating state authority and enhancing his reputation both at home and

abroad, in addition to enabling the nation to react more efficiently to perceived security threats and project its influence abroad with greater assurance.

NATO promised to redirect its attention back to its primary objective of collective defense and revitalize its sluggish navy and reconnaissance capabilities in order to counter Russia's increasingly assertive posture. A Readiness Action Plan, which includes a new high readiness force that can deploy in days, was adopted at the 2014 Wales Summit, where allies promised to reverse decades of defense expenditure declines. According to Browne (2016), during the Warsaw Summit in 2016, partners boosted NATO deterrence by stationing new multinational battalions in Poland and the Baltic States. The US military's presence in Eastern Europe will also be strengthened by the Obama administration by boosting rotational presence, training, and exercise (The White House Press Office, 2014).

The Syrian war is a big area of difference between East and West relations. By cutting off diplomatic ties with Damascus in 2012, France adopted the view that "Assad had to go" much earlier than other nations. Airstrikes and other actions that the Russians claim support the terrorist revolt in Syria were a part of a planned strategy by France and other Western nations to topple Assad in Syria. Russia has charged that the United States, and implicitly also the French and other Western partners, have been protecting the Al-Nusra Front in eastern Aleppo on purpose in order to use it in the future to bring about a Syrian regime change. The United States and its allies are allegedly preparing to use terrorists as pawns in their conflict with Assad, according to the Russians. Naturally, Russia does not agree with that result. The conflict between the United States and Russia over Syria has escalated. The roles that Russia can play in the world and those that the United States wants to play in the world are at stake. The United States and Russia have attempted to persuade themselves that they share common interests in Syria and could agree to fight terrorism together ever since Russian engagement in Syria under the guise of combating the Islamic State. However, in practice, the leaders of both blocs are acting out pre-determined roles in Syria to elevate their stature in the international community.

According to Gady (2015), the United States and its European allies are concerned about more than only Russia's increasingly potent conventional capabilities. Giles (2016) adds that Russia has found subversive forms of aggression, such as cyber and information warfare, to be useful weapons in its efforts to sow political unrest since they are hard to track and much harder to counter. In order to deflect attention from Soviet actions during the Cold War, Soviet intelligence services provided misleading material to Western media. With the advent of cyber tools, Russia's capacity for deception has also increased. The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, published in 2010, states that Russia will use "information warfare to achieve political objectives without the use of military force." Therefore, the government should spend money on "intensifying the role of information warfare.

The impacts of Russian information policy are no longer limited to its Eurasian neighbors (Fisher, 2016). The U.S. intelligence community stated in October 2016 that they were confident the Russian government was behind a cyberattack on the Democratic National Committee and that Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election could have only been approved by Russia's highest-ranking officials (Masters, 2017). There is a stronger case that Russia aided Trump, their favoured candidate, in winning the election in the United States (Lowe & Stewart, 2017). Theresa May of the United Kingdom and Emmanuel Macron of France are two more European leaders who have condemned Russian electoral intervention.

In the energy sector, Russia's willingness to use its vast energy holdings to blackmail and coerce European customers has caused US allies and partners to worry that if they don't follow Russian

foreign policy guidelines, they risk suffering crippling delays in gas delivery, as happened in Ukraine during the winter of 2014. The fact that certain NATO countries get almost all of their energy from Russia while others get little to none reveals the different levels of sensitivity to Russian coercion inside the alliance. The legitimacy and long-term feasibility of Europe's sanctions in the Ukraine and other places are challenged by the continent's continued reliance on Russian energy imports. Alarming indications point to major strains in the U.S.-Russian cooperation on nuclear security. President Putin warned that the two countries were operating in a "radically changed environment" in October 2016 and charged the US with breaching its treaty duties. He declared that Russia will withdraw from a 2000 agreement that allowed it to work with the US to dispose of plutonium suitable for use in weapons (Kramer, 2016).

Cooperation in East-West Relations

Turkey's strike on YPG strongholds surrounding the Syrian city of Afrin needs to be discussed, even though it is not a clear example of collaboration. The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has battled for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey for three decades, is seen as an extension of the YPG combatants in Turkey. The YPG, however, disputes any associations with the organization. As well as removing its forces from the Afrin region, Russia has condemned the strike. The United States and a number of Western countries, including the United Kingdom and France, have also urged Turkey to exercise prudence.

