

The Interaction between the Foreign Policy of U.S and Russia in the New Geopolitics of the South Caucasus

Behrad Farahmand, Abolghasem Taheri

¹Department of International Relations, College of Law and Political Science, Tehran Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

²Department of Political Science, College of Law and Political Science, Tehran Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

Received: March 26, 2014

Accepted: May 17, 2015

ABSTRACT

Within the theoretical framework of neorealism, foreign policy and power of great countries or major practitioners have the capability to keep a balance in the structure of international system. Among the practitioners, Russia and U.S. are concerned, either side attempts to achieve its security and interest. The countries have an impact on other members and regions of the system, especially those with geopolitical importance. Among these, we can point out to the South Caucasus and the whole Caucasus on which domination is one of the reasons for domination on the entire world as Heartland theory suggests. U.S. and Russia engaged in a contest with one another in order to keep a power balance. Accordingly, the foundation of the present paper, which was conducted by a descriptive-analytical method, is to show that there have been five rounds of interaction and confrontations with respect to the US and Russia foreign policy in the South Caucasus.

KEYWORDS: U.S., Russia, South Caucasus, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Foreign policy, geopolitics, defensive realism, offensive realism.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the Cold War, the US and the Soviet Union constructed a bipolar international system. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the bipolar system led to a breakdown and the United States finding itself unrivaled sought to exercise influence over the areas previously under the influence of the USSR namely the newly independent republics demanding expansion as the most important examples. Among the most important regions, it was the Caucasus which was divided into northern and southern parts. In the southern part, the three republics, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, gained independence, and even though they joined the community of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Georgia and Azerbaijan attempted to lean toward the West as fast as they. The South Caucasus is viewed geopolitically due to several reasons. As one reason, the area is a four-way junction of the East, West, North, and South. The next, it is the path to go into each of these States from Russia. The third, it has energy resources and the route they are transferred. The fourth, it is one of the few routes to get access to warm waters on the part of Russia, and last but not least it is the point of religious and different ethnic groups clash with one another. In addition to this, the region takes on key importance for the leadership of the world according to the theory of Heartland. Accordingly, the United States, on the one hand, occasionally sought to infiltrate the area since 1991, and Russia is keen to restore its previous influence, on the other hand. The question is what development the US's and Russia's foreign policy initiated in the South Caucasus. The purpose of the paper is to investigate the impacts of the international system structure on the foreign policy of the two Great Powers toward each other in the South Caucasus. The methodology included an analytical-descriptive technique. The configuration of the article is founded on the arrangement that the brief introduction precedes theoretical foundations followed by literature and background, subsequently the verification of main hypothesis and conclusion are presented in the end.

2. Theoretical foundations

Geopolitics is kind of a method of political analysis in which the role of geography is underscored in the international relationship. The central point of the theory revolves around national power and territorial control. Within a realist framework, the main hypotheses of geopolitical theorists are built on the prominence of regional. International, land and sea structure, which mostly includes the interpretation of history from Alfred Thayer Mahan's and MacKinder's point of views; the former is founded on sea power and the latter is built on the heartland

Corresponding Author: Abolghasem Taheri, Professor of Department of Political Science, College of Law and Political Science, Tehran Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. (Email: Farzad_taheri@yahoo.com)

of Eurasia. Mackinder, founder of heartland theory, elaborated his three principles of geopolitical theory as follows: “first, who rules Central and Eastern Europe commands the Heartland; the second, who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; the third, who rules the World-Island commands the World” (Mackinder, 1904). In the aftermath of the Cold War, geopolitics has returned to politics, taken on importance, and become influential in foreign politics. Therefore, there is a need to define foreign politics and investigate it accordingly.

