

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN UNITED STATES STRATEGIC VISION

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Abstract: Central and Eastern Europe is relatively one of the youngest regions in the world in the foreign policy strategic planning of the United States. Despite having established formal diplomatic relations with countries of this region many decades or in some cases a century ago, the nature of the relations between the U.S. and them was largely defined in the new post-Cold war era. Over the last thirty-five years the international relations in this region went from a highly structured logic of bipolar confrontation between the United States-led Western block and the Soviet-led Eastern block to a more complex set of relations within the framework of the European Union, NATO, and outside these organizations. Such qualitative transformation of relations in the region – from the Cold war, to a period of peaceful cooperation, and then again to a new confrontation between the U.S., China and Russia raises a serious research question – how the United States has been defining and building up their relations with the vast number of very different countries in the new international relations contexts. The paper will try to formulate the functional value of the relations with regional countries for the strategic imperatives of the United States. In order to determine that the author will analyze the evolution of diplomatic and political relations, investments and trade dynamics, military cooperation and strategic significance of those relations for American regional security interests. This research of the U.S. foreign policy practices towards the Central and Eastern Europe will try to formulate what are the main factors that served as a driving force of the development of those relations, and to understand the scale of how those policies are dependent on the U.S. strategic imperatives towards Russia, China, or major European allies.

Keywords: United States, US foreign policy, liberal world order, Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans, Russia, European Union, NATO.

Introduction

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Europe for the United States has been playing a crucial role throughout all the history of this country. From almost all aspects of social and international life the so-called Old World has in large scale determined the inception of the most powerful country not only in the New one, but eventually in the whole world. The European influence embraced in its philosophy, religion, strategic culture, political regimes as well as a great number of conflicts, wars and other problems served as important factors for the establishment of a large migration flows into North America, the design of the United States government and all future logic of its behavior. For the biggest part of the American existence the events on the European continent and foreign policy of its powers have defined the long-term strategic interests of the United States first on the regional, hemispheric, but then on the global spheres.

The XXI century brought to this state of affairs an absolutely new quality, previously not seen for more than two hundred years. The global economic, political, technological and in some part military rise of China has seriously shifted the global focus of the United States foreign policy from the West towards the East. Of course, it would be inaccurate to say, that the European vector of the United States foreign policy, that has been systemically significant from the beginning, faded into the background. The deep crisis of European security architecture, the degradation Russian American relations and the escalation of the Ukrainian conflict still has a very dangerous and glooming perspective to affect not only regional, but global affairs and thus the American national interest. China's evolution of national might as well as its macroregional Belt and Road Initiative and global vision of "the Community with a shared future for mankind" gave Beijing such qualitatively new posture in the international relations system, that Washington under the presidency of Donald J. Trump for the first time officially categorized these processes as a systemic and long-term challenge (National Security Strategy, 2017, p. 25).

At the same time this globally significant change in the United States strategic goal setting was not the only one that had seriously influenced the long-term nature of the American-European relations. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Warsaw pact and other socialist states the substantive structure of regional affairs shifted in a such drastic scope, that it still continues to heavily influence the U.S. foreign policy in the continent. The end of socialist rule at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s eventually gave birth to new 19 independent countries, thus creating a new political space, that

was not heavily integrated in neither any economic, nor military multilateral organizations.

This situation also created a new front in the United States foreign policy, which required developing a new strategic planning approaches towards this subregion. Despite having a lot of common history and problems of post-socialist development, these newly independent Central and Eastern European countries came from quite distinct and different structural background: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania were former Soviet Republics, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Albania, Bulgaria were former members of the Warsaw pact, and Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia were once part of the united Yugoslavia.

This moment in history was a bifurcation point in the the U.S. foreign policy and posed a new serious challenge to its future evolution in the most important region in the world. First of all, it raised a serious question for the American political establishment – what would be the main functional value of this new set of relations with newly independent states? How did the U.S. strategic imperatives change over time during the post-Cold war era and with the start of new confrontation with China and Russia? And, finally, would it accurate to presume that main factors that fueled the development of bilateral relation between the United States and these countries were predominantly exogenous? Were there some serious endogenous reasons that shaped the structure and nature of those relations? Developing an understanding of the structural significance of this new political region in Central and Eastern Europe could bring more clarity about what the main contradictions and problems are, that could seriously pose the stability of European security architecture in the nearby future.

The inception of fundamental approaches

Throughout all the initial part of the United States history Washington's attention towards the European continent was first of all focused on major Great Power empires, while all those peoples and nations that were under their domain in the region did not present any systemically significant interest for the first democracy. During the so-called isolationist period of the American foreign policy towards the Old-World Washington was quite consistent in following its approach of not intervening into European affairs, wars and conflicts in order not harm its newly born republic. Even despite having conceptual disagreements with the social order of European

monarchies at that time, the United States was not eager to support diplomatically, militarily or by any other deeds political forces they vocally sympathized with (Wilson, 1917).

This approach clearly manifested itself during the Hungarian war of independence of 1848-1849, when the 12th American president Zachary Taylor despite all the compassion to the Hungarians did not deviate from the established approach. In his 1849 annual address before Congress, he stated: "... During the late conflict between Austria and Hungary there seemed to be a prospect that the latter might become an independent nation. However faint that prospect at the time appeared, I thought it my duty, in accordance with the general sentiment of the American people, who deeply sympathized with the Magyar patriots, to stand prepared, upon the contingency of the establishment by her of a permanent government, to be the first to welcome independent Hungary into the family of nations. ... The powerful intervention of Russia in the contest extinguished the hopes of the struggling Magyars. The United States did not at any time interfere in the contest, but the feelings of the nation were strongly enlisted in the cause, and by the sufferings of a brave people, who had made a gallant, though unsuccessful, effort to be free." (Taylor, 1849).

