

US-Russia Rivalry in the 21st Century: New Cold War and Russian Resurgence in the Changing Global Power Dynamics

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Received: 07-May-2024

Revised: 19-May-2024

Accepted: 21-May-2024

Abstract

Introduction: The Russia-Ukraine conflict, involving major powers, has profoundly impacted global peace and security, sparking initial fears of nuclear escalation. Rooted in various factors, Russia's claim to Ukrainian territory stems from linguistic and familial ties, compounded by perceived American betrayal of promises made during the Cold War's end. NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe further strained relations, culminating in the Euro-Maidan Revolution. The alignment of Russian and Chinese interests against the United States signals a new Cold War dynamic. However, scholarly discourse debates whether this rivalry is a new phenomenon or a continuation of past tensions.

Methodology: This paper employs qualitative research methodology to examine the authenticity of American promises to the Soviet Union regarding NATO's non-expansion. Through qualitative analysis, it

seeks to unravel the complexities of geopolitical negotiations and ascertain the extent to which these promises were upheld.

Results/Findings: *The study sheds light on the historical antagonism between Russia and the United States, contextualizing the current conflict within this broader narrative. It highlights the ramifications of broken promises and geopolitical maneuvering, revealing the intricate dynamics of global power struggles.*

Future Direction: *Further research is needed to explore the implications of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on international relations and global security. Investigating the evolving dynamics of the Sino-Russian partnership and its impact on the geopolitical landscape will provide valuable insights into the trajectory of contemporary power dynamics. Additionally, examining the role of regional actors and the potential for diplomatic resolutions to mitigate tensions is essential for fostering lasting peace in the region.*

Keywords: *Russia-Ukraine conflict, major powers, global peace, geopolitical dynamics, NATO expansion, Cold War, American promises, qualitative research.*

Introduction

The malevolence and acrimony between the United States and Russia perpetuate well into the 21st century. And their competition is increasing tenaciously. The United States and Russia are engaged in a race for influence in Europe and internationally as well. A conspicuous feature of the bilateral relations between Russia and the US is the occupancy of sanctions. From the second decade of the 21st century, the activity of sanctions and counter-sanctions has been performed ordinarily (Mankoff & Kortunov, 2020). The recent Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has further exacerbated their relations. The invasion has deleterious consequences not only for the United States' interests but for the maximum international players. The sensitivity of the conflict has brought in all the major powers to procure their strategic interests. There are many purported reasons behind the Russian invasion of Ukraine. One of the professed assumptions is that the conflict has roots in the revolutions of Orange and Euromaidan. However, the Western assistance to Ukraine after the initiation of the conflict has accentuated the gap between Russia and the United States. Russia thinks the assistance is aimed at demolishing Russia (Belo & Rodríguez, 2023). The Russian antagonistic relations with the United States brought it closer to China (Biswas, 2021).

Although, the Soviet Union and China remained split for a considerable time during the Cold War. The causes of the Sino-Soviet split were the competition for paramountcy in terms of ideology and the territorial claims laid down by the two countries. Later, the Russia and China reconciliation was executed prudently. The rapprochement process was initiated in the 1980s but continued well even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The anti-US interests of Russia like the demand for a multipolar world converged with China. The two countries gradually resolved the point of contention in their relations. The longstanding issues of borders were settled. And the two countries carried out initiatives for enhancing bilateral trust. The two countries' engagement incorporated the security collaboration. The Sino-Russian bond was further strengthened in the post 'Global Economic Crisis' era (Bossuyt & Kaczmarek, 2021).

Pulling the plug on the United States and Soviet Union's rancorous dissension, the US-Soviet rivalry was terminated in the early part of the 1990s amicably. But to maintain warm and cordial relations was both arduous and grueling. And Russia-United States have again locked their horns in discordance and are designing policies focused on mangling and incapacitating others. One of the significant reasons behind the return of this hostility is NATO's advancing toward Russian neighboring countries. It is considered an American promise to Russians to obviate NATO from advancing eastward promise. NATO's expansion became a point of contention between Russia and the US. And it is a purported reason for the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The authenticity of such American promises needs to be assessed to understand the current Russia-US rivalry (Sarotte, 2022).

The United States' rivalry with Russia and China has resumed. It is being referred to as "a New Cold War" by many scholars. But the more suitable word for their rivalry is the "Resumption of the Cold War". Currently, the United States is fighting the war on two fronts. On one side it is confronting Russia through proxy wars such as in Ukraine. Secondly, its involvement in Asia since the Obama Administration has been concentrated on the containment of China (Gaido, 2023). Presently, neither the United States nor Russia and China are in the mood to be involved in a direct conflict. Yet both sides have been devising policies to debilitate and jeopardize each other signaling a Cold War-like Situation. But the Resumed Cold War of the 21st century is not going to be exactly like the previous one. The Resumed Cold War features some distinguishing elements. The ideology was the basis of animosity and contention between the two blocks in the Old Cold

War. The element of ideology is lacking in the current Cold War. This time, China is a more powerful player than Russia (Ford, 2023).

