

Pro Case

Resolved: That Russia has become a threat to US interests.

Consider two friends. Like any friendship, they have disagreements. However, the disagreements soon grow and cause a divide in the friendship, eventually destroying it. This is exactly what is happening with the US and Russia: 10 years ago, they might have been simple friends. Now, however, the disagreements have escalated and destroyed the friendship, replacing it with a threatening relationship. Russia is closing the door on democracy and capitalism, funding terrorism and destabilizing regions, and coercing the Western world, my partner and I stand in firm affirmation of the resolution *Resolved: That Russia has become a threat to U.S. interests.*

In order to understand whether Russia has become a threat to US interests in general, one must look at the big picture and analyze the two main US interests: national security and economic strength. All other interests can be subcategorized into one or both of these categories. Therefore, this debate centers on whether or not Russia has become a danger to America's national security and economic strength.

Contention 1: Oil as a Political Tool

Russia wields its natural resource advantage as a political bludgeon. Russian controlled gas giant, Gazprom, acquired multiple gas pipelines in Serbia in January 2008. The new acquisitions threaten Nabucco, a US-backed pipeline that was planned to relieve Europe's reliance on Russia for its gas imports. This is not just simple competition; it is Russia using its energy resources to stop pro-Western movements. For example, after pro-Western candidate Viktor Yushchenko won Ukraine's presidency, Russia cut off gas to the country in January 2006

to defame the administration and its pro-Western supporters. [CRS] Russia is not just a capitalist competitor; it is playing dirty politics to prevent nations from becoming pro-Western.

Contention Two: Arms Exports and Destabilization of Vital Regions

Russian arms exports to questionable countries are direct threats to US interests. In May 2006, the US banned all arms sales to Venezuela for sharing intelligence with Iran and Cuba. However, less than two months later, Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez thanked Russia for helping break what he called a US blockade of Venezuela. ~~According 2006 Country Reports on Terrorism, released in 2007 by the US,~~ Since then, Venezuela has strengthened ties with Cuba and Iran and allowed terrorist groups and drug traffickers to cross its borders. As a result, Venezuelan arms purchases are exceeding its military needs with excess weapons landing in the hands of guerilla or terrorist organizations. According the top US military chief in January 2008, this is “destabilizing to the region.” When the US relies for 15% of its crude oil imports from Venezuela, the potential economic threat that has Russia caused for the US is unavoidable. Russia has practice similar approaches in Iran and in Syria. [have a better logic tie w/ oil + terrorist or oil + unstable region.]

Contention Three: Coercion of the Western World

Lastly, Russia’s direct interactions with the US have become more threatening to US interests. Recently, Russia withdrew from Conventional Forces of Europe Treaty in July 2007. The proposed US Missile Defense system in Poland has further chafed US-Russian relations. On January 19, 2008, Gen. Yuri Baluyevsky, Chief of Staff for the Russian Arms Forces, issued a direct warning to Western governments that Russia reserved the right to conduct preemptive war that including nuclear weapons if it felt it was threatened. Russian president Vladimir Putin on June 3, 2007 said that, if the U.S. builds the missile defense system, Russia would target missiles

at Europe. This is not simple negotiating; it is blatant coercion. When the US already has agreements in place, Russia's blatant coercion of the US is a clear step backward.

In any friendship, there will be disagreements. However, the disagreements between the US and Russia are no longer differences of opinion; they are part of a growing divide between the two nations. Russia is closing the door on democracy and capitalism, funding terrorism and destabilizing regions, and coercing the Western world, clearly threatening the US's interests.

Alternate Points

Contention One: Membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, or SCO, was founded in 2001 by China, Russia, and a group of central-Asian countries, in order to further cooperation between the states. However, this organization quickly turned anti-Western. The Power and Intelligence News Report, an independent research organization, writes that “The overall strategic aim of the alliance for Beijing and Moscow is curbing Washington's influence in Central Asia in order to establish a joint sphere of influence there.” Essentially, the SCO and Russia seek to remove America’s influence in the region, threatening the US interest in energy resources and promotion of capitalism and free markets. In 2005, Russia proposed a plan requiring withdrawal of US forces from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, directly threatening the US’s ability to fight the war in the Middle East. Through the SCO, Russia is proposing measures which directly threaten US interests.