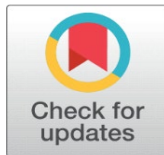


AMERICAN POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA (1867-1895)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the proclamation of the United States of America, U.S.–Russian relations have, overall, followed a broadly constructive trajectory. This positive momentum culminated in the establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 1809, marked by the exchange of ambassadors and subsequently reinforced through a series of bilateral treaties and agreements. The development of relations between the two states continued throughout the subsequent decades, with several key incidents contributing to the consolidation of U.S.–Russian ties. One of the most striking examples was Russia’s stance during the American Civil War (1861–1865), when it backed the federal government led by President Abraham Lincoln. This support helped preserve friendly relations between the two sides and played an important role in shaping their policies, while also encouraging continued efforts to strengthen and develop their ties over time.

ABSTRACT

U.S.–Russian relations between 1867 and 1895 underwent a notable shift, beginning with the Alaska Purchase, which helped foster a more positive atmosphere between the two countries. During this period, contacts between the American and Russian governments expanded across political, cultural, and economic spheres. At the same time, however, a major point of tension emerged in the form of the “Jewish Question,” particularly in relation to the Russian government’s treatment of American Jews and Jewish communities within the Russian Empire. Incidents of violence, forced displacement, and discriminatory policies drew criticism from the United States and brought increased attention to Russia’s domestic practices.

Despite these challenges, relations between the two countries remained relatively stable. This stability is reflected in several developments, including the American humanitarian response to the famine that struck Russia between 1891 and 1893. The period also saw the conclusion of an important bilateral agreement—the Extradition Treaty—which carried significant political weight, especially in its provisions concerning the mutual surrender of individuals accused of political assassination.

This study aims to explore the nature of U.S. policy toward Russia during this period, assessing its direction, outcomes, and broader implications through a historical analysis of the key events that shaped relations between the two states.

Keywords: U.S. Policy, Russia, The Jewish Question, Relations

This study examines the nature of U.S. policy toward Russia during the period (1867–1895), considering the importance of the events that unfolded during this phase, some of which led to profound transformations in the political and economic conditions of both countries.

The research explores the nature of U.S. policy toward Russia and the broader dynamics of their bilateral relationship through three main axes. The first chapter examines the sale of Alaska, tracing its underlying causes through the negotiations and finally to the outcomes that led to the completion of the Alaska Purchase in 1867.

The second chapter examines a highly significant issue that affected the nature of relations between the two countries, namely the (Jewish Question), as reflected in Russia's treatment of American Jewish citizens. It further explores the resulting migration of large numbers of Russian Jews to the United States, its impact on domestic conditions, and the American response to Russian policies toward Jewish populations.

The third chapter is devoted to the nature of U.S.–Russian relations during the early 1890s, as well as the positions adopted by both sides in response to contemporary events. Chief was the famine that struck Russia during (1891–1893) and the American attitude toward it, in addition to the conclusion of an extradition treaty between the two countries, generated considerable resonance within the United States. The study concludes with an analytical assessment of the nature of U.S.–Russian relations during this period and the outcomes that emerged therefrom.

1) First: The Purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867 and the Development of Relations up to 1880

Rumors began circulating as early as 1854 in certain American newspapers suggesting that Russia was inclined to sell Alaska to the United States of America, owing to its inability to prevent the British from seizing its possessions. However, this proposal did not materialize into an agreement, particularly following the conclusion of the Crimean War in 1856. Despite this, Russia's interest in selling Alaska to the United States persisted (1).

On 27 October 1859, U.S. Senator William M. Gwin proposed to the Russian ambassador in Washington, Edward de Stoeckl (2), that Alaska be sold. He noted that President James Buchanan supported the purchase and emphasized that the Russians were geographically distant from their American colonies, rendering them unable to effectively exploit them, whereas the Americans were in much closer proximity. The Russian ambassador responded that he would consult his government on the matter, which in turn requested that he continue the negotiations (3).

A combination of circumstances and considerations prompted Russia to contemplate relinquishing Alaska in favor of the United States. Among these was the weakening of its political and economic position in the aftermath of its defeat in the Crimean War, as the losses of the Russian American Company—which administered the territory—increased, and the financial burden associated with maintaining its presence there became substantial (4). Moreover, Russian officials harbored concerns regarding the potential for British occupation of Alaska. At the same time, Russia was preoccupied with consolidating and developing its territories in Central Asia and Siberia (5).

