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**Assessing the United States and Russia Relationship  
under Donald Trump's Presidency**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements of Master's Degree in Anglophone Language,  
Literature, and Civilizations.**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my beloved parents who were always there for me.

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## **Abstract**

The world witnessed a Cold War that changed many political and economic issues. The relationship between the US and Russia suffered from several ups and downs. The Cold War ended with the decline of the USSR, which made Russia entering new challenge to recover its power. Additionally, the reset policy which was launched by Obama allowed the two leaders to achieve a breakthrough on a number of controversial issues. However, 2012 highlighted the improvement in the bilateral relations, then, Russia wanted to take control over Ukraine, consequently, the US meted penalties against Russia. Next, Russia interfered in Syria. Also, Russia intervened in the 2016 US election, spying and hacking were the tools it used to damage Hillary Clinton. This whole struggle is called the New Cold War, in fact it still debatable whether this war had already started, or will start in the near future.

## ملخص

مرّ العالم بحرب باردة غيرت عدة قضايا سياسية وإقتصادية، مسّت العلاقة بين الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية وروسيا، إذ انتهت هذه الحرب بسقوط الإتحاد السوفياتي مما جعل روسيا تسعى لإستعادة قوتها من جديد ومنه أطلق أوباما سياسة إعادة التعيين التي حققت عدة قضايا مثيرة للجدل في 2012. سعى الى تحسين العلاقة بين الثنائية، بعدما أرادت روسيا التسلّط على اوكرانيا مما أدى أن الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية تفرض عقوبات ضد روسيا، أيضا نرى تدخل روسيا في سوريا في 2016 تدخل روسيا في إنتخابات الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية عن طريق التجسس والقرصنة لإلحاق الضرر ب "هيلاري كلينتون" ومنه سميت بالحرب " الباردة" الجديدة وفي الأخير نقول هل بلفعل قامت هذه الحرب الباردة؟ أم لم تبدأ أم ستبدأ في المستقبل.

## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>EU</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>FBI</b>	<b>Federal Bureau of Investigation</b>
<b>NATO</b>	<b>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</b>
<b>NWO</b>	<b>New World Order</b>
<b>NSA</b>	<b>National Security Agency</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>BPC</b>	<b>Bilateral Presidential Commission</b>
<b>ISIS</b>	<b>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria</b>
<b>USSR</b>	<b>Union of Soviet Socialist Republic</b>
<b>WWII</b>	<b>World War Two</b>
<b>WTO</b>	<b>World Trade Organization</b>
<b>SEATO</b>	<b>South East Asia Treaty Organization</b>
<b>CENTO</b>	<b>Central Treaty Organization</b>
<b>ANZUS</b>	<b>Australia New Zealand United States</b>
<b>START</b>	<b>Strategic Arm Reduction Treaty</b>

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## **Introduction**

The relationship between the United States and Russia is an ongoing and multidimensional challenge. It started when the US gained its independence from Britain. In the last 200 years, the US relation with Russia was controversial. Furthermore, the two countries passed through phases of strong cooperation and friendship and phases of exhausting relation and confrontation. The nature of their relation had been diplomatic and economic. For example, the US joined the Allied Military Intervention against Bolsheviks during Russian Civil War; however, the US and the Soviet Union were both the major Allies against the Axis powers during the WWII.

In other words, the US-Russian relationship had entirely changed from friendship to hostility when the two superpowers began to create nuclear weapons to compete each other. The conflict between socialist and capitalist ideologies represented the core of the struggle of the cold war era. During the cold war the two countries were competing for global domination to build a desirable world order, which in turn not only caused phenomenon known as arms race, but also created a threat of nuclear war, but by the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union, a hope was emerged for the beginning of a new era in U.S-Russia relations and new opportunities for cooperation.

Moreover, the 1990s highlighted a remarkable process in the US-Russian relations, the cold war ended by the decline of the Soviet Union, and the United States was the world's dominant power, the US was and is still the dominant power, while Russia did and is doing its best to win the struggle. However, more attention was paid during Obama's presidency in the second chapter, where the leaders agreed to reduce their strategic nuclear missile launchers and President Donald Trump in the last chapter where he called to strengthen the nuclear arsenal once more; taking into account the Syrian case

and Russia's interference in it. Russia employed counterbalancing behavior to counter US global hegemony. Consequently, the US and Russia did not manage to enhance relations of partnership after launching the Reset in 2009.

Russian President's interference in the 2016 US election was a turning point to Russia's benefit. Hillary Clinton's campaign was the main objective, but Putin declared that his country was not responsible for such actions. Moreover, the American new President disclaimed the intervention of Russia in the process of elections.

Throughout recent history, the presidential elections of 2015 are considered as the most influential incident in the political regime of the United State; assuming that the two countries can work together to solve the world's problems. In addition, the relation is based on strong trade ties since the US imported more gasoline from Russia than all other exports and Russia is the United States 34<sup>th</sup> largest supplier of goods imports in 2017.

With the coming of Donald Trump as President for the United State, the relationship between US and Russia started to, and still may take another dimension; raising the possibility that he might lift US sanctions against Russia. Therefore, this study will shed the lights on the face of this relationship during Donald Trump's presidency.

On the light of the data presented above, this research attempts to answer the following questions: What is the nature of the US-Russia relations during the Cold War era and after? How can the US-Russia relations affect the world affairs? What are the factors that led to the Reset policy between the two countries? Why had Russia interfered in the 2016 US presidential elections? To what extent doubts secret relations between Moscow and Trump are true? Finally, would this interference affect the future relationship between the two countries?

In attempt to know the importance of this topic, it is necessary to state a kind of literature review by considering some of the major scholarly works. In 1994, the editors Melvyn P. Leffler and David S. Painter wrote *Origins of the Cold War*. They examine the origins, causes, effects and the early years of the cold war. The book presents that, the cold war dominated the foreign policies of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, focusing on the international system and on events in all parts of the globe. In addition to the Soviet occupation of Germany and how the cold war ended.

In 2004, the editor Olav Njolstad writes *the Last Decade of the Cold War*, which discusses the history the Cold War's history, and the study of the international relations between the US and the USSR. It also explains the end of the Cold War as a turning point in the Soviet security policy, and the US role in winding down the Cold War.

At the outset, *US Russia Relations after Cold War* (2014), written by Viktorija Kotova, a thesis that explores the relationship between the two superpowers the US and Russia after the Cold War. The paper examines the twofold relation between the two superpowers and its immense impact on the world. In the same line of thought, the author highlights how the United States influence on the Soviet Union arena created a tremendous impact on the rest polices of the entire world's, taking into account the recent events of the bilateral relationship during Barack Obama's Presidency. It also discusses the US-Russian relation since the period after the cold war, and its influence on the world affairs and the international system as a whole.

In the context of global events and politics, "An Accident Waiting to Happen: Trump, Putin and the US Russia Relationship" (2017), by Bobo lo presents that the US Russian relation was pungent and strongly harsh during the termination of the Cold War era. It also discusses their relation before Trump presidency and how this relation was

greatly affected the by coming of Donald Trump as the leader of the United States, who strongly stands against the Western sanctions.

Moreover, Martine Russell in his article “US Russia Relations Reaching the Point of no Return?” (2018) discusses the US-Russia relation after the Cold War. The article deals with the relation of the two countries during the period of Trump’s presidency, especially in the presence of the two powers distinct foreign policies. These differences lead to a ruthless sanction in both sides.

Anastasiia Kiseleva (2016) presents in her research paper “the Failure of the US Russia reset policy,” an examination of the US-Russian relations that was misunderstood by the two forces. This misperception was the main reason behind the fundamental issue in US-Russia relations and its failure as well. It also highlights the several attempts to reset a good relation between the two countries particularly in the period between 2009 till the launch of the Ukraine crisis.

