

Policy Brief

The Prospect of the Defense Policy Between the US and Russia

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Abstract:

The persistent changes in defense policies around the globe present a status quo indicating that there will be a shift in the international order, as the conflicts between the US and Russia will further escalate to the extent to which regional stability could inevitably be undermined. Although numerous scholars from various fields have sought to discover constructive resolutions to de-ignite the “conflictual flame,” proposals, have failed to demonstrate their feasibility and reliability as neither the US nor Russia will willingly comply with the terms. Bearing such consciousness, this paper explores the likelihood of further military conflicts and defensive policy developments through a comparative sociological lens.

This paper uses the “Head-to-Head” approach as the comprehensive organizational structure and will initially introduce contextual variables in the two countries. Such variables comprise the political system, government structures, and economic performances. Following the discussion of contextual variables, the policy of

emphasizing the economic downturn and involving international actors will be analyzed to anticipate how defense policy has shaped their respective domestic economic developments.

In addition, the paper will undertake a comparative section applying administrative theories to strengthen the theoretical persuasiveness of the arguments raised. Specifically, “Most Similar System Design” and “Most Different System Design” will be utilized in the comparative scenarios to determine which is more appropriate in elucidating the current situation between the US and Russia.

Contextual variables of the two selected countries

According to “country-study” archives (Curtis, 1996), Russia operates its government with effective federative systems that comprise legislative, executive, and judiciary branches. Like the US, these branches exist to ensure balance and check and preclude the occurrence of power abuse by either unit. (Curtis, 1996)

However, it also utilizes partial components of the parliamentary structure by permitting the presence of the “state дума” and prime minister (Curtis, 1996). The “state дума” within the political system serves as a lower part of the parliament, also known as the “Federal Assembly,” that wields decisive powers in candidates’ appointments and removal procedures. “Federation Council” serves as the upper house of the parliament that functions similarly to that of the lower house with more emphasis on containing presidential actions (Curtis, 1996).

Though the political design may seem structurally homogeneous to the US, the

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president's executive branch holds the most influential informal and formal powers relative to other components. The country-study report endorses that hiring procedures and military policy drafting can reflect excessive presidential powers. From the hiring perspective, approximately 75,000 presidential apparatus and numerous state-owned enterprises employees nationwide in 1996 (Curtis, 1996) elucidated that the president's constitutional obligations could be informally extended. Military policy drafting is another fraction that may manifest the president's extensive powers. As the archive demonstrates, the president is granted the right to declare a state emergency, national or regional martial law, approve defense doctrine, confer military ranks and awards, etc. (Curtis, 1996).

Though this is a brief description of Russia's political system, it is evident that Russia's federal system differs significantly from the US, where the president is granted relatively more powers in multiple areas, such as personnel recruitment procedures and military controls.

The government structure in Russia is formed through three significant actors: the president, the State Duma, and the Prime Minister (Curtis, 1996). The prime minister serves as the head of the government and is responsible for overseeing all national matters and implementing policies and decrees approved by the State Duma and the President. The president is constitutionally designated to select cabinet members, which must be approved by two-thirds of the lower house (Federal Assembly) and upper house (Federal Council) (Curtis, 1996). The central government has deprived powers reserved for regional and local authorities at the local level. The constitution of 1993 provided a coherent list of capabilities that local authorities can

exercise, which are implementing orders and laws, collecting taxes, and establishing regional budgets within jurisdictional ranges (Curtis, 1996).

Though the constitution of 1993 asserted that all subordinate authorities could enjoy jurisdictional equality, no tangible changes were made due to discrepancies among the central actors (Curtis, 1996.). Despite political difficulties, the bilateral treaty signed in 1995 was issued to ensure local authorities could be more autonomous within their jurisdictional ranges (Curtis, 1996).

The contextual variables of the US government also consist of the political system and governmental structure. It is globally known that the US applies a federative political system that values a balance of checks and separation of powers. The US also established three congressional branches that perform respective functions and oversee the actions of others. However, the US's federal system differs from the Russian federative system in that legislative and judiciary branches significantly constrain the presidential powers. The legislative branch knowingly wields more administrative powers than the executive branch. The country-study archive provides explicit explanations regarding the structure of the legislative branch. The legislative branch divides itself into two significant houses: the House of Representation and the House of Senate (Curtis, 1996). The House of Representation appears as the lower house with the duty of proposing legislation for the House of Senate and the President to review. The Senate encompasses the right to add changes, amend the original bill, or disapprove it if it does not see fit (Curtis, 1996) Both houses limit presidential powers if they wish to implement certain acts. The approval for specific actions is only granted when there are

two-thirds supporting votes from the Senate (Curtis, 1996).