American interest in Alaska was shaped by an interlocking set of strategic, political, and economic motivations. Central to this was the imperative of territorial expansion, rooted in the doctrine of Manifest Destiny and strongly advocated by Secretary of State William H. Seward, who regarded the acquisition as a decisive step toward enhancing the United States' strategic presence and influence in the Pacific. This strategic outlook was also tied to a desire to limit British influence in the region. Even more significant, however, were the economic motivation behind the purchase. Alaska's vast natural resources were seen as a promising asset that could enhance American trade and commercial

¹ Andrei. V. Grinev; Richard L. Bland, A Brief Survey of the Russian Historiography of Russian America in Recent Years, *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 79, No. 2, 2010.

² Edward Stoeckl (1805–1892): born in Constantinople in 1804, his father was an Austrian diplomat. He served as secretary of the Russian mission in Washington from 1844 to 1854, during which he acted as chargé d'affaires of the Russian embassy there. In 1854, he assumed the post of ambassador following the death of Alexander Bodisco. He played a decisive role in concluding the Alaska Purchase and was consequently rewarded by the Tsar with 25,000 dollars. Due to declining health, he resigned in 1869, spent his final years in France, and died there. See: Glenn P. Hastedt, *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, New York, 2004, pp. 10–11.

³ Glenn P. Hastedt, op. cit., p. 12.

⁴ James R. Gibson, *The Sale of Russian America to the United States*, New York, 1983, p. 21.

⁵ Mao Xin Liang, *Dynamics of American Foreign Policy 1865–1900*, A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of Pacific Lutheran University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Social Sciences, Miami, 1988, p. 4.

opportunities across the Pacific (6). By contrast, the notion that the acquisition would further deepen American–Russian friendship—particularly considering Russia’s support for the Union during the Civil War—remained a secondary and less influential consideration (7).

Seward was a staunch advocate of American expansionism. Considering the diversity of Alaska’s economic resources—including deposits of gold, coal, and oil, as well as fish-rich waters, abundant wildlife, and extensive forests—American interest in acquiring the territory intensified. Following a brief contestation with the U.S. Congress, and with relatively smooth passage in the Senate, a purchase price of seven million two hundred thousand U.S. dollars was agreed upon. Nevertheless, strong opposition subsequently emerged within the House of Representatives regarding the necessary financial appropriation for the acquisition of Alaska, with some members insisting on freezing the funds (8).

After the Alaska Purchase was signed, matters were not finalized, and some issues remained unresolved, particularly in the House of Representatives, which had to approve the funding. The obligation was due within nine months, on January 1, 1868. During this period, Seward continued his campaign to defend the purchase through newspapers and magazines, and informed individuals who emphasized the value of the new land. Subsequently, a large part of the opposition in Congress became advocates for the purchase⁹. Finally, on July 14, 1868, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the allocation for the Alaska Purchase by a vote of 113 to 43, with 44 abstentions.¹⁰

Reactions within Russia to the sale of Alaska were relatively muted, attracting little public debate—largely because of the constraints imposed by the autocratic system and its mechanisms of censorship. Even so, the liberal newspaper *Voice* offered pointed criticism, initially dismissing the news as implausible. It argued that the considerable efforts and sacrifices of the Russian-American Company could not reasonably have been exchanged for such a modest sum, particularly considering newly discovered resources, including gold. The paper further suggested that the Hudson’s Bay Company might well have paid three or four times the agreed price. It also reproached the Americans for what it portrayed as ingratitude, citing their opposition to the purchase and delays in payment. At the same time, shareholders of the Russian-American Company expressed strong dissatisfaction with the transaction. Despite this opposition, the company ultimately received a measure of compensation, and its shares experienced a notable increase in value (11). In retrospect, the United States clearly emerged as the primary beneficiary of the Alaska purchase. American policymakers who supported the acquisition—most notably Secretary Seward—demonstrated a high degree of political and economic foresight, as reflected in the significant advantages the United States derived from the transaction in the years that followed.

The Russian ambassador to the United States, Konstantin J. Catacazy (12), who served during the period (1869–1871), contributed to diplomatic tensions between the two countries through a series of controversies. Among these was his declaration that U.S. negotiations with Britain over the *Alabama* (13) claims would affect American–Russian relations. He further sought to disrupt the negotiation process by disseminating misleading information in the press to foment

⁶ Joseph Tarnovecky, *The Purchase of Alaska: Backgrounds and Reactions*, Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, McGill University, Montreal, 1968, p. 74.

⁷ Thomas A. Bailey, *America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Day*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1950, p. 104.

⁸ Andrei V. Grinev; Richard L. Bland, op. cit., p. 321.

