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# Comillas Journal of International Relations



## Russia in the World Rusia en el Mundo

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Liz Arnanz, Stephen Blank, Maxine David, Ruth Deyermond, Lance Davies, Tracey German,  
David Lewis & Rachel S. Salzman

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# Editorial

## Las Fronteras de la Actualidad

*Comillas Journal of International Relations* dedicó su primer número a una cuestión estructural para la política exterior de nuestro tiempo, con especial foco en nuestro país: *Diplomacia Pública y Marca España*. En el segundo número reflexionamos sobre la memoria de la Guerra Mundial, cien años después. Un conflicto en el que se encierran muchas de las claves del moderno sistema mundial, y más en concreto, de la realidad europea.

El tercer número de nuestra revista busca abordar alguna de las claves de la actualidad más acuciante, al volver nuestra mirada a Rusia y su política exterior. Lo hacemos en un año crucial, con el conflicto de Ucrania candente y con la reflexión sobre las ambiciones y desafíos de las inquietantes aspiraciones de Vladimir Putin como un punto crucial del debate en relaciones internacionales.

El Kaiser Guillermo II dijo que declarar la guerra a Rusia es hacerlo a un continente. Desde el Báltico a al Estrecho de Bering, en efecto, se acompasan las pulsiones de un país que es por muchas razones único en nuestro planeta. Un Leviatán en el sistema de estados. Comprender su política exterior es clave para interpretar cuestiones clave sobre el presente y las perspectivas de evolución de Asia Central, los países emergentes, la estabilidad de nuestro moderno sistema multipolar, la Unión Europea o la siempre candente cuestión del encaje del mundo Árabe-Islámico en el moderno sistema mundial. Rusia no es la clave, pero en ella se encierran muchas de las respuestas para comprender las complejidades y contrapuntos del mundo en el que vivimos.

Para abordar esta cuestión hemos recurrido a una especialista de contrastada experiencia y prestigio en esta cuestión, que es también una gran amiga de la Universidad Pontificia Comillas ICAI-ICADE: la Dr. Maxine David, que ha reunido a un grupo de especialistas de contratado prestigio para abordar las principales cuestiones de relieve en la actual política exterior rusa, desde las conceptuales hasta las sectoriales.

Creemos que el resultado es valioso, novedoso y con voluntad de servicio; tiene en efecto una potencial capacidad de ser realmente *útil* a especialistas y a un público amplio. En definitiva, se trata de un número que hace honor a los objetivos de nuestra revista, y a los de la Universidad Pontificia Comillas.

Este número, en efecto, se sitúa en las fronteras de la actualidad, pero huye del oportunismo, a favor de la profundidad, y del maniqueísmo, en beneficio de la comprensión profunda de los procesos. Un ejemplo para los números que le seguirán, y un esfuerzo del que estamos especialmente orgullosos. Gracias a todos los que han colaborado a hacerlo posible, y más con la guadaña del mes de agosto cerniéndose sobre nuestras cabezas.

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# Nota del Coordinador del Número 3

## Special issue – Russia’s foreign policy and its effects

In the time since Ukraine’s conflict broke out in early 2014, Russia’s foreign policy has suffered no let-up in activity. Russia continues to weather a storm of accusations about its continued role in Ukraine. With the Dutch investigation into the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 in July 2014 moving closer to its final conclusion, there have been calls for a United Nations tribunal to be established to prosecute those responsible for the tragedy. The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, has so far stymied this move, saying Russia considered this to be “an untimely and counterproductive initiative” (Putin, 2015). Russia’s own very early Ministry of Defence report into the downing of the airplane has been challenged by a citizen journalist group, Bellingcat, who have compelling evidence that the Russian MoD doctored the satellite imagery (Higgins, 2015). Russia’s reputation in some quarters is therefore suffering. Nevertheless, Russia continues to demonstrate that it is a necessary partner in certain areas, most notably with Iran, and it manages to exploit its historical relations and present-day power as an energy giant to some effect in others.

In this special issue, authors cover a wide range of Russia’s foreign policy activity in recent years. Separate articles evaluate bilateral relationships with China, Kyrgyzstan and the US, multilateral relations within the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa group) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Also examined are Russia’s actions in Central Asia as ISAF (international stabilisation operation Afghanistan) troops withdraw from Afghanistan, as well as its peacekeeping activities in its neighbourhood throughout the post-Cold War period. The aim of the issue is not to provide or apply a single theoretical or methodological framework. Rather, we aim to provide a wide-ranging, largely empirically-driven account of Russian foreign policy in its most recent years. Authors tackle the weaknesses as well as strengths of Russia’s external actions, evaluating the opportunities available to Russia and whether and how it has managed to exploit those opportunities to serve its national interest well. Ultimately, a tone of pessimism underlies many of the contributions with authors concluding individually that Russia walks a fine foreign policy line in which it is as likely to come out the loser as the victor. Stepping back from the individual contributions and looking at them in the round permits a viewing of Russian foreign policy through a wider lens, which in turn illuminates the possibility that Russia is engaged in a process of over-reach and that by failing to narrow its scope of activity, it runs the risk of losing more than need be the case. Many of the authors, notably David, German, Lewis and Salzman also comment on the watchful stance that other actors are adopting in relation to Russia, concerned by its actions in Ukraine and elsewhere and what those say about Russia’s real intentions and motivations. Such actors worry too about the impact of Russia’s worsening relations with the West and how they themselves will be received by others.

No single journal issue can do exhaustive justice, of course, to the full extent of Russian foreign policy. Russia faces challenges in a number of relationships and in connection with a wide range of issues. As a result of the ongoing Ukraine conflict and Russia’s increasing number of confrontations with EU member states and NATO, Russia is garnering an unprecedented amount of attention, amongst politicians, economists, academics, policy analysts and even the general public. Ukraine is not the only former Soviet republic to be on the receiving end of Russia’s message that it intends to retain, even augment, its influence across the territory of its former empire and beyond. In the Western Balkans, for instance, Russia is working to maintain its influence there and to prevent the eventual accession of these states into either or both of the EU and NATO (Der Spiegel, 2014). Even in places outside its area of traditional influence, the

weight of Russia's preferences is being felt, in Sweden, for instance, concerned by Russia's actions in Ukraine and moving ever closer to NATO in response (Withnall, 2014).

The recent Russian reliance on military force or threat of use of force calls into question the extent to which Russia really believes in the effectiveness and value of soft power. Since the mid-2000s, Russia has turned its hand to the exercise of soft power, seemingly having understood that it could not rely on hard power alone to establish and retain influence. The Kremlin has focused on ensuring that the Russian view of the world is communicated through mass media such as RT (formerly Russia Today) foundations and funds such as Russkiy Mir and the so-called Compatriot Funds. The role of the Kremlin is suspected though not necessarily proven in think tanks based abroad, such as the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation, based in Paris and run by a former Duma member. Others are open in their links with the Kremlin, Serbia's Nasa Srbija, for instance, advertising its connections with the Russian institute for Strategic Studies (RISS) (Nasa Srbija, 2013). RISS has extremely wide links with the Kremlin and is credited with developing Russian foreign policy. Developments in this direction are not necessarily negative, of course, and mirror the type of work that many states have long been undertaking. And in the context of deteriorating relations between Russia and the West, such activity becomes all the more important – cooperative relations with Russia are more likely to be built if a greater understanding of Russian culture and ideas can be achieved. Russia's soft power credentials, however, are damaged not only by its actions in Ukraine but also by other developments at home. Notable here is the Foreign Agents Law, which requires non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to register if they are funded from abroad and engage in political activity, and which is condemned by Human Rights Watch as a tool to limit the work of independent organisations (Human Rights Watch 2013). Another example is the creation of the Federal Supervision Agency for Information Technologies and Communications (Roskomnadzor), responsible for the blacklisting of offending internet sites and with the power to order internet service providers to block sites altogether (David, 2015). Other examples of repressive behaviour at home abound and it is unsurprising, therefore, that Russia's soft power capacities are doubted. Even where soft power has been used as an alternative foreign policy tool to try and maintain Russian influence with other states, most notably in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, its effectiveness has been limited (Nixey, 2012) and is unlikely to be enough to assure such states remain orientated towards Russia and do not look elsewhere for ideas and transferable models.

One theme common to many analyses of Russian foreign policy, whether directly or indirectly, is that of Russia's conflicted state identity. The relevance to and effect of identity on its foreign policy has been well documented over a number of years (Neumann, 1995; Petersson, 2002; Prizel 1998; Trenin, 2006). In Foreign Policy terms, it has meant Russia making a choice between turning westwards, retreating into a more isolationist, nationalistic space, or building Russia as a great Eurasian power. Slowly deteriorating relations with the West and the immediately and devastatingly damaging effects of Crimea's annexation and Russia's alleged ongoing role in Ukraine have seen an end to references to a "Greater Europe" in which Russia has a role as an equal partner (Putin, 2001). Rather, we appear to be seeing a turn more consistent with Putin's talk of the necessity for Russia to have a "civilisational identity", one which will "preserv[e] the dominance of Russian culture" (Putin, 2012). Increasing Russian references to the need to protect its diaspora are evidence of this shift, references which are easily interpreted as threats to existing borders, as the response of the Baltic states has made clear.

That Russia is unlikely to confirm to Western-made structures is additionally confirmed by the manner in which it has reacted to the effects of a globalising and interdependent world. As a counter to western dominance of global organisations, such as the World Trade Organisation and World Bank, Russia is applying what it has learned from others' coping mechanisms. Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) may look to be stalled at the present time but it is an indication

nevertheless that Russia prefers to rely on regional arrangements in which it has the dominant role (EEU) or at least the equal partnership (SCO) that it demanded from the West and did not receive. That Russia has turned its back on the West seems undeniable. There has been a good deal of talk about whether or not China and Russia are building a new “superpower axis” (Graham-Harrison et al, 2015), this despite the fact that China represents a far more real threat to Russian territory and influence than ever the West could. That does not mean that Russia has abandoned its historical links with and ambitions in Europe but it does suggest that the alternative of a Russian identity rooted in Europe has been renounced.

The special issue opens with Rachel Salzman’s commentary on Russia within the BRICS. It offers an understanding of how Russia’s policy towards and position within this grouping has evolved, including since the Ukrainian conflict began. Much of our wider understanding of the BRICS stems from analysis of the other members, rather than Russia. Indeed, as Salzman shows, Russia was from the outset an unlikely member of this grouping, less of a rising power than its counterparts. Nevertheless, Salzman argues, Russia has acted as something of an opportunist, driving forward the BRICS narrative. Russia has had many motives for doing so, the BRICS group offering it a forum through which to project and build power and, crucially, in a forum that is not Western-led. In this commentary, readers are therefore offered an account of the evolution of the BRICS that reveals a pivotal role for Russia. Beyond the economic grouping first envisaged, Russia has sought to promote a political agenda for the BRICS. In her analysis, Salzman shows how important Russia’s conflicted identity continues to be to any analysis of Russian foreign policy. Of particular interest to many will be how Russia has turned to the BRICS grouping to mitigate some of the worst effects of the sanctions levied against it by Western states and Salzman’s analysis of what this means for the grouping itself. The BRICS members, Salzman shows, have long negotiated a path between asserting their rights and powers and not antagonising more established, especially Western, powers. It remains to be seen whether and how Russia’s increasingly vitriolic anti-western rhetoric will affect its fellow BRICS.

Complementing Salzman’s contribution that sees Russia orientated away from the West, Stephen Blank narrows the focus, situating Russia’s foreign policy amongst that of China and India and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Even as Russia’s relations with the West have continued to nosedive, its relations with China have occupied increasing amounts of media and scholarly attention. China occupies the central place in the analysis to some degree, presented as the context in which Russia’s choices and opportunities, as well as its policy towards India, can be better understood. Blank finds evidence that, despite denials to the contrary, a Sino-Russia military alliance is in the making. However, in keeping with other analysis on this relationship (see Kuhrt, 2012, for instance), Blank demonstrates the imbalances and asymmetries of power, weighted in China’s favour. This article is an interesting complement to that of Lewis, also in this special issue, providing further evidence that relations with China are as likely to prevent Russia achieving its ambition of regional hegemon as they are to help it succeed. To understand why Russia seeks to deepen ties with China, therefore, it must be remembered that the SCO and China are also important tools in Russia’s policy of excluding the US from the region. At the same time, from Blank’s detailed discussion of the SCO, one must conclude that Russia has little choice but to engage in this regional organisation if it is to limit the advance of Chinese influence.

As already outlined above, more attention is rightly being paid to Russia’s use of soft power. In her analysis of the US-Russia relationship, Ruth Deyermond examines these two actors’ separate discourses of democracy and accompanying values. She provides a basis for understanding Russia’s increasing antipathy towards the US, the emergence of its conceptualisation of democracy as sovereign and its instrumental use of democracy in its foreign policy. In a nuanced counter to prevailing arguments that Russia has adopted a cynical use of democracy in order to prevent democratisation at home and amongst its neighbours, Deyermond argues that insufficient attention has been paid to the context in which

Russia has operated. By focusing on the foreign policy of George W. Bush's administration, Deyermond reveals a heavy concentration of activity in Russia's backyard. This activity, moreover, in common with Bush's wider policy of democracy promotion, was highly selective, as Deyermond shows in her discussion of the varying support and encouragement versus condemnation shown for Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia itself as each of these fell in or out of favour with the US. The stakes were high for Russia, not only because of the US's move into what Russia saw as its traditional territory but also because of the nature of US activity there, which Russia interpreted as an existential threat to itself, an assault on Russian identity and security, the Colour Revolutions being notable in this respect. Having established the context, Deyermond moves on to a stimulating assessment of Russia's concept of Sovereign Democracy and how Russia has used this to argue for a democratisation of international relations, challenging US foreign policy in the process.

Russia's increasingly assertive foreign policy is as well understood as a consequence of its vulnerability as from its strength. Tracey German's analysis of Russia's concerns over Afghanistan offers an excellent example of why this is so. As the drawdown of ISAF troops continues, Russia has legitimate concerns about the scope for an increase in terrorist threats and for an influx of drugs across Afghanistan's borders, into the central Asian states, which together form, German reminds us, Russia's "soft underbelly". German additionally reminds us, however, that with threats can come opportunity. While German shows there is evidence to suggest the ISAF withdrawal will not lead to an increase in problems for Russia or its southern neighbours, it nevertheless offers a chance for Russia to reassert itself in the region, legitimated by its desire to ensure wider stability as well to ensure its own borders are secure. Also, perception is everything and Russia is aware that the North Caucasus remains vulnerable to externally-driven terrorist activity and that not all its neighbours are able to secure their borders from drug traffickers. German therefore examines the consequences of Russia's threat and opportunity perception. She details the ways in which Russia has deepened its bilateral cooperation with Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan before moving on to a study of developments within the two relevant multilateral relationships, the Collective Security Organisation (CSTO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

David Lewis's article focuses on Russia's actions in Central Asia through the lens of Kyrgyzstan and, like German's, offers important reasons to remember Russia's weaknesses as well as its strengths in understanding why Russia focuses where it does and how. Lewis's work constitutes an important contribution to our understanding of Russia's thinking on regionalism especially. Relying on the concept of regional hegemony, Lewis demonstrates both the extent and limits of Russia's reach in the region. He utilises explanations of hegemony that move beyond its mere material aspects to those that encompass ideational power. That said, Lewis ends by concluding that Russia's ability to establish and maintain hegemonic status will be dependent on its longer term capacity to meet the economic demands of Kyrgyzstan, and, by extension, the region more widely. Lewis reveals a Russia that is intent on establishing a hierarchical form of regionalism that learns but is distinct from both the EU and ASEAN. His work therefore has relevance not only for International Relations theory on regional hegemony but also to the emerging body of literature on Russia's employment of soft power. It offers, in addition, a detailed analysis of a relationship that features in relatively little scholarly work but which offers an important complement to work focused elsewhere. Lewis's article should be read in conjunction with other literature that analyses Russia's role in other former-Soviet republics but also that which focuses on the Western Balkans and even EU member states such as Greece and Hungary. Taken as a whole, they suggest a Russia that remains ambitious for influence but which is also limited by its failure to exert soft power credibly and which relies, therefore, on its economic reach.

Recent events have concentrated on Russia's role in causing or at least prolonging conflict. Lance Davies's article on Russia's peacekeeping activities provides a valuable corrective to this. He delivers an overview of Russia's involvement in

peacekeeping to date, ensuring a necessary contextualisation is provided in order that the readership can understand the security logics that inform its activity here. In common with other articles in this issue, Davies confirms Russia's intention to ensure its continued influence in the former soviet republics (the Baltics aside) and the region more widely, arguing for the need to understand that these intentions reflect Russia's understandable concerns about security, not least the destabilising effects of regional conflict that have capacity to impact on Russia itself. Davies offers a timely outline of what Russia understands by peacekeeping operations and related concepts and measures. Examining the evolution of Russia's doctrine in this regard, Davies follows the development of peacekeeping regulations in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the subsequent influences on Russia's thinking. Davies draws important conclusions about Russia's "institutional learning", portraying the process as a protracted and problematic one, beginning in the early 1990s in Georgia and Moldova. Russia has been accused of deliberately engineering a freezing of conflicts in the region but Davies argues that alongside the strategic benefits for Russia there are other logics, not least a desire to maintain consensus on regional approaches to peacekeeping, even if this comes at the expense of a resolution of conflict. Davies nevertheless highlights the deficiencies in Russia's learning, particularly the failure to understand the complex, multivariate nature of peacekeeping operations, while also acknowledging the contradictions that its actions in Ukraine in particular have demonstrated.

In the penultimate article in the special issue, Maxine David also connects to the contradictions evident in Russia's policy on international intervention. These contradictions, I argue, can only be understood if we first acknowledge that international structures remain in a state of flux following the end of the Cold War. Until 9/11, analysis was very much targeted at building an understanding of how Western states were moving out of the modern era into a post-modern one. This debate took various forms but at the heart of all approaches sat the concept of state sovereignty. The response of the US and its allies to 9/11 brought a halt to the vast majority of this work, even as the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) began its work on a rehabilitation of the concept of state sovereignty, which would result in 2005 in the United Nations' General Assembly adopting the principle of the Responsibility to Protect, by which sovereignty was seen as circumscribed by the responsibility to ensure the protection of human rights. I place Russia's views on international intervention within the context of a disputed international structure in which Russia acts as both receiver and driver of other actors' foreign policy but in which it also has capacity to impact on international structures themselves. Most often regarded as a defender of Westphalian values, in my article I show how Russia conforms to some principles and forms of behaviour that accord with a post-Westphalian order. I therefore argue for a refocusing on the modern versus post-modern debate, in which Russia can be approached as a reformist actor which seeks to ensure it retains a seat at the table when decisions on the future shape of international structures are made.

It is fitting not just for a Special Issue on Russian Foreign Policy but on Foreign Policy generally to end with an article that recognises the necessity of taking account of Russia and its capacity to act as either a constructive or a destructive influence. Analysis of the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) understandably often takes account of the neighbour to the East, Russia. Liz Arranz's consideration of the current situations of Georgia and Moldova offers excellent reason for doing so. Bound in so many calculations by reason of their frozen conflicts and their separate desires to integrate with Europe, these two former Soviet republics are further united by the desire of Russia to thwart their European ambitions. Reliance on Russia energy makes them both vulnerable to Russian policy, while the disputed nature of part of their territories renders them unlikely to achieve their objectives in the European Union.

Focus on any actor's foreign policy long enough and the deficiencies and failings will soon become clear. Foreign policy is, after all, about interactions and therefore actors can only ever rely on a certain degree of accuracy in their policy. It is the job of policy-makers to consider the possible consequences but all too often it is the law of unintended

consequences that prevails. Russia is no exception to this rule. The complexities of foreign policy-making are made all the more problematic for Russia because of unresolved identity problems and therefore the need to negotiate a range of conflicting ideas and preferences at home. Putin's continued hold on power is dependent, additionally, on his capacity to retain influence in Russia's traditional neighbourhood, explaining in part the no-nonsense approach to the possible loss of Ukraine to the European Union. In answering to exigencies at home, however, Russia has neglected exigencies abroad, as the articles contained within this issue reveal. What the longer term effects for Russia will be remain unknown but, as the authors here demonstrate, there are as many, if not more, reasons to be pessimistic as optimistic.

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# FROM BRIDGE TO BULWARK: THE EVOLUTION OF BRICS IN RUSSIAN GRAND STRATEGY

## De puente a fortaleza: la evolución de los países BRICS en la estrategia global de Rusia

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Russia has been the driving force in pushing and shaping the narrative of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) since the group began to acquire a political identity in the mid-2000s. Russia's motivations for promoting BRICS, however, have evolved considerably over the last decade. While Moscow's initial goal was to use the group as a rhetorical device to strengthen Russia's bargaining position with the West, in the wake of the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, BRICS has begun to symbolize for Russia a viable alternative to continued accommodation with the Western-led international system.



Abstract

Russia, BRICS, identity, Ukraine Crisis, anti-Westernism

*Rusia, BRICS, identidad, Crisis Ucraniana, anti-occidentalismo*



Key words

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Fechas

*Rusia ha sido la fuerza motriz de la configuración y el fortalecimiento de la narrativa de los países BRICS (Brasil, Rusia, India, China, Sudáfrica) desde que el grupo comenzó a adquirir una identidad política a mediados de los años 2000. Sin embargo, los motivos de Rusia para fomentar los BRICS han evolucionado considerablemente a lo largo de la última década. A pesar de que la intención inicial de Moscú era emplear el grupo como un recurso retórico para fortalecer la posición de negociación de Rusia con el Oeste, tras la actual situación de crisis en Ucrania, los países BRICS han comenzado a simbolizar para Rusia una alternativa viable a la constante adaptación al sistema internacional liderado por Occidente.*



Resumen

The rise of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) group is arguably one of the more interesting innovations in geopolitics in the last decade. Bringing together five continental powers with large populations and impressive growth rates, the group nonetheless often finds itself the object of ridicule and skepticism from international analysts who do not see common ground within the group for continuing cooperation. Yet to read Russian sources on BRICS, not only is the group interesting, it is “one of the most important geopolitical developments” (Lavrov, 2012, p. 1) of the twenty-first century. Russia, however, has a vested interest in emphasizing the power of BRICS, and not only because it is a member of the group. Russia has been the driving force in pushing and shaping the narrative of the BRICS since the group began to acquire a political identity. Its motivations for doing so, though, have evolved considerably over the last decade.

