

Perception and Misperception in US-Russian Relations

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Abstract

The contemporary political relationship between the United States and Russia is a contentious one, the nature of which cannot be explained solely as the result of objective decision-making. Rather, many of the interactions that have taken place between the two in the last century and a half have operated based on subjective factors such as perception and ideological bias. This research explores major events in the history of Russian-American relations through the lens of constructivism and political psychology, in order to determine the extent to which perception has influenced the outcome of these events.

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“Perception is defined by historically enduring beliefs and repetitive social practices and is rooted in self-other interactions.”

- A.P. Tsygankov, *The Sources of Russia's Fear of NATO*, 102

Introduction

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When examining modern political relationships between two countries, in order to understand them fully it is important to also understand how they arrived at their current state and the various factors that have influenced the relationship over time. In an ideal world, this analysis would be simple – most would be structured objectively, on a cost versus benefit basis with the main consideration being how each country can benefit from the other. However, politics is done by people, and people for the most part are easily influenced by their own internal biases and misperceptions. Political networks and communications are as a whole made up of individual people, each with their own such biases and perceptions or misperceptions, who are constantly interacting with one another. This often results in complications, and relationships that turn out quite differently than one might expect based on what seems to be most conducive to the prosperity of the countries involved. While this can be found in varying degrees in any international political relationship, one of the most notable examples is between two powerful countries with a history of adversity stretching back at least a century.

The historical narrative between the United States and Russia is rich and complex, a tumultuous consociation between two great nations with conflicting interests and disparity in ideological values. From events such as the Cold War to those in more recent history such as tension over NATO expansionism; American support for anti-Russian sentiment in Ukraine; or the Russian interference in the United States' 2016 presidential election, clashes between the two have been fairly common. Evidence of lingering contention can be found everywhere in modern day American culture: villains in classic movies are often portrayed with Russian accents; jokes about communism are often directed towards Russia rather than other prominent countries like

China which are also associated with the Communist party; oppressive regimes in many other countries remain largely ignored while Putin's administration continuously comes under fire for its violations of basic freedoms. American outrage that tends to erupt over Russian transgressions is often conspicuously absent when it comes to similar misdeeds committed by other countries. For example, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 when it became evident that Ukraine was seeking to distance itself and become more integrated with the West was met with strong condemnation by the American public, citing a national intolerance for the forceful acquisition of territory. However, in the past there have been several similar – if not arguably more distasteful – such acquisitions, such as the seizure of Cyprus by Turkey in 1974, to which the many Americans conveniently turned a blind eye. And after it became clear that Russian hackers used social media platforms to disseminate various advertisements in an attempt to sway American voters in the 2016 presidential election, the reaction by the American public was again instant outrage. Many Americans on the left who lack the traditional conservative disdain for Communist and post-Communist countries and thus have no immediate ideological cause for contention towards Russia instantly reverted to the narrative of Russia as the United States' natural enemy, using this to raise more public indignation over the election meddling.

In spite of the fact that many developed countries consistently interfere in the elections of other countries – even the United States is guilty of this, having participated in attempts to influence the outcome of elections in countries like Palestine, Chile, Nicaragua, and even in Russia's election of Boris Yeltsin in 1996 (*Shmitt*) – the outcry persists even among more educated Americans who ought to know this to be fact. This in and of itself is no great shock, as examples of hypocrisy in varying degrees abound in politics both domestically and internationally. The question that remains is: why Russia? What makes Russia such a perfect

scapegoat and an easy target for those in need of a villain to promote their agenda? Surely there are many advantages to cooperation between Russia and the United States, and little to be gained by prolonging decades-old hostilities. I argue that even in the absence of objective material motivation for conflict between the United States and Russia, ideology plays a vital role in perpetuating the narrative that exists today and in shaping the nature of their interactions, specifically those which took place within the last century and a half.

While the existence of bias to some degree or another is a relatively uncontentious claim, its role as an instrumental part of a major political relationship is not. In order to produce evidentiary support for this hypothesis, there must be a reasonably defensible measurement of the extent to which perception has had an influence on US-Russian relations.

Naturally, the analysis and measurement of a concept as abstract as perception is inherently difficult. In order to determine the extent of its influence on foreign policy decisions, then, it is first necessary to establish a concrete method of evaluation. One proposed method is to first construct a hypothetical outline of what the relationship between the United States and Russia might look like if it were crafted by negotiation between two completely objective entities, compare this outline to the version that exists in real life, identify the gaps between the two and determine what sort of non-material factors may have contributed to bringing about these gaps. The construction of such an outline can best be accomplished through the use of realist theory of international relations, because it leaves little room for speculation about individual perception or other abstract concepts and focuses instead on what is tangible. The existing theory is therefore quite relevant and can provide helpful guidelines with which to structure this very basic model.

There are a few key conceptions around which realism is centered. First, it relies on the assumption that the international system is inherently anarchic, as there is no one state with absolute power over the others. Under this assumption, the existence of global harmony relies heavily upon the ability of each state to cooperate with one another in the absence of a higher power with the ability to enforce order. Secondly there is the assumption that states are the most important actors in the international system, rather than individual people or large groups and organizations. Thirdly, it assumes that in addition to being the most important actors, states are also rational ones and their actions are generally logical and motivated by self-interest. And lastly, there is the assumption that the primary concern of all states is security. Under this theory, power is a zero-sum game and states must act to conserve theirs at all costs. Assuming the availability of consistently reliable and accurate information, if actors in the international system were to routinely abide by these terms, there would be little room for erroneous judgments based on the biases of individuals or groups. This is because according to realism it is states who are the major players while individuals and groups are of relative unimportance, and states act out of strict prioritization of objective self-interest. This makes it the perfect frame of reference for crafting a model stripped of the very things upon which this research is focused, in order to find where this model and the real world relationship diverge. In terms of interactions between the two, what would purely realist theory expect to find? How does this compare with what is actually found? And how can these gaps be explained? These are the questions that will be used to explore the relationship and determine the extent to which it has been shaped by factors other than tangible material interest.

To put this theoretical framework into practice before applying it to subsequent research, a useful time period to analyze first would be roughly the end of the 19th century. This was a

pivotal moment in American-Russian relations, when ideology started to make an appearance in what had previously been an uneventful affiliation characterized by politically ambiguous interactions. Indeed, until roughly the 1880s, the relationship between the United States and Russia had remained largely unchanged – with Great Britain as a shared rival, converging interests and overall little grounds for hostility, they maintained a cautious, neutral pseudo-friendship. In the time leading up to this period, Russia's industrial economy was fairly weak, with little international trading power and a good deal of domestic unrest as citizens became increasingly agitated under the weight of the tsarist regime. Their interactions had been somewhat friendly in the past, exemplified by events such as the sale of Alaska in 1867. The Russians had parted with the land gladly; it was not incredibly profitable and had in fact become a liability because due to its location, it was under constant threat of being annexed by Great Britain. However, since its purchase by the United States it had grown much more economically valuable and its many natural resources made the sale seem to be much more of a concession on Russia's part than it actually was. In the eyes of many Americans, the sale was a generous gesture of friendship rather than a strategic move to profit from the disposal of land that was more an encumbrance than anything else (*Stoessinger, 125*).

In terms of international rivalries Russia was threatened by both Great Britain and France, and since the United States was also engaged in competition with Great Britain and not inherently disposed towards hostility to Russia the two gravitated naturally towards cooperation. All this taken into consideration, an alliance between the two seems to be the most logical conclusion for two states looking to consolidate their existing power and maximize security. However, at the beginning of the 1880s the winds of change began to blow and slowly, the animosity which now characterizes their relationship began to take shape. This change and the

nature of their relationship during this time period will be more extensively explored in the following chapter.

Based on the assumptions of realist theory, there must be some sort of material gain to be had by instigating conflict with another state and it must outweigh whatever may be gained by maintaining a neutral relationship. The first major event that took place in this time period was the assassination of Tsar Alexander II by revolutionaries in 1881. Following this, harsh anti-Semitic policies began to emerge and Jews in Russia were vigorously persecuted. Prominent American author George Kennan published numerous works about the horrors he saw while traveling in Russia, shedding light on various human rights violations committed by the Russian government and propagating the image of Russia as a barbaric and oppressive state that engages in cruel mistreatment of its own citizens. In keeping with realist theory, the increasingly negative perception of Russia among the American public did not immediately affect policy decisions, and their diplomatic relationship maintained its evenhanded disposition (*Gaddis 1990, 31-32*). However, the major divide between American public opinion and official policy towards Russia is still noteworthy, as its influence will be seen in years to come.

The next noteworthy event that took place was the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. Ever since Alexander II's assassination the American public had grown more aware and more critical of the domestic situation in Russia and yet public officials had remained unswayed, preferring to maintain a cordial relationship for the benefit of the country. They still had a mutual enemy in the form of Great Britain, and it was beneficial for both of them to cooperate in order to prevent Britain from establishing a stronger influence in the Far East (*Gaddis 1990, 32*). However, as time went on tension between the United States and Great Britain began to ebb, bringing them closer together while Russia and Great Britain remained at odds. This changed the balance of

power, and Russia began to associate the United States with Great Britain and therefore saw their presence in the East as more threatening. As US interests were now more closely aligned with those of Great Britain, Russian influence in the Far East also began to be seen by the Americans as threatening (*Gaddis 1990, 33*). Russia had begun construction on the Trans-Siberian railroad in order to increase access to trade with China and went on to occupy Manchuria, inciting aggression from the Japanese who formed an alliance with Great Britain in response. Overall, there was little to be gained for the United States in Manchuria. In fact, encouragement of Chinese officials by the Russians to cooperate with other countries in the name of mutually beneficial trade was looked upon with favor by American investors in China (*Gaddis 1990, 34*). However, fear that American expansion into the Far East would be blocked by Russia's attempts to do the same spurred the United States to support the Anglo-Japanese opposition to Russian expansion.

This particular example does not diverge from realist theory, as security concerns and the conception of power as a zero-sum game predicts the American fear that Russia's gain in power would result in American loss. However, it is still a good example of the influence that perception can have on the outcome of events. In retrospect, it is evident that the Russians had no intention of opposing American expansion in the Far East. Continuing the tradition of previous years, officials in the current administration saw no need for Russian and American interests to conflict and were consequently taken aback by the hostile attitude of the United States towards their occupation of Manchuria. They had reacted calmly to the American acquisition of Hawaii and the Philippines, despite the significance of such areas in helping solidify US influence in the Pacific. Their peaceful demeanor had given little indication that they would resist US expansion into the east, despite their hostility towards Great Britain and

other Western European countries (*Gaddis 1990, 35*). The relative lack of animosity on the part of the Russians made the US support for Russian enemies Japan and Great Britain seem harsh by contrast.

This is an interesting example in which the realms of realism and constructivism/political psychology converge, and the intermingling of objective and subjective factors produces flawed results. While decisions are made that are based on realist considerations, the interpretation of what is or is not logical in terms of hard-power benefits is affected by the perception of the individuals making the decisions. It is worth noting that in such cases, it may not always be productive to compare a realist model to the event in real life, because the differences may not always be so apparent. In the event that similar situations arise in the following research, this must be taken into account. However, they can still be analyzed in terms of constructivism and political psychology in order to determine where the subjective factors come into play and affect the decisions of actors who are attempting to make judgments rooted in realist theory.

After the Japanese attacked Port Arthur and began the Russo-Japanese War, the Russians felt that part of the blame lay with the Americans whose lax approach towards Japan allowed them to take up arms against Russia (*Gaddis 1990, 37*). By 1905, the war had tipped so heavily in favor of the Japanese that Russia being completely expelled from the Far East. Rather than allowing this to happen, President Roosevelt expressed a desire to organize an equal balance of power between both countries in Manchuria. In August of 1905 he supervised a negotiated peace settlement between the two, dividing Manchuria into two separate sections. Southern Manchuria would be under Japanese control, while Russian influence would remain predominant in northern Manchuria. However, following the end of Roosevelt's presidency the Taft administration did not continue his policy of balancing these two powers and instead attempted

to promote a third power in the region: that of a joint coalition between the US and the Chinese. They did this by encouraging US investment in the area: first, in a Chinese project created to fund the purchase of all foreign railroads in Manchuria; and second, in the case of the first project's failure, the construction of new Chinese railroads running parallel to the preexisting tracks (*Gaddis 1990, 39*).

Ultimately both projects were met with failure, and both Russian and Japanese pushback against them only served to pull Japan and Russia closer together – effectively promoting rather than mitigating Russian interests in the Far East. The Taft administration's policy had “sought to break up, through nonforcible means, spheres of influence which both Russians and Japanese were prepared to use force to maintain. Far from balancing antagonisms, it only served to unite them in opposition to Washington's ineffectual intrusions,” (*Gaddis 1990, 40*). It also resulted in the growth of Japanese power, which would eventually lead to their domination over the area after the First World War. Had Americans been more willing to cooperate with Russia and not attempted to monopolize expansion in the area, they could have not only maintained good relations with Russia and perhaps avoided the Russo-Japanese War altogether but also potentially maximized their influence in the Far East and succeeded in the ventures which ultimately failed after the war. Objectively speaking this would have been the best possible outcome, but fear and misperception of Russian intentions on the American part led to the exact result they had feared: monopolization of access to Chinese markets by another country and deficit of American influence in the Far East.

From 1832 up until 1911, there had been an important commercial-trade agreement between the United States and Russia allowing for a “reciprocal liberty of commerce and navigation” between the two countries (*Cohen, 3*). This trade agreement of almost a hundred

years provided clear economic and diplomatic benefits to the United States, especially as it sought to expand its power gain a higher standing in the international system. However, American politicians were under great social pressure from the public and various Jewish groups to punish Russia for its flagrant mistreatment of its Jewish citizens. Initially these groups did not push for the treaty's abolition, instead vying for the implementation of various sanctions and other ways of coercing the Russian government into softening its harsh policies towards the Jewish people. But after Russian officials moved to deny visas to American Jews, this gave them the smoking gun they needed to move for total abrogation of the commercial-trade agreement. These groups went on to campaign for the replacement of the treaty with another that hinged on protections for the Jewish people (*Cohen, 7*).

Overall, there was much to be lost and little to be gained by abrogating the treaty. In the words of then-Secretary of State Phil Knox, it “would be an act of unprecedented disdain towards a friendly nation, which could scarcely fail to arouse antagonism and challenge retaliation.” Not only was it inadvisable to threaten the tenuous friendship that had in the past produced positive developments such as the acquisition of Alaska, the severance of the treaty would mean large economic losses for the United States. In terms of the value of trade between the two, Russians consumed approximately \$150,000,000 worth of American goods annually. Capital investments in Russia by the United States totaled approximately \$225,000,000. Furthermore, many private American companies located in Russia would suffer under termination of the treaty. In the wake of Japan's rise to power in the Far East, Russia was a valuable counterweight to their ascension and losing their support could severely undermine what remained of the American influence there. In addition to all this, there was no guarantee that this move would even work – it was entirely possible for Russia to disregard the American

petition for a new treaty based on the improvement in standards of living for the Jews. Even if it did, the plight of the Jewish people meant little to US officials – they had glossed over maltreatment of Jews and other various human rights violations committed by Russia in the past and there was no significant reason to change this now. As far as the rights of American Jews, only twenty-eight of them had taken up residence in Russia at that time, and there were only four documented cases of American Jews being denied visas and entrance into Russia (*Cohen, 16*).

The numbers in this case are quite clear, and the balance lies almost entirely in favor of maintaining the trade agreement. According to realist theory, one would expect the state to act rationally for preservation of American interests. Abrogation of the treaty would undoubtedly result in deficits in both the economic and security situation in the United States, as well as undercutting its already precarious position in the Far East at a time when the US was striving to achieve more global power. To do so would deviate strongly from rational state action and the maximization of self-interest and thus from realist political theory – and yet, that is exactly what the United States did. Under severe pressure from the public as well as passionate campaigning by Jacob Schiff, a prominent banker and the man spearheading the efforts to terminate the agreement, the Senate eventually endorsed the resolution to slash the agreement. They were followed by the House and in December of 1911, the commercial-trade treaty was no more. Russian officials were stung by the outcome of events, caught entirely off guard by the sudden digression from previous behavior on the part of the United States. “In light of America's larger commercial and political interests, [Russia] could not comprehend how a moralistic crusade could dictate diplomatic action...” (*Cohen, 37*). In the end, this moralistic crusade did not accomplish its goal. Not only did religious persecution against Jews fail to cease, persecution against Protestant Christians was actually increased after 1911. Not only did the previous

amicability of the US-Russian relationship evaporate and both countries sustain evident economic losses, but the ill-fated movement only served to worsen the very conditions it was meant to improve (*Foglesong, 45*).