⁹ Joseph Tarnovecky, op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁰ James R. Gibson, op. cit., p. 26.

¹¹ Ronald J. Jensen, op. cit., pp. 89–90.

¹² Konstantin J. Katakazi (1830–1890): of Greek origin, his father migrated to Russia in 1812 and was a major landowner. He graduated from Moscow University and rose through various positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was appointed ambassador to Brazil, then Russian ambassador to the United States, and later became a member of the Russian Senate. See: *The New York Times*, November 27, 1871, “The National Capital: Minister Catacazy and His Relations with the Government.”

¹³ The Alabama Claims referred to a series of demands for compensation sought by the United States from Britain in 1869, arising from Confederate naval attacks on Union shipping during the American Civil War, involving vessels constructed in British shipyards. The claims focused primarily on the most famous of these ships, the C.S.S. Alabama, which conducted more than sixty attacks before being sunk off the coast of France in 1864. In 1872, international arbitration upheld the American position, and Britain paid fifteen million US dollars, concluding the dispute through a treaty that restored friendly relations between the two countries. See: Kenneth M. Willes, *The Alabama Claims, The College Courant Magazine*, Vol. 4, No. 22, June 5, 1869, p. 343.

discord between the Americans and the British to Russia's advantage. President Ulysses S. Grant (14) recognized the risk posed by Catacazy's efforts to influence American public opinion and, accordingly, requested that Secretary of State Hamilton Fish (15) address the Russian government on 16 June 1871, urging the recall of its ambassador because his conduct was damaging to bilateral relations (16).

Ambassador Katakazi continued to create more problems by continuing to publish statements offensive to American officials, which strained relations between the two countries. However, this did not prevent increased diplomatic pressure from the American side, which resulted in his replacement at the end of April 1872.¹⁷

Russia continued to view the strategic advantage of American ports as potential points from which—at least in the event of war—its naval forces could be deployed against Britain, thereby avoiding confinement in the Baltic Sea under British naval pressure. Within this context came the significant diplomatic visit of Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich, the fourth son of the Emperor, in November 1871. He was accompanied by three vessels bound for New York. The reception he received in the United States during this visit was notably warm and highly ceremonial. A formal welcome was arranged in Washington, where he was received by President Ulysses S. Grant, Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, and several prominent public figures. Over the course of his stay, Grand Duke Alexei met with American military officers, engaged in discussions with them, and came away with the impression that the two countries had far more in common than had previously been assumed (18).

Trade between Russia and the United States during this period proved disappointing due to several circumstances. American cotton exports to Russia began to decline as a result of the disruption of plantations during and after the Civil War. At the same time, the British regained their near-complete dominance over transatlantic shipping. This coincided with the expansion of cotton cultivation in Central Asia and Egypt. Conversely, Russian exports such as hemp, linen textiles, and iron were no longer in significant demand in the United States, owing either to domestic competition or the emergence of alternative sources of supply (19).

Marshal Joel, a former governor of Connecticut, was appointed ambassador to St. Petersburg in 1872 to strengthen trade relations between the two countries, given his experience in trade. During that period, one of the successful imports was oil from Pennsylvania fields sent directly from the United States to northern Russia.²⁰

Russian imports of American oil reached nearly 150,000 barrels in 1873. Furthermore, locomotive sales helped bridge the trade gap between the two countries. Locomotives were shipped from the Baldwin plant in Philadelphia to St. Petersburg in 1873. The following year, fifty locomotives were ordered from the Grant plant in New York. These locomotive imports spurred the development of Russia's anthracite coalfields. Trade also included grain production and exports between the two countries, which saw significant expansion.²¹

Americans were generally sympathetic toward Russia during its conflict with the Ottoman Empire. In 1876, Serbia and Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire, while Bulgarians simultaneously rose in revolt against it. The

¹⁴ Ulysses S. Grant (1822–1885): born in Ohio, he studied at the United States Military Academy at West Point, graduating in 1843. He later worked in civilian life but returned to military service during the American Civil War, becoming commander-in-chief of the Union Army. He was appointed Secretary of War in 1867, then elected President of the United States in 1868 as the Republican candidate, serving two consecutive terms as the 18th President of the United States. See: John Marszalek, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant: The Complete Annotated Edition*, London, 2017, pp. 22–34.