Objectives:

1. To analyze the factors contributing to the US-Russia rivalry in the 21st century, with a focus on the Russian resurgence and its implications for global power dynamics.
2. To investigate the authenticity of American promises made to the Soviet Union regarding NATO's non-expansion and its role in shaping contemporary geopolitical tensions.

Research Questions:

1. What are the key drivers behind the US-Russia rivalry in the 21st century, particularly concerning Russia's resurgence and its impact on global power dynamics?
2. How do historical promises made by the United States to the Soviet Union regarding NATO's non-expansion contribute to the current geopolitical tensions between the US and Russia, and what implications do they have for international relations?

Literature Review

Russia-US Rivalry and the Global Power Politics

Russian and American relations have been feisty and pugnacious since the Bolsheviks toppled Kerensky in 1917. After the revolution, the Soviets were initially desiring a mellifluous and melodious kind of relationship with the United States. There were people in the American administration who were acquiescent to cooperation with Russians like Colonel Edward House who was advisor to the President at that time. However, the ideological differences between the Russians and the Americans intercepted and obviated the United States from pursuing a harmonious and collaborative interaction with the Russians. This resulted in the United States' non-recognition of Soviet Russia until 1933. The increasing influence of the Germans and Japanese was off-putting for the Soviets and the United States. This helped both countries to put their ideological differences aside and bridge an alliance to defeat 'the increasing German and Japanese' influence. Soon after the end of the Second World War, it didn't take much time for the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union to wrangle upon the structure of the new international order. Their disagreement and dissension kept distancing them, ultimately leading to a Cold War between these two superpowers (Diesing, 2009).

The Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States lasting from 1945-1991, was treacherous and minacious due to the invention of nuclear bombs. Such invention added to the already existing mutual suspicion and intensified the belligerent relations between the United States and the Soviet Union (Eisenhower, 2021). The Soviet Union confronted NATO in Europe. The arms race was also a significant element of the Cold War. The Americans and the Soviets threw their hats in the ring for the nuclear ballistic missiles. The long-range, intermediate, and short-range nuclear ballistic missiles were designed which were more treacherous than the atomic bomb used in 1945. Both the contending parties pulled out at all the stops to spread their particular ideologies. The United States and the Soviet Union went all out to protect their capitalist and communist governments respectively. Despite, both sides not trusting each other and being unpredictable. Yet confrontation was staved off due to the devastating repercussions of the nuclear bomb. Therefore, this period was characterized more by indirect confrontation or proxy wars. The ice was broken with Gorbachev came into power. And the cooperative posture adopted by both Gorbachev and Reagan brought an end to the Cold War (CRF, 2014).

NATO's Expansion in Eastern Europe

In the post-Cold War era, the earlier hopes of cooperative engagement and partnership between the United States and Russia didn't last long. The main deteriorating factor was the NATO enlargement. The Russian transition from communism to a capitalist state instead of development and progress worsened the conditions in Russia. It brought inflation and currency devaluation. And the mass population was disappointed in Boris Yeltsin's administration. Then NATO's eastward expansion created disquietude in Russia which ultimately resulted in Russia aspiring to regain its lost power and status in the international world. The NATO factor slumped and crumbled relations between Russia and the United States. The return of the Russian-US rivalry is being seen as a "New Cold War" or a 'Resumed Cold War' (Jones, 2015).

After the Soviet Union fizzled out in the early 1990s, the United States started to make plans for perpetuating its influence and power over the whole world. One of the major concerns for Washington was related to Europe over which the United States maintained a considerable amount of influence during the Cold War by providing them security against the Soviets. When

the Soviet threat was wiped out, the United States desired to enjoy the same influence over Europe in the post-Cold War era. For this purpose, the United States used NATO as a tool. A decent number of researchers and officials in the US Administration suggested that expanding NATO would help Washington not only maintain domination over Europe but it would also keep the United States protected from any anti-US power buildup in Europe. Washington in 1994 kicked off the “Partnership for Peace” program which aimed at the incorporation of those European States that are located in Central and Eastern Europe as well. Soon, NATO engaged in talks with the first three countries namely Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic about their integration into the organization. These first three states despite Russian concerns, officially became part of NATO in 1999. This didn’t stop there and in 2004, 7 more European States joined NATO after discussing the joining terms for over a year.