The abrogation of the trade agreement clearly deviates from the realist model of their relationship, under which the United States would obviously move in favor of preserving the agreement and thus the vital American interests at stake. There were many other factors in play outside of pure material benefit: social pressure from the public on various officials in the US government; influence of one individual (Jacob Schiff) over other individuals in the administration including President Taft; and the general conception of Russia as backwards and immoral as well as arrogance and eagerness to assert American authority on the global stage.

The comparison of realism to the actual progression of events has provided a useful frame of reference with which to separate and identify occasions where motivations other than objective material gain played a part in the succession of events. While at some points the influence of perception may still manage to fall inside the parameters of realist theory, such as in the example of American opposition to Russian expansion in Manchuria, thus far these have been easily identifiable and the role of perception been unmistakable. The successful analysis of the time period between the assassination of Alexander II and the First World War permits the continuation of this method of examination in subsequent historical periods up until the present day. In addition to the use of realist theory to determine the extent of nonmaterial factors in motivating policy decisions, ensuing research will be evaluated through the lens of political psychology and constructivist theory of international relations. This will provide a more detailed analysis of these nonmaterial factors and more accurately gauge the degree to which perception plays a part in shaping the outcome of interstate communication.

Chapter I: Tools of Measurement

Exploration of Political Psychology, Constructivism, and Realist Theory of International

Relations

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The first step in exploring the impact of perception in international relations is to determine the method by which it will be measured. Having already provided a brief example of the comparison between a model of events based on realist theory and the events as they existed in actuality, it is now necessary to delve a bit further into the more complex details of realism, as well as lay out the basics of constructivism and political psychology. In the following chapters basic rules, assumptions and theories from these two fields will be used to analyze the gaps identified by the comparison with realism that has been exemplified in the introduction.

Before going further it is also important to note that perception manifests itself in a variety of different ways, be it the perception belonging to various powerful political figures; the ideology of an entire nation that shapes the way it views itself and surrounding nations; or the perspective held by the general public who then pressure their government to take certain actions of which they may not approve when the perceptions held by these two groups diverge. While the main focus of this research is on perception of the individual and how it often renders the human mind fallible, inevitably resulting in the failure of a state to make the most objectively beneficial foreign policy decisions, there are many other ways in which perception has the capacity to influence relationships between states. These instances will undoubtedly surface at certain points in the exploration of this topic, and while not subject to the same scrutiny as that surrounding individual perception they must also be taken into account.

Realism

In addition to the four main premises of realism already presented in the introduction, there are several more key components of the theory. Realism highlights the importance of power as the primary influencer in all state decisions. This goes hand in hand with the assumption that security is the chief concern of all states because they are inherently rational and motivated only by the maximization of their own self-interest. While security and power have some superficial differences, at the end of the day it can be reasonably concluded that the more powerful a state, the stronger its security system is likely to be, and conversely the stronger the security system of a state the easier it will be for that state to gain and preserve power (*Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 70*).

In the introduction it was stated that because under realist theory the international system is anarchic with no one single state having ultimate power over the others, the existence of global harmony relies on cooperation between states. However, upon further explanation of realist theory it can actually be posited that global harmony is essentially impossible. This is because another line of reasoning in realism is that the nature of international politics and the system as a whole is not only anarchic, but also inherently conflictual. Under this assumption, while states in the international system exist without any overarching order imposed upon them by a higher power, they are consequently also engaged in a perpetual struggle to overcome one another and take the position of that higher power. Can such an outcome be possible under realist theory as it currently exists? As of yet, this is unclear, however it seems unlikely – realism requires that the international system be one where states are legally equal and have no higher authority despite the constant struggle to come out on top.

In keeping with the theme of rationality and objectivity, another facet of realism is the notion that states are able to successfully separate foreign policy decisions from their respective domestic political situations. This is perhaps, out of all the various assumptions put forth by realism, the most contentious and easily disproved conception in light of the political history between the United States and Russia – something that is quite apparent in the example given in the introduction, as well as even more readily so as time progresses and more examples are explored. It requires that at least one of two things be true: firstly, that the individuals who make foreign policy decisions are as objective and unbiased as possible, choosing the most rational way forward despite domestic political pressure in any of its various forms such as protests, lobbying, or economic strain; or secondly, that at the end of the day with all things taken into account the state as a whole – politicians, businesses or other organizations with significant political influence, and the general public – will weigh the bad with the good and ultimately reach the most logical solution with the highest potential benefit for their state.

In addition to these presuppositions that exist in realism, there are also a few central questions that most realists seek to answer through their study of international relations. The first is the question of what, overall, is the rationalization for the majority of actions taken by states, in particular those taken to ensure their survival? And secondly, what are the grounds for the many fluctuations and ever-shifting interactions between actors in the international system? While the general rules that are outlined above set guidelines for the answers to those questions – for example, according to the laws of realism, the rationalization for state actions will likely be based on hard-power factors such as military force or economic incentives – they are only a framework within which there are several kinds of possible answers.

In light of these new details, a more nuanced version of the previous example can now be produced.

Constructivism

The theory of constructivism is one that seems to exist almost in direct opposition to the theory of realism. Constructivism is based around the idea that humans, and by consequence all social systems put into place and inhabited by humans, operate according to various constructions in their brains.

To put it very simply, traffic lights is a typical piece of social construction. Red is a symbolic sign to stop, green is a symbolic sign to go. This system has been consciously invented for our convenience. As opposed to constructions that are automatically produced by our brains and do not involve participation of our consciousness and will (which Kant and his followers have discovered), social constructions are exactly the products of our consciousness, will and desire. As to legal and political constructions, a constitution of some country is the best example. Constructions engendered by our brains may be called natural constructions, while social and political constructions are artificial ones. (Alyushin et al, 347)

As made clear by this description, realism and constructivism are based on very different principles. While constructivism allows that states may well operate solely out of self-interest, it maintains that what constitutes a state's idea of self-interest is constantly subject to fluctuation. Realism relies on the hard-and-fast, while constructivism dives deeper into where this hard-and-fast originates from and how it can be subject to error.

Another important distinction is that while realism looks at the state as a whole as the most important actor in the international system, constructivism tends to focus on the individuals who make up the state or make important policy decisions for the state, be it a leader or figurehead or other prominent members of the government. Some of the main areas that constructivist researchers focus on are factors such as existing social norms and identity, both self-identification and also identity as perceived by outside observers. Both these structures are an important part of shaping the world in which international players operate. They are also subject to fluctuation, especially as time progresses and things such as international power structures, global demographics and domestic social rules and cultures evolve. Identity will prove to be especially important in the following research, as it plays an important role in the interactions between the US and Russia. Both countries' notions of their own state identity are wildly different from one another, lending credence to the perception of Russia as some sort of ideological foil for the United States and vice versa.

There are a few noteworthy facets of constructivism that call into question the reliability of realist theory to correctly predict the actions of states. The first of these is that realism requires that individual actors (in the case of realism, this will be states) can be consistently relied upon to accurately interpret the world around them. The environment surrounding them and the existence of material factors and incentives is fairly factual and cannot be called into question; yet, the ability of actors to see them exactly as they are and translate this into the most objectively beneficial policy decisions can be. An example put forth by Shannon is the counterargument to a popular objectivist/realist hypothesis by one prominent scholar that in the case of a house fire (i.e. a threat to security), all of the individuals caught inside will have the same reaction to it, which is to escape the house immediately. The rebuttal to this idea counters

with the claim that regardless of the fact that those facing a threat to their safety will naturally seek out a means of escape, there are other considerations that have been left out. For example, who will exit the building first? This could be determined by various beliefs held by the individuals inside; under certain circumstances children, women or the elderly might be given priority. Some might resist the notion that the building must be exited immediately and instead remain behind, attempting to save pets or material possessions. In addition, which route will these people take to exit the building? Some, out of fear, might resort to the quickest possible escape and leap from windows, while others might try to find their way to a door. In summary, “reality is not as important to understanding action as is the understanding of the world by people who occupy it,” (*Shannon & Kowert, 7*). People’s actions are shaped by their own beliefs and notions and also those that they may not personally share, but are impressed upon them by their surroundings.

Another is the motivations behind state interactions – for example, some defy the realist notion that states are naturally in competition with one another due to the anarchic system or lack of a ruling entity. Constructivists argue that state identity plays a crucial role in governing how states interact with others by imposing the same social norms on the state as a whole that it would on any individual person. In other words,

“[state identity] is treated as a source of values and interests and as shaped by global or domestic normative methods of socialization or persuasion [...] from regional security communities that seem to have overcome local “security dilemmas” to broader questions of an international community based on enmity, rivalry, or friendship, collective identity

is argued as driving behavior more than the mere material lack of a higher authority (what realists call anarchy).” (Shannon & Kowert, 14)

These sorts of underlying questions are the ones that constructivist theory pinpoints and attempts to answer.

Political Psychology

While political psychology is a markedly different field from constructivism, there is also a significant degree of overlap between the two. Both are concerned with understanding the underlying motivations behind state actions given the notion that the outside world is subject to the interpretation of its inhabitants. There are three main fields of study that make up most of the contribution to political psychology: the study of personalities, cognitive psychology, and social psychology. Scholars in political psychology engage in things such as leadership trait analysis to determine the tendencies of important political figures and how often they are influenced by their outside environment, how receptive they are to change or taking risks, and other similar attributes. While there will be systematic constraints in place on any policy maker, their individual choices and how they operate under these constraints are the subject of intense scrutiny. These findings can then be used to predict future decisions made by the individuals being studied.

Over the years, research done in the field of political psychology has reached a few important determinations that will play an important role in ascertaining the extent of the influence of perception in major interactions between the US and Russia. This includes the notion that “perceptions and attentions are selective,” as well as that “memory, attention and perception are biased to bolster individual needs and beliefs as people seek to reinforce beliefs,”

(Shannon & Kowert, 11). Human constructions of social and political norms impose constraints on individuals making policy decisions, and in turn these individuals craft their decisions within these constraints using their own tools and mental processes. These processes, according to political psychologists, are shaped by the influence of internal biases, values, emotions and beliefs already held by the individual and will thus vary from person to person. While more open-minded and at times well educated people may have a more measured and rational approach, this is not always the case and such people are not always the ones at the forefront of the decision-making process.

On a larger scale, the study of social psychology and cognition analyzes the behavior of groups. Ideas like social identity theory purport that grouping individuals together creates additional perceptions such as negative feelings about those outside of the group as well as positive ones about those inside. This only serves to increase the effect of things like cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias. Some argue that social identity theory renders conflict between groups unavoidable and undermines the potential for peaceful coexistence. Individuals also feel an innate need to belong to groups, causing them to seek out likeminded people and making the effects of such groupings a likely occurrence rather than a chance one. The broadly applicable findings of social psychology combined with the more narrow and individualized ones of personality and cognitive psychology to make political psychology a reliable tool with which to identify patterns of behavior that can be attributed to perception.

There are three main areas in which the focus of constructivism and that of political psychology overlap one another. The first is on factors and processes which are ideational, or non-material, in origin. The second is on the important role played by identity, both that of the

state as a whole, its individual constituents, and of key individuals involved in policymaking. The third is on the process of careful and accurate identification of the varying perceptions held by actors, rather than simply assuming them. Theorists from either side seek to uncover how an individual sense of self, structured by the social norms surrounding it, mingles with psychological traits and processes to result in the choices made by these individuals.

Given their overlapping areas of study and complementary theories and findings, the combination of constructivism and political psychology results in a clear analytical framework within which it is possible to examine the US-Russian relationship over time, identify patterns, and attribute them to the influence of perception if applicable. A quote from one of the resources consulted in this chapter reads

“[...] realist hypotheses of war ‘explain a great deal of history’ only ‘if they are recast as hypotheses on the effects of false perceptions.’ Walt recasts balance of power in terms of balance of threat, with threat being determined by the less tangible ‘aggressive intentions.’ Just what constitutes aggressive intentions, however, may be in the eye of the beholder, as suggested by studies in psychology and constructivism. In the case of misperceptions and threat perception, psychology and constructivism can offer realists a more complete assessment of fundamental questions of the ideational and emotional base of (in)security.” (Shannon & Kowert, 4)

In keeping with this quote, the following research will use realism to identify gaps in the US-Russian relationship that are difficult to explain using material incentives as the sole motivators for state actions. These gaps can then be more closely studied using techniques from the realms of constructivism and political psychology.

Before delving into the second chapter, a useful example of the application of such techniques is the time period discussed in the introduction. The first event from the introduction is the sale of Alaska in 1867. This particular instance does not diverge significantly from realism, as both countries were motivated by material factors like economic benefit and security issues. However, it should again be noted that as the true value of Alaska became more apparent over time, warm feelings towards the Russians developed among the US population and it began to be seen as a generous gesture of friendship rather than a move for self-preservation (*Stoessinger, 125*). Following this high point, the next thirty-odd years saw a slow shift in American attitudes towards Russia, especially after George Kennan's searing publications. However, at this point in time the influence of interest groups on American foreign policy was still fairly weak, and as a result public opinion had little effect.

After the Russo-Japanese War and during the time period when the United States began its attempts to establish a presence in the Far East, public opinion and foreign policy coincided much more closely. This was due to the fact that it was beneficial for American politicians to appeal to the public's negative opinion of Russia in order to increase support for progressively more aggressive actions towards them in the Far East and attempts to crowd them out. Examples of such behavior include the attempts to push for stronger US-Chinese influence in Manchuria that were discussed in the introduction. The United States feared that Russia would react towards their eastward expansion with hostility, and thus preemptively acted out in aggression rather than waiting to gauge their reaction. This would prove to be a miscalculation, as the Russians did not feel overtly threatened by this American expansion near their borders.

On the surface it is clear that this mistake can be attributed to the perception of the United States that Russia would react negatively. Delving deeper begs the question – what brought such a perception into existence? Previous interactions between the two had been overwhelmingly positive in nature, with deference to their amicably neutral relationship given by both countries. There was no reason for Russia to go back on this now, as there was still considerable benefit to be had in maintaining the friendship. The idea that they might toss aside their longstanding ally at the drop of a hat was an illogical one, a notion that was clearly apparent to the Russians, who reacted with shock at the new enmity shown to them by the Americans. So what, then, if not logic, brought the United States to the conclusion that Russia would be hostile to their expansion?

According to a few of the theories put forth in constructivism and political psychology, this could be attributed to a variety of different things. The existence of ideational factors is certainly a possibility – while the US fear of Russia was based on concerns over security, it is also possible that the conception during that time of Russia as a harsh, autocratic regime tainted the perspective of American politicians (*Foglesong, 29*). While it is true that foreign policy remained largely unaffected by the public opinion during this time, it is highly unlikely that all government officials were immune to the effects of this widespread bias. In fact, the social psychology theories about social groups (in this case, the entire state as a whole) fostering an us-versus-them mentality and intensifying negative ideas about others outside the group seems quite applicable to this situation. The miscalculation can also be easily chalked up to simple inexperience, as the United States was a fairly young country and much of their expansion had been done domestically rather than overseas and pushing up against borders of other large powerful countries.