¹⁵ Hamilton Fish (1808–1893): born in New York, educated there, and studied law at Columbia University, graduating in 1827. He practiced law briefly and held local offices in New York between 1832 and 1833. In 1843, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, and in 1847 became Governor of New York. In 1851, he became a U.S. Senator. He was appointed Secretary of State by President Grant in 1869 and served for two consecutive terms. See: Charles Lanman, *Dictionary of the United States Congress: Biographical Sketches of Its Members*, Lippincott Co., Philadelphia, 1959, p. 432.

¹⁶ Yi Zhang, "The First Central Asian Episode in US Foreign Relations: Eugene Schuyler, Turkestan, and America's Tacit Acknowledgment of Russia as a Eurasian Power," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, Vol. LXXVI, No. 2, 2023, p. 98.

¹⁷ Norman E. Saul, op. cit., p. 37; Thomas A. Bailey, op. cit., p. 112.

¹⁸ Robert V. Allen, *Russia Looks at America: The View to 1917*, Library of Congress, Washington, 1988, pp. 233–234.

¹⁹ Norman E. Saul, op. cit., p. 43.

²⁰ Robert V. Allen, op. cit., p. 237.

²¹ Franz Anton Ritter von Gerstner, *Reports from the United States of North America on Railroads, Steamship Travel, Banks and Other Public Undertakings*, translated with introduction by Steven Rowan, University of Missouri–St. Louis, 2019, p. 87.

American consulate in Constantinople issued numerous reports detailing massacres of Bulgarian and Slavic Christian civilians by the Turks. This shocked Americans and turned public opinion against the Ottomans, leading to Russian intervention in the region under the banner of protecting Slavic nationalism²². Russia's campaigns in Central Asia and its war with the Ottoman Empire required the procurement of additional armaments. Consequently, Russia imported substantial quantities of American weapons (²³). There is no doubt that the interests of American arms merchants, along with American support for Russia in this matter, contributed to the maintenance of cordial relations with Russia.

Ulysses S. Grant traveled to Russia in 1878—after the conclusion of his presidential term—where he met with Tsar Alexander II in discussions that were broadly amicable in tone. During the meeting, the Russian Tsar reportedly stated that “since the establishment of your government, relations between Russia and the United States have been of a very friendly character, and as long as I live, I shall spare no effort to continue this friendship” (²⁴).

At that stage, the American administration sought to remove any obstacles that might impede its positive relations with the government of Saint Petersburg. It also worked to strengthen bilateral commercial exchanges and ensure the continuity of political and diplomatic engagement, including through its generally supportive stance toward Russian foreign policy.

2) Second: The Jewish Question in Russia and Its Impact on US-Russian Relations

Russia took a series of measures against American Jews residing within its borders, most notably a law that compelled them to live in a strip of land along the western border of the empire. This angered the US government, as American Jews faced discrimination when traveling and residing in Russia. Therefore, the United States demanded the application of Article 1 of the 1832 Treaty, but to no avail. A new crisis ensued when the Russian side refused to accept Henry Bunks, an American Jewish merchant who had previously been forced to leave St. Petersburg without being able to manage his business.²⁵

Many Russian Jews and others had succeeded in obtaining American nationality and had become citizens of the United States (²⁶), yet upon returning to their country of origin—whether for employment or to visit relatives—they found that the Russian authorities applied discriminatory laws to them irrespective of their citizenship. Moreover, some American Jews were subjected to legal persecution on various pretexts. Beginning in December 1880, a series of incidents targeting American Jews arose in connection with alleged violations of restrictions on the residence of foreign Jews, including the deportation of certain individuals, such as Marx Wilczynski, an agent of an American textile company, who was prevented even from communicating with the consulate (²⁷).

These developments prompted the United States Secretary of State, William M. Evarts (²⁸), to issue a response to the Russian authorities on 28 February 1881. He made clear that the religion professed by American citizens bore no relation to their entitlement to the protection of the United States, emphasizing that the harm inflicted upon certain Jews was

²² Norman E. Saul, op. cit., p. 111.

²³ Yi Zhang, op. cit., p. 98.

²⁴ Quoted in: Yi Zhang, op. cit., p. 98.

²⁵ Muntaaha Sabri Mulla; Ali Jawda Al-Maliki, “The Russian–American Competition over Manchuria 1898–1905,” *Historical Studies Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 4, Basra, 2018, pp. 296–297.

