

Russia's Accession to the World Trade Organization under the Prism of Russia's Domestic Politics and Russian-American Bilateral Relations (1993-2008)

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In 2012, Russia formally became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The negotiations of Russia's accession to the WTO took more than eighteen years to be concluded. It was the longest accession process in the history of GATT/WTO. This paper deals with the reasons for the long duration of the accession process, focusing on the period 1993-2008, and argues that the reasons behind the long accession process lie in the Russian domestic politics as well as in Russian-American bilateral relations. Fierce division of interests in Russian society and the ensuing lack of consensus regarding the benefits of the WTO protracted the conclusion of the accession. At the international level, the US-Russian bilateral relations were characterized by mutual distrust, since the USA believed Russia was not a truly reliable partner, for allegedly having become authoritarian and not abiding by the rule of law. Russia argued that the USA did not treat it as a great power, neither wanted it as partner in the WTO. Those troubling bilateral relations reinforced a conservative faction in Russia, further aggravating the duration of the accession process. This paper also discusses the first year of Russia's membership and its implication for Russia's international profile.

Russia has come back to the center stage of international politics. The recent events in Ukraine have shown that Russia is still a great power, whose interests must be seriously taken into account upon his peers' decision-making procedures. These events, for many a return to Cold War times, highlighted the opposition views and misperceptions between the United States and Russia. Furthermore, the current crisis has spilled over other institutions, seemingly not related hard geopolitics, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), as Russia has menaced to file a complaint against the USA over the sanctions levied against Russian companies. Although Russia is now a full-fledged member of the WTO, it took over 18 years to accomplish the accession process, making it the longest in the history of the organization hitherto. Although the accessions the WTO tend to be inherently time-consuming – China's, for example, took 15 years to be concluded – Russia's was remarkably politicized: there was a logic of competition and mutual distrust between Russia and the United States, reinforcing conservative trends in Russia, aggravating the duration of the accession process.

That is precisely why Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization was a very intriguing theme over the last decade. An accession to the an intergovernmental body such as the WTO was supposed to involve more technical issues, for example, the compliance of the domestic legislation to the WTO legal rules. However, the whole accession process entailed more than that: it dealt with the two decades of Russia's transition to capitalism, the question of Russia's identity in the 21st Century and the pattern of Russia's international insertion, firstly designed by Yeltsin, then redefined by Putin over the last 10 years.

Russia firstly applied to WTO membership in 1993, under the Yeltsin government. Yet during the 1990s, the country devoted more attention to domestic politics and its consolidation. When Putin came to power in early 2000, he pledged to restore Russia's internal and international moral and the great-power status it had, and made the WTO membership a top foreign-policy priority, on the grounds that it would contribute to achieve those objectives. Later that decade, however, such an interested faded away.

This present inquiry aims at analyzing the reasons that led to the non-conclusion of the accession process (and, indirectly, the long duration process), ranging from the period of 1993, when Russia applied for WTO membership, until 2008, the end of the second mandate of Vladimir Putin, who himself made that accession a top foreign-policy priority. Why was Russia's WTO accession not concluded in that period (1993-2008)?

This paper analyzes two main hypotheses. Firstly, one must consider the domestic reluctance to the WTO accession. There was an important sector of the Russian elites (among them, the so-called *siloviki*) who used the state bureaucracy to advance their own interests, keep privileges and control key sectors of the economy, by non-transparent means, running counter the tenets of a multilateral trading regime. Many of those Russian elites were also disaffected with US policies towards Russia in the 1990s. There were sectors contrary to the membership, mostly of them deemed as uncompetitive and fearful of the consequences of the accession. Those sectors, besides a state bureaucracy willing to keep privileges, are factors that help explain the long duration process of WTO negotiations.

The second main reason lies in the competitive logic and mutual distrust between the United States and Russia in the period. From the US viewpoint, Russia was not a reliable partner, as it had revisionist policies and did not abide by intellectual property rules, nor the rule of law, even though it had previously adhered to those rules. For Russia, on its part, there was the impression that the USA did not treat it as a great power it deserved to be, nor wanted it as a partner in WTO, not to mention that the Russians considered the US foreign policy as expansionist and with unilateralist inclinations.

This paper proceeds as follows. Section I deals with Russia's WTO bid in the context of its transition to capitalism and how it was pursued during the mandates of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. Section II analyses the domestic environment and its influence on Russia's accession plea; in this section, Robert Putnam's two-level game theory is used a theoretical reference. Section III delves into Russian-American bilateral relations and their impact on the accession process, with theoretical reference to realism and constructivism in International Relations. Section IV brings some concluding remarks.

Section I – Russia and the World Trade Organization

Russia firstly applied to membership in WTO in 1993. It inherited the observer status the Soviet Union held since 1986. Russia's application to the WTO must be understood in the context of the deep transformations Russia underwent when it surfaced as an independent country in 1992. Those deep transformations consisted of the passage from a member of a federation of republics to an independent nation; from a totalitarian political system to a State with political pluralism; and from a centrally-planned to a market economy.

Russian economic and political reforms were influenced by the so-called "Washington Consensus", which advised domestic and external liberalization, privatization and macroeconomic stability (SCHARF, 2006, p. 12). Those reforms should be implemented radically, using a "window of opportunity", a period in which everything was possible, ensuring/accomplishing the needed reforms to prevent a "relapse into old patterns" (SCHARF, 2006, p. 13). Such "shock therapy" called for five main actions/policies/aspects: price liberalization, trade liberalization, privatization, macroeconomic stabilization and Institutional aspects, which was about building new state institutions to articulate and enforce the rules of the game in a society (NORTH, 1990).

The Russian transition was deemed as a typical example for a transition process in which the implementation of stabilization, liberalization and privatization programs has been relatively quick, but in which the importance of institutions for the results and long-term development of these elements has been underestimated. Hence, the Russian transition resulted in an ostensible democratic market system with exchange relationships being dominated by institutions of the old regime and characterized by poor economic performance (SCHARF, 2006, p. 25).

The political reform in Russia consisted of the establishment mechanisms of a representative democracy, multi-party system and regular parliamentary and presidential elections. Generally put, the literature on the subject argues that the political transition in Russia fell short of the expected (GOLDGEIER; McFAUL, 2003; ASLUND, 2007; SHEVTSOVA, 2010). This is due to the fact that the United States and the other countries that helped Russia were not prepared for the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The period called "the window of opportunity" the West had (when everything was possible, mostly in 1992, when Russia became independent) to help the Russians establish democratic institutions was not properly enjoyed. More attention was devoted to the economic transition, to the shock therapy plan designed by American and IMF economists than to democratic transition.

Apart from the political and economic plans, another part of the transition process, and also as a way to improve its pattern of international insertion/to be better integrated into the international arena, Russia applied for membership in various international organizations, among them the World Trade Organization (WTO). One of the main objectives of the first Russian president Boris Yeltsin (1992-1999) was be the

founder of a new State and a new nation, as well as the guarantor of the fledgling institutions, the westernization process, privatization and Russian territorial integrity against anarchy, secession and communism restoration (BROWN, SHEVTSOVA, 2004, p. 93). To participate in the WTO was seen as a way to integrate Russia into the West, besides the logic continuation of the economic and political reforms.

Later, even Putin acknowledged an important role for WTO. In Putin's words, *"The WTO is a tool. Those who know how to use it become stronger. Those who cannot or do not want to use it, those who prefer to sit behind protectionist quotas and tariffs are doomed. Our country is still "excluded" from the process of forming the rules of world trade. We have not yet been allowed to take part in forming the rules in world trade. This causes the Russian economy to stand still, and its competitiveness to drop. Membership in the WTO should become a tool to protect Russia's national interests on world market. And it should become a powerful external stimulus to solve the tasks which we need to solve so much (RUSSIA, 2002)"*.

Membership in WTO was seen as important, in that it helped Russia to lock in reforms still needed and would also bring economic benefits to the country's economy. Many are the reasons for membership in the WTO. The participation in this organism helps a nation to better integrate into the world economy, mostly the former socialist countries, which were apart from trade flows. Participation in the WTO also grants the member the most-favored nation status and the protection against unfair trade practices, besides access to new markets. Other reasons follow suit, such as the reduction of transaction costs, saying in the decision-making process regarding the formulation of new trade rules, access to the new markets, improvement of the domestic business environment and the reliance on a multilateral legal framework, giving predictability and stability to the world trading system.

Russia was also standing to obtain economic gains from WTO membership. Many studies based on econometric models, mostly from the World Bank, estimated the potential gains and losses for the Russian economy after membership. According to World Bank studies, Russia's GDP growth would be around 3.3% in the short term, and as high as 11% in the long term. 70% of such gains would derive from the access of foreign investments to the Russian services sector, whereas 25% of those benefits would come from tariff reductions and productivity gains (JENSEN; RUTHERFORD; TARR, 2004; RUTHERFORD; TARR; SHEPOTYLO, 2006; RUTHERFORD; TARR, 2008; TARR, 2008).

The sectors most likely to win with the accession were ferrous and non-ferrous metals and the chemistry industry, which were considered the most open and competitive sectors. Nonetheless, other sectors would suffer from the membership. Those were the sectors with higher government tariff protection and low export activity, namely, machinery and equipment, light industries and food industries. Yet potential unemployment in those more sensitive sectors will be compensated/offset by a rise of vacancies in the most dynamic sectors. Furthermore, some estimates showed that the

government income would drop by 0,7% per year due to import tariffs reduction, which, on its turn, could also be offset by tax collection from other sectors, as the Russian economy expands.

The World Bank reports point out that the potential losses would be punctual and of short term, mostly in non-competitive sectors. In the long run, the gains would be distributed to all the economy and will exceed the losses.

Other scenarios highlight the improvement of the domestic institutional environment for businesses (HARE, 2002; OGUTÇU, 2002; STERN, 2002; CHOWDHURY, 2003; SIMOLA, 2007). There will be more legal security in negotiations with the Russians, fostering the attraction of investments and economic diversification. Other reports (Babetskaia-Kukharchuk e Mathilde Maurel (2004, p. 16) highlight the respect for intellectual property and the diminution of the black market could rise trade flows as much as 66%. In general, those reports suggest the main gains would result more from Russia's own liberalization than from the diversification of its exports.

Another important factor to mention is that great part of tax collection and a considerable share of Russia's GDP came (and still come) from the fuels sector. It is also worth mentioning that the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Russia released a detailed program on Russia's growth strategies named "Russia 2020", in which one reads three possible scenarios (2008a). The innovation scenario presupposes growth led by investments in technological innovation and human capital. The fuels scenario, in which the economy will be based on the exploitation and commercialization of those products, would result in less economic growth. There is a third scenario, the "inertia scenario", which does not entail any changes in the economy, and the economic growth would be even lesser than the fuels one. Hence, WTO accession would encourage the innovation scenario, attracting new investments that could be directed to sectors other than the fuels one.

Summing up, Russia's accession to the WTO was viewed as an important instrument to accomplish structural institutional reforms, contributing to improve the domestic business environment.

