

## THE REVISIONISM TREND IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS THROUGH THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL CASE STUDY - RUSSIA -



PhD(c)./ Rezig Fatma <sup>1</sup>, Dr./ Foudi Mostafa Kamel <sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Canterbury Christ Church University, (UK)

<sup>2</sup> University of Tissemsilt, (Algeria)

<sup>3</sup> Corresponding Author: mustaphakamelfoudi@gmail.com

Date of submission: 08/04/2024 Date of acceptance: 24/04/2024 Date of publication: 28/04/2024



**Revision of the article:** Dr./ Bechani Fatima (Univ. of Algiers 2)

### **Abstract:**

*The expression of dissatisfaction with the international reality is manifested in the adoption of behaviors and positions of dissent. This can be exemplified by the case of the Russian Federation, which has adopted a revisionist behavior to demonstrate its ability to bring about change. This is evident in its positions during various international crises, starting from its opposition to the United States and the West regarding NATO's expansion to include Eastern European countries. It extends to its stance on the Syrian crisis, where it aligns itself with the Syrian regime, even within the corridors of the United Nations, by utilizing its veto power to obstruct any resolution against the Syrian government.*

**Key words:** *revisionist state; status quo; Russia; security council.*

### **Introduction:**

International and regional transformations have led to an increased role of other global powers besides the United States of America on the global stage. These powers have been calling for the need to find new ways of global leadership and to move away from the currently dominant pattern. This has unsettled the United States, which is considered the dominant pole and the most powerful state in the world, due to its negative effects in reducing and undermining its control, leading it to adopt many policies to maintain its current position. One of these policies is the use of warfare.

As a result of these transformations, discussions have emerged about the importance of finding another international power besides the United States to fill the void left by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and to restore balance to the international system. Among the most promising powers to occupy this position is the Russian Federation, as it is an emerging and advanced international power. This is because of the new circumstances that Russia is going through, which are pushing it towards ascent, given its political and economic role derived from its weight and status. This will inevitably reflect on its global policies and may act as an obstacle to American policies by virtue of its real influence. The truth is that these transformations have not only produced Russia as a global power with influence and impact, but there are also international powers such as China, Japan, and India. Some of them have surpassed regional influence to acquire international influence, while others are in the stage of transition, although they may not have fully consolidated their power factors as Russia has (AL-TAI, 2012, p. 07).

Based on the above, we present the following problem:

**To what extent does Russia seek to change the current situation?**

The study's axes are as follows:

### **THE FIRST AXIS:**

#### **The Revisionism approach, the Security Council: a conceptual introduction**

In this research, we will explore the concept of the ombudsman, focusing specifically on the European Ombudsman as an extension of the Scandinavian model. We will delve deep into the legal and institutional nature of this institution, examining the key legal frameworks that govern its operations and responsibilities.

##### **1/- The Revisionist approach and its relationship to the Realism**

The discussion about the origin of constructivist thought has not progressed much beyond the ideas of the philosopher Alexander Wendt, who is considered the reference for constructivist thought. Despite satisfaction and contentment with the current situation, it has been increasingly recognized in recent years as an important factor in shaping the behavior or approaches that states adopt. Additionally, rising powers tend to be constructivist because all states, by their

nature, are constructivist. However, this behavior is constrained by disparities in capabilities, and once this constraint is overcome through "power maximization," states seek to expand as much as they can.

The difference between revisionist and status quo states becomes apparent in the following definitions:

**Revisionist States:** These are states that are dissatisfied with the current international system and are willing to bear high costs, including the use of force, to change the current situation or alter the behavior of other states. Their risks are high in order to achieve significant gains, which may involve regional, ideological, or status-enhancing changes aimed at modifying the system in a way that serves their interests (YOUSEFI, 2016-2017, p. 30-29).

**Status Quo States:** These are states that have accepted the current system and are willing to use force only to defend the existing order, rather than to change it or redistribute capabilities or rewards within the system.

The issue of rising powers brings the constructivist approach back to the agenda of international relations. It has been associated for some time with classical realism and has been chosen or revived by neorealists seeking to understand and reshape ideas and institutions accompanying shifts in global power. To gain a deeper understanding of the constructivist thought, it is necessary to familiarize oneself and delve into this concept, starting from the classical realism to neorealism, in order to produce better specifications for the ambitions of rising powers in effecting changes within the global system, with a focus on contemporary paths of the constructivist approach.