²⁶ Prior to 1882, Russian Jewish migration to the United States was largely confined to the provinces surrounding the Neman and Don rivers. Economic conditions compelled Jewish peasants, as well as merchants and artisans, to relocate in search of better livelihoods. Some of these Lithuanian and Polish Jews sought to establish their fortunes in the southern regions of the empire, while the more adventurous crossed the borders to the New World. Jews residing in Ukraine, southern Russia, and certain central provinces of the Russian Empire were subjected to religious persecution amid the outbreak of anti-Jewish riots, which resulted in the displacement of thousands of relatively well-off families. Accordingly, multiple factors converged to encourage Russian Jewish emigration to the United States, including poverty and systematically promoted policies of persecution against Jews that were supported by the Russian government. See: Kifah Ahmed Mohammed, “Russian Jewish Immigrants to the United States until 1917 (A Study of Causes and Consequences),” *Tikrit University Journal for Human Sciences*, Vol. 30, No. 5, Part 1, 2023, p. 199.

²⁷ F.R.U.S., 1881, No. 608, Mr. Foster to Mr. Evarts, December 30, 1880.

²⁸ William Evarts (1818–1901): born in Boston, he graduated from Yale University in 1837 and enrolled in Harvard Law School in 1838. He practiced law and entered politics as a member of the Whig Party. He served as Assistant Attorney General in New York until 1853, after which he joined the Republican Party. He was appointed Attorney General in 1868 and later served as Secretary of State in 1877 under President Hayes. He subsequently became a member of the U.S. Senate from 1885 to 1891. See: Sherman Evarts, *Arguments and Speeches of William Maxwell Evarts*, New York, 1919, pp. 19–28.

unacceptable⁽²⁹⁾. In this context, the American ambassador in Russia held discussions with the acting Russian Foreign Minister, who acknowledged that the government in Saint Petersburg regarded the Jewish question as highly problematic, both in terms of domestic affairs and the treatment of foreign Jews. At the same time, however, he asserted that many Jews constituted a deleterious stratum within society, allegedly involved in smuggling and illicit commercial practices, with some purportedly implicated in revolutionary conspiracies against the life of the Emperor. Nevertheless, the Russian official indicated that a commission had been appointed to recommend amendments to Russian laws concerning the Jews⁽³⁰⁾.

On 13 March 1881, Tsar Alexander II of Russia was subjected to an assassination attempt that resulted in his death. The American response to the assassination was marked by sympathy for the Russian side, as reflected in the statement promptly transmitted by the United States Senate to the Russian mission, which replied with appreciation. When Russian émigrés and socialists convened on 15 March to celebrate the success of the assassination, the American press sharply rebuked them. A funeral service was also held in a church by the Russian legation, attended by prominent figures⁽³¹⁾.

This demonstrates that American officials were intent on conveying clear signals to the government in Saint Petersburg that they were fully cognizant of the depth of diplomatic relations between the two countries and committed to their further development.

The assassination of the Tsar triggered a wave of retaliatory measures by the Russian authorities, and Jewish communities soon became one of their main targets. From that point on, they were subjected to harsh persecution⁽³²⁾. At the same time, the broader economic situation was worsening, while some Jews were beginning to move into higher social and economic positions. This shift, occurring alongside general hardship, fueled resentment among other groups.

These tensions came to a head in a series of violent outbreaks in April and May 1881, with further incidents continuing in the years that followed. For a long time, historians believed that the Russian government had actively encouraged or incited this violence. However, later research suggests that neither central nor local authorities were directly responsible, even though their reaction was notably slow and did little to stop the attacks⁽³³⁾.

American media outlets initially offered only brief and surface-level coverage, often relying on images of the Kiev massacre taken from British sources. Before long, however, more detailed reports began to circulate, largely through Jewish organizations and newly arrived immigrants. As this information spread, it helped generate growing sympathy among the American public toward the Jewish cause. Some newspapers went further, openly criticizing Russian policy. In April 1882, U.S. Secretary of State Frederick Frelinghuysen³⁴ addressed the issue, expressing “profound regret at the reports of Jewish suffering in Russia.” He added that the United States, despite its friendly relations with Russia, felt compelled to voice its hope that the Russian government would take steps to bring an end to the persecution of these vulnerable communities”⁽³⁵⁾.

The violence of 1881, together with the more stringent enforcement of legal restrictions by the Russian government, precipitated a substantial trend of Jewish migration to the United States. By June 1882, it was reported that 1,500 out of approximately 6,000 Jews residing in Moscow had left the country. During that same month, the number of departures recorded aboard ships in Odessa ranged between 20,000 and 25,000, a scale that generated considerable difficulties. These migratory flows reached New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, thereby drawing increased attention to the hardships they had endured in Russia⁽³⁶⁾.

²⁹ F.R.U.S., 1881, No. 611, Mr. Evarts to Mr. Foster, March 3, 1881.

