

# RE- EMERGENCE OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY UNDER PUTIN REGIME

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## ABSTRACT

*The disintegration of Soviet Union is a watershed moment in international relations. The structure of international relations has been continuously changing then. The US became sole super power during this phase. After this incident, Russia's role in global affairs has been regularly undermined-be it in Yugoslavia and many. However, Russia became assertive and pragmatic when Putin came into the helm of affairs of Russia. In fact, Russia started re-emerging in global affairs. It is in this context, the article explains how the world politics changed after the disintegration of Soviet Union. It expounds how Russia's position got changed in global affairs since Putin arrival in Kremlin. Finally, the article also dealt what is the significance of Russian foreign policy in changing world politics.*

**KEY WORDS:** Foreign Policy, India, Russia, Vladimir Putin

## INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republic) broke the bipolar nature of the international relations to unipolar with the US (United States) as the sole super power, whereas Russia's status and power declined drastically. It's been twenty three years on since the dissolution of the USSR and Russian Federation was the main successor state. In these Twenty three years of itinerary, the Russia's political system and foreign policy has undergone drastic changes. It was restructured, renovated, while its foreign and domestic policies have experienced significant changes (Kanet 2010: 204). Throughout the last decade of twentieth century of international relations, Russia has been sidelined in major global decisions. However, with the arrival of Putin into the Kremlin since the year of 2000 has brought gigantic changes in Russian foreign policy and its stature. Thus, recurring changes in coeval global affairs and Russia's response to the same heralding its re-emergence in contemporary global politics. Indeed, it has been reflected in Georgia war, Korean nuclear imbroglio, Edward Snowden issue, Security Council resolutions, Arab crisis and most recent Ukraine crisis as well.

## HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The period after the World War-II considered being war prone without war to mention here except meager Cuban Missile crisis and Korean crisis. The Cold War was multifaceted and intrinsic, was incorporated

both power politics and competing ideologies and established an alternative economic and societal systems (Kanet 2010; 12). It emerged after the World War-II between two super powers, the US and the Soviet Union when latter included Eastern European countries in its great empire in 1946.

"The Cold War period was an east and western competition, tension and conflict with short of full-scale war, characterized by mutual perception of hostile intentions between military political alliances. There were real wars, sometimes called „proxy wars“ because they were fought by Soviet allies instead USSR itself- Along with competition for influence in the Third World, and a major super power arms race" (www.loc.gov/exhibits/archives/cols.html -For further detail).

Lasted till the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 (ibid), Shearman (2010) argues there was one sort of Cold War in which the relations between two superpowers represented by US and USSR, i.e. the ideological conflict between East and West. This period totally based on zero-sum-game, it says one's gains another's loss. The cold war has been larger implications on international relations after the World War-II. The emergence of military alliance system, institutionalization of politics, changed social and cultural relations drastically (ibid).

Nonetheless, the Cold War made world into two parts by making Non-Alliance countries space as

buffer zone in US-USSR great game power politics. The cold war ended formally with the dissolution of USSR in 1991. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 led to integration of world with perpetual political and economic power gravity United States, it got sole super power status ever since. Before 1991, Russia as part of the USSR was a Super Power along with the US (Zhuplev 2008). Yeltsin took control the power baton of federal Russia after the disintegration. It was geographically and socially disordered, demographically, politically fractured, economically dilapidated and militarily humiliated for a movement at that time when Boris Yeltsin became to represent the nation (Hall and Grant 2008). Russia was under neck deep trouble's, politically and economically it was shattered, foreign policy was western oriented and guided by Western interests only, in fact, it was in desperate need of economic aid of western countries promoted economic organizations like IMF. Internal political instability caused hugely to the stability of firmness of the state in international level.

Russia's economic, political and societal problems led Russia seep into the deep economic and political chaos, the administration was deeply clouded by corruption scandals, political instability, meander foreign policy, influenced and promoted with the introduction of market economy and shock therapy policies. Democratic heart Yeltsin, introduced Washington consensus under the guidance of the US to introduce market economy in Russia, in the beginning it was partly successful, but, in later part of the period it was hugely affected on its economy (Rutland 2012). Russia was wholly undermined on myriad global influenced affairs, to succinct, the first half of 1990's Russian foreign policy was guided by Western nations in it, Russia was in so mayhem that it was unable to retaliate Western influence in their so called near abroad, NATO's expansion and on many unwanted sanctions imposed by them.