According to Wendt, the dominance of states through international institutions transforms the law of the strongest into a right. Once a state achieves dominance, dissatisfied states emerge that seek to modify the international scene.

## **2/- Security council**

The Security Council is considered the executive tool of the United Nations and its most important organ. It is primarily responsible for maintaining peace and security in the world, suppressing acts of aggression, and imposing sanctions on states that violate the provisions of the UN Charter.

It consists of fifteen members from the United Nations, with the five major powers (United States, Russia, China, Britain, and France) being permanent members. The General Assembly elects ten other members from the United

Nations to serve as non-permanent members. Thus, the Council's member states are divided into two groups: the five permanent members and ten non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly for a two-year term. The provision stating that a member state is not eligible for immediate re-election aims to prevent a state from remaining a permanent member through continuous renewal.

Two factors are taken into account when selecting non-member states: their contribution to the preservation of international peace and security and their respect for the other purposes of the United Nations, as well as the fair geographical distribution, ensuring that all major regions of the world are represented in the Council (AL-DIN, 2012, p. 07-08).

## **THE SECOND AXIS:**

### **Manifestations of Russian Shifts in Positions**

The Russian Federation is striving to regain its position at the top of the international hierarchy and reclaim its former status. This has become evident in a number of international events, most notably the Russo-Georgian War (August 8, 2008), its stance on the Arab revolutions, and its behavior in the United Nations. As history has shown, changes in the international arena, meaning the transition from one prevailing situation to another, represent a realistic phenomenon that evolves over time. The international landscape cannot remain stable for extended periods, especially in today's world characterized by dynamism and rapid change. Additionally, the concept of power has expanded beyond the military realm to encompass other aspects such as economy, politics, culture, and information.

In light of these factors, the leadership of the Russian Federation, under figures like Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev, has formulated a vision for Russia's status and its path towards ascending to the top of the international hierarchy. This involves implementing its foreign and domestic policies, as well as expanding its influence on the global stage.

When President Vladimir Putin came to power, he sought to deepen the Eurasian orientation in Russia's foreign policy. In June 2000, he introduced several principles known as the "Putin Doctrine" in Russian foreign policy. One of the main principles was prioritizing internal reform programs over foreign policy. Some scholars argue that this idea suggests that domestic goals override Russian foreign policy objectives. On the other hand, the Putin Doctrine emphasized the

development of Russia's role in a multipolar world that is not subject to the dominance of a single great power. It aimed to gradually restore Russia's role in Asia and the Middle East, prevent the West from marginalizing Russia's role in international relations, and added three new elements to Russian foreign policy:

**Firstly**, if NATO continues to expand eastward from Russia, the Russian Federation will seek to support the cohesion among the former Soviet Union countries to protect its first line of defense.

**Secondly**, Russia opposes the unipolar system but will work with the United States on several issues such as arms control, human rights, and others.

**Thirdly**, Russia will work to support its security environment in the East by strengthening its relations with China, India, and Japan.

**Fourthly**, building a pragmatic foreign policy by distancing itself further from the ideology that was the basis of its recent diplomatic moves and introducing more transparent economic and strategic justifications that express Russia's future aspirations.

As a continuation of the Russian National Security Doctrine (Vladimir Putin's principle), another document was issued concerning the Russian military doctrine, which became effective in 2000 (as the new military doctrine includes stricter provisions, such as the possibility of initiating the use of nuclear weapons). Therefore, the United States looked at the Russian Federation under the leadership of Vladimir Putin with suspicion, especially after the escalation of Russian ambitions to reclaim the role of an influential power in the new world order (and cooperation with China, the emerging economic pole) (AL-TAI, 2012, p. 39).