Julianne Smith and Adam Twardowski (2018) in their article studied “the Future of the US-Russia Relations.” Firstly, they spot the light on the US-Russia relationship during the Obama Administration when the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty is signed which lowered limits on the US and Russia deployed strategic warheads by one third. Secondly, the article presents a detailed explanation of the next US administration which should resist and deter Russian efforts to undermine the post Cold War in Europe and elsewhere. The authors focus on the last events between both nations; the mutual spheres of interest where they will find ways to cooperate, the leading factors to deterioration of their relation and Russia’s willingness to incur the economic and diplomatic costs of dismembering European neighbors. They also emphasized on the next president must not allow Russian pressure to prevent qualified states desiring membership from entering the

alliance, nor should NATO alter its open door policy as a concession to Russia. Also, the authors discussed that Russia's interference in the US presidential election is a glaring indication that its subversive tactics are aimed not only at Europe but also at the United States.

This work is composed of three chapters. The first chapter is divided into the following, the first title "The US-Russia Relations during the Cold War" deals with the division of the world after the WWII, the lengthy struggles between the two leaders, the main phases of the Cold War, reasons and effects of the Cold War. The second title "The US-Russia Relationship in Post Cold War" deals with the bilateral relation after the collapse of the USSR, during Bush and Yeltsin administration, and Bill Clinton and Yeltsin presidency. Also, it studies NATO's enlargement and its effect, and it explains the relationship between Ukraine, Russia NATO.

"The US-Russia Relations during Obama's presidency" is the title of the second chapter. First, it discusses Obama's reset. Then, it studies whether the bilateral relation improved or not during Obama's presidency. In addition, it sheds the light on the Syrian case, and the influence of the Russian Involvement in Syria on the US-Russian Relationship.

"The Bilateral Relations during Donald Trump Presidency" is the title of the third chapter. It focuses on how social media played a major role in this election. This chapter discusses the Russian interference in the 2016 US election. Next, it deals with the future of the US Russia relations and the New Cold War.

## **Chapter One**

### **The United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War**

The Second World War was a war that the history has written about for a long time, it was the most destructive event in human history. The Soviet Union and the United States were allies, however, when the war ended and Germany was divided the communist USSR and the Capitalist US then saw each other with increasing suspicion (Kenadssa and Goreini 4). Then, the Communist bloc dominated many nations in Eastern Europe.

After the Second World War, lots of events had changed, which led to the division of the world into two great superpowers; the Capitalist US and the Communist USSR (Kenadssa and Goreini 1). There have been many political, economic and social problems between the US and the USSR. Due to their different ideologies and mistrust, there was a clash between them because they presented a threat to each other. Despite that they did not fight each other directly, they engaged in many conflicts in different countries over the world. This lengthy struggle between the US and the USSR is called the Cold War (Kenadssa and Goreini 2-3).

Basically, the Cold War was at the center of the world politics, it dominated the foreign policies of the two superpowers 'the Soviet Union and the United States'; they build up their own territories, dividing the world into two opposing blocks. The Cold War was not a struggle between the US and the USSR but a globe conflict that affected many countries, particularly Europe, which was divided into two polars; the Western Europe and the Eastern Europe (Kenadssa and Goreini 3).

## 1. The Origin of the Cold War

Actually, the alliance formed by the US and the USSR in the WWII managed to defeat the European Fascism and the Japanese Expansionism. However, the struggle between the US and USSR (1947-1991) was named the Cold War since there is no direct military confrontation between them. The two nuclear superpowers struggle ended with the collapse of the USSR because of its ineffective political system and presence of the political freedoms (Aybar 1).

By the close of the WWII, the term 'Cold War' was used for the first time in *The Cold War*; a book written by the American journalist Walter Lippman in 1947. He took the term from a congressional debate by Bernard Baruch, who was an American financier, who devoted his time toward advising US Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt on economic matters. Also, he used this term to refer to the bipolar political and military completion between the two superpowers (Kenadssa and Goreini 5).

For Arthur Schlesinger Jr., the Cold War was "a presumably mortal antagonism, arising in the wake of the WWII, between two rigidly hostile blocs, one led by the Soviet Union, the other by the United States. This animosity dominated the political relations of the antagonists and in some cases escalated to blowing up the planet" (1).

The conflict was complicated and multidimensional. Also, the Cold War was "the divergent aspirations, needs, histories, governing institutions, and ideologies of the United States and the Soviet Union that turned unavoidable tensions into the epic four-decade confrontation that we call the Cold War"(McMahon 5).

The origins of this long American-Soviet struggle went back to the end of the WWII (Sadaoui 11). Despite that the United States and the Soviet Union were allies against the Axis powers, this alliance began disintegrating by the close of the war. The struggle



emerged when the superpowers begins discussing the future of the world when the WWII ended (Paintor and Liffler 1).

### **1.1. The World is Divided into Blocks: 1945-1955**

Bradley Lightbody in *The Cold War*, noted that Winston Churchill; former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom made his 'Iron Curtain' separated communist Europe from free Europe "and expressed in public British and American concerns about Soviet expansionism" (10). In addition to, the US President Truman's willingness to implement a policy of 'containment of communism', which aimed at stopping its expansion to Greece and other parts of the world (Aybar 3).

Furthermore, the US implementation of the Marshall Plan; US program providing aid to Western Europe following the devastation of the WWII. In addition, the aim of this plan was to create stable conditions in which democratic institutions could survive (Aybar 3).

Moreover, the first stage of the Cold War took place in the defeated country of Germany, it had been divided into four sections: British , French, American, and Soviet. Also, Berlin was similarly divided. In 1949, Germany was divided into the Federal Republic of Germany (the Western part) and the German Democratic Republic which is the Soviet zone (Aybar 4).

Another event was that the war spread to Asia, Mao Zedong declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China in October 1949. Furthermore, the first atomic bomb on August 1949 executed by the Soviet Union, resulted a successful development of nuclear weapons. Andrei Sakharov and Igor Kurchatov led the program to success (Aybar 3-4).

### **1.3 The Clash between the Two Superpowers**

The two great powers emerged from the war, the US and the USSR fought together to defeat Germany which was their common threat. Following the WWII, their relation start to disintegrate even before the fighting had stopped. The Cold War was an enduring conflict between the US and the USSR from 1945 to 1991. They did not engage in a direct war but there were many conflicts between them like the Korean War (Kenadssa and Goreini 7).

#### **1.3.1. Reasons of the Cold War**

By the end of the WWII, the US President Harry Truman, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin met in Potsdam to decide the fate of Europe. The intention from the US denotation of the two atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was to force Japan to give up. However, this action made a pressure on the USSR to negotiate with Eastern Europe and Germany (Kenadssa and Goreini 8).

Also, the US President Truman did not inform Stalin, that he wanted to deploy nuclear weapons, which had a negative effect. Moreover, the Soviet Union did not accept to be part of UN for a long time as well as it wanted to spread Communism, while the Americans followed Democracy. It was a clash of beliefs between the two leaders. In all, the two superpowers feared an attack from each other, and the USSR took control over Eastern Europe which led to the US suspicions (Kenadssa and Goreini 9)

The US considered Communism a destroyer of individual freedom. American Bloc accused the rival bloc of being Expansionist State, crushing Hungarian and Czechoslovak Communist leaders who desired to act independently of Soviet control and free from

Russian domination. In addition to the Soviet leadership kept on propagating the Americans are colonialists, imperialists and capitalist exploiters (Rank).

Another cause is the concept of Vacuum; when Germany was defeated after the WWII, Britain and France decline the world was left in the US and USSR hands. Hence, they could not cooperate with each other to fill the vacuum, each power wanted to dominate (Rank).

### **1.2.3 Main Phases of the Cold War**

This enduring conflict had witnessed many phases between the American Bloc and the Soviet Bloc from 1946 to 1987.

The first phase started from the end of the WWII to 1949: In 1945, it was the most dangerous one (Gharbi 7). The alliance between the US and the USSR began to get worst, Harry Truman in his inauguration was in charge of a country with a unique economic and military force, after the death of Franklin Roosevelt. Also, the US was the most powerful nation in the world since the war took the power and resources of all potential competitors (Kenadssa and Goreini 9).

In addition, China after being in the side of the US, become communist country. Also, Germany and Japan would soon be defeated; the conflict influenced negatively Britain and Russia; more than 30 million Russian died in the WWII, and Russia's industry and agriculture had been destroyed by German occupation by contrast the US territory remained untouched (Kennadssa and Goreini 11).