Though the country-study archive does not directly describe the relationship between the national and state governments, the tenth amendment in the Bill of Rights has asserted explicitly that the state consequently reserves powers not delegated to the federal government (Bill of Rights Institute). In addition, states are permitted to create and enforce respective laws and orders appropriate for state development and local interests. However, the Bill of Rights Institute rebuts that there have been controversial voices regarding power distribution among states and the federal government. The ideas of “interposition” and “nullification” were among the top arguments the constitution framers had utilized to raise different perspectives (Bill of Rights Institute). In sum, the government structure in the US stresses the vast importance of power allocation, which ensures that the national government can be restrained and held accountable constitutionally by entrusting proportionate powers to states and localities.

The policy of focus: Economic impacts that upgrading defense policy generates and the role of international actors

According to a report published by the Rand Corporation, though the US’s rising army budget to strengthen national defensive capacities has not produced notable counterproductive effects, its comparative drawbacks have been inferred as one of the essential engines that have advanced the economic deterioration within the US. The article adopts the comparative method to scrutinize how investments in military buildings affect economic growth relative to investments in public infrastructure (Rooney et

al., 2021). The findings explicitly demonstrated that investments in public infrastructure might assist in the boost of economic growth in the long term, as such investments can produce tangible economic values that are conducive to production, labor, and logistical needs (Rooney et al., 2021).

In contrast, while the increasing military spending has reportedly resulted positively in economic development, its prospect of engendering sustainable economic growth seems pessimistic (Rooney et al., 2021). The article further illustrates that the rise of military spending may temporarily create employment opportunities for those who wish to contribute to national defensive work (Rooney et al., 2021). However, such an act needs to pay more attention to the primary economic consideration that promoting national defense does not necessarily relate to accomplishing economic growth. Rooney proposed that the annual federal deficit can also manifest the relationship between economic growth and the defense budget. He categorizes the defense budget as a part of the discretionary spending by Congress, and such a portion occupied 15% of GDP in 2019 and would be expected to grow in the future (Rooney et al., 2021). In addition, raising funds for military operations was not recognized as a core deficit driver; it was one of the primary contributors (Rooney et al., 2021).

Though this section only revealed partial evidence regarding the relationship between the defense budget and economic growth, it is logical to presume that increasing the defense budget will continually deteriorate economic prospects. Specifically, the soaring annual deficit rate and negligence over public infrastructure development may downsize the availability of economic activities.

Russia's increasing defense budget has presented similar patterns to the US, but the overall economic conditions are reportedly more fragile due to military spending.

According to the Journal of Eurasian Studies, Russia's military spending has directly resulted in its economic downturn, for the executive powers are excessively concentrated in the president's hand, and the excessive spending of federal revenues could otherwise be spent on public welfare (Oxenstierna, 2016). In section five, regarding Russia's economic policy and the development of defense spending since 2013, Oxenstierna illustrates that public spending was lessened due to the increased spending on defense operations. Social policy expenditure had fallen below five percent of the total GDP (Oxenstierna, 2016). The article displayed an illustrative graphical chart that categorized different spending Russia had incurred between 2013 and 2015. Among the categories, Russia's national defense spending was the only category that showed a consistent increase, from 2.9 percent in 2013 to 4.3 percent in 2015 (Oxenstierna, 2016). In contrast, public infrastructures such as housing and utilities (0.4%-0.2%), education (1.0%-0.8%), health (1.0%-0.5%), and environmental protection (0%-0.1%) had remained substantially low in those years (Oxenstierna, 2016). Other external factors that have impeded Russia from reviving its economic prosperity could be attributed to the ongoing competition with the US. Economic sanctions imposed by the Western hemisphere restricted Russia's access to capital markets, and precluded technological imports are a critical factor undermining Russia's economic conditions (Oxenstierna, 2016). Based on the evidence, Russia's military ambition to sustain its geopolitical influence severely undermines its domestic economic prospects. The US is seemingly following the same footpath if the

defense budget increases; however, its economic capacities are more sustainable to stabilize its domestic markets and maintain fundamental public infrastructure.