Under the definition of international relations dictionary, foreign policy is a strategy or part of an applicable map for making decision in a nation against other countries or international institutions in order to achieve particular national goals, which are by definition national interest (Plano and Olton, 1982). Thus, foreign policy entails strategies which are referred to as orientation of foreign policy. This includes isolationism, neutrality, revisionism, the preservation of the status quo, and alliance and coalition. In the adoption of each of these strategies, countries are allowed a free hand, but it is substantially within the power of a country by considering the questions under what condition does a country choose a strategy and what factors affect the implementation of foreign policy; this is where the behaviorist approach of Rosenau (1969) comes into play, under which foreign policy acts as a dependent variable in every country and a cause of the aggregate of five components, all of which include in a single sphere as follow: personal characteristic of decision makers, function, government, social factors (small scale), and international or structural environment (large scale). In his approach, it is claimed that the more powerful a country, the greater the weight of international environment will be in its foreign policy decision-makings, and the less powerful a country, the more inclined to the early factors of the decision-making sphere it will become in reverse. This is where the structure of international system as a component plays a pivotal role in foreign policy strategy as for great powers such as the US and Russia, and the most important theory favors the structure in international relations is neorealism which entails defensive and offensive spheres.

According to Waltz, order often hinges upon the preservation of a hierarchy of dominance by great and small states, the more hierarchical a system, the greater the diversity of functions will be, and the more the absence of a central authority, the greater the similarity of unite functions will be (Waltz, 1979). Structure of system induces countries to embark on the same endeavor, which in turn reproduces the system structure. The theory of neorealism is “state-oriented” and comes up with a model of the world where states are actors (Krasner, 1978). Waltz viewed state in association with power, because it is rooted in the potentials that build on a leeway for acting government (Thompson, 1978). In addition to this, in the international system structure, it is power that brings order, and Waltz views it from a power balance standpoint, the balance itself hinges highly on the distribution of power.

Since every state seeks its survival and security in the anarchic structure of the international system—reliance on the principle of self-help, security is introduced to neorealism through power, which brings the two spheres, offensive and defensive realism, into existence. In the former, Waltz draws on the idea that the single goal of states is to survive and achieve the security sitting atop the goals. He believes that it is the structure of the international system that induce great powers to be fully attentive to power balance. Anarchy prompts states seeking security to vie with each other for gaining power (Mearsheimer, 2001:23). For Walt, state may cease to form a balance against every power, though they do this in opposition to the state that poses the major threat. In addition, balance policy is adopted when two actors decide on a coalition against the same threat, and Walt here posits bandwagoning policy under such circumstances (Walt, 1985). Offensive realist holds that the international system induces great powers to maximize their relative power, because it is considered the only desirable means of maximizing security. In other words, survival calls for an offensive behavior, on the grounds that states are in need of gaining further power if they are keen to increase the odds of their survival (Mearsheimer, 2001). With an emphasis on the function of anarchy and its increasing effect on the international system, the doctrines of offensive realist are determined to preclude other states from using them, as well as leading them to an anarchist position where they may seek opportunities to take advantage of competing with each other. Mearsheimer believes that the mystery of security echoes the central reasoning of offensive realist, because it is founded on the idea that the security of other states will equally decline as a state endeavors to enhance its security (Mearsheimer, 2001).

3. LITERATURE AND BACKGROUND

Based on the literature, the emphasis here is laid on the foreign policy of the U.S. and Russia in the South Caucasus. However, there are a number of studies different from the present study and its innovation at a glance. Oskanian (2013) focuses on the security issues of the post-soviet South Caucasus. The theme of the book is the belief that the trend of the security development suggests secessionist conflicts have abated in recent years and the geopolitical region moves toward a peaceful future, even though the South Caucasus faces several security issues inherited from the Soviet Union. The theoretical background of the book draw on Regional Security Complex Theory by which the untangled knot of the security issues concerning relations of the South Caucasus is undo