³⁰ Norman E. Saul, op. cit., p. 236.

³¹ Terry Morris; Derrick Murphy, *Europe 1870–1991*, 2nd ed., London, 2004, p. 60.

³² Elizabeth Black, *Perception and Misperception in US-Russian Relations*, A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts in Contemporary Russian Studies, 2019, p. 6.

³³ Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia*, California, 1986, p. 83.

³⁴ Frederick Frelinghuysen (1817–1885): born in New Jersey, he studied law at Rutgers University. He served as Attorney General of New Jersey from 1861 to 1866, then became a member of the United States Senate from 1866 to 1869. He was appointed Secretary of State of the United States in 1881. See: Russell H. Bastert, “Diplomatic Reversal: Frelinghuysen’s Opposition to Blaine’s Pan-American Policy in 1882,” *Oxford University Press*, Vol. 42, No. 4, 1956, pp. 653–669.

³⁵ Thomas A. Bailey, op. cit., p. 123.

³⁶ Kifah Ahmed Mohammed, op. cit., p. 202.

A series of meetings was convened by American organizations and activists supportive of the Jewish cause to protest Russian violations, with sympathizers calling for the United States government's intervention. More than \$140,000 was raised to organize the resettlement of refugees at a rate of approximately 1,000 per month among those who continued to migrate to the United States in search of freedom or improved economic conditions (³⁷). As a result, the growing presence of Jewish immigrants in the United States contributed to the consolidation of an increasingly negative public opinion toward Russia.

The flow of Jewish migrants to the United States continued because of Russian policy, sectarian divisions, adverse economic conditions, and mounting pressures. In 1888, more than forty thousand Jews moved toward the province of Bessarabia, with the vast majority ultimately making their way to the United States (³⁸).

This shift in public awareness coincided with the publication of reports by George Kennan following his journey to Russia, which had been commissioned by The Century Magazine to investigate conditions in Siberian prisons. What began as an investigative assignment soon developed into a broader campaign. Through a series of articles and public lectures, Kennan became one of the most prominent American critics of the Russian regime. His efforts eventually led, in 1890, to the founding of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, which aimed to raise awareness of Russian autocracy and encourage reform. Not long after, a parallel organization emerged in the United States, working toward similar goals (³⁹).

Following the reactions in the Western and American press, the Russian government discussed the matter on February 9, 1891. Subsequently, the Russian Foreign Ministry summoned the American ambassador to clarify the situation, emphasizing that no new laws or measures had been enacted, only that existing laws had been tightened. They further asserted that the issue was not religious but rather social and economic, about the Jews. For its part, the American State Department did not conceal its deep concern regarding immigration and blamed the Russian government's policies toward it.⁴⁰

On 22 March 1891, the American ambassador, Charles Smith Charles Smith, met with the Russian Foreign Minister, Nicolay de Giers Nicolay de Giers(⁴¹), and once again explained the issue concerning the migration of Russian Jews to the United States as a result of coercive measures. According to available estimates, the number of Jewish migrants reached roughly two hundred thousand over 10 years. The American ambassador observed that, although these migrants had been adequately supported, the continued influx placed increasing strain on resources and had become a growing concern among the American public. The Russian minister requested information regarding the nature of their migration, whether for employment or other purposes, and affirmed that he had received the American reservations in a friendly spirit and had conveyed those observations to the Emperor(⁴²).

Numerous appeals were submitted to the United States Congress concerning the treatment of Jews in Russia, particularly naturalized American citizens. The pressure became so intense that, in 1892, several American representatives from the state of Ohio introduced a proposal calling for the severance of diplomatic relations with Russia. Naturally, the proposal received no support. At that time, the platforms of both the Republican and Democratic parties in 1892 included provisions expressing solidarity and sympathy with the persecuted Jews. Nevertheless, anti-Jewish campaigns began to decline after that date. Global public opinion likely played a noticeable role in the diminution of those events, in addition to the influence of prominent Jewish banking institutions, which created obstacles to lending funds

³⁷ Elizabeth Black, op. cit., p. 18.

³⁸ Leah Platt Boustan, "Were Jews Political Refugees or Economic Migrants? Assessing the Persecution Theory of Jewish Emigration 1881-1914," Cambridge, 2007, p. 267.

³⁹ Robert V. Allen, op. cit., p. 251; Thomas A. Bailey, op. cit., p. 128.

⁴⁰ Norman E. Saul, op. cit., p. 294.

