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## THE EFFECTS OF THE SEPTEMBER 11th INCIDENT ON RUSSIA`S POSITION IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM (2001-2010)

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### Summary

The September 11th incident led to some principle changes in international security and many see it as even more important than the results of the Cold War. This incident not only changed the structure of the international system, but made countries redefine their foreign relations. US relations with its rival in the Cold War, Russia, entered a new stage. The question studied in this paper is: "What are the effects of 9/11 on Russia`s position in the international system?" The hypothesis is that the 9/11 incident led to an increasing role for Russia in the international system according to the security and political requirements of the US. In this article, the reasons for cooperation between Russia and the US being based on offensive realism, US security and political requirements after 9/11, and its effects on the increasing importance of Russia`s position in the international system are carefully studied.

**Key words:** 9/11 incident, International system, Security, Terrorism, Multilateralism.

### Introduction

The killing of three thousands peoples on US territory on September 11, 2001 was a major event that changed the total international security condition and the phenomenon of fighting terrorism appeared on both the security and global stage. Although terrorism had been an issue in international relations` history, the 9/11 incident made the US revise its relations with other great powers like Russia.

In spite of severe competition between these two powers in the military and strategic fields, which reasons encouraged Russia to cooperate with the US during its two wars with Afghanistan and

Iraq? What were the US political and security needs after 9/11 that Russia's cooperation in these areas led to its increased importance in regional and international position after the Cold War?

On one hand, Vladimir Putin, as well as Dmitry Medvedev, had planned a general strategy so that Russia could play a role as a super power in the international system<sup>[1]</sup>. On the other hand, neoconservatives in the US leadership system were sure about the material and spiritual qualities of their country, and their dominant beliefs on power structures in Russia and China did not view US power to be threatening or challenging to their vital values, and they sought American peace. In part I of this article, considering offensive realism, a theoretical framework is presented. In part II, US political and security requirements as a result of 9/11, and in part III the effect of 9/11 on Russia's position in the international system are analyzed and investigated. Finally, we will conclude that Russia wants to revive its past magnificence in its belief in multilateralism in the international system.

### **Theoretical framework**

The conceptual framework for this article is the offensive realism theory based on its theoretical analyst, John Mearsheimer. We shall study the article's subject based on the suppositions of the theory.

Offensive realism, like defensive realism which emerged from the presentation of Kenneth N. Waltz's international policy theory in late 1970, recognizes the anarchy structure and the lack of central power as the most crucial feature of international system, but in contrary to defensive realism and its theoreticians, Kenneth N. Waltz and John Mearsheimer, believes that superpowers do not retreat from war and expansionism in this condition and they take action to increase their power and influence whenever possible.

So, in a state of anarchy which causes constant insecurity, the most remarkable way to obtain security and power is to defeat other governments that may be threatening. To John Mearsheimer, there are three reasons in international connected system that caused governments to be afraid of each other:<sup>[2]</sup>

1. Lack of a central power that stands above all governments and supports them against each other.
2. The fact that governments often have enough capability and capacity for offensive military action.
3. The reality that governments can never be aware of each other's intentions.

Cooperation in this situation is extremely difficult if not impossible. When allies face a common enemy and their survival is threatened, this cooperation is promoted in a particular condition, based on the same enemy<sup>[3]</sup>. The cooperation of other powers like Russia to fight terrorism and identifying terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda after 9/11 is in this category.

On the contrary, defensive realism believes that powers avoid the high price of competitions like wars, arms race etc. also for the sake of their common benefit, but in most cases governments ignore the balance of powers based on defensive realism and do their tasks in nonstrategic ways.

Mearsheimer believes that some governments follow a wrong foreign policy and it is due to their domestic affairs. These countries pay their policy's price, however, following an improper policy encourages other governments to behave more logically. In Mearsheimer's idea, that was not true for the US attack on Iraq and the reinforcement of military bases in Europe demanded from Neoconservative rulers. This was because neither of these two subjects were serious threats for the US, and invasion of these territories did not help foreign policy to solve security problems.<sup>[4]</sup>

Such behaviors are mostly based on immature ideologies rather than logic, and for this

reason, Mearsheimer is seriously opposed to the attack on Iraq, as well as spending money and staying in that country.<sup>[5]</sup> We should consider the US's performance and competitive policy with the Federal Republic of Russia.