Another important event discussed in the introduction was the abrogation of the trade agreement in 1911. The treaty's termination, despite the marginal benefits and weighty political and economic consequences was the first time a "moralistic crusade" of this sort had a serious impact on US foreign policy towards Russia. In this case, there were undoubtedly ideational factors at play, as the material factors clearly showed that the treaty was far more beneficial than detrimental. In addition to the existing disadvantages to terminating the treaty, there was also a lack of non-ideological motivation to support the movement given the fact that Russian anti-Semitism had little effect on American citizens, even Jewish ones. The combination of precious few material incentives and multiple potential material losses leaves a gap in reasoning that can only be explained by factors that are ideational in origin. It is entirely likely that the influence of such factors stemmed from America's newfound interest in the affairs of other countries that came about in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Cohen states that

"Given the Russian premise that foreign Jews could not be treated any differently from native Jews, it followed that if foreign Jews were permitted commercial privileges equal to those granted other foreigners (and by treaty terms equal to those enjoyed by Russians) Russia would be forced to eventually accord the same privileges to her own Jews [...]. Abrogation seemed to be the quickest way to compel Russia to grant equal rights to American Jews, which in turn would cause other nations to demand similar rights for their Jews." (Cohen, 7)

This notion of the sacrifice of American material interest to promote the interest of non-American groups was entirely unprecedented at that time, in light of their history of adherence to realist methods of international cooperation. The emergence of an ostensible national conscience

is a solid explanation that seems fairly likely – in keeping with their sense of outrage over the mistreatment of Russian citizens by their own government, members of the American public felt responsible for stepping in and attempting to assuage the situation. Social psychology has found patterns in the cognitive functions that contribute to the way group behavior develops, called categorization and social comparison. Categorization explains the way that individuals organize information in their brains, making it easier to understand the world around them. Once these categories have been established, people tend to overestimate the similarities that exist within one category and exaggerate differences between multiple categories. This is prominent when it comes to the categorization of people into different social groups, and individuals within these groups will be inclined to zero in on the differences between their group and those outside it. These differences can include things like appearance, language, culture, political values, etc. While categorization is an important and necessary cognitive function without which it would be much more difficult to process the world around us, it also makes us fallible to stereotyping, chauvinism, and intergroup conflict.

Social comparison stems from social identity, or “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership,” (*Shannon & Kowert, 63*). The existence of such an identity is only possible in the presence of other groups, and groups are usually made up of multiple individuals who share one or more common traits. Such traits can include things like nationality, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc., and often times individuals belong to many different groups based on how many of these traits they actively identify with. These groups are also hierarchical in nature, leading social psychologists to conclude that they will often come into conflict with one another. This seems only natural given the pitfalls that arise

from the process of categorization. Groups also strive to achieve and/or maintain a positive identity, because their social identity is tied to each individual member's sense of self. Given this understanding of humans' social interaction, the reaction of the America public to Russian anti-Semitism becomes less surprising. The United States viewed itself as a prosperous, democratic nation concerned with moral values and the promotion of civil liberties. The juxtaposition of that against Russia, a severe autocracy with harsh policies and a history of human rights abuses, already highlights glaring differences. Examined through the lens of social psychology, where individuals unconsciously gloss over the flaws that exist in their own group and amplify those belonging to outside groups, this disparity between the two becomes even more apparent. Categorization results in the grouping of Americans versus Russians – democracy versus autocracy, benevolent leaders versus tyrannical dictators. Russia's flaws are viewed even more harshly, while the contrast of them with the American system lends it a benign glow, especially given the tendency of groups to strive for a positive identity. Social comparison emphasizes the differences between the two even more, and explains the inherently conflictual nature of the international system.

The exploration of the non-material factors motivating the United States' actions during this time period has proven to be a promising one. Using processes taken from the fields of constructivism and political psychology, it is possible to identify the reasoning behind actions that seem to have no material benefit. Insights from these fields help explain how and why humans operate the way that they do in cases that cannot be explained by materially-based contemporary theories of international relations like realism. In the spirit of this example, subsequent cases can now be explored using various techniques and observations garnered from constructivist and political psychology scholars.

Chapter II: Historical Context

Russian-American Relations from 1775-1917

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This chapter is devoted to providing important context for the case studies that will be explored later on. It will begin with a brief overview of the period from 1775-1881, and continue up to the period in which the three case studies take place. In order to develop as accurate, unbiased and well-rounded an account as possible, it will be based on historical texts written from both the Russian and American perspective.

1775-1881

The period from 1775 up until about 1881 is an interesting one which differs quite a bit from the rest of the historical account. Up until 1881, the US-Russian relationship actually did quite closely resemble the theoretical realist model put forth in the introduction. This time period clearly showcases a relatively balanced relationship that was neither an alliance nor a rivalry, but an amicable neutrality stemming from shared enemies and occasional mutually beneficial cooperation. It is only after 1881 that the relationship begins to shift and perception begins to play a much more important role. The exploration of this period, then, will serve to further the understanding of how an authentic realist model might look and add to its complexity.

Their relationship began even before the United States was officially founded in 1776, when the United States and Great Britain were still engaged in the Revolutionary War. During the conflict, King George the III sent a request to Catherine the Great, the reigning Russian tsar, to supply him with 20,000 Russian soldiers to assist in his crusade against the colonists. In contradiction to the alliance existing between the two, Catherine declined. While this was

interpreted quite favorably in the colonies, she did so not out of kindness or admiration for the fighting spirit of the Americans. Having witnessed the tenacity of their forces, Catherine had already determined that the defeat of Great Britain was the most likely outcome (*Bolkhovitinov, 10*). It was therefore in Russia's best interest not only to turn a blind eye and allow Britain to become weaker, but also to avoid antagonizing America as an emerging player on the world stage. In summary, "the conclusion that must be drawn from [this] is that the Russian empress dealt with the American question on grounds of pure realpolitik. She neither liked nor disliked the Americans and probably never met an American in her entire life. The only question that concerned her in connection with the American revolution was the primacy of the Russian national interest," (*Stoessinger, page 118*). This event and the previous quote characterize the US-Russian relationship for roughly the next 100 years.

A second example of such pragmatic thinking occurred in 1867, when Russia sold Alaska to the United States. As was briefly mentioned in the introduction, such an agreement was very beneficial to both countries for multiple reasons. On the Russian side, ownership over such a distant land mass caused many more problems than produced benefits. It was already vulnerable to illegal inroads from American fishermen and trappers who ventured into the Russian territory to capitalize on its rich natural resources. Given its proximity to the United States and tempting array of benefits, in addition to the gold rush sweeping across America that had already inspired them to expand their territory into places such as Texas and Florida, there existed a very real possibility in that they might push to encroach on Alaska as well. Many gold deposits could be found hidden along its rocky expanse, something of which the Russian government was very aware. At that time Alaska was monopolized by the Russian-American company, which was a joint stock company specializing in the fur trade and was also completely

bankrupt. This made it a liability to the Russian government rather than an asset, bringing in no revenue from a land that ought to be abundant with opportunity. Yet another concern its vulnerability to British invasion, as the Russian navy was fairly weak and held little hope of defending the territory if such an unfortunate occurrence were to take place. There was also a general desire to maintain amicable relations with the United States, and the sale of Alaska was a gesture of goodwill that would go a long way towards generating positive attitudes towards the Russians. This is exemplified in a direct quote from Alexander II, stating that "...in relations with the United States, it behooves us to support a traditional, cordial candour, but without intimacy," (*Куропятник, 98*).

Overall, there were many reasons for the tsar's desire to rid itself of Alaska as quickly as possible, before the land was lost for good with no chance for Russia to benefit from its transferal of ownership. Naturally, there was also much to be gained from the sale on the American side of the situation. The United States' Secretary of State during this time was a man named William Seward. Seward was a huge supporter of American exploration and expansionism or, as it was commonly called, the spirit of "Manifest Destiny." As such, he quickly became a champion of the movement to purchase Alaska. Due to Alaska's variety of resources including the deposits of gold, coal, and oil; waters teeming with fish and other edible sea creatures; wild animals to trap or hunt for fur and meat; and forests for logging, there was a plethora of economic benefits to its acquisition. Just as the possibility of annexation by Great Britain was a threat to Russia, it was also one for the United States. Great Britain was a leading power in the world, and a prominent economic adversary of both countries. Its procurement of such a profitable area, especially one in such close proximity to the United States where many of their hunters and fishermen already took advantage of its assets, would be a considerable power

move. Altogether, this rendered the United States eager to buy and Russia eager to sell. After brief conflict with Congress, a selling price of \$7,200,000 was agreed upon – a price quite advantageous to the Russians, who likely would have settled for as low as \$5,000,000 (*Stoessinger, 125*). Over time, Alaska's true value as a natural resource only grew, and the effect was a prolonged sense of friendliness towards Russia among the American people. However, this friendliness was a product of rather than factor in the transaction – on both sides, the major motivators were all of the material variety. From economic benefits to strategic defensive maneuvers, their various lines of reasoning all fit well within the boundaries of realist theory (*Ананьев, 8*).

Following the sale of Alaska and in the spirit of the relationship preceding it, for a little while affairs continued as they always had. The “cordial relationship without intimacy” proceeded apace, without undue influence from non-material factors. However, this would eventually prove unsustainable, as ideological factors slowly but surely began to work their way into American foreign policy. The first significant event marking the downfall of realpolitik in US-Russian relations occurred fourteen short years after the acquisition of Alaska.

1881- 1917

The name of Tsar Alexander II might ring a bit of a bell in the minds of those who read it. As far as rulers of Russia go, he is a fairly noteworthy one for a variety of reasons. Known by many as a great liberator and champion of progressive values, Alexander II emancipated the serfs in Russia and maintained a steady crusade for economic and political reform during his reign. As a figure representing freedom, civil rights and modernization he was quite appealing to the American public and they viewed his rule as a positive development in Russian

politics. Naturally, his assassination in the year 1881 was met with shock and sadness by many Western people who admired his policies. His successor did not share his open-minded liberal values, and this was one of many reasons for the deterioration of the previous positive American attitude toward relations with Russia (*Bailey, 120*).

Another metaphorical nail in the coffin was actually a person – namely, prominent American explorer and scholar George Kennan. As a young man Kennan was recruited to travel to Russia on an expedition to explore frozen Siberia. He wrote an expose called *Siberia and the Exile System*, to be published in 1891 and widely circulated among educated upper-class Americans. In this report Kennan detailed in quite explicit terms every injustice or cruelty he witnessed during his travels. He denoted the system under which many people accused of various crimes had no access to a fair trial before they were exiled to life in Siberia. Such unjust methods of punishment were unthinkable in established democracies like the United States. Naturally, due to these circumstances prisons were heavily overcrowded and lacking in basic resources and staffed by overzealous guards who were quick to exercise violence against their charges. Many prisoners died of sickness, suicide or even starvation. Censorship was rampant across the country, with any thought of publicly exposing or denouncing the state's cruelty nigh on impossible. Kennan also lamented the difficulty of life as a peasant in Russia, saying

“From the time when he leaves his cradle and begins the struggle of life down to the time when his weary gray head is finally laid under the sod, he must be guided, directed, instructed, restrained, repressed, regulated, fenced in, fenced out, braced up, kept down, and made to do generally what somebody else thinks is best for him.” (*Bailey, 131*)

Overall, Kennan's platform was empathy and pity for the Russian subjects and abject disdain for their rulers and system of governance. This sentiment was mirrored by Americans who read or heard details from his expose, furthering the notion of Russia as a backwards country with values that opposed those of the United States.

1900s

As it turns out, the spirit of "Manifest Destiny" and expansionism persisted long after the United States solidified its continental territories. In the 1900s they were consumed with the desire to expand their influence into Europe's Far East. This pushed them right up against the border with Russia, and a major area of interest for them was Manchuria – a place of significant strategic importance to the Russian government. While this did not bother Russia unduly in the beginning, the United States anticipated a much more adverse response and went in with a deliberately combative mindset.

In a convenient development for American politicians, their desire to establish a heavier presence in the Far East manifested itself around the same time that the general public's opinion of Russia was on the decline. The interests of the average American citizen about affairs in other countries had been steadily increasing over the years, and distaste for Russia's totalitarian government was widespread after the publication of George Kennan's findings. There was also more awareness of the rampant anti-Semitism that existed in Russia, and Jewish social and political groups had begun to lobby the American government to put pressure on the Russians to soften some of their harsher policies. Eventually in the year 1911 they succeeded in convincing the United States to abrogate the trade agreement with Russia that had been in place since 1832. While overall the effects of this move were marginal in either direction (as was previously

discussed in the introduction), it was glorified by many Americans who pitied the Russian citizens oppressed by their tyrannical government. There was a growing perception of Russia as an “other,” a state where all the things that Americans most feared came together and plagued innocent people (*Gaddis 1990, 41*). An authoritarian government which refused to grant civil rights to its citizens, censored their speech, and convicted them unjustly of crimes they did not commit. The very sort of government the United States had fought and escaped in the Revolutionary War! A government in a country that espoused corruption and oppression and crimes against humanity! To the American public, who clung to romantic ideals of freedom and capitalism and the American Dream, such a place was almost nightmarish. As a result of all this, levels of public support for a more assertive stance against Russia were much higher than they may have been in previous years.

This time period was the first significant emergence of psychological factors as a major influence in the relationship, as American voters began to look at Russians as an ideological foil or entity with values that completely opposed their own. At this point in time, this increase in the influence of perception came into existence solely on the American side. While the Russians were aware of the US desire to expand eastward, they did not view it as a direct threat to their sovereignty and overall took it into account with their existing trade agreements, various other economic ties and general history of amicable neutrality. This rational analysis led them to conclude that, while noteworthy, the new rivalry for more influence in the Far East was in the end “not of paramount importance,” (*Куропятник, 254*). While the Americans were beginning to weigh factors such as ideological values and whether or not one should continue to engage in friendly relations with a country of dubious moral standing, the Russians had much less abstract reasons for their decisions.

It is also interesting to note the difference between the way this time period is written about by the American scholars and Russian scholars whose works are included in this research. On the Russian side, considerable thought is given to topics like economics and trade, and there is significant analysis of the value of various imports and exports between the two countries. They mention decisions made by the Russian government in favor of the Americans or based on their previous friendliness, such as an instance in 1897 between Germany and the Russian Minister of Finances. Germany was also seeking to expand its influence and trade prospects and proposed a political-trade agreement between herself and Russia. However, the Minister of Finances refused, citing an unwillingness to endanger the positive relationship they shared with the United States. This event goes unmentioned in the American sources.

There is also repeated mention of how during the Russian revolution in 1905, they felt quite positively towards the United States, who supported the people's uprising against their government. Again, the Russian acknowledgement of this is unmentioned by American scholars in their historical records. The conclusions of the American sources on this time period were heavily focused on the rivalry between the two countries and how the Russians were not entirely happy with American expansion eastward. Conversely, the Russian sources recognized this conflict of interests, however, their focus was on the various ways in which the US and Russia actually cooperated rather than collided. This disparity in the way history is recounted in each country important to take note of, because it plays a role in shaping the way today's citizens and policymakers view the US-Russian relationship. It can be said that in least in the examples used for this research, the Russian account is structured in a more realist way, with serious discussion of hard power factors and much a more categorical, mathematical approach to calculating the positives and negatives of policy decisions.

The regime put in place after the Russian revolution of 1905 was fairly unstable, and increasing dissatisfaction with the government led to the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. During this time there was a slow but steady separation of the existing relationship into two parts – the economic relationship, which remained important to both countries and in fact was growing in power; and the political relationship, which was characterized by coldness and apathy due to the American view of Russia’s policies as immoral. Evangelical groups in the United States were very concerned with the religious persecution running rampant in Russia, especially after the increased haranguing of Protestants that began occurring when the US abrogated the 1911 treaty (*Foglesong, 45*). The United States desired the destruction of tsarism completely, wishing for the Russians to embrace democracy and more freedom for its people. The Russians understood that their system was flawed, however, they believed that their participation in World War II and hence the “war against German absolutism” would absolve them of their sins. Allying themselves with great, modern powers such as Great Britain and France (whose culture the Russians have always admired) would, they believed, help cleanse the tsarist system. They wanted to wash away its flaws and make a new version of tsarism, where their citizens could prosper and their power could grow but in a way that was still inherently Russian rather than embracing the Western way of life.

This distinction is an important one, and one that will persist into the present day – for the United States, positive changes in Russia means becoming more like the United States. Modern, Western, democratic – these are qualities Americans wanted to see. As the United States became more involved with world affairs, an “it’s my way or the highway” attitude developed, rooted in arrogance and overconfidence in the methods that had thus far succeeded in helping them prosper. The Western way is the only way, and any deviation from that must be the root cause of

another country's problems: this was the perception that had developed in the United States in the early 1900s. Unsurprisingly, this was not an appealing prospect to the Russian government. This is understandable if one is to imagine the widespread outrage that would occur if a country such as Canada or Iceland were to reach out to the United States and insist that we might be more prosperous if we renounced our American ways and instead adopted a political model like their own. The idea that Russians should give up the way they have always done things and adapt to follow in the footsteps of a different country – and a much younger one at that – was insulting and unthinkable. This example will repeat itself several times throughout history: Americans maintain to this day that Russia should emulate our behavior, unable to comprehend that this suggestion might cause offense, and Russians remain resistant to such changes. While there are many reasons for the disparity in perception between the two countries, this factor is foundational in understanding it.