(Oskanian, 2013). Ismailzade (2012) paid considerable attention to the problem of energy in Azerbaijan. However, the work addresses other countries of the South Caucasus—Armenia and Georgia, because they are routes of energy transportation as well. The theme of the volume is energy and it is demonstrated that how influential oil incomes was in the sluggish trend of democratic progress, and how crucial energy resources and their transfer to the West in the geopolitical region—the South Caucasus—is as to security conflicts and issues, on international scale (Ismailzade, 2012). Jafalian (2011) addresses the security issues of the Caucasus and the relationship of great powers and regional actors to the security of the region in the world. The South Caucasus appeals to Russia, the US, Europe and Turkey. From the West's point of view, the South Caucasus is a corridor of oil and gas imports into Europe, whose stability has become part of European security. The volume reviews the security interests of various actors in the region. The book reassesses the relevance of politics and security at national, regional, and international levels with the aim of re-examining sustainable peace trend in the South Caucasus (Jafalian, 2011). De Waal (2010), in his book “the Caucasus: an Introduction”, addresses the region, particularly the South Caucasus, which can turn into a major international crisis at any moment. He largely focuses on Karabakh crisis and the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia. For him, the crisis in the Caucasus, as in Georgia, can flare into a major international crisis and impact on the relations of great powers and the regional powers (De Waal, 2010). Cheterian (2009) provides an account of ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus, discusses the relevant issues within the new geopolitics framework of the regions since 1991. Nonetheless, given the ethnic issues in the South and North Caucasus, the volume addresses both sections of the region, and examines the effects of conflict origins in the Caucasus, seeking means of sustainable peace establishment in the important strategic region. The theme of the book is to provide a different understanding of a historical heritage and the new challenges of the region and its people and leaders. The volume directly delves into the major source of the collapse of the Soviet Union, i.e. the State-Nation Project of the countries in the South Caucasus, as well as the competition of Armenian, Azeri, Georgian, Abkhazian, Ossetia, and Russian ethnics (Cheterian, 2009).

Historically speaking, the Caucasus Region is situated between latitude 38 degrees and 25 minutes and 43 degrees and 35 minutes north and longitude 39 degrees and 50 minutes and 30 minutes east. The region is home to the Caucasus Mountains where the Russian Federation is located in the northern part of it. It is bordered on the south by Iran and Turkey, on the east by the Caspian Sea, on the west by the Black Sea. The region covers an area of 440,000 km² and is divided into northern Caucasus and southern Caucasus by the Caucasus Mountains. In the south part of the mountains, from the east to the west, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia are located respectively. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of these three countries, they leaned substantially toward the West view, and the pace of globalization in the South Caucasus was faster than that of other countries comprising the Commonwealth of Independent States, which suggests the tendency and request for a western lifestyle (Tatikian, 2006). However, politically speaking, unsettled ethnic disputes, political instability, and lack of democracy are the most crucial issues in the South Caucasus. The strategic position of the Caucasus as a clash point between Europe and the Middle East turned the region into an arena of political and economic rivalry between great powers. Economically speaking, the presence of gas and oil reserves has tempted foreign actors as the region acts as a conduit for the energy supplies of the Central Asia and the Caspian Sea to Europe (Nixey, 2010). For this reason, the issues of the Caucasus have become one of the most complicated issues concerning international relations since 1991. More particularly, security conflict is one of the most crucial discussions in the region. Ethnic dispute is one of the central problems in the Caucasus region, in that ethnic separatism has been an important cause of security and border conflicts. The borders of South and North Ossetia have caused a lot of problems since 1991. North Ossetia is located in the Russian Federation, so is South Ossetia in Georgia's territory. Efforts by both sides to establish an independent republic or incorporate the south part into the north have always been cause of tensions. Historical claims over border are considered another aspect of insecurity. Apart from Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its occupation, Armenia- the Republic of Azerbaijan disputes over parts of Nakhchivan have proven to be true (Nichol, 2014). The insecurity which has domestic root cause foreign powers to exert influence over the region, as well. In addition, the Caucasus is the only conduit for serious relations of Russia to international waters, and naturally the strategic breathable artery of Russia, since Russia has limited coastline on the Black Sea. The extent of the shoreline was considerable during the Soviet era, but with the demise of USSR and the independence of the Soviet republics –Ukraine and Georgia, much of the coast of the Black Sea was distributed (Holowaty, 1993). The topics caused the South Caucasus to geopolitically take precedence for great and regional powers. In this respect, we can think of Russia, the US, Europe Union, Iran and Turkey as the most important players in the developments in the Caucasus over the past two decades, whose the manner of interaction and confrontation between them lead a wide outlook ranging from conflict to collaboration between the three countries of the Caucasus and the foregoing players to be shaped in different times. To put it differently, a model of power balance policy or threat balance has been established between trans-regional and regional powers and these three countries in different periods.

