

Free research paper on american foreign policy on the cold war and modern russia

[War](#), [Cold War](#)



American Foreign Policy on the Cold War and Modern Russia

History has long portrayed the United States and Russian Federation (or the former Soviet Union) as bitter rivals since the time of the Great Wars and the onset of the Cold War. Both became the leader of the West and the East as the world's superpowers in the Cold War, with one becoming the de-facto leader of the international community and the other becoming a silent entity in the European region. For years, both countries remained in conflict in several aspects within the international arena and in the side of the United States, their foreign policy had indicated some shifts when it comes to the changing Russian administration. From the time of the Cold War up to the present, American foreign policy towards Russia remains cordial and sometimes cooperative, however, there is a lingering reservation within these policies to the possible reemergence of a powerful Russia.

Since replacing Franklin D. Roosevelt in the midst of the Second World War, President Harry Truman's policy, according to Miscamble (2007) was directed mostly in ensuring an active America and a cordial and decent relations with the Soviets to ensure peace in the Western and Eastern Spheres. However, while both countries had accepted a temporary truce to settle the war in Germany; upon the time the Allies and the Soviets turned into the Pacific, the Americans, especially Truman, started to lose their trust with the Soviets when the Japanese had tried to get the Soviets to support them. The Americans were also weary regarding Soviet sincerity regarding their position in Europe due to their movements in Poland and the Central and Eastern European nations. Truman then ordered the use of the atomic bomb

against Japan without informing the Soviets to ensure the Soviets would not interfere. Once the Second World War ended, American perspective over the Soviet Union turned to the worst (including the public), and for Truman and his two Secretaries of State George Marshall and Dean Acheson, the Soviets are bidding their time to claim the recovering Europe. In this end, American foreign policy concentrated on resisting the influence of the Soviets in the region and create barriers to ensure the reduction of communist influence that has already spread in Central and Eastern Europe. The Truman Administration also enforced the Truman Doctrine (Soviet containment) and the Marshall Plan in 1947 to ensure that the Europeans would recover and call for democratic freedom that would remove the totalitarian rule communism advocates. Marshall, in the intent to still fix US-Soviet relations, had met up with the Soviets in the Moscow Conference to continue talks regarding post-war Europe; however, he saw that the Soviets were indeed trying to ensure it remains damaged to breakdown the system in the region for takeover. Truman had allowed Marshall to determine American foreign policy after the meeting and provided funding to the Marshall Plan, a \$13 billion economic aid for Western Europe which would ensure American-European relations and to protect American interest and national security concerns.

However, the Soviets continued to move towards Western Europe and in February 1948, communist Klement Gottwald had led a coup against Czech president Eduard Benes that triggered European and American action to stop the Soviets. According to Ernest Bevin, one of the founders of the Marshall Plan, it was crucial to create a defensive alliance with the Americans to

ensure that the Treaty of Brussels (1948) between the French and Benelux countries would be supported. At first, the Americans were reluctant to support the Treaty under the premise it may cause further turmoil. The Americans only agreed to the Treaty after creating the London Program, designed to lower occupation costs and ensure German recovery. The Soviets did not like the plan and attempted to protest against it by blocking the western parts of Berlin. The Americans and the British had countered by restricting air traffic, but had ensured Stalin's attempt to break their cooperation for Western Europe to fail. Truman knew it was now crucial to ensure a mutual defense treaty is created. With Truman undergoing the elections in 1948, he had Dean Acheson to lead the negotiations for the mutual defense treaty or the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949. Negotiations went smoothly for the North Atlantic Treaty, which indicated in Article 5, that 'an armed attack against one or more [of the signatories] shall be considered an armed attack against them all'. The US Senate immediately ratified the treaty and ensured the establishment of America's foreign policy after the war. However, while the US did not take an active role on peacetime alliances, the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1950 ensured Soviet containment and deterrence to protect the Western Europeans. In this extent, it could be said that while Truman's administration had its lapses over foreign policy, it had ensured peace within Western Europe and established the commitment of the Americans to stop communism as the world's leader .