NATO further enlarged with the incorporation of Albania and Croatia in the first decade of the 21st century and later Montenegro, North Macedonia, Finland, and Sweden also entered the alliance in the following decades. However, NATO’s encouragement to Ukraine and Georgia for alliance membership since 2008 has triggered Russia the most as both countries are touching the Russian borderline. Therefore, Russia has carried out military action in both Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014, 2022) to restrict NATO encroaching. Russia claims that its annexation of Georgia, Crimea, and now Ukraine in 2022 is a reaction to NATO’s extension (Menon & Ruger, 2020; Larsen, 2023).

Ukrainian Crisis and the Changing Power Politics

Ukraine which previously remained under the Soviet's control, became independent through the disintegration of the USSR. So, the developments in Ukraine following the USSR dissolution were considered a point of concern in Russia. Ukraine turned into a sweltry issue in 2014 when Russia invaded Crimea, the southern part of Ukraine. Since then, the tensions between the two countries not only aggrandized but became a major point of contention in the international arena. Russian relations with Ukraine and the West have further slumped and have hit the skids recently. This came off with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Russia stormed into Ukrainian borders on the 24th of February in the said year. In the last month of 2021, Russia manifested and communicated its concerns over NATO’s activities in Eastern Europe before the invasion. It indicated that Ukraine’s inclusion into NATO is something that Russia will never

compromise upon. And it expressed its desire for the assurance that Ukraine, a former Soviet territory would never amalgamate with NATO. Such Russian demands were condemned on the grounds of Ukrainian self-control and reticence posture. Later, the meeting between Russian and US diplomats conducted in Geneva in the first month of 2022, could not produce fruitful results either. This ultimately led Russia to storm into Ukraine in February 2022 (Walker, 2023).

Reaction of the West

Soon after the invasion, the Russian act was pummeled and mauled by the West. The West labeled the invasion as superfluous, unfounded, and groundless. The United States alacritous and expeditious response to the Russian invasion was the obtruding and inflicting of sanctions. The latter has been subject to the former's sanctions since it occupied Crimea in the previous decade. Even before the February invasion in 2022, the United States had exhorted and apprised Russia about the consequences that it would have to face in case of any other attack on Ukrainian territory. The reverberations and repercussions primed and instructed by the United States to Russia included the imposition of newfangled sanctions and buttressing support to Ukraine. The warning also included the augmentation of NATO's presence in the areas that are considered a security concern for Russia. European Union has also taken measures similar to those of America (Esteves, 2023).

American Response

As aforementioned, the United States had apprised Russia before it invaded Ukraine about the menacing repercussions of such an act. However, the bilateral negotiations and such warnings could not prevent Eastern Europe from turning into an area of war and antagonism. Therefore, after the invasion, the United States came up with a set of newfangled vigorous and zealous sanctions for Russia. The United States contrived sanctions that excruciated and tormented Russian foreign reserves. The Central Bank of Russia faced diminution and curtailment in carrying out transactions internationally. The United States brought into action the Export Controls against several Russian commodities and sectors. Russian energy sources and oil exports to the United States were officially debarred. The bilateral trade between the two countries was also interdicted. The sanctions were also thrust upon more than 3000 Russian officials including from the Prime

Minister to members of the Legislature. Moreover, Russian firms or companies like Nord Stream 2 are not devoid of American sanctions (CRS, 2023).

The imposition of the sanctions is not the only measure taken by the United States. Washington also came forward to provide Ukraine with aid and address Ukraine's security needs. The United States to accommodate and strengthen Ukraine, from 2022 to 2023 dispensed an amount of more than \$75 billion. In the said period, the United States allotted more than \$40 billion to Ukraine in the name of security. The United States also provided Ukraine with humanitarian assistance. The amount for this humanitarian assistance stands at \$2.8 billion. This assistance comes through the enactment of supplemental appropriation laws which allowed the United States to provide assistance and support to Ukraine in an emergency caused by the Russian invasion. Washington's assistance was also for Ukraine's agriculture and energy sector. To strengthen its position against Russia, the United States stationed more than 17000 of its troops in Europe. Washington also worked on buttressing the Ukrainian defense against Russia. For this purpose, the United States enhanced the military capabilities of Ukraine according to NATO's weapons. Washington also provided Kyiv with weapons and types of equipment suitable to the latter's military. The United States along with its anti-armor system and anti-air missiles, has provided Ukraine with Abrahm Tanks which are the world's most competent and up-to-the-mark tanks. However, these are not handy and difficult to pilot (CRS, 2023).