4. U.S. and Russia foreign policy Interaction in the new geopolitics of the South Caucasus

The collapse of the Soviet Union provided the US with a good opportunity to seek influence in the region. According to this, due to its geopolitical prominence, the Caucasus has been appealed to the US, including its three newly independent republics in the South Caucasus; Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. The South Caucasus is of importance to the US's homeland security interest, including "energy security, access to Central Asia, the fight against terrorism, and the region's proximity to Russia, Iran, and the Middle East". The purpose of U.S.'s foreign policies for the presence in the South Caucasus, during 1990s, was to find means of bolstering its influence in the regions suffered from a gap in power, which are in turn incorporated into bigger plans including precluding Russia from gaining power, preventing the spread of the influence of Iran and China, and restricting the spread of Islamism (Nicu Sava, 2010). With the aim of presence in the Caucasus in the first round of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the US took the initiative and entered into security relations in the South Caucasus in a limited fashion. However, the US called on NATO to side with it in such a way that NATO acted as if it was the executive arm of U.S.'s security. That is, the goals and missions of NATO were aligned with the military-security ambitions of the United States. The organization made an effort in the form of co-operation on a peace initiative to provide the military troops of the three states of the South Caucasus with training help and guidance, and negotiations took place in an attempt to deploy NATO in the US's military bases (Cornell, 2005). In this regard, Georgia among other three countries was keener to join NATO than other two countries. In June 1992, Georgia became a member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) and signed the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program in March 1994. Tbilisi also participated in the Planning and Review Process (PARP) and contributed to the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1999. It also attended the NATO peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and Iraq (Europe after the NATO, 2001). The US stiffened its presence in the South Caucasus throughout the 1990s.

On the other hand, Russia faced relentless weakness in the first period of Boris Yeltsin Presidency. However, subsequent to the collapse of Soviet Communism, the presence of the elites in power and domination of Russian people over economy and dependency of economic structures, the newly independent republics, including in the South Caucasus, the issue was continued as for Russia (Sammut and Paul, 2011). Russia thus managed to tie with Commonwealth of Independent States, though it was unable to stop the republics, especially Georgia and Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus, from exhibiting a tendency to the West. This caused Russia, in the second term of Yeltsin Presidency, to continue to expand its influence in the region and the country's leaders found the South Caucasus part of the "near abroad" and area of its security interest (Charap and Troitsky, 2011). With such way of thinking, the contest between the USA and Russia for the former Soviet republics, especially the South Caucasus, started running parallel with the pattern of the Cold War, i.e. the zero-sum game in that victory of one part was considered the failure of other. According to this, with the increase of Eurasian influence on Russian foreign policy which stressed the geopolitical aspect of the country, sensitivity to the influence of foreign players began to strengthen (Tchantouidze, 2008). Russia thus continued to confirm its presence in the South Caucasus through establishing military bases in Georgia and Armenia in the form of peacekeeping sources in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and released important documents in this regard. Among the national instruments of Russia during 1996-2000 and Russia's strategic plan for the twentieth-first century (1998), in which the South Caucasus takes on special importance throughout the documents, the Russia's policies proved contradictory, wavering, hypocritical, passive as well as increasingly unstable and variant (Blim, 1998).

On the contrary, in the United States in the second term of Clinton, due to Russian policy drawing from variations in domestic policy of the country, Eurasianism and repulsion from the West, divergence between objectives and interests began to shape between Russia and the United States. As a result, the USA contributed more than 9.1 billion \$ to the countries of the region by designing new policies including granting financial support by the end of 1990s. Accordingly, the Washington's policies in the areas across Russia became more transparent and got away from the passive state (Jaffe, 2001). In this respect, what made the USA interested in the region more than ever was the discovery of huge gas and oil reserves in the Caspian region (Nichol, 2008). Hence the USA's strategy included political, economic, and geopolitical objectives as well.

Conversely, Russia pursued three major policies in order to restore its influence over oil developments in Caspian Sea, especially Azerbaijan; first, to maximize the role of Russian oil companies in the region, second, to control oil transportation from the region, third, to prevent unilateral oil developments in the region by benefitting from the uncertain status of the legal regime of the Caspian Sea (Gorst, 1998). On the contrary, the USA disregarded Russia in his energy transfer policy, in that Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Oil Pipelines not only have made Iran and Russia detached from oil and gas pipeline stream, but they also jeopardize oil and gas transfer paths previously crossed Russia (Lenczowski, 1997). Since Russia sought exclusive economic-political influence in the region through controlling oil and gas reserves of the Caspian Sea (Gorst, 1998), Putin as acting president

depicted Baku-Ceyhan project as a political and economic failure for Russia when it was initiated by the United States (Saivetz, 2000).