The evolution of Russia’s goals and attitudes towards the BRICS group is a microcosm of the larger issue that Russia’s place *vis-à-vis* the West, and indeed with regard to the international system more generally, has been unsettled for the duration of the post Cold War era. The discomfort has come from an ongoing internal struggle between a desire to engage with the international system while still maintaining complete control over domestic development and national identity. This is further complicated by an unfulfilled desire to play a leading role in the formation and administration of an already codified system in which the West is preeminent and Russia is not. Finally, a stable national identity, which could have mitigated the tension over how to engage internationally, has been elusive. Nearly twenty-five years after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian national identity remains divided between identification with Europe and the (ideological) West and the idea of Russia as a civilization apart, required by virtue of geography and culture to follow its own developmental path.

This divide has produced a foreign policy approach that simultaneously attempts to undermine the legitimacy of the reigning system and position Russia as an alternative center of power, while also seeking to secure recognition from established status quo great powers. For most of its existence, BRICS has been a useful tool for Russia to deploy in balancing between those two objectives. Russia’s initial goal was to use the group as a rhetorical device to strengthen Russia’s bargaining position with the West. In the wake of the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, however, BRICS has begun to symbolize for Russia a viable alternative to continued accommodation with the Western-led international system. Indeed, Moscow has begun to see BRICS not only as a source of leverage in the current international system, but as a basis and a model for a new system altogether.

*The rise of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) group is arguably one of the more interesting innovations in geopolitics in the last decade*

## 1. From BRIC to BRICS: a brief history

Before delving more deeply into the role of BRICS in Russian foreign policy and grand strategy, it is worth undertaking a quick review of the history of the group. The term “BRIC” (an abbreviation of Brazil, Russia, India, and China) originated in a 2001 analysis by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O’Neill entitled “Building Better Global Economic BRICs” (O’Neill, 2001). The goal of the paper was to identify the likely future leaders of the global economy, and was targeted primarily at investors. While O’Neill’s analysis did suggest that global growth patterns might eventually necessitate a reshuffling of the G7, he in no way intended his paper to have geopolitical consequences.

However, the idea took hold beyond the private sector in ways O’Neill never envisioned. Though he was not the first to notice the exceptional economic performance of the world’s largest sta-

tes, his acronym became the shorthand for both shifts in the global economic landscape and the presumed geopolitical rebalancing that would follow (Tett, 2010; Stuenkel, 2014a). It then became a banner under which those states themselves began to meet and coordinate. The first unofficial meeting of BRIC representatives took place with a meeting of deputy foreign ministers in 2005 (Andreev, 2013, p. 127). The following year, in what is normally hailed as the first official BRIC meeting, the foreign ministers of the BRIC countries met at the sidelines of the 2006 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Since 2009, the group has held regular independent summits at the level of heads of state. In 2011, South Africa formally became a member and BRIC became BRICS. This accession is notable not only for the change in acronym, but because the inclusion of South Africa, a state that would not qualify for membership based on O'Neill's original criteria, marks the completed transformation from O'Neill's "global economic BRICs" to a BRICS group with geopolitical goals and influence.

This transition from an economic to a political grouping was unexpected, and one of the side effects is that the question of how to define BRICS remains an ongoing concern of both the politicians engaged with it and the academics that study it. The official Russian term is *obedinenie* (association). "Group" is another term used frequently in both Russian and non-Russian literature, and is arguably a more neutral term than "association". Still others have spoken about BRICS as a "quasi-organization," a term as cumbersome as it is unhelpful. I shall for the most part speak just of "BRICS," with the understanding that these countries are coordinating in a way that makes it conceptually rational to speak of common goals and activities, but are not (yet) sufficiently institutionalized to merit a more formal designation.

There is one final point before continuing to the main analysis. One area of disagreement that complicates the study of BRICS is over the extent to which BRICS is at this point a political rather than economic undertaking. On one side of the debate are those who argue that BRICS is fundamentally about economics, and therefore the success or failure of the group will be determined by the countries' growth rates. On the other side are scholars who contend that BRICS has evolved beyond its initial acronym, and now has wider political basis and significance. I am of the latter group. Although most of the BRICS coordination happens within international forums dealing with economics – notably the G20 and the IMF – I argue that the goals are geopolitical because what is at stake is political control of the international financial system. Further, although coordination is now focused on international financial institutions, stated long term goals are wider, including, for example, expanding the United Nations Security Council. Finally, for Russia specifically, as I argue in more depth below, BRICS has always been primarily about politics.

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## 2. Russia's role in the formation of BRICS

Missing from the above narrative about the evolution of BRIC from economic to political is the critical role Russia played in effecting that transformation. It is not an overstatement, however, to assert that without Russia, the BRIC group would never have come together. Russian intellectuals were thinking about BRICS more as a political than an economic question from very early in the 2000s. In 2004, the Institute of Latin America of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ILA RAN) sponsored a conference about how the rise of the Giant Emerging Countries (GECs), and first and foremost the BRICs, could impact the creation of a new world order (Davydov & Bobrovnikov, 2009, p. 13; Bobrovnikov & Davydov, 2005, p. 4). While Brazilian

research centers were also beginning to engage with similar questions at around the same time, it was Russia that really pushed the project forward. This is most evident in President Vladimir Putin's initiative to bring the foreign ministers together at the 2006 UNGA. The proposal for a stand-alone BRIC summit also came from Russia, and the first summit was held in Ekaterinburg in 2009 (Stuenkel, 2014a, p. 91).

Beyond being the prime mover behind organizing meetings and summits, it is also clear that Russia had a strategic vision for how it wished BRIC to develop before the other partners. In advance of the Ekaterinburg summit, Russian political scientist and Duma member Vyacheslav Nikonov organized a meeting of scholars from BRIC countries to think about the future of the group (Nikonov, 2009). Russia wanted to institutionalize the group from the beginning, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is often credited as "the intellectual architect of the politicization of the BRICs platform" (Stuenkel, 2014b, p. 103). Further, while the other partners joined the grouping for economic reasons, Russia's motivations in pushing for meetings were primarily related to politics and security (Unnikrishnan, 2014). The combination of the early push for institutionalization and the alternative motivations for cooperation suggests both that Russia had a distinct narrative it wished the BRIC group to represent, and that it sought to control and shape that narrative in a way that served Russia's own international priorities.

### 3. BRICS and Russian Foreign Policy priorities

To understand the connection between Russia's national goals and the BRIC narrative it tried to promote, one need look no further than the internal review of foreign policy published in 2007. A comprehensive review of all elements of Russian foreign policy, the document declares that:

The role and responsibility of Russia in international affairs has qualitatively grown over the first decade of the twenty-first century. The chief achievement of recent years is the newly acquired policy independence of Russia. The time is ripe for conceptualization of the new situation, particularly at the doctrinal level. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007)

This is of critical importance for understanding how Russia initially conceived of a political BRIC. The group was intended to further the second goal (reshaping the doctrinal basis of international relations) by leveraging the new policy independence, meaning they would be able to conduct the foreign policy they wished without fear of repercussions from other actors (Zagorski, 2010, p. 32).

That Russia hoped to use BRIC to increase its weight in the international system is not a novel argument. Cynthia Roberts (2010, p. 42) has argued convincingly that Russia's BRIC diplomacy was aimed at creating a "power multiplier". The idea was to create a mechanism that could be deployed to increase Russia's impact in international forums and thereby renegotiate the reigning post-Cold War institutional settlement, with which Russia has never been satisfied (ibid). These goals are seen clearly in Vladimir Putin's speech at the 2007 Munich Security Conference (Putin, 2007). They are also evident, with a slightly more conciliatory gloss, in the 2008 Foreign Policy Concept, which was signed shortly after Dmitri Medvedev assumed the presidency (Roberts, 2010, p. 42).

Where previous analysis falls somewhat short is in defining precisely how Russia hoped to use BRICS as a power multiplier, especially since BRICS would seem at first to be a "second best" solution. As Roberts notes, while coordination with these other large emerging countries did

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give Russia a larger voice in some international organizations, it did not produce similar effects in Euro-Atlantic organizations, such as NATO or the G8, which is the prime locus of Russian dissatisfaction with the current system (Roberts, 2010). Further, associating with the BRICS countries is an imperfect fit with Russia's dominant national identity as a great power member of European civilization and the Global North (Panova, 2012). While the other BRIC countries are becoming more globally important, none has a firmly first world identity. Seen from this perspective, Russia's push to institutionalize BRICS seems, if not counter to strategic priorities, at least less immediately related.

It is important to remember, however, that although historically Russia's dominant national identity has been European, that is changing. In recent years officials have made a concerted effort to promote a "Eurasian" identity, which conceives of Russia as a unique civilization apart from both Europe and Asia, but linked to both. This is partially about stoking an increase in anti-Americanism for domestic political reasons, and partially a renewal of the long-standing debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles that has dominated Russian intellectual thought for over two centuries (Umland, 2012, pp. 30-34; Stent, 2007, p. 418). But while the official promotion of a Eurasian identity is linked most obviously to Russia's retreat from integration with the West, it also presages an effort at strategic positioning to increase Russia's power in both East and West. BRICS is the cornerstone of that effort.

Indeed, this is in many ways the key to understanding the strategic thinking behind Russia's efforts to bring the original BRIC countries together into a more formal grouping. As much as the effort to institutionalize BRIC was designed to give Russia (rhetorical) parallel options to further accommodation with the West, there was also a hope that the country could use its unique position as a member of both the G8 and BRIC to increase its influence in both (Grishaeva, 2012, p. 305; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). It is here that Roberts's theory about BRIC as a power multiplier needs to be extended: the aim was not just to gain influence in general international organizations, but was also specifically about looking for a way to position the country such that it could increase its leverage in those clubs with which it was most concerned. In addition to solving immediate economic and security concerns, therefore, BRIC also initially offered Russia another "shore" from which to build a bridge to Western institutions, in hopes that it could use its joint position and identity to increase its voice on both sides.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, in addition to acting as a power multiplier, BRICS also served the purpose of dual soft balancing. By creating a forum stocked with powerful rising players that operated as an "alternative" to Western-led informal international institutions, Russia was able better to balance against Western hegemony. At the same time, BRICS also increased the country's engagement with China. There was a hope that this additional layer of institutional webbing (over the existing Shanghai Cooperation Organization and, nominally, Evgenii Primakov's "Strategic Triangle" of Russia, India, and China) would help manage China's rise such that it did not become too much of a problem for Russian interests.

Since it was meant to balance both sides, BRICS was also never intended as a full alternative to cooperation with either side. Despite early and persistent calls for institutionalization, it is unclear that Russia actually wished to follow through on those demands. This is underscored by the fact that BRICS diplomacy is run entirely out of the foreign ministry rather than the

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<sup>1</sup> On whether or not this was a realistic hope, see Panova (2012).

Presidential Administration. It is true that under the Russian constitution the president has final authority over foreign policy, and the foreign ministry could not pursue initiatives without presidential approval. However, items higher on the presidential priority list are coordinated through the Presidential Administration rather than the foreign ministry<sup>2</sup> (Panova, 2014).

In addition, the “Concept of Participation of the Russian Federation in BRICS,” published by the foreign ministry in March of 2013, describes BRICS as part of the overall trend towards informal network diplomacy in international affairs (Kremlin, 2013). While the Concept also lays out a long-term goal of further institutional formalization of the BRICS association, most of the emphasis is on maintaining informal links and not institutionalizing to the point that it overrides bilateral relations. Indeed, one of the general pillars of Russian foreign policy is a preference for bilateral relations and a reticence towards agreements that would circumscribe the country’s sovereignty and foreign policy independence (Zagorski, 2010, p. 32).<sup>3</sup> It seems clear, therefore, that although Russia wished to promote BRICS’ importance on the international stage, the country had no more desire to align fully with BRICS than it did to align fully with the West (Fortescue, 2014, p. 234).

#### 4. Russia and BRICS after the Ukraine crisis

The desire to keep a distance from both sides changed after the precipitous decline in Russian-Western relations in the wake of Russia’s annexation of Crimea, the ongoing unrest in Eastern Ukraine, and the increasingly punishing sanctions that the United States and the European Union have levied against Russia in response. All of a sudden, BRICS serves two very important functions for Russia, addressing both political status and economic necessity. Both of these functions, while evident from the beginning, have been sharpened by the present crisis.

The first function is political, and this may be the most important in the short term. BRICS countries have not supported Russia’s actions in Ukraine, but they have not condemned them either. Further, in response to rumored efforts by the Australian foreign minister to ban President Putin from the November 2014 G20 Summit, the BRICS foreign ministers issued a joint statement reminding observers that no G20 member has the authority to exclude another unilaterally (Cox, 2014; BRICS Foreign Ministers, 2014). This silence on the general issues combined with the mild rebuke of the G20 on the specific issue of Russia’s potential exclusion provides Russia with room to maneuver. Despite Western efforts to isolate Russia, the ongoing partnership and the agreements reached during the July 2014 BRICS summit in Fortaleza and July 2015 summit in Ufa, Russia, both offer compelling imagery supporting Russia’s contention that the United States cannot strip it of its powerful partners nor, with the new Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), access to capital.<sup>4</sup>

*BRICS serves two very important functions for Russia, addressing both political status and economic necessity*

2 See Lukyanov (2014, December 13), personal interview.

3 This is a common view among the BRICS countries.

4 The CRA is modeled on the Chiang Mai Initiative, and its main purpose is to provide assistance in the case of short term liquidity gaps. According to the terms of the agreement, each BRICS country has access to 30% of their contribution without preconditions. The remaining 70% is available only when the country is also under an IMF program. It is too soon to gauge how well the CRA will work in practice (or if it will work at all), but its creation does suggest that, at least in theory, Russia will have access to some amount of emergency lending that is independent of the West. For more on the CRA, see Ministry of Foreign Relations, Brazil (2014).

The (theoretical) access to capital leads to the second function: intra-BRICS trade and Russia's bilateral relations with the BRICS countries individually offer potential relief from the effect of Western sanctions, as well as from Russia's self-imposed ban on Western agricultural imports. The countries of Latin America, and especially BRICS partner Brazil, have cheerfully stepped into the void left by the ban on EU agricultural goods (Devitt & Caglayan, 2014). From the perspective of the Russian consumer this is not unmitigated good news in the short run; food prices are expected to rise as a result of the ban, and this will likely push inflation even higher as well (Rapoza, 2014). These negative effects are exacerbated by the December 2014 ruble collapse. Taking a longer-term perspective, though, the story may be somewhat more positive. The speed with which Russia was able to leverage its relationships with the BRICS to replace the banned items and the positive reception these overtures received suggests that Russia has willing partners towards whom to reorient its economy<sup>5</sup>.

These practical considerations have been bolstered by official rhetoric. Whereas previously Russian officials discussed BRICS as part of the overall "multivector nature" of Russian foreign policy, speeches now are much more pointed and antagonistic (Lukyanov, 2014). Following the agreements reached at the Fortaleza summit, the Russian press declared that BRICS was "breaking the chains of the dollar" (Krestianinov, 2014). During his speech at the BRICS plenary session in Fortaleza, President Putin suggested a number of new initiatives that would bring cooperation to a qualitatively new level, including an energy association and joint use of Russia's GLONASS system (Putin, 2014). In his September 1, 2014 speech at the Moscow State Institute of International Affairs, the official university of the foreign ministry, Foreign Minister Lavrov spoke of Russia's BRICS "allies" (Lavrov, 2014).

None of these are watersheds in and of themselves, and Putin's Fortaleza suggestions have been percolating for some time. In aggregate, however, they suggest that the deep-freeze in relations with the West following the crisis in Ukraine has propelled BRICS up the list of Russian foreign policy priorities, and that it now for the first time appeals to Moscow as a real alternative to the Western system. From thinking of themselves as a bridge between BRICS and the West, Russia is now attempting to position BRICS as a bulwark against further Western encroachment on their interests.

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the other BRICS*

## 5. The reaction of other BRICS and the potential implications of increasing Russian anti-Westernism

Russia does not execute its BRICS policies in a vacuum, and the responses of the other partners are critical for Russia's long-term success or failure to achieve its objectives in how it would see BRICS evolve. In the case of Russia's renewed emphasis on the importance of the BRICS group within its own foreign policy, the main question is the attendant anti-Westernism that has accompanied this renewal. This brings to the fore an issue with which the group has struggled since its inception: the role and degree of anti-Westernism in BRICS both as a motivator for cooperation and even sometimes a *raison d'être*.

5 As of April 2015, food exports to Russia from Latin America and the Middle East had increased, and Russian authorities were working to ease existing restrictions on, for example, Brazilian meat exports. However, this substitution has been insufficient, and food prices continue to rise. See: Stratfor (2015, April 23), "Russia's Impending Food Shortages", retrieved from <https://www.stratfor.com/image/russias-impending-food-shortages>

Anti-Westernism has been the elephant in the room since BRIC first began to coalesce as a political entity in 2006. It remains unresolved because of the competing and contradictory interests of the group. On the one hand, all of the BRICS have more investment in their relations with Western countries than they do with the other BRICS. Even though China is now the largest trading partner for both Brazil and South Africa, none of the BRICS countries features in China's list of top five trading partners, and all continue to conduct significant trade with both the United States and the European Union (Brancato, 2014; Vlaskin, Glinkina & Lenchuk, 2013, p. 318). These strong economic ties are one reason that BRICS documents are so careful to emphasize that the group is not directed at any third parties and is not an anti-Western bloc (BRIC Leaders, 2011).

There are also political reasons to temper any perceived anti-Western motivations. BRICS's overarching goal is to reshape global governance architecture such that they have a larger voice in existing institutions. Most of the members are evolutionary rather than revolutionary in their approach to the current system (Armijo & Roberts, 2014, p. 520; Panova, 2012). What this means in practical terms is that BRICS will need Western acquiescence and cooperation in order to achieve its aims. From that perspective, overt or alienating anti-Westernism, would be counterproductive (Unnikrishnan, 2014).

On the other hand, there is something inherently anti-Western in the group's initial coalescence. The beginnings of BRICS as a political idea is deeply entwined with the global discontent with the United States that began to emerge in the wake of the invasion of Iraq and everything that followed (Laidi, 2011, p. 2). Perhaps more importantly, there is an intrinsic Pareto optimality problem with the BRICS demands. The BRICS desire a reorganization of votes in international organizations (most prominently the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but elsewhere as well) so that voting weights better represent the current global distribution of economic capacity (Ünay, 2013, p. 84). However, in demanding that reshuffling, the BRICS by definition are demanding that the shares of other countries, mainly in the EU and the United States, decrease. The BRICS hope to gain power through others' loss of power. Whether or not their calls are fair, or rational, or should be heeded, there is no solution to the demand wherein the United States and/or certain EU member states are not geopolitically and geoeconomically worse off afterwards than they were beforehand.

The BRICS group therefore walks a very fine line with regard to its relationship with the West. It must be sufficiently oppositional in order to capitalize on (latent) anti-Western sentiment and dissatisfaction with the reigning system among developing countries. However, it cannot become so oppositional that it torpedoes either the collective goal of the BRICS group (reform but not revolution in the international system) or the national (economic) interests of BRICS member countries.

The ongoing standoff between Russia and the West makes this balancing act more delicate because of how it has affected Russia's calculus for participation within the group. Other BRICS countries understand that the Western sanctions on Russia are not an attack on either the BRICS group or the other member countries individually (Davydov, 2014). However, if those sanctions push Russian anti-Westernism to further extremes, and if BRICS continues to grow in importance on the Russian foreign policy docket precisely because it is a grouping of non-Western states and Russia pushes for BRICS statements to reflect that change, it would exacerbate intra-group tensions and knock the already precarious equilibrium further off balance.

*The beginnings of BRICS as a political idea is deeply entwined with the global discontent with the United States that began to emerge in the wake of the invasion of Iraq*

It is in some sense a question of degrees. As noted above, the BRICS (and others) have been happy to pick up the market share left by Western sanctions. BRICS as a group also tend to dislike economic sanctions as a tool of international politics (Laidi, 2011, p. 3). This suggests that there could be a certain amount of flexibility among the other BRICS partners in allowing Russia to make BRICS anti-Westernism more overt. However, if Russian rhetoric (beyond that intended for domestic consumption) goes too far, then it is likely that China and India in particular will push back (Unnikrishnan, 2014). Neither will countenance BRICS becoming an explicitly anti-Western alliance. The open question, therefore, is what the long-term effects of the split between Russia and the West will be on Russia's participation in the BRICS group and whether this crisis will prove the straw that finally breaks an already weak basis for cooperation, or instead will become the crucible that brings five strong rising powers into true accord.

## 6. Conclusion

In 2006, Dmitri Trenin published an article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled "Russia Leaves the West," in which he argued that, "Russia's leaders have given up on becoming part of the West and have started creating their own Moscow-centered system" (Trenin, 2006, p. 87). Since 2006 was when BRIC began to come together as a political entity, Trenin would seem to have been on the mark in his observation. However, a retrospective analysis suggests certain nuances. If in 2006 Russia was beginning to build its own solar system, to use Trenin's analogy, then this new system was at least adjacent to the Western one. Indeed, Moscow's goal was to strengthen its own hand through strategic cooperation with both old and new power centers.

This initial goal coincided with the goals of Russia's other BRICS partners. Although the group has always been something of a Rorschach test for its members, with each country having its own goals and rationale for participating, all used it as a way of maximizing their voice in the international arena without directly challenging the reigning hegemon. Russia has historically been the most willing to paint BRICS with an anti-Western brush, but it has also been cognizant of the limits of that approach. Within the Russian foreign policy consciousness, BRICS has been the symbol of an alternative to the West, but not more than that. This has made managing conflicting views on anti-Westernism within the group easier.

After the Ukraine crisis, however, that balance seems to have disappeared, at least from official formulations (expert views are more nuanced). Instead of Russia as the cord that connects the BRICS and the G8 together, and a willingness to curtail anti-Westernism within BRICS, the new image is of shackles being broken. BRICS has become Russia's battering ram against the old system. For now, at least, it seems Russia really has left the West. It remains to be seen to what extent BRICS will become part of that exodus, and how much the increase in Russia's anti-Westernism will affect the attitudes of the other BRICS countries towards participation and cooperation within the group.