Vladimir Putin announced in 2004, in a meeting with military leaders, that his country is developing a new generation of nuclear weapons that no other nuclear power in the world possesses (referring to the United States), and it will enter service in the coming years to protect Russia from what he described as future security challenges. He reiterated this stance in the Munich Conference in February 2005, and Igor Ivanov, the Russian Foreign Minister, supported this statement by affirming that these weapons are not aimed at a specific country but aim to ensure the security and sovereignty of Russia against any future threats. This led to the possibility of the return of classic deterrence strategy playing an important role in US-Russian relations, (AL-TAI, 2012, p. 47) confirming that the continued expansion of NATO towards the neighboring countries of the Russian

Federation will have a negative impact on US-Russian relations and will be a source of tension in this relationship.

The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the destabilization of eastern Ukraine have led to a strong sense of insecurity and vulnerability among the neighboring countries of Russia. This sense of vulnerability is particularly acute in the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) due to their proximity to Russia and the significant military imbalance between Russia and the Baltic states. Russia's recent behavior has further heightened the concerns of the Baltic states. Since Vladimir Putin's return to power, there has been a significant increase in border violations, airspace violations, and encroachments into territorial waters. Russia has also conducted large-scale military exercises in the region, including the surprise military drill in the Western Military District in March 2015, involving up to 38,000 troops. These exercises are part of a broader program of comprehensive military training that includes forces from the Western, Central, and Eastern Military Districts, as well as the Southern Military District, albeit on a smaller scale.

## **THE THIRD AXIS:**

### **The Russian Veto as means of change**

Russia has gradually felt the impact of the new international order imposed by US dominance over global affairs, the United Nations, and its specialized agencies. A new trend has emerged in Russian leadership, seeking to detach (AL-TAI, 2012) itself from American hegemony and unilateralism. This has become evident in Russia's positions regarding blockades and wars against Iraq, as well as in other issues concerning Yugoslavia, Libya, and Cuba. Russia has refused to use the Security Council as a cover for military strikes against Iraq. The Russian State Duma has adopted a resolution urging the President to take all measures to prevent the Security Council from authorizing any military action against Iraq. Russia also worked with China and France to prevent such action. However, despite these efforts, the United States continued to marginalize the United Nations, as evidenced by the occupation of Iraq.

Therefore, the Russian Federation turned to the United Nations as a means to overcome the decline in its global role and to safeguard and defend its interests, utilizing its permanent membership in the Security Council. It is worth noting that

the threat of permanent membership and the resulting ability of the Russian Federation to thwart any American inclination to monopolize decision-making serves as an equivalent to the former Soviet Union's efforts to employ the same status in a positive direction. This refers to the use of the veto power backed by the authority and international status that the Soviet Union enjoyed. Consequently, Russia is attempting to find a balance with the United States, as it does not seek further escalation in bilateral relations. Moreover, Russia aims to benefit from Western relations to enhance its position, as demonstrated by its handling of the Syrian crisis.

The Russian stance aligns to a large extent with the Syrian position towards the changing international environment. This explains the continued existence and resilience of the Syrian regime despite international and regional pressures. The Russian interest revolves around the continuity of the current Syrian regime and strengthening bilateral relations in all fields. While Russia supports Syria now, Syria was among the few countries that declared support for the Russian military operation in Georgia in 2008 and endorsed Russian policies in the internal conflicts in Dagestan and Chechnya.

The relentless Russian stance in defending Syria can be attributed to the Russian leadership's realization (Others, 2017, p. 09) that the complete loss of Syria to the United States would mean closing off the Middle East region to Russia. It would enable the United States to penetrate through Turkey into the Caucasus and Central Asia, thereby destabilizing Russia itself by encouraging separatist movements starting from Chechnya and extending to Mongolia and the depths of Siberia.

The Mediterranean region is vital for Russia due to its economic and strategic significance, particularly Syria, which plays a central role in Russia's strategic vision as evident in the following points:

- 1- Syria is one of Russia's most important trading partners, with Russian-Syrian trade accounting for 20%. It experienced a significant increase in 2011, reaching \$1.92 billion. Russian companies operating in Syria, particularly in the energy sector, are among the prominent firms in the country, including Gazprom and Soyuzneftegaz.
- 2- Syria serves as an important market for Russian arms, with Syria's share of Russia's military trade amounting to approximately 7% in 2011,

reaching around \$550 million in 2012 and \$8 billion in 2013, according to the Center for Strategic Analysis and Technology in Moscow.