Mankoff (2008; 67) said " Russia was immensely over depended on Western countries that it could not object its wicked and trickery political, economic, and military politics throughout the 1990's. The collapse of industry, drastic fall in living standard and the corruption led the guarantor of instability in the beginning of new Russia (Kagarlitsky 2012; 82). Ellison (2006) says Boris Yeltsin can be regarded as controversial leader in modern history in new Russian politics. He led the transition of Russian democratic revolution, and a defender of Russia's fragile new liberties, besides that, evolving respect for rule of law

and private property as well as core freedoms of speech, religion, press and political association.

After USSR disintegration Russia was re-examining its stature and status. In this connection it assumed importance to quote the conversation between Kozyrov, the then Russian foreign minister, and US president Nixon. Kozyrov asks Nixon, "If you.....can advise us on how to define our national interests, I will be very grateful to you" (Monkoff 2008; 29 and the conversation between Nixon and Kozyrov). There was the policy confusion in Russia when it was separated from the USSR. That led to the severe crisis in Russian foreign policy. The nationalists and conservatives were immensely distraught with the pro-western foreign policy implemented by him, the neglect of the former Soviet Union republics. The changes in Russian foreign policy were initiated since the 1996 after Yevgeny Primakov was made as foreign minister by replacing Kozyrov (Mankoff 2007). Primakov was oriental, favored largely on the CIS and on Third World Countries. Hassner (2008) argues, Primakov mostly focused on near abroad by emphasizing on emerging nations from third world countries to balance the relations between the west and east in his period and it lasted till 1998. Nonetheless, this period is not so fruitful for Russian federation.

## RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY DURING PUTIN

Russia entered the 21st century with a mixed feeling as an autonomous international player-deemed to be member of the West but neither as an integrated member of Western security institutions such as NATO nor into the core of an Eastern empire (Trenin 2004). It was during this period, Putin emerged as an unrivaled personality in Russian politics. And, it was due to his masterful and astute strategies, Russia brought back its lost clout as an international player unlike the Boris Yeltsin's regime which had its own sui generis memories. Political and foreign policy objectives of Russia had undergone dramatic changes during this period as the country became more active and aggressive in furthering its interests in international arena unlike the 1990s.

Within one year after his election as Prime Minister in 1999, Putin became president in 2000. Since then, through his pragmatic and assertive foreign policy, Putin has extended his network of allies with the likeminded states to contain the United States from assuming a dominant global position (Kanet 2007; 209). From there Russia started emerging slowly and steadily with Putin's arrival in Russian politics, made Russia one

of the strong powers in world politics. Famous on Russian affairs Rumer and Wallander (2003) pointed out that, the Russian economy advanced from mere 4.3% in 2001 to 7.1% in 2003, its currency became very stable, paying international debts without any trouble, citizens were receiving their pensions and wages without any hiatus and, Russia runs trade and economy surpluses, inflation was reduced marginally and its central bank holds foreign currency of more than 64 billion dollars (ibid).

After that, Putin identified the important economic sectors to uplift the shattered economy, and emphasized on oil and natural gases, natural resources, became one of the largest producer of it, in fact it stood in third and second position in gas production (ibid), Russia making huge profits for the Russian economy, and became one of the stake holder in oil and natural gas production. Russia paid all international debts which were taken during the Yeltsin period. The economy came on the right track (ibid). However, the causes for concern in domestic politics were the Oligarchs involvement in domestic politics. Further, Putin centralized this central domination in choosing of state representatives, put business tycoons into policy making and decreased politics, and curbed the critical media, which had anti-government nature. Putin eliminated his opposition and took the direct control of the state. This made Russia one of the strongest states; in fact it was needed at that point of time as well since the state of Russia's internal and external reputation has declined (ibid).

When Putin first introduced the new foreign policy concept as the basis for his foreign policy, he mentioned that, "the basic objective of the Russian Federation foreign policy is to promote Russia's interests, to become most powerful center in world politics to ensure its security, preserving and strengthening sovereignty and territorial integrity to make Russian federation very strong and authoritative in world community, in a way to promote its political, economic, intellectual and spiritual position" (Russian Foreign Ministry, foreign policy concept 2000). When, Putin introduced foreign policy concept of Russia (FPCR), he flaked US" unilateral decisions on many number of International Affairs, he mentioned that, Unilateral actions and decisions of the US on many global affairs has divided the World, might become the reasons to escalate tensions around the World and a cause for concern in multilateral relations, that has led to strife in religious and national harmony"

(Foreign Policy Concept, 2000). The basic tenets of that concept are as mentioned below.