The second round of Russia-USA relations started from acting presidency of Putin and lasted until his presidency, i.e. by the end of the first term of George W. Bush's presidency. In this period, in Russia the idea "Russia, the great power, came to the fore and the South Caucasus came back into the spotlight. Russia thus endeavored to bolster up its influence by forging security ties as it perceived U.S. energy policy to be its failure. Therefore, common borders between Georgia and the Chechen Republic have been always causes of crisis and at time tensions between Russia and Georgia. As the war between Russia and Chechen separatists broke out again in 1999, the Russian expected more assistance from Georgia in order to aid the suppression of the separatists. Yet coming across a negative response on the part of Shevardnadze, the tension between Russia and Georgia was exacerbated. In the course of this war, Georgia accepted thousands of Chechen refugees, and since then Russia exerted substantial economic and political pressure on Georgia through imposing sanction on visa regime, cutting off gas transit in the winter, and accusing them of harboring Chechen rebels (Zeynoo, 2002). Conversely, U.S. incorporated support of Georgia, NATO expansion to the East, and investment in Azerbaijan energy into its foreign policy. Since September 2001, U.S. has viewed the Caucasus as an important component in its anti-terrorism policy and perceived courting Western-oriented countries like Azerbaijan and Georgia to be important to its policies and has been very active in security cooperation with the states of the region in fields relevant to counter-terror and counter-proliferation (Shaffer, 2003). In this basis, after September 11 attacks, Georgia had growing ties with the Washington and signed several military contracts with Turkey and the U.S. The Russian who took account of the necessity to maintain their influence on "near abroad" following the breakup years and utilized various leverages to avert the influence of the West (Shafee, 2010). They responded to the event and were at odds over the growing influence of the U.S. in the region and the battle in Iraq, particularly on Azerbaijan whose energy riches are substantial. Given the developments and position of energy in the Caspian Sea during the era, the geopolitical situation was substantially risen in importance and the competition between U.S. and Russia for gaining influence in the region, in that the term "Great Game" in the South Caucasus revealed the importance to the homeland security of states involved (Sander, 2006). During the Bush Administration, the acme of U.S. policy in the South Caucasus was to interfere with a view to bringing political changes to the leaders of the region, in the sense that the U.S. sought to make figures rise to power that implemented the Washington policy by replacing the leaders of the region and pursuing the idea of "Rose Revolution". The acme of the US presence, especially in political and security arena, has to do with developments in Georgia in the aftermath of the colored Revolution in the country in 2003, followed by the intransigence of Russia (Khelashvili and Macfarlane, 2010). This was regarded as a threat to Russia, since a totally Western-oriented country exists near its territory. That is, the South Caucasus was seen as a critical region and strategic studies indicated that every region can rise in geopolitical importance as it displays a tendency to great powers. As a result, the end of the period came with confrontation.

The third term of US-Russia relations in the South Caucasus encompassed the second term of Putin's and G W. Bush's presidency. In this period, the strategic sensitivity of the Caucasus can be associated with Russia's survival and power seeking as well as economic and energy point of views. Review of Russia's strategies for the Caucasus is in line with its large-scale strategic policies (Karami, 2005). Such policy is recognized as the idea "Russia, a great power". A look at the foreign policy of Tsarist Soviet and post-soviet periods indicates that the idea has had a continuous impact on foreign policy makers' mentality in the country; and weakness and power was considered as a principle in different times. Reiterating the idea bears in mind that Russia is seen as a "great power" seeking a special route for development. According to this, the idea can be viewed as the foundation of Russian national self-understanding which has an impact on elites and people of the country as well (Shevtsova, 2007).

On the contrary, we can point out to the idea relevant to the presence of U.S. in the Caucasus as opposed to the idea "Russia, great power", which constitutes the geopolitical significance of the region. Long term and large-scale objective of the US is to set foot in the backyard of Russia and establish its presence in the region so that it can avert shaping of treaties and military alliances. Washington has been struggling to pursue its political order and establish its hegemony in the world by acquiring influence in the region (Kaplan & William, 2003). Russia is reluctant to entirely hand in the region to U.S., because it still sees itself as a great power in the structure of international system. However, Russia-US relations encompassed a host of issues ranging from contradictions in their orientations by the end of the second term of Putin and Bush administration. The trend of the relationships was stripped of any continuation and stability of any sort, in the sense that in the early years of the third millennium any indication of serious competition based on conflict and maximization of interest conflict has been revealed and a behavioral pattern of both countries included cooperation and mutual understanding as to the subject of counter-terrorism in the next stage (Charap & Troitsky, 2011).