The end of the WWII marked the triumph of the USSR due to the help of America over the two enemies Germany and Japan which were completely destroyed. The Communist Bloc expended over Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary

and the Soviet zone of occupied Germany. The major events of 1947 were the collapse of the great alliance and the beginning of the Cold War. The American Bloc and the Western Bloc mistrusted each other both sides wanted to dominate the world. Also, America always had taken control over the Russian powers. The Greece Civil War helped in the development of the Cold War (Kenadssa and Goreini 10).

On March 12<sup>th</sup> 1947 Truman announced to Congress the Truman Doctrine aiming to counter the Soviet geographical expansion.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way. I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes. (Hodge and Nolan 400)

The speech marked the beginning of the Cold War, Truman believed that the US would help the world by supporting freedom or individual liberty.

In 5 June 1947, Marshal Plan had been a financial support to the Western Europe countries to facilitate the American Involvement in Europe. An excerpt from general Marshall's Speech

An essential part of any successful action on the part of the United States is understanding on the part of people of America of the character of the problem and remedies to be applied. Political passion and prejudice should have no part. With foresight and willingness on the part of new people to face up the vast responsibility which history has clearly placed upon our country the difficulties I have outlined can and will overcome. ("Marshall. . .")

The second phase started in 1949, during Stalin-Truman Era. Then, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was the first military alliance created by the US, Canada and many Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet. It was a response to Stalin's blockade of the American, British and French zone of Berlin. In this phase, after the establishment of NATO the Cold War took a rest (Kennadssa and Goreini 12).

Then, a new phase started (1949-1953) in which many treaties were signed. The first treaty ANZUS; aimed at securing cooperation on the military side. It was signed with Australia, New Zealand in September 1<sup>st</sup> 1951 in San Francisco. Moreover, San Francisco Peace Treaty was between Japan and the Allied powers, signed by 49 nations on September 8<sup>th</sup> 1951, in San Francisco, California. It ended the American led Allied Occupation of Japan (Kennadssa and Goreini 13).

When the WWII ended, the two superpowers agreed that the Japanese surrender in Korea would be taken by the Soviet in the North and the US in the South. The main reason of the Korean War went back to this military decision. The two superpowers did not succeed to agree on Korean reunification. Then, in 1951 the North declared war against the South taking armament from Russia and army from China and after two years they signed a treaty of peace and the war ended. To reduce the Soviet Communism, America spent a massive amount of dollars in the Korean War (kennadssa and Goreini 14).

Furthermore, the following phase started from 1953 to 1957; Eisenhower in his inauguration was anti-communist, he declared that he had a mandate for change. His policy aimed to save money depending on nuclear deterrent. Khrushchev took the

presidency after Stalin's death in 1953. America formed the South-East Asia Treaty Organization to withstand Soviet aggression in Asia in 1954 (Kennadssa and Goreini 14).

Moreover, another phase took place during 1957 until 1959; Khrushchev went on a historical tour to America in 1959. The US and the USSR were annoyed for Berlin Crisis. To avoid the migration from Easter Berlin to Western Berlin, the Berlin wall was built by the Soviet on August 13<sup>th</sup> 1961. Then, the Cuban Missile Crisis; a confrontation between the two superpowers had a profound influence not only in Europe but also in the whole world. After the American President Kennedy's conversation with the Soviet President Khrushchev, America assured the Soviets that it would not attack Cuba and the USSR (Aybar 5)

Next, the phase from 1969 to 1978 was marked by the détente between the US and the USSR. They drew conclusions from the Cuban Crisis, they made a truce in the Cold War. The US, USSR and the United Kingdom signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology. Also, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talk (SALT I) in 1972 aimed at curtailing the manufacture of strategic missile capable of carrying nuclear weapons. Then, in 1979 the American President Carter and the Soviet President Brezhnev signed SALT II at the missile station from Cuba (Aybar 5-6).

The final phase was from 1980 to 1990. During this period, the relationship between the United States and China improved. After the fall of Berlin wall and the Communist Bloc, the Cold War ended, Gorbachev reforms policies Perestroika and Glasnost failed. Russia withdrew from a talk on missile with America. In addition, the world order has changed and a third world was created. Historians called it a New Cold War because of the changes occurred at that time (Rana).

### **1.3.2. Effects of the Cold War**

The world was bipolar during the Cold War. The US and the USSR were the leading powers of the globe since the world was tired from the WWII. The Cold War was the center of the world politics, which influenced the whole world affairs. Many alliances were created like NATO, SEATO, WARSAW PACT, CENTO and ANZUS (Leffler and Painter 333).

Also, due to the Cold War the third world was created where many countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America decided to keep away from the superpowers. As a consequence, the Non-Alignment Movement appeared. Also, Communism was defeated and the military spending of Russia was cut. Russia suffered a financial crisis and its living standards have worsened in post Cold War era. The world had been unipolar with the US the sole remaining super power (Leffler and Painter 334).

Despite that this enduring conflict was not the source of all the world's ills, its influence was for reaching a long lasting. The end of the Cold War provided an opportunity for the people of the world to forge a more peaceful, prosperous and just international order (Leffler and Painter 333).

### **1.4The US-Russia Relationship in Post Cold War Era**

Russia and the US passed through phases of intense cooperation and friendship and phases of strained relations and confrontation. The Cold War started by the end of the WWII, the two superpowers were running for global domination, however, the Cold War ended by the decline of the USSR. Russia was the Soviet's successor and the US dominated the world.

### **1.3.3. The US Russia Relationship after the Collapse of the USSR**

The causes of the end of the Cold War remained one of the most debatable issue in the study of the international affairs. The US-Russia relations had gone through different phases since 1991. However, the Cold War ended with the dissolution of the USSR, the Russian Federation emerged as an independent state. Anuradha M Chenoy in his book *The Making of New Russia* declared that “Russia as the successor state of the Soviet Union that gave the Russian Federation the Soviet place in all international organizations, acceptance of Soviet treaties and obligations, and responsibility for the nuclear arsenal on Russian territory” (51). The emergence of Russia gave hope that it would follow the communist democratic model.

In December 1989, the Cold War ended officially by Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush Sr at Malta Summit. Russia presented a threat to the US since it still retained nuclear weapons. “After the demise of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the Bush administration immediately reached out to Russian President Boris Yeltsin promising aid, encouraging liberal economic and political reforms, and negotiating new security arrangements” (Goldgeier and McFaul).

Moreover, the Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev called for cooperation with the west. Then, relations with the US took the dominant place in Russia’s Foreign Policy. One of the most important meeting was when Boris Yeltsin visited the US on January 31, 1992, he met with George H W Bush and they discussed the dissolution of the Soviet, how to more reduce the strategic nuclear weapons and cooperation in the field of trade and on non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (Kotova 22).

The bilateral relation had gone through two different stages:



The first stage was from 1990 to 2008, Mearsheimer called it the 'Golden Age'. It was stated that in "Relations between USA-Russia: a new cold war? The moment of Trump . . . The West had lived in peace with Russia, except for the wars in the Balkans, which, however, did not pose a real threat of war between Russia and the West." (Sospedra 3). That is to say, there was a peaceful relation between Russia and the West.

This fact was due two main causes; the first was that the NATO remained untouched. The US kept Europe as one of the major international focal points, which indicated that it was erected as a supreme ruler and authority that kept organization in the area (Sospedra 3). However, this was good for Russia and the European countries, because it reduced the probability of conflict between them (3).

The second reason was that the West through NATO did not menace Russian interests (Sospedra 4). Although the opposing enlargement of NATO, the Russians did not consider the first two expansions of it as a deadly threat; these two enlargements took place in 1999 and 2004, however, in the first expansion they added: Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, and in the second, Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia.

The second stage was from 2008 to Present, 2008 was the key date to understand the deterioration of the relationship between the two super powers and between Russia and the European Union. "The Russian President Putin outlined his political agenda, whose main objective was to return Russia to its position of preeminent power respected by the West." ( Sospedra 4-5). In addition to lots of events that made the US-Russia Relations deteriorating.