During World War I there was little overlap between the United States and Russia; Russia left the war due to an unstable domestic situation right around the time the United States entered it. The United States was quite unhappy with this development but was unable to prevent the Russians from withdrawing. There was a significant misunderstanding between the two regarding the domestic political goings-on in Russia as well. The United States supported the provisional government that had been put in place, although it was weak and ineffectual and a group called the Petrograd Soviet was in actual possession the most political power. Few Russians trusted or wanted the provisional government; by consulting with them rather than with those in the Petrograd Soviet who were actually calling the shots, they weakened their influence as well as creating large gaps in the understanding of what was really going on. Effective communication between the two countries was limited, and American politicians had a flawed

and blinkered view of Russian society (*Геннадий, 352-354*), (*Gaddis, 1990, 65*). The overthrow of the provisional government by Lenin in 1917 thus came as a huge shock to the United States. They had significantly overestimated the level of admiration for the US that existed in Russia, having expected it to inspire them to continue fighting in World War I and supply troops to bolster the Eastern front while the United States slowly mobilized its troops and geared up to fight. They could only watch in frustration and disbelief, then, as Lenin took control and immediately pulled out of the war.

The time period from 1775 up until 1917 shows considerable changes in the US-Russian relationship. Beginning with the sale of Alaska, objective considerations such as economic and security benefits have a clear monopoly on the foundation of foreign policy decisions. Around the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the domestic political situation in the United States shifts. As Americans become more and more aware of and involved in the affairs of other countries, the public distaste for Russian policies begins to grow. Simultaneously, the influence of interest groups on foreign policy becomes stronger. This culminates in decisions such as the 1911 abrogation of the Russian-American trade agreement, where Jewish interest groups lobbied the government to take action that was not necessarily in the best interests of the US economy. Realism still maintained a heavy influence on relations, such as the strong focus of US on keeping Russia in the First World War to protect their own security interests. Unfortunately, the introduction of subjective factors into the reasoning process was enough to result in significant miscalculations. Ideological factors such as support for the weak provisional government, as well as mistaken perceptions such as the overestimation of US influence on Russian society, would lead US failure to prevent Lenin from withdrawing from the war.

At this point in the relationship, the Russians remained more objective and adhered more closely to realist lines of reasoning than the United States, which was beginning to explore its value system and place more emphasis on ideological considerations. The departure from purely realist reasoning that takes place near the end of this period will continue along this trajectory for the duration of the relationship up to the present day. While some aspects of realism remain an integral part of the decision-making process, they are altered or mitigated by other components such as ideology and bias. This interaction of objective and subjective factors continues to characterize the relationship after this period and will be further explored in the next chapter, through three different case studies.

This concludes the chapter on historical context. This comprehensive history of US-Russian relations up until this point provides useful context for the case studies that will be conducted in the following chapter. In order to better understand how and why the events being analyzed unfolded the way that they did, it is important to have a general comprehension of US-Russian relations as a whole as well as of how the relationship has changed over time.

Chapter III: Major Events

Breakdown of three key events in relationship: Second World War, the Post-Cold War Era and NATO Expansionism, and the Orange Revolution

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Having established an analytical framework with which to study important events in US-Russian relations, it is now possible to discuss several different cases in which the influence of perception can be identified. As in the previous examples, this will be done through the creation of a realist model of the event, followed by a comparison of this model to the way in which the event unfolded in real life. After the differences are identified, they can be examined in the search for visible patterns that can be attributed to findings from political psychology and constructivism. The first of these case studies is the Second World War.

Second World War

Historical context

To begin this case study, it is first necessary to provide a brief overview of the events that took place between the end of the First World War and the beginning of the second. Following the end of the First World War, a phenomenon called the Red Scare was sweeping across the United States beginning in roughly 1919. American workers were going on strike and domestic prices were soaring, something many enthusiasts of capitalism blamed on the emergence of Communism in Russia. Fear of Bolshevism and of Communist ideology was widespread and vicious, and the negative beliefs about Russia took an even firmer grasp on the American people, as did the perception of them as an “other” or a place where every value existed in fundamental opposition to those held by the United States. Due to extreme disdain for Communism, Lenin

and the Bolsheviks after their seizure of power from the provisional government and subsequent establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States declined to recognize the Soviet Union as a legitimate power (*Wilson, J.H., 350*).

In 1921, disaster struck the Soviet Union in the form of a massive famine. Though it was likely infuriating for Lenin to have to ask the United States for aid, given his belief that capitalism would fail and states would only be able to survive by adopting Communist methods, he reached out to them for economic assistance. For a variety of reasons such as pity for the Soviet people held captive under their autocratic regime, or fear that hunger would force them to incite conflict with other countries, the United States agreed. President Herbert Hoover organized an agreement called the American Relief program, allotting it a budget of \$20,000,000. Overall, about 90% of all foreign aid to the Soviet Union during this time came from US sources. The famine lasted for about two years, eventually drawing to a close in 1923. In the end, the lives of some 10,500,000 people had been saved by relief efforts. After this event it was regarded with some distaste; the Soviet government did not wish it to be widely known that they accepted help from capitalist America and indeed attempted to disguise how much aid was received from them, and the United States expressed a feeling of being “dirty” for having dealt with such a country (*Stoessinger, 253-256*). Although many history books will gloss over this period, it stands out as a time when political animosity was put on hold in order to save lives.

In 1924 Lenin died, much to the relief of Americans affected by the Red Scare. While distaste for the Soviet Union persisted, it waned in strength, and other threats began to take shape in the forms of people like Adolf Hitler who came to power in 1933. After extensive consideration, the United States finally decided to officially recognize the Soviet Union and

establish formal diplomatic relations. This would make dealings with the Soviets much easier and also strengthen the US position in the Far East as Japan slowly grew in power. In 1936, Stalin began his quest to purge the Communist party and the country of Leninism. Thousands of innocents were murdered at his behest, including many important generals in the Russian army. This caused great discomfort in the United States, but those in charge agreed that relations should still be maintained in the interest of national security. A quote from one American source reads, “The ambassador and the career diplomats disagreed sharply over the question of whether two governments with such diametrically opposed political systems could find any basis for joint action in the pursuit of common interests. The question has bedeviled Soviet-American relations ever since,” (*Gaddis, 1990, 133*). This seems an accurate summation of the way the relationship will continue over time.

World War II

In 1939, the stirrings of war began in earnest. Before describing the events that preceded the spiral into global war, it is important to note that despite their being involved in the same war on the same side the situations faced by the United States and the Soviet Union during this time were very different. With the notable exception of the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, the United States suffered no conflict or bloodshed on American soil. The United States joined the war much later than the Soviet Union, preserving as many lives and wartime expenses as possible, and although they did sustain heavy losses after they joined these losses were nothing as compared to those of the Soviets. The United States was able to ship soldiers and equipment overseas – indeed it was mostly equipment, as the United States contributed much more in the realm of money, weaponry and resources than in fighting men – and never had to worry about

the safety of their homeland. The war was a far-off concept for most Americans, who stayed in the comfort of their own homes. While they worried about the safety of their loved ones fighting in Europe, they were never faced with the threat of their land being invaded, their cities being sacked, or their homes being taken away from them. This was not the case for the European and Asian countries involved in the war, as none of them were spared violence in their home countries. China had been ransacked by the Japanese; France had been conquered by Germany and was full of German soldiers ferreting out Jews and resistance fighters and taking over the homes and towns of French citizens; Great Britain had its cities bombed by German air forces. None of this, however, was comparable to the mass carnage that took place in the Soviet Union.

One of Adolf Hitler's many goals, besides conquering all of Europe and establishing regional German hegemony, was total annihilation of the Slavic people. Hitler believed them (among many other groups such as Jews and Romanis) to be an inferior race. His plan for the Soviet Union was not only to invade but also to wipe out the entire upper and middle class. After killing off every single educated human in the Soviet Union, only the impoverished peasant class who were isolated and largely illiterate would remain. These people would be enslaved and the whole country repopulated by German citizens or other non-Slavic peoples, effectively wiping Slavic culture off the face of the earth. The Americans were fighting to prevent international instability and Europe's domination by Germany; the Soviets were fighting not only for their lives but also for the survival of their race, their culture, and their history. The entire Slavic identity was at stake, and ultimately World War II was a battle to preserve their place in humanity. After the war had drawn to a close and the casualties had been tallied up, the Russians had lost twenty-seven million lives, many of whom were innocent civilians who starved to death or were caught in German crossfire. Conversely, the United States lost but a small

fraction of this number – approximately 400,000 – and vast majority of their losses were soldiers who had been deployed to fight in the war rather than civilians. These markedly different circumstances surrounding two countries involved in the same war provide an environment conducive to the development of two very different perceptions, because the experiences that informed each side's perception of the war was so different.

In 1939, Hitler extended an olive branch to the Soviet Union and asked it to sign a treaty of non-aggression with Nazi Germany. This was of course all part of Hitler's grand plan to use the USSR to help divide up and conquer countries like Finland, Poland and the Baltic States before eventually turning on them and enacting his plan to wipe out the Slavs. However, this grand scheme was largely unbeknownst to the United States and other Western countries. After signing the treaty, Hitler and Stalin set their sights on Poland, dividing up the land between the two of them and laying siege to the country from either side. Caught relatively unprepared, Poland was crushed in record time, with German and Soviet forces butchering thousands of Polish citizens before they surrendered. The Baltic states followed, and after their surrender Stalin invaded Finland. This proved to be much more difficult and resulted in exponentially higher losses on the side of the Soviets versus that of the Fins. In the end, however, Finland was forced to concede large amounts of territory in peace settlements. The West watched with horror as their allies were invaded and slaughtered and condemned Russia for signing the treaty and partnering with Hitler, someone they considered to be their enemy.

Great Britain and France were the first to declare war on Germany after they invaded Poland, and this was the official start of the Second World War. While the United States declined to join them, they still looked down on the Soviet Union for agreeing to the treaty with

Germany. The Nazi-Soviet alliance had come as somewhat of a shock; the Communist Soviet Union was ideologically opposed to fascist Germany and had treated the country with general disdain in the years preceding. In 1935, Stalin ended the existing feud between the Soviet Communist Party and the moderate Socialists in Germany, citing a need to present a united front in the face of rising levels of fascism throughout Europe. In the West, hope arose among liberal groups that the extreme policies of Hitler's right-wing administration had inspired some sort of altruistic sentiments in the Soviet Union and they had at long last decided to put aside their aversion to cooperation with capitalist states in order to promote the common good (*Kennan, 287*). This hope was dashed for good in 1939 when the Soviet Union signed the non-aggression pact. Winston Churchill called the news "sinister," comparing it to an explosion in the way it "broke upon the world" the day of the treaty's signing (*Roberts, 30*).

Although the Western world was caught by surprise by the Nazi-Soviet pact, the agreement was not outside the bounds of logic. While the primary interest of both the US and Russia in this case was their own security, their vastly different circumstances required different methods of acting to preserve this security. The signing of the non-aggression pact is an instance in which different situations, rather than ideological motivators, are the main factor in the development of a difference in perception. Indeed, due to the focus on security, in this particular instance both sides were still operating fairly closely along the lines of realism. As such, the construction of a realist model will not be especially helpful, because such a model would be almost identical to the situation as it occurred. Fortunately in this case, the differences in perception are not difficult to identify, and they are outlined as follows.

Both countries, as was established, were focused first and foremost on their own best interests. For the United States, Germany represented a threat to their European allies and by extension to the US itself. The First World War had shaken the United States, and in its wake the country was gripped by harsh anti-war sentiments. Americans were apprehensive about being dragged into another European war by other countries, with the predominant viewpoint being that British propaganda had tricked the United States into entering the war. A Gallup poll conducted in 1937 concluded that approximately 70% of Americans regretted the US decision to enter the First World War and believed that the United States should never have become involved (*Olson, 612*). Such sentiments resulted in a severe deficit in funding for the military, and in 1939 the US army was ranked seventeenth in the entire world, with fewer than 175,000 men, only a third of whom had ever received formal training with a weapon (*Olson, 624*).

Overall, they were rendered completely unprepared to fight another land war overseas (*Kaiser, 24*). Their main hope for maintaining American security lay with the Navy. While the US Navy was undoubtedly a much stronger and formidable force than its army, most of the fleet was based in the Pacific. This left safeguarding of the Atlantic up to the British, and while the possibility of facing the Axis powers alone was feasible for the Americans, the prospects for defense should Great Britain and France fall to the Germans were quite dim (*Kaiser, 25*). In addition to being unprepared, the United States was also preoccupied with domestic problems such as the Great Depression. It was overwhelmingly in the best interests of the United States to stay out of the war and hope that the Allied powers would be able to prevail without them. This explains the US hopes for the Soviet Union opposing Hitler – not only was it beneficial to their European allies, it was beneficial to US as well if it meant that they might not have to join the war. For the Soviets to not only decline to side with Western powers but to join Germany and

invade Western allies was unthinkable to those in the United States, because it made their security situation even more precarious.

On the side of the Soviet Union, the threat posed by Nazi Germany was clear and inescapable. Hitler had made his intentions in expanding towards Soviet borders obvious. He had already outlined extensive plans for German expansion into the Soviet Union and Russia in *Mein Kampf*. And as a fellow radical ideologue, Stalin understood better than anyone the depth of Hitler's anti-communist beliefs and the lengths to which he might go to see his aspirations fulfilled (*Roberts, 32*). Stalin had also received numerous intelligence reports detailing Hitler's plans to attack Poland, convincing him that the attack would happen with or without Soviet agreement to the deal (*Roberts, 32*). If it happened without him and Germany was able to seize Poland, this brought them that much closer to the Soviet border. In addition, Stalin could not be sure of aid from Great Britain and France should Hitler enact his plans to invade Russia sooner rather than later. In fact, the two countries had already displayed great reluctance to engage with Germany aggressively. Hoping to avoid repeating the mistakes of the First World War, they erred on the side of appeasement. While they conducted extensive talks of creating an alliance with the Soviet Union against Germans, there was no substance behind these talks, and France and Great Britain hoped that the possibility of them reaching fruition would be enough to deter Hitler from invading Poland. Their hesitance made Stalin wary of their commitment to the anti-German cause, sowing fear and doubt in his mind concerning their true intentions. He would later confess to Churchill his private convictions that the potential alliance would fall through and Great Britain and France would reach a settlement with Germany, leaving the Soviets to face Hitler alone (*Roberts, 31*).

All things taken into consideration, the Soviet Union was left with a difficult choice. Facing impending Nazi invasion and a shortage of powerful allies, they could choose to either face Hitler alone, or to reach some sort of settlement with him. After calculating the odds, Stalin reached the decision that a temporary settlement between the USSR and Germany would better serve his purposes. While eventual Nazi invasion remained a likelihood, this gave the Soviets the opportunity to stall and prepare their country for war as best they could. Even if Hitler had decided to forestall his attack on the USSR, the invasion of Poland was still a significant threat to the Soviets. Two major Russian cities, Leningrad and Moscow, were located quite close to the Soviets' western front, and would be placed in imminent danger if the Germans were to occupy all of Poland. In addition to the western threat, the Soviets would also have to contend with the Japanese in the Far East. They were already ill-prepared for a crisis on either side of their border, and the prospect of facing this dual threat without aid from Great Britain or France were grim. Conversely, should the Soviets acquiesce and join Hitler in his invasion, the acquisition of Polish territory would provide a buffer zone between their border and German troops as well as be a significant accomplishment for Stalin (*Kennan, 309*).