The United States has also strived in international organizations for the encumbrance of Russia. It endeavored to brand the Russian invasion as a contravention and incongruous with the UN laws. For this purpose, the United States tried to align the maximum number of countries to its side in the United Nations General Assembly and G20. This was done to strangle Russia in the international sphere to the most possible level. Certainly, this has not been possible. However, the United States also struggled at the international level to abate the negative consequences of the conflict for Ukraine (Bose, Singh, & Golubkova, 2023) (Lewis, 2024).

European Union's Reaction

Earlier, when Russia invaded Ukrainian territory in 2014, the European Union riposted with a particular reaction that was not despotic and raucous. The European Union enacted sanctions against Russia. However, these sanctions were scanty and patchy. Secondly, the diplomatic route between Russia and European countries was not closed down (Bukhari, Kokab,

& Khan, 2024). And thirdly, the European Union facilitated and expanded support to Ukraine. However, in the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the European Union's response is contrasting and dissimilar to the earlier response in 2014. This time, the European Union adopted a posture that is austere and un pitying (Bukhari, 2024). The EU's stance and comportment are out of the ordinary and freakish. The EU's posture is being considered as unique, unequaled, and unexampled. The transition from a lighter in 2014 to a much harsher response in 2022 is due to earlier warnings made by EU leadership to Russia for any reinvasion (Rabinovych & Pintsch, 2024).

In the early months of the conflict, the two prime and dominant countries of the European Union namely Germany and France were not part of the measures taken by the Union. Germany which played a major role during the times of 2014 invasion in leading the European Union, kept itself out of the European Union's stance over the Russian invasion in 2022 by prioritizing its national interests (Bukhari, 2024). Although, the threat due to the Russian invasion was exerted by almost all the European countries. However, Germany and France adopted a contrasting stance in the early months of the conflict. One of the reasons substantiated and purported to explain such a response by Germany and France is their dependence and reliance on Russia in economic terms (Bosse, 2023).

The European Union's reaction is corresponding to that of the United States. The European Union imposed sanctions on Russia looking much of the muchness and similar to sanctions placed by America. However, even before the conflict in Ukraine broke out, the EU was designing and mapping out sanctions against Russia based on American intelligence. After the conflict started, the European Union expeditiously like the clappers jumped to placing sanctions on Russia. The EU instantaneously brought five sanction packages for Russia. Gradually with the passage of time and new developments, the European Union brought 12 sanction packages into effect till 2023. However, a 13th set of sanctions was introduced by the EU in the second month of 2024 (Al Jazeera, 2024) (DG for Communication, 2024) (CRS, 2024).

The European Union's response is not limited to sanctions only. The European Union has also helped Ukraine financially. From 2022 to March 27, 2024, Ukraine received an amount of £12 billion from the European Union. A particular portion of this amount was dedicated to helping Ukraine manage its balance of payments efficiently in an emergency created by the conflict.

Secondly, Ukraine procured an amount of £620 million from the EU to meet its budgetary needs. Almost £7.1 billion has been disseminated by the European Union to Ukraine for military purposes. The European Union has also equipped Ukraine with missiles and air defense systems that are majorly impactful against Russia. Moreover, the European Union has also trained and prepared thousands of Ukrainian soldiers to combat Russian forces effectively and compellingly (Mills, 2024).

Another initiative taken by the European Union was to succor and palliate the Ukrainian people in this quandary situation. An exigency had been felt by the European Union member states to devise a plan for alleviating and assuaging Ukrainians' affliction and distress caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Therefore, the European Union opened its doors to provide Ukrainians with an opportunity to move into EU member states. The Ukrainian's movement into EU states has been legalized. They have been empowered to seek residence and working opportunities in Europe. This facilitation has been made possible through the Temporary Protection Directive (European Commission, 2023).

Methodology

The qualitative literature review approach for the study "US-Russia Rivalry in the 21st Century: New Cold War and Russian Resurgence in the Changing Global Power Dynamics" will involve a comprehensive analysis of existing scholarly literature, focusing on qualitative data sources such as academic articles, books, government reports, and policy papers. This approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics shaping the US-Russia rivalry and the broader geopolitical landscape.

Data Collection:

1. **Academic Articles:** Reviewing peer-reviewed academic articles published in reputable journals focusing on international relations, security studies, and geopolitics will provide insights into various aspects of the US-Russia rivalry.
2. **Books:** Examining scholarly books written by experts in the field will offer in-depth analyses of historical contexts, geopolitical strategies, and diplomatic relations between the two countries.

3. **Government Reports:** Analyzing reports published by governmental agencies, such as the US Department of State and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will provide official perspectives and policy positions on the rivalry.
4. **Policy Papers:** Reviewing policy papers and think tank publications will offer alternative viewpoints and policy recommendations regarding the US-Russia rivalry and its implications.