### **1.3.4. Bush and Yeltsin Administration**

In June 1992, the two leaders Bush and Yeltsin signed charter for US-Russian Partnership and Friendship. Russia provided the 'Peace Corps' volunteers giving the right of working on its territory and opened its airspace in Eastern Siberia for the international community. Yeltsin called for more Western aid and the US made a program 'Operation Provided Hope' under which Russia received emergency humanitarian assistance (Kotova 24).

However, fostering cooperation was the reason of reaching consensus in the military domain, because it helps in decreasing mutual suspicion and promoting economic ties between the superpowers. When Bush visited Moscwo, START II treaty was signed to limit the strategic weapons for each party. This agreement showed that the two powers can achieve consensus (Kotova 24)

After the collapse of the USSR, Russia and the United States became able to strengthen cooperation in the security domain. However, they discussed other arms control agreements, for example, nuclear and chemical nonproliferation, conversion of defense industries, and the US assistance to Russia in transporting and destroying nuclear and chemical weapons (Kotova 25).

The two countries achieved a number of agreements on trade and investments, for example, a treaty for avoiding double taxation, a bilateral investment treaty to guarantee non- discriminatory treatment for US investors in Russia, Expansion of contacts between the scientific and technological communities and other. These agreements developed the economic relation between the two nations.

### **1.3.5. Bill Clinton and Yeltsin**

Bill Clinton, who was elected new President in 1993, a high hope was raised sought to achieve cooperation between the two countries, and set the goal to transform Russia into a democratic nation with a functioning market economy. The Clinton-Yeltsin era highlighted the disastrous economic reforms of Russia, which was based on Western programs (Kotova 30). ‘Shock therapy’ through radical economic measures resulted in mass poverty, corruption and insecurity. Russian public assumed that “the US was using Russia’s weakness to reduce it to a second-rate power” (Kotova 30).

Furthermore, Clinton and Yeltsin held their first meeting in Vancouver, Canada on April 1993, it resulted in the signing of the Vancouver Declaration, which agreed on the US-Russia cooperation and commitment to promote peace, democracy and security. Moreover, another result from the Vancouver meeting was the establishment of a US-Russian Commission on technical cooperation in energy and space that later was called Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission (Kotova 31).

In April 1994, the two Presidents held a meeting, and they reconfirmed their commitment for cooperation and took further actions toward eliminating persisting elements of the Cold War. Yeltsin declared that Russia is ready to take part in Partnership for Peace program, on the other hand, Clinton insisted on his anticipation that Russia would remove its troops from the Baltic States. In addition to that, the two leaders made a common statement in which they expressed their commitment to democracy and human rights and also the inviolability of sovereignty of the former USSR republics and the right of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic States (Kotova 26).

The two leaders also discussed mutual cooperation to stop the proliferation of the Weapons of Mass Destruction with an emphasis on the Middle East and the two Koreas;

not to target their nuclear missiles at each other. In addition, five nation contact group was created to foster conflict resolution between Bosnian Serbs and the Federation. Moreover, 1994 highlighted many interesting events like the creation of the first US-Russian Space Shuttle Mission, the signing of an agreement between NASA, the Russian Space Agency, that made Russia a partner in International Space Station Projects, and the commercial agreements to achieve Ukraine's accession to the NPT (Kotova 31).

When Clinton visited Moscow in 1995, he expressed his support for democratic development in Russia, he also asked to settle the Chechen struggle, and promised to develop an exceptional relationship between NATO and Russia

### **1.3.6. NATO's Enlargement and Its Effect**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was created to deter the Soviet military threat. NATO's expansion which was the US plan, it was the main problem of the US-Russia Relationship. However, Yeltsin withdrew the Russian troops from the Baltic countries and Eastern Europe.

In 1997, the two leaders met in Helsinki where they discussed further reductions in nuclear weapons. They engaged in negotiations on START III treaty since START II treaty was validated by both sides. Both Presidents reconfirmed their commitment to foster Russia-NATO cooperation, but, they disagree in regard to NATO enlargement to Eastern European countries ('United . . .'). Besides, the two leaders established a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council, to promote collaboration and give Russia voice in NATO, thus, alleviating Russia's objectives in regard to NATO expansion ('NATO. . .').

In 1998, Clinton raised again the problem of approval of the START II treaty, because the United States validated the treaty in 1996. In protest to NATO's expansion, the

Russian State Duma rejected the validation of the treaty until April 2000. Additionally, the National Security Concept clearly marked the security dilemma perceived by Russia after NATO's eastward enlargement (Kotova 32).

In February 1990, the American James Baker who is the Secretary of the State, visited Moscow in order to debate the German reunification and during the reunion, Baker assured Gorbachev that NATO expansion to the East would not succeed if Moscow supported Germany's peaceful reunification. It is also worth mentioning that NATO expanded to three Soviet republics, such as: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (Kotova 32).

Moreover, Jack Matlock, the American Former Ambassador to Moscow, has supported this contention "We gave categorical assurance to Gorbachev back when the Soviet Union existed that if a united Germany was able to stay in NATO, NATO would not move eastward" (Kotova 30). However, these words were denied by the West. In regard to NATO expansion, Russia referred several times to these words but they were not written in any agreement.

It is also worth noting that, the US-Russia Relations was negatively influenced, when NATO begin bombing Yugoslavia. Then, NATO initiated bomb attacks on Belgrade and the Russian Prime Minister was on plane heading to the United States to debate the additional financial aid. He asked to turn the plane to Moscwo that was a symbolic act which referred to a new chill in relations between the two nations (Kotova 30).

It is also worth mentioning that NATO expanded to three Soviet republics, such as: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Additionally, Russia chose to pull back from 'NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council'. Furthermore, NATO expansion and Belgrade bombing harmed the US-Russia relations and incited a negative attitude to the United States among the Russian elite and broader public (Kotova 31).

Dimitrin K Simes emphasized that “most Russians were prepared to accept NATO enlargement as an unhappy but unthreatening development until the Kosovo crisis 1999...” (Orlova 75). NATO declared war against Serbia without the United Nations Security Council agreement, Russian elite and Russian people concluded that they had been completely misled and NATO was against them (Orlova 76).

### **1.3.7. Ukraine Crisis and NATO-Russia Relations**

The Ukraine Crisis started on November 2013, it is a power conflict between factions within Ukraine. The first wanted to align the EU and the second with Russia. It appeared to be the potential turning point in Euro-Atlantic security. Additionally, the main reason of this current crisis was Russia’s relationships with Ukraine and the emerging of public problems within this country.

However, it is a recent crisis emerged during the new struggle between the United States and Russia. “Russia’s annexation of Crimea and attempts to further dismember the Ukrainian state pose a challenge for Russian neighbors and potentially for the wider European security order” (Alison).

The Russian president Putin believed that keeping Ukraine far from EU and NATO influence is an obligatory mission to his plan without any obstacle. Also, the Russian nightmare was that Ukraine and Georgia join NATO (Wade 1). The choice of either to join Russia or the EU is what worsened things for Ukraine. To clarify more Russia without Ukraine is like a country. Ukraine President was completely against Ukraine’s registration to the European Union instead of Russia, on the other hand, his decision caused many protests.

John Marsheimer believed that the United States and its European allies presented the main reason of the crisis more than the Russian aggression. Amanda Paul declared that “this crisis can still be resolved but only if the west is resolute in its support of Ukraine and ready to take the necessary actions to counter Moscow. Failing to do this will signal that the West is allowing Moscow to revert back to the Cold War era”. To end this conflict, all sides had to know that Ukraine had the freedom to choose which part it will be involved in.

In summary, Russia and the US passed through phases of intense cooperation and friendship and phases of strained relations and confrontation. The Cold War started by the end of the WWII, the two superpowers were running for global domination, however, the Cold War ended by the decline of the USSR. Russia was the Soviet’s successor, however, this provided hope for the bilateral relations. On the other hand, the bilateral relation did not proceeded smoothly and have been transformed from deep cooperation into mutual accusations and even sanctions

## **Chapter Two**

### **The US-Russia Relations during Obama's Administration**

When the Cold War ended, the United States was looking for opportunities to enhance its power and influence. Russia did not win the Cold War because of its weak economy. However, Russia perceived the US as a threat, that's why Russia was looking for opportunities to protect its traditional sphere of influence. In this chapter, more attention is paid to the bilateral relations during the Obama's administration.