Given these two choices, it is unsurprising that the Soviets signed the treaty with Germany. And indeed, this would not prove to be a miscalculation – France and Great Britain never had serious plans to go to war with Germany. Many private citizens and politicians alike were ideologically averse to entering an alliance with the communist Soviet Union, and it made little strategic sense to go to war to defend the USSR if it was uncertain whether or not Hitler was intent on attacking Western Europe as well. The widely held belief was that Germany could be appeased, and this notion was much more appealing than that of another world war. One English foreign policy official was quoted as saying that the Russians “knew quite well” that in

the case of the Soviet Union coming under attack by Germany, Great Britain would neither come to their defense, nor join Germany in the attack (*Carley, 86*). Great Britain and France were intentionally vague in their discussions of an alliance with the USSR, because in order to be any more specific they would risk revealing how little they were willing to bring to the table (*Carley, 87*). Stalin's suspicions seem to have not been misplaced – it is unlikely that, had he turned down Hitler's proposal, and Hitler had turned German guns on the Soviet Union, either country would have come to his aid.

In this situation, the difference in perceptions is quite clear, as is its root in the very different situation each country faced at the onset of the war. The United States believed that the evils of Hitler's campaign were clear for all to see, and the decision of the USSR to make peace with them and take part in the partition and invasion of a peaceful Western ally was taken as a betrayal. All in all, "Moscow's role in the shattering events surrounding the outbreak of World War II – the cynical Nazi-Soviet Pact, the partition of Poland, the bungled invasion of Finland which made Stalin look both brutal and ridiculous – greatly intensified American hostility," (*Gaddis, 1972, 4*). For the Soviet Union, this choice was the best way of ensuring their country's safety. Great Britain and France were not trustworthy allies, and while Hitler was certainly no more trustworthy, the time bought by the Nazi-Soviet Pact was time that could be used to better fortify the Soviet Union against inevitable invasion. There was certainly no logical reason for Stalin to engage in early war with Hitler to protect the interests of Western Europe or of the United States, who had shown little inclination to do the same for the Soviets. Each country was focused on the best outcome for themselves, and the lack of understanding of the others' situation led to very different interpretations of the 1939 non-aggression pact.

Following the invasion of Poland, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany and the Second World War officially began. The United States was reluctant to become involved and participated only by sending minimal aid to Great Britain. There was great pressure on President Roosevelt to cut ties with the Soviet Union after it invaded Finland, which was a close ally with strong economic ties to the US. However, he refused, a decision that would prove wise in the long run. In March of 1941, nine months before the United States entered the war, President Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease agreement into law. This agreement extended US aid to any country whose defense was vital to US security interests. Great Britain was the primary recipient of this aid, and countries like China were ushered into the agreement later on. The USSR was one of the last countries to be added to the lend-lease, a few months after Hitler rescinded his side of the non-aggression pact and invaded the Soviet Union in August of 1941. The agreement was largely a formality, as the United States had been sending money and military equipment to the Soviets ever since the invasion began.

In December of 1941, the Japanese launched an attack on Pearl Harbor, officially bringing the United States into the war. They were now confronted with the decision of how best to retaliate. The US faced a unique challenge in deciding how to proceed with the war: they needed Russian cooperation in order to defeat the Axis powers, however, should Germany and Japan fall, this would lead to a considerable increase in the Russian influence over both Eastern Europe and the Pacific (*Gaddis, 1972, 63*). One of the main areas of contention between the two during the war was the question of whether or not to establish a second front in Europe. The purpose of such a movement would be to draw off some of the German army and relieve some of the pressure on the Soviets. Time was of the essence, considering the fact that the Soviet Union was currently bearing the brunt of the war as Hitler's invasion tore through Russia. The

Russians were desperate for the Allies to create a distraction, and the Allies were torn: on one hand, they could not afford for the Soviets to be defeated. However, on the other, the United States was orchestrating the second front but due to their distance, lack of preparedness and underfunded army it would be Great Britain providing most of the manpower. This was a prospect to which they were fundamentally opposed, preferring to minimize casualties by performing a series of amphibious attacks rather than an all-out European land invasion (*Gaddis 1972, 69*). Churchill vetoed the motion for a second front in 1942. Instead, the Allies decided to invade North Africa, leaving the Soviet Union to battle the Germans alone.

By 1943, US-Russian relations had soured to a point where the Allies privately worried that the Soviets might resort to making their own peace deal with Hitler (*Gaddis 1972, 73*). Fortunately, the tides of war began to turn in the Soviets favor, and the likelihood of this prospect subsequently began to wane. However, the damage to US-Russian relations had already been done. The Soviets felt that they had largely been abandoned by their Western allies, and Stalin made open and public complaints about how they had “[borne] the whole weight of the war,” (*Gaddis 1972, 74*). Concerns began to shift in the opposite direction, and the Allies began to worry that the lack of a second front and essential abandonment of the Soviets would reflect badly on them in the post-war world. The Soviets’ miraculous victory, achieved without aid from the Allies, might well feed into the notion that they had earned the right to preside over a large portion of the post-war settlement (*Gaddis 1972, 74*). This was especially true given the fact that it looked as if the US and Great Britain had intentionally abstained from sending their own troops to help their Soviet allies in an hour of need.

The issue of the second front is the second situation in which a difference in circumstance resulted in different perceptions. The United States saw the failure to launch a second front and distract Germany from the Soviets as an instance where the British had forced their hand. Many US strategists supported the motion for a second front, and reacted with frustration when Great Britain vetoed the movement (*Gaddis 1972, 70*). However, this did little to stifle the Russian disappointment and bitterness upon learning that they were essentially on their own. While these differing perceptions are unfortunate, there was ultimately not much that could have been done to change them, as they were largely the result of circumstance. The same can be said of the perspectives following the turning of tides in the Soviet Union, although on the US side ideology did come into play. After having suffered heavy losses and near defeat, the Soviets monumental victory over the Germans was a point of great pride for them. They had snatched victory from the jaws of defeat, as it were, and had done so with little outside help. Indeed, many Soviets firmly believed that the United States had intentionally delayed sending troops to Europe, in an effort to let the Germans and Soviets kill as many of each other as possible before stepping in (*Zubok, 13*). It is unsurprising that the Russians felt that they had earned a place at the negotiating table after the war was over. On the side of the United States, this sense of entitlement to post-war reparations was threatening, because it meant an increased sphere of Soviet influence and thus increased chances for the spread of Communism. The fear of Communism had persisted in the United States since the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, and had not abated with the onset of the war. Although these countries were allies caught in the midst of a devastating war, they still had competing interests and ideals as well as differing circumstances. All of these issues fed into each country's perception of the other as the war progressed.

On August 6th they dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. The Soviet Union scrambled to follow and declared war on the Japanese on August 8th, only one day before the US dropped a second bomb on the city of Nagasaki. By the time the Soviet Union officially entered the war on Japan, the United States had already accomplished most of the heavy lifting and ensured Japan's eventual surrender. This resulted in not one, but two major accomplishments for the United States: first, it successfully knocked Japan out of the war, and secondly, it expanded the American sphere of influence right next to the Russian border. As per the example given in introduction, this was something the US had been trying to do since the onset of the 20th century but had ultimately failed. The United States had also succeeded in “drastically alter[ing] the post-war balance of power, making it at least technically feasible for the United States to impose its will on the rest of the world,” (*Gaddis 1972, 245*).

While this was in part a favorable development for the Soviets because it meant that they no longer faced a threat from the Japanese in the east, the positive developments were largely cancelled out by the fact that it was the Americans who had removed it and replaced it with their own projection of power. The Soviet Union could take little credit for the defeat of the Japanese due to the brevity of their time at war, and were consequently left out of important post-war proceedings. While they were allowed to take part in the official acceptance of Japan's surrender, the United States refused to allow Soviet participation in the military occupation that would follow. This was a slight on two fronts: firstly because of Japan's proximity and strategic importance to the Soviet Union, and because memories of Russia's stinging defeat at the hands of the Japanese in 1905 still lingered in the Soviet consciousness (*Haslam, 63*). In addition, the unspoken menace inherent the detonation of two catastrophic bombs so close to the Soviet border did not go unnoticed. This was clear intimidation on the part of the Americans, designed

not only to exact retribution from Japan for their attack but also to warn the Soviets that the US was not to be trifled with in the years following the war. According to the recollections of a leading Soviet nuclear physicist, many Soviet officials considered the dropping of the bomb to be a sort of “atomic blackmail,” demonstrating US power as well as a willingness to unleash it whenever necessary (*Zubok, 27*). While Stalin did not react openly to this implicit threat – he is quoted as saying that atomic bombs were “meant to frighten those with weak nerves” – he was well aware of the American intentions (*Holloway, 253*). Determined not to capitulate, Stalin sent word to the Americans that he still intended to carry out his plans to send Soviet troops to the Japanese island of Hokkaido, to aid in the military occupation. He argued that the Russian public opinion would be “seriously offended” if the Soviets were denied the opportunity to take part in the occupation of Japan (*Zubok, 30*). Truman flatly rejected Stalin’s request, having no intentions of allowing the Soviets to gain a foothold in the region. They had reached a stalemate: both sides wanted to gain as high a standing in the post-war world as possible, while weakening the other, and both sides were infuriated by the others attempts to thwart them.

This situation played out riding the coattails of sentiments that arose after the Soviets turned back Hitler’s armies. Now concerned more than ever with the post-war state of affairs, both countries were vying to establish as much influence as possible. Once again, their opposing interests and vastly different situations led each side to conform to a very different perspective, one based on their own best interests. It was also to an extent based on ideological values: the US opposed the spread of Communism, and the Soviets wanted to promote it. However, this was one factor of many, and overall each country desired a stable and prosperous position in the new world order.

After the War

The events that took place after the war's end are also important to explore, given their significance in setting the stage for the US and USSR to enter into the Cold War. By the time the war had ended, Soviet losses were well into the millions. In addition to the lives lost, there was a significant amount of infrastructural damage as well as a severely weakened economy. Although the wartime threat was over, the Soviet Union was still in need of outside aid to help restore their country. The same could be said of most all the countries involved in the war, and in order to address the problem policymakers came up with a plan for the US to provide aid to countries in need of it. This program was called the Marshall Plan. There were several goals the program was designed to reach: rebuilding European regions torn apart by war, modernizing their economies, strengthening trade ties, and overall restoring global order and stabilization after years of havoc and destruction. There was another goal US policymakers had in mind as well: preventing the spread of Communism. Americans had lived in fear of Communist ideology and the Red Scare for many years preceding the war, and now following it they felt they had solid justification for this fear. Many believed that the Soviet Union planned to embark on a crusade to incite worldwide Communist revolution (*Gaddis 1972, 257*).

The anti-Soviet aspects of the Marshall Plan were not well hidden. It was crafted in a way that imposed certain requirements on its beneficiaries (*Dorpalen, 191*). Ostensibly, these requirements were put in place so that the United States could oversee the economic processes taking place in the countries that were being aided in order to ensure that their money was not going to waste. In a nutshell, should the Soviet Union agree to these terms and receive aid through the program, the United States would then be able to influence the Soviet economic

system. In order to participate, the Soviet Union would have to restructure its policies towards the rest of Eastern Europe and acquiesce to a Western reorientation of these countries' economies. Any increases in production would go toward furthering trade with the West rather than with Russia. The Soviet Union would also have to first assist in the provision of raw materials to help increase European production, and would only have access to aid for reconstruction during the second phase of the plan (*Leffler, 185, 186*).

Naturally, the Russians could not agree to the terms outlined in the plan and still hope to maintain their Communist way of life. They argued that "the Marshall Plan could easily be used for attempts to enforce changes in the political and social structure of these countries in return for help," (*Dorpalen, 191*). Just as the United States was fundamentally opposed to Communism, the Soviets were equally opposed to capitalist systems. Stalin made a public declaration in 1946 that the war had come about as the result of capitalism, and could have been avoided if "the possibility of periodic redistribution of raw materials and markets between the countries existed in accordance with their economic needs, in the way of coordinated and peaceful decisions," (*Dorpalen, 189*). Under such convictions, the Soviets could not well agree to the terms of the Marshall Plan. As such, they were forced to decline to take part in the program. Many Americans expected this outcome, including influential George F. Kennan.

As the plans for rebuilding after the war began to take shape, the Soviets were left high and dry by their former allies while Europe flourished under the Marshall Plan. US-Russian relations quickly relapsed to the outright hostility that had been in place in the years between the First and Second World Wars. These tensions would quickly go on to become the Cold War, a period of enmity that would span the next several decades.

According to the tenets of realism, states must act out of their own best interests, and the choices they make to promote this self-interest will generally be the most rational option available. Additionally, due to the anarchic nature of the international system, the promotion of peace relies on the ability of states to coexist as harmoniously as they can. They must also be able to make foreign policy decisions independent of the domestic political situation – for example, the preservation of amicable relations with Russia in the mid to late 1800s even as public opinion was slowly becoming more and more negative. While it is indubitable that the United States was acting in the spirit of self-preservation, a central tenet of realism, the rationality of their choices is debatable. The foundations of the Marshall Plan were already in the making before the official end of the war, and opting to isolate the Soviet Union risked losing their help in bringing it to a close. Two of the advisors of Roosevelt’s successor Harry Truman, the Secretary of War and the US Army Chief of Staff, warned against such a motion. “[They] warned that a showdown would not cause the Soviet Union to abandon its vital interests in Eastern Europe, while it might cost the United States the Soviet military assistance deemed essential in prosecuting the final year of the war in the Pacific,” (*Hunt, 155*). Their protestations fell on deaf ears, as Truman moved to make Soviet containment a central precept of his administration. The extension of the Marshall Plan to the Soviets was seen as a clear ploy to subvert the Communist system and implement democratic governments throughout Eastern Europe. Overall,

The plan appeared to aim at the reintegration of Eastern Europe into the capitalist economic system of the West, with all the political ramification that implied. Thus the Marshall Plan, conceived by U.S. policy- makers primarily as a defensive measure to stave off economic collapse in Western Europe, proved indistinguishable to the Kremlin

leadership from an offensive attempt to subvert Soviet security interests. (Narinsky & Parrish, 4)

The Marshall Plan was set up to battle Soviet Communism in two ways: either by accepting them into the plan and subverting their system that way, or by leaving them out of the plan to languish and try to rebuild their ravaged country without assistance while the rest of Europe flourished. Either way, the United States wove Soviet containment and anti-Communist policy into their plans for restructuring the world after the war.

The elements of perception in place during this time are fairly clear. The American fear of Communism persisted, and the ideological leanings of the individual crafting policy – in this case, Harry Truman – significantly influenced the outcome of events. Soviet aversion to capitalism and their conviction that capitalist systems would eventually fail also played a role, especially in their rejection of the terms of the Marshall Plan. The three main overlapping facets of political psychology and constructivism can all be applied – ideational factors, identity, and specific perceptions. The most prominent ideational or non-material factor in this case was the desire to contain the Soviet Union and prevent the spread of Communism. The Soviet in its weakened state did not pose a strong security threat to the United States, and in fact the possibility of such a threat emerging later on could likely have been easier staved off if the US were to pursue amicable relations rather than resorting to antagonism. The aversion to such relations stemmed, then, from the ideological belief held by many Americans that Communism was fundamentally evil.

In addition to strict ideological belief: for example, the notion of Communism and authoritarianism as “evil,” there were strategic political reasons for the American opposition to

Communism. The majority of US policymakers at this time were all of a similar school of thought, and they strongly believed in the power of democracy, over all other forms of government, to maintain global peace and prosperity. In the words of Harry Truman, the president who followed Roosevelt, “the stronger the voice of a people in the formulation of national policies, the less the danger of aggression,” (*Hunt, 152*). Wary of reigniting global conflict after the catastrophic loss of life in the Second World War, many Americans were convinced that autocratic countries like the Soviet Union would consistently engage in hostile relations with their neighbors and that the only way to maintain peace in the international arena was to ostracize those countries and attempt to force them to democratize. The preexisting fear of communism was exacerbated by Americans like George F. Kennan, who was influenced by his predecessor the first George Kennan. Kennan wrote various publications detailing the immorality of the Soviet system and the maltreatment of its citizens by their own government. He drew on the already jaded view of Russia and the Soviet Union, painting them as an ideological foe who represented the antithesis of everything the United States stood for. Many Americans, those in Washington and the common citizen alike, mirrored Kennan’s views. The general consensus was that nondemocratic countries would consistently pursue aggressive policies and provoke their neighbors, in contrast to the peace-loving nature of democratic ones. According to this perception, the only way to ensure global peace and rule out the possibility of igniting a third world war was to establish a democratic system of governance in every developed country. This is exactly what the United States attempted to do through the Marshall Plan. Similar to findings in the second chapter, this situation reflects realist thinking that is influenced by ideological factors.