Data Analysis:

1. **Thematic Analysis:** Identifying key themes and patterns across the literature related to the US-Russia rivalry, including historical antecedents, geopolitical strategies, military dynamics, and diplomatic relations.
2. **Comparative Analysis:** Comparing and contrasting different scholarly perspectives and empirical findings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of the rivalry.
3. **Contextual Analysis:** Examining the historical, political, economic, and social contexts surrounding the US-Russia rivalry to understand its evolution over time and its current manifestations.
4. **Critical Analysis:** Critically evaluating the strengths and limitations of existing literature, including potential biases, gaps in research, and areas for future investigation.

Synthesis and Interpretation:

1. **Synthesizing Findings:** Integrating and synthesizing key findings from the literature to develop a coherent narrative of the US-Russia rivalry, highlighting its complexities and implications for global power dynamics.
2. **Interpretation:** Providing insights and interpretations based on the qualitative analysis, including implications for international relations theory, policy implications, and avenues for future research.

3. **Identifying Research Gaps:** Identifying gaps in the literature and areas for further exploration, including potential avenues for qualitative research to deepen understanding of the US-Russia rivalry.

Discussion of the study

US Changing Patterns in Global Political Chess Board

i. Cause of Ukraine Conflict is Contested:

A considerate and decent number of recent researchers like (Suny, 2022) (Lajeunesse, 2023) elucidate that the current war in Ukraine is the causatum and denouement of the spun-out expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation towards Eastern Europe. This enlargement of NATO towards the eastern side of Europe is considered by Russia, a contravention of the American promise in the 1990's "not to expand NATO." Another study (Roberts, 2022) corroborated and substantiated that NATO activities in the post-Cold War era flustered and ruffled Russian expectations. The discombobulation and disquietude resuscitated the antagonism between the United States and Russia and resulted in the latter's invading Ukraine to baffle and thwart NATO from reaching Russia's doorsteps. An article in the CATO Institute (Carpenter, 2022), postulated that Russia could have been stopped from carrying out its invasion of Ukraine in 2022 if the West had entertained Russian security concerns and avoided broadening NATO's horizon. It is argued as well that the West adopted a vexatious attitude towards Russia in the post-Cold War era. And Ukraine, which is incredibly of supreme value to Russia, has been utilized by the West to infuriate and confound the Russian sentiments (Xianyang, 2022).

Antithetically, the perception of the West regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine seems to be oppugnant and poles apart from what is mentioned above. The West reckons that Russia is a State with an imperialistic mindset and expansionist goals. The United States assumes that Russia has gone all out to recoup and repossess its position by branching out its sphere of influence, specifically into the areas that were formerly part of the Soviet Union (Bowen & Welt, 2021). The United States considers Russia's invasion of Ukraine and previous incursions as an "act of aggression" aimed at reconstructing the "Russian Empire." Washington has denominated and

cleped Russia to be warmongering and carrying out an encroachment policy implemented through its invasion of Ukraine (NFHS, 2023).

When the war in Eastern Europe broke out in 2022, the reaction of the West corroborated their perception of Russia as an “expansionist state” through media channels. A study by Florian Zollmann explicated and delineated how the Russian invasion in 2022 has been formulated and arranged by the Western news media. The news media portrayed Russia to be a menacing and threatening country. Secondly, the new media illustrated that Russia owing to its truculent and pugnacious attitude along with its “expansionist aims” carried out storming of Ukraine in February 2022. Newspapers from three countries namely the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, in the early weeks of the invasion, divulged almost “952 new items.” In these “news items”, they did not accept the assertion that NATO’s enlargement is erroneous. Earlier in 2014, NATO itself unambiguously proclaimed that a promise limiting NATO expansion was never penned. Therefore, an assessment of the agreement regarding NATO made at the end of the Cold War and NATO’s expansion policy in the post-Cold War era is necessary for a better understanding of the current war in Ukraine. The paper analyzes whether or not the United States pledged itself to restrict NATO’s expansion in the post-Cold War era. If there is evidence of such a promise made by the United States, the paper then endeavors to figure out if NATO’s moving towards Eastern Europe is a violation of that promise or not (Zollmann, 2023) (NATO, 2024).

ii. American Promises: A Myth or Reality

Russian political figures have zealously and vehemently expressed their concerns and baptized NATO’s inclusion of eastern European states as a violation of what was agreed during Germany’s unification. Earlier in the 1990s, Yeltsin reminded the Clinton Administration in a letter that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation could not move into Eastern Europe. Later, Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Medvedev, and even Mikhail Gorbachev have also criticized the United States for not keeping promises agreed during the unification of Germany (Ip, 2024). On the other hand, the United States leadership and policymakers refute such Russian claims on the ground that no such agreement was made. United States officials like James Baker and Robert Zoellick repudiated the existence of such promises during German unification talks (Neal, 2022).