The establishment of bilateral relations with new nations was a step-by-step process, that was reactive to the gradual dissolution of European empires. The first wave of recognition came after the end of the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877-78. In 1880 Washington established diplomatic relation with Romania (gained independence in 1877), then in 1881 – with Serbia (1878), in 1903 – with Bulgaria (de-facto was autonomous 1878), and finally in 1905 – with Montenegro (1878). Nevertheless, this moment in history does not reflect a formation of a perception of these new states as a new specific and unique political space on the continent. The American diplomacy was first of all focused on the issues of diplomatic significance (the establishment of the relations and the signing of international agreements), while in some part Washington saw some opportunity in developing new trade roots with the Near Eastern markets (Hayes, 1879; Hayes, 1880; Arthur, 1883; Taft, 1910). Yet once again, when Turkey broke out the war with Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia Washington limited its participation to only providing safeguard and humanitarian aid when it was needed. As at that time the U.S. President William H. Taft stated, "the United States has happily been involved neither directly nor indirectly with the causes or questions incident to any of these hostilities and has maintained in regard

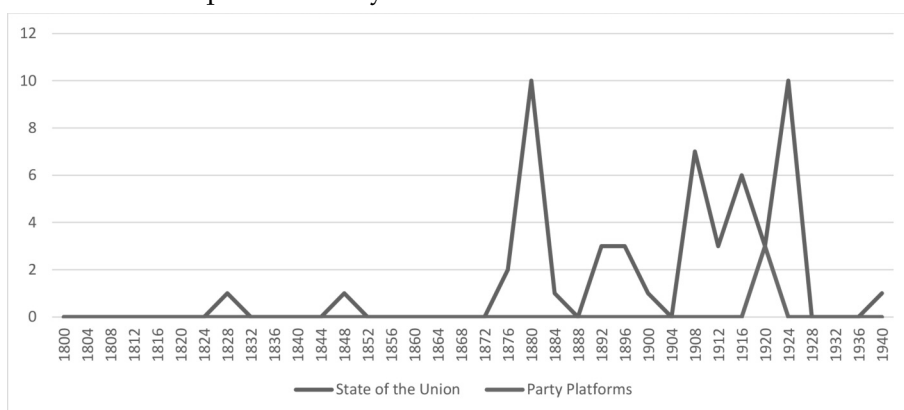
to them an attitude of absolute neutrality and of complete political disinterestedness..." (Taft, 1912).

The next wave happened right after the end of the First World War with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and the Russian Empires. In 1919 the United States established relations with Poland (became independent in 1918), Czechoslovakia (1918), in 1921 with Hungary (1918), and in 1922 with Albania (1912), and the Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (all became independent in 1918). Thus, after the war the new map of Europe included more than a dozen of new nations, who gained their independence within the lifetime of one or two generations of their citizens, creating a de-facto new subregion and political space composed of Central and Eastern European countries.

Nevertheless, this huge change in the European landscape did not in any serious manner change the overall American strategical perception of the continent in general or the subregion in particular. During the war president W. Wilson even tried to stimulate the closest German ally the Austrians to make a separate peace by saying in his 1917 State of the Union address that the United States will not "...in any way to impair or to rearrange the Austro-Hungarian Empire" (Wilson, 1917). W. Wilson did invest a lot of energy to guarantee independence of new countries, as well as he put serious effort into the creation of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (Wolff, 2020), but he did not stand in favor of the principle of self-determination over peace in Europe and in the world (Wilson, 1918). Washington considered newly independent nations no more than yet another member of "the family of European States" without deeply delving into the specifics about each of them in order to restructure the regional affairs for its own benefit (Thompson, 2013, pp. 61-62). A very symptomatic example of that trend was demonstrated a couple of years later, when the new administration of the republican president C. Coolidge was primarily requiring these new countries nothing else, but to pay their financial debts: "I am opposed to the cancellation of these debts and believe it for the best welfare of the world that they should be liquidated and paid as fast as possible. I do not favor oppressive measures, but unless money that is borrowed is repaid credit can not be secured in time of necessity, and there exists besides a moral obligation which our country can not ignore and no other country can evade. Terms and conditions may have to conform to differences in the financial abilities of the countries concerned, but the principle that each country should meet its obligation admits of no differences and is of universal application." (Coolidge, 1924; Coolidge, 1925).

Therefore, up until the Second World War the United States did not have any specific role designated within its strategic planning logic to the Central and Eastern European countries, and Washington had little interest in developing strong ties with these nations. Unlike other European countries, these new states or any matters related to them were never reflected in the internal political processes within the American establishment: the Democratic party congratulated the newly independent nations only in its 1920 party platform (Figure 1) (Democratic party, 1920).

Figure 1. Number of mentioning of Central and Eastern European nations in the annual State of the Union address and quadrennial democratic and republican Party Platforms from 1800 to 1940.



Source: The American Presidency project.

Note: countries in search are Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia (Czechia and Slovakia), Hungary, Romania, Albania Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia (Yugoslavia), North Macedonia.

The start of bipolar confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union served as a serious catalyzer for the formation of first U.S. foreign political approaches towards the Central and Eastern European countries. The establishment of socialist regimes in this political space led to a formulation the first U.S. foreign region-wide political approach as a part of a more general containment strategy to address the Soviet expansion further in Europe and around the world (Truman, 1951).

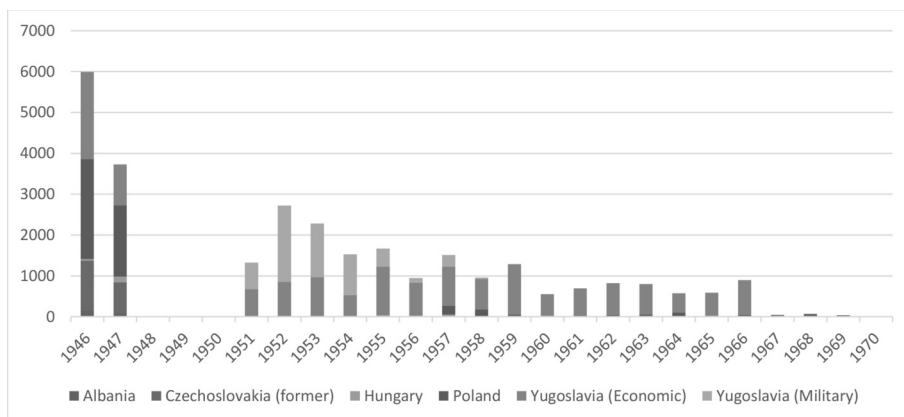
Under the Truman presidency the rise of strategic importance of the Central and Eastern European countries was reflected not only in the work of the governmental institutions, but also in the platforms of both Democratic and Republican parties, which showed their deep anxiety with the unfolding situation. If twenty years before the predominant mood in the American establishment was to steadily follow the noninterventionist approach, now the bipartisan consensus favored a more pro-active foreign policy in almost every corner of the world (Republican Party, 1952), and with regard to Central and Eastern Europe in particular it advocated that the United States must assume the mission to liberate its peoples. “We look forward to the day when the liberties of Poland and the other oppressed Soviet satellites, including Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia and other nations in Asia under Soviet domination, will be restored to them and they can again take their rightful place in the community of free nations.” (Democratic party, 1952).