For a long time, Russia was the major economy outside the WTO. When it became independent, Russia faced economic domestic constraints, being impelled to search for external assistance to become member of many organizations, among them the WTO, and the country that was in the best position to provide such help was the United States (COTTRELL, 2002, p. 52; DONALDSON; NOGEE, 2009, p. 218). The USA, on their turn, upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union, announced they would take the lead in the process of Russia's integration into multilateral organizations (McFAUL; GOLDGEIER, 2003, p. 240). Since then, with USA support, Russia had entered the IMF, the World Banks and the G-7 (expanded to G-8 in 1997). But until 2008 (and actually 2011), Russia was not a member of the WTO, despite expectations that the conclusion of the accession process would happen soon after the signing of the Bilateral Accession Protocol with the USA, occurred in 2006. The signature of this

agreement was seen as a benchmark to speed up Russia's accession to the WTO (CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, 2006, p. 9; LISSOVOLIK, 2006, pp. 447-8; ASLUND, 2010, pp. 58-9).

The question that motivates the most this research is why Russia, though member of many important organizations, such as the G-7, was still out of the WTO, even after the signing of the USA-Russia Bilateral Accession Protocol, deemed as crucial, since the USA was the last large country with which Russia still had to sign such an agreement.

The WTO accession process is inherently time-consuming. The accession to the WTO is formally ruled by the article XII of the 1994 Marrakesh Agreement, which states that any state or customs territory having full autonomy in the conduct of its trade policies may join ("accede to") the WTO. Broadly speaking, the application goes through four stages. First, the government applying for membership has to describe all aspects of its trade and economic policies that have a bearing on WTO agreements. This is submitted to the WTO in a memorandum which is examined by the working party dealing with the country's application. These working parties are open to all WTO members (Russia's Working Party, for example, had 60, the then biggest in WTO history (RÚSSIA, 2011a)). Second, parallel bilateral talks begin between the prospective new member and individual countries of the Working Party. These talks cover tariff rates and specific market access commitments. The new member's commitments are to apply equally to all WTO members under normal non-discrimination rules, even though they are negotiated bilaterally. These talks determine the benefits other WTO members under normal non-discrimination rules, even though they are negotiated bilaterally. In other words, the talks determine the benefits other WTO members can expect when the new member joins. (The talks can be highly complicated. It has been said that in some cases the negotiations are almost as large as an entire round of multilateral trade negotiations.) Third, once the working party has completed its examination of the applicant's trade regime, and the parallel bilateral market access negotiations are complete, the working party finalizes the terms of accession. These appear in a report, a draft membership treaty ("protocol of accession") and lists ("schedules") of the member-to-be's commitments. Finally, the final package, consisting of the report, protocol and lists of commitments, is presented to the WTO General Council or the Ministerial Conference. If a two-thirds majority of WTO members vote in favour, the applicant is free to sign the protocol and to accede to the organization. In many cases, the country's own parliament or legislature has to ratify the agreement before membership is complete (WTO).

There is only one article (article XII) that formally rules the accession process. In practice, the process changes from country to country, depending on the dynamic of the negotiations. Therefore, the article XII has raised severe criticism for being short and generic, mostly because it relegates the accession terms to bilateral negotiations (LANOSZKA, 2001; DRABEK; BACCHETTA, 2004; CATTANEO; PRIMO BRAGA, 2009; JONES, 2009). Those scholars argue the most controversial aspect of

the WTO accession lies in the fact that the bargain power tilts in favor of the incumbent members, since the member-to-be is obliged to adjust its trade regime to accede to the organism, yet it does not get the compensation from the incumbent members, which had already paid to be part of the WTO during the bilateral talks. The old members do not make new concessions to the candidates. The only commitment they make is keep their markets open in a non-discriminatory way to the candidates. Besides, the commitments made by the incumbent members are not automatically conferred to new members. For example, the United States had abolished the controversial Jackson-Vanik Amendment (that links permanent trade relations with former socialist countries to their Jewish emigration and other human rights policies) for countries such as Bulgaria even before it became a member of the WTO, but not for Russia, even after it became a member of the WTO¹ (DRABEK; BACCHETTA, 2004, p. 1094).

Hence, some analysts sustain that the WTO accession process is rather predominantly political, once geopolitically useful countries in a certain period had easier access to the organization, without major restrictions to their political and economic conditions (BELAEFF; LOZANSKY, 2010). In the 1960s, countries like Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia were admitted as members of the GATT, despite their centrally-planned economies, since western countries wanted to expand their influence on Eastern Europe. When the Soviet Union tried to get more involved in GATT, in the 1980s, it was refrained from participating of the Uruguay Round, mostly in due to opposition from the USA (NÁRAY, 2001, p. 19; HANSON, 2007, p. 8). Therefore, it sound odd that countries like Albania and Kyrgyzstan were members of the WTO by 2008 (and by all means 2011) and Russia was not.

Section II – Russia’s domestic politics and its implications for WTO accession

I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest.

Wiston Churchill

The accession process, as it was argued, is inherently prolonged and controversial, and it is a reason for the protracted negotiations. However, in 2006, everything was seemingly set to conclude Russia’s accession to the WTO. This country had already signed bilateral agreements with the main economies and brought most of its legislation in tune with that of the WTO. Truth be told, There were a couple of countries with whom Russia still to sign that deal, one of them being Georgia. Georgia

¹ On 16 November 2012 the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill which would repeal the Jackson–Vanik amendment for Russia and Moldova.[4] The law repealing the Jackson–Vanik amendment was signed together with Magnitsky bill by President Obama on December 14, 2012.

had had political, economic and geopolitical problems with Russia, straining their bilateral relations. Georgia, as an incumbent member of the WTO, could veto Russia's accession to the WTO, because the candidate must sign a bilateral agreement with all of the members of the Working Party. Without concluding this stage, Russia could not go forward. Yet, then again, Georgia was a not a big economy and did not have the economic or political clout to determine a new member's entrance as had the United States.

So, why Russia took that long to get into the WTO?

The first hypothesis raised in this work is Russia's domestic politics and environment. Hence, following Churchill's quotation, this section delves into Russian domestic politics and identifies the main economic and political groups involved in the discussions of the WTO accession. There was a division in Russian society regarding the accession process. To analyze this division, we use Robert Putnam's two-level game, which deals with the influence of the domestic constraints on the external negotiating process, the relation between the internal support and the player's credibility in the international level and the role of the interest groups as signal/indicator of the difficulties the Executive would have in approving domestically the agreement reached in the international level.

According to Putnam's model (2010), the rulers in charge of the countries' foreign policies, the international players, work jointly with their domestic interlocutors, with whom they negotiate the ratification and the entrance into force of the international agreements (Level II). At the same time, the rulers act in the international stage (Level I), where they play in search of international cooperation with other states. In this two-level game, there are at least two main stages. The bargain between the negotiators in the international arena that leads to a provisional agreement (Level I) and the discussions, taken separately, among the domestic groups on the decision to ratify or not that agreement (Level II). In general, the agreements reached on level I must be ratified domestically in the level II to be legally binding. Hence, the domestic groups determine what each negotiator can offer and to what extent they can reach, what Putnam calls "win-set". Only agreements within a win-set of the countries will be ratified in their "Level II". This has direct effects on the power of bargain of each negotiator, and, consequently, on the negotiation dynamics. Putnam refers to the Conjecture of Schelling, according to which a player A, whose domestic level is heterogeneous and divided in structures of preferences may convey to a player B that some concessions would not be accepted in their domestic level, thus compromising the efficacy of the agreement. A country where there is no ample consensus or convergence of interests among its members may make it hard for the Executive to ratify an agreement signed in the international level. But on the other hand, internal dissensions are benefic for the international player upon the international negotiation, as they make it evident to its counterpart that if the agreements are not in accordance with their win-set, they will not be ratified in the Parliament. Therefore, the less the win-set, that is, the more diffuse the viewpoints and positions are in the domestic level, the stronger the player will be in the

international negotiation. And the bigger the win-set, the bigger the probability of reaching an agreement; conversely, it diminishes the government's power of bargain vis-à-vis other negotiators.

In Russia, the Level I was identified as the Russian government (the Executive branch), and the main responsible for WTO negotiations, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Level II was composed of/comprised of sectors of Russian society, business community and governmental elite whose interests would be directly affected by the accession (HELMER, 2002; MEDVEDKOV, 2002, pp. 43-4; ROCHE, 2002, pp. 12-16; GURIEV; RACHINSKY, 2005, pp. 15-6; BREMMER; CHARAP, 2007, p. 91; JOHNSON, 2007, p. 20; VERCUEIL, 2007; COOPER, 2008; ASLUND, 2010, pp.53-4). Among the opposition, were:

- The company RUSAL, Russia's (and the world's) then biggest aluminum company. Although the company had major heft/prominence in the sector (then 11% of the world's total aluminum production and 13% of the world's alumina), the CEO and so-called oligarch Oleg Deripaska lobbied for more subsidies to the sector. The realm of aluminum was one of those which benefited the most from the protectionist measures decreed by the Russian government after the economic crises of the first years of transition.

- The automobile and civil aviation sector. They were considered poor competitive and much protected sectors. Besides, they are industry branches that were controlled by part of the siloviki during Putin's mandate. In this sector, there were also some oligarchs, like Oleg Deripaska, who controlled the company Rospromavto, Russia's then second biggest automobile industry, and others of civil aviation, which required longer periods of transition.

- The Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which amassed former directors from Soviet times and was ruled by the former prime minister Yevgenii Primakov (1998-1999) ("eurasianist"², who initiated the more assertive character of the Russian foreign policy in the 1990s) and the Russia's Union of Manufactures. In general, those organizations resorted to the nascent-industry argument and the fierce competition Russian companies would face after the opening of the country to foreign concurrence.

- The agriculture sector, crystalized in the figure of the then Minister of Agriculture Alexei Gordeev (1999-2009). The biggest concern was with the limit for the subsidies to be allowed by the WTO the meat-importing criteria, since the meat industry in Russia was showing signs of recovery.

² Tsygankov (2006), Mankoff (2009) and Donaldson and Noguee (2009) identified 3 main political traditions in Russia: a) the atlanticists, who emphasize Russia's integration into the West, considered the most viable and progressive civilization in the world and with which Russia is similar in some aspects; b) eurasianists, who emphasize the role of the State as guarantor of the political and social order, highlighting some aspects, such as power, stability and sovereignty instead of democracy and freedom. This group is not inherently anti-western but seeks western recognition of the Russian power, through the demonstration of economic and military assertiveness); c) civilizationists, who see Russia as nation whose values differ from the western ones and who have been trying to spread the Russian (Slavic) values in the world.

- The banking and insurance sectors (Russia Bank Association and Russia Insurance Association), telecommunications and retail companies, which did not want the foreign presence in those sectors.
- Light industries (textile and food industries), fearful of foreign competition.
- the political group named *siloviki*, whose political and economic prowess entailed the great presence of the State in the economy, the keeping of their privileges and the less integration and concessions to the West.

Besides those sectors, many Russian regions, with no conditions to compete with foreign enterprises, were also against WTO accession. The region of Samara, for example, was home to the biggest Russian automobile company Avtovaz, which responded for 55% of the regional GDP and represented a little more than half of the whole local government tax collection (ROCHE, 2002, p. 14).

Among the favorable sectors were:

- the steel sector (whose biggest company was Severstal), since its exports to the USA were regulated by quota-systems. It was a competitive sector whose exports were to increase after the accession.
- Chemistry industry, which suffered antidumping measures from the European Union. It was also deemed as a competitive sector that stood to gain after the accession.
- Most part of the industries that made up the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs. This organization had been ruled since 2000 by oligarchs; it reunited the country's big companies and was considered an important lobby for some measures such as tax and red-tape reduction, the reform of the Judiciary and the natural monopolies and transparency improvement.
- Other companies, such as Norilsk (nickel, copper and cobalt producer) and Alrosa (diamond producer), also stood to gain from accession. Those sectors, together with oil and gas, supported (or at least did not oppose to) Russia's accession to the WTO.

