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# Foreign Policy Strategies of the USA and Russia in the South Caucasus and Central Asian Regions. New Geopolitical Changes and Clash of National Interests

## Summary

One of the turning points in international politics obviously was the end of the Cold War. The unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union and communist regimes in the eastern part of Europe, the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, have led to the birth of new international system. The starting point of the new system, which is frequently called as "the new world order", was the thaw in the post-Cold War relations between the two superpowers.

This thesis examines the post-Cold War foreign policies of the United States and Russia in the South Caucasus and Central Asia from a theoretical and practical view. After 9/11, the South Caucasus region became an important geo-strategically in the U.S. global strategy. U.S involvement in the South Caucasus region was described as "instituting sustainable policies to promote national and regional stability". The aim of the project is to analyze the nature of the U.S. and Russian Foreign Policy Strategies in the region since the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially since the adoption of the Bush doctrine and to find an answer to the question, whether there are neo-imperialist elements in the U.S. and Russian foreign policies towards the region and in its bilateral relations with the three region states. This paper argues that the U.S. and Russian strategies have been designed to guarantee its own hegemony over the region. The isolation of Russia and Iran from any influence and hegemony over the region are the main goals of the U.S. foreign policy. Security interests and energy issues play dominant role on the agenda of the U.S. foreign policy in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. At the same time the paper investigates how the White House and the Kremlin policies have affected the whole region. Ethnic conflicts, the color revolutions in the post-Soviet space, democracy promotion, and energy security issues are used to explore the geopolitical implications of Russian and American politics in the above mentioned regions.

From the International Relations perspective, there is a vacuum in the literature dealing directly with the *Great Power politics and neo-imperialist politics* in the South Caucasus and Central Asia region. There is also a void in the literature to be filled with new theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of neo-imperialism in the U.S and Russian foreign policies in the ethnic conflicts and generally in the whole region. My aim is to bring a new perspective to the literature on above-mentioned issues.

## Research Questions

I argue that both the U.S. and Russian strategies have been designed to guarantee 'hegemony' over the region and that the differences between the two have important theoretical and practical implications. In the data analysis, the key notion is strategy, and the central question, which outlines the framework of interpretation, is whether there are 'neo-imperialist' elements in the U.S. and Russian foreign policies towards the regions, and how the U.S. policies compare with Russia's.

The dissertation will be based on *two research hypotheses*:

- The first one applies to the assumption that *the U.S and Russian foreign policies in the South Caucasus and Central Asian regions could be analyzed from the neo-imperialist perspective*;
- The second hypothesis, however, constitutes a basis of explaining the issue that by the U.S supported *democratic revolution* in Georgia haven't brought to the stabilization and democratization of those countries and the regions as whole, rather those regime changes have made Russia more aggressive, which resulted with getting lost of the Georgian territories and the strengthening of Russian influence in the region.

The thesis hereby aims to contribute to a theoretical development of the *Great Power and neo-imperialist politics*, as well as the linkage between *ethnic conflicts and color revolutions* in the region.

## Problem Statement

By the collapse of the Soviet Union, a bipolar international system was abruptly transformed into unipolar system. United States and Soviet Union's struggle for the control of the world during the Cold War era, replaced with the *de-facto global hegemony* of the USA. With regards to international relations theory *realism* was the winner of the Cold War, which argued that individual states define their own national interests, pursue their own security, and choose own methods to protect those interests. *Security and prosperity* were two central ideals in the US Foreign policy. After the collapse, scholars continued to debate on the future of the international system and the *foreign policy* of the U.S. International relations schools of thought – *neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security and primacy* have arisen. Realism was the starting point all of these schools.

A strategic goal for Russia is to keep and restore the CIS area as an *exclusive zone of Russian influence*. The Kremlin continues to pursue a policy which weakens the sovereignty of the post-Soviet republics and occasionally resists in order not to allow these countries to escape from Russian orbit. Russia views the South Caucasus as a zone of its exclusive interests, where its objectives have supported its grand strategy of creating a multi-polar international system. Russia's strategy in those regions has been revitalized as a result of recent economic growth under Putin's leadership, and while still lacking a regional doctrinal approach, has increasingly assumed the contours of one. The Kremlin's policy towards those region states have been designed to guarantee its hegemony and domination over them, be coercive or cooperative. Russia combines her traditional great power goals with the geo-economical goals. This is why I call this policy a new Russian imperialism and these strategies as *neo-imperialist* foreign policy, and argue that these strategies will cause to the formation of a new multi-polar world order.

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