Russia had been an issue in every US Presidential election since the USSR breakdown. The year 2008 highlighted two Presidential elections; Americans voted for a candidate who represented the Democratic Party, Barack Obama. Would he bring new opportunities and challenges in the bilateral relations? What was the aim of the Reset? Taking into consideration the Syrian case, why did Russia interfere in Syria?

#### **2.1. The Reset**

Few months after Obama's inauguration 2009, he launched a 'reset'. The reset aimed to strengthen and deepen the bilateral relationship and to engage Russia on pragmatic initiatives of mutual interests, like establishing trade relations and stronger security (Smith and Twardowski 3). When the reset was announced, a very different tone emerged between Washington and Moscow.

Another aim was to reduce tensions stemming from Russia's invasion of Georgia, with the objective of securing Moscow's assistance on issues key to the Obama's administration plan. The reset made many successes not only the New-Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) but also it improved cooperation on Iran and Afghanistan (Pefer 112).



Dmitri Trenin in his article "The Obama Administration's Policy toward Russia: a Moscow Perspective" stated that "The Obama administration came to the White House in January 2009 with a clear interest in 'resetting' the US-Russia relations." However, most people in Washington believed that Russia was continuing on downward path (1).

Furthermore the reset was supported by the Russians, however, it produced a worthy results such as Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization (Trenin). On the other hand, it tripped on the issue of US missile defense, which the Russians believed that it threaten their security (Trenin).

The 'reset' of the US-Russia relations comprised a number of reciprocal concessions that would serve interests of both nations. Thomas Graham, American former assistant to the president, declared that the 'reset' was intended to demonstrate Washington's readiness to respect Moscow's interests, though the Obama administration has never explicitly mentioned this (Kotova 42).

Moreover, Graham noted that the White House planned to take a number of steps, in particular, to agree on a new nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russia, to reconsider the deployment of its missile defense in Europe to lower relations with Ukraine and Georgia and to soften US criticism of Russia's internal policies (Kotova 42).

However, when Washington was waiting for Russia's aid for Obama's vision of nuclear free world and US policy toward Iran and Afghanistan, the US was planning to continue working on Russia's joining to the WTO. Russia confirmed later that the current management was willing to promote US-Russia cooperation based on the principle of 'equality and mutual respect' (Kotova 43).

The two superpowers established the Bilateral Presidential Commission, which had eighteen working groups covering fields such as counterterrorism, health, economy, thus,

integrating many bilateral contacts into a single mechanism. Furthermore, the Obama regime's precedence list contained the issue of arms reduction, thus, the arms control working group was also established in the framework of the Bilateral Presidential Commission (Salzman 20).

However, it was said that, the purpose of the reset was securing the Russian co-operation on priority issues like the nuclear arms. Moreover, administration officials stressed that the President will invest his time, addressing some issues of interest to Moscow, aiming at securing cooperation. They stated that if Obama saw no return on his investment he would cut his losses and turn his attention elsewhere (Pefer 112).

On April 2009, Obama and the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev met in London. The result of their meeting was two joint statements; the first was about cooperation across the broad relationships, and the second stressed their contracts to start negotiations on reducing strategic nuclear arms (Pefer 112). Moreover, the negotiations that produced New START succeeded rapidly.

### **2.1.1. Was the Bilateral Relation Improved during Obama's Administration?**

In July 2009 summit, Obama noted that "the relationship between Russia and the United States has suffered from a sense of drift" (Lovelas 98). However, the Russian President and Obama had resolved to re-set the US-Russia relations, and Obama stated that "the United States wanted to deal as equals with Russia", since the two countries are nuclear superpowers (Lovelas 99).

Another result from the meeting was the establishment of the US-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission (BPC), it had the aim of strengthening consultations and diplomacy. Obama stressed that the Commission was like the 'foundation' element in re-

setting relations, which facilitated communications between the two superpowers. This commission was like the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, which was set up during Clinton's administration, to enhance US-Russia Relations.

In May 2010, the National Security Strategy of Obama was released, it confirmed that the United States attempts were to build steady, persistent, substantive and multidimensional relationship with Russia based on shared interests. This strategy called for bilateral cooperation with Russia. It also highlighted that the US will support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia's neighbors ("National . . .").

On June 2010, Medvedev visited the US to speak about business and technology relations between the two nations. During this visit, the US announced the arrest of 11 Russian spies on charges which contained money laundering and not registering as foreign agents. Politicians conjectured that the quick resolution of the spy case, indicated that the cooperative efforts among policy makers in both nations, to preserve the Reset in the bilateral relations (Nichol 51).

The New START Treaty was signed on April 8, 2010, when the two presidents met in Prague. The treaty required that each country reduce its strategic offensive Arms, it also contained a collection of verification and transparency. However, the treaty's duration was ten years and the two countries may agree to extend the treaty for a period of no more than five years ("New . . .").

### **2.1.2. Bilateral Relations during Obama's Second Term**

By the end of the year 2012, the media highlighted that Obama's administration would alter its Russia policy during its second term. The administration seemed to seek to

protect and build a cooperative ties where possible, while also expressing concerns about waning cooperation in some regions.

On January 2013, it was announced that the United States was retreating from the Civil Society Working Group since it was not effective in addressing the restrictions on civil society in Russia. Meanwhile, the State Department declared that it continued assisting civil society groups in Russia and denied that the withdrawal signaled that the BPC was not working on other issues.

Moreover, on February 26, 2013, new Secretary of State John Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov met in Berlin and discussed 'Syria Policy'. Furthermore, Lavrov termed the meeting 'constructive' and he stressed that he had increased concerns about the lack of diplomatic notification and access to Russians adoptees.

On April 13, 2013, Kerry met with Lavrov, on the sidelines of the G 8 foreign ministerial meeting, in London. It was reported that Syria was their main topic. Simultaneously, Lavrov stated that the two countries agreed to step up the activities of the BPC. In addition, the two sides discussed North Korea and the Middle East peace process (Nichol 53).

At the same time, Thomas Donilon was the National Security Advisor, he met with officials when he visited Russia. Besides, Russian officials had reported that, he borne a letter from Obama to the Russian President Putin, identifying the possible areas of cooperation between the two super powers (Nichol 53).

Obama and Putin met on June 2013, they released three joint statements, which were cyber security, counter terrorism cooperation and on bilateral relations. The joint statement on countering terrorism demanded the exchange of operational information, between the conduct of coordinated operations and intelligence agencies (Nichol 54).

The statement on enhanced bilateral relations, included trade, nonproliferation, and arms control. The two Presidents declared that, the Vice President Biden, and the Prime Minister Medvedev would expand their dialogue and that a regular ‘two plus two’ dialogue would be launched involving the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Ministers of Defense and foreign affairs (Peter 53).

Hence, the joint statement on cyber-security highlighted that communications links had been established between each country computer emergency response teams, US Cyber-security Coordinator, the Russian Deputy Secretary of the Security Council and the Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers. The two nuclear powers agreed on forming new Cyber-Security working group as part of the BPC (Nichol 54).

Then, Obama noted that the summit had ended negotiations, which had led to the signing of a follow on protocol to the expiring Comprehensive Threat Reduction Agreement. Meanwhile, on June 23, 2013, the relationship between Russia and the US confronted many stresses, after intelligence leaker Edward Snowden escaped to Russia (Nichol 54)

Despite the high demands that, Snowden be sent back to the United States, Russia gave him temporary asylum. In response to the granting of the asylum, Senator John McCain called it “deliberate effort to embarrass the United States” and he called for “a more realistic approach to our relations with Russia” (Nichol 54).

## **2.2. The Influence of the Russian Involvement in Syria on the US-Russian Relationship**

The recent Russian military engagement in Syria was a proof to strengthen its place in the international affairs to show the world the necessity of keeping away from the Russian

sphere of influence. Russia conducted airstrikes in Syria to fight against opposition; groups broke out with the governmental system. Also, aircraft was sent out to Syria to combat ISIS and the opposition forces of Bashar Al Assad. However, a highly developed air defense systems were established in the Syrian territory, strategic bombers were sent and Russian navy was asked to launch missiles at objectives in Syria from locations in Caspian and Mediterranean Seas.