At first in 1946 and 1947 the United States had provided a record amount of foreign assistance through the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration – \$9,7 billion (in constant 2020 U.S. dollars), a number that hadn't been surpassed ever since. The assistance was sent only to five countries: Poland (\$4,1 billion), Yugoslavia (\$3,1 billion), Czechoslovakia (\$1,9 billion), Albania (\$214 million) and Hungary (\$183 million) (Foreign Assistance, 2024). With the start of the Marshall plan the Soviet Union and its satellite regimes declined to participate in this program, assuming it might lead to an increase of American influence over the Eastern Europe (Britannica, 2024a). The eventual Moscow's initiative to create a multilateral economic organization called the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance seriously alarmed the U.S. foreign policy officials, that started to advocate a readjustment of the U.S. its economic policies towards the Soviet block by tightening export-import control over luxury, U.S. machinery, and stimulating the conditions for the so-called brain drain (Kohler, 1949). Thus, Washington addressed its assistance funds to countries with no or disputable communist influence (like Greece), which in conjunction with Truman's ideological doctrine and the establishment of NATO laid the foundations of the U.S. dominance in Western and partly in Southern Europe (Folly, 2013, pp. 93-94).

One of the crucial events that undermined Moscow's long-term expansion in the region was the aggravation of Soviet-Yugoslavian relations due to an argument between Stalin and Tito over the latter's influence in the Balkans, and especially over Albania (Perović, 2007). It not only limited

Yugoslavia's participation in the civil war in Greece, which had great strategic importance for the U.S. (Truman, 1947). Even before the formal breakup of diplomatic ties, while the bilateral crisis was taking place, the United States had immediately started to develop plans for the enhancement of economic relationships with Belgrade (Gannon, 1949). That crisis seriously undermined mutual trust between the USSR and Yugoslavia, which could not be restored even after Stalin's death. Belgrade not only increased bilateral trade with Washington, but also the U.S. Congress passed the Yugoslav Emergency Relief Assistance Act of 1950 (Truman, 1950), which eventually from 1951 to 1966 provided Belgrade with \$12,5 billion of economic aid, and \$5,7 billion of military assistance (Figure 2) (Foreign Assistance, 2024). This context also helped to settle with the active participation of the United States a dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia about Trieste in 1954, which from the American strategic assessment seriously improved the security situation in the Mediterranean (Eisenhower, 1951).

Figure 2. The U.S. foreign assistance to Central and Eastern European countries from 1946 to 1970 in 2020 constant U.S. million dollars



Source: foreignassistance.gov

From offensive to cooperation

Throughout the 1950s and in the beginning of the 1960s the United States had been predominantly following the established strategy of containment and isolation of Eastern European socialist regimes (Britannica, 2024b). In the end of 1940s, the U.S. and 14 of its allies established the Coordinating

Committee on Multilateral Export Controls to regulate trade of dual-use goods and sensitive technologies with socialist states (Henshaw, 1993). In cohesion with this approach in 1951 Congress passed the Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act that prohibited assistance those who shipped goods of strategic importance to the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe (Public Law 82-212, 1951). At the same time in order to counter Moscow in the ideological field, Washington since early 1950s started broadcasting informational programs via a newly established Radio Free Europe (Hill, 2001).

Nevertheless, this set of economic, diplomatic, and ideological measures were not effective enough at the initial stage of the Cold war. The deterioration of economic conditions of the Eastern European societies didn't lead to the collapse of local governments or the deterioration of Moscow's power (Borhi, 1999). A vivid example of that was the suppression of the uprising in Hungary by Soviet military forces and Hungarian communist loyalists. Though it was condemned by the American political establishment (Republican Party, 1960; Democratic party, 1960), the United States could do little in that regard, but to help the refugees (Eisenhower, 1957), because Washington's potential intervention could lead to a military escalation with unforeseen consequences (The U.S. Department of State, 2001–2009).

The Hungarian events led to a start of readjustment of the U.S. foreign policy approaches towards the Central and Eastern countries. The conjunction of isolationist measures and "liberation policies" was not effective in influencing the strategic situation in the region. As in 1960 the future U.S. president stated on the Polish-American Congress: "We recognized after the experience of the 1960's the limitations of the so-called policy of liberation. We do not want to mislead the people of Poland or Hungary again, that the United States is prepared to liberate them. Therefore, within the general framework of present events, what policies should we carry out? ... Our task is to encourage and pursue a policy of patiently encouraging freedom and carefully pressuring tyranny, a policy that looks to evolution and not toward immediate revolution ... We must never, at the summit, in any treaty declaration, in our words or even in our minds, recognize the Soviet domination of eastern Europe as permanent" (Kennedy, 1960).

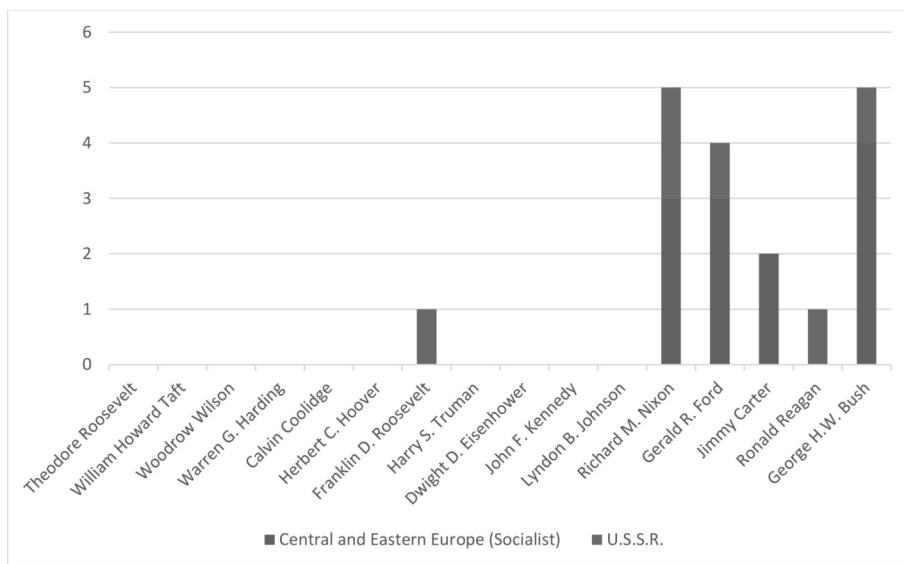
The acceptance that the status quo will not change in the foreseeable future although did not abort the liberation mission led to a gradual establishment in the U.S. foreign policy of the approach of building bridges and peaceful coexistence with socialist states in Europe (Kennan, 1960). Starting right after the Hungarian uprising from 1957 up until 1970 Poland became the second