Accordingly, presence of the US in the South Caucasus was seen as a major hurdle for Russia to fully lead the region. Some causes of the conflict between the two countries in this period include: US missile defense deployed in Czech and Polish, US and NATO progress in the backyard and near abroad (McNamara, 2008). In this respect, Russia continue to rein in the US and Europe by militarizing energy security and cut gas export to Ukraine and Europe since the beginning of 2006. Energy militarization from Russia coincided with the rise in international energy prices, which displayed power of Russia successfully (Sadri & Burns, 2010).

The fourth round of US-Russia relations is linked with the presidency of Medvedev and the first term of Obama. In this course, witnessing US and NATO progress in the backyard and near abroad, Russia perceived their national interest and strategic balance to be at stake. Hence Moscow practically got into a confrontation with the US and NATO (Papava, 2009). The course of confrontation continued until August 2008 when Russia made a military attack on Georgia, which led to a conflict between the two great powers, which led presidency of Medvedev to be referred to as high tension age of Russia-West relations. However, when Obama rose to power, the patterns was shaped otherwise. In this course, Russia-US ties forged as a result of security approaches for both countries moved toward a limited balance and equilibrium. Indeed, presence of a great regional power like Russia in Eurasia area has made the maneuvering power of U.S. largely subsided and the countries of the region arranged their relations centering on Russia. Therefore, U.S. made an effort to keep its regional circles going on so as to protect its power as well as embarking on subsequent strategic actions (Salzman, 2010). Following the five-day war, Russia put an end to its peacekeeping operations in the region and established new form of its military presence following the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence. At this point, Russia no longer took on a mediating and impartial role, in the sense that leaders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia offered Russia the establishment of a military base in their territories (Markedonove, 2009).

However, Obama attempted to make U.S. foreign policy aligned further with Russia in the South Caucasus, deciding on few measures to reconstruct the relations between the two countries, namely replacing START treaty, cooperation over Afghanistan and agreement on Iran and North Korea. In the meantime, following the independence of South Ossetia, which blurred the relation between the two parties, it was hardly expected to see an increasing level of cooperation from either side (Alcaro & Alessandri, 2009). The joint statement by Obama and Medvedev in April 2009 in London, however, contained issues of cooperation over international security and strategic nuclear arms reduction talks, as well as laying emphasis on fixing bilateral economic issues. The measures taken by the U.S. indicated that U.S. managed to tackle symbolic concerns of Russia. In addition to the joint statement by Obama and Medvedev in April 2009 in London, both sides had talks over Georgia and Ukraine on July 6th 2009, which led Medvedev to take a flexible foreign policy.

As for Medvedev's approach to a flexible foreign policy in Russia's strategic 'National Security Instrument' until 2020, which was approved in 2009, it has been pointed out that enlargement of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States constituted top priority of Russian foreign policy. As a result of Moscow's determination to gain control over the territories of the former Soviet, U.S. grew in concern (Markedonove, 2009). That is, the issues laid out were conspicuously echoed in the first formal and important document drafted by Obama, National Security Strategy of the United States, in May 2010, which demonstrated the emphasis of Obama's policy makers on continuation of policies and approaches previously adopted.

In this regard, developments in Arabian countries brought about ever-growing interest of U.S. foreign policy team in an unforeseen, accelerated, and complex trend over countries such as Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria. The natural upshot of this led to less interest of U.S. in regions such as the South Caucasus. In general, relations between the two countries coming with Obama's withdrawal in this period followed a process of interaction.