The idea of Soviet containment and distrust had lingered on after Truman's administration as stated by Matlock (2008) despite the agreement of a

détente from the tenures of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford as a sign of easing tensions between the two parties and to agree with the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Under the tenure of President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), US-Soviet relations were at the very low due to the 1972 Soviet takeover of Afghanistan. Carter had immediately ordered a rice embargo and the boycotting of American athletes in the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games as a result of this breach. Many had not agreed over Carter's harsh reaction, especially his political rival and successor Ronald Reagan as it would weaken the United States and its position as a country of liberty and freedom. With Carter removing the only way for the Americans to reach out in neutral terms aside from political negotiations, Reagan and his allies sought out the people and stress that if this continues, a compromise to end the Cold War would be difficult. After the elections in 1981, Knopf (2004) stated that many supported Reagan's election to Presidency. However, many realized Reagan did not have a clear perspective as to how he would utilize his power to shape American foreign policy. Nonetheless, like his rhetoric, he stressed that it is crucial to speak with the Soviets to ensure the end of the Cold War and agree on terms regarding nuclear weaponry and arms control. Unlike his predecessors, Reagan knew entering a battle with the Soviets would lead to nowhere and that foreign policy should be more on pressuring the Soviets subtly to their defeat. American foreign policy under Reagan had also highlighted the common interests of the US and the Soviet Union, which is necessary because both nations can work together to improve issues within the international community. Reagan had also indicated that there is a need to improve Soviet Union

policies because it contradicts the system already practiced by the other nations which is why the end of the war is impossible. At first, the Soviets did not like Reagan's foreign policy as he proved that he was not ready for discussions regarding the SALT-II treaty, Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces 1981 and the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks in 1982 as he was concentrated on improving US defense. Once satisfied, Reagan slowly move towards his main agenda in reaching out to the Soviets by removing the embargo and work on a compromise regarding nuclear arms control and conflicts due to the Cold War. His 1985 speech regarding this matter opened the gates for rekindled US-Soviet relations and the introduction of a younger leader for the Soviets that would be crucial for a compromise. The Soviet leaders were reluctant to relinquish their positions to a younger leader, but had agreed to elect Mikhail Gorbachev as the new Soviet Premier in 1985. With the help of Gorbachev, both parties had managed to reach a compromise regarding the unification of Germany and arms control. The Reagan-Gorbachev tandem had managed to introduce more open US-Soviet relations as both leaders flew to the other's capital to sign the agreements on arms control and to finalize the issues on Eastern Europe and Germany to end the war. In 1989, Reagan left the White House with his successor George H. W. Bush finalizing the terms of ending the Cold War .

With the breakup of the Soviet Union after the Cold War that ushered the introduction of the Russian Federation, American foreign policy was slightly neutral as the presidency of George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton did not easily identify as to what position the US should play after the Cold War. For George H. W. Bush, he had issues regarding the funds for his foreign policy

efforts due to the expenses during Reagan's tenure and the debts it had allowed to other nations. Bush was not able to even provide the Eastern Europeans aid like the Marshall Plan. Most of the foreign policies of the US in the 1990s were for Israel, Egypt, and Central America and Bush had rejected the position of his predecessors of an active America. He had problems with the separation of the Soviet Union because of the 30, 000 nuclear weapons scattered in former republics of the Soviets. Bush was also reluctant to join the battle in the Balkan territories and the Yugoslavian conflict due to their lack of support and knowledge in the area. Many experts believed the US is guilty of double standards regarding the area because the US had also had massive firepower desire on military attack. When Clinton became the president, his foreign policy was non-existent and only had a policy team to remove foreign policy from his work. There was also no pressure to make a new foreign policy, but the foreign situation of Russia's declining economy and the growth of rogue states in the Middle East made it difficult for Bush to work on efficient foreign policy and concentrated on economic policy.

In the tenure of George W. Bush in 2001, he had selected Condoleezza Rice as his national security adviser and Colin Powell as his Secretary of State. He did not have a foreign policy agenda like Clinton, but he was determined to improve his stance over an active foreign policy as compared to Clinton's administration. He knew that his people are the ones who could decide well on his behalf regarding foreign policy issues, but he would have the last say over decisions and policies. Bush had cancelled talks with the Middle East, North Korea (another known communist state), and the Balkan territories and just work on national missile defense regulations and policy. Experts

stated that Bush made sure that the US moved away as the world's peace broker and leader, throwing the international arena out of the loop due to the removal of the US in improving international issues. Bush disregarded these criticisms, focusing first on domestic policies and issues. However, American foreign policy under Bush's administration changed upon September 11, 2001 when the World Trade Center bombings that woke America's active foreign policy against international terrorism. Russia had joined with the US to work on international counter-terrorism, opening the US to Central Asia and the Caucasus to fight against the terrorist groups in the region .