The religious and political tensions had been part of Syrian political life (Hoeling 20). In addition, the competition between Russia and the US is clear in events such as the Ukrainian and the Syrian crises. Moreover, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the military involvement in Georgia's war had shown the cracks of the Cold War in Europe. During that time, the Arab Spring established a combat zone for both powers in West Asia region, which is apparent since 2011 Syrian crises.

Actually, it was the largest involvement of Russia in the Middle East. This sudden military attack into Syria has changed the civil conflict into a Russian-American one. Hence, this situation raised the risks in the continuing confrontation between Russia and the West generally, and the United States particularly. The war in Syria has involved Russia as a player and America and its allies must find a way to handle the situation.

The Arab Spring of 2010, that enveloped Syria with other countries in West Asia, saw the engagement of the re-emerging Russia and US in opposite camps, a Cold War type emerged. However, nations of this region which have their own ambitions and national interests in the new world order, had helped in building up the environment (Talukdar 2).

### **2.2.1. Russia's Strategic Interest in Syria**

Vladimir Putin's announcement of withdrawing the Russian forces from Syria was to a great extent surprising to most policymakers. Nevertheless, it was not a complete retreat since Putin declared that his intervention in Syrian issues was not open ended. On the other hand, a telephonic conversation was made between Putin and the Syrian President Bashar Al Assad when Putin said that "Russia will maintain an aviation support centre in Syria in order to monitor compliance with the ceasefire" (Talukdar 1).

Russia's interest in Syria has emerged during imperial times. However, Moscow's relationship with Syria was well planned since the world division into two ideologies Capitalism and Communism. Also, Bashar Al Assad's father, Hafez Al Assad, took power in a coup 1970, that's why Russia had closed ties with Syria. Russia was the major arms supplier to the Syria where the former established its only military base exterior to the former Soviet Union (Talukdar 1).

The interference of Russia in the civil struggle in Syria altered the trend in 2015. The reason of the attack was that Russia was making efforts to reduce terrorism by supporting Al Assad who was losing ground and power in the summer. According to Putin, the terrorists would be mobilized if Al Assad's regime decline. However, he was helping the revival and the consolidation of the state foundation in the regime (Talukdar 2).

Despite the declaration of Putin, the Kremlin has clearly decided that, with the purpose of defending its interests in Russian neighboring countries, it is obliged to act globally. When Russia drew a line on Ukraine, it came to the conclusion that Syria would be the next country to suppress the upheaval strictly. It succeeded in turning the attention away from the destabilization Putin.

Russia believed that protecting Syria means protecting the Russian own property. In the economic domain, Russia invested within the segment of energy, steel and aviation. In addition, it incorporated a considerable presence within the Syrian infrastructure energy and tourism industries. Also, Russia signed many agreements for the building of gas processing plants, irrigation facilities and power stations (Talukdar 2-3).

### **2.2.2. Russia's Intervention in Syria**

Russian military engagement in Syria went back to the 1950's, when the Soviet Union courted Syrian nationalist rulers as counterbalance to the US regional partners. After the NATO led the 2011 military involvement in Libya, the Russian regime came out supporting Bashar Al Assad's government. Moreover, Moscow provided Damascus with military and financial support.

Furthermore, it submitted Al Assad with diplomatic assistance, stressing the UN efforts. The purpose was to encourage the formation of a transitional government, concentrated on mediating an agreement between the Syrian government and the rebel movements, instead of what the US and its allies characterized as the negotiated departure of Al Assad.

On the other hand, the two superpowers cooperated with the United Nations with the league of Arab States in a fitful and abortive series of peacemaking endeavors. In September 2013, Russia proposed working with the US, to establish an international mission, to remove chemical weapons from Syria as a solution for preventing US military interference.

Then, in 2015, Moscow started a gradual buildup of Russian personnel fighter airplane, and military hardware in Syria. In September, the Russian aerial bombing



started, drawing on Syrian opposition targets, some groups are assisted by the United States. However, in the subsequent year, Russia enlarged its targeting to incorporate Islamic State forces. Despite it continued targeting US backed rebel groups.

Moreover, airstrikes formed Russia's primary offensive military effort in Syria. These attacks had strengthened Al Assad's forces in reserving some opposition gains in Aleppo. Russia's participation in the advanced air defense systems in Syria also reportedly limited the capacity of other air planes to work freely in the area and complicates proposals calling for the establishment of a no-fly zone (Talukdar 3).

At the same time, the US and the Russian military forces cooperated in Syria against terrorist groups. Russia believed that these groups were fighting Assad government. Then, the Russian ground forces played a limited combat role, and appeared to be interested on defending Russian bases and installations, despite some may be embedded as advisors with Syrian military forces ("Russia . . ." 32).

Actually, the transmission of the Russian modernized weapons system to the Syrian military, were relying on the older Russian equipment during the Soviet Era. In addition, it provided the Russian military with a chance to test new weapons system and a platform to market Russian equipment to potential regional buyers.

In the beginning of 2017, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu declared that Russia tested 162 types of weapons in Syria. On the other hand, Russian media emphasized the performance of T-90 battle tank in Syria, arguing that it had the ability to resist strikes from US made TOW missiles ("Russia . . .").

For the future, Russia may continue its operations against Syrian rebelling groups, with the purpose of declining any credible or capable opposition to the Al Assad regime. However, Russia could enlarge its operations in the Islamic State-held areas of central and

eastern Syria. Actually, Russia may seek to retain influence with the Syrian regime by remaining to advise and help the Syrian military. In addition, Russia had contracts to keep a long presence at both the Tartus naval facility, and the Hmeimin airbase in Latakia.

Russia played an active role in the political negotiation between the Syrian government and the opposition group. In January 2017, Russia, Iran, and Turkey hosted peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan. Three months later, the representatives of Iran, Russia and Turkey signed a memorandum calling for the creation of four ‘de-escalation areas’ in Syria (“Syria’s . . . “).

However, the memorandum agreed that the de-escalation areas should be managed by forces from the three guarantors. On the other hand, the three signatory countries raised the possibility that these areas might become actual spheres of influence for Russia, Iran, or Turkey, as they might generate an additional influx of personnel from those nations into Syria (“Memorandum . . .”).

In 2015, the prospective of Al Assad’s defeat had many negative implications for Russia. It would have meant the loss of a major partner in the Middle East, a region where Russia started to enlarge its influence to help establish itself as a world power and a peer opponent to the United States. It would also set another significant precedent for US military backed transition in the Middle East (Talukdar 3-5).

### **2.2.3. The Influence of the Russian Intervention in Syria**

Russian airstrikes killed 18000 Syrians, 7000 of them were civilians. The Russian intervention in the war replaced Al Assad’s position in the geopolitical map, and helped him regaining control again. Since 2015, the government supervision was enlarged from one quarter over the half of the country’s territory with all the major cities. After Aleppo

was captured, the three countries initiated a new series of peace talks, which were held the capital of Kazakhstan, Astana (“Russian . . .”).

In 2012, the Astana process landed a parallel chain of peace talks led by the UN, in Geneva, and crashed in disorder in December 2017. However, the UN special emissary to Syria Staffan de Mistura, participated in the Astana talks; he negotiated the composition concurred at those talks to draft a new Syrian constitution. The first proposal was for the Syrian government and Russia, they choose one third of the committee’s members (Bradly).

Nevertheless, the Syrian government was demanding that it together with Russia, Iran and Turkey nominate the remainder rather than the UN, like it was firstly proposed. The Astana talks enabled Al Assad to carry on consolidating military gains. De-escalation zone agreed at Astana, in May 2017, helped to put combat on hold in four largely opposition held areas. In addition, the Syrian army picked off one area after another, re-taking three of the four zones with the help of the Russian air support.

Assaults in the final remaining de-escalation zone in Idlib were put on hold after Russia and Turkey concurred instead to form a disarmed zone along the front line. Nowadays, the bargain seemed weak with revolts having low level fighting with government forces continuing. In any event, the Syrian government considered the arrangement as merely a temporary measure, before re-conquering Idlib.

