Beat: Politics

Intensifying Ideological between the United States and Russia

The Alaska Summit

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USPA NEWS - The collapse of the Soviet Union had profound repercussions on Russian foreign policy, its strategies, and defining characteristics, as well as on the reality of international politics in general. This collapse resulted in the emergence of a unipolar international system dominated solely by the United States of America. These consequences, with the severe internal crises both economic and political that afflicted the Soviet Union - which inherited by Russia- rendered the process of formulating a coherent Russian foreign strategy highly contradictory. It had to balance between the new global reality and the Soviet legacy, as well as between Russia's limited capabilities and the pressing requirements of domestic development and reform mandated upon any future political leadership.

Today, Russia occupies a special position not only because it continues to be a global power by virtue of its military might, geographical expanse, abundant economic resources, and latent scientific and technological capacities, but also due to the decisive steps it has taken since Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency in 2000. These steps marked Russia's serious return to the stage of global politics after years of imperial disintegration.

In this context, Russia's significance is further magnified by the inheritance of the Soviet imperial legacy, which for more than half a century remained one of the two global poles in a bipolar world order. Despite the end of bipolar rivalry and the emergence of a new, cooperative, and seemingly different international system, Russia's positions within the United Nations Security Council continue to wield substantial influence. In recent years, Russia has adopted foreign policy stances that rekindled aspirations for a restored global balance of power. Through this renewed vision, Moscow seeks equilibrium within a multipolar international order—especially given the waning grip of the United States on global affairs, alongside the rise of other international powers such as China, India, and Brazil, which increasingly share spheres of influence and diminish America's dominance.

Although ideological polarization and the politics of deepening contradictions have historically defined relations between the two poles, such dynamics did not preclude occasional periods of détente. A prime example was U.S. President Richard Nixon's historic visit to Moscow in 1973, which led to the formulation of a set of principles aimed at avoiding military confrontation, preventing nuclear crises, and rejecting the use of force. This was followed by Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev's visit to Washington in the same year. However, détente proved short-lived. The ideological struggle and politics of contradictions soon resurfaced, particularly after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 and Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. These events reignited the Cold War. President Jimmy Carter pursued a strategy of exacerbating Sino-Soviet contradictions and intensifying the U.S. nuclear presence in both Europe and the Gulf region. Ronald Reagan later advanced this same course, accelerating the arms race and launching the Strategic Defense Initiative in 1983.

Furthermore, Russia played a pivotal role in the Iranian nuclear file, which culminated in the July 2014 agreement. Putin's efforts in this regard sought to alter Washington's foreign policy trajectory, compelling the United States to engage with Moscow as a partner in global affairs.
The outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine war, however, was deeply rooted in historical justifications. Putin's move toward Ukraine cannot be understood without recognizing the historical bonds linking Ukraine with Russia—whether Tsarist or Soviet. Indeed, Kyiv itself was once referred to as "Kievan Rus," considered the cradle of Russian civilization. The emergence of the first political entity in the region during the 13th century, known as "Kievan Rus," further underscores this connection. Notably, during the Soviet period, Russia voluntarily relinquished territories such as Crimea to Ukraine, despite having previously gained them through war with the Ottoman Empire.

At present, President Putin seeks what may be termed a strategic correction—a recalibration aimed at addressing unresolved questions left in the aftermath of the Cold War. These lingering questions echo the unresolved issues of World War I, when Germany was burdened with punitive reparations and consequences that eventually contributed to the outbreak of World War II. Germany sought to correct the flawed conclusion of the First World War, ultimately giving rise to a new international order. Similarly, Russia today is attempting to rectify what it perceives as the flawed conclusion of the Cold War—a process that, once complete, could well yield a new global order.

Accordingly, it was only natural that the summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, held in Alaska on Friday, produced no agreements or breakthroughs to halt the war in Ukraine. No tangible steps toward a ceasefire emerged from the talks, despite Trump's prior assertion that his chief objective in meeting Putin was to end what he described as Europe's deadliest war in eighty years.
Thus, President Putin has neither abandoned nor will he abandon the ideological principles that underpin his vision in exchange for short-term political bargains with the West at the expense of peoples' struggles—unlike Soviet leaders who, despite presiding over a global superpower, compromised or traded away revolutionary movements and allies. Before the Soviet Union itself collapsed, communist parties worldwide had already crumbled, not due to compelling geopolitical necessity but as a result of the failures of Soviet leadership.

Indeed, President Putin has succeeded in consolidating the foundations of a great power within the borders of the Russian Federation. Yet his ambitions extend beyond the limits of his state, requiring a political framework capable of reconciling the myriad contradictions at play. This should not, however, serve merely as a substitute for filling the political vacuum created by the growing failures of U.S. foreign policy. We can only hope that President Putin avoids being drawn into the perilous dynamics of a renewed Cold War and an arms race—an endeavor that would drain the Russian economy without yielding meaningful returns.

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