after Yugoslavia major recipient of the U.S. economic assistance (predominantly agricultural), receiving throughout this period \$922,6 million U.S. dollars (in constant 2020 prices) (Foreign Assistance, 2024). At the same time, a start for a serious trade liberalization has been carried out in the 1960s by Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations. Within one decade the United States increased the volume of trade with major Comecon economies many times over. For example, from 1962 to 1972 the trade overflow with the Soviet Union increased from \$34,8 million to \$626,3 million U.S. dollars, with Poland – from \$41,5 million to \$236 million, with Hungary – from \$2,4 million to \$33,9 million (Atlas of Economic Complexity).

Nevertheless, the real qualitative change happened with the start of the so-called *Détente*. The start of the U.S. direct military involvement in the Vietnam war due to the failures of the Saigon government, the crush of Czechoslovakia's liberalization reforms (Democratic party, 1968), and most importantly the reach of the so nuclear parity between Moscow and Washington only endured the belief of the latter the need for change the U.S. approaches towards the Socialist block: "On occasions when a liberalization of trade in non-strategic goods with the captive nations can have this effect, it will have our support", said the Republican party platform in 1968 (Republican Party, 1968).

The rise of degree of openness laid the prerequisites for future restructuring of regional relations. The steps undertaken by the United States in the 1960s were quite humble with comparison to what was about to happen in the 1970s and 1980s. With the improvement of Soviet-American relations and the start of first Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Washington engaging more actively with Eastern European countries. Under Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford administrations the United States made its first official presidential visits to the sphere of the Socialist block: Romania (August 1969), Yugoslavia (September 1969), and only then the USSR (May 1972, Figure 3) (Travels Abroad of the President).

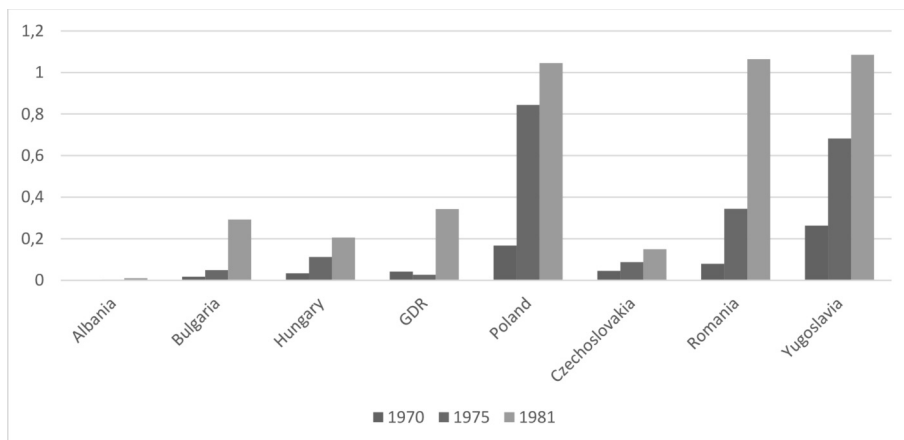
Figure 3. Number of official visits of the United States presidents to Central and Eastern European countries and to the Soviet Union from 1901 to 1993.



Source: The U.S. Department of State, the Office of the Historian.

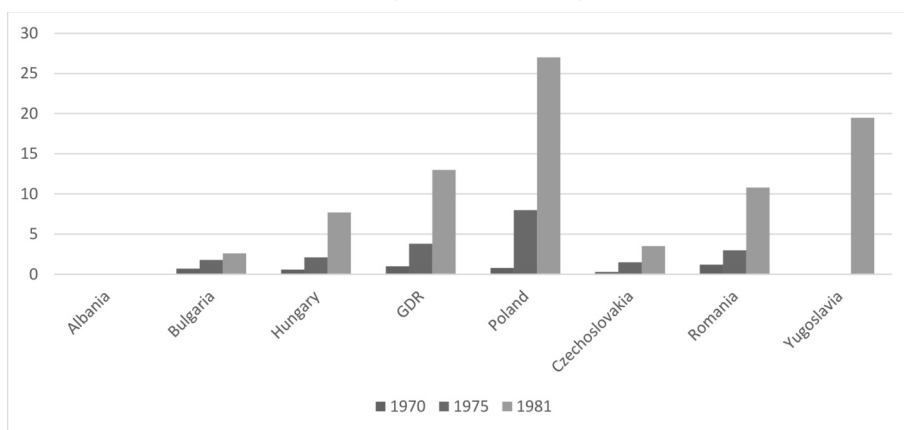
Perhaps one of the most important consequences of this liberalization was a critical rise of economic connectivity of socialist states with the U.S. and West in general. By the beginning of the 1980s the trade overflow between the United States and all Central and Eastern European countries had increased 6,4 times within one decade and became \$4,1 billion U.S. dollars (Figure 4), which sometimes accounted for 30 to 40% of their foreign trade (Morgan, Graham, 1982). More importantly, over the same time the soviet allies had tremendously increased their debt dependence on the United States by 18,2 times, reaching \$84 billion U.S. dollars (Figure 5) (Davydov, 1983, pp. 257-258). This burden on socialist economies was eventually even worsened by the inability of the Soviet Union to fulfill the demands of its allies even after the 1973-1974 energy crisis (De Groot, 2020).

Figure 4. The U.S. trade overflow with Central and Eastern European countries in 1970, 1976 and 1981, in billion U.S. dollars



Source: Calculations made by Yu. P. Davydov based on the Statistical Abstract of the United States, and the U.S. Department of Commerce data.

Figure 5. The debt levels of Central and Eastern European countries to the United States in 1970, 1976 and 1981, in billion U.S. dollars.



Source: Calculations made by Yu. P. Davydov based on the Statistical Abstract of the United States, and the U.S. Department of Commerce data.