In sammary, the case study on Syria confirmed that the responsibility to stop people’s extreme suffering did not lead the decision making process in the main human rights organization UN, and the international community as a whole. Also, the Syrian case proved that the failed to fulfil its responsibility to protect toward the Syrians.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Bilateral Relations during Donald Trump Presidency**

The president of any country is the head of the state, which represents his nation in the world. That's why election is a necessary step to any country and the selection of the country's President gives an image about how the country's issues will be solved. In addition, the Russian government intervened in the US presidential election to raise the political unsteadiness in the United States and to damage Hilary Clinton's presidential campaign by bolstering the candidacies of Donald Trump, Jill Stein and Bernie Sanders.

The candidate Donald Trump had no experience in government he had never run for or held elective office or served in government before. There was certainty that Trump will not win the election and Hillary Clinton was the projected winner. A January 2017 assessment by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) noted that Russian leadership favored presidential candidate Trump over Clinton, and that Russian President Vladimir Putin personally ordered an 'influence campaign' to damage Clinton's chances and "undermine public faith in the US democratic Process" ('Assessing Russian Activities').

However, the election started on November 2016, each candidate worked hardly to win the presidency. During the process of the 2016 election, Russia intervened through spying. Donald Trump won the presidency and he denied Russia's interference. Hence, the US leadership under Obama's administration was very different from Trump's leadership, and his speeches gave a clear image about the differences. The aim of this chapter is to clarify the US presidential election, focusing on why did Russia interfere in the US presidential election? What direction he is going to take in a foreign policy in general, and with the Russian Federation specially.

### 3.1. Preparation for the Election

No President has taken the oath of office with as little political experience as Donald Trump it was not supposed to happen. In addition, ‘The Upshot’ placed the probability of a Hilary Clinton victory at 85 percent (Katz 2016). Also, the Huffington Post’s election 2016 model pegged the probability of a Clinton victory at 98 percent (Jackson and Hooper 2016).

Furthermore, the Unites States presidential election is determined through both popular vote and Electoral College, however, the one who wins the popular vote is the one who wins the electoral vote. On the other hand, Bush’s situation was different, he lost the popular vote but he won the electoral vote.

Moreover, the President should be 35 years old or more and should be a resident at least for 14 years old (“Requirements . . .”). Hence, the competition between Clinton and Trump determined the next President of the most powerful country in the world. Clinton was the first woman who won the popular vote, has lost the electoral votes (Klaine).

Donald Trump had no prior political experience of any type, he was not fully responsible for such liability. Consequently, Russia, the enemy of the US, attempted to intervene and spread fake news and rumors as it did before. In addition, the Soviet Union accused the US for assassination of Martin Luther King (Osnos, Remnick and Yaffa).

One week before the election, Nate Silver cautioned that Trump had a path to victory and that Clinton’s electoral advantage was weak (Schier and Ebrly 2). FiveThirtyEight’s Harry Enten warned that “Clinton does not have a meaningful advantage in the electoral college” and stated that she was in a worse position compared to Obama (Enten 2016).

Five days before the election, Silver noted that there were far more undecided voters in 2016 than 2012, those voters can produce significant last-minute shifts in the outcome

of the election. Meanwhile, he suggested that Pennsylvania and Michigan presented risk for Clinton (Schier and Ebrly 2).

Trump was always praising Putin for ways of thinking and controlling others using professional ways. “Free societies are often split because people have their own views, and that is what former Soviet and current Russian intelligence tries to take advantage of” (Osnos, Ramnick and Yaffa). Hence, Americans are free to make decisions, and this helps to effect the election.

### **3.2. The Interference of Russia in the US Election**

In 2014, Russia started planning to intervene in the US election in a fake newsroom in St Petersburg aimed at starting warfare against the US (Smith). The 2016 US presidential election was heroic for many reasons; it featured the first female candidate for President Offered by either major political party.

Additionally, Steven E. Schier and Todd E. Eberly in their book entitled *The Trump Presidency* stated that “There can be no doubt that Russian agents interfered in the election” (5). Hence, Russian interference in the 2016 US election was confirmed, since the Russians had successfully penetrated the email servers of the Democratic National Committee (6).

Moreover, Russian intervention in the US presidential election was so clear at that time. Also, it had the object of harming Hillary Clinton chances, and helping Donald Trump to win. However, Russia started by hacking the computer systems for the national level Democratic and Republican parties (Russian Meddling).

Mark Semakovsky of the Atlantic Research Center, a former Russian expert at the Pentagon, stated that “the indictment is an indication of the scale of Russia’s interference,

but also an indication of the scale of Mueller's investigation" (Smith). Furthermore, Russia used fake accounts with true public American information (Smith).

Meanwhile, Mueller mentioned in the 448 page document that "the Russian government interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion" ("Collusion . . ."). Also, It provided new details about Kremlin-backed plot that compromised Democrats computer networks and targeted state and local election ("Collusion . . .").

It was also worth mentioning that, the Kremlin stressed that Putin was ready to improve ties with the United States but it was up to Washington to make the first move. However, a Russian presidential spokesman, Dmitry Peskov said in conference call with reporters, referring to a summit between Trump and Putin (Harding).

Many investigations showed that Russia had interfered in the election. The US Intelligence agencies result demonstrated that Putin in a way or another helped Trump to win the presidency (Ward). Moreover, the occurrence that changed the political track of the US and eroded its credibility was when Russia succeeded to hack Clinton's emails, this hacking "involved stolen identities, fake social media account" (Smith).

On the other hand, the election seemed fair because of opinions of the fake accounts. Russia interfered in Ukraine Obama's administration imposed several sanctions against Russia's aggression (Harding). Therefore, Putin responded that it was unfriendly act and he banned American couples from adopting Russian children (Bevan).

Also, Jeffrey Toobin in the article entitled "The D.N.C's Laswsuits against Russia and the Trump Campaign Isn't Bad Idea" commented that by June 2016, Russia had stolen thousands of DNC documents and emails; the email of John Podesta, Hillary

Clinton Campaign chairman, and those of a handful of subordinates were also hacked and disseminated”. Until now, no one has been held accountable for these crimes.

Luke Harding wrote in his article entitled “What we know about Russia’s interference in the US election” that “Russia turned from hacking emails to WikiLiks websites, published before the election.” In other words, hacking emails was not sufficient for Russia, so it moved to Wikiliks websites.

Jonathan Masters, on February 26, 2018 wrote in his article entitled Russia. “Trump and the 2016 US Election” that the CIA FBI and the National Security Agency jointly stated with high confidence that the Russian government conducted a sophisticated campaign to influence the recent election”. Also, he noted that the aim of Putin’s interference was to damage Clinton’s presidential campaign.

Russia’s interference in Ukraine and 2016 US election opened the door for New Cold War. In July 13, 2018, Michael S Schmidt in his article entitled “Trump Invited the Russians to Hack Clinton Were They Listening” wrote that “in a new conference in July 2016, Donald J. Trump made a direct appeal to Russia to hack Hillary Clinton emails and make them public.” In other words, how did Trump deny Russian interference, if he talked about the hacking publicly?

### **3.2.1. Why did Russia help Trump?**

Jennifer Rubin wrote in her article entitled “Helping Russia help Trump is precisely what Trump did” that Trump said “... Russia Russia Russia! That’s all you heard at the beginning of this witch Hunt Hoax. And now Russia has disappeared because I had nothing to do with Russia helping me to get elected. It was a crime that did not exist.” This may be an inadvertent confession.



On April 29, 2019, Amy Mackinnon noted in her report entitled "Trump may like Putin. His Administration Doesn't". Trump as presidential candidate, in his first foreign policy speech as a presidential candidate, voted for making closer ties with Russia if elected. However, during the election campaign, Trump pledged to improve the US-Russia relationship.

The Russian President had chosen Trump for several causes. The main reason was to damage the secretary of the state, Clinton, "He blamed secretary of the state, Hilary Clinton, for the anti-kremlin protests in Moscow's Bolototannaya" (Osnos, Remnick and Yaffa). Putin planned to damage Clinton and he did.