Talking about political scientists, some international relations scholars throw their weight behind the existence of American promises “to limit NATO expansion” and endorse that such promises were made at the end of the Cold War. Contrastingly, there are scholars on the other side as well who discard the existence of such a pledge made by the West. The intellectuals like Michael MccGwire and Sergei Karaganov have supported what is claimed by Russia that the United States had pledged “not to expand NATO.” Also, the Russian leadership has been raising its voice against NATO’s eastward movement, labeling it an American dereliction (Mccgwire, 2008). While scholars like M. E. Sarotte, Anne Applebaum, and James Kirchick state that NATO’s non-expansion agreement was never penned down. NATO also denies any guarantee given to the Soviets regarding its non-enlargement. The promise of restricting NATO’s borders is being supported and rejected by several scholars and intellectuals of international relations who are considered above suspicion. Such incongruent statements have generated ambiguities about the matter and have made it oracular and enigmatic. This concocts a need to dive deep into the matter to untwine and disentangle the complexities related to the topic.

In the 1980’s, the prime and paramount Soviet Union started to enervate and dwindle. The economic failure played a distinguished role in enfeebling the capacities Soviet Union. While a decade-long war in Afghanistan proved to be precarious, it also debilitated the Soviet Union’s position in the international world (Segrillo, 2020). During such times, the Soviet Union came under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid-1980s. He came with a soft tone in effectuating and executing of relations with other countries. His gentle and calm posture made it possible to have dialogue with the United States. The bilateral negotiations during Gorbachev's duration between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic and the United States tranquilized the antagonism and helped in taking the edge of the Cold War (Mosila, 2022).

From the aforementioned Russian official's claims, it seems like the affirmations and guarantees by the West to the Soviets are linked with the reunification of Germany. Hence, thrashing out Germany’s reunification is a prerequisite to disentangle the ambiguities surrounding the covenant about NATO’s enlargement. In the late 1980’s, the Berlin Wall tumbled down escalating a security concern in the United States regarding the future of Germany (Marsil, 2021). Following the opening of the Berlin Wall, West Germany indicated the possibility of sacrificing its links with NATO in return for Soviet concurrence on bridging two parts of Germany. However, the United

States wanted to hold Germany under the domination of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Such Washington's interests could only be achieved by playing a role in the struggle for Germany's reunification, which was initiated by West Germany following the fall of the Berlin Wall (Sen, 2021). Soon, Washington was successful in establishing a collaborative response with the West Germans and NATO office-bearers for reunification (Sarotte, 2021).

The idea to limit NATO's borders was initially proposed by a West German Hans Genscher to pave the ground for Germany's reunification through a give-and-take approach. He promulgated and made his offer known to the Soviet Union in January 1990 about NATO's non-enlargement towards Soviet territory in exchange for bridging two parts of Germany (Spohr, 2012). Such an offer captivated Washington's attention and generated curiosity among the officials about the Soviet response. Soon, Genscher and the United States then Secretary of State Baker met in the latter's country. This was an important meeting as Baker endorsed the offer that the "North Atlantic Treaty Organisation would not increase its area of influence towards Soviet territories in return for Soviet assent to the reunification of Germany" (UNCLA, 2019). Such a coordinated stance by the US and West Germany ultimately led to discussions between American and Soviet office-bearers to bridge East and West Germany. These discussions were held in Moscow from 7 to 9 February 1990. During this time, Baker directly proposed to the Soviets including Gorbachev that if Germany was reunited and allowed to enjoy NATO membership, then the military alliance would not even take a single step eastward. However, Kohl and Genscher posited to USSR leadership that East Germany would be free from NATO's existence. Baker was not alone in the Bush Administration to make such an offer to the leaders of the Soviet Union. Robert Gates, who was the then National Security Advisor of the United States assured the Soviets in such words, "We support the Kohl-Genscher idea of a united Germany belonging to NATO but with no extension of military presence to the GDR." The Soviets allowed the two parts of Germany to be reunited. Until February 9, it was agreed that the Soviet Union would allow the reunification of Germany, where East Germany would be out of NATO's domination, in return for NATO's adherence to limiting its horizon towards Soviet borders. Besides this, the point which was put forth by West Germans, Kohl, and Genscher that East Germany would be out of NATO's influence, was found unconvincing while seeking approval from the Bush Administration. To resolve this issue, a meeting between American officials and West Germans was held in the latter part of February,

through which it was decided that East Germany would be given a “Special Military Status” (Bonev, 2017) (Erdem, 2022).