Besides the private sector, other domestic players in favour of the accession were liberal members of the Parliament and other liberal scholars who wrote various papers on the impact of the accession in Russia's economy. In the governmental realm we can mention German Gref, former Minister of the Economic Development and Trade (2000-2011) and director of the WTO Working Party on Russia until 2008, Maxim Medvedkov, chief-negotiator of Russia's accession, former Prime Minister Mikhail Kassianov (2000-2004).

Basing on the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace report on the 2006 USA-Russia Bilateral Agreement on Russia's accession to the WTO and on official documents, in the USA, the Level I was identified as being the Executive branch and

the department directly responsible for negotiations with Russia, the United States Trade Representative (USTR). Level II was identified as those sectors that demonstrated a greater interest in Russia's accession, as well as those with the biggest probabilities of gaining commercially from Russia's accession (CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR PEACE, 2006; JOHNSON, 2007; COOPER, 2008; EUA, 2011c). Those are:

- The National Pork Producers Council. Pork industry was one of the sectors which had had their exports augmented to Russia the most, reaching, in 2005, a US\$ 2.6 billion record. According to this Council, the Bilateral Agreement was such that the USA did not need to concede anything in addition to Russia, apart from the "permanent trade relations" status, which is conceded to all countries acceding to the WTO. The agreement was deemed satisfactory for them.

- Counsel to the Intellectual Property Alliance. The USA's intellectual property exports, such as music and tv programs, had become one of the biggest in the country. According to this sector, Russia, although signatory of many intellectual property treaties, did not properly enforce them, neither inspected piracy actions. This sector considered Russia's accession to the WTO very important, for legal security reasons. However, it demanded Russia's previous commitment of intellectual property agreements it signed, otherwise the USA would not back Russia's plea. In 2006, the Intellectual Property consented to the Bilateral Agreement.

- Services sector (finance and insurance). Russia was then the world's 23rd biggest market for insurance services, but the 3rd in growth. This sector wanted to increase their participation in the Russian market. Months before the conclusion of the Bilateral Agreement, it was reported that the USA Congress would not vote for the "permanent trade relations" with Russia if this country did not agree to open its services market for further foreign participation.

- The USA Congress. This institution had an important role, since, besides representing the US society, thus somehow the way the Americans see Russia, needed to vote the "permanent normal trade relations (PNTR), by repealing the Jackson-Vanik Amendment dating back from 1971. Such "status" can be conceded after or before the country accedes to the WTO. As it was mentioned before, not only by the end of 2012 (that is, months after Russia formally became a member of the WTO) did the USA repeal that Amendment.

The two-level model is useful to illustrate the domestic environment of the negotiators. From the USA side, one can state that its domestic scene was more homogeneous, represented by sectors interested in Russia's accession. The Bilateral Agreement had the support from the sectors of the American economy and was considered advantageous, which demonstrated that the Executive had legitimacy and the backing of part of the business community and that the Final Protocol of Russia's accession to the WTO would be ratified (in Putnam's ample sense he gives to this term)

in the USA. It is interesting to notice that there was even a debate to discuss the signature of the agreement, released by the Carnegie Institute.

From Russia's side, however, there was a heterogeneous domestic environment up to the signing of the bilateral agreement, denouncing a low win-set in Russia, which could lead to the defection or non-ratification scenario, even though the Executive (Level I, represented by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade) had finished the Bilateral Agreement with the United States, a milestone in Russia's accession process.

Hence, Putnam's model help shed light the reasons for the long duration of the accession process, in that it illustrates a more heterogeneous environment in Russia, where a strong opposition, besides the less competitive private sectors, also came from a powerful group that rose politically and economically during Putin's mandate. The existence of such domestic opposition meant that, even if the government signed the Bilateral Accession Protocol, its ratification (that is, its internal consent, since the legal ratification by the complacent and docile Parliament) would not happen. Until 2008, everything indicated that there was no consensus or a strong support from influential people in Russia for the accession.

John Helmer (2002) and Peter Reddaway *et alli* (2004) actually suggested that there was an internal struggle for economic power between the established economic groups (oligarchs) and the ascending groups (siloviki). The WTO accession was regarded as a dispute between these groups pertaining the gains and losses ensuing the conclusion of the accession.

Recent studies have discarded the hypothesis that Russia is a totalitarian state, under the control of Putin or the intelligence services (FSB, Federal Security Service). As Chris Monday (2011, p. 72) pointed out in an article on the Russian elites, it is quite difficult to decipher exactly who belonged to which faction in Russia due to the Russian's regime opacity. Nonetheless, Angelo Segrillo (2011, p. 144) argues that Putin has been balanced between two main groups, the "civil" and the siloviki.

The siloviki (REDDAWAY *et alli*, 2004; BREMMER; CHARAP, 2007; ILLARIONOV, 2009). They were a group composed mostly of former KGB and military officials. In general, they defend a more assertive role for Russia in the world and are reluctant to Russian concessions to the West. This group retook the control of various industries privatized during Yeltsin's term, such as Rosneft (oil), Rosoboroneksport (arms), Avtovaz (automobile) and Russian Airlines (civil aviation), as well as important banks in Russia – sectors the WTO members demanded greater foreign participation during the WTO accession negotiations. They wanted to increase their influence over the country and obtain a bigger slice of the pie of the national economy, competing with the oligarchs (KAGARLITSKY, 2001; HELMER, 2002; REDDAWAY, 2004, p. 4). Bremmer and Charap (2007, p. 59) even stress the alleged difficulties imposed by the USA during the negotiations of the WTO accession

strengthened this group, making them less interested in keeping the application to the organism.

Siloviki's political project was that of an economy with strong State intervention. Besides, many scholars (BREMNER; CHARAP, 2004; REDDAWAY et alli, 2004; COHEN, 2009; KRYSHANOVSKAYA, 2009; MANKOFF, 2009) suggest this group was not willing a greater integration into the West, since they had ascended politically and economically at the expenses of the State, through interpersonal connections and with the Russian government, in a non-transparent way. To adhere to an organism such as the WTO, whose motto is about transparency, would run counter to the interests of the siloviki. In addition, still according to Monday (2011), this group controlled companies with low competitiveness and highly subsidized (Russian Airlines, Avtovaz, Rosneft). Hence, to get in the WTO meant to expose those industries to foreign competition, which could financially harm them.

The other group, the "civil" ones, was more liberal, willing a more competitive economy that relied more on private ownership than on the hands of the State. Among the civil, Segrillo cites Putin's former Financial Minister Alexei Kudrin (2000-2011) and the former Minister of Economic Development and Trade German Gref (2000-2007). Those two were enthusiastic of Russia's WTO accession.

Among the "civil" ones, one could mention the oligarchs, a business class that emerged from the controversial privatization process of the 1990s (that are assessed to have sold state companies to former workers at a really low price).³ They had strong influence on Yeltsin's government and were considered the "Family" of the president. In general, they were liberals who wanted to deepen links with the West, to whom they resorted for know-how and investments. Hence, they advocated free trade and the deepen ties with European countries (HELMER, 2002; MONDAY, 2011, pp. 72-76). During Putin's term, they were marginalized politically.

Although such division in "civil" and siloviki might be opaque, it is reported that those factions had poor communication, for being dominated not by individuals, but by bureaucracies, which led to power struggle. There was little room for horizontal communication among the agencies. The vertical communication centralized system prevailed and spawned rivalry among the agencies under the central government. Even for foreign policy matters there seemed to be a division. According to Michael McFaul (1999, p. 396), the military faction seemed to control the foreign policy towards Georgia, Gazprom controlled the foreign policy toward Eastern Europe, Lukhoil tends to control the policy on the Caspian Sea, the Ministry of the Atomic Energy seemed to control the policy on the Middle Eastern. The institutionalized coordination between those unities seemed weak". Celeste Wallander (2007, p. 116) affirms the authoritarian patrimonial system that surfaced in Russia is based on the political control of economic resources with the aim to enrich patron-client clans. The "boss" asserts himself in

³ See FREELAND, Chrystia (2000), *Sale of the Century: The Inside History of the Second Russian Revolution*. London: Abacus.

power, through the support of his clients, who in their turn, are rewarded for supporting him.

At the top of the political system was President Putin, who coordinated the relations and the disputes among competing patron-client clans headed by top government and business figures the patron-client, such as Development and Trade Minister German Gref, Deputy Prime Minister and Gazprom chairman Dmitry Medvedev, Gazprom president Alexei Miller, and Igor Sechin, deputy head of the presidential administration and chairman of Rosneft.

This particularity of the Russian regime, that is, such fragmentation and the lack of communication among the factions and the fact that many opposed the WTO accession, whereas others were more favorable, for ideological reasons, or personal interests, contributed to the long duration of the accession process, reinstating the thesis that there was no internal consensus towards the accession, which made it a low win-set. Hence, until up to 2008 the accession was not concluded.

Putin was the “arbiter” of those groups. Ultimately, he was the one to take the decision of going through with the accession or not, one could argue. According to Segrillo (2011, pp. 141-5), he was a moderate westerner and also a supporter of a strong State. As a moderate westerner and also aware of the model based on fuels exports that would not be sustainable in the long term, and ultimately he would decide for Russia’s accession, since being in this organism would promote the diversification of the Russian economy and attract new investments. He would then be serving the interests of the “civil” and the oligarchs. So much so that the position of the deputy prime minister in Russia was divided between a siloviki (then Defense Minister Igor Sechin) and a “civil” (Dimitri Medvedev) (SEGRILLO, 2011, p. 144).

As a supporter of a strong State, he would promote a conservative modernization, adopting the “inertia strategy” (RUSSIA, 2008a), protracting to the maxim the accession, in an attempt to get advantageous transition periods to have time to strengthen a capitalist system with strong state intervention (ASLUND, 2009b). This strategy would serve the interests of some oligarchs contrary to the accession but, mainly, the siloviki, who wanted to make the foreign policy a subservient instrument of the domestic politics and of the interests of the country.

Although ideologically clinging to the side of the siloviki, Putin counted on those two main groups to hold power. And since he did not have the consensus necessary, until 2008 Putin did not make up for the accession, even after the signature of the Bilateral Agreement with the USA in 2006, an important step of the process, since it had the back of the biggest WTO economy. According to Putnam’s model, even if the international agreement was signed in the Level I, he would not be ratified (accepted) in Level II, in case this level was heterogeneous and with divergent forces.

Hence, that is why after the signature of the agreement, Russia raised its protectionist rhetoric, embargoed north-American meat, raised tariffs of log imports from the European Union, that is, in thesis contrary to market liberalization.

The result was a dual and ambiguous orientation towards the WTO process. Alexei Portansky (2011) argued, for example, that the bureaucratic coordination for the WTO accession matters changed over time and was somehow disperse, showing that the WTO seemed not to have priority or focus. The business community was not regularly consulted. Actually, many scholars (COTTRELL, 2002; TRENIN, 2005) stated that Russia wanted to enter the WTO not to be left out of an important organization, which was incommensurate with its nuclear, military, energy and economic status. Economically, Russia already had most-favored nation and market economy status from the USA and the European Union, and its exports (mostly fuels) did not suffer severely from antidumping measures. Even from the outside world, Russia was not a competitive economy and there was no danger that its products would “flood” the international markets after the accession, different from what was observed in the case of China (RUTLAND, 2007; ASLUND, 2006; 2010, p. 51).