On one hand, these two countries cooperate with each other based on offensive realism in order to fight the same enemies and terrorism; for instance, Russia has helped the US with transferring equipment and weapons for American and NATO forces through its territory into Afghanistan. This cooperation has continued even during Barack Obama's presidency, and also the US has expressed its sympathy towards Russia's fighting against Chechen independence.<sup>[6]</sup>

US action against terrorists and the Taliban resulted in Russia's and many other Central Asian countries' release from terrorism because of their being neighbors with the Taliban, and this result enhances their cooperation. On the other hand, since governments don't know each other's intentions, they are in an offensive mood and a strong competition has been created between the US and the Federal Republic of Russia on missile defense shields, the influence of the US on Russia's private foreign regions and NATO expansion to east. These issues are very important for Russia, as a cross-regional power to advance military capacity based on an offensive realism supposition.

### **US political and security need after 9/11 event**

9/11 created new political security needs in the international system. Before that, there was an emphasis on coherent international policy and removing US domestic weakness in economical fields, people's demands as an essential step to make US strong and challenging of democracy in foreign policy as the US ambiguous branch of foreign policy managed to be done from the first speech of Bill Clinton in December 1991<sup>[7]</sup>. After 9/11 we confront a big change of US politicians' agenda from anxiety about domestic affairs to foreign affairs and from educational reform to fighting terrorism.<sup>[8]</sup>

The most major political and security need of US after 9/11 are defined in following domains:

1. Influence on the Middle East
2. NATO expansion to east

### **Influences on the Middle East**

9/11, 2001 and consequently the profound changes in the international system and US attack on Afghanistan and Iraq made the Middle East position more sensitive and important. The Middle East has been considered a security problems for the US because of its political, historical and economical role from the past up to now and also the presence of some of US allies.

According to US officials' opinions, the lack of political and economical development in these countries, has lead to a situation that increases radicalism and terrorist movements among political groups in this area and puts US profits in danger. In order to prevent these movements, the US has tried to have influence on these countries by applying soft power factors such as democracy, women's rights, equality, etc., and to reform their structures to expand its own long-term values. These factors have been more impressive with recent changes in the Middle East during Barack Obama's presidency. But the presence of Iran, Lebanon's Hezbollah and Syria, have enabled the US to reach its goals. Russia wants to play a role, acquire prestige and persists on multi-step diplomacy to build a relationship with governments in the region.

Russia as a rival in US Cold War, made this country to start negotiations by insisting on multilateralism in the international system by strengthening its relationship with Iran, Syria and Palestinian governments with the leadership of Hamas and by improving cooperation between the US's traditional allies in the Middle East like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Jordan and Egypt, and

limiting US influence on central Asia, the Caucasus and the Middle East.<sup>[9]</sup>

Russia has improved its economic position by selling weapons and by facilitating energy cooperation in a way that surpassed US sales and Arab countries are eager to buy. It has been warned in a US National Security Council project document that by 2020 many of the Middle East countries will recognize Russia as a stabilizer against US influence in the region. Russia will play an important role around the world in the near future due to:

1. Abundant resources of oil and natural gas
2. Military research and weapons' development

### **NATO expansion to the east**

The 9/11 incident caused some changes in different organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization attitudes' towards security problems. Within 24 hours after the attacks, NATO members agreed upon signing a treaty about terrorism as a major threat to the expansion of NATO missions. Although the subject of NATO expansion was on the political agenda of NATO, using this incident as an opportunity, NATO in general and the US in particular tried a great deal to go through the military structures of Russia, the separated complex of the Soviet Union, by expanding NATO and having influence in the east.

So in this matter, NATO must prove to Kremlin officials that activities in this region are not against any third government and the development of security by NATO's program will help to increase Russia's security too. Since the economical benefits of cooperating with western organizations are so important for Russia, its defense industry will be benefitted by cooperating with NATO too.<sup>[10]</sup>

In spite of some disagreements, Russia is willing to have collaboration with NATO. By this action, the major obstacles of attaining American values and goals are removed and Russia is now, as a strategic partner with the US, so that NATO, the US and Russia will be the three sides of a triangle in the international system.