*BRICS has become  
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# RUSSIA, CHINA, INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

## Rusia, China, India y Asia Central

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India's forthcoming entry into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization may be of importance to Delhi but it cannot undo the critical fact that China is increasingly becoming the most consequential foreign actor in Central Asia and that Russia is slipping into dependence on China even to the point where its Ministry of Defense has formally sought an alliance with China against terrorism, "color revolutions", and the US. China is winning the rivalry for influence in Central Asia, India is barely competitive there and Russia is steadily losing ground there, mainly due to its own failures to enhance its economic-political capacity, even before it invaded Ukraine. The consequences of that move have only accelerated the processes of its growing dependence on China.



Abstract

Russia, China, India, Central Asia, Shanghai Cooperation Organization  
*Rusia, China, India, Asia Central, Organización de Cooperación de Shanghái*



Key words

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Fechas

*La próxima entrada de India en la Organización de Cooperación de Shanghái puede ser importante para Delhi pero no puede deshacer el factor crítico de que China se está convirtiendo cada vez más en el actor extranjero más relevante en Asia Central y que Rusia está dependiendo de China hasta el punto de que su Ministerio de Defensa ha buscado formalmente una alianza con China en contra del terrorismo, «las revoluciones de colores» y los Estados Unidos. China está ganando en la competición por la influencia sobre Asia Central, India apenas es competitiva allí y Rusia está perdiendo terreno paulatinamente, principalmente debido a sus propios fracasos para acrecentar su capacidad económica-política, incluso antes de invadir Ucrania. Las consecuencias de esa jugada tan solo han acelerado el proceso de su creciente dependencia de China.*



Resumen

Russia and China continue to profess a growing amity and identity of interests, not least in Central Asia. And they also have tried to accommodate India's rising influence, e.g. by supporting its membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, at their recent foreign ministers meeting all three states nominally agreed to support a multipolar world and essentially passed over Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2015). Nevertheless the abiding Russian idea of a strategic triangle comprising all three states is not likely to materialize anytime soon. The differences between India and China even before the Modi government came to power last year were serious and they may have hardened despite Chinese efforts to accommodate India (see Blank, 2008). So despite these professions of amity and mutual agreement on the need for a more polycentric or multipolar world order, it increasingly appears that Moscow cannot compete with Beijing in Central Asia while Indian objectives are only to a limited degree congruent with those of China.

Indeed, Prime Minister Modi has castigated Chinese expansionism in Tokyo and increased Indo-Japanese and Indo-Australian military ties. Still more recently, he and President Obama signed a joint statement openly criticizing Chinese foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> And the tensions between India and China across Asia, for all their efforts at accommodation, are deeply rooted.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the signs of Russia's retreat from competition with China are everywhere. Already in 2013, the late Alexandros Petersen stated publicly that China was and would be the most consequential foreign player in Central Asia.<sup>4</sup> Scholars have also long known that this trend evoked Russian suspicion but Moscow could not, even then, compete economically with China. Since then things have gotten even worse. Recognizing Russian suspicions, Chinese President Xi Jinping magnanimously offered to link the Trans-Siberian railroad to China's Silk Road. President Putin welcomed that offer ("Beijing", 2014). Sergei Ivanov, Putin's Chief of Staff, may claim that the silk road will link to Russia's Baikal-Amur and Trans-Siberian railroads and have a great potential if they do so by connecting East and Southeast Asia with Europe ("Moscow", 2014, July 9). Yet thanks to its reckless invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing Western sanctions and collapsing energy prices, Russia has now had to withdraw altogether from this project.<sup>5</sup>

This sequence displays China's victory over Russia and Russia's inability to compete with China. Russia now is merely a "junior brother" in such endeavors. Typically, China graciously but decisively punctured Russia's grandiloquent Eurasian and great power pretensions. And Russia's recklessness and failure to reform greatly assisted in this process. Given the expansive geostrategic benefits that China will obtain as it realizes its silk road vision, the evolving bilateral relationship on this issue portends a massive and decisive Russian strategic defeat in Eurasia rendering it here, as in energy, China's raw materials appendage (Calder, 2012).

Moreover, China has announced two "silk roads", one through Central Asia and a maritime one through South and Southeast Asia and launched enormous railroad, infrastructure, tele-

*Russia and China continue to profess a growing amity and identity of interests, not least in Central Asia*

1 For more information see Valdyntan (2015) and "Russia, India and China Stand United To Bring Perpetrators of Terror Acts To Justice" (2015).

2 For more information see Baker & Harris (2015); Einhorn (2014).

3 See Smith (2014); Malik (2011); Tellis & Mirski (2013).

4 As stated by Alexandros Petersen at a conference at the Central Asia Caucasus Institute of the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, D.C., November, 2013

5 See Goble (2015); Terekhova (2015).

communications and pipeline projects to realize this vision. This vision contradicts and would eclipse Russia's rival vision of a transcontinental "iron silk road" from Europe to Asia through the Trans-Siberian Railroad and a North-South corridor to India, Iran, and Central Asia. And by inviting India into the maritime if not overland silk road, China also destroys the essentially rhetorical US silk road project while also trying to coopt India into its grand design. The US' Silk Road Project, announced by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in 2011 outlined a grand vision of projects linking together Central Asia and India. Unfortunately this was merely a bureaucratic smokescreen to deflect criticism about the absence of any coherent US policy for Central Asia beyond the war in Afghanistan. Only one major project, the CASA-1000 program to bring Central Asian electricity to Afghanistan and Pakistan, appears to be moving forward and bureaucratic funding, the true test of the project's genuineness, was always minimal (Blank, 2013). China already is and will remain the most consequential and preeminent foreign actor in Central Asia.<sup>6</sup> And this was true even before President Xi Jinping outlined his Silk Road project in late 2013. Thus these silk roads are increasingly morphing into building blocks of China's hegemonic project in continental Asia.

Neither does Russia's decline end with this issue. As part of the mounting and increasingly hysterical (no other word is appropriate) threat assessments now prevailing in Russia, Moscow evidently believes that the US has also launched a global conspiracy to threaten it in Asia as well as Europe by launching color revolutions while Islamic radicals threaten terrorist attacks along its frontiers. Thus In November 2014, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said in Beijing that Russia and China confront not only US threats in the Asia-Pacific but also US-orchestrated "color revolutions" and Islamic terrorism. Therefore, "The issue of stepping up this cooperation [between Russia and China] has never been as relevant as it is today" ("Moscow", 2014, November 18). Specifically this means his advocacy of enhanced Sino-Russian security cooperation (through unspecified means) both bilaterally and within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Ibid). Shoigu included not only Central Asia but also East Asia, as did his Deputy Minister Anatoly Antonov. Both men decried US policies that allegedly were bringing about color revolutions and support for Islamic terrorism in Southeast and Central Asia. Meanwhile official threat assessments betray mounting anxiety about the other threat of terrorism breaking out of what Moscow sees as a failing Afghanistan into Central Asia where it would threaten Russia's vital interests. Specifically Chief of the General Staff, General Valery Gerasimov, reported to foreign defense attachés that,

In the light of the political decision adopted by the US leadership to withdraw the contingent of American troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, we predict with a high degree of probability a significant deterioration in the situation in that country with the transfer of real control of particular regions to terrorist groupings. In the context of the severe deterioration in the situation in Iraq and Syria as well as the stepping up of the activities of the terrorist grouping ISIL, the possible removal of Afghanistan from the focus of attention by Western and other interested countries is capable of putting the security of the Central Asian region in jeopardy. ("Moscow", 2014, December 10)

Russia has attempted to shore up its gradually eroding position in Central Asia by the use of all available means of power at its disposal including searching for multilateral and bilateral part-

*Moscow evidently believes that the US has launched a global conspiracy to threaten it in Asia as well as Europe*

6 As stated by Petersen at a conference at the Central Asia Caucasus Institute of the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, D.C., November, 2013.

nerships even as it acts unilaterally to strengthen its forces (Nixey, 2012). An examination of its military policy which has probably ruled out the return of Russian combat troops to Afghanistan, reveals an ongoing pattern to leverage partnerships and alliances with all the interested parties in Afghanistan except for NATO since that is now obviously out of the question. Yet it will insist, as observed above that NATO defends Afghanistan. Nevertheless this policy means heightened military-political and military-economic engagement and deals with India, China, and Pakistan, and in the Chinese case an approach for what appears to be an open military alliance.

Moscow has thus brokered an arrangement by which India would buy Russian arms and equipment, e.g. light artillery and mortars that will then go to the Afghan army. Since neither side can or will inject its own forces into Afghanistan and India does not have the necessary spares and equipment this arrangement works well as a way of satisfying the enormous needs of the Afghan army (Miglani, 2014). This arrangement also builds on the upsurge of Russian direct investment in Afghanistan (Weitz, 2014). This process thus enhances Moscow's standing in Kabul and continues to build on its long-term partnership with India that now embraces Central Asia as well as South Asia. It may also be the case though we cannot be certain that Moscow will look benevolently upon the efforts of India and Central Asian governments to strengthen military ties with each other. The expansion of such ties clearly ranks among major recent Indian policy initiatives. It meets the needs of Central Asian states as well, especially if they are continuing to balance their major power relationships.<sup>7</sup>

However, the most striking and consequential example of this is the new approach to China growing out of the close Sino-Russian relationship. Shoigu and Antonov's remarks above demonstrate the Ministry of Defense and presumably the government's advocacy of what amounts to a military alliance with China based on the principle of collective security against both terrorism, and supposedly US-sponsored "color revolutions".

This overture to China apparently marks a fundamental reversal of past Russian policy to keep the Chinese military out of Central Asia and retain the option of military intervention there as an exclusively Russian one and could signify Russia's growing dependence on China in Central Asia and elsewhere under mounting Western and economic pressure. But the details remain to be seen. Such an alliance would also mark a reversal of Chinese policy that has heretofore shunned military involvement in Central Asia but there are some straws in the wind suggesting that Beijing is rethinking this position. On the one hand, China's Ministry of Defense spokesman, at an international press conference on November 27, 2014, went out of his way to deny that an alliance with Russia existed and said that,

I need to emphasize here, though, China and Russia adhere to the principle of no alliance, no confrontation, and not targeting a third party in military cooperation, and therefore it (the Sino-Russian partnership) will not constitute threats to any country. It is inappropriate to place normal military cooperation between China and Russia in the same category as the US-Japan military alliance. ("Beijing", 2014, November 27)

On the other hand, however, on December 16, 2014, right after Shoigu's visit, Prime Minister Li Keqiang, speaking in Astana, proposed that the SCO become the "guardian of Eurasia". Obviously, this is linked to concern over Beijing's showcase policy project of a new silk road through Afghanistan and Central Asia to Europe that would come under severe pressure if

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<sup>7</sup> See Gokhale (2014); "Kazakhstan and India Develop Cooperation in Defense Sector" (2014).

Afghanistan collapsed. And in August, 2014, Russia and China held their largest SCO exercises to date where China contributed J-10 and J-11 fighters JH-7 early warning assets and control aircrafts, and WZ-10 and WZ-19 attack helicopters (Aneja, 2014). In this vein there are also signs that China might actively contribute to the struggle against ISIS (The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) with support for coalition air strikes against them even if it does so independently and apart from the US coalition (Borgozmer & Hornby, 2014). This too would mark a revision of past Chinese policies if these were genuine indicators of an impending major policy change and could betoken movement towards a genuine Sino-Russian military-political alliance in Central Asia against terrorism and Islamism in all its forms. Obviously, that trend if it materializes would have profound implications for world affairs, going far beyond Central Asia.

Moreover, Russia's new defense doctrine proposes to "coordinate efforts to deal with military risks in the common space of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)" ("Voyennaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii", 2014). It also provides for creation of joint missile defense systems. While Moscow has pursued this with the West in the past, this could also be a warning or offer to go with China in the creation of such systems. Although analysts like Dmitri Trenin deny that Moscow is seeking an alliance with China, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said in Beijing in his aforementioned statements that Russia and China confront not only US threats in the Asia-Pacific but also US-orchestrated "color revolutions" and Islamic terrorism. Therefore, "The issue of stepping up this cooperation [between Russia and China] has never been as relevant as it is today".<sup>8</sup>

Shoigu further stated that, "In the context of an unstable international situation the strengthening of good-neighborly relations between our countries acquires particular significance. This is not only a significant factor in the states' security but also a contribution to ensuring peace throughout the Eurasian continent and beyond" ("Moscow", 2014, November 20; "Moscow", 2014, November 10). Thus Shoigu stated that, "During talks with Comrade Chang Wanquan, we discussed the state and prospects of the Russian-Chinese relations in the military field, exchanged opinions on the military-political situation in general and the APR (Asia-Pacific Region) in particular". And "We also expressed concern over US attempts to strengthen its military and political clout in the APR", he said. "We believe that the main goal of pooling our effort is to shape a collective regional security system". If this is not an offer for an alliance then we need to redefine the term.

China has been no less active but infinitely more rational. During 2014, China has launched a major new initiative regarding Central and South Asia that fundamentally departs from its previous policies and points in new and hitherto unforeseen directions. China has reversed its traditional opposition to Indian participation as a full member in major Asian security institutions and invited India to join or participate in the following agencies, many of which are Chinese-sponsored institutions: the Chinese-sponsored Asian infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), ambitious Chinese-initiated maritime silk road projects through Southeast Asia, the Asia-Pacific Economic Community (APEC) whose annual meeting China hosted in November 2014, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Iran, Pakistan and Mongolia will also receive invitations to the SCO.<sup>9</sup> And, China and India are both founding members of the

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<sup>8</sup> See "Moscow" (2014, November 18); Trenin (2014).

<sup>9</sup> See Raina (2014); Aneja (2014); "China Invites India to Join Maritime Silk Road" (2014); "China Invites India to Join Its Ambitious Silk Road Projects" (2014); "Modi Leads India to the Silk Road" (2014); Tiezzi (2014).

forthcoming BRICS bank (Panda, 2014). This is an amazing turnabout for Beijing since most analysts perceive the Indo-Chinese relationship to be fundamentally rivalrous.<sup>10</sup>

India has long sought membership in the SCO and the Modi government's newly enhanced engagement with China and India's pre-existing "Connect Central Asia policy" suggest it will actively participate in the SCO (Raina, 2014). Analysts have already discerned two potential benefits for China by expanding the SCO in this fashion. On the one hand, an expanded SCO works to curtail US influence in both South and Central Asia that could block expanded Chinese influence in both regions (Raina, 2014). Since considerable Sino-Russian cooperation against America already exists in Central Asia, one might visualize the SCO as a joint effort to restrict Washington's presence there and prevent Central Asia's alignment with either Moscow or Beijing against the other (Lindley-French, 2014, p. 37). But from Moscow's standpoint the SCO is also undoubtedly a way to moderate or channel China's rising Central Asian profile within an institution where Russia has an equal voice and can assert itself. Given the close ties between Delhi and Moscow, Moscow may think it is gaining a partner and the increased membership might dilute China's presence there and more broadly in Central Asia. In this context, expanding the membership is arguably a calculated Chinese risk to dilute Russia's voice, obstruct India's gravitation to either Moscow or Washington, and enhance its own influence through Pakistan's adhesion.

Yet on the other hand, India has made clear its opposition, in tandem with the US and Japan, to China's expansionist tendencies and for all the effort to bring both India and China together in expanded mutual cooperation, the security tensions between these two powers spill over into Central Asia.<sup>11</sup> Equally, if not more importantly, India will be nobody's instrument, though it might align itself with one or another of the major powers to pursue its interests. So calculations based on having India available to support Russia, China or the US against one or more of the other powers are built on flimsy premises.

For its part, Beijing has consistently envisioned the SCO as a template of multilateral cooperation for a new, essentially anti-American, and alternative system of Asian and international relations generally (Blank, 2013). The SCO thus represents the embryonic form of a future anti-American system in Asia where China plays a major role and leverages its membership as a means of influencing these organizations in its direction. It has always emphasized that the SCO embodies China's vision of a future world or at least Asiatic order from which American military power and calls for democratization would either be excluded or at least restricted to a minimum. Thus, Beijing simultaneously pursues multilateral initiatives like the East Asian Summit that it has tried to guide in order to engender the exclusion of America throughout Asia as a whole. Many commonalities exist between China's efforts to guide the SCO and its promotion of multilateralism in Southeast Asia. Reiss states:

One of the results of China's diplomatic efforts has been to marginalize the United States. Washington is not a party to any of the regional institutions that China promotes and which are now setting the future Asian agenda. To be sure, the United States does not have to belong to every institutional organization, but China is defining multilateralism for the region in ways that specifically exclude the United States. (2005, p. 342)

*Calculations based on having India available to support Russia, China or the US against one or more of the other powers are built on flimsy premises*

10 See Raina (2014); Smith (2014); Tellis & Mirski (2013); Malik (2011).

11 See Smith (2014); Tellis & Mirski (2013); Malik (2011).

In this respect, the SCO is the opposite of America's Asian alliance system. China's policies toward Central Asia, particularly the development of the SCO, exemplify the process by which China intends first to build a prosperous neighborhood under its auspices and then shelter its economic development from both internal and foreign threats. Beijing also hopes to reshape Asian security agendas to attenuate US alliances and replace them with relationships that are ideologically and politically more congenial to China's insistence on its unfettered sovereignty and freedom to maneuver in world affairs.

Step one for the SCO was to build the group, the first multilateral group China had started on its own. Step two: expand it to discussions of trade, economics and energy. Step three: begin discussions on more substantive security partnerships. The SCO has gone so far as to conduct its own joint military maneuvers, in China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region. This approach of deepening regional multi-level ties will likely be repeated in other forums, such as ASEAN+ 3 grouping (ASEAN plus Japan, Korea, and China). (Cooper Ramo, 2004, p. 53)

In light of the hegemonic aspirations lurking behind the Silk Road projects we can see that the SCO – which serves as the venue where China makes many of the bilateral deals that futher the silk road through Central Asia – is equally a part of this grand design.

Ultimately this fact also makes the SCO the arena for Russo-Chinese competition in Central Asia. While both governments support suppressing Central Asian reform and repressing any threats to the status quo; they clearly compete against each other in the SCO and Central Asia. Thus those governments have previously differed on membership issues in the SCO (Blank, 2013). A 2008 Senate Foreign Relations Committee study observed that,

Some observers have viewed the creation of the SCO as reflecting the common goal of Russia and China to encourage the Central Asian states to combat regime opponents (in their own countries-author) of the two major powers. While cooperating on this broad goal, Russia and China have appeared to differ on other goals of the SCO and to vie for dominance within the organization. Russia has viewed the SCO mainly as a means to further military cooperation and to limit China's influence in Central Asia, while China in recent years has viewed the SCO not only as enhancing regional security but also as an instrument to increase trade and access to oil and gas. ("Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2008, p. 68)

Since 2008 we have seen numerous examples of Sino-Russian competition in Central Asia and Russia's mounting but ultimately unsuccessful efforts to hedge against China's growing influence there. China frustrated Russia's attempts to dominate the region's energy industry and force it into a single Russian channel (Feigenbaum, 2011, p. 31). China has also become the primary money and foreign capital market for Central Asia (Feigenbaum, 2011, pp. 29-31). Similarly China's commercial penetration of Central Asia compared with the visible signs of Russia's inability to compete commercially or as an investor in Central Asia has triggered increasing Russian anxiety and moves to restrict Central Asian trade with China like the new Eurasian Union and accompanying Customs Union (Feigenbaum, 2011, pp. 29-31). These trade diverting organizations are already diverting Central Asian trade from China to Russia (Wisniewska, 2013, p. 15; Mankoff, 2013, p. 2). A study of the impact of that Customs Union on Kyrgyzstan concluded that,

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The main conclusion of this section of the study is the need to modify Kyrgyz trade policy, which has been based on trade flows going from China to the CU countries through Kyrgyzstan. All stages of the supply chain from importation to exportation must be changed. According to the opinions of local experts, changes in the trade flows from China to CIS countries could be expected as a result of the CU formation. Such changes would likely increase trade flows via Central Asia rather than the Far East region of the Russian Federation, due to lesser costs. At the same time, “shadow” re-export flows could be replaced by products produced in Chinese factories newly located in Kyrgyzstan. (Beshimov, Abdykamov & Sultanalieva, 2010, p. 12)

Kazakh analyses also highlight Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan’s inability to compete with Chinese goods and conclude that the Customs Union will reduce China’s penetration of their domestic markets (Yilmaz & Moldashev, 2009; Moldashev, 2011).

This bilateral rivalry over energy, economics and each government’s political influence in Central Asia is visible, robust, and growing despite both sides’ understandable efforts to conceal it. Russian analysts already claim that “the interaction with China within SCO only weakens Russia’s position in the long run” (Teploukhova, 2010, p. 83). Maria Teploukhova writes that,

Beijing is one of the major foreign policy partners of Moscow, bilateral dialogue is well set, and the SCO cannot be regarded as a priority for further development or interaction. Even for military exercises both parties do not need the SCO – they can simply continue them in the bilateral format, as they do now. Meanwhile attempts to compete with China within the SCO are also doomed to failure, since for China the SCO is a matter of foreign strategy and for Russia it is a matter of prestige. Therefore, Moscow either has to agree to the position of second player (as it does now), or to spend much of its resources on real rivalry. Cooperation between the SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization helps to improve the position of Russia, but again the overall context implies that the structure is more oriented towards Central Asia than the Russian Far East. (2010, p. 83)

Indeed, China’s economic power grew so much by 2009 that Russia had to accept China’s investments in Central Asia as a positive phenomena. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov actually praised Chinese investment in Central Asia for its “transparency”. Ryabkov further claimed that,

We believe that our friends and partners in Central Asia are appropriately meeting the situation and solving the task facing them in the sphere of economic and social development using the opportunities that present themselves as a result of cooperation with China. Hence this can only be welcomed. (“Russian Officials Laud Ties With China; Observers Express Concerns”, 2009)

Given Moscow’s consistent paranoia regarding any gain by China or America in Central Asia, this represented a profound change in rhetoric if not policy and a major concession to China. As a 2007 report of the Russian-Chinese Business Council observed,

Being a member of the SCO, China views other members of the organization as promising markets. It is China that wishes to be the engine behind the trade and economic cooperation within the framework of the SCO --- China’s intentions to form [a] so-called economic space within the SCO are well known. Owing to that fact, experts have

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been speaking about greater Chinese economic expansion in various parts of the world, including Central Asia. --- Beijing has activated ties with all Central Asian countries and strives to comprehensively strengthen economic relations and the dependency of these countries on its market. ("Moscow", 2007, November 15)

By 2007 China was already Russia's commercial rival there, bypassing Russian efforts to monopolize Central Asian energy trade against China (Graham, 2010, p. 65). And now China has become the leading outlet for Central Asian and especially Turkmen gas. It will soon get up to 65BCM annually from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, more than they send to Russia (Blank & Kim, 2013). Nevertheless, Russia will not admit that China is its rival and only acts indirectly or covertly against China there. As Dmitri Trenin and Alexei Malashenko wrote,

The rise of China has challenged Russia's position in Central Asia even more massively, fundamentally, and permanently than America's insertion into the region. However, Moscow while traditionally allergic to military expansionism, is relatively tolerant toward the projection of economic influence, which distinguishes the Chinese practice in Central Asia from the American. Russia still regards the United States – not China – as its principal competitor. (2010, p. 21)

Shoigu's remarks, cited above, clearly confirm their concluding assertion.