Stephen Hanson (2007, p. 10) pointed out that Russia had not been integrated fully into western organizations and the WTO was the “only alternative in town”. Although it had cooperation with NATO, it did not have veto power; the international regimes the Soviet Union had a prestige (armaments control) was disregarded by the Bush administration; the fact that Russia was part of the G-8 was matter of criticism by American members of the parliament. The only international prestige left for Russia was the veto power of the Security Council, which, again, was disregarded by the USA in the Kosovo (1999) and the Iraq (2003) cases.

The Bilateral Agreement showed that the political struggle of many international negotiations can ultimately be seen as two-level game. In the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests, pressing the government to adopt policies that serve them. In the international level, the national governments seek to maximize their own skills of satisfying the domestic pressures, while they minimize the adverse consequences of the external negotiations. Neither of the two levels can be ignored by the decision-makers, since their countries remain interdependent and sovereign at the same time.

Russia wanted to make the least concessions possible, in order to maximize its domestic and international interests. To maximize the domestic interests meant to serve both the “civil” (oligarchs) and the siloviki. Even with the rhetoric escalation against liberalism and seemingly loss of interest for the accession during Putin’s second term, the Russian government concluded important bilateral agreements – in 2004, with the European Union and with the USA in 2006 – and made a significant legal reform to adapt to the rules of the WTO. The chief negotiators of the WTO were always “liberal”: German Gref, Alexei Kudrin and Elvira Nabiulina. Ah the same time, the Russian government wanted to make the least concessions and to obtain long transition periods

served the interests of the less competitive industries and also those who preached an image of a strong Russia, which negotiated as a great power that did not deserve to be treated as a second-class or weaker country, as Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine (whose accession, accomplished in 2008, was deemed disadvantageous to the country).⁴

Putnam (2010, pp. 157-8) notes that some domestic groups can have low costs with the non-accord, whereas others can have higher costs; the first ones will be more skeptical than the second ones. Besides, big self-sufficient countries usually stand to lose little with the non-accord, in comparison with smaller countries or more economically weak.

Even though Putin had a will to modernize Russia, its accession to the WTO was not assessed as something necessarily urgent. After all, almost 70% of its exports were fuels, which were not regulated by the WTO and were not target of protectionist or antidumping measures. The economic model based on the energy sector and the strong presence of the State seemed to work well as far as 2008, giving the impression to the Russians that the accession was not necessary in the short term. After all, the country had managed to sign advantageous agreements with Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and China for oil and gas provision. At the same time, the country integrated into the world economy through free-trade agreements with former Soviet countries, with good terms for Russia.

However, for the United States, the cost of the non-accord was not negligible. The United States had commercial interests in Russia's accession to the WTO. Besides counting on a legal security to trade with Russia, the latter had a big consumer market for USA, whose exports incidentally had increased over the years, mostly meat. Other USA companies had the interest to expand its activities in the Russian banking sector and there was the concern on Russia's effective enforcement of intellectual property rules. No less important was the political cost, that is, the USA strategy of "socializing" Russia, by backing its participation in international organizations.

Yet Russia was not a big trading partner. It did not stand among the USA's 15 biggest trading partners (EUA, World Book, 2011a), neither exported to the USA goods of highly-strategic level, except oil (RUTLAND, 2007, p. 32).

Even after the USA backing for Russia and the Russia's legislation in compliance with the WTO, Russia was still out of the organization in 2008. According to Aslund (2010, p. 59), the Russian authorities said that the conclusion depended "99% on the USA".

Other authors, such as Philip Hanson (2011) and Geamand and Kols (2011) emphasize the Russian domestic politics as the main cause for the long duration of the

⁴ Cf.: KOUBOUTA, Iryna et alli(2010), "Ukraine's Second Year in WTO: Trends in Foreign Trade in Goods and Analysis of Compliance with Commitments". Kyiv:Blue Blue Ribbon Analytical and Advisory Centre. Cf. também: "Ukraine joined WTO on disadvantageous terms - economics minister". Ria Novosti, 19/7/2010 (Disponível em: <http://en.rian.ru/world/20100719/159861414.html>).

accession, due to the division in the Russian society towards the benefits of the accession to the WTO, as it was exposed. To be part of the WTO meant adopt the principles of the market liberalism and business transparency. If on the one hand these principles served the interests of the oligarchs (who wanted to strengthen Russia's economy competitiveness) and the "civil" ones, on the other hand, they ran counter the interests of the siloviki, namely the control of key sectors of the economy, the maintenance of privileges obtained in a non transparent way, the stronger presence of the State in the economy and protectionism. The heterogeneous domestic environment denounced a potential defection by Russia. That is why even after the signature of the agreement with the USA, Russia protracted the decision for the accession and adopted protectionist measures.

Some scholars argue that the political system that emerged in Russia throughout the 20 years of transition was incompatible with the integration into the international regimes (MANKOFF, 2009; SHEVTSOVA, 2010; TORBAKOV, 2010). The main aim of the Russian foreign policy is to create conditions to preserve the authoritarian political system of economic and bureaucratic capitalism to make this system be seen as equally legitimate as the liberal capitalism. At the same time, that policy intended to integrate the Russian economy into the global system, but protecting the domestic environment from the supposedly pernicious western influence.

Russia is characterized by many scholars as a "patrimonial" State. Celeste Wallander (2007) holds that the current Russian political and economic system is based on the centralization, the control of the country's natural resources by the governmental elite, which has not been held accountable and has been enriching at the expenses of the State. Such a system is incompatible with the liberal capitalism (or the WTO, for that matter), which requires contracts, accountability and property law. However, Wallander (2007, p. 117) points out that this system can be integrated into the world economy through "transimperialism", through which the country invests and trades with the external world without being too open or permeable, selectively integrating sectors of the elite into the international globalized system. Moscow would play the role of the arbiter and the manager of the Russian international insertion into the world, making sure the Russian economy is not exposed to the liberalization effects of competition.

Some authors contend the existence of sectors contrary to the accession was a considerable hurdle to the conclusion of the accession (ROCHE, 2002; JOHNSON, 2007; VERCUEIL, 2007; COOPER, 2008). Conversely, other authors (ASLUND, 2010, p. 58; MEDVEDKOV, 2002, p. 43) state that those sectors contrary to the WTO were not contrary per se, but only fearful of the negative effects of the accession.

In addition, other scholars (ASLUND, 2010, p. 58; ASLUND; BERGSTEN, 2011) emphasized the Russian-American bilateral relations as the main cause for the protected WTO accession negotiations. The WTO accession was a top priority of Putin's foreign policy, at least in his first term (2000-2004). In 2001, the Russian government signed the "Plan for Bringing legislation of the Russian Federation to

conformity with rules and regulations of the World Trade Organization”.⁵ The Russian parliament passed and reform scores of laws to bring the Russian legislation into compliance with the WTO rules and the WTO negotiations actually worked as catalyst for legal reform in Russia. Besides, in his second term (2004-2008), Putin took measures that led to the centralization of the power and the weakening of the opposition. The Parliament was dominated by the president’s Party United Russia, the members of the Federal Council (upper chamber) were nominated by the President (and not elected anymore), foreign policy decisions were concentrated on the presidential administration, and not on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Therefore, even with the opposition from sectors contrary to the accession, Putin would have the accession approved. However, at the same Putin allowed the rise of a group of nationalists who saw the western countries, such as the United States, as rivals and the main hurdle for the conclusion of the accession. Hence, we also intend to delve into Russian-American bilateral relations to grasp the reasons of the long duration of the Russia’s accession process.

Section III - USA-Russian Bilateral Relations and Russia’s WTO Accession (1993-2008)

There are now two great nations in the world, which starting from different points, seem to be advancing toward the same goal: the Russians and the AngloAmericans [...] Each seems called by some secret design of Providence one day to hold in its hands the destinies of half the world.

Alexis de Tocqueville

With the assumption that one International Relations (IR) theory is not sufficient to grasp the international reality, to delve into the Russian-American bilateral relations both neo-realism and constructivism are used.

This author espouses Jeffrey Mankoff’s analysis (2009, pp. 38-40) that the neo-realism is adequate to explain Russia’s foreign policy. Neorealism (whose main theorist is Kenneth Waltz) holds that the international system structure presses the States to pay

⁵ This plan of actions was in the whole fulfilled, with the passage, among others, of the new version of the Customs Code of the Russian Federation (May 28, 2003, No 61-FZ), the laws On the Foundations of State Regulation of External Trade Activities (May 28, 2003, No 61-FZ), On Special Anti-Dumping and Compensatory Measures During the Importation of Goods (December 8, 2003, No 165-FZ), On Currency Regulation and Currency Control (December 10, 2003, No 173-FZ), On Technical Regulation (December 27, 2002, No 184-FZ), a set of laws on intellectual property rights protection, “On the Introduction of Amendments to the Customs Code of the Russian Federation Dealing with Customs Fees” (of the 11th of November, 2004, N 139-FZ), “On the Introduction of Amendments and Additions to the Russian Federation Law on Customs Tariffs” (of the 8th of November, 2005, N 144-FZ), package of laws on intellectual property rights protection and others.

more attention the relative balance of power among them. Anarchy makes the States compete among themselves, because power is the best way to survive. The foremost objective of the states is to survive and their physical integrity.⁶

Neo-realism emphasizes the existence of an international anarchy, where the behavior of the states is conditioned by the distribution of relative power among them. As Mankoff pointed out (2009, p. 39), it was expected that Russia, facing a decline in its relative power during the 1990s, would reduce its geopolitical ambitions, whilst a country whose relative was rising would seek an international expansionist role and would convey more assertiveness. This pattern seems to explain Putin's foreign policy – he was more cooperative when Russia was still recovering domestically⁷ and more assertive when Russia had already recovered – but does not explain why Yeltsin refused to diminish the country's geopolitical ambitions during the 1990s, especially in 1999 (when he opposed the Kosovo military operation), when Russia was still shaken by the previous year's financial crisis.

Alexander Wendt's Social constructivism (1999) also helps shed light to the facts.⁸ This theorist emphasizes that the States' behavior is above all a reflex of their self-perception and the identity constructed and construed by their elites. Under this prism, the international system is cultural or social phenomenon, and not a terrain where military, economic and diplomatic instruments are applied. It is, first and foremost, a space that promotes socialization and comprehension of the interest in world politics. The central category of the social constructivism is identity; the very existence of the Self requires the Other's recognition/acknowledgement. The Other exerts influence on the Self. In Russia's case, Europe and the West had traditionally played the role of the "Other", in that Russia has historically seeking recognition by the West (the Other) and to modernize in a Western manner (TSYGANKOV, 2006; MANKOFF, 2009).

Russia's insistence of acting and being treated as a great power went throughout Yeltsin's and Putin's eras and is backed by thinkers and decision-makers in Russia. Although there was a certain difficulty of defining itself culturally and politically after the end of the Cold War, there was a general consensus in Russia about its international role. The Russian elites saw their country in terms of great power, whose interests reached many regions of the globe and, therefore, should be consulted in many international issues, even though they were not directly affected Russian interests (MANKOFF, 2009, p. 41). There were hesitations and vacillations in Russia's

⁶ WALTZ, Kenneth (1979), *Theory of International Politics*. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press.