This rephrased version of the offer, with only the change of East Germany’s status, was to be placed before the USSR. Bush himself informed Gorbachev about the “Special Military Status” to East Germany through a phone conversation on February 28. And also repeated what Baker and Gates had earlier assured the Soviet leaders. A new period of guarantees by the United States was commenced by the Soviet Union’s demands in March like conducting reunification slowly, dissolving the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and playing a role in framing Europe’s security structure. In May 1990, Baker again illuminated that in return for the reunification of Germany, NATO would be transmogrified according to the Soviet Union’s terms and guaranteed the formation of such a security system in Europe that was demanded by the USSR. Another pledge was made to the USSR that it would be amalgamated into Europe and CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) would be strengthened. Ultimately, the reunification was crystallized on 3rd October 1990 without any further amendment in the reunification offer (APP, 1990) (NSA, 1990) (Texas A&M, 2009).

The United States' interests by October of the same year had changed dramatically like NATO should play a greater role in Europe’s Security and prevent CSCE from strengthening. However, the United States didn’t apprise the Soviet Union about its changed policy regarding NATO and Europe’s security structure. Although, the assurances were only verbal. The Washinton didn’t revoke, neither formally nor informally, any of the things it had assured the Soviet leadership before Germany was reunited. It is quite discernible that German reunification was conditional and linked with NATO’s limited role even in former East Germany and beyond. And if the Soviets were not enlightened about any ‘abrogation of assurances’ by the US until the reunification, then the American promises were and are morally binding in the post-Cold War era (Shifrinson, 2016).

iii. Resumed Cold War

The term “Cold War” depicts tautened relations between countries that have malice designs on hurting each other without any confrontation. This term has been famous for the enmity between the U.S. and the USSR in the previous century. The hostility and dissension between the United States and the Soviet Union is considered to have fizzled in the late 1980s and with the

disintegration of the Soviet Union. Russia made an appearance on the world map as an inheritor of the Soviet Union. The relations between Russia and the United States remained peaceful for some time in the post-Cold War era. However, the relations have again turned to a feisty, knarly, and contentious nature between the United States and Russia. This confrontation between Washington and Moscow is being seen through the lens of a “New Cold War.” Several recent researchers (Harasymiw, 2010; Sahakyan, 2017; Smith, 2020; Smeltz, Wojtowicz, Volkov, & Goncharov, 2022) have discussed the current antagonism between Russia and the United States as the “New Cold War.” However, the more suitable word for explaining the Washington-Moscow rivalry in the 21st century is “Resumed Cold War” rather than a New Cold War (Sakwa, 2023).

“Mankind must put an end to war before war puts an end to mankind,” said President Kennedy (Library of Congress, n.d.). But the world has never witnessed peace for a long time. It is not surprising that the peace treaties or agreements that are signed to end wars are rarely successful in establishing a lasting peace. Such treaties or agreements can assure peace for only a short period, and the adversaries ultimately find themselves again on the battlefield, lashing out at each other.

This has happened with the United States and Russia. As usual, after every war, the ending years of the Cold War also witnessed peace agreements between both countries. Certain promises were made to each other. The violations of these agreements and promises, like NATO’s expansion towards Eastern Europe and Russia being declined to be considered an ally by the US touched off the dissipating hostile attitudes that led to the resumption of the Cold War. This is not the first time when hostility resumed between adversaries after they had ended their rival conflictual confrontation. History is full of such examples where the rivalry resurfaced between the adversaries after a short period of no confrontation. One suitable example is England and France which were engaged in a long war in the 14th century. They put an end to their antagonism in 1389 by signing the Truce of Leulinghem (History Maps, 2023). However, this could not ensure longstanding peace between England and France and the rivalry resumed between them in 1414. In the same way, it is articulated that the “Second World War was a continuation of the First World War”. The Treaty of Versailles only paused the rift between adversaries for some time but could not prevent it from resurfacing (Pen, 2019). In this context, enthralling is the question of how the Cold War of the 20th century, embroiling the two great powers the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, could end without resulting in further grievances. The answer is simple,

what is considered the end of the Cold War was only a brief hiatus in the US-Russia rivalry and did not vanish their antagonism completely, resulting in the re-emergence of the US-Russia rivalry (Onion, 2018).