The fifth round of relations between the two countries was established in the new presidency of Putin and the second term of Obama administration. In this period that Russia encountered the Commonwealth of the Independent States, particularly the South Caucasus, preservation of regional influence and battle with the enlargement of NATO to the East was an important cause of adopting a confronting policy against U.S. among others. Russia decided to maintain its military bases in Ukraine up to 2042 and in Armenia until 2044. In light of U.S. and NATO troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, Russia took advantage of a gap in power and embarked on fortifying its positions in Central Asia and Caucasus. Thus, the charter of Collective Security Treaty Organization was modified in 2012, where member states were banned to make available their lands to other countries in order to establish military bases without the consent of other member states (Racz, 2012). Indeed, the measure aimed at the gradual elimination of all non-Russian military bases from the lands of member states. One reason for Russia to gain power in early part of the course was increase in oil price and therefore, the increase in revenues of the country. This led Putin to pursue the idea "Russia, great power" more vehemently and attacked Ukraine in opposition to the US' will for the enlargement of NATO to the East and Ukraine's tendency to U.S. in 2014.

In order to deal with this security issue in the North Caucasus in 2014, Russia cut off Crimea from Ukraine by making an attack on the country. At this point in time, Russia keeps an eye on the eastern part of the country. With the occupation of the Crimea, U.S. still takes no military measure to support Ukraine, though it sparked the West's response, and it just suffice to impose sanctions on Russia. Thus, Russia has been certain that it can expand its military influence over the entire Caucasus.

Relying on this, rearranging US-Russia relations is very difficult in the new administration of Putin. It is because this requires the abolition of Jackson-Vanik amendment, which grew in credit by Russia's attack on Ukraine. The code puts constraint on ordinary commercial relations with countries violating human rights (Larrabee, 2012). With such developments, the conflict between Russia and U.S. reached a peak, in the sense that Russia embarked on a contest with the US by supporting separatist from Ukraine. The contest has become strengthened by employing economic sanctions on the part of the Western countries and U.S. versus Russia; more particularly, the US could struck a great blow to Russia's power with an increase in oil price.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we discussed interaction between the foreign policy of U.S. and Russia in the new geopolitics of the south Caucasus. According to our discussion, in general, the geopolitical aspect of the South Caucasus as one of the causes and Russia's interest has led both countries to experience a circle of interaction and confrontation in a constant fashion. The interesting point is that both sides, as neorealism theory suggests, demonstrated the same conducts toward each other once decided on a power balance in the South Caucasus.

REFERENCES

- (1). Alcaro, Riccardo and Emiliano Alessandri (2009), "Re-setting US-EU-Russia Relations", Moving Beyond Rhetoric, at: <http://www.iai.it>
- (2). Mackinder (1904). *The Geographical Pivot of History*.
- (3). Thompson, E.P. (1978), *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- (4). Plano. & Olton (1982). *The International Relations Dictionary*. 3rd edition, ABC-Clio, 1982, the University of Michigan
- (5). Rosenau, James N. 1969. *Linkage Politics*. New York: Free Press.
- (6). Waltz, Kenneth M. (1979), *Theory of International Politics*, Mass, Addison Wesley Publishing.
- (7). Krasner, S.D. (1978). *Defending the National Interest*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- (8). Mearsheimer, John J. (2001), *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, Norton Company. *New York Times* (1995), 12 Oct.
- (9). Oskanian, Kevork (2013), *Fear, Weakness and Power in the Post-Soviet South Caucasus: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis; New Security Challenges*,
- (10). Ismailzade, Fariz (2012), *The South Caucasus 2021: Oil, Democracy and Geopolitics*, Washington D.C., Jamestown Foundation.
- (11). Jafalian, Annie (2011), *Reassessing Security in the South Caucasus*, United Kingdom, Ashgate.
- (12). De Waal, Thomas (2010), *The Caucasus: An Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press
- (13). Cheterian, Vicken (2009), *War and Peace in the Caucasus: Ethnic Conflict and the New Geopolitics*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- (14). Tatikian, Soossi (2006), "Euro-Atlantic Integration Trends of the South Caucasus States", *Central Asia and Caucasus*, No. 4 (40).
- (15). Nichol, Jim (2014), "Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia: Political Development and Implications for U.S. Interests", *Congressional Research Service* 7-5700, July 13.
- (16). Cornell, Svante (2005), "US Engagement in The Caucasus: Changing Cears", *Helsinki Monitor*.
- (17). Blim, Douglas (1998), "Russian Caspian Policy UnderPremakov, Program on New Approaches to Russian Security", PONARS.
- (18). Nichol, Jim (2008), "Armenia Azerbaijan and Georgia: security Issues and Implications for U.S Interest",
- (19). Gorst, Iabel (1998), "Petroleum Ambassadors of Russia, State Versus Corporate Policy in The Caspian Region", James A Baker 111 Institute for Public Policy, Rice University.
- (20). Lenczowski, George (1997), "The Caspian oil and Gas Basin, A New Source of Wealth?", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. V, No. 1.
- (21). Khelashvili, George and S. Neil Macfarlane (2010), "The Evaluation of US policy toward The Southern Caucasus", *Uluslarrasiliskiler (International Relation)*, Vol. 7, No. 26, summer.