- 3- There is reciprocal diplomatic support between the two countries. Russia has supported Syria's political regime, while Syria has backed Russia in declaring its support for the Russian military operation in Georgia in 2008.
- 4- The naval base in Tartus, Syria, is Russia's only base on the Mediterranean coast. It exists based on an old agreement between the two countries dating back to 1971. The continuation of this base has cost Russia by exempting it from debts amounting to \$9.8 billion in 2006. Additionally, Russia has obtained certain facilities in Latakia. It is in Russia's interest to maintain its military presence in Tartus and the Hmeimim Airbase, located approximately 22 kilometers south of Latakia. These two bases are the only essential bases for ensuring Russia's presence in the Mediterranean (AL-TAI, 2012, p. 74).

Russia has set two main objectives for its direct military intervention in Syria to safeguard its interests by supporting the Syrian forces loyal to the regime. These objectives are as follows:

**The first objective** is to prevent American and European presence from forming any alliances that would establish liberated areas and impose a no-fly zone on them. This is aimed at preventing the armed Syrian opposition from consolidating in those areas and launching ground attacks under the air cover of the coalition forces. Russia is actively preparing for this scenario, either directly through Turkey and Saudi Arabia or indirectly through France.

**The second objective** is the Kremlin's desire to support the legitimate regime in combating terrorism, which allows Russia to protect its interests unlike what happened in Libya.

Therefore, it can be said that Syria has become a battleground for showcasing the capabilities of major powers and competing for strategic goals and ensuring military presence, especially between Russia and the United States (BOUZIDI, 2015, p. 133).

The escalation of armed violence and bloody fighting between the Syrian regime and the armed opposition has led to increased pressure from the United States on the Assad regime in an attempt to change the course of events on the ground. The United States and its Western allies raised the Syrian issue to the



Security Council in an attempt to issue a resolution similar to the intervention in Libya. This American attempt to internationalize the Syrian crisis transferred the US-Russian competition to the international level, where the competition in the Security Council became an expression of scoring points against opponents and thwarting their projects.

The US efforts to issue a UN resolution condemning the Bashar al-Assad regime have faced Russian rejection through the use of veto power twelve times since 2011. This highlights the seriousness of the international conflict over Syria, as it represents a form of division among major powers that differ in their perspectives on the events in Syria.

Russia and China stood against the issuance of resolutions allowing for external military intervention under the pretext of protecting Syrian civilians or imposing sanctions on the Syrian regime. The United States, along with Western countries, opposed President Bashar al-Assad and sought to push him to leave power through UN sanctions or military intervention.

In October 2011, the United States and the European Union proposed a resolution at the United Nations similar to the one issued regarding Libya, condemning the Syrian regime for the bloodshed and calling for sanctions. However, Russia and China vetoed the resolution, citing the principle of state sovereignty and non-interference.

In February 2012, an Arab-Western draft resolution was presented to the United Nations Security Council supporting the Arab League's initiative for a transitional phase in Syria. The resolution expressed deep concerns over the killing of civilians and called for an end to violence without the threat of intervention. However, Russia vetoed the resolution, arguing that it lacked balance in calling for all parties to cease violence and did not hold the opposition responsible for the violence. The United States, through its ambassador Susan Rice, expressed strong dissatisfaction with the Security Council's failure to address the growing moral challenge and increasing threat to regional peace, stating that those who stood against the resolution and supported President Bashar al-Assad's repressive regime could not meet the demands of people calling for democracy (YOUSEFI, 2016-2017, p. 59-60).

The third attempt to issue a resolution by the Security Council in June 2012 threatened Syria with the Council resorting to measures under Chapter VII if previous international resolutions were not implemented. Russia vetoed it, as it

believed it opened the door to sanctions and military intervention against the regime, undermining the principles agreed upon in the Geneva meeting on Syria.

In May 2014, Western countries made a fourth attempt to submit a resolution to the Security Council to refer the crimes in Syria to the International Criminal Court. However, it was dropped after Russia and China vetoed it for the fourth time since 2011. Consequently, the United States and Western countries considered Russia to be covering up crimes in Syria. The U.S. Ambassador Samantha Power stated that the Russian-Chinese veto "not only covers the crimes and violations of President Bashar al-Assad but also the terrorist groups", emphasizing the need to hold accountable the Council members who prevented accountability in Syria. However, Russia argued through its representative at the United Nations that the resolution was an attempt to stir political emotions and prepare for military intervention against Syria.