Among numerous international organizations, NATO is a political-military alliance that assembles the military strengths of those that share collective political views and military goals. With the US being the head of this organization, NATO's role in the ongoing competition between the US and Russia has significantly assisted in containing the growth of Russia's influence. Specifically, the recent event of Russia's special military operations in Ukraine has forced NATO to ameliorate its measures to secure the Eastern European borders. According to NATO's latest statement regarding "Defense and Deterrence," multiple strategic plans have been announced to establish a more substantial political unity to defend its alliances, including Ukraine. Tangible measures include military deployments in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia to strengthen the regional military capability and geographical access (NATO, 2022). In addition, the Readiness Action Plan launched in 2014 was mentioned in the article. RAP establishment seeks to bolster NATO's readiness, responsiveness, and reinforcement (NATO, 2022). Such strategic measures claim to assist members in responding to imminent challenges more readily with maximal availability of resources.

Cyber operation is also a salient domain that requires further enhancement. The recently created Cyberspace Operations Centers in Belgium signify NATO's determination to engage in the technological spectrum to maximize its strategic options (NATO, 2022). The defense budget discussed in the previous paragraphs was also reiterated in NATO's statement. The Defense Investment Pledge

established in 2014 requires all NATO members to spend two percent of their GDP on military developments (NATO, 2022). Implementing such a defense policy has permitted NATO members to be militarily consistent and ensured that members' military equipment could operate effectively (NATO, 2022). Though there is a lack of information regarding the feasibility of these measures taken by NATO, its determination to promote regional security and utilization of economic sanctions have significantly restricted Russia's political ambitions. Therefore, NATO has served as a non-state actor that implements supplementary policies consistent with the US.

The role of the UN in such an ongoing competition between the US and Russia has yet to exert substantial effects. Instead, the UN primarily focuses on providing victims' and refugees' necessities and urging nations worldwide to participate in conflict mediation. Though the UN has never enacted direct intervention in the Ukraine conflict, there are alternative approaches that the UN may take to interfere. According to the article published in the "peace and security" section of the UN, the General Assembly possesses the right to act if the Security Council fails to reach an agreement (UN, 2022). For instance, the General Assembly may call upon an "Emergency Special Session," which requires the majority of the assembly's approval to draft immediate resolutions to decrease the escalation of conflicts (UN, 2022). However, such a call does not generate a binding effect that can hold non-participants accountable (UN, 2022). With the US and Russia being the Security Council's permanent members, the wills of the General Assembly and other member states are eventually put in the void, failing to implement effective strategies to intervene in the Ukraine conflict.

In sum, the UN is less influential in terms of military development. However, the UN's incapability to detract from the trajectory of the Ukraine conflict and its failure in mediation can be primarily ascribed to its functioning nature, as the UN is characteristically different from NATO. Therefore, the UN does not fit the role of mediator responsible for offering constructive resolutions to the conflict between the US and Russia.

Discussion of comparison

The concept of MSSD will be adopted to elucidate the economic comparison between the two. Considering that the increase in military expenditure is the dependent variable for both countries, which is reportedly the same, the economic indicators will be the external independent variables that define the implications of the defense policy in both countries. As the evidence stated above, the US is projected to experience unpredictable economic conditions due to the rise in military expenditure. Rand corporations asserted that raising military budgets could result in a temporary surge in the employment rate, providing individuals the opportunity to serve their country. Such a temporary economic comfort deems to fail due to the incapability of introducing real economic growth. However, the case-study archive shows that boosting the military budget does not necessarily raise societal awareness because of the colossal monetary mass that comprises numerous advanced industries. Furthermore, the World Bank also provided statistical evidence that the unemployment rate in the US is more likely to increase, implying that the US could have chosen to spend its funds on more critical sectors to facilitate people's lives. Instead, funds have been drained by the militaria demand that generates fewer pragmatic