The identities of both the United States and of the Soviet Union also played a key role. For the Soviets, the war was a validation of their autonomy and right to exist according to their own terms, not the terms of the West. Their victory was a symbol of everything they had suffered through and earned (*Γυθκοβ*). They defeated Hitler on their own, they saved the Slavic people on their own. The experience of the war “shaped the Soviet people’s national identities like no event since the Russian Revolution,” (*Zubok, 3*). Given that the Soviet experience had been so traumatic and ridden with strife, and that this had largely been ignored or glossed over by Western powers, its role in their state identity can help explain the vehement Soviet opposition to US plans for the post-war world. As for the United States goes, their state identity had changed after the war as well. Before the war, the United States had remained largely isolationist, even after an emerging social conscience and widespread concern about the goings-on in other countries that came about in American society in the late 1800s (*Foglesong, 26*). However, after American intervention helped turn the tides of war against Hitler, the sense of the United States as a global force for good was beginning to take shape (*Foglesong, 110*). President Truman also shared this notion of the United States as an arbiter of peace and justice.

The United States, blessed with the “greatest government that was ever conceived by the mind of man,” would have to lead the resistance. While the impending rivalry, as Truman saw it, bore a resemblance to [the] great international rivalries he had read about, it also carried consequences of unprecedented significance. “We are faced with the most terrible responsibility a nation has ever faced. From Darius I’s Persia, Alexander’s Greece, Hadrian’s Rome, Victoria’s Britain, no nation or group of nations has had our responsibilities.” It was now the task of Americans, who had become great yet had renounced self-aggrandizement, “to save the world from totalitarianism.” (*Hunt, 157*)

The spirit of American exceptionalism that had taken root and shaped the essence of the post-war US identity is emblemized in this quote.

With the help of the tools of identification provided by constructivism and political psychology, the pattern of influential perceptions is clear. The ideological belief in the evils of Communism, the American state identity as a global governing force of sorts and the firm conviction that Soviet autocracy would eventually lead to another world war blended together. While realist considerations such as security and money were still pertinent, the interpretation of these considerations and how best to address them was influenced by the introduction of psychological factors into the decision-making process. These two different aspects augmented and built off of one another to craft the American policy towards the Soviets that would linger for decades to come.

NATO Expansion and the Post-Cold War Era

Historical Context

The Cold War began in 1947. It was a period of unprecedented heightened tension between the two, which never resulted in outright physical conflict but came close on multiple occasions. Each country attempted to outdo the other in a variety of arenas such as military power, economic and industrial development, worldwide influence and even establishing a presence in outer space. In 1949 the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, was first formed. It was based on an organization by five countries who signed the Treaty of Brussels: the United Kingdom, France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands. This treaty was intended to unite the five countries in the face of Soviet and Communist expansion in Europe. After NATO was established in 1949 it included these countries as well as the United States, Canada,

Italy, Iceland, Norway, Portugal, and Denmark. In 1954 the Soviet Union attempted to join the pact as well, but NATO leaders feared that this was an attempt to sabotage the organization from the inside and declined the request. After West Germany (the half of Germany that had been given to Western powers after World War II) joined in 1955, the USSR retaliated by signing the Warsaw Pact. This was a similar alliance uniting the Soviet Union, Poland, Romania, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Albania and Bulgaria. These two groups became natural adversaries, and opposing sides in the Cold War. The world was divided into two clear halves: those who supported a worldwide Communist revolution and the establishment of Communist regimes in as many countries as possible, and forces who were fundamentally opposed to Communism in all its forms. While the United States and the Soviet Union never faced each other in actual combat, there were outbreaks of multiple proxy wars in several smaller countries. These wars were between Communist and anti-Communist forces, with the former side being funded and supported by Warsaw Pact members and the latter by NATO. This includes the Chinese and Greek civil wars, the Korean war, the Hungarian revolution, the Soviet-Afghan war, and the Vietnam war.

A significant portion of the Cold War was presided over in the Soviet Union by Nikita Khrushchev, following the death of Stalin in 1953. Khrushchev was a much more liberal leader than Stalin and even denounced his policies in his famous Secret Speech, embarking on a mission to right his many wrongs. He reunited families and brought home political prisoners from exile, loosened restrictions on artistic expression that had long been strictly fettered by censorship rules, and encouraged both foreigners to visit the Soviet Union and Soviet citizens to travel and see the rest of the world. In 1954, in an attempt to atone for various atrocities committed by Soviet leadership against the Ukrainian people (for example, Stalin's man-made

famine before the Second World War), Khrushchev signed off on the transfer of control over the Crimean Peninsula from Soviet Russia to Soviet Ukraine. While this would help stabilize relations and promote cooperation between the two, the peninsula was rich in both resources and strategic importance as well as boasting a population that was roughly 75% ethnically Russian. This unprecedented move would prove to have significant consequences roughly sixty years later, during the time of the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan crisis. Despite Khrushchev's liberal tendencies in making policy decisions, his tenure did little to alleviate Cold War tension. In fact, the closest that the two nations ever came to all-out nuclear war was during the Cuban Missile Crisis which took place in 1962 under Khrushchev.

In 1955 the Space Race between the US and the Soviet Union kicked off, each side determined to best the other in establishing a presence in outer space. In the beginning the Soviet Union held the competitive edge with the first successful satellite launch in 1957, when Sputnik 1 was sent into orbit. They followed up this accomplishment by also being the first country to successfully send a human into orbit around the Earth in 1961. This honor was held by a man named Yuri Gagarin. In 1969, however, the United States surpassed these accomplishments by landing the first humans on the moon – Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. After this, the Space Race slowly ebbed in strength before finally fading into oblivion to be replaced by cooperation on the front of space exploration after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

During this time, there were conflicting fields of public opinion on the characteristics of Russian society. Many believed the Russians to be inherently submissive and irreparably cowed through centuries of oppression by their tyrannical government. Others were of the belief that no, in looking at Russian history and their series of rebellions against autocratic regimes and

attempts to install better rulers, it could be clearly seen that despite these centuries of oppression the Russian spirit was fiery and unquenchable (*Foglesong, 113*). Across the board, the one thing that united these different opinions was an air of superiority and patronization. The notion of Russia as an “other” still persisted, as did the insistence that they must adopt Western methods of governance and social structures in order to prosper and truly become modern or civilized.

After the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Apollo II moon landing, the intensity of the Cold War itself began to wane as people realized the amount of harm and conflict it had caused. The Soviet economy was in decline and countries like Japan had grown in power since the end of the Second World War. Rather than a polarized world split cleanly between two succinct sides with opposing ideologies, groups had slowly splintered off and polarity was deteriorating into smaller, less passionate factions. In 1964 Khrushchev was ousted from power and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev as General Secretary of the Communist Party in the USSR. He and US President Richard Nixon met in Moscow and discussed terms to cease the nuclear arms race their respective countries had been engaged in ever since the Cold War began and begin a period of neutrality known as the *détente* period. They attempted to replace the conflict in their relationship with stronger trade agreements and general political cooperation.

This period was short and ultimately doomed to failure, and by the 1980s the hostilities that had plagued the post-war period returned in full force. Ronald Reagan, who succeeded President Jimmy Carter in 1980, was highly critical of the Communism and the USSR and famously denounced it publicly as an “evil empire.” During this time they were both engaged in a full-on proxy war in Afghanistan, and Reagan significantly increased military spending and development. The Soviet economy had already begun to stagnate after enacting similar

measures in previous years. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev took charge of the Soviet Union and put into place his policies of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (transparency). His focus was on rebuilding the economy rather than perpetuating the nuclear arms race. Both sides gradually backed down until the fall of the Berlin Wall and reunification of Eastern and Western Germany, and finally in 1989 Gorbachev met with US President Bush on the neutral island of Malta to discuss terms for the reunification of Germany as well as working together to promote peace and cooperation in US-Soviet relations. After coming to an agreement, the two declared the Cold War to be officially over.

Post-Cold War Era

The end of the Cold War was followed by a defining moment that would rearrange the structure of the international system – the fall of the Soviet Union. After the Cold War ended, a wave of revolutions swept across Eastern Europe. Thoroughly disillusioned with the Communist systems in place, citizens of countries such as Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary began to rebel against the existing regimes. Even in the Soviet Union, the Communist Party was eventually forced to give up its role as the main arbiter of state power that had been in place for over seventy years. In 1991, the entire Soviet Union collapsed and all of its collective nation-states stood on their own once more. This included Russia, which became the Russian Federation, as it is still known today. After its fall, Russia's economy was tremendously weakened and unstable. Regardless of its fragile state, Russia expected to be treated as an equal power in the international system, on par with the United States, Great Britain, France and other wealthy developed countries. After all, it had just recently been a force to be reckoned with throughout the decades-long tenure of the Cold War. Despite its current weak state, it had amassed a significant number of nuclear

weapons and made serious contributions to the world of science and technology, especially its accomplishments in the Space Race. Conversely, the United States viewed Russia's weak state as evidence that they had emerged from the Cold War as a victor. They expected Russia, as the losing side, to subordinate itself to the Western way of life in order to be included as an important part of the new world order. This misunderstanding and subsequent inability of either state to compromise and reach a mutually beneficial agreement to work together to promote European stability paved the way for NATO expansion. In order to understand why and how this miscommunication came about, it is important to examine each side's understanding of the Cold War and its end.

Throughout history, a central part of the Russian identity has been the way in which it stands apart from other countries. Suspended between Europe and Asia, fiercely independent and individualistic, Russia has never fit squarely into any one group or categorization. Despite being looked upon as backwards or regressive, despite its harsh climate and many obstacles standing in the way of economic prosperity, throughout the centuries Russia has by and large managed to not only eke out a living but maintain a standing as a major world power. Throughout the three major systems under which it has been governed – the imperial period, the Soviet period and now during the tenure of the Russian Federation – the conception of Russia as a great power has persisted (*Савка, 54*). As such, it is intrinsically and irreversibly connected to the Russian sense of state identity.

This sense of standing as well as Russia's refusal to acquiesce to the demands of the modern world and adopt the domestic systems of major European powers has consistently been validated by its perpetual triumph over outside forces. The invasion of Napoleon and the French

in 1812 is a classic example of this, and helps to explain why Russia's loss to the Japanese in 1905 was such a bitter pill to swallow. The victory over Hitler in the Second World War, then, represented an important moment in Russian history. The last moment turning of tides in Hitler's invasion, the narrow escape from total cultural and ethnic obliteration, the crucial role played alongside other Allied powers in bringing about the Axis defeat – this was the validation of Russian autonomy (*Tsygankov 2013, 181*). Why conform to the Western system when Russia was fully self-possessed, capable of defending herself and asserting her own independence? This was the Russian mindset come the end of the Second World War, and they fully expected to be treated as equals. The United States, however, had other ideas, and their treatment of Russia after the end of World War II was a major factor in the onset of the Cold War. Now, many years later and after the Cold War came to an end, the Russian mindset was quite similar to that of the post-World War II Soviet Union. NATO, an organization created to contain Russia, was essentially an ideological form of the same threat to the Russian existence that Nazi Germany had posed all those years before. NATO represented the spirit of Western civilization, thirsting for expansion and to stamp out the backwards Russian existence deemed detrimental to global progress. Now that the Cold War and, ostensibly, Russian-American animosity, had ended, there seemed to be no need for it. In light of this, the Russians proposed the dissolution of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact in order to better establish a new harmonious world order in the wake of the age-old conflict's end.

The United States, on the other hand, had a very limited understanding of Russia's sense of self or their view of the Cold War events. Rather than considering the end of the Cold War a draw between two formidable world powers, they felt that they had emerged victorious and Russia's economic weakness following the fall of the USSR was largely a result of their failure

in the war. For the US, it was only natural that Russia as the losing side should fall into line behind them, the victor, and accept them as the new leaders of the free world. This sentiment was present in all echelons of American society: George Bush publicly declared that the United States had “won” the Cold War, and the Clinton administration compared the outcome of the conflict to Germany and Japan’s defeat in the Second World War. This stands in stark contrast to the sentiments of Gorbachev and his administration at the conclusion of the Cold War, who hoped that its end might signify “a common victory – not only of the great powers, but of all the states between them,” (*Ставка*, 55). Despite Russia’s wishes, there was never any intention in the United States of dismantling NATO and starting afresh. In the words of then-Secretary of State Madelaine Albright, “the new NATO can do for Europe’s east what the old NATO did for Europe’s west: vanquish old hatreds, promote integration, create a secure environment for prosperity, and deter violence in the region where two world wars and the Cold War began,” (*Hart*). Of course, this vision of a unified and prosperous Eastern Europe conveniently excluded Russia.

Given the brevity and overall straightforward nature of this period, a realist model of it would be relatively simplistic and the construction of one would not be overtly helpful. Most of the departures from, or adherences to, realist theory are the same for this portion of the period as they are for the following one. In order to avoid being redundant, then, at this time it will simply be noted that the continued antagonization of Russia was not in the best interests of Western security. There were warning from several key policy advisors after the end of the Cold War and, following it, throughout various stages of NATO expansion, that warned against it based on the idea that aggravating Russia would only worsen instability and harm vital US security interests (*Tsygankov 2013, 182*). In choosing to isolate Russia and maintain hostile relations

rather than attempting to engage them as an equal or even a potential ally, the United States undermined its own security as well as that of Europe. This notion is present throughout the entire time period and will be explored much more extensively in the discussion of NATO expansionism.

Each country had similar hopes and expectations for the outcome of their relationship after the Cold War. Both desired harmony and cooperation in the international arena and a mutually beneficial relationship that would lead to economic prosperity. However, each side had fundamentally different expectations for how such a relationship might come about. Russia believed that it would be treated as an equal and allowed to maintain the individuality it had struggled for so long to preserve. The United States believed that Russia would respect the outcome of the war, acknowledge American preeminence, relinquish its hold on the autocratic tendencies it had embraced for so long and accept that Western democracy was the only way forward. The outcome of this misunderstanding was the decision of the United States to continue pushing for NATO expansionism in an attempt to force democracy right up against Russia's border, and outrage and retaliation from the Russians. The perception in each country of its counterpart as the "other," a key conception in constructivism, is very apparent in this situation. The tendency of states to highlight their own accomplishments and consider themselves superior to those around them is clearly at play here. This tendency often leads to ethnocentrism, and the widespread belief that one's cultural values are better than the cultural values held by others. Every state believes that its way of doing things is the "natural" way and that all other states should emulate their behavior (*Tsygankov 2013, 180*). The vast differences between each country's political system only served to exacerbate this notion.

“Civilization is defined as a system of politically and culturally distinct values, or beliefs about the appropriate organization of human institutions and foreign policy [...] Western civilization is centered on competitive political system and individualism, whereas Russia and other non-Western societies continue to rely on a highly concentrated authority of the executive.” (Tsygankov 2018, 102)

The emphasis on the conception the “other” and misguided belief in the sanctity of one’s own state institutions and practices fits in quite neatly with political psychology’s discussion of state identity, categorization, and social comparison. These theories answer the question of why policymakers in both countries resorted to aggressive measures, rather than attempting to resolve their differences. After all, cooperation between the two was clearly in their best interests, especially considering the years of trauma that had been caused by the Cold War. However, those advocating for cooperation in the United States were drowned out by idealistic champions of democracy who clamored for the containment of Russia as the only antidote to the specter of autocracy that loomed over Europe.

This summarizes the nature of the dialogue surrounding the end of the Cold War, and the misaligned perceptions that brought such a dialogue into being. The crucial few years after 1991 were characterized by deliberations in each country over how to address the situation, setting the stage for the era of Western expansion Eastward into post-Soviet countries that would come to follow.

NATO Expansionism

The decision for NATO to expand was officially made in 1994, three years after the fall of the Soviet Union. Given the widespread sentiments of American superiority and Western

democracy as the only form of just governance at the time, this decision is unsurprising. NATO membership would be a tempting opportunity to the countries surrounding Russia, giving them access to a plethora of economic and security benefits. In order for Russia to maintain its status as a regional power, it needed a coalition of smaller allied countries to serve as both an economic and political support system and a buffer zone between Russia and the West. Its only other option would have been to put aside hostile relations and join NATO as a member state, something that Russia had actually attempted in the 1950s before being immediately shot down by the organization. Having already settled on the decision that Russian power must be mitigated, NATO was determined to isolate the country and diminish its sphere of influence. Over the next several years, the organization offered membership to more and more of the countries clustered around the Russian border. Countries like Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, otherwise known collectively as the Visegrád countries, were quickly added to NATO's growing list of members.