The second Cold war and eventual restructuring

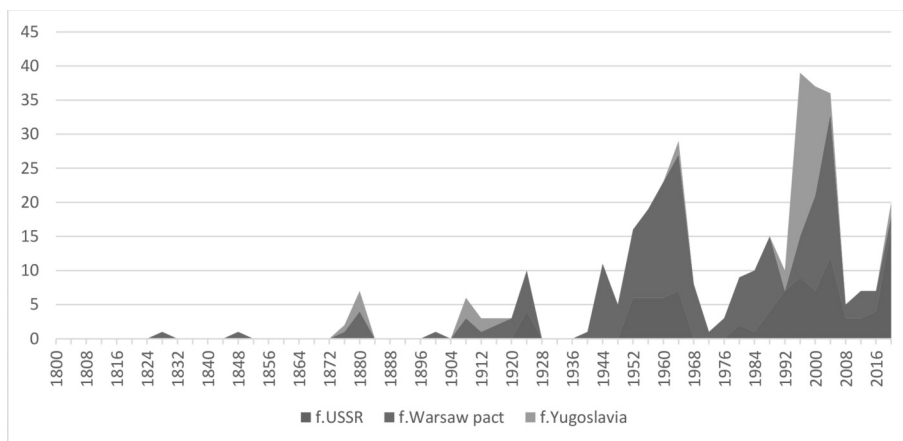
Another one of the most important legacies of the Détente era was the signing of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. It established a formal framework for East-West international relations in a vast number of spheres of cooperation: diplomatic, scientific, economic cooperation. One crucial novation of this agreement was that the Helsinki Act obliged all signatory countries to stand for the defense of human rights in accordance with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including freedom of emigration, cultural exchanges and freedom of the press (Helsinki Final Act, 1975). Initially in 1948 the USSR, Belorussian SSR, Ukrainian SSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia abstained from voting on the acceptance of the Declaration by the United Nations General Assembly (Yearbook of the United Nations, 1948-1949, p. 530), but the inclusion of the so-called “Block III” in the Final act, that specifically stated the formal agreement with the Declaration, gave the United States a normative leverage on these socialist governments (Selvage, 2009, pp. 671-687).

This circumstance led to a significant change in the U.S. foreign policy with the arrival of Carter administration and especially during the Reagan presidency. Right after the admission of the Final act the U.S. Congress passed a law, that established a bipartisan Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1976, that specifically was focused on monitoring the compliance of its provisions by countries signatories (CSCE). The Department of State, the Agency for International Development and the U.S. Information Agency were specifically reformed to take more attention and to express condemnation and concern regarding the acts of human rights violation (Dumbrell, 2013, pp. 132-135; Carothers, 1999, p. 29). Finally, under the Reagan administration the United States established a new formally independent, but controlled by the government and Congress organization, directly specializing in supporting local civic organization and activist – the National Endowment for Democracy (Davydov, Pee, 2023).

Moreover, the United States made a significant shift back in their rhetoric and strategic thinking, by taking a more offensive approach towards the socialist block. In 1980 and 1984 the Republican party started emphasizing the need to liberate not only the Central and Eastern European countries, but also the peoples in the Soviet Union itself: “We stand in solidarity with the peoples of Eastern Europe: the Poles, Hungarians, East Germans, Czechs, Rumanians, Yugoslavs, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Baltic peoples, Armenians, and all captive nations who struggle daily against their Soviet

masters” (Republican Party, 1984). This became the harbinger of a new and largest wave of United States attention towards the region (Figure 6).

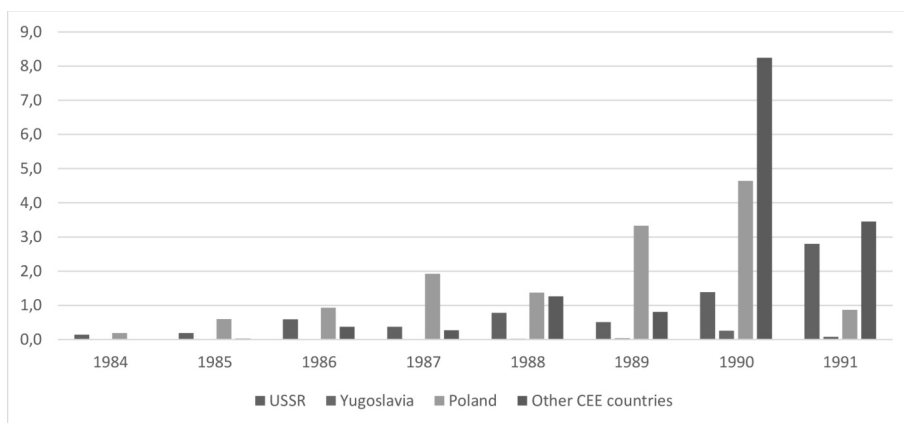
Figure 6. The numbers of mentioning of Central and Eastern European Countries in annual State of the Union addresses and Party Platforms from 1800 to 2022



Source: State of the Union addresses and Republican and Democratic Parties Platforms.

With this change in the U.S. strategy the new people’s upheaval in the region led to more active measures. In the period from 1984 to 1990, the main emphasis was placed on supporting anti-government movements in the Eastern European bloc, primarily in the Polish People’s Republic (Domber, 2019). The rise of the “Solidarnost” movement reinforced fears in Washington that Poland could become another Eastern European country for a Soviet invasion (Carter, 1981). Thus, through the conclusive part of the Cold war projects in Poland received almost 40% of all funding directed to the region. For comparison, \$13.9 million was allocated to Poland, \$17.7 million to the rest of the countries of the social bloc, while only \$4 million was allocated to projects throughout the Soviet Union (Figure 7) (NED, 1985–1992).

Figure 7. Financial flows of the National Endowment for Democracy projects in the USSR, Yugoslavia, Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe for the period from 1984 to 1991.



Source: Annual National Endowment for Democracy reports

In the late 1980s NED started supporting projects on separatist issues within the USSR itself. The movement for independence was openly supported in the Baltic republics (from 1984 to 1991, funding amounted to 754 thousand dollars), in Armenia (70 thousand dollars), the Crimean Tatar movement (86,5 thousand dollars), various independent civil society organizations in the RSFSR (1 million dollars), in Ukraine (472 thousand dollars). By 1990 projects on the Soviet outskirts have reached such importance that in the annual reports of the NED the region “Europe” has even been named “Europe and the Soviet Republics” (NED, 1985-1992). Finally, in 1989 the U.S. Congress adopted Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act in order to support for reforms and economic assistance to the region (Public Law 101-179, 1989).