⁷ Putin in his first address to the nation, acknowledged that in 2000, for Russia to catch up Portugal GNP per capita – then the poorest European Union Member –, the economic growth should be at 8% per year in the next 15 years. The same year, the Russian submarine Kursk sank. Cf.: RÚSSIA (2000a). V.V. Putin, 'Rossiia na rubezhe tysiacheletii,' (Russian on the Eve of the Millennium), *Pravitelstvo Rossiiskoi Federatsiia* (Government of the Russian Federation), January 2, 2002. p. 5.

⁸ WENDT, Alexander (1999), *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

foreign policy, which according to Tsygankov (2006, pp. 8-27), are result from different coalitions that took the power in Russia in different times.⁹

Personalities such as the Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, who is an atlanticist, had a set of values radically different from those of Primakov, who was an eurasianist, or o Putin. However, none of them questioned Russia's fundamental identity as an autonomous great power and a key player in the international system. Although Russia does not intend to be a global hegemon, it aims to be a regional power, one of the poles of the current world order, with privileged interests in the post-Soviet space. Hence, as a typical strategy to contain a foreign power, Russia sought to increase its influence over the former soviet republics of the Caucasus and the Central Asia, who had tilted toward the United States, in face of the greater military presence of this country due to the military operations in Afghanistan. Furthermore, as Putin affirmed (RUSSIA, 2012), "Russia is only respected and has its interests properly considered when it shows strength and firmly stands up to its positions". In addition to that, in this same speech, the USA are considered a threat, since they want to become "absolutely invulnerable", which Putin reads as the absolute vulnerability of the other countries, which Russia would not allow. The Russian stand of being treated and be recognized as a great power was a reason for the tensions with the USA during the WTO accession negotiations.

Russian-American bilateral relations (1993-2008)

Boris Yeltsin (1992-1999) and Bill Clinton (1993-2001)

Yeltsin (1992-1999) Clinton (1993-2001). Boris Yeltsin's term majorly coincided with that of Bill Clinton (1993-2001). They had convergent viewpoints, in that they were "liberals" and aimed to integrate Russia into the West. During Yeltsin's tenure, the bilateral relations were characterized more by cooperation than confrontation. Boris Yeltsin's foremost objective, right after taking power in Russia, was to integrate Russia into the West, as a way to guarantee democracy consolidation and the market economy and avoid communism restoration (BROWN; SHEVTSOVA, 2004, p. 93). The country wanted to make part of the post-Cold War international order that could be characterized by strong USA prominence in many realms, including multilateral organizations, as the GATT/WTO (COTTRELL, 2002, p. 52; DONALDSON; NOGEE, 2009, p; 218). Furthermore, at that time, Russia faced financial difficulties and needed political and financial assistance from the West to advance economic and political reforms towards the adoption of a market economy and a representative democracy.

The USA were the country that had the best conditions to lead such financial aid to Russia – which made Russia act in a more cooperative (and sometimes subservient) in relation to the Americans (KANET, 2009, p. 1). There was a belief that

⁹ Those were the aforementioned eurasianists, the atlanticists and the civilizationists, mentioned in the Note nº 2.

the **discourse/stance the USA** adopted in relation to Russia would influence the other countries' conduct toward that country too (SHEVTSOVA, 2010, p. 11). The USA was interested in a cooperative conduct with Russia, because it was believed that Russia would become a democratic country, thus having more chances of cooperating with the USA.

This internal transformation strategy in order to foster cooperation was an American foreign policy tradition. According to Goldgeier and McFaul (2003, p. 5), the foreign policy makers in the USA after the Cold War could be positioned in two poles: the regime transformers and the **power balancers**. In the first category, there were policy makers who believed the USA should use its soft power to integrate Russia into many multilateral institutions, such as the WTO, and also to transform Russia from within/inside, in order to turn it into a democratic country. This was what is called a Wilsonian (or liberal) tradition. The second category amassed policy makers who believed Russia's domestic environment did not dictate its behavior in the international arena. Hence, the strategy to be pursued was to diminish Russia's power to the most extension possible, either through reducing its nuclear arsenal or promoting its neighbors' independence. This was the realist tradition.

The Wilsonian tradition believed the best way to guarantee USA's security is not to defend the country from the outside world, but to change it, in order to make more democratic and, consequently, pacific. The realist tradition emphasized power politics and the relative power of the States.

In consonance with the Wilsonian tradition, Bill Clinton pursued a policy of integrating Russia into international organizations, in order to make Russia "feel important and part of the West" (GOLDGEIER; McFAUL, 2003, p. 260). In fact, Clinton publicly supported Russia's accession to many western cooperation mechanisms, such as the International Space Station, Bosnia peace talks and more notably in the G-7. Clinton also vehemently supported Russia's accession to the WTO, with the intent that Russia made part of the West and also to catalyze its domestic transformation, as a way to foster friendly relations with the USA. Russia was a top priority in Clinton's foreign policy.

Security matters also prompted Clinton's stance, as Russia could not be isolated for "*the world cannot afford the strife of the former Yugoslavia replicated in a nation as big as Russia, spanning eleven time zones with an armed arsenal of nuclear weapons that is still very vast.*"¹⁰

Some scholars state Clinton's approach toward Russia was not exempt of an ideological component. According to Stephen Cohen (2001, p. 111), there was a US rush to convert Russia into "a USA replica". The USA wanted to teach Russia how to become a capitalist and democratic country – through shock therapy and tight economic

¹⁰ LEGVOLD, Robert (2006), "US-Russian Relations: An American Perspective". *Russia in Global Affairs*, Vol. 4, Nº 4, October/December.

measures, privatization (2001, p. 9). The political reform only consisted of supporting Yeltsin, who represented “the direction the USA wanted Russia to take”.

Indeed, one of the pillars of the US Russian policy in the Clinton era was the unconditional support to Yeltsin, who was considered the key to guarantee democracy in Russia. That is why the USA supported Boris Yeltsin when he unconstitutionally dissolved the Parliament in 1993 and forced a new constitution. Clinton did not condemn Russia’s human right violations when Yeltsin initiated a military campaign in the Russian separatist region of Chechnya. In that occasion, Clinton supported Russia’s initiative, considering it as defense of the Russian democracy and even compared the Russian military action to the Secession War.¹¹ Finally, Clinton supported Yeltsin’s reelection in 1996, even under accusations of illegal campaign financing, preferring to keep in power instead of supporting an also liberal candidate Grigorii Yavlinsky (part of the Yeltsin’s team of reformers) (GOLDGEIER; McFAUL, 2003, pp. 126-142). In those moments, the non-US intervention was believed to provoke Yeltsin’s downfall – and consequently, the interruption of the economic and political reforms in course so dear to the USA.

However, Cohen holds that the attempt to convert Russia was doomed to fail, since the US policy makers designed their policies under a triumphalist prism. This “missionary” idea collided with Russia’s historical traditions. Cohen (2001, p. 103) argued that it was naïve to imagine that, due to the end of the Cold War, Russia and the USA would leave decades of mistrust and confrontation behind to enter a new era of friendship and partnership.

The American prescriptions did not work fully with Russia, since it vehemently opposed NATO’s expansion (seen by Russia as a violation of the promises taken upon the German reunification that it would never expand towards the Eastern Europe) and the military action in Serbia in the 1990s. NATO’s inclusion of three former Russian satellites led Russia to believe it was not held highly in account by the West, at least by the USA (COHEN, 2001, p. 249). Besides, the Western help to Russia fell far short of what the transition to capitalism required.¹² Other divergences in the international agenda abounded. The USA opposed Russia’s contacts with India and Iran (traditional buyers of Soviet weapons) in the realm of nuclear energy. Russia also opposed to commercial sanctions toward former trading partners, as was the case with Iraq in 1998 (KANET, 2009, p. 5).

¹¹ Clinton also rejected the idea that Russia should be expelled from international organizations as a punishment for the actions in Chechnya. To the contrary, Clinton pressed to transform the G-7 into G-8 and did not cut off financial assistance to Russia during the Chechnya invasion. Cf.: GOLDGEIER; McFAUL, 2003, p. 142.

¹² Russia received US\$ 15.95 billion worth of direct assistance from the USA, between 1992 and 2007, 2.3% of which were devoted to democratization programs (1992-1998). Of the amount of financial aid transferred to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Russia absorbed 65%. In 1995, however, that amount fell to 45%. The drop on the financial aid to Russia made part of the strategy of strengthening Russia’s neighbors and to get closer to the oil-rich countries of the Caspian Basin. In 1997, Ukraine was already the biggest receiver of financial aid in the region and the 3rd in the world. Cf.: GOLDGEIER; McFAUL, 2003, pp.114-8; SHEVTSOVA, 2010, pp.67-75.

In addition to that, domestic economic problems and mismanagement and international misfortunes (fall of the price of fuels in the international markets and the 1997 Asian crisis) led Russia to a big crisis in 1998 and to default. By the end of Clinton's administration, Russia was not a priority for US foreign policy.

Vladimir Putin (2000-2008) and George W. Bush (2001-2009)

The reclassification of the USA foreign policy priorities continued during the George W. Bush (2001-2009). According to this administration, the USA should focus on the allies of North America, Asia, Europe and then focus on Russia (GOLDGEIER; McFAUL, 2003, p. 14). Bush's administration was initially marked by realism (they wanted to increase the US military vigor and to get rid of treaties that limited that objective, such as the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty) and by balance of power politics. After the September 11th, the Bush government was imbued of Wilsonian values, such as the individual liberty and democracy, but as a way to justify US action against terrorism (GOLDGEIER; McFAUL, 2003, pp.14, 305).

The Bush administration initially acted with indifference and pursued a neo-containment strategy toward Russia. The Bush administration considered Russian policy as erratic and dangerous. But by the end of 2001, Bush decided to pursue a personal approximation policy with Vladimir Putin – because at that time, the USA saw China as a bigger threat to the USA and Russia could be a helpful partner (2003, p. 312). After the September 11th, due mostly to Russia's initiative of getting closer to the USA and offering them a helping hand in the war against terror, the USA had a more cooperative attitude with the Russians.

The credit for such shift in the US foreign policy toward Russia should be conferred to Putin. His objective upon the inauguration of this administration was to raise the political profile of Russia, which was shook by the political and economic crises of the 1990s. To accomplish that objective, he took conciliatory gestures towards the USA (ASLUND; KUCHINS, 2009b). The highlight of the bilateral relations occurred during the 2002 Moscow Summit, when the USA expressed the need to install/establish military bases in Central Asia (more precisely, in the territories of the former Soviet Union) as a platform for the military operations in Afghanistan, and Putin acquiesced to it. Putin also welcomed the military partnership the USA were promoting in Georgia, and even stated that a better equipped Georgia was beneficial for Russia's security (KUCHINS, 2006; ASLUND, 2006).