⁴¹ Nikolay de Giers (1820-1895): a Russian diplomat born in the Volhynia region of the Russian Empire. He held several positions within the Russian Foreign Ministry, joining the Asian Department in 1838. He served as Director of the Asian Department and Deputy Foreign Minister from 1875 to 1882 and was a supporter of Russian expansion in Asia. He became acting Foreign Minister in 1878 and assumed the office of Foreign Minister on 28 March 1882, with the primary objective of maintaining an alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary. See: David Fromkin, "The Great Game in Asia," *Foreign Affairs Magazine*, Vol. 58, No. 4, Washington, 1980, pp. 940-942.

⁴² F.R.U.S., 1891, No. 81, Mr. Smith to Mr. Blaine, March 28, 1891.

to the Russian government⁽⁴³⁾. This, however, did not signify any substantive change in Russian policy toward the Jews, as the subsequent years witnessed numerous incidents that affected the condition of Jews within the Russian Empire.

3) Third: The Nature of American-Russian Relations, 1891–1895

Russia was struck by a famine during the period 1891–1893 as a result of crop failure, the depletion of livestock resources, and prolonged drought conditions, which were further aggravated by local officials concealing the true scale of the crisis. It was difficult to determine the exact number of deaths caused by the famine, as it coincided with an outbreak of cholera, although the epidemic was mainly concentrated in the southern parts of the principal famine regions in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Estimates suggest that approximately four hundred thousand people died from the famine, in addition to three hundred thousand others who perished because of disease and harsh climatic conditions⁽⁴⁴⁾.

The American response to the Russian famine was especially significant, reflecting a remarkable humanitarian effort at both the public and governmental levels. A nationwide relief campaign was organized to support Russia during the crisis. Contributions included both financial donations and material assistance, with particular emphasis on gathering thousands of tons of essential agricultural products, such as corn and other staple goods, and transporting them to Russia by ship. American aid exceeded one million dollars, while additional financial contributions continued to be collected⁽⁴⁵⁾.

The Russian government welcomed all forms of American assistance and expressed its gratitude to both the United States government and the American people. This sentiment was conveyed by the senior official at the Russian court, Vorontsov Dashkov⁴⁶, who addressed the American ambassador on 19 March 1892, stating: “The feelings of friendly sympathy which the United States now shows toward us can never be forgotten by my countrymen.” This was followed by numerous statements and declarations from Russian officials expressing the atmosphere of friendship and harmony between the United States and Russia⁽⁴⁷⁾.

Many American legislators expressed skepticism that such assistance would reach those genuinely in need and accused the American administration of aiding despotism. Conversely, opposition also emerged in Russia from conservative Slavophile circles, which rejected the aid on nationalist grounds and insisted that Russia should manage its own affairs independently. Nevertheless, this opposition did not prevent the continued flow of relief efforts, particularly after numerous Americans responsible for the relief campaign traveled to the famine-stricken regions of Russia. There, they were appalled by the extent of poverty and suffering and became convinced that the relief efforts were both necessary and worthy of support⁽⁴⁸⁾.

⁴³ Thomas A. Bailey, op. cit., p. 126.

⁴⁴ David P. Lilly, *The Russian Famine of 1891–92*, Paper selected by the Department of History as the Outstanding Paper for the 1994–1995 academic year, Loyola University, New Orleans, 1995, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Norman E. Saul, op. cit., p. 355.

⁴⁶ Vorontsov-Dashkov (1837–1916): a Russian statesman and military figure, he was one of the joint commanders in the conquest of Central Asia during the 1860s. In 1866, he was promoted to the rank of Major General. In 1881, Emperor Alexander III appointed him Minister of Imperial Estates in the Russian court. Under Nicholas II, he became a member of the State Council during the period 1897–1905, and later he was appointed Viceroy of the Caucasus, a position he held until his death. See: Stephen Badalyan Riegg, “Neotraditionalist Rule to the Rescue of the Empire: Vorontsov-Dashkov amid Crises in the Caucasus 1905–1915,” *Ab Imperio Journal*, Maryland, 3/2018, pp. 115–121.

⁴⁷ Quoted in: Norman E. Saul, op. cit., p. 356.

⁴⁸ Norman E. Saul, op. cit., p. 361.

The extradition treaty⁽⁴⁹⁾ agreed upon between Russia and the United States was under consideration by the U.S. Senate; however, strong opposition—voiced by numerous newspapers, writers, and critics of Russian policies—prevented its ratification at that time⁽⁵⁰⁾.