At the same time, Sino-U.S. rivalry is intelligible through the conception of Thucydides' trap, which means that war is inevitable between a rising power and a ruling power. The Russia-US enmity and Sino-US confrontation have pushed the two neighbors, Russia and China towards cooperation and synergy against the United States. This reminds the early period of the old Cold War when China and the Soviet Union were on the same page against Washington. Another surprising fact is that Beijing and Moscow described their partnership as having "no limits" just a few days before the latter entered Ukraine (Kim, 2023). However, the "Resumed Cold War" has some differences from the old one. Firstly, China is more powerful in the current confrontation as compared to its position in the 20th century (Kovalev, 2023). Secondly, a significant element of the old Cold War was the ideological incompatibility between the United States and Soviet Union-China. While in the Resumed Cold War, the element of ideology as the basis for rivalry is missing (Ali & Sultan, 2020). While there exists a similarity between the old and the current Cold War as well. The danger of nuclear weapons being used is common in both the Cold Wars of the 20th and 21st centuries. The threat of using such weapons of mass destruction has resurfaced with the Russian invasion of its neighbor Ukraine. However, this should not be misunderstood with the "Resumed Cold War" to be completely similar to the "Old Cold War." (Ford, 2023).

The qualitative literature review critically examines previous studies to assess their contributions, limitations, and implications for understanding China's role in the global economy. By synthesizing and analyzing existing research findings, the study aims to identify gaps, contradictions, and areas for further investigation. The analysis of previous studies enables the development of a comprehensive conceptual framework and research agenda for exploring the multifaceted dimensions of China's economic influence on the global stage.

The qualitative literature review methodology employed in this study enables a rigorous analysis of existing scholarly works on the role of China in the global economy. By systematically reviewing and synthesizing diverse perspectives and empirical evidence, the study generates meaningful insights into China's political strategies and economic outcomes and their implications for the global economic

landscape. The methodology ensures a robust and comprehensive examination of the research topic, laying the foundation for informed analysis and discussion.

Conclusion

The Russian assault on Ukrainian territory in February 2022 has become a center of attention in the international arena. The United States in retaliation to the Russian attack has carried out steps like sanctions which have deteriorated relations between Russia and the West. However, the relations between Russia and the United States have been malignant and rancorous since the first decade of the 21st century. A thorough analysis of the matter suggests that the Ukraine War and the antagonism between Washington and Moscow are because of the integration of East European countries into NATO.

The Russian claim regarding the promise and assurances it had received for “NATO’s non-expansion” during German reunification does have a strong basis. The analysis of German reunification rejects the American claim that such a promise was never made. In the first half of the year 1990, the Soviet Union received assurances about restricting NATO’s borders Eastward from several American officials like Baker, Gates, and even President Bush himself in a phone conversation with Gorbachev. While the United States' interests regarding NATO had changed by July-October 1990, Washington never apprised Moscow about its changed policy. If the United States did not inform the Soviet Union about its changed policy, then all the assurances the latter had been giving the former since the reunification talks started, remain obligatory on the US. Even if the assurances were not included in the final paper on German reunification, the assurances and promises regarding NATO are morally binding on the United States. Promise is meant to be kept, irrespective of its legal formulation.

The world is witnessing the return of the Cold War in the 21st century. The Cold War was marked by tense relations and indirect confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. China also cooperated with Russia against the United States in the first half of the Cold War. A thorough analysis of the Cold War and post-Cold War era along with historical records of rivalries suggests that the rivalries may encounter a phase of normalization and peace between the contending parties for a time-period. In such a situation the rivalry does not vanish forever but it is placed before the time to test the reality of normalization. In such a situation, if the normalization

between the contending parties cannot stand the test of time, the resurfaced rivalry is not a new one but rather the continuation of the old one. The same is the case with Russia, China, and the United States rivalry. The antagonistic relations between the Cold War countries only underwent a period of normalization (between the US and China in the 1970s and between Russia and the US in the 1980s, and 1990s). However, the normalization between these countries could not stand the test of time and the rivalry has resurfaced in the 21st century. The Beijing-Moscow split has also been bridged against the United States. In this context, the current feuding and antagonism is the resumption of the Old Cold War and not a new one.

Future Research Direction

Present qualitative literature review study has provided valuable insights into the complexities of the US-Russia rivalry in the 21st century, shedding light on its historical origins, geopolitical dynamics, and global implications. Moving forward, future research should focus on exploring emerging trends and developments in the rivalry, including the impact of evolving geopolitical strategies, technological advancements, and shifting alliances on international security and stability. Additionally, there is a need for further investigation into potential avenues for diplomatic engagement and conflict resolution to mitigate tensions and promote cooperation between the two powers. Moreover, examining the role of other actors, such as regional powers and non-state actors, in shaping the US-Russia rivalry could provide a more nuanced understanding of its multidimensional nature. Overall, future research should aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the US-Russia rivalry and its implications for global peace and security.

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