Matt Bevan in "Why Does Vladimir Putin Hate Hilary Clinton?" stated that "Hillary Clinton has never been afraid to call out Vladimir Putin, but she never expected Russia's vengeance to be so damaging". Clinton was certain that Putin will not be able to influence the 2016 presidential election. Unfortunately, he did what she had never expected, he proved that he was dangerous more than she had never expect.

### **3.2.2. Why did Putin Damage Clinton?**

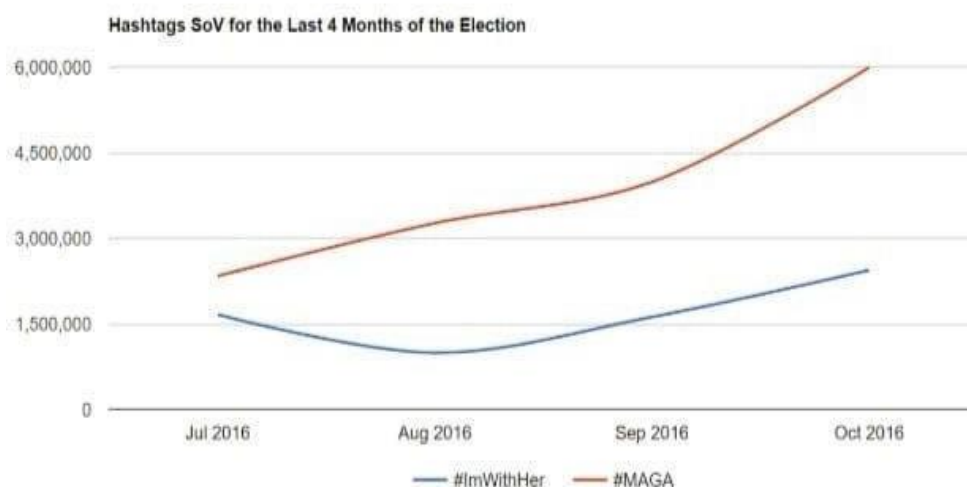
Trump was an easy target to take benefit from, he had always admired and praised Putin during his speeches. On the other hand, Clinton was always criticizing Putin, she criticized Putin when he interfered in Ukraine. Also, she affronted him when she said "Mr Putin does not have a soul, she called him a tough guy with a thin skin, and she compered his annexation of Crimea in 2014 to the action of Adolf Hitler" (Bevan).

### 3.2.3. How Did Media influence the US Presidential Election?

Social media can be unstoppable weapon if it is used with the right way (Hana 34). Putin used very sensitive way when interfering in the election. Sam Sanders said in his article “Zuckerberg also pointed out studies showing that increasingly, more young people are getting their news primarily from sites like Facebook, and that young people have said it helps them see a larger and more diverse set of opinions”

Also, social media dominated our life it influenced our thinking and may change our opinions easily. However, using media as pressure weapon played a major role in Trump’s wining. Dan Kennedy commented that “Trump as a TV celebrity was not something that give him a privilege over an experienced governor” but Trump who had no experience in government won the presidency.

On April 13, 2017, it was mentioned in the article entitled “A Final, Data-Driven Look at Trump V. Clinton on Social Media” that “Trump’s social media following was larger than Clinton’s” (Galley). According to Jennifer Stromer Galley “While Clinton’s Campaign was overall more active on its social media accounts, it did not receive the same amount of attention and support on social media compared with Donald Trump.”



**Fig1:** Share of Voice on Trump’s and Clinton’s Twitter Hashtags.

Morghan Wright noted in his article entitled "Trump and Putin Should Be Talking about Cyber Attacking and Social Media instead of Nuclear Weapons" that during the election, the situation was like "Digital cold war fought via social media, networks and mass media." Also, a digital Cold War was occurring because of Russia's action and Putin's ambitions, spying and hacking was the opening of the New Cold War.

Additionally, Steven E. Schier and Todd E. Eberly wrote in their book entitled *The Trump Presidency* that "Most voters learn about politics and candidates secondhand, via the news, so media coverage can be a crucial to a candidate's success or failure." As a result, media played a crucial role in the US election (8).

### **3.3. The Future of the US Russia Relations and the New Cold War**

#### **3.3.1. Toward a New Relationship**

Richard Sakwa in his title entitled "U.S.-Russian Relations in the Trump Era" stated that "The idea of doing a deal was an increasing substantial as Obama's reset earlier. Both failed to address Russia's underlying insecurities and concerns" Hence, each one considered the other as a threat to its existence and adopted strategies to maintain their positions they mistrust each other.

Robert Legvold noted in his research paper "Managing the New Cold War What can Moscow and Washington can learn from the last one" that "It is important to call things by their names and the collapse in relations between Russia and the West does indeed deserve to be called a new Cold War." In addition, In May, Alexander Vershbow, the deputy secretary general of NATO, asserted that "Russia should now be considered more of an adversary than a partner." ("Managing . . .")

John Feffer commented in the article “US vs Russia: the New New Cold War” that “this new new Cold War between a United States nostalgic for the same period is potentially very dangerous indeed” To be more clear, the future of the bilateral relations may be dangerous more than it had been before. He also stated that: “If the United States had disbanded NATO, pushed for nuclear abolition, and helped to create a new security architecture for Europe that included Russia, the Cold War would have died a natural death. Instead, because the institutions of the Cold War lived on, the spirit of the enterprise lay dormant, only waiting for the opportunity to spring forth” (Feffer).

In 1991, the Cold War ended with the collapse of the USSR, the US was the dominant power. Then, on January 20, 2019, Alina Polykova stated in the article entitled “Are U.S. and Russia in a new Cold War?” that “Each president seemed convinced that he could fix the Russia problem through a close personal relationship with the Russian leader.” Also, she noted “Russia is no match to the United States economically, militarily, or in terms of its appeal to others.” Hence, whatever Russia does, it cannot be like the United States.

### **3.5. What May Happen in the Future**

Donald Trump won the presidency, he is the legal responsible for the US matters. In preference to punish Russia, “Trump delighted in saying that Putin was a superior leader who had turned the Obama administration into a laughing stock” (Ossnos, Remnick and Yaffa) to be more clear, Russia’s President supported Trump which will strengthen his relationship with the US, his plan to influence Trump’s opinion has succeeded.

On November 24, 2016, Scott Gilmore commented in his article entitled “Donald Trump and the New World Order” that “The United Nations may be one of the earliest victims of the Trump presidency. The organization is still recovering from the damage

done by John Bolton as George W. Bush's short-lived ambassador to the UN." That is to say the United States still suffer from what President Bush did, and President Trump will damage more.

## Conclusion

Lots of events occurred by the end of the WWII, which led to the division of the world into two great leaders, the Communist bloc USSR and the Capitalist bloc US. Each one wanted to dominate the world, and they mistrusted one another. The Cold War was not a conflict between the two superpowers, but a globe conflict that affected many nations. After that, this struggle ended by the decline of the USSR, and the US dominated the world.

The focus of this dissertation was on assessing the U.S-Russian relations since the end of the WWII till present. The US after the Cold War was running for new opportunities to improve its power and influence, which made Russia perceive the US as a threat. Obama Administration's effort to foster enhanced U.S Russia Relationship faced several challenges during the election cycles.

Hence, the United States and Russia are competing as the old days during the Cold War, this confrontation was like the old one because proxy wars did not end yet. The interests of Russia when it interfered in Syria also stem from the collapse in Russia-West ties following Moscow's invasion of eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Trump's Victory was not expected, it led to the emergence of several questions such as how could unexperienced men in government, be President of the most powerful nation in the world. Also, he denied Russia's interference in the election, saying that Clinton's loss was because of her unpopularity. However, the candidate Hillary Clinton, who was sure about her victory, lost the election because of the Russian President Putin Interference. Moreover, Robert Mueller examined Russia's interference in the 2016 US election.

Furthermore, The US and Russia seek total domination over everything, that's why they are against the balance of power. The intervention of Russia in the 2016 US election

had made Putin under investigation. The topic of the US-Russia relations is extremely debatable, their future relationship will be unstable because their history witnessed many improvement and several crises. In addition, the probability of their cooperation and partnership is still far away.

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