Russia deepened its cooperation with NATO in 2002. It signed the Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (SORT) with the United States in 2002 and apparently did not protest very loudly when the USA resigned the 1972 ABM Treaty in December 2001. As a response, Bush changed his rhetoric towards Russian military action in Chechnya (reinitiated in 1999) even acknowledge the region as part of the world's efforts in the fight against terrorism (GOLDGEIER; McFAUL, 2003, p. 316). The USA even considered Russia as a “non-China”, meaning that in Russia there was freedom of speech, a pluralist system and a real opposition (ARON, 2006, p. 84). The USA also

fostered Russia's participation in the "Quartet on the Middle East" as an equal partner, improving the country's political profile. President Bush vehemently stated the USA would exert significant effort toward helping Russia enter the WTO. Such statement was translated into the classification of Russia as a market economy by the USTR in May 2002. Finally, the USA pressed the other G-7 to accept the Russian presidency of the group even though it had not entered the WTO (SHEVTSOVA, 2010, p. 52).

In 2003 came the watershed in the US-Russian bilateral relations. In the beginning of that year, Russia, together with France and Germany, opposed the US invasion to Iraq. At that time, many commented on a potential Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis to counterbalance US unilateralist tendencies/inclinations.¹³ In the same year, Russia started renationalizing some key companies for Russia's security, mostly those that dealt with natural resources exploitation. In a very idiosyncratic manner, Russia confiscated the then biggest Russian company, IOKUS, of the oil realm, and restricted foreign participation in the fuels sector. According to Aslund and Kuchins (2009, p. 2), the US losses with the renationalization were up to US\$ 12billions, although the US government had not publicly protested against those losses.

In 2004, the bilateral relations evidently were deteriorated. In March, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, not to mention the three former Soviet republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia became members of the NATO, which prompted Moscow's rebuke. Russia considered that extension a US interference in Russia's area of influence. To add weight to the strained bilateral relations, in July that year, investigative journalist Paul Klebnikov of the Forbes Russia was murdered, which was seen as a threat to the investigative journalism. Later that year, elections were held in Ukraine, in which Putin meddled to obtain favorable results to Russia. The West protested against Russia's intervention and against the tricked results (followed by the "Orange Revolution"), what Russia saw as conspiracy led by the US in Russia's *near-abroad*.

In April 2005, Vladimir Putin declared that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the biggest disaster of the 20th Century.¹⁴ In December that year, president Putin adopted a law that restrained NGO action in Russia, despite protests from the European Union and the United States.

¹³ Anthony, I., Bailes, A. J. K., Kile, S., and Lachowski, Z. (2003), 'The Euro-Atlantic System and Global Security', In SIPRI Yearbook . Oxford University Press, pp. 70-71; PRADETTO, August (2004), "Germany, France, and Russia: An Axis of Anti-Americanism?" German Foreign Policy in Dialogue E-Newsletter, Nº12. (Disponível em: <http://www.deutsche-aussenpolitik.de/newsletter/issue12.pdf>); GOLDTHAU, Andreas (2008), "Divided over Iraq, United over Iran. A Rational Choice Explanation to European Irrationalities". European Political Economy Review, Nº 8, pp. 40-67. Para uma análise interessante sobre o eixo na atualidade, cf.: WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel (2011), "The Paris-Berlin-Moscow Axis Back Again". Binghamton University Commentary, Nº 317, 15/11. (Disponível em: <http://www2.binghamton.edu/fbc/commentaries/archive-2011/317en.htm>).

¹⁴ RUSSIA (2005), "Discurso Anual do Presidente da Rússia à Assembleia Federal da Federação Russa", 25/4.(Disponível em: <http://www.kremlin.ru>).

In January 2006, the Russian company Gazprom interrupted/disrupted the gas supply to Ukraine (and hence to the European Union, since Ukraine is a transit country), for two days (in the winter), casting doubts on Russia as a reliable gas supplier. However, in November the same year the USA and Russia announced the signature of the Accession Bilateral Protocol, almost concomitantly as the murder of the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya (who criticized the military operations in Chechnya) and the former FSB official Aleksandr Litvinenko (who had defected and started investigate facts that compromised Putin's government).¹⁵

In February 2007, there was an escalation of the confrontationist rhetoric between the two countries, when the US plan of deploying antimissile shields in the Czech Republic and Poland (two countries of the Soviet "orbit") came to public. Although the USA alleged the shield was to intercept potential attacks from North Korea or Iran, Russia contended that shield was directed against her, hence the country had no option but to deploy its own missiles in the Kaliningrad enclave towards Europe. In response to that US plan, Russia also suspended the implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE).

In 2008, Georgia and Ukraine applied to NATO membership. In response, during the NATO Summit in Bucharest in April that year, Russia threatened both countries, even stating that if Ukraine was admitted as a member of that organization, the very existence of Ukraine as a sovereign country would be put into question. After the Summit, Russia quickly backed the Georgian separatists regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The long-held tensions culminated in Russia's incursion in Georgia in August that year, under the pretext of protecting ethnic Russians dwelling in those separatist regions. This was the nadir of the US-Russia bilateral relations (at least until 2008). The consequences of that confrontation was NATO's suspension of Georgia and Ukraine's candidatures and also the cancellation (at least rhetorically) by Putin of the WTO accession negotiations. In April 2008, the USA and Russia had signed the 123 Agreement on Civil Nuclear Cooperation, which was assessed to have a significant commercial importance, but had its ratification suspended by the USA after the invasion of Georgia.

Despite all the confrontationist rhetoric, Bush and Putin had not less than 27 meetings (more than 18 held by Clinton and Yeltsin). However, in his second term, George W. Bush established the promotion of democracy and the American values as a US foreign policy priority. Aslund and Kuchins (2009b, p. 4) argued that there was not a clear foreign policy toward Russia, apart from random policies in the realm of nuclear security and energy. That gave Putin the impression that Bush was not a reliable partner. For example, Bush had promised Putin (like Clinton did to Yeltsin) that he would exert efforts to convince the US Congress to repeal the infamous Jackson-Vannik Amendment, but did not manage to accomplish it.

¹⁵ Cf.: POLITKOVSKAYA, Anna (2004), *Putin's Russia: Life in a Falling Democracy*. Nova York: Metropolitan Books; RACEWICZ, Michal (2007), *Putin i Spólka: Historia Manipulacji (Putin e Sua Rede: Uma História de Manipulação)*. Varsóvia: Ed. Newsweek Polska.

Besides those divergent points, the USA also supported the construction of pipelines that bypassed the Russian territory in direction to the European countries, such as the Nabucco Project and Transcaspian. The Russians interpreted the expansion of the USA influence in Central Asia as new strategy of containment of Russia. As far as human rights are concerned, Russia accused the USA of practicing a double-standard, since the USA rarely condemned the disrespect of human rights in Saudi Arabia or Egypt (US traditional allies) or minimized the repression of civil liberties done by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan or even China, which, according to Freedom House, violated more human rights than Russia.

The various misunderstandings mentioned above, though seemingly cyclical and conjunctural, actually exposed structural divergences between both countries, which were exacerbated when Russia was politically and economically recovered from the 1990s. There was a mutual mistrust between them. The Bush administration assumed Russia was still an insignificant power, ignoring the growing economic influence of that country. Hence, when Putin made his initial “concessions” to the USA – that is, helping the US in Afghanistan and closing down Soviet-era military bases in Cuba and Vietnam – he received nothing in exchange. To the contrary, the Russians allege they received the unilateral US retreat from the 1972 ABM Treaty, the backing of NATO and EU expansion into Eastern Europe and criticism of Russian’s domestic policy. In Russians’ view, Bush interpreted Russia’s actions as a sign of weakness and not cooperation. Russia’s perception was that the USA was encircling Russia through NATO expansion and the anti-missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic. To the USA, Russia had abandoned its democratic course – that is, the course the USA wanted Russia to follow. Therefore, there as a mutual mistrust between them, which, according to some authors, poisoned the bilateral relations and, in particular, WTO accession talks (ASLUND; BERGSTEN, 2010).

The USA had an idea of an antidemocratic, authoritarian and bellicose Russia, who was not viewed as a reliable partner to be in the WTO; Russia saw the USA as country with unilateralist inclinations that did not treat Russia as a great power, and was not a reliable partner either. There was confrontationist logic in their bilateral relations.

But why the United States had such a central role in Russia’s accession to the WTO? It is worth to mention that the West had always been present in the debate of Russia’s identity, since the reign of Peter, the Great (1682-1725). Russia has historically sought to be recognized by the West (Western Europe) and to modernized in Western style/à la West (TSYGANKOV, 2006, p. 17). Hence, it is understandable why Gorbachev, Yeltsin and even Putin had affirmed Russia is a country with European and Western identity, instead of Asiatic. Putin declared that the WTO would “bring/conduct Russia to the civilized world”.¹⁶ In the post-Cold War period, the USA became the point

¹⁶ RÚSSIA (2002), “Discurso Anual do Presidente da Federação Russa Vladimir Putin à Assembleia Federal”, 18/04 [Annual Address of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin to the Federal Assembly].

of reference for the Russian foreign policy (KASYMOV, 2011, p. 119-21; MANKOFF, 2009, pp. 17, 97-100).

While more weakly economically, Russia saw the special relationship with the USA as an efficient manner to exert influence on the world. Furthermore, during his mandate, Bill Clinton (1993-2001) recurrently gave support for Russia's WTO accession, as they had supported Russia in other organizations, such as IMF and G-7. Clinton personally pledged the IMF more flexibility upon conceding loans to Russia. Although it would have been less problematic to enter the WTO during Yeltsin's tenure, due to the strong US support for Russia's integration into the West, and the fact that Russian bureaucracy was strongly influenced by the "atlanticist" view, the nascent State was more focus on consolidation-building policies, and the Parliament, after 1994, had a bigger number of seats taken by communists and other parties skeptical toward the West and contrary to the economic reforms in course. Besides, more attention was devoted to security matters, leading to the straining of the US-Russian relations, making the accession process more difficult.

When Putin ascended to power (1999-2008), the interest for the accession grew increased. He promised to give back Russia the proud and power it had lost, and being part of an important organization, such as the WTO, would contribute to those aims, in that it would catalyze the reforms necessary for the consolidation of the market economy, as well as attract new investments, helping diversify the economy. During his first mandate (2000-2004), he focused on the accession negotiation process, with the target of getting in the WTO in 2003 (ASLUND, 2006; ASLUND; KUCHINS, 2009b). One factor that may have spurred Putin's willingness was China's accession to the WTO concluded in 2001. Russia did not want to be excluded from the main global forums, which is incommensurate with its power. However, after his reelection, there was a shift in his foreign policy. Putin wanted to emphasize the grandeur of Russia, recovered from the ashes of the 1990s and the USSR collapse, a country that was still a great power whose interests should be held into account and did not want to be treated as a second-class country who needed to be "humiliated" to enter the WTO.

It is interesting to notice that the context of the US-Russia bilateral relations was marked by the rule of the two leaders with more "realist" views. George W. Bush was power-balancer and Putin, although a moderate western (SEGRILLO, 2011, p. 141) though his policies were clearly marked by power politics. The USA saw Russia as a country which distanced itself from democratic ideals and the rule of law, which were dear to the US foreign policy. The USA saw Russia as a country that did not completely get rid of its imperial past and refused to take more responsibilities in the international arena. As a result, Washington conducted a dual policy towards Moscow, at times by contention, at times by cooperation (MANKOFF, 2009, p. 101). George Kanet (2010) espouses this analysis but points out that the USA did not take into account Russia's efforts to integrate into the West as an equal partner, and not as a defeated or a second-class power. Kanet (2009; 2010) believes Russian interests were neglected throughout

the 1990s, as the USA advanced his NATO agenda regardless of Russia's legitimate interests.