For Russia China remains the "threat that dare not speak its name" in Central Asia as elsewhere (Kipp, 2011, pp. 459-503). And this inability to acknowledge the Chinese threat has only grown as Moscow's dependence on China has grown in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine. Now it will be virtually impossible for Russia to deal candidly with Chinese power as it showed at the recent Shangri-La conference on Asian security (Gabuev, 2015). And there are still more examples of this rivalry. China joined other SCO members in 2008 to block support for Abkhazia and South Ossetia's independence from Georgia. China then collaborated with Uzbekistan to thwart Russian efforts to intervene in Kyrgyzstan's domestic crises in 2010 (Blank & Kim, 2013). China prevented Russia from obtaining a precedent using Article 51 of the UN charter and the right to protect ethnic kinsmen abroad from being applied to Central Asia. That precedent could be used to devastating effect against both Central Asian and the Chinese governments and could have been used in Ukraine but this precedent apparently blocked that gambit. While principles defending states' territorial integrity are enshrined in the SCO charter, Russia clearly does not take them seriously. This alone drives other members to look to China. Should future crises erupt within one or more member states or between any two of them, it will be an important test for the SCO. Ukraine suggests it could fail that test and that the gap between the SCO's formal by-laws and its effective functioning will probably grow over time.

Zhao Huasheng, the Director of the Center for Russia and Central Asia Studies, Center for Shanghai Cooperation Organization Studies, at Shanghai's Fudan University, wrote in 2004 that issues like terrorism, drugs, and the links between drug running and the Taliban were problems beyond Russia's effective unilateral ability to cope with, either in the short or long-term perspective. Moreover, other regional organizations could not fight these challenges either. Only the SCO could combat terrorists, extremists, separatists, and drug trafficking. Zhao embellished upon the idea of China's free riding, explaining that China concedes to Russia a leadership position in Central Asia, as long as Russia recognizes that it needs China's influence to exercise legitimate authority here.

*For Russia China remains the "threat that dare not speak its name" in Central Asia as elsewhere*

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has continued to influence this area but its ability to control Central Asia is waning. To varying extents, the countries of Central Asia wish to be independent from Russia. In the long run, Russia's control over Central Asia is worrisome. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization links the Central Asian countries and remains attractive for this reason. Therefore, the SCO may be conducive to the exertion of Russian influence and domination. In particular, Russia may cement its broad and general existence in this region with the help of China's influence and the Central Asia's confidence in China. The newly-born SCO has the potential to develop into the most influential regional organization of this part of the world. Joining the SCO is an important way for Russia to take part in Asian affairs, otherwise Russia's potential is greatly diminished. (Husheng, 2004, p. 286)

If he accurately captured China's thinking and Russia's reality, then the SCO could well resemble Asian security organizations who have been singularly unable to prevent major powers from launching unopposed security threats, e.g. China in the South China Sea, even more than it presently does. And that would benefit none of the members whether they be old or new, except for China who could then bring its power over other members to bear bilaterally, given Russia's growing economic dependence on China. That is not a positive outcome for Russia or India. For example, in the Asian Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN, open rivalries and strong differences may be publicly voiced but little practical result ensues. Unless Russia learns to compete economically with China, it may ultimately function merely as the gendarme of Eurasian autocracy and of China's investments.

Finally China's recent invitation to India, Iran, Pakistan, and Mongolia to join the SCO opens a new chapter in its history. This may be partly a gesture to Russia which has long supported Indian entry into the SCO in return for the visible warming of Russo-Pakistani relations or it may be part of an altogether new page in Sino-Russian rivalry of the SCO in South and Central Asia. Only time will tell. But this move certainly comports with the Russo-Chinese desire to create new international organizations that exclude the US and transform the Asian and international economic-political order. But it is unlikely that this move will improve amity within the SCO, formal rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding. Despite the professed Russo-Chinese identity of outlooks, at the 2012 Beijing summit of the SCO, Russian diplomats openly took the credit for successfully torpedoing China's major initiatives (Kaukenov, 2013, p. 11). Thus the Kazakh analyst Adil Kaukenov writes,

It is difficult to understand how an efficient and reliable organization can be established if the second largest participant is set on doing all it can to prevent major projects from working. And there I an explanation for this; it is obvious that one of the reasons for Russia's accession to the SCO was to prevent China's uncontrolled penetration into Central Asia. At the beginning of the 2000s, it became clear that China's entry into the region was inevitable, so Moscow gave the green light, as long as it was involved too. This was also advantageous to Beijing, since Moscow's participation in the organization gave the SCO, which also meant China's entry into the region, a significant reserve of legitimacy. So Moscow occupied the position of an active pessimist in the SCO, making generous offers, allotting funding, but in the end doing everything to ensure that the SCO does not go beyond the framework of a dialog platform. Russia's attempts to make the SCO more global by means of an enlargement or active efforts on the global scale are being opposed both by Beijing, for which the SCO is an entirely specific mechanism,

*China's recent invitation to India, Iran, Pakistan, and Mongolia to join the SCO opens a new chapter in its history*

so it is worried about its erosion, and by the Central Asian countries, which are worried they will be drawn into a new standoff between Russia and the West. (Kaukenov, 2013, pp. 11-12)

While he thinks Xi Jinping's new policies towards Russia and emphasis on finding larger areas of agreement with Russia might change this situation; this rivalry remains the primary impediment to the SCO's effectiveness (Kaukenov, 2013, p. 12). Furthermore, China is consolidating its advantage by building a gas pipeline from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to China even though Gazprom took over Kyrgyzstan's energy company and China could buy cheaper gas using the existing Kazakhsan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan pipeline. As Kyrgyz expert Adjar Kurtov argues, China aims to create,

A system for the region's dependence on interests of China. Its aim is to create conditions so that in the future China might become a moderator of [the] majority of key processes in the west of its borders. And China consistently will implement this aim step by step which will be facilitated by China's financial mightiness and international reserves which are the biggest in the world in terms of volumes.<sup>12</sup>

So while it is quite clear that there is substantial cooperation among any dyad of this triangle, it is equally true that at the regional level in Central Asia and even all the way to Korea and Japan that there are considerable tensions among them, i.e. between Russia and China and between India and China (Blank, 2014, September). While efforts to keep these relationships in equilibrium are to be welcomed, no dispassionate and objective analyst can overlook them and pretend to a full understanding of these dynamics among them. In a situation where Russia is steadily declining relative to both India and China who are both rising and competitive with each other and where Russia constantly tries to assert itself even as it seeks ever closer unity with China, their relationships in Asia in general and Central Asia in particular are likely to be much more stressful than they want others to believe. So while both China and Russia have welcomed India into the SCO and more broadly into Asian multilateral organizations; India may join the SCO but it might yet recoil from what it finds there and in Sino-Russian relations.

Even as Russia seeks to hedge against China on issues of Asian security it is clearly losing ground to China in Central Asia and must depend on it globally for support against Washington. Under the circumstances it is hardly surprising that not only US allies in Asia but also states like India and Vietnam increasingly gravitate towards Washington despite excellent ties with Russia.<sup>13</sup> If India hoped, as in the past, that Russian support would be critical in helping it deal with China, increasingly that is a vain hope. Russia clearly aims to be thought of as a great independent Asian power, but its own failure to reform, aggression in Ukraine, and inability to address itself to Asia's security concerns and agenda have greatly undermined that pretense (Gavueb, 2015). Insofar as Russia claims great power standing in Asia it increasingly appears to be a case of what the Chinese proverb calls the name without the reality rather than the reality without the name.

*It is hardly surprising that not only US allies in Asia but also states like India and Vietnam increasingly gravitate towards Washington despite excellent ties with Russia*

12 See "Chinese Puzzle: Beijing Goes the Other Way, Why?" (2014).

13 See Singh (2015); Vuving (2015).

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# DISPUTED DEMOCRACY: THE INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY IN US-RUSSIA RELATIONS DURING THE GEORGE W. BUSH AND PUTIN PRESIDENCIES

## Democracia reñida: la instrumentalización del concepto de democracia en las relaciones entre los Estados Unidos y Rusia a lo largo de los mandatos presidenciales de George W. Bush y Putin

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Abstract

The conflict over the idea of democracy was a key factor in the deterioration of US-Russia bilateral relations during the second term of the George W. Bush presidency (2005-2009). US governmental and non-governmental support for democratisation in the post-Soviet region was viewed by Russia as a cover for the advancement of US national interests in the region, at the expense of those of Russia. In response, Russia developed practical and discursive strategies to counter it. Debates about the status of Russian democracy, about the idea of “sovereign democracy”, and of the democratic (or otherwise) conduct of US foreign affairs, all emerged in this period as sites – and evidence – of dispute between the two states. This article argues that pro-active US democracy promotion rhetoric combined with a clear pattern of instrumentalisation of the concept of democracy encouraged – in the contexts of a more broadly assertive US foreign policy and the “Colour Revolutions” – an answering instrumentalisation of the idea and use of “democracy” by Russian political elites, who utilised the concept as the basis for a discursive challenge to the US’s global dominance. In consequence, not only is the content of the term “democracy” a source of dispute but, critically, that dispute became tied to questions of state identity, state security, and conceptions of international relations. “Democracy” is thus likely to remain both a source of, and a means of articulating, discontent in the US’s relationship with Russia and the states of Central Asia for the foreseeable future.

Democracy, Russia, United States, George W. Bush, Colour Revolutions, identity, security  
*Democracia, Rusia, Estados Unidos, George W. Bush, Revoluciones de Colores, identidad, seguridad*



Key words

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Fechas

*El conflicto sobre la idea de democracia fue un factor clave en el deterioro de las relaciones bilaterales entre los Estados Unidos y Rusia a lo largo de la segunda etapa del mandato presidencial de George W. Bush (2005-2009). El apoyo gubernamental y no gubernamental estadounidense a la democratización de la región postsoviética fue visto por Rusia como un encubrimiento de los avances de los intereses nacionales estadounidenses en la zona, a expensas de los de Rusia. Como respuesta Rusia desarrolló estrategias prácticas y discursivas para contrarrestarlos. Los debates sobre el estado de la democracia Rusa, sobre la idea de «democracia soberana» y sobre la guía democrática (u otra) de las relaciones exteriores de los Estados Unidos emergieron durante esta etapa como lugares –y evidencia– de las disputas entre ambos estados. Este artículo sostiene que la retórica de fomento de la democracia estadounidense combinada con un patrón claro de instrumentalización del concepto de democracia que alentó –en los contextos de una más general política exterior asertiva estadounidense y de las «revoluciones de colores»– la respuesta de la instrumentalización de la idea y uso de «democracia» por las élites políticas rusas, que emplearon el concepto como la base de un reto discursivo al dominio global estadounidense. Como consecuencia, no solo es el contenido del término «democracia» motivo de discusión sino que, de modo crítico, la disputa ha quedado unida a temas como la identidad estatal, la seguridad estatal y conceptos de relaciones internacionales. «Democracia», por lo tanto, parece que se mantendrá como una fuente y como un medio de articular el descontento en la relación de los Estados Unidos con Rusia y los estados de Asia Central en un futuro previsible.*



The deterioration in the US-Russia bilateral relationship since the start of the Ukrainian crisis in late 2013 has brought relations between the two states to arguably their lowest point in the post-Soviet period. A central factor in this deterioration has been the perception on the part of key members of the Russian political elite that the events in Ukraine were part of a wider attempt by the US and its allies to undermine Russia's interests and international position.<sup>1</sup> In the case of Ukraine, as in other cases, Russian interests are characterised not only as material but also ideational – the widening and deepening dispute with the US and its allies is understood to comprise questions of identity and political values which are simultaneously stakes in the conflict and instruments to be used in it.

To understand the way in which contested political values have developed as critical factors in US-Russia relations, it is necessary to consider the ways in which they became central to the relationship during the first decade of the twenty-first century. The most important ideational dispute in this period was that over democracy – its meaning and its promotion. The conflict over the idea of democracy during the second term of the George W. Bush presidency (2005-2009) was a key factor in the deterioration of US-Russia bilateral relations, reversing the improvement in relations that had occurred at the start of the Bush presidency, and re-emerging as a source of friction after the end of the “reset” period during the first Obama administration. US governmental and non-governmental support for democratisation in the post-Soviet region was viewed by Russia as a cover for the advancement of US national interests in the region, at the expense of those of Russia. In response, Russia developed practical and discursive strategies

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the assertion of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov that the EU's Association Agreement with Ukraine was promoted by European states closely allied to the US as part of a policy of dividing Russia and the rest of Europe in order to undermine Russian strategic interests (Lavrov, 2014).

to counter it.<sup>2</sup> Debates about the status of Russian democracy, about the idea of “sovereign democracy”, and of the democratic (or otherwise) conduct of US foreign affairs, all emerged in this period as sites – and evidence – of dispute between the two states.

This has been interpreted by many British and American analysts as a cynical manoeuvre, designed to check democracy promotion within Russia and the surrounding states of the CIS (Ambrosio, 2009; Fawn, 2009), or as part of a strategy to counter emergent, domestic democracy movements (Horvath, 2011). This instrumentalisation of democracy by Russian political elites also needs, however, to be understood in context; one context which has been largely neglected but is, I would suggest, important is the instrumentalisation of the term, and of the policy of, democracy promotion, by the Bush administration. The growing US criticism of Russian democratic failures took place in a broader context of what appeared to be a highly partial approach to democracy and its promotion across the space of the former Soviet Union and beyond. This article argues that the combination of pro-active US democracy promotion rhetoric combined with evidence of the instrumentalisation of the concept of democracy encouraged, in the contexts of a more broadly assertive US foreign policy and the Colour Revolutions, an answering instrumentalisation of the idea and use of “democracy” by Russian political elites, who utilised the concept as the basis for a discursive challenge to the US’s global dominance. As a result, the dispute over democracy became tied to questions of state identity and security, and to perceptions of international order, with consequences for the bilateral relationship and beyond it.

## 1. The idea of democracy in the foreign policy of the George W. Bush administration

A commitment to democracy promotion was a prominent element of US foreign and security policy during the Bush administration, as it has been of administrations before and since (Monten, 2005; Rieffer & Mercer, 2005; Smith, 2012; Bouchet, 2013). “Democracy” as a core US foreign policy value, and “democracy promotion” as a key objective together formed a central pillar of the Bush administration’s foreign policy, despite an initial reluctance of the administration to involve itself in “nation building”. The use of these terms and their application to the practices of foreign policy profoundly shaped relations (in both positive and negative ways) with the states of the former Soviet Union in this period, most significantly with Russia; in particular, the perception that the terms were selectively applied and instrumentalised for the purposes of advancing US geopolitical interests at the expense of Russia shaped the discursive response of the Russian government to the US’s engagement in the region.

“Democracy” – and “freedom”, a term with which it was frequently paired – recurred as a key trope of Bush administration speeches, briefings, and policy documents after 11 September 2001 (“9/11”). The main subjects of the Bush administration’s democracy promotion policy were Iraq and Afghanistan; its discursive scope extended well beyond these two states, however, to form a central principle of the administration’s wider foreign policy as part of its “Freedom Agenda”. However, US democracy promotion policy during the George W. Bush presidency was deeply contentious in a number of respects. Most obviously, the two principal areas of focus,

*A commitment to democracy promotion was a prominent element of US foreign and security policy during the Bush administration*

2 The term “post-Soviet” is used here not to indicate an authoritarian regime type as in, for example, Fawn (2009), but to refer to any successor state of the USSR.

Afghanistan and Iraq, were states where democracy promotion accompanied – indeed, was made possible by – US-led military intervention to remove the existing government. Militarised, coercive democracy promotion in these two cases was understood to have increased resistance to democracy promotion efforts elsewhere (Carothers, 2006).

A second problem was that the Bush administration appeared to combine an inconsistent attitude to democracy promotion in different states with a notably activist approach – engaging more assertively with the idea of democracy promotion in non-allied states than immediately prior administrations had done while minimising criticism of democratic and human rights failings on the part of allies, and in consequence producing an appearance of greater partiality on the issue of states' democratic credentials. By the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Bush administration discourse on democracy and human rights appeared to act as a reward and penalty system for allies and non-allies in the "War on Terror". As Stephen Sestanovich suggested, "Bush made it all too easy to portray his 'freedom agenda' as a hypocritical tool for advancing narrow US interests" (Sestanovich, 2008, p. 22); Thomas Carothers, one of the most prominent US analysts of democracy promotion, similarly warned of the risks of "the instrumentalisation of pro-democracy policies – wrapping security goals in the language of democracy promotion and then confusing democracy promotion with the search for particular political outcomes" (Carothers, 2004, p. 71).

Apart from those states where the US has been directly engaged through military intervention, arguably no other area of the world was the subject of such a high profile and sustained focus on democratisation and democracy promotion at the start of the twenty-first century as the states of the former Soviet Union. The reasons for this were complex; Beissinger (2007) identifies a combination of opportunity; prior history and national interests. The personal backgrounds of some of those in relevant parts of the Bush administration might be added to this list – both Condoleezza Rice and Undersecretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, for example, had previous experience as policy advisers and analysts of the region. Perhaps for precisely some of the same reasons, a high level of engagement with democracy promotion in this region was particularly contentious. The administration's approach to this region appeared to combine all of the most problematic aspects of their policy, resulting in an activist but clearly partial approach that minimised failures of democratisation in allied states while stressing them in states with which the US did not have good relations. Examples of this could be seen in the varying characterisations of two of the region's most authoritarian regimes, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

In the post-9/11 period, Uzbekistan was regarded as a key, regional ally in the "Global War on Terror" (GWO, a fact that placed the US government's commitment to democracy promotion in clear conflict with its security objectives. While never wholly dismissing the problems of democracy and human rights in Uzbekistan, public criticism of the Uzbek government's record was greatly moderated in this period. Thus, when challenged about the extent to which the US pursued the need for democratisation with the Uzbek government, a State Department spokesman gave a typically mild response, noting that "then-Defence Secretary Rumsfeld has affirmed [...] the need for *additional* progress on achieving multiparty democracy" [my emphasis] (State Department, 2004). In a 2003 report on human rights and democracy, the State Department claimed that "US advocacy resulted in a number of positive steps by the government of Uzbekistan, as well as some improvement in the human rights situation" (State Department, 2003, p. 126). Even when withholding some bilateral funding on the grounds that Uzbekistan had

*No other area of the world was the subject of such a high profile and sustained focus on democratisation at the start of the XXI century as the states of the former Soviet Union*

not made sufficient progress on democracy and human rights issues, as required by the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, the State Department clearly sought to moderate the effect of this cut, asserting that: “Uzbekistan has made some encouraging progress over the past year with respect to human rights” (State Department, 2004b). Though eventually criticised by the administration, in the period immediately after the mass killing of demonstrators in Andijan in May 2005, it failed to condemn the government of Uzbekistan for the deaths and attempted to blame the protestors who were killed, characterising them as “criminals” and “terrorists”; this was attributed, at least by some members of the US press, to the US’s security relationship with Uzbekistan.<sup>3</sup>

From 2006, however, following the expulsion of the US from the K2 base in late 2005, the account of Uzbekistan’s democracy and human rights record became much more critical, with the State Department citing “relentless government pressure” opposing US support for Uzbek civil society development (State Department, 2007). In 2006, Uzbekistan was, for the first time, included on the State Department’s Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) list, which identified states engaged in violations of religious freedom; Uzbekistan was singled out for its “abysmal record on religious freedom and other human rights” (Terhune, 2006).

A similar trend, though in reverse, was observable in the case of Kazakhstan – a state with whom the US sought to develop closer ties, in particular following the deterioration of relations with Uzbekistan. Thus, in 2002, the State Department described itself as “deeply concerned” by “effort[s] to intimidate political opposition” and “urge[d] Kazakhstan’s political leadership to take appropriate action to protect and advance democratic development” (State Department, 2002). In December 2005, however, the State Department’s comments on Kazakhstan’s presidential elections noted that they “showed improvements over previous ones” and “reflected the will of Kazakhstan’s voters” (State Department, 2005b); in contrast, Freedom House – which continued to award Kazakhstan the second lowest political freedom ranking – noted the increased harassment of, and the introduction of legislation restricting, opposition groups, civil society, and the media, during and before the election (Freedom House, 2005). The response of the US government to these elections was later attacked in congressional testimony by Thomas Carothers as “a weak [...] response to manipulated elections” (Carothers, 2006). By September 2006, the White House was characterising Kazakhstan as “an important strategic partner in Central Asia”, and describing the US and Kazakhstan as sharing a “common commitment to working together to advance freedom and security” (State Department, 2006b). Strikingly, as Angela Stent observes, Dick Cheney’s May 2006 speech in Vilnius, attacking the Russian government’s anti-democratic behaviour, was immediately followed by a visit to Kazakhstan in which he recalled that he had “previously expressed my admiration for what has transpired here in Kazakhstan, both in terms of economic development as well as political development” (Stent, 2014, p. 140).