The American campaign to relieve the Russian famine contributed to easing this opposition, as public sympathy for conditions in Russia increased. This coincided with the attempted assassination of Henry Clay Henry Clay, president of Carnegie Steel Carnegie Stael, in July 1892 by a Russian Jew, which hastened the U.S. Senate's unexpected decision to ratify the treaty in February 1893. Despite this, opposition to the treaty persisted among activists and writers, who published numerous articles condemning it and accusing the Washington government of employing underhanded tactics, particularly since the final stage of the treaty's approval had been completed in complete secrecy prior to its official promulgation in June 1893. Soon thereafter, the economic depression of 1893⁽⁵¹⁾ within the United States came to dominate public attention, as newspapers focused extensively on the crisis, thereby diminishing the intensity of the discourse opposing the treaty⁽⁵²⁾.

At the invitation of U.S. President Grover Cleveland Grover Cleveland, Russia participated in 1893 in the first international naval review, held in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition in New York to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas. The review included warships from ten different countries, among them Russia, Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

The naval contingents assembled at Hampton Roads in the state of Virginia before proceeding to the port of New York to take part in the review, which was held on 26 April 1893. The Russian fleet, consisting of three ships, was accompanied by Alexander Mikhailovich, the nephew of the Tsar, together with a group of officers and political figures⁽⁵³⁾.

Subsequently, American–Russian relations continued along the same trajectory, and commercial exchange between the two countries persisted, in addition to mutual understandings on several issues of common interest, including maritime affairs. It had been expected that American investors would participate in the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, whose construction began in 1894; however, the two sides failed to reach a final agreement due to certain issues related to investors and Russian bureaucratic procedures. Consequently, the railway was built by the Russians themselves⁽⁵⁴⁾.

2. CONCLUSION

The purchase of Alaska by the United States from Russia in 1867 represents a pivotal event during American–Russian relations. Both parties had their respective reasons for concluding this agreement; however, it clearly served the interests of the United States to a greater extent, reflecting the foresight of American policymakers who insisted on and succeeded in finalizing the deal, fully aware of the long-term benefits it would bring to the United States.

⁴⁹ The extradition treaty was initially signed on 28 March 1887, ratified by the United States Senate on 6 February 1893, approved by the President on 14 February 1893, and ratified by the Russian Tsar on 16 April of the same year. It entered into force on 21 April 1893. The treaty defined procedures for the extradition of individuals accused or convicted of crimes in either country, and specifically included provisions concerning the extradition of persons guilty of attempted assassination of rulers and political leaders in both states. See: Aleksandr G. Volevodz, "International Cooperation Between Russia and the United States in Extradition of Persons for the Purposes of Prosecution: Challenges and Opportunities," *Law in the Modern World Magazine*, Vol. 14, No. 4, Moscow, 2021, pp. 230–235.

⁵⁰ Thomas A. Bailey, op. cit., p. 156.

⁵¹ The bankruptcy of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad companies was declared on 20 February 1893. At that time, the railroads had debts exceeding 125 million dollars. Stock markets began to decline, and the Courage National Company, which had liabilities of 10 million dollars, was unable to meet obligations amounting to 50,000 dollars. European investors began selling securities worth 100 million dollars, and depositors rushed to withdraw funds from banks. See: Jerry W. Markham, *A Financial History of the United States*, Vol. 1, New York, 2002, p. 452.

⁵² Norman E. Saul, op. cit., p. 365.

⁵³ *It All Began 110 Years Ago: A Retrospective of All U.S.-Hosted International Naval Reviews and Operation Sail Events and a Roster of Ships for OpSail and INR 2000*, *Naval History Magazine*, Vol. 14, No. 4, August 2000.

⁵⁴ V. F. Borzunov, *Materials on the Building of the Siberian Railway 1890–1904*, Moscow, 1965, p. 105.

Russian governmental policy toward Jews constituted one of the major obstacles to stable relations between the two countries. The issue of American Jews and the poor treatment of Jews by Russian authorities cast a shadow over bilateral relations, leading to a wave of criticism of the Russian government within American public opinion. This, in turn, pressured the American administration toward adopting a more critical stance regarding Russian policies toward Jews, one consequence of which was the significant increase in Jewish migration from Russia to the United States. This development posed a challenge for the American government in managing the resulting crisis.

Americans were aware of the solid foundations that had governed their relations with Russia over previous decades. Accordingly, during the Russian famine crisis of 1891–1893, the United States adopted a distinctive position, reflected in the provision of governmental assistance and support from American humanitarian organizations. This was followed by the extradition treaties ratified by both governments in 1893, which demonstrated that American policy at that time maintained consistent principles in its relations with Russia, despite certain domestic opposition.