Currently, American foreign policy under Barack Obama towards Modern Russia is similar with Bush's approach, inclining to opening more cooperation between the two countries to solve the problems on terrorism and international affairs. According to Unnikrishnan and Puroshothaman (2013), Obama and Putin had exchanged several communiques since the Obama administration to discuss the New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) to discuss reductions in nuclear weapons before 2018. Putin conceded and agreed with the reduction of weapons and stockpiling. The US remains undecided regarding Russia's concern over the expansion of NATO to the Eastern region because it may trigger Chinese nuclear power, but it had agreed to reduce its missile defense system to aid negotiations. The Obama administration also was supportive with the reduction of strategic nuclear warheads within Europe to influence Russia to do the same, but Russia remains passive over the position of the Americans.

In terms of counter-terrorism, both Russia and the US agreed that global

terrorism is a serious problem and both nations are not spared by these insurgencies. With the Boston bombings in 2013 showing the capabilities of terrorists to overrun the security of the US, it was discovered that the Russian authorities had shared intelligence information about the bombers earlier on. Although the American authorities did not take the information seriously due to the lack of information on the bombers and how the Russians gotten the information, it showcases that the Russians were open for cooperation. In reaction to this willingness, the American government had announced in the last G-8 meeting in June 2013 in Ireland that they will work together to improve counter-terrorism efforts and information sharing. In relation to this issue, the American foreign policy on Russia with terrorism can be seen in Afghanistan as the Russians supported the Americans to remove the Taliban after 9/11, knowing that Afghanistan would become a serious problem if not resolved. America worked with the Russians to discuss the usage of the Northern Distribution Network that the Russians have within the region to transport supplies for the troops in order to make sure that Afghanistan would no longer be the hub for extremists.

Central Asia also became crucial to American foreign policy on Russia as it provided slight issues between the two nations despite their cooperation agreements. America had its troops over in Central Asia to foster democracy. Russia was not accepting over this stance, but knew Obama would not risk full intervention in the region due to the current issues of the country in other parts of the globe. Finally, foreign policy on Russia is also developed by the growing tensions in the Middle East that slightly challenged the cooperation between the two nations. America wanted to intervene in the

growing tensions caused by the Arab uprisings but Russia wanted the international community to remain still and not intervene in internal affairs. While both nations agreed it is crucial to end the violence, Obama pressed on discussing terms for the Geneva II to solve the issues on Assad's regime in Syria, the growing tensions in Egypt and the problem with Iran's nuclear capability. Both nations are currently in disagreement as to how to solve the Iran and Syria issue, but both nations are still positive a compromise can be met soon .

America and Russia have a long history together and shared several similarities since the time of the Great Wars up to the present time. While both had embraced two different ideologies and political sentiment, it is without a doubt that these two powers have same national interests and desire for the world despite their conflicting positions. In the case of the Americans, its foreign policy is marred by both the desire to have ties with the Russians, but had been unable to have a lasting cooperation because of the perceived Russian intentions as seen in the Cold War period. With the world now experiencing various global and domestic issues, both America and Russia must act together in solving these issues because of their potential in working out a compromise and their capability as the world's Western and Eastern leaders. Without these two nations cooperating, it is likely that cooperation or peace would not be attainable in the modern world.

References

Cameron, F. (2005). *US Foreign Policy after the Cold War: Global hegemon or reluctant sheriff?* Oxon: Routledge.

Knopf, J. (2004). Did Reagan win the Cold War? *Strategic Insights*, 3(8), 1-14.

Matlock, J. F. (2008). Ronald Reagan and the End of the Cold War. In C.

Hudson, & G. Davies, *Ronald Reagan and the 1980s: Perceptions, Policies, Legacies* (pp. 57-78). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Miscamble, W. (2007). *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima, and the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Unnikrishnan, N., & Purushothaman, U. (2013). *US-Russia Relations at a Crossroads*. New Delhi: ORF Issue Brief.