*In the post-9/11 period, Uzbekistan was regarded as a key, regional ally in the “War on Terror”*

3 See, for example, exchanges between the press and administration officials in May 2005 (State Department, 2005a; White House, 2005b). The link between the US-Uzbek relationship and the US response to the Andijan killings was also raised with Bush himself by one journalist who queried:

The consistency of a US foreign policy that’s built on the foundation of spreading democracy and ending tyranny [...] how come you have not spoken out about the violent crackdown in Uzbekistan, which is a US ally in the war on terror? (White House, 2005c)

## 1.1. US democracy promotion and Russia

If the relationship between the Bush and Putin administrations on questions of democracy and its instrumentalisation were generally shaped by a global US approach that combined assertive discourse on democracy in principle with a pragmatic approach to democratic failings by GWOT allies, it was also affected by two related issues of immediate concern in the region: US views of Russian democratic failings, and the impact of the Colour Revolutions. Both of these, in the Russian government's view, were evidence of the instrumental use of democracy promotion as a means to advance US national interests at the expense of Russia.

The Colour Revolutions, particularly those in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004/5) were critical to the development of both US and Russian governmental attitudes towards democracy promotion in the post-Soviet space. Although the Colour Revolutions were domestic in character, involving mass protests in response to fraudulent elections, protesters in Georgia and Ukraine received significant and visible external support. This support came both from other civil society groups in states where protests had previously been successful in effecting a change of government – from Serbia in the case of Georgia, and from Serbia and Georgia in the case of Ukraine – and from Western organisations such as Freedom House, the National Democratic Institute and the Soros-funded Open Society Foundation (McFaul, 2010, Welt, 2010). Key to perceptions about the role of these external actors in the Colour Revolutions was the question of whether they were supported or even controlled by the US government, as part of a US plot to remove unfriendly regimes and undermine Russian influence. However, as Mitchell (2012, p. 75) notes, the rejection by the Bush administration of claims that the Colour Revolutions were orchestrated by Washington was complicated by the administration's desire to present them as successes of the "Freedom Agenda"; thus, for example, the events in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan were listed in a document detailing "President Bush's Accomplishments" (White House, 2005d). The fact that the new governments in Georgia and Ukraine states sought closer relations with the US and Western institutions, and in particular that they sought NATO membership, strongly supported by the US government, reinforced perceptions that the Colour Revolutions were orchestrated by the US to advance US influence in the region, rather than democracy.

A second area in which US governmental discourse on democracy appeared to be instrumentalised was the position on the democratic status of Russia itself. In late 2001, US governmental attitudes towards Russia were at their most positive, following the Russian government's support for the Bush administration's "Global War on Terror", including a lack of opposition to the establishment of US military bases in Central Asia. The US administration's stated views of Russia's domestic politics in this period were not only broadly positive but suggested ideational commonalities between the two states; a November 2001 joint statement by Bush and Putin, for example, asserted that "our countries are embarked on a new relationship for the 21st century, founded on a commitment to the values of democracy, the free market, and the rule of law" (White House, 2001). In May 2002, Bush asserted in a radio address that "the partnership of America and Russia will continue to grow, based on the foundation of freedom and the [...] democratic values we hold dear" (White House, 2002); the following year he claimed that he "respect[ed] President Putin's vision for Russia: a country at peace within its borders, with its neighbours, and with the world, a country in which democracy and freedom and rule of law thrive" (White House, 2003). In this period, as in the previous year, Freedom House assessed

*The Colour Revolutions were critical to the development of both US and Russian attitudes towards democracy promotion in the post-Soviet space*

Russia as only “partly free” and scored Russia 5 on a descending scale of 1 to 7 for both political rights and civil liberties, with a downward trend indicated for 2003 (Freedom House, 2003).

However, strongly-worded public criticism of the status of democracy in Russia became a consistent feature of the Bush administration’s foreign policy pronouncements after this, particularly in the second term of the Bush presidency (2005-09). US-Russian relations experienced a sharp deterioration in this period triggered, in part, by US engagement with, and Russian concerns about, the Colour Revolutions which had in turn prompted moves towards more authoritarian actions by the Putin administration (Stoner-Weiss, 2010, Duncan, 2013). In this period, Russia’s own democratic failings, and its opposition to democracy promotion in the other post-Soviet states, became one of the primary grounds of criticism by the US government, as was strikingly evident from Dick Cheney’s May 2006 speech in Vilnius in which he asserted that “the [Russian] government has unfairly and improperly restricted the rights of her people” and had “interfere[d] with democratic movements” in neighbouring states (White House, 2006). Following the Russia-Georgia war in August 2008, then the low point of Russia-US relations in the post-Cold War period, President Bush asserted that “Russia has tended to view the expansion of freedom and democracy as a threat to its interests” (White House, 2008), a striking contrast, as a comment about trends in Russian governmental attitudes, with the claims of shared democratic values made earlier in his presidency.

Thus, in the course of the post-9/11 Bush presidency, US governmental attitudes towards the issue of Russian democracy underwent a radical shift as wider relations between the two states deteriorated. From a moment of attempted ideational identification, when Presidents Bush and Putin asserted their common commitment to democracy, the US administration’s judgement of the failures of Russian democracy became both more explicit and more severe. While it is clear that US governmental criticisms reflected a move towards greater authoritarianism in Russia, it is also clear that it was consistent with the broader practice of the Bush administration in instrumentalising democracy discourse in the region, as elsewhere. As in the case of Uzbekistan, prior assertions of a degree of normative convergence on democracy and human rights, seemingly used to reward support in the “Global War on Terror”, was reversed once the bilateral relationship had deteriorated. In the case of Russia, this produced an answering instrumentalisation of democracy discourse, at both domestic and international levels.

## 2. The Russian response

In response to the apparent use of democracy discourse to reward and punish other states and to advance US national interests at the expense of Russia, Russian governmental counter-discourses emerged on democracy, at both domestic and international levels, with the development of “Sovereign Democracy” and “democracy with national characteristics”, and the call for a democratisation of the international system to counter US hegemony.

### 2.1. Sovereign Democracy

Sovereign Democracy emerged as a prominent concept in Russian political thinking in the middle of the first decade of the twenty first century, (Ryzhkov, 2005; Orlov, 2006; Lebedev, 2007; Averre, 2007; Evans, 2008). Vladislav Surkov, the Putin administration’s then-chief ideologist, brought the concept to public attention in a February 2005 speech to United Russia acti-

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vists. It was not universally welcomed even within the administration, with then-First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev stating that he preferred to discuss democracy without adjectives (Russia Profile, 2006). Nevertheless, the concept proved influential; Surkov, and others, developed it in articles, speeches, and interviews in the months following its introduction, and it ultimately established itself as a core political concept for United Russia, and the Russian government, even when the term itself was not explicitly invoked. Importantly, as Averre noted, “the ideas underpinning the concept of ‘sovereign democracy’ have taken root in mainstream foreign policy narrative” (Averre, 2007, p. 181).

Despite this, however, the concept of Sovereign Democracy remained ill-defined in relation to the democratic practices of Russian domestic politics. Although Sovereign Democracy was described by its proponents as, variously, a mechanism for the development of the Russian economy, the expression of the national will of the Russian people, and the strengthening of Russian state sovereignty, the actual detail of the democratic processes involved in sovereign democracy remained extremely limited.<sup>4</sup> It was, however, a concept that was understood to rest on an assumption of a powerful, centralised state, and of the leading role of structures of state power in key sectors of the economy. In this sense, it has been understood by analysts as a development related to, and building on, the prior concept of “managed democracy” (Okara, 2007; Petrov, 2005).

In the same period, although without using the term Sovereign Democracy, Putin developed two additional qualifications to the concept of democracy: the idea of democracy with national characteristics, and the importance of strong, sovereign statehood as a necessary pre-condition for democratic development. Speaking in February 2005, at a meeting with George W. Bush, Putin stated that:

We are not going to make up, to invent any kind of special Russian democracy [...] But, of course, all the modern institutions of democracy, the principles of democracy should be adequate to the current status of the development of Russia, to our history and our traditions. [...] The implementation of the principles and norms of democracy should not be accompanied by the collapse of the state and the impoverishment of the people. (White House, 2005a)

Two months later, in his April 2005 address to the Federal Assembly, Putin asserted that “developing democratic procedures should not come at the cost of law and order”, and that:

The democratic road we have chosen is independent in nature [... Russia] will decide itself how best to ensure that the principles of freedom and democracy are realised here, taking into account our historical, geopolitical and other particularities and respecting all fundamental democratic norms. As a sovereign nation, Russia can and will decide for itself the timeframe and conditions for its progress along this road. (Putin, 2005)

The idea of a model of democracy specific to Russia was also articulated by Sergei Ivanov in his discussion of Sovereign Democracy as one of a triad of Russian national interests. Ivanov argued against a standardised, externally determined model of democracy, asserting that all democratic states “have their national particularities, dependent on their individual, historical experience and cultural heritage” (Ivanov, 2006). In this context, he identified one of the key

*The concept of Sovereign Democracy remained ill-defined in relation to the democratic practices of Russian domestic politics*

<sup>4</sup> On sovereign democracy’s conceptualisation of the relationship of the state to civil society, see Richter, 2009.

features of democracy as the right of a sovereign people to take independent decisions without external pressure.

As Ivanov's comments suggest, and as Sovereign Democracy's limited focus on specific democratic structures and practices, and the timing of its emergence all indicate, the concept needs to be understood principally as a response to external events, external (above all, US) attitudes to Russia, and Russia's consequent assertion of its rights as an independent state. Most immediately, the concept of Sovereign Democracy is widely understood to have been a direct response to the Colour Revolution phenomenon (for example, Ambrosio, 2009, p. 72; Duncan, 2013, p. 4), in particular to Ukraine's Orange Revolution, which preceded the first articulation of Sovereign Democracy by only two months. A US democracy promotion policy that was both highly partial and activist appeared to the Russian political elite and many analysts to be little more than a cover under which to advance US national interests (Sestanovich, 2008, Aksenyonok, 2008). As such, it represented a significant threat that needed to be countered conceptually as well as materially. In an article on Sovereign Democracy, Dmitri Orlov asserted that the entire Russian political establishment was agreed on the unacceptability of any attempt to overturn the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of states, even under the pretext of democracy "promotion" (Orlov, 2006). Writing in 2006, Surkov asserted that:

Our Russian model of democracy is called "sovereign democracy". We want to be an open nation amongst other open nations and to collaborate with them along equitable principles, and not to be controlled from the outside. [...] Managed democracy [is] the imposition by certain centres of global influence of a standardised model of ineffective and externally managed economic and political regimes [...] I will not name the countries, which, in our judgement, appear to be managed democracies, they are well known to you. (Kommersant, 2006)

The central aspect of Russian democracy, in this account, was thus not the particular features of democratic structures and practice, but its national specificities and the domestic foundations of the process of democratisation. Even where the term Sovereign Democracy was not used, as in Putin's comments, the sovereignty of the Russian state in relation to external influences was clearly critical to this conceptualisation.

That Sovereign Democracy represented an explicit response to such forces was made equally clear by Sergei Ivanov (2006), who identified it as a means of defending Russia from external pressure. In his view, accusations of democratic deficit directed towards Russia result from concerns about the emergence of an "independent, powerful, confident Russia" with a developing economy and a distinct political position which is "able to stand its ground in the global competitive struggle and defend its sovereign path of development". As Dmitri Trenin notes, the Russian government's conception of Sovereign Democracy was based primarily on Russian independence in international relations, with "democracy" here meaning "the rejection of outside interference in the Russian transformation" (Trenin, 2008, p. 121), and as Averre and Ambrosio note, sometimes characterised as a response to US neocolonialism, where democracy promotion is used as a mechanism to undermine states' independence (Averre, 2007, p. 180; Ambrosio, 2009, pp. 78-82). The concept of democracy and the process of democratisation have thus been instrumentalised, as a means of addressing a perceived threat to Russian sovereignty from external forces – a threat which emanates from the instrumentalisation of the same term by those external forces.

*The idea of a model of democracy specific to Russia was also articulated by Sergei Ivanov in his discussion of Sovereign Democracy as one of a triad of Russian national interests*

## 2.2. Democratising the international system

In the context of his discussion of sovereign democracy, Sergei Ivanov (2006) attacked as “intolerable” a world order in which one power attempts to dominate, and when the rules of game, founded on military and economic superiority, are forced upon everyone else. As Ivanov’s comments suggest, the second way in which the instrumentalisation of democracy discourse was adapted by Russia and other post-Soviet states during the Bush presidency was as a means of directly attacking the idea of US hegemony. In this context, the idea of democracy is applied not to domestic political structures and processes, but to the structures and processes of international relations. Unipolarity is rejected as dangerous for international security and as inequitable; a democratisation of international relations is proposed as a safer and more just model. Criticism of anti-democratic practices are turned back on the US, which is identified as an authoritarian international actor, in contrast to Russia and other advocates of democratic international relations.

One of the most famous statements of this position was Putin’s speech to the 2007 Munich Conference, where he asked:

What is a unipolar world? [...] It is a world in which there is only one master, one sovereign [...] And this certainly has nothing in common with democracy. Because, as you know, democracy is the power of the majority in light of the interests and opinions of the minority. Incidentally, Russia, we are constantly being taught about democracy. But for some reason those who teach us do not want to learn themselves. (Putin, 2007)

The idea that a process of democratisation of international relations was required to counter anti-democratic hegemony was also raised in Dmitri Medvedev’s address to the Russian Federal Assembly in November 2008, when he stated that “the creation of a polycentric international system is more relevant than ever. [...] Together with all interested parties, we will create a truly democratic model of international relations, not allowing any one country to dominate in any sphere” (Medvedev, 2008). For the Russian government, Sovereign Democracy (whether explicitly invoked or not) was key to this conceptualisation because, as Andrei Kokoshin argued, “the presence of sovereign democracy in Russia (just as in many other countries) is an important prerequisite for democracy in interstate relations” (Kokoshin, 2006).

This use of democracy discourse at an international level to defend Russia’s position and criticise US dominance was formalised in the 2008 Russian Foreign Policy Concept, which repeatedly emphasised both the need to ensure that Russia is recognised as a democracy, and the need for a democratic international politics. It identified, as one of its main foreign policy objectives, the need for “the establishment of a just and democratic world order [...] to promote an objective global perception of the Russian Federation as a democratic state with a socially oriented market economy and an independent foreign policy” (Russian Foreign Ministry, 2008). In its discussion of contemporary international politics, and Russia’s place in it, it asserted that “for the first time in recent history, global competition is acquiring a civilisational dimension which presupposes competition between different value orientations and development models *within* [emphasis added] the framework of the universal principles of democracy and market economy”. In this context, it described “the policy of ‘containing’ Russia” as a reaction by the West to its prospective loss of global primacy. Asserting Russia’s commitment to “universal democratic values”, it identified one of Russia’s foreign policy objectives as using opportunities at regional level to promote human rights and freedoms while “respecting the national and historic particularities of each state in the process of democratic transformation without foisting

*Sergei Ivanov attacked as “intolerable” a world order in which one power attempts to dominate*

borrowed value systems onto anybody”. In relation to Russia’s policy towards Europe, it asserted that “the principal objective of Russian foreign policy [...] is the creation of a properly open, democratic system of regional collective security and cooperation”.

This adaptation of democracy discourse to the discussion of international politics served two, related purposes. Firstly, it staged a discursive challenge to US hegemony, and secondly, in doing this, underlined resistance to US intervention in the domestic politics of the post-Soviet states. It thus constituted a challenge on two grounds to US foreign policy. Resistance to hegemonic, and therefore “anti-democratic” US dominance of international relations was expressed not just in relation to material aspects – the need for a more balanced international system – but on ideological grounds. The 2007 Council on Foreign and Defence Policy report, *The World Around Russia; 2017 An Outlook for the Midterm Future*, argued that the “crisis of governance in the ‘developed’ countries” stemmed primarily from “the monopolistic position that Western democracy acquired in global ideology following the collapse of the Communist idea”. “Western democracy” – a formulation designed, like Sovereign Democracy, to stress the multiple and differentiated, rather than universal, character of democracy – is, in this reading, characterised by a number of related “dogmas”, including assumptions that “Western democracy is a universal value inherent in each society”; “Western democracy is a final goal in the development of every society”; “a US-led unipolar global system is the least conflict-prone structure”; “US domination enjoys sympathy among the majority of countries in the world because it is a new type of hegemony that is based on universal American values”; and that “it is more effective to maintain hegemony by fragmenting the geopolitical space of potential rivals” (Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, 2007, footnote, p. 43).

*The views of the Russian leadership need to be understood in the context of evidence of US instrumentalisation of the concept of democracy*

### 3. Conclusion

The concept of democracy, and democracy promotion, both became deeply contested in Russia-US relations during the presidency of George W. Bush. The US government and many US and Western European analysts have tended to attribute this contestation to an increased authoritarianism in Russia and the Russian government’s anxiety about indigenous democracy movements inside Russia and in neighbouring states (Mankoff, 2007; Ambrosio, 2009). The Russian government and many Russian analysts have, in contrast, attributed it to a perceived US policy of using concerns about democracy to attack states that pose a challenge to US hegemony and to a desire to use democracy promotion as a cover to advance national interests and weaken competitor states.

The views of the Russian leadership need to be understood in the context of evidence of US instrumentalisation of the concept of democracy. Looked at in the context of changing bilateral relations, the statements and documents of the Bush administration indicate a partial approach to democracy assessment and promotion, in which praise for democratic advances (or, at least, the limiting of criticism over democratic failings) was given to security allies in the former Soviet Union (and elsewhere) and withheld from states with which the US did not have good relations. Giving evidence on the “democracy promotion backlash” to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Thomas Carothers identified as a contributory factor in the response to US democracy promotion by some states, “the glaring double standard in democracy promotion in which unfriendly non-democracies are singled out for pointed attention to their political

failings while those non-democracies that are helpful to US economic and security interests get a free pass” (Carothers, 2006).

This approach, which instrumentalised not only the practice of democracy promotion but the content of the term “democracy”, encouraged a counter-instrumentalisation on the part of Russia. The ideas of Sovereign Democracy and the democratisation of the international system acted as a means of ideational pushback against both US democracy discourse and US global dominance.

The result of this – in addition to the further deterioration of relations between the US and Russia, brought about by the exchange of charges regarding democratic failings and hypocrisy – was that the dispute over the meaning and promotion of democracy became tied to questions of state identity, state security, and conceptions of international relations. The consequences of that linkage continue to have serious consequences not only for Russia-US relations but for the post-Soviet space and for the stability of the contemporary international order.

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# AFGHANISTAN POST-2014: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STABILITY OF RUSSIA'S SOUTHERN PERIPHERY

## Afganistán pos-2014: las implicaciones para la estabilidad de la periferia meridional de Rusia

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Afghanistan and the wider Central Asian region constitute part of Russia's "southern underbelly", a term that underscores the sense of vulnerability it feels along its southern border. Russia's security concerns in the region focus on cross-border instability, including the spread of religious extremism and drug trafficking. Moscow is apprehensive about the possibility of a further deterioration in Afghanistan's internal situation after the withdrawal of international forces in 2014, and has consequently been taking steps to bolster the security of both Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbours through a variety of means. This paper analyses the drivers of Russian policy and assesses its perceptions of threat and security in the region, focusing particularly on the implications for Russia of the 2014 drawdown of the international stabilisation operation in Afghanistan (ISAF).



Russia, Central Asia, ISAF, transnational security challenges, military assistance, Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)

*Rusia, Asia central, ISAF, amenazas transnacionales a la seguridad, ayuda militar, Organización del Tratado de Seguridad Colectiva (OTSC)*



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*Afganistán y la amplia región de Asia central constituyen parte del «punto sensible meridional» de Rusia, un término que subraya el sentido de vulnerabilidad que siente a lo largo de la frontera del Sur. Las preocupaciones rusas en seguridad en la región se centran en la inestabilidad transfronteriza, incluyendo la proliferación del extremismo religioso y el tráfico de drogas. Moscú está inquieta por la posibilidad de un mayor deterioro en la situación interna de Afganistán tras la retirada de las fuerzas internacionales en 2014, y por lo tanto ha tomado medidas para reforzar de diversos modos la seguridad tanto de Afganistán como de sus vecinos de Asia central. Este artículo analiza los conductores de la política rusa y valora sus percepciones sobre la amenaza y seguridad en la región, centrándose en particular en las implicaciones para Rusia del retiro de la operación internacional de estabilidad (ISAF) en Afganistán.*



Resumen

In November 2013 Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu identified the withdrawal of Western coalition forces from Afghanistan in 2014 and international Islamist terrorism to be two of the three principal military threats facing Russia, highlighting government concerns about the impact of the drawdown of international troops in 2014.<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan has become an important focus of Russian foreign policy over the past decade, reflecting Moscow's concerns about stability on its southern periphery. Russia is one of several actors located in Afghanistan's "northern neighbourhood" and, although it does not border the country directly, it is concerned about the potential for instability in Afghanistan to spill over into the Central Asian region, an area that is considered to be important for Russian national security. Central Asia is part of Russia's "southern underbelly" (*yuzhnaya podbryush'ye*), a term that underscores the sense of vulnerability it feels along its southern periphery, where stability is a core concern. There is unease across the region about what may happen in Afghanistan after 2014, particularly with regards to any possible resurgence of the Taliban or spread of religious extremism. A warning from Uzbek President Islam Karimov in 2013 reflects concerns shared by all Central Asian states about the future stability of Afghanistan:

[T]he upcoming withdrawal of ISAF forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, without any doubt, will be a serious test for the countries bordering Afghanistan and the CIS as a whole... Chaos and disorder in Afghanistan could destabilise the situation in Central Asia. ("Uzbek leader notes Russia's role in CIS", 2013)

The Russian narrative about Afghanistan post-2014 tends to emphasise the potential for the destabilisation of the broader region and focuses on two key security threats: a rise in the spread of radical Islam and the smuggling of drugs. This article explores Russian policy and assesses its perceptions of threat and security in the region, focusing on the implications for Russia of the drawdown of the international stabilisation operation in Afghanistan (ISAF) in 2014. It analyses official Russian security discourse with regards to Afghanistan and explores what measures it is taking to foster stability in the broader region. The potential for cross-border instability emanating from Afghanistan constitutes a major preoccupation of Russian policy-makers, but what is the extent of the threat to Russian national security? Do concerns about instability mask other objectives, namely Moscow's desire to reinforce its position and influence in the region? There

*The Russian narrative about Afghanistan post-2014 tends to emphasise the potential for the destabilisation of the broader region*

<sup>1</sup> The third was continued NATO enlargement on Russia's borders. See Brilev (2013).

is little doubt that the uncertainty affords Russia the opportunity to justifiably strengthen its foothold in the region, undermined in recent years by the growing presence of other actors, particularly the US and China. There have been significant changes in wider Russian foreign and security policy over the past decade, as the country has recovered from the chaos of the Yeltsin years and developed a more coherent, coordinated policy, perceived by many to be more assertive. Russia is determined to counter the perceived expansion of Western involvement within its “sphere of influence” to ensure that it remains the predominant power in the post-Soviet area and Moscow has sought to counterbalance the growing involvement of other actors in the region. Russian policies vis-à-vis former Soviet states in Central Asia, the South Caucasus and its Western periphery (Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus) in the contemporary era are focused on maintaining influence and protecting its political and economic interests in the region. Central Asia has become an increasingly important focus of Russian foreign and security policy in recent years, both because it is considered to be within Russia’s “zone of privileged interest” and because of concerns about the potential for instability emanating from Afghanistan after 2014.