- Russia will strive for the creation of stable, equal and mutual respect international relations, in which no state should interfere in internal matters of any state and must follow international law principles.
- World politics should be run by the United Nations principles or based on the UN Charter principles.
- United Nations Security Council should be more representative and should expand in democratic manner. And
- Russia increases its participation in prominent international groups like BRICS, SCO, G-7 and RIC for making sustainable manageability of global politics without any hindrance.

Russian foreign policy became more complex, pragmatic and very assertive and also ambitious over the period. Russia was generally considered one of the great power countries in the modern world; no country has potential as Russia to balance US hegemonic power. It is not China, India or Brazil but Russia, which is the only single power and which can constrain US unilateral decisions on any global affairs, whether it is militarily, economically or on any other matter. Russia's decline had led to unrestrained US hegemony. Russia's stabilization has led to a better position to counter balance.

The Putin's aspirations to revive the USSR empire was clearly eclipsed in periodic economic pressure on Ukraine, in the so called Cyber War on Estonia in spring in 2007, invasion of Georgia in August 2008, it indicated the Russia's commitment to reverse the geopolitical changes that occurred in post-cold war Europe and to reestablish its regional dominance and its position as a global power (Kanet 2010; 204). The recent past incidents in international relations clearly signaling his intention to bring back power politics in world by establishing Eurasian Union with inclusion of former Soviet Republics in that entity and growing relations with emerging nations under Putin regime will have larger implications on Russian foreign policy and in global affairs in near future.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

The Putin era in Russian politics restarted again and will decide the future course of action of Russia and its relations with the US and other emerging nations in coming days as by any means Putin is going to be in Duma till 2018, but, China and India's role is very

crucial in shaping relations, in fact, much is depends on how these countries react to US-Russia relations. Now, the question that arises is how Russia will engage countries of the Global South, especially the BRICS and new formation like G-20. Many of the important aspects have been mentioned in Medvedev foreign policy concept, such as, multi polarity, independent foreign policy and Russia's active participation on many global affairs, so on and so forth, as scholar Rywkin (2012) says that, they are;

- Enduring of great power status of Russia in coming international relations would be based on an independent foreign policy of Russia.
- Active promotion of Russian foreign policy throughout the globe, by emphasizing more on so called near abroad as it is very important for new Russia federation owing to the US over involvement in Central Asian affairs as ever before, it would be based on the blossoming Eurasian Union concept by including existing Eurasian trade union (Russia, Belorussian and Kazakhstan are part of Eurasian trade union).
- It might even focus on preservation of one party rule system in new Russian federation, but, it would be more on Putin's United Russia and, elimination of potential threat in domestic politics of Russia. And lastly the return of great power politics is inevitable with the arrival of Putin.

Over all Russia's growth as a global power at this critical juncture of world politics is inevitable, and imminent. The foreign policy statement of Medvedev has given Putin immense scope to evaluate it and play active role in global politics in the near future. If he can coordinate the many crucial regions such as, Central Asia, Asia Pacific, Europe, South Asia, Middle East. Recently popularizing Arctic region with its abundance of natural resources, will give Putin the opportunity to play effective role in world politics. The pivot of world politics is, the rising power status of countries, such as, China, India, Brazil (BRICS), it is not exaggerating to say that, real international politics will depend on how BRICS maintain strategic relations with them. Hence, Russia has immense opportunity to exploit the situation that prevails in the present international relations to tackle Western hegemonic domination.

## CONCLUSION

During the First World War there were many countries which were fought for power valiantly, in those days it was mostly on military and naval power

decided the strength of the state but, in modern time it is economy which determines the power of a state. The minuscule difference was being between military and economy, it is entirely, neo-liberal", combination of economy and political relations on the basis of institution regime. Thus, as according to the goals, and foreign policy concept, it should promote their multilateral regime of negotiations towards the third world countries.

Furthermore, the return of Putin as president has raised many questions among many international scholars and political analysts and policy makers. The US concern is that, the Putin's leadership has made Russia re-assertive and, one of the global power within the decade. The man with determination, assertive and pragmatic foreign policy goals, and the highly ambitious leader's dream project to make or bring so called near abroad under one umbrella by establishing Eurasian Union is a potential cause for concern in Western countries as it challenges hegemony, make Russia a global power and helps in multi-polar world and institutions based regime.

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