US officials care about American values and also in the past, they have mentioned it in major contracts, like the Paris agreement which was concluded between NATO and Russia in May 28, 1997; Henry Kissinger states that every action done by Russia and NATO, or separately must be compatible with US goals.<sup>[11]</sup>

### **The effects of 9/11 on Russia in international system**

Despite Russia's ambition for power, this country has benefitted from the post Cold War opportunities to increase its power. 9/11 opened up an opportunity for Russia to promote its international position. Determining factors in promoting Russia's position after 9/11 are as follows:

#### **An equal policy of Russia**

Since the middle of 1990, Vladimir Putin has formed a foreign policy to have a general strategy and to make Russia a great power, and this struggle has been augmented with the transmission of power to Dmitry Medvedev, as is completely clear in Russian's officials' discussions. For example, Putin described the fragmentation of Soviet Union as a total geopolitical catastrophe in his annual speech to the federal assembly in 2005 and they have not abandoned the dream of returning to their former magnificence yet<sup>[12]</sup>. Putin and his accompanying politicians acted in a manner that Russian's equal policy is called the policy gravitation towards West.

Despite the different groups inside Russia and different points of view towards Russia's performance in collaboration with the West, Putin and his supporters gravitated towards the West to restore Russia and to take up a better position. According to some of analysts, this collaboration led

to flexibility on the part of Vladimir Putin and the Westernizers, as seen in the response to US strategic decisions like the entrance of the Baltic countries into NATO in 2004, and the cancellation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002<sup>[13]</sup>.

### **Particular attention to domestic potentials and organizing economic condition**

With Vladimir Putin's election and determining domestic policy, economic organizing had priority above all. From Putin's prime ministry up to his presidency which lasted until 2008, the developments of domestic projects were \$103 trillion, more than six times the developments in 1999. Wage growth grew from 65 dollars to 540<sup>[14]</sup>. Putin and his supporters wanted to have influence on the West. Russia's business lobby was not that powerful after the Cold War, when it reappeared in the economic field. Western investors established a good relationship with the Kremlin since billions of dollars was going to be poured in West Europe and North America. At first Russia had to organize its economic condition to take up a proper position in order to compete with other powers.

### **Emphasis on multilateralism in the international organizations framework**

Considering the US role in foreign policy international relations, Russia has increased its concentration on multilateralism in the international system to have an advantageous position in security measures and it will start its activities in the international system when international organizations such as security council of the UN, the Group of 8, and other powers, not only do not limit Russia's power, but impose some limitations on the US as a great power<sup>[15]</sup>. Russia's membership in international organizations is to keep this position. For instance, its collaboration with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is in this course.

Russia makes use of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a tool to control tribal, religious fights and to prevent them from getting into Russia, and supports other countries' membership, even as a supervisor like Iran, and also to make a balance of power and to prove the international system's multi-polarity in its relations with West.<sup>[16]</sup>

### **Energy strategy**

The Federal Republic of Russia has the largest resources of oil and gas in the world, and could increase its power against the European Union (EU) and the US. As a result, Kremlin officials believe that the West is quite weak, because of its pressing requirements for Russia's resources of energy, and this energy has become a powerful tool for Russia to control the EU and other regions in Middle East, and Central Asian energy policies.

Russia's energy strategy was planned in 2003 by Vladimir Putin, as the center of Russian's diplomacy and prevented Europe from varying energy sources in European countries specially gas to stay as international market of gas. The particular attention of Putin to energy and its effects on Russia's foreign policy is one of the most influential factors for him to take a respectable position among other powers and so made the US in Obama's presidency to find a solution for the problems that were coming from the carelessness of the Bush government towards Russian influence on the world energy market.

Russian's desire to have influence on the world market and the increase in the price of oil in July 2008, from 18 to 147 dollars per barrel, represents the economic effects on politics. But Russia has some difficulties with its old infrastructures in its oil industry that needs Western investments to strengthen its position in energy. Based on western estimates, Russia's oil industry needs 60 million dollars for more than 10 years.<sup>[17]</sup>

## Conclusion

Russia has always tried to revive its past magnificence and power, and by Vladimir Putin's election as the leader of this country, the official motto is "powerful Russia". To coin this motto, Russia maintains relations with the great powers in the world, especially the US as the most essential one. This decision became more important after 9/11 and Russia made an agreement on the US attack on Afghanistan.

In fact, 9/11 led to some political and security requirements for the US and created an opportunity for Russia to make use of all the factors which had been handed down from the Soviet Union and to regain its lost powers. Russia tries to reach to this level in its policy making framework. The US has been confronted with some facts after 9/11 about its relationship with Russia:<sup>[18]</sup>

1. Russia is neither a friend nor a foe to the US and changes its position in different situations versus the US.

2. Contrary to many American politicians, Russia is still an international power and it is not possible to prevent it from using its power.

3. Russia wants to bring into existence an international order consisting of a four-member group of Russia, the US, the EU and the UN.

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