## 1. Security concerns

Haas has identified several characteristics of the development of Russian security policy, including a perception of being surrounded by “enemies”, which leads to an emphasis on external threats in security documents, and an “insatiable” desire for security, resulting in a focus on expansion and buffer zones.<sup>2</sup> These characteristics are useful in understanding the drivers of contemporary policy-making in Russia, as well as the shaping of security discourse, which focuses very much on threats from “outside” of Russia crossing the border and causing instability. This focus on external threats is apparent in the discourse on Afghanistan after 2014.<sup>3</sup> As mentioned above, Afghanistan borders the Central Asian region, which is part of Russia’s “southern underbelly”. An article in Russian military journal *Voennaya Mysl'* in 2009 emphasised the significance of the “south”, describing it as “the most worrying in terms of ensuring the national security of the Russian Federation. It is on our southern flank that events occur which directly affect national security and require a clear definition of Russia’s geopolitical interests” (Maruev & Karpenko, 2009, p. 9). The area (which includes the Caucasus and Caspian) is an unstable neighbourhood facing a range of security challenges, including drug smuggling, the activity of terrorist and extremist groups and criminal organisations, and unresolved conflicts. These reflect the principal threats to Russian national security outlined in Russia’s 2009 *National Security Strategy*, which noted that the protection of state borders was crucial to tackling challenges such as extremism, transnational criminal organisations and illegal trafficking, and preventing them from undermining Russian security. It paints a bleak vision of the future, predicting that:

Nationalist sentiments, xenophobia, separatism and violent extremism will grow, including under the banner of religious radicalism. The global demographic situation and environmental problems will become more acute, and threats associated with uncontrolled

*There have been significant changes in wider Russian security policy over the past decade, as the country has recovered from the chaos of the Yeltsin years*

2 For more information see De Haas (2010, p. 3 & pp. 156-180).

3 A tendency to emphasise the “Afghan problem” and enumerate a wide range of prospective threats to Russia’s security is visible not just in the official discourse, but also in media reports, which tend to focus on the worst-case scenarios for future regional stability and security. See for example “Ukhod NATO iz Afghanistana usilit islamistov v byivshem SSSR” (2013) and Polunin (2013).

and illegal migration, drug and human trafficking, and other forms of transnational organised crime, will also increase. (*National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation*, 2009) <sup>4</sup>

In 2011, the head of Russia's Security Council (and former head of the FSB) Nikolai Patrushev identified international terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal migration as the most pressing issues facing both Russia and other countries.<sup>5</sup> Concerns about these security challenges increased in advance of 2014 and the withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan. A leaked report drawn up for the Russian government on possible scenarios after the withdrawal of ISAF identified the destabilisation of the Central Asian region as the principal threat, noting that Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan may find themselves at the "epicentre of an explosion of Islamic extremism" (Chernenko, 2013). This warning echoed a similar prediction by Vyacheslav Nekrasov who cautioned that it would not be hard for the Taliban to penetrate CIS territory as the "Afghan-Tajikistan border is very poorly guarded" and that

the Islamists' ideas are spreading in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan... The strengthening of the Taliban will give fresh energy to Central Asian radicals like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and dozens of other smaller groupings that dream of creating Central Asian emirates. ("Ukhod NATO iz Afghanistana usilit islamistov v byivshem SSSR", 2013)

Several Central Asian states share direct borders with Afghanistan and consequently the region has significant societal links with its southern neighbour. Afghanistan contains substantial numbers of ethnic Uzbeks, Tajiks and Turkmen, particularly in the northern border areas. The 1,200 km border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan is of particular concern as it is extremely porous, mountainous territory that has proved difficult to secure, facilitating the unregulated movement of people and goods, as well as drugs. Consequently, the Russian government is very concerned about the impact of ISAF's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, highlighted by Shoigu's November 2013 warning, and the potential for instability affecting its Central Asian neighbours and, ultimately, Russia. Konstantin Sokolov, vice president of Russia's Academy of Geopolitical Problems, has also highlighted Russian concerns about instability spreading to Russia and the Caspian region:

What happens in the Near East reaches Russia fairly quickly. The conflict will move in the direction of Iran, and this is already the Caspian region. If combat operations begin in Iran, the strategic ties between that country and China, which receives energy sources from Iran, will be disturbed. There is a danger of the undermining of stability in Central Asia. It would not be difficult to do this, because the economic situation of the majority of inhabitants there is very difficult. From there the conflict would cross into Russia. (Ivanov & Shulman, 2012)

There is an assumption in the security discourse that any instability will automatically cross into Russia from Central Asia, reflecting the sense of insecurity and vulnerability identified by Haas. At a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in September 2013, the Afghan leader Hamid Karzai reportedly vowed to ensure that the territory of Afghanistan would not become an area from which action directed against Russia could be taken, an assurance that

*The Russian government is very concerned about the impact of ISAF's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014*

<sup>4</sup> Approved by decree of the President of the Russian Federation.

<sup>5</sup> See "International terrorism major threat for Russia – security chief" (2011).

the Kremlin had been seeking, highlighting Russian concerns about the potential for instability emanating from the country post-2014.<sup>6</sup> Deputy foreign minister Igor Morgulov has outlined Russian concerns, asserting that the ISAF withdrawal will lead to an increase in terror attacks, the activity of armed opposition groups and drugs smuggling, and warned about the “real threat of [Afghanistan’s] disintegration” (“Russian diplomat says concerns about Afghanistan after troops pull out remain”, 2013). Morgulov’s statement emphasises Russian concerns about the potential for threats to spill over from Afghanistan: as mentioned above, there are few direct threats to Russian security, they are mostly indirect that may impact on states in Central Asia and, consequently, Russia. President Putin has also voiced his concerns regarding a growth in the intensity of Afghan drug trafficking and the activities of terrorist groups, arguing that “[e]xtremists are already trying to extend their activities into neighbouring countries, including the states of Central Asia” (“Russian-led security bloc will help Tajikistan strength Afghan border – Putin”, 2013). Thus, according to official discourse, the two most worrying security issues for Russia arising from the draw-down of the international stabilisation operation in Afghanistan are international terrorism and extremism, as well as drug trafficking, both of which, it is feared, could impact on Russia via Central Asia. These concerns are based on an assumption that there will be a deterioration in Afghanistan’s internal situation, which in turn will prompt an upsurge in the activity of extremist groups and drug traffickers. These two principal security concerns for Moscow in the wider Central Asian region reflect major domestic security challenges within Russia, highlighting a clear link between foreign and domestic policy-making. Furthermore, as discussed above, the narrative focuses on the threat “coming” to Russia, resulting in an emphasis on border security. The 2009 NSS notes that:

The main threats to the border-related interests and security of the Russian Federation are the presence and possible escalation of armed conflicts near its state borders... Security threats to borders include the activity of international terrorist and extremist organisations which base their emissaries and terrorist means in Russia and organise sabotage on Russian territory, and likewise the increased activity of transnational criminal groupings engaged in the illegal transfer across the Russian border of narcotic and psychotropic substances.

The states of Central Asia and Russia are strongly opposed to the spread of radical Islamism. Russian fears about a possible rise in extremism in Central Asia, resulting from a Taliban resurgence post-2014, are connected to the fact that instability in Central Asia could stimulate instability in Russia, which is home to around 15 million Muslims and an ongoing Islamist insurgency in its North Caucasus region. The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan in the 1990s was reflected by a corresponding rise in extremism in Central Asia, manifest by the emergence of groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), whose stated goal was the overthrow of Uzbek President Islam Karimov’s government. The IMU broadened its perspective after 2002 to include the whole of Central Asia and China’s Xinjiang region, and was declared a “terrorist organisation of particular concern” by the Bush administration. An offshoot of the IMU, the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), claimed responsibility for attacks in Tashkent and Bukhara in 2004 that killed 47, and re-emerged in 2007 when three men with alleged ties to the IJU were arrested in Germany for plotting terrorist attacks against the US military base at Ramstein, as well as the US and Uzbek consulates. Both the IMU and the IJU are listed as

*Russian fears about a possible rise in extremism in Central Asia are connected to the fact that instability in Central Asia could stimulate instability in Russia*

6 See “Afghan leader vows to prevent anyone in Afghanistan threatening Russia – Kremlin” (2013).

foreign terrorist organisations by the US State Department.<sup>7</sup> There are concerns that groups such as these could be re-activated and undermine stability in Uzbekistan and Central Asia. According to the US State Department, whilst the government in Tashkent is confident about the security of its own border with Afghanistan, it has concerns about the porosity of the borders of its Central Asian neighbours, particularly the potential “infiltration of extremists through Uzbekistan’s long, rugged border with Tajikistan.”<sup>8</sup>

The rapid advance of Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Northern Iraq has renewed fears about radicalisation in Central Asia and Russia, particularly as there have been unconfirmed reports of citizens from Central Asian states and Russia fighting alongside IS, and there have been warnings that IS may expand into Central Asia from Afghanistan, with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan particularly vulnerable.<sup>9</sup> As discussed above, Tajikistan is perceived to be the “weakest link” in Central Asia because of its porous borders and underdeveloped security structures. This has prompted significant Russian assistance to bolster regional security and counter perceived cross-border security threats, discussed in more detail below.

Nevertheless, in spite of these concerns, there have in reality been few attacks in Central Asia, where governments have adopted harsh measures to counter the perceived threat in the name of national security. Strachota argues that the “assumption of the ‘Afghan threat to Central Asia’” is a clear example of a “self-fulfilling prophecy”, a contention that is “misused for the purposes of internal...and external policy”, asserting that “Afghanistan did not, does not and will not constitute either a direct strategic threat to Central Asia, nor a reason or necessary condition for destabilisation” (2013, p. 51). Whilst there is little doubt that extremism (and drug trafficking) can cause instability, there is little evidence to support the prevailing belief that the withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan in 2014 will inevitably prompt a growth in the manifestation of such challenges. Several observers have pointed out that the principal security challenges to Central Asia are internal, not external. That said, Strachota goes on to argue that “[a]lthough the Afghan threat in Central Asia is definitely mythologised, over-estimated and instrumentalised, this does not mean that the region is and will remain stable” (2013, p. 57).

Russian apprehension about the potential spread of radical Islamism is not just linked to concerns about instability in Central Asia, but also to its domestic security concerns regarding the ongoing Islamist insurgency and radicalisation in its North Caucasus region. Although Moscow formally declared the end of its “counterterrorism operation” in Chechnya in spring 2009, there has been a conspicuous escalation in militancy and Islamist radicalism across the broader North Caucasus since 2005, as well as a string of attacks across Russia. The Russian military operation in Chechnya (1994-1996, 1999-2009) destabilised the region, with large numbers of displaced Chechens, as well as rebel fighters and arms, seeking haven in neighbouring republics within the North Caucasus. The Kremlin consistently justified its second campaign in Chechnya from 1999 on the grounds that the country was defending itself against the threat from Islamist terrorists and Putin issued repeated warnings about the threat that Russia (and

*The rapid advance of Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Northern Iraq has renewed fears about radicalisation in Central Asia and Russia*

7 For further information see US Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism (2013): “Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist organisations”.

8 See US Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism (2013): “Chapter 2: South and Central Asia”.

9 See “Expert says ISI likely to expand to Central Asia” (2014).

the rest of the world) faced from global terrorist networks funded by extremist Islamist groups.<sup>10</sup> Moscow accused the Taliban of training Chechen rebels at camps in Afghanistan and was furious when the Taliban opened diplomatic relations with the Chechen “government” in January 2000, opening a Chechen “embassy” in Kabul.<sup>11</sup>

The North Caucasus region remains very unstable and there has been a campaign of assassinations targeted against local officials, particularly clerics and security representatives, and a string of terrorist attacks against economic targets such as railway lines, gas pipelines and other strategic infrastructure: Dagestan and Ingushetia have been particularly badly affected by the insurgency. While the situation in Chechnya provided the inspiration for growing radicalism across the North Caucasus, violence in the region has been fuelled by corrupt local government, poverty and the Kremlin’s policy of seeking to exert direct control over republics, for example, appointing regional leaders instead of allowing them to be elected locally, as was the case previously. Russian fears about the potential for further attacks were heightened in September 2014 when IS threatened to launch an attack against Russia and “liberate” the North Caucasus as a response to Moscow’s support for the Assad regime in Syria. There are serious concerns that IS might join forces with militants from the Caucasus Emirate and other radical groups in the North Caucasus, who are seeking to create an Islamic state across the Caucasus. Instability in the North Caucasus has the potential to undermine security across Russia (demonstrated by terrorist attacks in Moscow and other cities) and represents a genuine security threat. The return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan could bolster support for Islamist militants in the North Caucasus and Moscow fears a repeat of the situation in 2000 when the Taliban opened diplomatic relations with the Chechen “government”. However, the assumption that there will be a growth in radicalisation emanating from Afghanistan via Central Asia after 2014 is flawed and certainly not a *fait accompli*. Although the radical element in the North Caucasus became stronger and more internationalised after 1999, the “scarecrow” of international terrorism is diverting attention away from issues that need to be tackled at the local level.

Another core Russian security concern connected to Afghanistan is the smuggling of drugs. Russia lies on one of the principal routes for the trafficking of drugs from Afghanistan. According to one estimate, in 2009-10 around 25 per cent of heroin from Afghanistan was smuggled via the northern route to and through Central Asia, amounting to 90 million tonnes of heroin.<sup>12</sup> The majority of this heroin is destined for markets in Russia and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime annual *World Drug Report 2014* (p. 27) highlighted a significant increase in the seizures of heroin being trafficked through Central Asia and into Russia between 1998 and 2004, although noted that overall seizures have since declined. The head of Russia’s Federal Drug Control Service, Viktor Ivanov, maintains that the production of drugs in Afghanistan has increased forty-fold since the beginning of the ISAF operation.<sup>13</sup> Russia does have a significant problem with narcotics abuse: according to a government report released in September 2013, the number of drug addicts in the country is estimated to be 8.5m people, almost six per cent

*The North Caucasus region remains very unstable and there has been a campaign of assassinations targeted against local officials*

10 Moscow accused Osama Bin Laden and the Taliban of assisting Chechen rebels, providing them with arms and training separatist fighters at camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan, claims that were apparently corroborated when many Chechens were found to be amongst the Taliban fighters during the US military operation in Afghanistan in 2001.

11 For more information see “Chechen ‘embassy’ opens in Taleban’s Kabul” (2000).

12 Figures quoted in *Afghan Narcotrafficking: A Joint Threat Assessment* (2013, p. 27).

13 “Russian official hails joint efforts to combat drug trafficking in Central Asia” (2013).

of the total population, with most addicts aged 18-39. Over 90 per cent of addicts use heroin and Russia has the greatest number of heroin addicts per capita of any country in the world, with over 30,000 people dying each year from drug-related illnesses (“Over 8 Mln Russians are drug addicts – govt report”, 2013). Russia’s heroin market is valued at US\$6bn, making it a highly lucrative business: in October 2013, the head of counter-narcotics in southwest Siberia was arrested for selling heroin.<sup>14</sup>

Drug addiction and drugs trafficking causes a series of security and social problems in both transit and destination states: it is linked to an increase in local crime levels, including corruption, increases the number of those with drugs-related health issues, and there are also concerns about the use of revenues to fund regional Islamist extremist groups. Consequently, states across the broader Central Asian region are taking joint action to tackle the narcotics problem. Russian Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev proposed the establishment of an “anti-narcotics security belt” around Afghanistan to minimise the threat posed by drug smuggling, which he described as “a scourge of our civilisation” (“Russian ministry proposes anti-drug belt around Afghanistan at CIS session”, 2013). Russia, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan have already conducted joint operations to combat drug trafficking, destroying 22 labs and nearly 20 tons of heroin destined for Russia during 2013. They plan to build on this success, signing a roadmap that facilitates the planning and execution of large-scale joint raids to intercept Afghan heroin.<sup>15</sup> The Afghan-Tajik border is considered to be especially vulnerable: the majority of Afghan opiates trafficked via the northern route initially transit Tajikistan and it is thought that most laboratories are concentrated in areas along the border (*Afghan Narcotrafficking: A Joint Threat Assessment*, 2013, p. 28). Russian border guards manned Tajikistan’s southern border until 2005 and there was discussion in 2013 of a renewal of the Russian presence. However, CSTO Secretary-General Nikolai Bordyuzha ruled this out, maintaining that the Tajik border troops were “fully manned”, although he did suggest that Russia was considering equipping them, as they “must be provided with means that allow them to control the border successfully enough” (“Russian border guards won’t be sent to Tajikistan – Bordyuzha (Part 2)”, 2013).

*Russia is boosting its bilateral and multilateral cooperation with those Central Asian states that directly border Afghanistan*

## 2. Taking action

Amid concerns about the possibility of a deterioration in Afghanistan’s security situation after the withdrawal of international forces, which could trigger instability in Central Asia (particularly with regards to the spread of radicalism and narcotics), Russia is boosting its bilateral and multilateral cooperation with those Central Asian states that directly border Afghanistan, as well as reinforcing its military presence in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In 2013, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Russia signed a memorandum of understanding on border security coordination in an effort to counter drugs smuggling and terrorism (Hamdard, 2013). It was reported in 2013 that Russia is providing US\$1.3bn-worth of military assistance to these two Central Asian countries to strengthen regional security: Kyrgyzstan is anticipating US\$1.1bn of equipment, including helicopters, armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and missile launch systems, whilst the remainder is going to Tajikistan (Safronov, Chernenko & Karabekov, 2013). Tajikistan will receive assistance “in the form of aviation, communications systems, artillery, [...] anti-aircraft

14 See “Siberian Anti-Drug Police Chief Caught Selling Heroin” (2013).

15 See “Russian official hails joint efforts to combat drug trafficking in Central Asia” (2013).

missile launders and also firearms”, whilst free training for Tajik citizens at Russian military higher educational institutions will be expanded from its current level of 500 (Safronov, Chernenko & Karabekov, 2013).<sup>16</sup>

The Russian 201<sup>st</sup> army base in Tajikistan is the largest grouping of Russian armed forces outside of the borders of the Russian Federation, highlighting the importance of the area and its stability for Moscow. As mentioned above, it is perceived to be the “weakest link” amongst the Central Asian states, particularly in terms of border security. Formed in 2004, the 201<sup>st</sup> base contains 7,000 servicemen spread across three cities: Dushanbe, Kulob and Qurghonteppa. In 2011, Russia extended its lease of the base up to 2042. The base has been reorganised into a division and, by the end of 2013 had been reinforced to 80 percent of its manpower capacity. It is expected to reach full capacity by 2014. According to the bilateral agreement between Moscow and Dushanbe, signed in 2012, Russia does not pay rent for the use of the base, pledging instead to equip the Tajik army with modern weaponry and assist in its modernisation (“Ratification of agreement on Russian military base draws mixed reaction”, 2014). In September 2014, servicemen from the 201<sup>st</sup> base took part in a training exercise on the Tajik-Afghan border that envisaged 500 “terrorists” attempting to cross the border (“Russian base holds anti-terror drill on Tajik-Afghan border”, 2014). Russian and Kyrgyz servicemen also took part in counter-terrorist drills at Kant in September 2013. The head of the CIS Counter-Terror Centre, Andrei Novikov, stated that the “decision to hold such drills was right because we all know about the events that are going to happen in 2014 [...] We will not allow destabilisation of the situation in the Central Asian region” (*Vecherniy Bishkek*, 2013).

The Russian airbase at Kant in Kyrgyzstan is also being reinforced and will receive additional aircraft and helicopters, enabling it “to effectively attack targets in mountainous terrain” (Brilev, 2013). Russia opened its base at Kant in 2003, shortly after the US had established an air base at the Manas international airport near Bishkek in late 2001 to support military operations in Afghanistan. In 2009 Russia and Kyrgyzstan signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to increase Russia’s military presence in the south of the country, primarily as part of the CSTO rapid-reaction force. After Putin agreed in September 2012 to write off Kyrgyzstan’s debt to his country, President Atambayev agreed to a 15-year extension to Moscow’s lease on the Kant air base. Russia has been keen to counter US influence in Central Asia. Prior to September 11 2001, the possibility of a formal American military commitment to the states in Central Asia was assumed to be remote. However, this changed dramatically with the 2001 terror attacks against the USA, which triggered a significant US presence across Central Asia, and bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, in support of the operation in Afghanistan.

The US security presence in Central Asia disconcerted Moscow and the ISAF drawdown means a reduction in the US presence in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Whilst this represents a positive outcome for Moscow, its satisfaction is countered by its concerns about the potential for instability emanating from Afghanistan. Whilst Russia is clearly concerned about the potential for destabilisation in Central Asia as a result of spillover from Afghanistan, the uncertainty affords Moscow the opportunity to justifiably strengthen its foothold in the region. Russia’s military bases outside of its own sovereign territory are not only a way to contribute to stability in the region, they also enable Russia to maintain its influence. These agreements were seen

*The Russian 201<sup>st</sup> army base in Tajikistan is the largest grouping of Russian armed forces outside of the borders of the Russian Federation*

16 The report also claimed that Russia promised to introduce preferential terms for Tajik migrants and the abolition of export duties on the supply of fuels and lubricants.

by some as a sign that Russia is seeking to consolidate its position in Central Asia on the eve of the ISAF drawdown, and to prevent the US from boosting its position in the region. One Russian analyst noted that the question of “who is going to shape the security structure in Central Asia after 2014 is acute” and Russian assistance to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan enabled Moscow to “seize the initiative from the United States and remain the centre of gravity for the Central Asian republics... in the security sphere” (Brilev, 2013). The presence of Russian military bases in Central Asia has drawn criticism from some observers in the region who consider the bases as a threat to the sovereignty of individual states and signals the weakness of those states. It has also been criticised by religious organisations in the region. Jamaat Ansarallah, a banned religious organisation in Tajikistan, urged the Tajik government not to ratify the agreement extending the Russian military presence in the country, stating that the

presence of the Russian military base is against the Islamic values and national interests of the Tajik people. Any document which allows a state of unbelievers to be present with its army or military units on the territory of Tajikistan...is invalid and illegitimate. (“Banned religious group challenges Tajik-Russian pact on military base”, 2013)

In fact, the increasing Russian military presence could itself trigger a rise in radical activity (as opposed to spreading from outside), suggested in the warning from Jamaat Ansarallah, which reflects Strachota’s “self-fulfilling prophecy” contention. A strong security presence intended to deter the feared upsurge in radical Islam could in itself be a catalyst for increasing support for extremist ideologies.