The fall of Berlin wall, of socialist regimes in late 1980s and eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to a strategically significant qualitative change in the structure of the of relations in Central and Eastern Europe. The core multilateral system of socialism was built first of all on the existence of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw pact, and cease of their existence created an organizational vacuum and largely undermined the emerging order, the spirit of which was embodied in Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

The restructuring of regional relations in the logic of NATO expansion became the main stumbling block in bilateral relations between Russia and the United States, which had largely determined the whole subsequent logic of the U.S. strategy in the post-socialist space. The factual end of Cold War competition did not eradicate maybe the most significant by its long-term consequences product – a zero-sum logical framework. The dissolution of the Soviet pole could not stop the inertia of bipolar thinking model, and led to an almost automatic reaction of the American political class to support its unilateral expansion (Krauthammer, 1990). Right from the start of the new era the first U.S. National Security Strategy directly stated NATO's mission to play central role in filling the macroregional organizational vacuum of in the post-Cold War order in Europe (National Security Strategy, 1994, pp. 21–22).

Washington's establishment overtly formulated the limits of Russian activities in the new realities. In his 1994 State of the Union address president W. Clinton stated that the United States "... will seek to cooperate with Russia to solve regional problems, while insisting that if Russian troops operate in neighboring states, they do so only when those states agree to their presence and in strict accord with international standards" (Clinton, 1994). The Republican opposition in Congress articulated its views in the same logic: "...Our foreign policy toward Russia should put American interests first and consolidate our Cold War victory in Europe. We have a national interest in a security relationship with a democratic Russia. Specifically, we will encourage Russia to respect the sovereignty and independence of its neighbors; support a special security arrangement between Russia and NATO – but not Moscow's veto over NATO enlargement..." (Republican Party, 1996).

The issue of NATO admission of former Warsaw pact members and Soviet Union republics was highly sensible for Moscow. George F. Kennan pointed out that such move could trigger a strong militaristic reaction, therefore undermining long-term American interest of pacifying Russia (Kennan, 2022). To address these concerns a specific compromise was formulated in the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997. At that moment presented the highest point of Russian-American dialogue over the new security architecture in Europe. The Act established a permanently working NATO-Russia Council – a mechanism for joint policy coordination, information exchange and peaceful settling of disputes. Moreover, while it directly said that Russia had no veto over NATO's internal affairs, the Act also prescribed not to proliferate nuclear arsenals and not to establish

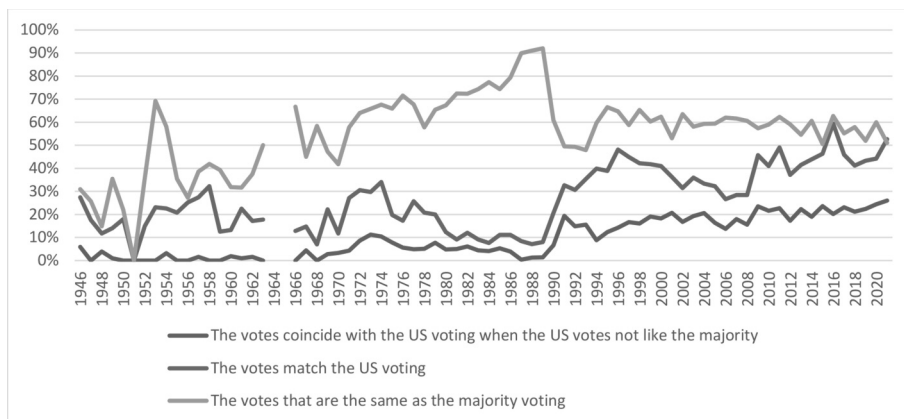
additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces on the territory of new NATO members (The U.S. Department of State, 1997).

Nevertheless, the turning point came in March 1999. The acceptance of former Comecon and Warsaw pact members Hungary, Poland, and Czechia into NATO on 12 March and almost simultaneous bombing of Belgrade two weeks later triggered substantial changes in the U.S. strategy. Looking at this sequence of events through Cold War symbolical lenses it was the first in the new era act of decomposition of former Moscow-centered political space, in which Washington-centered institutions deliberately turned former socialist countries against each other. It led to gradual antagonization of U.S.-Russia relations and increased significant level of distrust later.

Moscow's major dissatisfaction with the U.S. policies over Yugoslavia and NATO expansion significantly shifted the Washington's strategic thinking. The 1999 National Security Strategy contained criticism of Russia's practices over dealing with Chechen separatists and terrorists. "The conflict in Chechnya represents a major problem in Russia's post-Communist development and relationship with the international community; the means Russia is pursuing in Chechnya are undermining its legitimate objective of upholding its territorial integrity and protecting citizens from terrorism and lawlessness." Moreover, for the first time the NSS formulated clear imperatives and significantly broadened the agenda towards other Newly Independent States. The Clinton administration directly stated its concern regarding the withdrawal of Russia forces from Moldova and Georgia under the Conventional Armed Forces Treaty. It also stated Washington's interest in supporting Moldovan, Armenian, Georgian, Kyrgyz, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian and Ukrainian admission to the World Trade Organization (National Security Strategy, 1999). Although there would be an exaggeration to characterize the 1999 NSS as anti-Russian, it clearly showed the first non-Russian centered approach of building relations with post-soviet states.

The huge structural change in the region led to a visible shift among the majority of countries in their political solidarity with the United States. A step-by-step entry of all former Warsaw pact members into NATO was accompanied by the fact that this group of states eventually have become one of the most loyal among all the U.S. allies. Three decades after the fall of communism those regimes the average solidarity voting with the Washington when it voted not loke the majority of members of the United Nations General Assembly was from 24,1% (Romania, Bulgaria) to 27,8% (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic; Figure 8) (Davydov, 2023).