In Moscow's view, its policies are not revisionist; they only want to reestablish its privileged interests in the area of the former Soviet Union and to negotiate with the West in the terms it considers appropriate. Segrillo (2011, p. 142) also highlights Russia has always been used to have an important – if not key – role in the world scene, as a great power (tsarist times) or as a superpower (during Cold War). An extremely enfeebled Russia of the 1990s was an exception to that pattern.

Kashymov (2011, pp. 109-113) argues that Putin's "statism" (re-centralization of the State, as a means to restore the former great-power status as a way to establish a coherent and concise domestic and foreign policy) was motive of preoccupation for the USA. In spite of that, Putin sought to integrate Russia into global economic and political institutions, as was seen with WTO. However, the reforms to consolidate the state power, which somehow ended up to erode democratic institutions and led to the greater presence of the State in the economy, ended up contradicting some WTO rules.

Still, despite the Russia's political centralization and the great-power politics (*derzhavnosti*) was reason of concern for the USA, both countries signed in 2006 the Bilateral Accession Protocol. More than just an economic symbol, this agreement was a political symbol, since the USA was a key partner in bringing Russia into many international organizations and helping Russia's transition. It was the "go ahead" for Russia from the biggest and, clearly, most influential WTO member. Therefore, it was believed that after the signature of the agreement, the accession would soon after take place (CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, 2006, p. 9; LISSOVOLIK, 2006, pp. 447-8; ASLUND, 2010, pp. 58-9).¹⁷ Even after that agreement and changes in Russian legislation, Russia was not a WTO member by 2008. Russia alleged China entered the WTO in 2001 even though its economy was more controlled by the State than in Russia, as well as Saudi Arabia in 2005, which violated human rights. Yet, they had the backing of the USA. According to Aslund (2010, p. 59), the Russian authorities stated the "conclusion of the accession process depended 99% of the USA", including that the USA should intervene in the negotiations with Georgia.

Georgia, from 2006 until 2011, kept vetoing Russia's accession as a reprisal of the Russian political action towards Tbilisi (that escalated to the Russian incursion in 2008). Georgia, as a member of the WTO Working Party of Russia, could block the

¹⁷ Actually, it was believed that Russia was really closer to enter the WTO in 2007 right before Putin leave the power. WAGSTYL, Stefan (2011), "Russia and WTO: The End in Sight", Financial Times, 31/10. Aslund (2010, p. 60) states that in 2009 for example, the USTR Secretary and the European Commission had successfully concluded negotiations on Russia's accession to the WTO with Igor Shuvalov (one of the chief negotiators) with the Financial Minister Alexei Kudrin (an supporter of the accession) and with the Minister of Trade Elvira Nabiullina (also a supporter). Two days later, on June 09th, 2009, Putin announced he was calling off WTO bid as an individual country to pursue the candidacy in the form of a customs union with Belarus and Kazakhstan, an idea that months later was discarded.

submission of the final Report to the WTO Ministerial Council, which makes the final decision. Russia questioned if the USA, which had gotten closer to Tbilisi over the past years, could not press the country to repeal the veto. But for Georgia that would mean a setback, seeing Russia win over Tbilisi yet again. And the USA (and the EU) had interests in the country, notably those related to pipelines that would pass through Georgian territory, bypassing Russia.

However, Georgia was a small economy and it was not the main factor hampering Russia's accession. Besides, the Russians alleged that if Georgia continued to veto, they would use the Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement, which stated that when consensus is not attained, the 2/3 majority would do. And despite all the technical and some pending negotiations, Aslund (2010, p. 60) said they were transposable. The great bulk of the agreements and hurdles were compromised up to 2008. The main reason was the mutual distrust between them and not much the Russian domestic politics (ASLUND; BERGSTEN, 2010).¹⁸

Russia alleged the USA blocked its entrance into the WTO or made excessive demands of market overture.¹⁹ However, reports from the World Bank economist David Tarr (2008, pp. 16-17; 2009, pp. 9-11) showed that Russia actually had obtained favorable conditions of accession.

Many analysts, scholars and officials advocated the USA should take a more assertive stance towards Russia, in face of the unfolding of Russia's domestic politics (COHEN, 2002, p. 2; ARON, 2006, p. 97; SESTANOVICH, 2006, pp. 38-40; WALLANDER, 2007, p. 120; SHEVTSOVA, 2010, p. 45; EUA, 2010b). Just as the USA had backed Russia's participation in other organizations (including in preferential conditions) the USA should support Russia's bid to the WTO, making it fully integrated into the community of the "developed democracies".

However, they argued, Russia should not have special conditions or privileges; instead they should open their markets in tune with American interests. For the USA, the accession should be conditioned to the previous qualification of the candidate. It should not be a political "present" nor seen as prestige. To the contrary, Russia should signal that the country would previously commit to abiding by the rules of the multilateral trading system. No doubt, Russia's accession was in the interest of the USA. Russia's participation would promote its democratization, transparency, the rule of law and would bring their bilateral relations into another institutional framework, contributing to a greater predictability for them. However, Russia should demonstrate willingness to participate in the West as a full member, which adopts democratic ideals,

¹⁸ However, only in 2010 were the last aspects of this bilateral agreement between the USA and Russia on Russian accession to the dealt with, in the context of the Obama's reset policy toward Russia. Yet, this fact does not take the importance of the 2006 Bilateral Agreement. Cf.: BELLAEFF, Vladimir; LOZANSKY, Edward (2010), "A Quid pro Quo Reset". Russia Profile, 10 de agosto (<http://www.russiaprofile.org>; última visita: 20/05/2011).

¹⁹ Cf.: RIA NOVOSTI (2009), "Joseph Stiglitz calls Russia's WTO entry terms 'outrageous'", 2/07. (Disponível em: <http://en.rian.ru/world/20090702/155417328.html>).

market liberalism and a truly rule of law. Without such signals, the USA would not endorse Russia's entry to the WTO.

Shevtsova points out, however, that none of the previous Russia's accessions to international organizations involved "previous conditions" (democratization, liberalization, tariff reduction) (SHEVTSOVA, 2010, p. 45).

During the WTO negotiations, Russia was "obliged" to make a series of adaptations to its legislation – which it did –, had to commit itself to reducing tariffs, to increasing transparency (which ran counter the interest of the new Russian elites) in a time of growing divergence with the United States in many international issues, stirring a feeling that Russia was not being treated a great power it deserved to be. For many in Russia, WTO negotiations were actually concessions to the West (and the USA in particular) (FEAN, 2011) and not negotiations of adherence to the multilateral trading system, whose motto is trade liberalization and tariffs reduction.

Hence, it seemed that Putin did not want to advance WTO negotiations either because he wanted to demonstrate that Russia was still a great power. That is, he did not want to give, in relation to the WTO, because it would seem that Russia was once again giving (surrendering) to the West and the USA not receiving much in exchange. Why would a recovered power, one the 10 biggest economies in the world (even bigger than some of the G-7 countries), a key country as far as world energy and nuclear security is concerned, a country that paid its debts contracted during the 1990s, with strong influence over its surrounding region, with claims in the Arctic, holder of a permanent seat at the Security Council, and mediator in some international conflicts, why would such a great power easily make concessions to the USA, with which that power still had geopolitical rivalries, and to an international organization that until 2008 was not economically essential for Russia, but for matters of prestige? Russia wanted better conditions to enter the WTO; after all, Russia, although may acknowledge it is not as powerful as the USA, was still a great power and deserved to be treated as a great power and should not have severe conditions to enter the WTO, even more so dictated by a country with which it compared in nuclear terms.

Obviously, Putin took into account the domestic demands, since there was a considerable number of sectors which were against the WTO accession. However, he had great power concentration, legitimacy and high approval rates and have actually run over domestic demands to advance certain objectives. Even though he had to balance himself in between two main groups (siloviki and "civil"), he was the arbiter of the elites. Hence, he could make WTO accession happen. And thence the hypothesis that the USA was a reason for the long duration of the accession process – if there was clearly a possibility to approve the accession in Russia, in the USA, on the other hand, there was a reluctance. Due to Russia's "wrong direction", it was not deemed a reliable partner and should not be allowed to enter an "exclusive club" as the WTO was.

Therefore, Russia's interest for WTO decreased (BORDACHEV; LUKYANOV, 2008; ASLUND, 2010). The solution was to pursue an autonomous,

independent policy, without the need to cooperate with the West. If Russia needed cooperation, then it would turn toward China, whose economy was more dynamic and with which they shared common views on human rights and state sovereignty (KUCHINS, 2006). Russia also sought to establish itself as a regional center (with global interests), deepening ties with the former Soviet Union countries. It engaged in the promotion of free-trade agreements in the region, which would culminate in the launching of the Eurasian Economic Union.²⁰

Another way to convey Russia's independent foreign policy and deviate the attention from WTO accession was to encourage the BRICS group that brings together countries as diverse as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The group, firstly seen as an acronym designed by the Goldman Sachs Bank, got more consistency in part thank to Russian (and Brazilian) efforts. To Putin's Russia, to show the West that Russia was part of the BRICS, a group that has gained evidence, meant Russia had alternative forums it could take action, and that the WTO was not "the only alternative in town". To be part of the BRICS showed the world that Russia still had the credentials to be a rule-maker as far as global governance is concerned. The group BRICS is more flexible, with no strict rules imposed by the West, being hence preferable for Russia (ROBERTS, 2010). The group also denotes a type of international insertion that aims to preserve national sovereignty, besides conveying its own perspectives and new thoughts and viewpoints on decision-making procedures (LUKYANOV, 2012).

In 2008, Putin affirmed Russia should abandon some commitments made during the bilateral talks, since he expected the western countries to punish him for his aggression into Georgia. He was also told to have publicly shouted at a Russian official, saying that Russia should not implement the WTO agreements before the conclusion of the process, otherwise the Western countries would not be interested in admitting the Russians.²¹ Of course, one could argue, it is more rhetoric and true words, but show true sentiments.

Russia, under a Cold-War logic in relation to the USA, saw the WTO negotiations under the geopolitical prism. The USA somehow was also involved in such logic. Some American representatives even raise the possibility of punishing Russia by not supporting its WTO bid anymore. The then USTR Secretary Carlos Gutierrez wanted to condition Russia's entry to the WTO with its troop withdrawal from Georgia.²² Again, not true words, but true sentiments. Yet, the list goes on. Other representatives wanted the USA not to keep Russia in the G-8 nor let it get in the WTO until the murder of Alexander Litvinenko was solved (EUA, 2007, p. 26). Others pledged the USA to hold up Russia's accession to the WTO until it reviewed its human

²⁰ Cf.: ADELAJA, Tai (2011), "Touting a Mini-WTO: The Customs Union Prepares for Stage Four of Integration". Russia Profile, 14/07.

²¹ BACCHUS, James (2011), "Former WTO judge: Putin's cynical effort to get Russia into WTO", International Business Times. (<http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/142145/20110506/former-wto-judge-putin-scynical-effort-to-get-russia-into-wto.htm>).