After these additions led to disagreement, the organization promised that it would cease expansion eastward in exchange for Russia acceptance of the proposal that a reunified Germany would be admitted into the program. An agreement was reached and Germany became a part of NATO, however, this promise was quickly reneged upon. Afterwards, the United States offered up three smaller promises in its stead: that the goal of NATO was to be strictly focused on policy rather than interventions, that any existing military aspect in the program was solely meant for defensive purposes, and that despite the fact that Russia was technically not a member it would be allowed a say in any important decisions regarding Eastern Europe. Once again, these promises were all broken in 1999 when NATO intervened militarily in a civil war occurring in Kosovo in Yugoslavia between ethnic Serbs and Albanians.

At the time, the justification proffered for NATO's actions was that they wished to stabilize the region as quickly as possible, and prevent violence against the Albanians. This justification falls apart when one considers the fact that there were other such conflicts going on elsewhere in the world, such as those in Rwanda, Sierra Leone or Sudan. Compared to these African countries, levels of violence in the Yugoslav conflict were much lower, and yet NATO chose to intervene there. Their actions were also not sanctioned by the UN, making them technically illegal according to international law. This implication was a serious one for Russia – it set the precedent that NATO had the ability to supersede the UN, closest thing existing in the international system similar to a global parliament or governing force. The Russians were wholeheartedly opposed to Western intervention in Yugoslavia, and the disregard for their objections continued the negative trajectory that relations had taken since the admission of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic into NATO (*Mandelbaum, 7*). In addition to all this, the intervention was also a catastrophic failure: rather than serving to mitigate the violence in Yugoslavia, it only served to exacerbate it. The assumption made by the United States, that the Serbs who were perpetuating the conflict would back down immediately after a brief show of force from NATO, proved to be wildly inaccurate (*Mandelbaum, 4*). Instead, the violence increased by tenfold – thousands of lives were lost, thousands more people were displaced from their homes, cities and infrastructure were destroyed. The overall aim of the United States going into this conflict was to prevent political instability in the Balkans and to prevent the displacement of the Albanians, by proxy asserting the preeminence of NATO in this area.

Not only did this plan backfire, but the reputation of NATO in the eyes of Russia became even more damaged. Already it had broken its three promises: it had infringed upon the rights of a state that was not a NATO member nor had displayed any aggression towards existing NATO

member states; went back upon their claim that NATO's military factions were dedicated solely to defensive purposes; and ignored the protestations and wishes of Russia by intervening in the conflict. This episode of interference in Yugoslavia further intensified the view of NATO as an untrustworthy organization bent on Russian containment.

After this conflict, NATO expansionism persisted. After officially confirming the addition of the Visegrád countries in 1999, other Eastern European countries began to petition NATO for entry. In the year 2000, around the same time of current Russian President Vladimir Putin's ascent to power, a group of countries that included but was not limited to the Baltic States, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Slovenia banded together to lobby the organization to allow them to join. In 2004, all the abovementioned countries were officially admitted, the Baltic States being the first former Soviet countries to join NATO. By this time, Russia had begun to apply significant political and economic pressure on other countries in the post-Soviet bloc that had expressed interest in joining. Countries like Ukraine and Georgia were given the most attention, and in 2006 Russia's Prime Minister issued a statement declaring that should either country join NATO it would likely catalyze a major restructuring of current geopolitical system. Russia also began working to threaten the territorial integrity and political stability of each country, increasing military and economic aid to areas of Georgia such as South Ossetia that were engaged in attempts to secede as well as sowing seeds of separatism in Ukraine (*Tsygankov 2013, 186*). By 2008 tensions had heightened enough that Russia and Georgia engaged in a brief but bloody war that summer, which for the time being effectively ended the debate about NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine and brought expansionism to a halt.

As one might imagine, these events were viewed quite differently in the United States than in Russia. Once again, the narrative in the United States was of NATO as a benevolent force seeking to free Eastern Europe from the tyrannical yoke of Russian regional power and influence. Only by joining the West, adopting democratic forms of government and promoting Western cultural values could these countries prosper.

According to realism, the most important factor in the motivation behind state actions is security. A realist model of NATO and the US during this time, then, relies on the emphasis first and foremost on security and which action has the highest potential for protecting US and Western security interests. European security (and, by extension, US security considering its extensive ties to European countries) depended on the collaboration between the five biggest regional powers. During this time period some the major threats to European security were issues such as political and economic instability, and the unchecked proliferation of nuclear weapons. Other factors highlighted by realism are hard power motivators such as economic and trade incentives, things which should also be taken into consideration when constructing a realist example of how the relationship ought to have proceeded at this time. Given these considerations, a realist state would analyze the level of security threat posed by Russia and decide whether to engage or to isolate it. It would also ponder the economic benefits of adding poor or unstable post-Soviet countries to NATO and whether or not such states had anything to offer outside of helping to shrink Russia's sphere of influence in the East.

After analysis of potential threats to European security, it can be reasonably concluded that not only did Russia not pose a serious security threat but it was in fact necessary for Russia to cooperate with the West in order to promote stability. The lead editorial for The Times on

July 7th of 1997 stated that “a stable democratic Russia at ease with its shrunken post-imperial frontier is the grand strategic prize, without which Europe can never be durably secure. That prize was placed within our grasp by the post-Cold War settlement, but it is now threatened by the current US-led effort to expand NATO,” (*Mccgwire & Clark, 1293*). There were three major potential threats to European security at this time: Russia’s territorial and political aspirations, political and economic instability, and nuclear weapons. All these threats are reactive rather than proactive in nature, and Russia showed no sign of acting on any of these factors without Western provocation. In essence, in order for Europe to be secure it must be peaceful and in order for it to be peaceful Russia must be engaged in cooperative and constructive dialogue with the rest of the major powers. As long as it is engaged, the level of these three threats is fairly low, and as soon as it is left out of the conversation the level of these threats becomes notably higher (*Mccgwire & Clark, 1293*).

In light of this information, it is clear that NATO expansion in the manner it occurred was not in the best interests of the United States. The economic benefits of bringing in countries such as the Baltic States as well as the appeal of unstable countries like Georgia and Ukraine is questionable at best, and served to aggravate Russia rather than assuage the terse relationship. The security risk posed by Russia would best be addressed by peaceful negotiations and allowing Russia to maintain its influence on post-Soviet countries, rather than by pushing NATO eastward. In this case, the US and by proxy NATO acted in direct opposition to their own security interests, contradicting the realist model. However, in keeping with previous findings this departure cannot be attributed to an entirely ideological foundation. Instead, a faction of US policymakers whose opinions resembled those of the Truman administration and the Marshall Plan creators won out over those who outlined the risks of antagonizing Russia. The influence of

ideological factors on the interpretation of security risks led these individuals to the misconceived notion that the best way of addressing the risk posed by Russia was by pursuing aggressive containment rather than appeasement.

As one might imagine, these events were viewed quite differently in the United States than in Russia. Once again, the narrative in the United States was of NATO as a benevolent force seeking to free Eastern Europe from the tyrannical yoke of Russian regional power and influence. Only by joining the West, adopting democratic forms of government and promoting Western cultural values could these countries prosper. In Russia, expansion was viewed as the primary method of Western containment and attempts to force Russia to adopt Western values or to shrink its sphere of influence as much as possible. Overall, it was an attack on the Russian identity, way of life, and global standing. Once again, patterns adhering to the theories put forth in constructivism and political psychology have emerged. Ethnocentrism and the conception of each opposing country as an “other,” as well as the prioritization of one’s own cultural values as the “right” or “best” values to have are present and clear. They can be seen both in the continuous attempts by the US to promote Western democracy in Eastern Europe, and in Russia’s steadfast refusal to adhere to Western social standards. Categorization and social comparison are also likely culprits behind the blind American support for the external projection of Western values under the pretext of protecting the freedom of citizens in post-Soviet countries. These theories can help explain why policymakers in the US went against their own security interests in promoting NATO expansion – they acted on preconceived notions of Russia as an aggressor who must be contained. These notions came about through various cognitive functions – categorization and social comparison – and were further inflamed by fear and

ethnocentrism, creating a worldview through which US-Russian relations can be fundamentally misinterpreted.

The Orange Revolution

One of the most significant revolutions that came about after the end of the Cold War was the Orange Revolution. It occurred in Ukraine in 2004, right around the time that members of the Vilnius group were admitted to join NATO and when Russian opposition to NATO expansion became a much more prominent aspect of Putin's foreign policy. The revolution consisted of a variety of political protests and movements spanning from 2004 to 2005, likely as a result of political instability in the country that persisted after the fall of the Soviet Union. Such revolutions were commonplace across post-Soviet countries, and were collectively known as the Color Revolutions. General characteristics of such revolutions include protests based on rigged or elections or falsified election results, and protestors whose overall objective is the reform of autocratic-leaning systems to create a more democratic political process (*Reznik, 751*). Similar examples include the Rose Revolution in Georgia, or the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. What makes the Orange Revolution unique, however, is its location in Ukraine, a country vitally important to Russian economic and security interests; and the fact that it was intrinsically connected to the Ukraine crisis, an event that would occur ten years later and bring Russian-American tensions to a head. Furthermore, there was also a significant amount of US influence present in the revolution. This led Russia to believe that the United States had purposely interfered in Ukrainian affairs in order to promote anti-Russian sentiments, undermine their influence, and bring Ukraine closer to the West and weaken Russia by default.

Before going into detail about the nature of the revolution and the role played by the West, it is first crucial to establish the nature of the Russian relationship with Ukraine. There are close historical and cultural ties, as well as economic ones. Ukraine had spent a great deal of its lifetime under the control of various Russian rulers, even before its time in the Soviet Union. As a result many of its citizens were ethnically Russian or harbored pro-Russian sentiments, and vice versa (*Reznik, 753*). In terms of economic ties, Russia has invested large sums of money in various Ukrainian business ventures as well as having several Russian oil pipelines running through the country. More importantly, however, Ukraine is crucial because of its location. Geostrategically speaking, Ukraine is important to Russia for a variety of reasons. First, it provides a large buffer zone between Russia and the West. Losing influence over Ukraine – either through their integration into the EU, entrance into NATO, or any sort of Westward-leaning economic or political ties that could make them into a Western ally – means bringing the United States and Europe right up to a large portion of the Russian border. With the Baltic States and other Eastern European countries now part of NATO, Russia’s sphere of influence is steadily decreasing and making it more difficult to maneuver. A Westernized Ukraine also entails the termination of Russian influence over the Black Sea region, which is important in terms of military exercises, power projection and access to the warm-water port Sevastopol. This port is of monumental strategic value to Russia – Vladimir Putin has referred to Sevastopol as the very birthplace of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet (*Skalamera, 398*). Finally, control over Ukraine is a prerequisite for Russia to become an imperial power spanning both Europe and Asia. Should their influence there be mitigated, Russia loses this possibility. In the words of Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former National Security Advisor to US President Jimmy Carter,

“without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire,” (*Fujii, 13*).

Stirrings of protest were in the making long before 2004, beginning of course with the fall of the Soviet Union. After its collapse and the power vacuum left behind by Communism, many states had difficulty finding a functional system to implement in its place. The political system that developed in Ukraine after it became independent was somewhere in the middle of authoritarian and democratic.

“Between 1992 and 2004, Ukraine can best be described as a competitive authoritarian regime, in which elections were meaningful and created uncertainty but in which incumbent abuses were so regular and severe that the country could not be called democratic. Elections were often highly competitive [...] yet, those same elections were also extremely undemocratic. [...] the government regularly bullied opposition leaders through periodic arrests and harassed them using the tax authorities, police and other government agencies. Finally, incumbents also heavily manipulated the election process itself, leading to outright stealing of roughly 3-10% of votes in elections.” (*Way, 192*)

In addition to struggling to maintain a fair democratic process, the system was also not well equipped to handle progress or modernization, and there was a major divide between two large factions of the population. This divide was between members of the population with pro-Russian political leanings, and those with pro-European political leanings. These two segments were divided not only by political preference but also by their economic preferences. Those who were pro-European tended to favor a free-market, capitalist style economy as well as supporting increased trade with the West and the EU. Conversely, those who preferred that Ukraine retain

closer ties with Russia than with the West also tended to be less in favor of such an economic system (*Reznik, 753*). While this distinction is not entirely black and white, the choice between favoring friendlier relations with Russia and friendlier relations with the West was an important political consideration in the upcoming election that led to the revolution. This split can be visualized, with a much higher concentration of pro-Russian citizens located in the southeastern region of Ukraine and the pro-European citizens in the west-central region. Weak institutions and polarized political conditions, especially with the advent of younger people who came of age after the Soviet Union's downfall and were more open to change, made conditions in 2004 conducive to revolution.

The revolution itself was a peaceful one, which did not result in violence or deaths like its successor the Euromaidan. Its main catalyst was the 2004 Ukrainian Presidential Election, where Prime Minister Victor Yanukovich faced off against opposition leader Victor Yushchenko. Although Yanukovich was favored among the corrupt elite of the country, the majority of Ukrainians supported Yushchenko. Consistent with the previous description of how leaders often seek to undermine their political opponents through various abuses of power, Yanukovich began his crusade to cripple Yushchenko's campaign long before the election itself. For months beforehand his administration funded brutal attack ads against Yushchenko, supplying a neverending stream of negative press designed to turn Ukrainian citizens against him. In addition to this state-sponsored propaganda, Yanukovich also engaged in other illicit activities to slow down his opponent. Many unfortunate incidents befell Yushchenko, such as his plane's landing privileges being abruptly revoked right before he was about to arrive to important political rallies or events. Other such instances include physical barriers blocking the roads he traveled, mysterious individuals following him or trying to eavesdrop on his

conversations, and even a sudden illness due to dioxide poisoning – which his opponent claimed must have been the result of ingesting contaminated sushi (*Karatnycky, 37*). In addition to Yushchenko himself, many of his prominent supporters were arrested based on falsified charges, threats were leveraged against those who planned to vote for him, and voting stations in areas that had demonstrated a preference for him were sabotaged.

Regardless of all this interference, when election day came preliminary results showed Yushchenko with a clear lead. Exit polls showed that he had received roughly 52% of the vote, as opposed to Yanukovich's 43%. The official results, then, which claimed Yanukovich as the victor by 2.5% of votes were immediately subject to suspicion. The deception was not well hidden: the voter turnout rate that was projected after polls had closed underwent significant changes overnight, calling the validity of Yanukovich's win into question. In the eastern region, where Yanukovich polled highest and also the region where those with pro-Russian political and economic regions were concentrated, voter turnouts jumped significantly. For example, in Donetsk the voter turnout increased from 78% to 96.2%, with support for Yanukovich placed at around 97%, and in Luhansk it increased from 80% to 89% with support at around 92%. Overall, these overnight jumps accounted for 1.2 million votes, 90% of which were for Yanukovich (*Karatnycky, 36*). The sudden and convenient nature of these new votes, as well as the major discrepancy between his exit poll numbers and official results, was enough to trigger an investigation into the election results. It was quickly discovered that at a minimum, 2.5 million of the ballots had been altered to favor Yanukovich.

In light of these allegations, Yushchenko declared himself President and publicly asked that the military and law enforcement stand down and that all local and national politicians

respect his claim to the position. There was now a terse standoff between the incumbent President Kuchma as he was about to leave his position, the “official” winner by fabricated results Yanukovich, and Yushchenko. This event sparked massive public protests as citizens took to the streets and the military and security forces were divided. The Interior Ministry attempted to dispatch soldiers to dispel the protesters by force, while members of the Ukrainian security forces cooperated with Yushchenko to protect the protestors (*Karatnycky, 45*). Protestors gathered outside the offices and residences of various important public officials, including those of the still-incumbent Kuchma. Finally, after days of protests, the parliament voted to invalidate the results of the election, and six days later they were officially annulled by the Supreme Court. In the follow-up election Yushchenko was the clear winner, and took up the mantle of President. Altogether the protests lasted 17 days, during which fortunately no death or violence resulted from the unrest.