### 3. Multilateral cooperation

Russia and the Central Asian states are also working within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) to secure the region. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are all members of the organisation, which was established in 2002 to boost military cooperation between member-states in order to maintain security on a collective basis.<sup>17</sup> Russia’s 2009 NSS describes the CSTO, which conducts annual large-scale military exercises, as the “main interstate instrument for responding to regional threats and challenges of a military-political or military-strategic nature” (*National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation*, 2009, Par. 13), thus there is an expectation that it will play a key role in the future maintenance of regional security. The organisation held its first joint peacekeeping exercises in Kazakhstan in October 2012, exercises which reflected regional concerns about possible instability emanating from Afghanistan in the wake of ISAF’s withdrawal: *Nerushimoye-bratstvo-2012* (Unbreakable brotherhood-2012) involved the establishment of a collective peacekeeping force in a Central Asian CSTO member-state enduring “a crisis situation as a result of activities of international extremist and terrorist organisations, as well as disputes between ethnic groups”, reflecting prevailing concerns about the potential spread of extremist groups and ideology.<sup>18</sup> A meeting of the CSTO’s Security Council held in Sochi in September 2013 discussed the provision of assistance to Tajikistan to reinforce its border with Afghanistan, as well as stepping up cooperation

*Russia and the Central Asian states are also working within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) to secure the region*

17 See *Treaty on Collective Security* (n. d.). Uzbekistan withdrew from the organisation in 2012 to focus on its security cooperation with NATO and the US.

18 The CSTO collective peacekeeping force was established in 2007 and entered into force in 2009 with a total of 4,000 personnel.

between Russia and Tajikistan within the CSTO framework to ensure national security. CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha maintained that boosting the effectiveness of border security at the Tajik-Afghan border was vital as it is the “external border for all CSTO member states” whose “security depends upon its condition” (Aleksandrov, 2013, pp. 1-3).

Another regional organisation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation,<sup>19</sup> has also discussed taking a more active role in stabilising Afghanistan post-2014, led by China’s economic dominance. At first glance this would seem to be a natural fit as the primary concerns of the organisation are extremism, terrorism and separatism, as well as organised crime, drug trafficking and illegal migration, with member-states keen to avoid instability developing in neighbouring states. However, how they intend to do this remains a question and the SCO has been unable to develop a unified strategy on Afghanistan, hindered by mutual mistrust on the part of Russia and China. Despite common concerns about instability from Afghanistan spilling over, unified action amongst Central Asian states to mitigate any risk remains negligible, as the regional states remain focused on national, rather than regional, solutions. There is a lack of unity amongst the states of Central Asia and certainly no regional stance towards these common security challenges.

*There is a lack of unity amongst the states of Central Asia and certainly no regional stance towards the common security challenges*

#### 4. Concluding remarks

Moscow is very concerned about the possibility of a further deterioration in Afghanistan’s internal situation after the withdrawal of international forces in 2014, and has consequently been taking steps to bolster the security of its Central Asian neighbours through a variety of means. It is clearly defining its national security interests in the region and its official discourse on Afghanistan post-2014 focuses on the potential for destabilisation, identifying two key security threats for Russia arising from the draw-down of the international stabilisation operation in Afghanistan: a rise in the spread of radical Islam and drug smuggling, both of which could impact on Russia via Central Asia. There is some debate about the extent of these threats, but there is little doubt that they constitute a major preoccupation of Russian policy-makers, as they are both major domestic issues. The focus on the “external” as opposed to the “internal” sources of these security challenges facilitates the pursuit of a tough response and measures.

Russian policy towards the Central Asian states is driven to a large extent by concerns about security and stability, both its own and that of its southern neighbours. Amid concerns about the possibility for a further deterioration in Afghanistan’s security situation after the withdrawal of international forces, which could trigger instability in Central Asia, Russia is boosting its bilateral and multilateral cooperation with those Central Asian states that directly border Afghanistan, as well as reinforcing its military presence in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Russia’s priority with regards to Afghanistan and the wider Central Asian region is to ensure stability. As discussed above, Tajikistan is perceived to be the “weakest link” in Central Asia because of its porous borders and underdeveloped security structures. This has prompted significant Russian assistance to bolster regional security and counter perceived cross-border security threats. Concern about the situation in Afghanistan has provided Moscow with the justification to boost

19 The SCO encompasses cooperation in political, military, economic, energy and cultural fields between its six member states: Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

its military presence in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as promote closer cooperation within multilateral structures such as the CSTO.

Whilst there is little doubt that extremism (and drug trafficking) can cause instability, there is little evidence to support the prevailing belief that the withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan in 2014 will inevitably prompt a growth in the manifestation of such challenges: Russian concerns about instability in Afghanistan and Central Asia reflect key domestic security issues. However, the growing Russian military presence in Central Asia, ostensibly intended to secure its southern periphery against possible instability emanating from Afghanistan, could have the reverse effect of actually stimulating a rise in the activity of extremist groups in the region. Furthermore, the perceived threat from the region has enabled Moscow to shore up its influence there. Moscow considers the broader post-Soviet space to be a sphere of its exclusive influence and has sought to counterbalance the growing involvement of other actors across the region, which has led to rising tension between Russia and some of its neighbours, most recently Ukraine. This is reflected in Russian concern about Afghanistan and Central Asia: whilst it is worried about non-traditional security threats, Russia is also seeking to regain its position as the predominant power in the Central Asian region. Thus, whilst it is imperative to recognise Russia's sense of vulnerability on its southern periphery, which is the source of many security challenges, it is also important to recognise Russia's desire to remain the predominant power in the region, which has increased in significance since 1991 with the growing interest of external actors. Russia has strong ties with the region and it is seeking to reassert its influence there, to counter the influence of actors from outside of the region, particularly the US. The uncertainty affords Russia the opportunity to justifiably strengthen its foothold in the region, undermined in recent years by the growing presence of other actors.

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# REASSERTING HEGEMONY IN CENTRAL ASIA: RUSSIAN POLICY IN POST-2010 KYRGYZSTAN

## Reafirmar la hegemonía en Asia Central: las políticas rusas en Kirguistán tras 2010

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While there has been considerable international focus on Russia's assertive foreign policies in Ukraine and the southern Caucasus, Moscow's increasing influence in the former Soviet states of Central Asia has received much less attention. A shift in policy after 2010 has been particularly successful in the development of a much stronger Russian relationship with Kyrgyzstan, a state that had previously developed a moderately pro-Western foreign policy, and which plays a key strategic role in the region. Kyrgyzstan has downgraded security and political ties with Western states, joined the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), and developed closer security ties in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). This article analyses these policy shifts and characterises the new Russian stance as "hegemonic", indicating both Russian military, political and economic dominance in the relationship but also significant popular support in Kyrgyzstan for closer ties with Moscow. Russian policy has relied on an integrated approach to foreign policy that includes initiatives in the fields of security, economy and politics, and also forms of "soft power" and cultural influence. The case of Kyrgyzstan suggests that analysing Russian policy within the framework of hegemony is a useful way to discuss both the potential for increased influence and the significant constraints faced by Russian policy-makers in the Eurasian region.



Abstract

Russian Foreign Policy; Kyrgyzstan; Central Asia; Hegemony; Regional Security  
*Política exterior rusa; Kirguistán; Asia Central; hegemonía; seguridad regional*



Key words

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Fechas

*Aunque ha habido un foco internacional considerable en las enérgicas políticas exteriores rusas en Ucrania y el Cáucaso meridional, la creciente influencia de Moscú en los antiguos estados soviéticos de Asia Central ha recibido mucha menos atención. El cambio en la política tras 2010 ha sido especialmente exitoso en el desarrollo de una relación mucho más profunda de Rusia con Kirguistán, un estado que previamente había desarrollado una política exterior moderadamente pro-occidental y que juega un papel estratégico clave en la región. Kirguistán ha rebajado los lazos políticos y de seguridad con los estados occidentales, se ha unido a la Unión Económica Euroasiática (UEE) dirigida por Rusia y ha desarrollado vínculos de seguridad más estrechos en la Organización del Tratado de Seguridad Colectiva (OTSC). Este artículo analiza estos cambios en la política y califica la nueva actitud rusa como «hegemónica», señalando tanto el dominio militar, político y económico ruso en la relación como el considerable apoyo popular en Kirguistán para tener vínculos más estrechos con Moscú. La política rusa ha confiado en un acercamiento integrado a la política exterior que incluye iniciativas en los campos de seguridad, economía y política, así como formas de «soft power» e influencia cultural. El caso de Kirguistán sugiere que estudiar la política rusa dentro del marco de la hegemonía es un modo útil de analizar tanto el potencial de tener una mayor influencia como las considerables restricciones que se encuentran los responsables de las políticas rusas en el área de Eurasia.*



Resumen

## 1. Introduction

Along its borderlands and throughout the former Soviet space, Russia is engaged in constructing a variety of models of hegemonic political order, from the proto-states of Eastern Ukraine to state-building initiatives in Chechnya, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. (Lewis, 2015; Cooley, 2014).<sup>1</sup> A parallel process is reasserting Russian influence in Central Asia, most notably in its relations with Kyrgyzstan, a strategically important republic once seen as moderately pro-Western in its foreign policy orientation and democratically-inclined in its domestic politics. After 2010, Russia developed a set of overlapping policies – security, political and economic – that reclaimed Russian primacy in Kyrgyzstan and institutionalised its influence through multilateral organisations and bilateral economic and security agreements. I argue that this relationship is best understood through the concept of hegemony, and explore how it is constructed with reference to political, economic, military and “soft power” instruments. The article contributes to a wider research agenda on the nature of Russian policy in the former Soviet space, and to an IR literature on regional hegemony.

*In discussing this relationship between Russia and Kyrgyzstan, I follow the tradition of IR theorists who reject realist views of hegemony*

## 2. Hegemony in IR

In discussing this relationship between Russia and Kyrgyzstan, I follow the tradition of IR theorists who reject realist views of hegemony, which only consider material – primarily military – aspects, and instead characterise hegemony as reliant on some form of consent and characterised by legitimacy. Ikenberry and Kupchan (1990) argue that hegemonic power has a dualist character. It combines material incentives (offering or denying political and economic rewards to foreign leaders to ensure compliance) and ideational activities that achieve hegemony when foreign

<sup>1</sup> Research for this paper was funded by the ESRC research project “Rising Powers and Conflict Management in Central Asia” (ES/J013056/1). Interviews were conducted by different members of the research team during three visits to Kyrgyzstan in the period 2013-2015.

leaders “internalise the norms and value orientations espoused by the hegemon and accept its normative claims about the nature of the international system” (1990, p. 286). Agnew has argued that hegemony reflects much more than simply a differential in material power, but instead relies on the “enrolment of others in the exercise of your power by convincing, cajoling, and coercing them that they should want what you want” (Agnew, 2005, p. 2). For Lebow, hegemony “requires acquiescence by allies or subject states, and this in turn rests on some combination of legitimacy and self-interests” (Lebow, 2001, cited in Clark, 2012, p. 22). Clark argues that hegemony in international society should be understood as sharply differentiated from what he terms “primacy”, the dominance of a power as measured in material terms. Hegemony, on the other hand, requires a normative basis that lends legitimacy to a hierarchical relationship (Clark, 2012, pp. 23-25). Theoretical approaches that emphasise consent as underpinning hegemony owe much to neo-Gramscian readings, which argued for ideational and cultural aspects to explain the resilience of hierarchical social relations. Antondiades argues that “[w]ithout diminishing the importance of material power and dominance over material resources, [the Gramscian view] understands hegemony not in terms of coercion, but in terms of consent, shared beliefs and commonsense” (Antondiades, 2008, p. 4).

This strand of IR literature on hegemony primarily examines a single global hegemon, focused primarily on the role of the US in post-1945 global affairs (Cox, 1993; Clark, 2012). Regional hegemony has not received the same attention in the theoretical literature strategies (Deyermond, 2009; Prys, 2010), perhaps because of the preoccupation with the US role as a global hegemon and the emphasis within regional studies on prospects for non-hierarchical integration. Most theorisation of regional hegemony examines a relationship between a hegemon and a regional system of states, such as the “hegemonic security order”, which Frazier and Ingersoll-Stewart (2010) consider as one type of regional security complex, or the “hierarchical regional orders” discussed by Pereira (2013). Instead of examining Russia as a hegemon among a system of states, in this article I focus on one bilateral relationship, albeit with wider regional impacts.

Deyermond (2009) successfully revisited the concept of regional hegemony in the Central Asian concept, but concentrated on the way in which potential hegemons and sub-hegemons might coexist, arguing that the region demonstrated a “multi-level hegemony”. Mearsheimer argued that Russia would re-emerge as a regional hegemon, as a result of the international system, but used the concept only in relation to military dominance (2004). By contrast, Prys (2010) suggests that regional hegemons are characterised not by military dominance but by “hegemonic behaviour”, such as the provision of public goods or the management of conflict. I return to Clark’s notion of hegemony as combining material dominance with a normative, legitimising element, and emphasise neo-Gramscian readings that suggest different forms of consent that might contribute to hegemony. This approach goes beyond a focus simply on bargaining power between two actors, as used in other attempts to categorise “hierarchical regionalism” (Pereira, 2015), but also recognises the importance of shared discourses and post-colonial identities in constructing this relationship.

### 3. Policy shift

Russia’s post-Cold War decline in regional and international affairs led some to argue that its role in the Central Asian region was in terminal decline (Nixey, 2013; Kazantsev, 2010) or would be marked at least by “caution rather than assertion of dominance” (Matveeva, 2013, p. 495).

*Russia’s post-Cold War decline in regional and international affairs led some to argue that its role in the Central Asian region was in terminal decline*

These diverse views reflected differing views within the Russian elite about the extent to which Russia should attempt to retain or reassert an hegemonic relationship with Central Asian states (Matveeva, 2013). As a result, Russian policies towards the region before 2010 were often “fragmentary, reactive and even self-contradictory” (Troitsky, 2012, p. 8). Some of this ambivalence remains in Russian policy discourses, but in official policy a clear policy choice emerged in 2011, when Vladimir Putin set out what Sakwa terms “Putin’s big idea for his third term” (Sakwa, 2014, p. 138). This was a bold strategy to reassert Russia’s self-identification as a “Great Power” by consolidating and formalising a Eurasian regional identity for the Russian state, including through a new integrative supranational institution, the Eurasian Union. In Central Asia this new policy of hegemonic regionalism resulted in what Liik has labelled a “Pivot to Eurasia”, which promotes Russia as a dominant regional power in Central Asia and asserts a stronger Asian orientation in Russian foreign policy. In Kyrgyzstan this new assertiveness has resulted in a policy that has been characterised as the creation of a “client state” (Cooley & Laruelle, 2013).

At one level, as Lukyanov argues, this shift to the east can be understood primarily as a reflection of Russia’s disappointment in its relations with Europe, rather than any essentially expansionist aims (Lukyanov, 2014, p. 23). Certainly, as Cooley argues, regional primacy is seen as essential to underpin Russia’s great power status more widely (2012, p. 52). However, the shifts in policy on Kyrgyzstan also suggest a developing view of regionalism more generally, characterised by the hierarchical role of a regional hegemon, rather than cooperative relations under supranational bodies (as developed in the EU) or the assertion of Westphalian sovereignties (as emphasised by members of ASEAN). This has broader implications, informing a Russian concept of global order based on “re-legitimis[ing] geopolitical spheres of influence as an organising principle of international life” (Liik, 2014, p. 15). These spheres of influence are partly defined by geopolitical imperatives, but also claim an historical legitimacy built upon sets of shared ideas and values defined in civilisational terms. Understanding the process whereby Russia has reasserted hegemony in Kyrgyzstan therefore contributes to the broader debate about Russian policies in the former Soviet space and in the international order more widely.

Russian policy was also strongly influenced by events in Kyrgyzstan itself. By 2010 Kyrgyz relations with Russia were in difficulty. Despite strong Russian objections, in 2009 the government of President Kurmanbek Bakiev agreed a further five-year lease for a US military base at Manas. In politics, Kyrgyz nationalist sentiment – potentially opposed to a strong Russian presence in the country – was playing an increasing role. Russia’s demographic card – a significant ethnic Russian minority in the country – was fading. At independence, there were more than 900,000 ethnic Russians living in Kyrgyzstan; but only 439,860 were left at the 2009 census. Those who remained reportedly felt abandoned and forgotten by Moscow (Toursunov, 2010). Against this backdrop of declining Russian influence and consolidation of a US military presence, Russian officials extended their contacts with the political opposition, and encouraged Russian media to highlight corruption and abuse of power of the regime of President Kurmanbek Bakiev. It is unclear whether Russia aimed to oust Bakiev, or merely wanted to place pressure on him to comply with demands to close the US base. Whatever the goal of Russian policy, events took on their own momentum, and in April 2010 opposition demonstrations forced Bakiev to flee the country, leaving a chaotic situation in his wake. An interim government, headed by Roza Otunbaeva, took power, but in the south of the country, in the towns of Osh and Jalal Abad, hundreds of people died in June, in serious inter-ethnic violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities (Matveeva, 2012; Melvin, 2011). The Russian government declined an invitation by interim Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva for Russia to intervene militarily to stop the violence.

*The shift to the east can be understood primarily as a reflection of Russia’s disappointment in its relations with Europe*

This failure to intervene to halt the Osh violence was interpreted by some analysts as a set-back for Russian policy aspirations in the region. Troitsky argues that “Russia’s reputation as a regional stabilizer and guarantor of stability was severely damaged” by the failure to respond militarily to the Osh crisis (Troitsky, 2012, p. 25). De Haas notes that “[t]he reluctance of Moscow and the CSTO to interfere in this domestic unrest raised doubts about the value and effectiveness of the organization and about the Kremlin’s reliability, at least for the regimes in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan” (De Haas, 2015, p. 4). However, such views misinterpret Russia’s approach to security in the region, which differs sharply from the conflict management strategies of Western states. While Western actors – mainly within the framework of the OSCE – discussed typical components of a short-term liberal peacebuilding approach in response to the Osh violence (deployment of international police missions, reconstruction and reconciliation programmes, and encouragement for democratisation and minority rights) Russia’s policies prioritised long-term stabilisation, through the promotion of a stronger central government and an enhanced Russian security and economic presence. In this mode of strategic thinking, direct military intervention was not a priority and could damage the long-term Russian effort to develop broader, institutionalised hegemony in the region, which depended on the maintenance of a measure of legitimacy for Russian presence in the region. As one observer suggested, such a deployment could easily end badly for Russia, “not with a calm withdrawal and a feeling of a duty fulfilled, but with rocks, sticks and the image of ‘Russian occupiers’, exploited by ...[local] elites for political ends” (Minin, 2010).

*Rather than relying on military intervention, Russian policy in Kyrgyzstan has attempted to integrate a range of initiatives in different policy areas*

## 4. Russia’s mechanisms of hegemony

Rather than relying on military intervention, Russian policy in Kyrgyzstan has attempted to integrate a range of initiatives in different policy areas. Previous analyses have emphasised the importance of linking Russian policy in different policy domains (Nygren, 2008; Tolstrup, 2009), and a similar approach is used here to provide analysis of Russian policies in four main areas: military-security issues; the political sphere; cultural and soft power initiatives; and economic issues.

### 4.1. Military and security policies

Although military force might be expected to be interpreted as a material aspect of hegemony, in the case of Kyrgyzstan Russia’s military basing and security assistance is probably more significant in a symbolic and discursive role. Russia’s security engagement, underpinned by constant interaction among security and intelligence officials of the two states, creates shared assessments of potential security threats, and a common understanding of the appropriate response. This was relevant both in bilateral security relationships and in the role played in security affairs by the further development of the Russian-led security organisations, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).

#### 4.1.1. CSTO reform

After the 2010 Osh events, a Russian think-tank published a report in 2011 calling for significant reforms to internal decision-making procedures in the CSTO, and a development of capacity to mount peacekeeping-type operations, along the lines of other regional security organisations (Yurgens, 2011; Cooley, 2013). The CSTO did undertake some reforms, amending its charter in

December 2010 to allow a joint response to a much wider range of conflict situations, including armed conflicts inside member-states and more stress on the development of a joint military force, the Collective Operational Reaction Forces (KSOR). KSOR had been set up in 2009, and on paper should have included 18,000 ground troops and 1,500 special forces, managed through a joint military headquarters (Rozanov & Dovgan, 2010, p. 68). But media reports suggested that movement towards a fully operational, joint rapid reaction force was still a long way off, and for the foreseeable future military operations under the CSTO banner would in effect be conducted by the Russian General Staff, with the CSTO only having a consultative role (Mukhin, 2013). In 2007 the CSTO agreed that peacekeeping forces could be formed under CSTO auspices, but the CSTO only conducted its first peacekeeping exercises in October 2012, in Kazakhstan, and their development remained at an initial stage (De Haas, 2015).