- (22). Saivetz, Carol (2000), 'Russian Foreign Policy Free-Lancing: the Cases of Lukoil,Gazprom, and Rosvooruzhenie', in Breslauer et al. (2000), pp. 25–31.
- (23). Zeynoo, Baran (2002), "The Caucasus: Ten Years after Independence", The Washington Quarterly, winter
- (24). Shafee, Fareed (2010), "New Geopolitics of The south Caucasus", at: <http://www.gab-ibn.com>
- (25). Shaffer, Brenda (2003), Iran's Role in the south Caucasus and Caspian Region: Diverging Views of the U.S. and Europe, SWP Berlin, Iran and It's Neighbors, US: Harvard University, Belfer Center, July.
- (26). Sander, Aaro G. (2006), "US-Russian Energy security in The Caucasus: The prospects for Conflict in The National Interest", at: <http://www.sras.org>
- (27). Jaffe, Amy (2001), US Policy Towards The Caspian Region: Can The wish – list Berealized ? ", security of The Caspian Sea Region: SIPRI.
- (28). Karami, Jahangir (2005), "Russia National Indentity and Policy toward The Near Abroad", Amu Darya, Vo.18, No.18.
- (29). Serhiy Holowaty, "Ukraine: One Year of Independence," in Russia, Ukraine, and the U.S. Response (Queenstown, MD: The Aspen Institute, 1993), 56.
- (30). Shevtsova, Lilia (2007), "Post-Communist Russia: Historic opportunity Missed", International Affairs, Vol. 83, No. 5
- (31). Kaplan, Lawrence f. and William Kristol (2003), The war Over Iraq: Saddam's Tyranny and American Mission, California: Encounter Book.
- (32). Charap, Samuel and Mikhail Troitsky (2011), "U.S- Russia Relation in Post-Soviet Eurasia: Transcending The Zero–Sume Game", at: <http://www.us-russiafuture.org>.
- (33). McNamara, Sally (2008), "International Missile Defense: Ensuring Americas Safety and its Global Alliances", Published by Heritage Foundation, at: <http://www.herritage.org>
- (34). Sadri H. & Burns N. (2010). The Georgia crisis: A new cold war on the horizon?
- (35). Sammut, Dennis and Paul, Amanda (2011), "Addressing The Security challenges in The South Caucasus The Case for a Comprehensive, Multilateral and Inclusive Approach", European Policy Center, at: <http://www.epc.eu/documents>.
- (36). Papava, Vladimir (2009), "The End of the Frozen Cold War?", Caucasus Review of International Affairs, Vol.3, No.1, at: <http://www.cria-online.org>.
- (37). Nixey, James (2010), "The South Caucasus: Drama on Three Stages", at: <http://www.chathamhouse.org>
- (38). Markedonove, Sergey (2009), "The Big Caucasus Consequences of the Five Day war, Threats and Political Prospects", International Center for Black sea Studies (ICBSS), Xenophon Paper, No. 7.
- (39). Nicu Sava, Ionel (2010), "Geopolitical Patterns of Euro – Atlanticism", International Interest, at: <http://www.da.mod.UK/colleges/arag>.
- (40). Racz, Andras (2012), "Good Cop or Bad Cop? Russian Foreign Policy in The New Putin Era", at: <http://www.transatlantic academy.org/publications>.
- (41). Larrabee, Stephen (2012), "Putin's NATO: Cold Winds from Moscow", at: <http://www.rand.org/blog>
- (42). Tchantouidze, Lasha (2008), "The Three colors of war: Russian , Turkish , and Iranian Military Threat to The South Caucasus, Caucasus Review of International Affairs, Vol.2, No.1, at: <http://www.Cria-online.org>