In conjunction with the turmoil in Ukrainian society caused by the election and subsequent revolution, there were other forces at work as well. The United States and other Western powers had a clear hand in the goings-on, therein lying the point of contention between Russia and the United States. Each side preferred a different candidate: Vladimir Putin displayed strong support for Yanukovich, while the United States stood behind Yushchenko. Yanukovich and Kuchma were both pro-Russian candidates, preferring to maintain existing ties with Putin. Putin displayed a clear preference for him during the campaign, going on record in press interviews and public meetings to voice his support. Many Kremlin officials aided the campaign in advisory or managerial roles, as well as making significant donations to the campaign (*Karatnycky, 49*). Yushchenko, conversely, had displayed a strong preference towards democratization and integration with the EU. He spoke openly about his admiration for the

United States, praising it as “a bedrock of support for democracy and rule of law in Ukraine,” (*Karatnycky, 51*). The United States displayed as clear a preference for him as Putin did for Yanukovich. The reason for this is unsurprising: his win undercut Putin’s aspirations for Russian hegemony. The election of Yushchenko was conducive to Western plans to drive a wedge between Russia and Ukraine, and the election outcome was made all the more frustrating for Russia because of the clear role played by the West.

Overall, the United States are estimated by some to have spent approximately \$65 million over a two year period to help Yushchenko’s campaign (*Wilson, 22*). Others calculate that the number is closer to \$100 million (*Wilson, 24*). There was both direct and indirect aid, the indirect aid taking the form of funding from ostensibly non-partisan NGOs in support of democracy and free and fair elections. Although these NGOs were meant to be unbiased, their values aligned with those of Yushchenko and the US and therefore had a hand in tipping the election in his favor.

“Overall, it is alleged that the implicit bias of the West and the weight of money involved cast doubt on NGO’s self-proclaimed neutrality. Either their pre-existing bias led them to seek out Western funding, or that funding led to the distortion of their role. Non-governmental organisations therefore acted as interest groups rather than as promoters of universal standards, and as tools of US foreign policy rather than as local representatives of the ‘global conscience’ or ‘transnational civil society,’” (*Wilson, 23*)

The Freedom Support Act, which provided the bureaucratic backing for US aid to promote democracy in former Soviet countries, facilitated the aid to Ukraine and enabled those providing it to do so with few restrictions and little oversight. Some of the allegedly nonpartisan NGOs

had clear ties to Yushchenko – for example, USAID-funded organization PAUCI gave aid to several Ukrainian NGOs, on one of which Yushchenko was a board member (*Wilson, 24*). There was also significant US contribution to the exit poll that projected Yushchenko as the winner and helped shed light on the fabrication of the official results. Without this poll, it would have been more difficult to identify the disparity between legitimate and fabricated results and made it harder to make the case for annulling the results of the fraudulent election. Another group that the United States helped fund was PORA, a pro-democracy Ukrainian youth organization that played a significant role in the protests following the election. The Institute for Sustainable Communities, a US organization based in Vermont, was awarded \$11 million dollars from the federal government in order to “bring about [...] ‘a fundamental cultural shift’ in Ukraine ‘from a passive citizenry under an authoritarian regime to a thriving democracy with active citizen participation,’” (*Wilson, 28*). Another private American consulting firm called Development Associates, Inc. received \$100 million from US government to promote the strengthening of democratic procedures in foreign countries. Several million dollars from this award went to Ukraine before the onset of the election. These are a few of many examples of various organizations or programs through which the US supplied funding to support Yushchenko and help bring him into power.

In addition to economic aid, the US also used soft power factors to influence the election. The possibility of ascension into organizations such as the EU, NATO and the World Trade Organization were attractive, and made all the more likely should Ukraine choose to orient itself Westward. The depiction of freedom, democracy, and the quality of life that went hand in hand with the notion of Westernization was also an alluring one. “The perceived attraction of relative prosperity and the general ambience of life *à la européenne* undoubtedly played a role in the

Ukrainian Revolution,” (*Wilson, 30*). While the use of soft power is more difficult to quantify, its influence can be determined through deductive reasoning. Despite the many attempts by Yanukovich to sabotage Yushchenko’s campaign, there was still a high level of support in Ukrainian society for him. A considerable amount of support for political candidates can be reasonably chalked up to support for their policies, and Yushchenko’s policies favored integration with the EU, democratization and Westernization. Therefore the appeal of his policies implies the appeal of these notions. Because the United States had a hand in crafting the image of Westernization and democracy and painting it in a positive light, it can be concluded that their soft power influence over the image of the West played a role in electing Yushchenko.

Overall, two things can be concluded. First, that the United States had significant interest in the outcome of the election – going along with their penchant for NATO expansionism, the election of a pro-Western candidate who had expressed a desire to integrate with the EU and consequently undermine Russia’s influence was the ideal outcome. Secondly, that either by indirectly funding Yushchenko’s campaign or programs that supported it such as the exit poll or PORA or by promoting Western values in Ukraine through the use of soft power, the United States played a role in his being elected.

In keeping with the Russian opposition to NATO expansion, the meddling of the US in the Ukrainian election was also done with the goal of shrinking the Russian sphere of influence. Considering the various reasons that make Ukraine strategically valuable to Russia, as discussed in the beginning of this case study, separating the two countries has appeared to be a prominent goal of the US ever since the fall of the Soviet Union.

“The West’s final tool for peeling Kiev away from Moscow has been its efforts to spread Western values and promote democracy in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states, a plan that often entails funding pro-Western individuals and organizations. Victoria Nuland, the US assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, estimated in December 2013 that the United States had invested more than \$5 billion since 1991 to help Ukraine achieve ‘the future it deserves.’” (Mearsheimer, 79-80)

While the prospect of extending NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine was not feasible at this time, given Russia’s staunch opposition and the fact that the Baltic states had only just been added to the organization, the election provided another opportunity for the United States to draw Ukraine away from Russia and into the Western sphere of influence. Consistent with the findings from the second case study, US policy towards Russia at this time consists largely of attempts to isolate or contain them while bringing all other post-Soviet states into the Western sphere. In the second case study it was already determined that such policies were detrimental to US and European security interests, and yet they were pursued anyway. Rather than reiterating these points, then, the realist model for this case study will focus on the objective costs and benefits of integrating Ukraine into the EU. After all, with this as the ostensible long-term policy goal of the United States, in order for it to fit in with a realist model of the relationship there must be hard-power incentives, such as security or economic benefits.

It has already been established that Westernizing Ukraine while alienating Russia has implications for the destabilization of Europe, making it adverse to US security interests. As for economic interests, in order for a country to be considered for joining the EU it must have a certain degree of economic development. Such development was not present in Ukraine at this

time, and some speculated that it would not be able to join the EU for another fifteen years (*Karatnycky, 50*). At the time of Yushchenko's election there was a rising budget deficit in the country, as well as a growth rate that was projected to fall by around 6% that year (*Karatnycky, 49*). Corruption among politicians and the elite was a significant contributor to Ukraine's economic problem – for example, Ukraine has “one of the world's highest rates of energy consumption per unit of GDP” due to their lack of a sophisticated energy-efficiency policy (*Charap & Darden, 8*). If policy makers dedicated themselves to creating such a policy, as well as investing in the development of Ukraine's own domestic gas market and encouraging others to do so, the country would be stronger economically and less susceptible to Russian pressure given their reliance on Russia for oil imports (*Charap & Darden, 8*).

Herein lies the first problem: Ukraine's corruption problems and lack of productivity make its potential contributions in the event of EU integration somewhat dubious. The economic benefits were marginal at best. The only remaining reason that can be deduced from the decision to continue to pursue Ukrainian integration into the EU, then, is to weaken and destabilize Russia. However, it was already determined in the previous case study that the isolation and destabilization of Russia was detrimental to US security interests, thereby also making the decision to influence the Ukrainian election detrimental to security interests. This puts it outside the bounds of realism.

In addition to the reasons discussed in the second case study, there is another factor that made interference in Ukraine and provocation of Russia a security problem for the United States: gas. As relations were heading downhill after the controversy over the Orange Revolution, the extent to which the West depended on Russia's gas exports became a serious concern (*Trenin,*

34). The nature of this concern was essentially that because of the dependence of countries like Germany on Russian gas, Putin would use this as an opportunity to retaliate to the spread of Western influence by exerting his own influence on them. This concern would not exist if it were not for the US policy of isolation forcing Russia to find creative ways to leverage its power. Even if Russia continued to supply the West with gas without attempting to use it as leverage, there was still another issue at hand. Once again, Ukraine's location made it geostrategically unique in that after the fall of the Soviet Union, it became the direct conduit of Russian gas exports into Europe. Many major pipelines as well as oil refineries and terminals were located there, and overall about 80% of Russian gas exports traveled through Ukraine after 1991 (*Skalamera, 400*). While the Orange Revolution turned out to be a peaceful event, there was no guarantee that this would be the case. In fact, were it not for the cooperation of Yushchenko and the Ukrainian security forces, it is quite possible that the incumbent regime may have succeeded in using force against the protestors (*Karatnycky, 45*). Yanukovich could also have refused to step down, possibly inciting a civil war (the likes of which did eventually happen years later after Euromaidan).

While this is all mostly speculation, it is important to note that there is record of the fact that the United States was prepared for or even willing to incite protests to ensure Yushchenko's win. Bill Clinton's former advisor, Dick Morris, advised members of Yushchenko's campaign during a secret meeting before the election that an exit poll would not only help identify fraudulent votes but also encourage voters to take to the streets in protest in the event of such an outcome (*Wilson, 26*). This would turn out to be the exact outcome of the election, proving that at least one prominent US official had an inkling that the election could lead to protests. While the propensity of such protests to actually become violent was not discussed, the fact remains

that the United States took a serious gamble in interfering with the election. They risked igniting major turmoil in Ukrainian society, alienating their main oil supplier as well as endangering the stability of their main oil conduit. Such a risk is irreconcilable with realist theory.

How can such a risk then be explained? The most probable answer is that there was something of inherent value to the United States at stake. If the key factor in choosing to influence the election was not important economically, politically, strategically, or based on security, then it must have been ideological in nature. And indeed, this is the reasoning that can be found when researching this issue. Anti-Russian sentiments persist

The issue of perception in Russia, while not as significant as that of the United States due to the more reactionary nature of Russia's side of the relationship, should not be neglected.

“Within Russia, alienation from the West has had the effect of rallying the bulk of the population around the flag, the Kremlin and Putin. The Western insistence that isolationist measures are directed against Putin's policies rather than the Russian people is not cutting much ice. Most Russians see Western attempts at isolating the Kremlin as proof of the United States and its allies being Russia's historical competitors.” (Trenin, 79-80)

Indeed, it is unsurprising that such a perception arose as a reaction to US policy towards Russia. Once again, the patterns of state identity ethnocentrism, categorization and social comparison arise in each country's dealings with the other. Just as with the issue of NATO expansionism, US state identity and ethnocentric belief in the superiority of Western values led the United States to find a way to push democratic values in post-Soviet countries and isolate Russia. In the same manner, Russian state identity and ethnocentric belief led them to perceive this external projection of Western values as a direct attack on the Russian sense of self and cultural identity.

The notions of categorization and social comparison are present not only in the US perception of Russia, but also of Ukrainian citizens. The depiction by the Bush administration of Ukrainian people as subjects of Russia's cruel and tyrannical policies was certain to appeal to the sentimental nature of the American public while simultaneously catering to their notion of Western superiority in pitying those who were portrayed as less fortunate. This third and final case, in which the same patterns that were also identified in the first two cases have emerged, provides even more evidence for the role of perception as a major factor in the outcome of events in the US-Russian relationship.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

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Throughout the tenure of the relationship between Russia and the United States, a significant change has taken place. The basis of objective decision making that constituted the relationship when it first began was slowly replaced by one of skewed perception and ideological bias. Areas of study such as constructivist theory of international relations and political psychology can help identify why and how such perceptions came into being. First, in addressing the change in the nature of the relationship that took place in the late 1800s-early 1900s, the notion of state identity is an important factor. The role of the United States in the international arena was slowly evolving, resulting in the subsequent evolution of its state identity. By the end of the Second World War, the United States had gone from a marginally powerful noninterventionist country to a major world power that played a deciding role both in the outcome of the war and the structure of post-war global system. This new identity brought with it a certain arrogance, enhanced by ethnocentrism and the tendency of the human psyche to overemphasize the validity of one's own cultural values and view them as superior to the cultural values of others. Russia's state identity has remained more constant than the United States. As a much older country, this has only contributed to the saliency of their national sense of self as a major global power despite their episodes of weakness. This makes the respective state identities of Russia and the United States inherently incompatible: the United States believes that it has the moral upper hand in promoting democracy and reforming Russia's political and social system in its own image; while Russia believes that in doing so the United States is disrespecting and undermining Russia's hard-earned status as an independent power and threatening the Russian cultural and political identity.

These individual perceptions created by each country's state identity are further reinforced by various cognitive mechanisms discovered by political psychologists. The human mind's inclination to form social groups based on categorization and compare these groups to one another lead to the tribal nature of individual nation-states. The influence of group membership on each individual person's sense of self makes their prejudices even stronger, leading to the tendency to overlook flaws in one's own group while simultaneously emphasizing the flaws of other groups. These psychological tendencies fall right into line with ethnocentrism and the stubborn belief in the superiority of one's own cultural values. This can help explain both why Americans are so insistent on the spread of democracy and Western sociopolitical structures, and why Russians are so resistant to the changes to their own culture proposed by the American side.

It is important to note that while the above findings manifest themselves on both sides of the relationship, each side is fundamentally different in nature. The United States is the more proactive side, taking actions to isolate Russia such as refusing to allow them to join NATO and attempting to make them more Western while ignoring the saliency of their cultural identity. Conversely, Russia's actions are for the most part made in reaction to US policy towards them. Once again, this can be chalked up to their state identity and how this influences the way in which they operate in the international system. The structure of this research may at times appear as though it is the United States at fault, which can be true in many instances due to their recurrent position as the aggressor, but Russia's own failings must not be ignored. The autocratic nature of Russia's political system in conjunction with their conservative social structure often has negative implications for many of its citizens, such as women or minority groups. In such cases, more progressive and indeed therefore more Western policies would

benefit many marginalized members of society and result in fewer human rights violations by the Russian government. This is one instance in which the Western attempts to influence Russia are not entirely misguided, although their method of doing so often backfires.

This disparity in perception in US-Russian relations is important because of its repercussions. Many violent conflicts or near-disasters have occurred as the result of contention between the United States and Russia. Examples of include events such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, the conflict in Ukraine after Euromaidan and subsequent destabilization of Ukrainian society, and the civil war currently taking place in Syria. The perpetually aggressive nature of the US-Russian relationship has negatively affected not only these two countries but also many others around them. In addition, there are significant benefits to potential cooperation between the United States and Russia. The unification of all major influential powers in Europe has powerful implications for lofty longtime global aspirations such as world peace. While this may be too improbable a concept, it would still certainly go a long way in preserving regional stability and mitigating conflicts such as those in Ukraine and Syria. Increased trade opportunities could be economically beneficial for both countries, and collaboration in important fields such as science and technology could lead to important discoveries and innovation, as well as steps towards important goals such as combating global warming. Military cooperation and well-drafted, serious peace agreements are the first step in ridding the world of nuclear weapons and the eliminating the possibility of nuclear war for good. And Western goals of helping Russian society progress and alleviating burdens on marginalized groups can be better achieved through cooperation and gentle soft power influence than by attempting to project Western values by force. Overall there are many, many benefits to

cooperation between the United States and Russia as well as consequences for prolonged animosity.

Given the new understanding of state actions and human nature that this research has unearthed, is such a concept feasible? I would argue that it is, because it has already been done before. One need only look at the characteristics of the relationship in the 1800s, before it began to change. The amicable neutrality based on mutual interests can resurface, because there are still many mutual interests. In order for this to be done, however, both sides must exercise critical reflexivity in understanding their own implicit biases and how these affect relations in a negative way. Only once policymakers learn to operate objectively rather than ideologically can the relationship return to its previous nature, and both countries can work together to establish a peaceful and mutually beneficial coalition.

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