benefits. In contrast, Russia's economic downturn seems more severe than that of the US, as the domestic economy heavily relies on exporting natural resources, primarily gas and oil. With the lack of sustainable domestic productivity, the continuous military expenditure that fulfills Russia's political ambitions will probably face a critical economic recession that could disrupt the domestic market. Oxenstierna indicated that the high rise in Russia's military budget has directly decreased other social welfare spending. Housing, education, health, and utility expenditures have fallen below the standard criteria, deteriorated people's lives, and endangered comprehensive societal functions. Therefore, the distinctions in the independent variable represented by those economic indicators illustrate that Russia's increase in military expenditure will most likely suffer more significant repercussions than the US, whose public infrastructure and economic conditions are more sustainable in confronting incoming challenges. However, the commonality shows that the US and Russia are progressing in the same direction, which may gradually exacerbate their respective economic downturn.

The US and Russia's governmental structures can also perceive progressive developments in defense policy. Curtis (1996) illustrated that though Russia superficially employs a federative system, its bureaucratic procedures have produced reversing effects, given that the president's powers are unreasonably concentrated. It is expressly declared that the president's power bestowed by the constitution is cabinet member designation. The upper and lower houses retain other powers and decision-making processes demanded by the constitutional effect. In addition, powers not particularly designated to the president are supposed to be proportionally allocated among

subordinate authorities throughout the country.

Curtis (1996) claimed that the local authorities do not righteously practice most jurisdictional powers. Instead, the supernatural forces permeated by the president inhibited local authorities from performing equitable civic services. Based on such evidence, it is logical to assume that the progressive developments of Russia's defense policy are an inevitable phenomenon that does not consider the perspectives of other authorities. The organizational culture within its institutional environment bestows the president with the power to overlook external factors that could significantly influence the policy outcome. As a result, Russia's defense policy will continually facilitate the extent to which its geopolitical threats are mostly eradicated.

The situation tends to be moderate within the US's institutional atmosphere. While the president wields substantial powers in the military realm, it is still difficult for the president alone to impose a decisive military decision or a defense policy without the consent of Congress. The president of the US is considerably restricted by Congress, which is composed of upper and lower houses that function similarly. Such an institutional and cultural atmosphere is ascribed to the firm determination to uphold the value of power balances. With such a governmental structure based strictly on the constitutional framework, the outcome of defense policy is mainly dependent on the partisanship and compatibility between two political parties. According to Pew Research Center, the defense policy and military support for Ukraine during the recent army event have gained bipartisan recognition; (Pew Research Center, 2022), in which 73% of Republicans and 85% of Democrats endorsed the decision

of the US deploy necessities for Ukraine (Pew Research Center, 2022). Again, the comparison of the governmental structures between the two can apply the MSSD approach. The defense policy may intensify as a dependent variable, which is highly likely given the current situation. Governmental structures and institutional atmosphere are independent variables that may yield decisive effects on the prospect of their defense policy. Therefore, the chance of their respective defense policy escalating is highly likely given Russia's concentrated executive powers that neglect subordinates and the US's bipartisan solidarity against Russia's military operations.

Conclusion

With the MSSD and MDSD approaches, the comparative result concludes that despite distinctions between Russia and the US regarding economic performances, political systems, and governmental structures, their defense policies will likely escalate further. Economically, the US encompasses a more advanced economic cycle and allows itself to sustain prolonged international conflicts.

Though the unemployment rate and general economic growth are expected to decline temporarily, the economic diversity and the excellent implementation of equitable constitutional duties will prevent the reckless policy from being imposed. Such an institutional characteristic can also be attributed to the persisting governmental structure that strictly obeys constitutional obligations, precluding the possibility of indirect influences from the top. Russia's failure to enforce equitable power allocation and conform to its constitutional obligations has inevitably strengthened the president's powers. One of the apparent effects of such a phenomenon would be the right to impose,

implement, and conduct military operations without objective considerations. Again, Russia's institutional status quo does not develop quickly; the rigid governmental structure that primarily complies with presidential orders and failure to produce a sustainable economic system is the crucial contributing factor. As "The Council of Foreign Relations" asserted, the deeply rooted ideological discrepancy is the rationale that cultivates the mutual skepticism between them (Master, 2022). Therefore, the defense policy will continually advance until such an ideological discrepancy is erased.

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