Figure 8. The percentage of equal voting of former members of the Warsaw pact (without USSR and GDR) with the majority of UN General Assembly members, with the United States, and with the U.S. when it voted not like the majority (1946-2021)

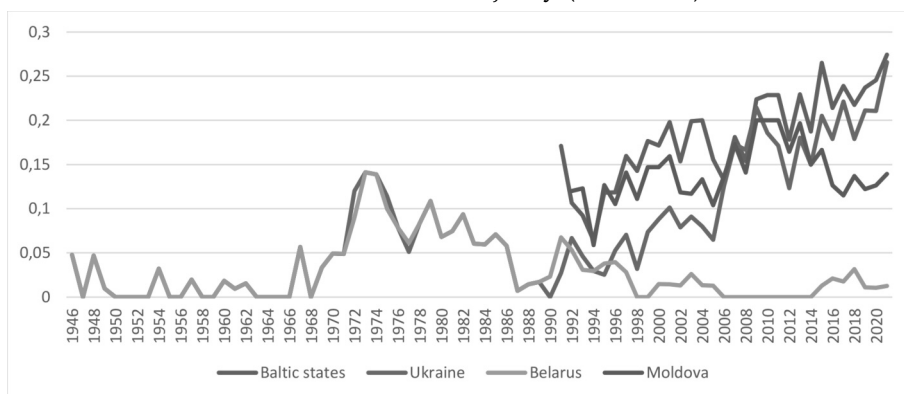


Source: Voeten E., Strezhnev A., Bailey M. United Nations General Assembly Voting Data // Harvard Dataverse. 2009. V 30. URL: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml?fileId=6358426&version=30.0> (accessed 05.04.2024). Hereafter: UN GA Voting Data.

Note: the dataset does not provide voting statistics for 1964 and 1965.

Totally heterogeneous trajectories can be seen among former Soviet republics. All three Baltic states have synchronously increased their political solidarity just like all former members of Warsaw pact, while Belarus and Moldova have been stable in their voting throughout the last three decades (average solidarity voting have been 1,6% and 14%, respectively). Ukraine has been demonstrating very strong alinement with the United States only after the 2005 Orange revolution, almost instantly doubling its voting solidarity from 6,5% in 2005 to 12,5% in 2006, while increasing it to 26,6% in 2021 (Figure 9).

Figure 9. The percentage of equal voting of former Soviet republics (without Russia, Central Asia and Caucasus) with the U.S. when it voted not like the UNGA majority (1946-2021)

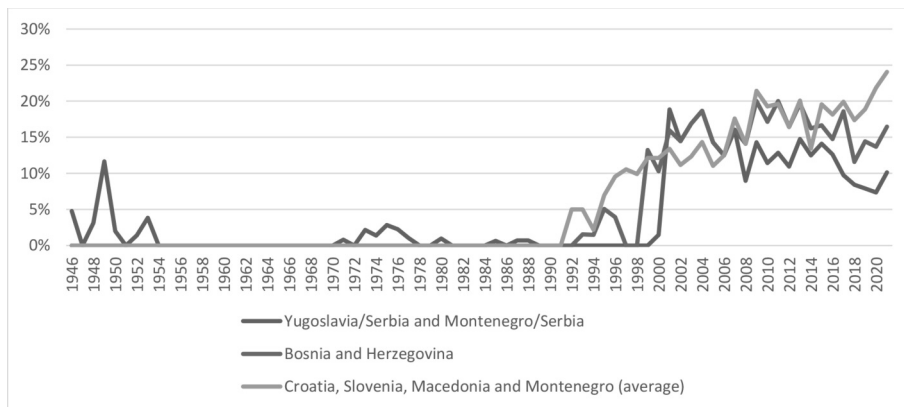


Source: Voeten E., Strezhnev A., Bailey M. United Nations General Assembly Voting Data // Harvard Dataverse. 2009. V 30. URL: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml?fileId=6358426&version=30.0> (accessed 05.04.2024). Hereafter: UN GA Voting Data.

Note: the dataset does not provide voting statistics for 1964 and 1965.

Finally, similar picture can be seen in former Yugoslavia. Serbia's solidarity with the United States has been decreasing after the tragic bombardment in 1999 to 10,1% in 2021, while all future members of NATO (Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro) over the years increased their solidarity to 24%. Bosnia and Herzegovina voting remained stable around 16% annually (Figure 10).

Figure 10. The percentage of equal voting of former Yugoslavia states with the U.S. when it voted not like the UNGA majority (1946-2021)

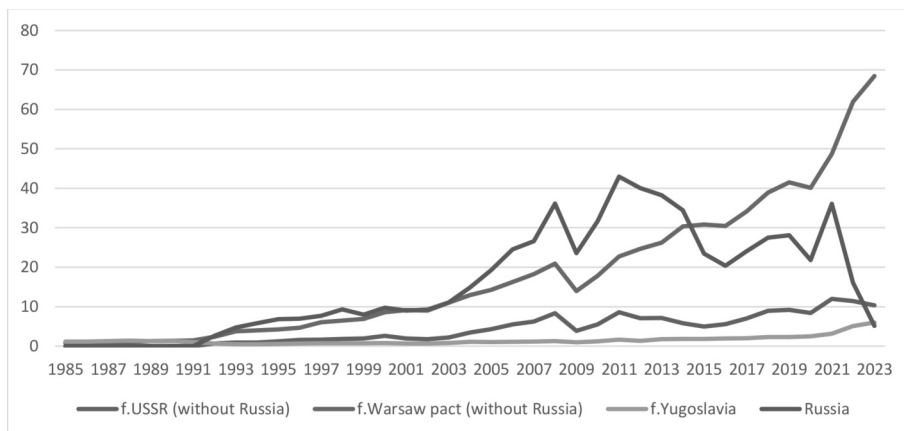


Source: Voeten E., Strezhnev A., Bailey M. United Nations General Assembly Voting Data // Harvard Dataverse. 2009. V 30. URL: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml?fileId=6358426&version=30.0> (accessed 05.04.2024). Hereafter: UN GA Voting Data.

Note: the dataset does not provide voting statistics for 1964 and 1965.