²² "SPIEGEL Interview with US Commerce Secretary Gutierrez", Der Spiegel, 25/08/2008. Disponível em (<http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/0,1518,574126-2,00.html>).

rights policies (BOSCO, 2011). Even the permanent trade relations status would be conditioned to Russia's relations with Iran, they suggested.²³ This mistrust toward Russia was clearly demonstrated in the American Congress that, until 2012 (hence, even after Russia had fully entered the WTO), had not repealed the Jackson-Vannik Amendment. It was more a symbolic than a real impediment to trading with Russia. Actually, when Russia entered the WTO, the USA would have to repeal the Amendment, under penalty of incurring in illicit against WTO rules and would not enjoy commercial advantages accorded by Russia upon its accession. According to Kuchins (2006), the position of the American Congress was more a reflex of the general idea of Russia in the USA and, hence, it is important, since it represents the "green light" (the approval) the American society confers the Executive in terms of foreign policy.

It is important to remind that democracy promotion is part of the American identity. The USA believes it has a mission, a divine providence of spreading democracy and freedom to the world (MEAD, 2002, p. 60; KANET, 2010, p. 213). Freedom is a key concept of the American exceptionalism, according to which the USA were an exceptional nation, whose mission is to build a morally virtuous society to serve as an example to other peoples (JUNQUEIRA, 2003, p. 170). Everyone was able to share American values, and the USA were seen as an inspiration to the freedom cause (KISSINGER, 1994, p. 142, 471).

The thing is that exceptionalism is also present in Russia culture. There is a belief that Russia is also a great power with a special mission in the world. Russian exceptionalism, firstly with strong religious traits – after the fall of Byzantium, Moscow claimed to be the Third Rome for the Christian Orthodox religion – then later had secular components, serving to contrast the "materialist" and "rationalist" western culture, which, to be regenerated, should turn itself Eastwards, to the Russian culture, which was still "young, full of energy and comprehensive" (ZUBELZÚ, 2007, pp. 105-6). The Russians had the mission to transform society. In the 21st Century, Russian exceptionalism is still present in the Russian discourse: one of long term objectives of that exceptionalism is "transform Russia from a imitator of other civilizations into a model to be looked up to or imitated by others" (POLYAKOV, 2009, p.24).

US and Russia are two countries with their own views and projects. Russian and American perceptions about each other were characterized by expectations and disappointments for both, sparking mutual mistrust. Russia said the USA did not want cooperate with its accession to the WTO. The USA believed Russia did not want to play by the rules of the multilateral trading system, for domestic reasons, and hence it was not a reliable partner. Therefore, Russia's WTO accession did not take place until the end of Putin's mandate.

²³ "Russia trade vote will be "hard lift": U.S. lawmaker", Reuters, 13/12/2011.

Russia's accession to the WTO in 2011 and beyond

Even though the scope of this article ranges from 1993 until 2008, it is worth writing a few lines about the end of the accession process. On December 15th17th WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva, Russia finally was admitted as a full member. The conclusion of the process was made possible after political – not commercial – arrangements with Georgia allegedly with Swiss mediation.²⁴

As part of the negotiations, Russia concluded 30 bilateral agreements on market access for services and 57 for goods. The tariff-ceiling was of 7,8% in comparison with the average of 10% then in course in 2011. The terms of the accession can be consulted in the WTO documents.²⁵ The assessment is that Russia managed a more flexible agreement than China had, with long transition periods, besides keeping its energy prices low for domestic households (a controversial issue raised by the USA and the Europe Union) and being allowed to apply export taxes on oil and gas (Russia's main exports). It managed to limit foreign participation in the services sector. Hence, Tarr (2008, 2009) was right in his analysis.

Hence, it is difficult to sustain Russia's allegiance that USA blocked Russia's accession. Or maybe until 2008. Clearly, US-Russia bilateral relations influenced the negotiations, in that hard politics contaminated trade politics issues. And it is unwise to disregard the big influence Russian domestic politics had on the accession process. Putin had concentrated powers in his hands, but was backed by an elite ("siloviki", which he himself approved) that was less willing to make concessions to the West and had another project for the country – an economic modernization with strong State intervention and the State as the promoter of economic growth and innovation. However, there was a perception (by Putin himself too) that this model was not sustainable, not because of its conception per se (after all, the State must be present in some economic projects and there is nothing abnormal that the State intervenes in the economy to rescue the country economically and financially) but because the economy was strongly dependent on fuels, which discouraged investments and spurned rent-seeking. The 2008-2009 economic crisis hit Russia deeply and exposed its economic febleness. This is a factor that may have prompted the final WTO accession.

Until 2008, Russia's economy was still striving, the WTO was not seen (and is it now?) as a way to diversify Russia's economy, until then not strongly exposed to the crisis.

²⁴ MARKEDENOV, Sergey (2011), "The Mountainous Road to the WTO". Russia Profile, 08/11; Cf.: GORST, Isabel; WAGSTYL, Stefan (2011), "Russia/WTO: What's in it for Georgia?" Financial Times, 2/11; ROMASHEVA, Anastasia (2011), "Russia to Join WTO This Year to Save Europe". Pravda, 1/11; WAGSTYL, Stefan (2011), "Russia and WTO: The End in Sight", Financial Times, 31/10.

²⁵ OMC (2011b), Report of the Working Party on the Accession of the Russian Federation to the World Trade Organization. (http://docsonline.wto.org/imrd/gen_searchResult.asp?RN=0&searchtype=browse&q1=%28+%40meta%5FSymbol+WT%FCACC%FCRUS%FC%2A%29+&language=1). Look for the following documents: WT/ACC/RUS/70, WT/ACC/RUS/70/Add. 1, WT/ACC/RUS/70/Add. 2, WT/ACC/RUS/1/Rev.30

The Russian delegation for the first time participated in a ministerial conference in the capacity of a full-fledged WTO member, in Bali, December 2013, when the trade facilitation agreement was signed (giving life back to the WTO). This is an important aspect, since now Russia can now expose its opinions and have its considerations taken officially in that body. Yet, as Alexei Portansky (2014) recalls, shortly after Russia became a member, in September 2012, Russia introduced a motor vehicle recycling tax, deemed a direct violation of fair competition rules or specific WTO rules. The European Union filed a complaint against Russia over this matter. In the meantime, the State Duma in the spring of 2013 adopted a law banning foreign banks from opening their branches in Russian territory, which obviously runs counter to the aforesaid provision of the Working Party's report. Although Russia became a full-fledged WTO member on August 22, 2012, as follows from the findings of the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation, Russia by April 2013 had not yet adopted regulatory acts to institute Russia's Permanent Mission at the World Trade Organization. In the current situation (as of March, 2014) trade policy powers and functions are split among several agencies: the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Industry Ministry, and the Eurasian Economic Commission, an agency formally commissioned to conduct trade policies. At the same time the core competences remain in the hands of the Economic Development Ministry's Trade Negotiations Department.²⁶

More recently, Russia has threatened to take the WTO over sanctions imposed in the context of the Ukrainian crisis. The WTO has been silent over this matter, since trade sanctions (interconnected with geopolitical issues) have never been tested before. Cuba, for example, has never mounted a formal case challenging the longstanding US trade embargo.²⁷ Russia also complained that the US abruptly withdrew an invitation for Russian veterinary officials to attend talks this week and accused Washington of "sabotage", an apparent sign of tension over Ukraine.²⁸ And finally, adding rhetoric to injury, State Duma lawmaker Sergey Mironov stated that Russia considered leaving the World Trade Organization (WTO) in light of sanctions over Russia's handling of the Ukraine crisis.²⁹ Hence, one can expect to see the WTO as another platform of confrontationist rhetoric between the US and Russia in the short term.

²⁶ PORTANSKY, Alexei (2014), "WTO Membership – Easier Said Than Done". Russia in Global Affairs, March.

²⁷ Financial Times, "Russia threatens US with WTO action over Crimea sanctions". (http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/5418ad46-c57c-11e3-97e4-00144feabdc0,Authorised=false.html?i_location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcms%2Fs%2F0%2F5418ad46-c57c-11e3-97e4-00144feabdc0.html%3Fsiteedition%3Dintl&siteedition=intl&i_referer=#ixzz2zAZBpFHn)

²⁸ Reuters, March, 3rd, 2014. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/03/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-usa-idUSBREA220J120140303>).

²⁹ http://rapsinews.com/legislation_news/20140317/270950001.html

Section IV – Concluding Remarks

This paper aimed to comprehend the reasons behind Russia's long duration process of WTO, focusing on the period of 1993-2008.

Throughout the negotiations, Russia showed contradictory signals, at times being favorable, yet at the same time acting contrary to the accession. This paper tried to show that the idiosyncratic stances Russia took throughout the negotiations were nothing but the reflex of the lack of internal consensus on the benefits and advantages in acceding the WTO. Putnam's two-level model were valid to show that such a heterogeneous denounced a low win-set, which ultimately would lead to the non-ratification (no broader social or business endorsement) of the Final WTO Agreement. Even though the parliament might have accepted (since it was dominated by Putin's party and was docile) Putin needed the backing of the "siloviki" to keep running the country, even though he is the "arbiter" of the elites. This group did not care very much about WTO, since Russia was managing to integrate into the world economy through fuel-supply agreements and the formation of joint-ventures with selected countries (Germany, France, Netherlands, Italy). Besides, there was a feeling that Russia was being treated not as a first-class power during WTO negotiations.

Were not the USA the ones blocking Russia's WTO entry until at least 2008? It remains to be proved in further studies. Russia's 2011 Final Accession Protocol shows that it actually obtained good conditions. And Russia's heterogeneous domestic environment clearly put weight on the government's decision-making as to push more for entering the WTO. Therefore, it is wiser to state that the USA, the US-Russian bilateral relations strengthened Russia's domestic opposition (mostly, the siloviki) to the WTO even further, which made the conclusion of the process – which, per se, is already time-consuming – and also highlighted the strong political component of the accession process to an organization that leads essentially with trade matters.

This domestic opposition was exacerbated by the fact that Russia argued that the USA did not treat it as a great power it deserved to be. If during the 1990s Russia was economically and politically weak, during the 2000s, when most of the bulk of the WTO negotiations took place, Russia had already recovered and was a strong economy, and could not have its pride hurt again by accepting "any" conditions (that is, conditions that were incommensurate with its great-power status) to enter a typical western organism, which, after all, was deemed not essential to it by 2008. Besides, the divergent points over many geopolitical issues also exacerbated that domestic opposition. The USA, by the same token, thought Russia was not a reliable partner for economic (too much piracy in Russian territory, for example) and political reasons (a revisionist power), and conveyed signs (the long-held Jackson-Vannik Amendment) it wanted to Russia to act in a different way before they approved the latter's entry in the WTO. The realist and constructivist International Relations theories were useful to base those misperceptions and power politics between the two countries.

The accession took place in 2011 (formally in 2012, when Russia, not without hesitation and some rhetoric (!), ratified the Final Protocol), and it had to take place anyway because there were stakes for the parts involved. For Russia, to be in one of the (still) key international organizations. Also, the 2008-2009 economic crisis that hit Russia hard may have showed it that WTO in the long term is a good way to promote economic diversification. For the USA, it was the one who started helping integrate Russia into the global scene and also wanted to bring their economic relations into a legal and institutional framework. Besides, they wanted to confer the “reset policy” more substance for Obama’s administration and concluding Russia’s WTO accession could do it. And Russia’s accession to the WTO was also instrumental in a time when the organization was facing discredit, due to the seemingly unsuccessful negotiations of the Doha Round.

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