Additionally, there has been considerable East-West cooperation in how the North Korean missile program has been handled. While it is obvious that the West prefers a strict sanctions policy against the North Korean government, the East appears to take a more lenient stance. In the most recent action, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin reportedly stated that the country is pursuing leaders of North Korea's ballistic missile programs as part of a pressure campaign to isolate the country and achieve a fully denuclearized Korean Peninsula. This is according to Bruunstrom and Pinchuk (2017). The Russians have long urged talks between the United States and North Korea and have frequently stated their readiness to serve as a mediator if the two sides agreed.

Both the West and the East have worked very closely together in the fight against terrorism. According to Kelin (2005), the events of September 11, 2001, marked a turning point in East-West relations with regard to the fight against terrorism. The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council adopted a joint statement on September 13, two days after the strikes, denouncing them and pledging to cooperate to counter the danger. A first cooperation action plan was agreed upon a month later, highlighting the necessity of further NATO-Russian cooperation to confront emerging security concerns. Following the Beslan school massacre in September 2004, which left 344 civilians dead, including 186 children, the political significance of the NATO-Russia Council became clear to Moscow. An Ad Hoc Working Group on Terrorism, which analyzes theoretical perspectives on countering the terrorist threat and aims to foster practical cooperation, is one of the new vehicles of the NATO-Russia Council. The Group has so far been successful in creating and adopting a number of joint papers. Al-Qaida's threats and challenges are among them, as are assessments of terrorist threats to the safety of peacekeeping forces in the Balkans, threats to civil aviation, including the danger that such aircraft pose to critical infrastructure, threats to NRC members posed by Islamist extremism and radicalization in Central Asia, and present and potential terrorist threats to cargo and passenger transport. Additionally, Kelin (2005) draws attention to the NATO-Russia anti-terrorist collaboration, which has expanded beyond the creation of "paper" threat assessments to include joint drills like Kaliningrad 2004.

Recent intelligence from the US helped Russia avoid a bomb assault that may have been fatal in St. Petersburg. The Kazansky Cathedral in St. Petersburg, Russia's second city, and other areas where huge crowds congregate were targets of the attempted attack (Lowe and Stewart, 2017).

As a result, Russian President Vladimir Putin called his American counterpart Donald Trump to express his gratitude for the tip-off.

Another effort to raise awareness and a sense of urgency about the threat posed by terrorists launching a nuclear assault is the United States-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism. The program combines the work of American and Russian institutes and professionals in the sectors of terrorism, security, nuclear, intelligence, and energy in recognition of the prominent roles that Russia and the United States play in creating and safeguarding nuclear materials and weapons. The project connects governmental and private organizations to promote collaboration between the United States and Russia in each of these areas. The program focuses on identifying the further actions Russia and the United States may take to lead international efforts in preventing nuclear terrorism, building on the numerous efforts already made to improve the security of nuclear weapons and materials.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The prospect of East-West negotiations has grown over time. Similar to this, the search for novel kinds of collaboration is bearing fruit in a variety of fields. A growing understanding that collaboration gives much more benefits than ongoing conflict is also emerging in the East. There are risks associated with the new trend, of course. They are caused in part by the still-existing inequalities between the systems, the various sets of values, the ongoing discrepancies between East and West in terms of political power, and the dominance of the US military.

However, the enormous challenges facing the entire world make it difficult to make a reliable prediction of future development. These challenges include managing the rapid technological change and the corresponding social, economic, and political changes in developed regions; addressing economic stagnation, overpopulation, poverty, and underdevelopment in significant portions of the third world; and addressing global environmental damage and irreversible consumption. In this larger global framework, the East-West relationship will be more recognized as essential. On the road into the 21st century, a number of, at times scary, tendencies impose a shared obligation on the leaderships of East and West to put an end to all forms of conflict and to successfully combine their resources in their own and the interest of the world.

Confrontation and collaboration, containment and negotiation will continue to characterize relations with the Soviet Union and its allies. Future trends therefore point to long-term stability in East-West ties built on collaboration and the balancing of interests in all areas, including security. It must be impossible to think in terms of an international class war and to strive for supremacy in any way.

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