Russia, through its use of veto power six times in the Security Council, seeks to thwart the issuance of an international resolution against the Assad regime, in order to assert that it is an important player whose interests must be taken into account if the Syrian crisis is to be resolved. This puts both the United States and Western countries in a difficult position. Either the United States commits to a joint solution to the crisis that considers Russian interests, which would represent a significant Russian political victory, or the United States will be forced to act outside the framework of the United Nations and international legitimacy, thereby increasing the cost of intervention to the maximum extent and stripping it of legitimacy (KADDORA, 2014, p. 01).

The United States' inability to make decisive international decisions at the Security Council to overthrow the Syrian regime has led it to impose sanctions on the Syrian regime unilaterally. It has also encouraged its partners within NATO and the Arab League to impose similar sanctions.

The United States, in addition to imposing sanctions on Syria, has urged European Union governments to do the same. It has reached a bilateral agreement with European Union governments to impose sanctions that include a ban on imports of Syrian oil and new investments in the Syrian oil industry, which is considered one of the harshest sanctions imposed on Syria (KAGAN, 2014, p. 01).

Through these sanctions, it can be said that the inability of the international community to unify its position in issuing United Nations resolutions according to American desires has led the United States, many of its Western allies, and some

Arab countries to impose sanctions aimed at tightening the noose on the Syrian regime and weakening it internally, so that the opposition supported directly or indirectly by the United States can overthrow the Syrian regime without the need for external military intervention. However, these American efforts have been met with supportive Russian steps towards the Syrian regime. Russia has strengthened its trade relations with Syria, reaching around 2 billion dollars, in addition to concluding numerous deals and contracts, especially in the oil and gas sector. Russia and its ally China seek to support the Syrian regime in the face of American and European sanctions imposed on it. (KAGAN, 2014, p. 02)

### **Conclusion:**

Russia is making vigorous attempts to assert its revisionist policies through its positions within the Security Council, as an indication of its rejection of American domination over Security Council resolutions. Russia sees itself as having the status and qualifications to play a leading role in international affairs. It is capable of defending its allies and safeguarding its gains, including what remains of the Soviet Union's legacy, such as the Tartus naval base, which is vital to Russia. Additionally, Russia views the Crimean Peninsula as a strategic depth for its security.

Russia's international stances are an explicit call for dissatisfaction with the current situation. They serve as a message to the United States and the West that Russia will defend its capabilities by playing a crucial role in international relations. Russia leverages its inheritance from the Soviet era, specifically its permanent seat in the Security Council, to achieve dominance and safeguard its vital interests.

### **Recommendations**

- 1- The necessity of a final solution for NATO because it is highly likely that its expansion could be a cause for a world war to break out.
- 2- Making Ukraine a neutral state to avoid war.
- 3- The United Nations is a result of World War II, which makes it unable to keep up with current changes. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a new international system.

## **References:**

1. AL-DIN, A. S. (2012). *The security council and its role in maintaining international peace*. BEIRUT: AL- HALABI huaman rights publication.
2. AL-TAI, T. M. (2012). *U.S relations after the cold war*. BEIRUT: HAMMURABI for research and strategic studies.
3. BOUZIDI, A. A.-R. (2015). , *U.S.-Russian Competition in the Middle East: A Case Study of the Syrian Crisis 2010-2014*. Supplementary Memoir for the Degree of Master in Political Science, International Relations and Strategic Studies Branch. BISKRA: MOHAMMED KHIDER UNIVERSITY.
4. KADDORA, I. (2014, july). *Geographical Significance of Controlling the Eastern Gateway :Ukraine is a conflict hotspot*. Arabic politics journal.
5. KAGAN, R. (2014, may 26). *super powers don't get retire*. new republic.
6. others, F. S. (2017). *Russia and the west after the ukranian crisis : european vulnerabilities to russian pressures*. california: Rand corporation.
7. YOUSEFI, H. A.-N. (2016-2017). *Russian strategy in the mediterranean from modified prespective*. Master thesis. UMM AL BOUAGHI UNIVERSITY.