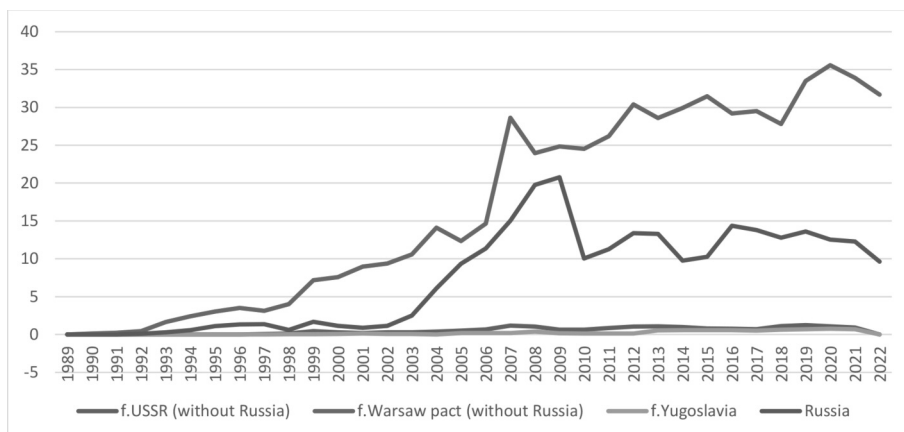
Divisions between Central and Eastern European countries based on their membership in NATO and on the degree of their solidarity with the United States also shaped Washington's long-term priorities in developing economic cooperation with these states. After the fall of the socialist block the United States has focused on the development of trade and investments predominantly with three countries: Poland, Czechia and Hungary, while other states presented little or almost no interest from the economic point of view. The development of economic relations with Russia stumbled over Moscow's accusations against Washington regarding a possible interference in the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2011-2012 (Davydov, 2022, p. 138), and then over the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis in 2013-2014 (Figure 11, 12).

Figure 11. Trade overflow between the United States and Central and Eastern European countries from 1985 to 2023 in billion U.S. dollars



Source: The U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 12. The U.S. direct investments abroad into Central and Eastern European countries from 1989 to 2023 in billion U.S. dollars

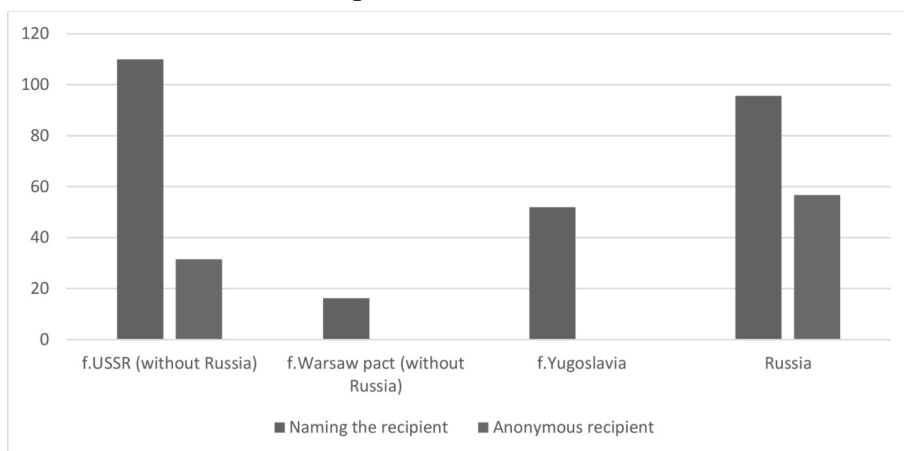


Source: The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Finally, a completely opposite picture can be seen while analyzing the distribution of finances regarding the democracy promotion projects in the region. Over the first two decades of the 21st century the National

Endowment for Democracy had projects in first of all in those countries, who were not members of NATO and who did not represent long-term economic interest and were not demonstrating increasing levels of solidarity with the United States (Figure 13).

Figure 13. The overall budget of the National Endowment projects in Central and Eastern Europe from 1999 to 2020 in million U.S. dollars



Source: The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Thus, after the end of the Cold war the United States had restructured the multilateral relations in Central and Eastern Europe in such a manner that the fundamental long-term dynamics of future evolution of regional affairs were largely determined by the affiliation of regional actors with Washington and its multilateral institutions.

* * *

The strategic logic of United States foreign policy towards the Central and Eastern European countries have largely been determined by exogenous factors, that were first of all connected to Soviet and then Russia's policies towards those states. After these countries obtained their independence, the United States, although verbally had been expressing sympathy towards them, showed little interest in dealing with them due to their limited security and economic importance for the U.S. national interest.

Only the start of the Cold war and vast expansion of the Communist influence laid the foundation of a coherent U.S. strategical approach towards the region. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Washington's policies in designing and strengthening a more preferable structure of relations with regional countries was predominantly determined by exploitation of shortcomings of its counterparts and crisis in the socialist bloc.

From the long-term strategic perspective, the Soviet split with Yugoslavia, the inefficiency of the planned economy, repressive and military practices within the alliance, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Warsaw pact and Comecon, and eventually the Ukrainian crisis were step-by-step exploited by the United States in order to increase bilateral or multilateral ties with the Central and Eastern European countries.

The case of Central and Eastern European policy of the United States demonstrates that Washington's long-term strategy towards the opposite powers has always been consistent in its goal-setting approach, while was quite flexible in its methods. When the U.S. establishment realized the inevitability to achieve the fall of communist regimes in this region in short- to middle-term perspective, Washington supported the institutionalization of the established order of things in order to make it more predictable. But at the same time the U.S. policy makers were designing their plans of restructuring the unfavorable status-quo.

Nevertheless, the long-term perspectives of the United States strategy towards the Central and Eastern European region are more uncertain then 30 years ago or even as they were on the eve of the Cold war. Taking in consideration previous dispute resolution practices in the region Russia's start of military operation in Ukraine could be interpreted as an attempt to coerce a dialogue over a new restructuring of the European security architecture, based largely on the demands formulated in December 2021 to withdraw NATO's military infrastructure to its positions in 1997.

This contradicts Washington's general political approach, that NATO should remain the main and only organization, that determines the security architecture in Europe, while Russia should not have a word in NATO's affairs. This approach is a direct continuation of the old Cold war zero-sum logic, while the nature of the contemporary system of international affairs largely depends on another set of differences - between China and the United States. In this regard an excessive pressure on Russia could lead to unpredictable consequences, which might even include the usage of nuclear weapons, which would undermine long-term position of the United States in their competition with China. At the same time a potential start o such

dialogue could lead to a decline of the spirit or a potential destabilization in the most crucial security space of the United States – NATO. That circumstance correlates very much with Moscow's initial position to intertwine the U.S.-Russia dialogue regarding the strategic offensive nuclear weapons with the issue of security architecture in Europe.

Indeed, the eventual resolution of the Ukrainian crisis, that affects the situation on the battlefield, the Russia-West economic competition, the principles upon which the European security architecture is designed and how modern structure of the international relations system is functioning, depends on vast number of unpredictable factors: presidential elections in the United States, decline of rise of China's economy, enforceable global crisis. Nevertheless, it's resolution will eventually lead to a serious systemic transformation of the European and global security architecture and it will define a new pillar of the United States' long-term strategy in Central and Eastern Europe in the foreseeable future.

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