In reality, CSTO reform only partially addressed its difficulties in developing a more capable military force with the capacity to intervene in conflict situations and effect peacemaking and peacekeeping functions. The withdrawal of Uzbekistan from the organisation in December 2012 removed one political obstacle to future agreement among its members, but the political and operational limitations of the CSTO were still not fully addressed. However, as Nikitina has argued, the effectiveness of the CSTO should not be measured with reference only to metrics of functionality. Instead, it is more comparable to many non-Western regional organisations that serve to maintain ideational values, such as sovereignty, rather than seek organisational functionality and effectiveness (Nikitina, 2010, p. 49). However, although it does inculcate and reflect some shared values and norms, the defining characteristic of the CSTO is its relationship to the single regional hegemon. As such, its predominant ideational role is to act as a “secondary institution” to the “primary institution” of Russian hegemony. Firstly, it provides discursive legitimacy to Russia’s claim for military pre-eminence in the region. In this sense, frequent disputes within the organisation only serve to offer a multilateral veil for what remains, at heart, a Russian-dominated military bloc. Secondly, it promotes shared discourses about the meaning of security and shared ideas about the appropriate responses to internal conflicts. Its activities and discourses reflect a very different understanding in Moscow, Astana and Bishkek of how stability should be achieved in Central Asia. Rather than prioritising multilateral military peacekeeping interventions, Russia and its Central Asian allies preferred to develop strong state-building regimes through bilateral security and military relationships.

*The most important shifts in Russian security policy towards Kyrgyzstan after 2010 were in the sphere of bilateral rather than multilateral relations*

#### **4.1.2. Bilateral military deployment and security assistance**

The most important shifts in Russian security policy towards Kyrgyzstan after 2010 were in the sphere of bilateral rather than multilateral relations. In September 2012, during a state visit by President Putin to Kyrgyzstan, a new basing agreement was signed, providing for a further 15-year lease for the Russian airbase at Kant. The agreement created a “unified” Russian military base in Kyrgyzstan, bringing together all Russia’s strategic assets in the country, including the Kant airbase, the jointly-owned Dastan torpedo factory, and a torpedo testing base on Lake Issyk-Kul, and also left open the possibility of a new Russian-Kyrgyz base to open in Osh in 2017 (Gladilin, 2013).<sup>2</sup> However, the agreement did not significantly increase the Russian

<sup>2</sup> The Kyrgyz government agreed to sell its remaining shares in the Dastan torpedo factory in July 2013, see The Moscow Times (2013, July).

military commitment and was met with some scepticism by Russian analysts. One argued that “the existing level of Russian military force commitment will be preserved in Kyrgyzstan, where in fact there is not a serious military base of the RF [Russian Federation]” (Gladilin, 2013). There was some upgrading of the Russia military capacity, including new fighter planes (Kucera, 2014 December), but more importantly the new legal framework for the base served to institutionalise Russian military dominance as a symbolic geopolitical presence. The basing agreement took on more significance within the context of a wider security relationship, which included Russia’s success in persuading the Kyrgyz authorities to finally close the US airbase at Manas. President Almaz Atambaev had promised to close the base during his 2012 election campaign, and at the end of the base’s lease in 2014, the last US troops left the base and it was transferred to Kyrgyz control.

The US airbase had paid significant fees, a point used by the Kyrgyz authorities to leverage economic support from Russia. President Atambaev argued that: “The current situation where a Russian military base is not fulfilling its obligations and even does not pay for the lease does not suit us” (cited in Matveeva, 2013, p. 484). In the September 2012 deal Russia offered to write off nearly \$500m in Kyrgyz debt. In 2013 Russia also offered Kyrgyzstan a package of military assistance and training, reportedly costed at over \$1bn (Kucera, 2013). As with many of Russia’s financial commitments, the details of the equipment and training package were difficult to track, but reportedly Russian arms shipments reportedly began in December 2013 and continued through 2014-15.

According to one interviewee, more than 60 Kyrgyz military officers study in Russian military academies every year.<sup>3</sup> Russia has also provided training to the Kyrgyz intelligence agencies, which has resulted not only in enhanced capacity among local intelligence operatives but also the development of extensive institutional and personal ties between the local State Committee for National Security (GKNB) and the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB). A new initiative launched in 2013 to place detachments of FSB officials abroad for training purposes initially targeted Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Kyrgyzstan. The inclusion of Kyrgyzstan alongside two unrecognised states is suggestive of an increasingly close security relationship with Russia, and again demonstrates a blurring of Russian conceptualisations of sovereignty in the former Soviet space. Russian FSB officers – numbering about 15 in Kyrgyzstan – were tasked with “provid[ing] advice and guidance to their intelligence and law enforcement agencies in conducting operational, search and other special activities” (Soldatov, 2013). Media and anecdotal reports have suggested that the FSB and other Russian intelligence services have been more active in Kyrgyzstan after 2010, and engaged in a wide range of political engagement and intelligence-gathering activities (Satke, 2014).

Permanent military deployment, coupled with equipment and training for local military and security forces, and the deployment of intelligence officials have all contributed to the reassertion of Russian hegemony within Kyrgystan’s security environment. These ties rely both on material and ideational aspects of hegemony. Alongside training, equipment and troops deployment, Russia’s engagement in this area has produced common understandings of security and potential threats that legitimise Russia’s security role in the country. As a result, its security policy has widespread public and elite support. In a poll, 87 per cent of respondents argued in

*Permanent military deployment, equipment and training for local military and security forces, have all contributed to the reassertion of Russian hegemony in Kyrgystan*

3 Interview, academic, Bishkek, November 2013.

favour of a Russian airbase remaining in Kyrgyzstan, while only 16 per cent firmly supported the US base (Trilling, 2014).

## 4.2. Political engagement

Russian political engagement in Kyrgyzstan takes place on two levels. One is the arena of formal diplomatic engagement, which has developed significantly since 2010, particularly in connection with the negotiation of the EEU. President Putin visited Kyrgyzstan in 2012, and President Atambaev has been a frequent visitor to Moscow. Many Russian government officials have visited as part of negotiations of accession to the EEU, but have often negotiated directly with other parts of government, rather than with the foreign ministry. The negotiations – particularly with regard to EEU accession – have blurred the boundaries between the foreign and the domestic, as Russian officials have engaged with a wide range of domestic Kyrgyz regulations and practices, including customs regulations, food inspection regimes, and migration rules.

While many of these official delegations engage in asserting what Krause terms “bargaining power”, a more personalised, long-term pattern of political engagement with the Kyrgyz elite produces “hegemonic power” (Krause, 1991; Sozen, 2010). As Krause argues, “hegemonic power involves coopting the decision-making elites and/or legitimating a certain understanding of security (and threats to it) to win continued willing acceptance of the definition of these concepts established by the patron” (Krause, 1991, p. 325). Since the overthrow of President Akaev in 2005, when Russia’s influence with the wider elite was found wanting, Russia has attempted to develop the process of political cooptation of elites at a broader level than previously. Moscow began to work with figures from the whole political spectrum, rather than just with the regime in power. Gaining the support of the political establishment in Moscow became an important career move for political figures in Kyrgyzstan. Opposition and government figures alike travelled to Moscow to gain access to important political figures in the Russian capital. Various political “brokers” – including journalists and academics – often assisted Kyrgyz politicians to gain a profile in Moscow, through arranging formal and informal meetings, or setting up round-tables or seminars. These visits to Moscow have become important rites of passage for aspiring Kyrgyz political figures.

There has also been more political engagement on the level of parliament, again focused on the ideational rather than the material. Russian legislators and officials have encouraged the Kyrgyz parliament to adopt a series of conservative laws, largely copied from earlier Russian examples. In May 2014, President Atambaev signed a law outlawing “false accusations” that appeared to recriminalise libel and impose limits on free speech. Parliament has discussed bills outlawing “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations”, which is a copy of a similar bill adopted in Russia in 2012, and a bill that would institute strict controls on NGOs receiving funding, also a Russian-backed initiative (Toktonaliev, 2014). This latter legislation, which labels NGOs engaged in political activity and receiving foreign funding as “foreign agents”, reflects Russian unease at the continued presence of many Western-funded NGOs in the country, which it views as part of a wider geopolitical challenge to Russia’s dominance in the country. Many Kyrgyz parliamentary deputies agree with the law’s challenge to Western-backed NGOs; others are willing to support such bills to gain support from Russia.

These attempts to set agendas and influence discourse are probably more effective than direct engagement in the political process by backing particular parties or individuals. Local political

*Visits to Moscow have become important rites of passage for aspiring Kyrgyz political figures*

figures expect Russia to play some role during parliamentary elections due in November 2015 (Trilling, 2014). But Kyrgyz politics is profoundly local and external actors are seldom able to influence grassroots politics directly. One local interviewee is sceptical:

Russia is not doing anything in this area. When there is a month left to the next election, they will start rushing in chaotically, then they will bet on one of the existing ones, the money will be wasted foolishly [...]. Those, who get that money, will use it somehow, and then they will quite simply dump Russia.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these problems, Russian policymakers have successfully cultivated personal connections and promoted local allies in Bishkek, although the long-term durability of such ties continues to depend on economic and political benefits for local elites. However, this engagement with political elites also benefits from aspects of Russia's own version of "soft power", including the development of common political worldviews that make it easier to develop a shared discourse among business and political elites.

*Russian policymakers have successfully cultivated personal connections and promoted local allies in Bishkek*

### 4.3. Russian "soft power"

The idea of hegemony as incorporating both material dominance and normative, ideational aspects is theoretically more compelling than Joseph Nye's characterisation of "hard" and "soft" power (Antoniades, 2009, p. 9; Nye, 2004; Yoruk & Vatikotis, 2013). However, in policy terms, the idea of "soft power" has caught the imagination of Russia's foreign policy elite and led to a variety of strategies to promote Russian interests through cultural, educational and language policies (Tsygankov, 2006). One form of soft power consists of the spread of Russian culture and language, and the impact of its entertainment, music and film industries that make it an attractive country both for elites and the wider population. Since independence, the use of the Russian language has been in decline in Kyrgyzstan, as the ethnic Russian population diminishes and teaching of Russian in schools has proved difficult to maintain (Blank, 2015). However, Blank's suggestion that Russian culture will become an "historical relic" in the region, with the Russian language increasingly displaced by English or Chinese, remains an unlikely prospect (Blank, 2015). The decline in Russian language use has not been replaced by alternative bilingualisms: English, Turkish and Chinese are languages still largely confined to those benefiting from an elite education. Increased labour migration to Russia, improved institutional ties, and continued Russian education and training for Central Asians will ensure a continued relevance of the Russian language for political and business elites, and for many labour migrants.

A second aspect of the Russian understanding of "soft power" is a more carefully planned and calibrated set of actions, which Saari argues resemble more the "active measures" pursued by Soviet intelligence services in the Cold War than Western modes of engagement with civil society and the media (Saari, 2014). "Soft power" and "public diplomacy" initiatives began in earnest following the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 but have become much more extensive throughout the CIS since Putin's return to power in 2012 (Chatham House, 2014). Saari identifies four strands in this post-2005 public diplomacy, all of which are present in Kyrgyzstan. First, as noted above, the Russian authorities sought to engage with actors from

<sup>4</sup> Interview, political and security analyst, Bishkek, November 2013.

both opposition and government and promote their own political ideological positions. The second pillar of the new strategy was the creation of pro-Moscow NGOs, think-tanks and youth groups, created both in Moscow and in CIS states. A third strand focused on the use of Russian-language media, both those based in Russia and those located in CIS states. A fourth area included language and cultural policy, with a stress on historical linkages between Russia and its neighbours (Saari, 2014, p. 57). Such initiatives attempted to challenge the predominance of Western-funded NGOs and Western-funded engagement with cultural and political elites, through exchange programmes, media projects and international linkages.

After independence, an active network of NGOs emerged in Kyrgyzstan, mostly funded by international organisations and donors, and espousing broadly liberal political ideas. Since 2010, in direct response to this proliferation of “Western” NGOs, a variety of Russian NGO and think-tank projects have been launched in Kyrgyzstan. *Rossotrudnichestvo* (the Federal Agency for CIS Affairs, compatriots, living abroad and international humanitarian cooperation), which took responsibility for Russia’s foreign aid programme in May 2013, has shifted attention to funding initiatives in the post-Soviet space, and has been active in Kyrgyzstan. Typical of these projects is the Moscow-based NGO, “Eurasians – New Wave”, founded in 2010, which has developed student links, trained journalists, and campaigned in favour of the Eurasian Economic Union. According to its website the group aims to strengthen “historico-cultural, scientific and educational links between Russian and Kirgizia” conduct research and publishing programmes, support media coverage of Russian-Kyrgyz relations and support for the Russian language (see [www.enw-ru](http://www.enw-ru)). Other projects include the Goncharov Fund, which promoted training programmes and study tours. Other projects have reportedly been promoted by the Presidential Administration in Russia, and according to unofficial reports, by the Russian intelligence services.

For the most part, these projects are not perceived as particularly successful. In interviews, local pro-Russian activists complain that there is no overall strategy. There are sharp differences among rival groups and individuals, with particular problems emerging between the Russian embassy – which is viewed as a rather closed institution, with limited links with local society – and local Russian journalists and activists, many of whom accuse Russian diplomats of insufficient activism and professionalism.<sup>5</sup> One interviewee said:

Rossotrudnichestvo, where is it? What was this agency created for? Nobody knows anything about it. I – for one – don’t feel its presence in any way. ...there was some optimism that a specialised structure, something like USAID or the British Council, had been created and that now Russia would appear here, create a structure, there would be a system of communication. [But] there’s nothing here.<sup>6</sup>

Many local Russian activists are scathing about official Russian cultural support programmes. As one interviewee argued: “the Russian culture so far holds thanks to the Soviet legacy. That is to say, it is not the merit of the current work, but again is the result of inertia”.<sup>7</sup> Projects tend to follow very traditional mechanisms – a photographic exhibition on Russian-Kyrgyz relations, a drawing competition for school children, visiting lectures and study tours for journalists.

*After independence, an active network of NGOs emerged in Kyrgyzstan, mostly funded by international organisations and donors, and espousing broadly liberal political ideas*

5 Interviews, Bishkek, April 2015.

6 Interview, Bishkek, November 2013.

7 Interview, Bishkek, November 2013 .

Funding is reportedly very limited, and has been cut back significantly as the Russian economic crisis has developed.<sup>8</sup>

For the most part, these Russian-backed “project” NGOs only promote Russian interests, rather than any thematic ideas or goals. Russian NGOs are not for the most part involved in development or humanitarian work: development projects continue to be conducted either through the UN or with local government structures. There is little engagement with local communities. One interviewee is critical: “They are mainly using hierarchy, i.e. neither communities, nor networks, but hierarchical models. They work via the authorities, via officials, and so on. I can’t say that it is effective.”<sup>9</sup> In addition to development work, international organisations and Western NGOs have been active on issues such as human rights abuses, torture or discrimination against minorities. On occasion, Russian diplomats are reported to have intervened in individual human rights cases involving ethnic Uzbeks who hold Russian passports. In the case of Usmonjon Kholmiraev, for example, who died after being tortured in a police station in southern Kyrgyzstan, Russian diplomats reportedly intervened and demanded a proper investigation. However, there is little strategic policy interest in such matters, and Russian academic experts on the region and think-tank reports downplay issues of justice or human rights, instead reiterating official discourses of stability and strategic positioning (RIAC, 2013). This difference of emphasis reflects a much broader divide between the Russian emphasis on using project NGOs to provide new means for mobilising support for the authorities and the Western approach that views civil society as a means to promote long-term stability through good governance, democratisation and rule of law (Yurgens, 2011, pp. 24-25).

In terms of maintaining Russian hegemonic discourses and shared understandings of geopolitics and security, the Russian media has been much more effective than Russian-backed NGOs. Polls suggest that Russia’s main channel, Russian Public Television (ORT), is the second most popular channel in the country, only behind the local national channel. Some 20 per cent of the population get most of their news from ORT. Since local channels have limited budgets to cover foreign news, many people received international news primarily from Russian sources (Rickleton, 2014). In the print media, popular local Russian-language editions, such as *Delo Nomer*, embrace anti-Western narratives and conspiracy theories. However, Kyrgyzstan also has a lively Kyrgyz-language press, which has a much broader range of views, including more nationalist positions. Russia has actively promoted new online news services, particularly its new global news operation, Sputnik. A new site set up in December 2014 offers news in both Kyrgyz and Russia (visit [www.sputnik.kg](http://www.sputnik.kg)), and plans radio broadcasts and phone apps (Sputnik, 2014). However, local journalists remain sceptical: such operations are still not able to shape the news agenda in Kyrgyzstan, where local agencies and press continue to be the key sources of news and analysis.<sup>10</sup>

Blank (2015) argues that “Russia... lacks the capacity to deploy soft power on the requisite scale in Central Asia and win the support either of the local governments or the population”. In Kyrgyzstan, at least, this is clearly not the case. There are many shortcomings in Russia’s “soft power” policies, but the strong historical and cultural ties, and the influence of Russian

*Russia has actively promoted new online news services, particularly its new global news operation, Sputnik*

8 Interview, activist, Bishkek, April 2015.

9 Interview, analyst, Bishkek, November 2013.

10 Interviews, journalists, Bishkek, April 2015.

television broadcasting, remain decisive. There is little doubt that Russia continues to be a favoured external partner for much of the population. In a 2010 poll, 89 per cent of respondents argued that Russia should be a priority country for development cooperation: by comparison China was favoured by only 1 per cent of respondents, the US by 0.8 per cent, and Turkey by 0.6 per cent (M-Vetkor, 2010, pp. 8-10). In 2014, according to another poll, 90 per cent of respondents in Kyrgyzstan declared either a “great deal” or a “fair amount” of confidence in President Vladimir Putin; President Barack Obama won the confidence of only 26 per cent, while Chinese leader Xi Jinping gained the approval of 35 per cent (Trilling, 2014).

These overall figures disguise some complexities in this post-colonial relationship with Russia. For many Kyrgyz, their views of Russia are coloured by experiences of racism, police brutality and discrimination as labour migrants. Others, while criticising Russia, also expect more assistance and support from the former colonial power. A parliamentary deputy says:

what do the Turks do? If you graduate from a Turkish university, you will definitely get a job with a Turkish firm. But [Russians...] do not even give a student stipend, or state-funded university places, and [they] also humiliate our people and every day we get a coffin back [from Russia].<sup>11</sup>

Others make a distinction between Russia and its present regime. One graduate of a Moscow institute says: “when I mean I am not pro-Russian, I mean, that I don’t like what’s happening in Russian politics. But I have a lot of friends, I speak Russian, I read in Russian, I watch [TV] in Russian, therefore I am very pro-Russian in that sense”.<sup>12</sup> The same interviewee argues that society has become polarised between two camps:

there are two radical viewpoints. One is very pro-Russian – socially this is the majority, and this is not in Bishkek, but in the regions and it is due to inertia: people have got used to thinking, that mother Russia will save us all; there are young people among them, too, but those who have not been migrants. And there is the majority of people in Bishkek, let’s say people like me, experts, who are very sceptically predisposed.<sup>13</sup>

This polarisation has only been accentuated by the conflict in Kiev, which has divided opinion into pro and anti-Russian positions. Apparently minor incidents fuel polemics. In 2015, in the run-up to the events to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory Day on 9 May, the government did not use the Russian St George’s Ribbon, which has become identified with separatist movements in Ukraine, instead promoting a different coloured version of the symbol. Russian nationalists protested against the change. The war acts as a discursive device for post-colonial assertions on both sides. Kyrgyz politicians frequently remind Russian leaders of the role of Central Asians in the war, noting the role of the Panfilov Division, which consisted largely of Kyrgyz and Kazakh recruits, in defending Moscow in 1941.<sup>14</sup>

Increased Russian nationalism inside Russia – including continuing attacks on migrants by neo-Nazis or discrimination by the police – can also provoke more anti-Russian sentiment at home. Sharp historical differences also emerge from time to time. In 2016, many Kyrgyz wish

*In a 2010 poll, 89 per cent of respondents argued that Russia should be a priority country for development cooperation*

11 Interview, Parliamentary deputy, Bishkek, November 2013.

12 Interview, Bishkek, November 2013.

13 Interview, university lecturer, Bishkek, November 2013.

14 Interview, Bishkek, April 2015.

to mark the 100th anniversary of the brutal repression by Tsarist troops of an anti-Russian rebellion. Some activists and historians have even sought a recognition of the events of 1916 as an act of genocide.<sup>15</sup> The Russian authorities remain opposed to any such characterisation of Russian history in the region, highlighting what they view as the positive, progressive impact of Russian rule on Central Asia. Even academics and independent experts repeat this discourse, expressing concern about “the growth of nationalistic mindset among the people who deny the Russian historic and cultural contribution into national development in principle” (RIAC, 2013, p. 15). There is no attempt in Russian official thinking to come to terms with the colonial past, and this represents a serious weakness in Russian strategy for the long term. In the short term, however, such differences have limited impact on politics, since significant political mobilisation around such viewpoints is difficult. Political figures that have been characterised as Kyrgyz nationalists have seldom succeeded in politics at a national level. Regional leaders such as Melis Myrzakmatov, a former mayor of Osh, who promoted a Kyrgyz nationalist agenda, have been marginalised from public life.

These contested aspects of Kyrgyz relations with Russia – including the postcolonial ambivalence that is central to much of the discourse – suggest that the legitimacy of Russia’s hegemonic position, which still rests on historical and cultural legacies, requires constant reinforcement. However, Russia’s active attempts to construct legitimacy – through think-tanks, NGOs and educational initiatives, have been only partially successful. Russian television broadcasting, however, remains a powerful force in shaping agendas and asserting and maintaining shared understandings of the world.

## 5. Economic policy

Traditionally, regional hegemons are expected to play a powerful economic role, providing public goods in the form of a free trade zone in a region or investment in public infrastructure. This viewpoint coincides with the post-colonial discourse of many Kyrgyz citizens, who expect Russia to play a positive role in supporting the local economy. In the 1990s, however, Russia offered virtually no economic public goods for the region, partly because it was undergoing its own economic crisis, and partly because of domestic opposition to what were viewed as wasteful Soviet-era subsidies to Central Asia. This began to change as the Russian economy improved after 2002. Firstly, it opened its economy to labour migrants from Central Asia, producing a huge flow of remittances to Kyrgyzstan. Secondly, in Kyrgyzstan it began to offer development assistance and strategic investments in major infrastructure projects. Thirdly, Russia’s promotion of the Eurasian Economic Union promoted free trade in the EEU area, albeit at some cost of trade with other countries and regions.

### 5.1. Labour migration

Studies of regional hierarchy often try to distinguish deliberate state-sponsored interstate transfers from other non-state economic activity (Pereira, 2015). In the case of labour migration, such a distinction is unhelpful. While all of this activity takes place in the private sector, it continues to be effectively regulated by the state, which has the capacity to refuse

*Regional hegemons are expected to play a powerful economic role, providing public goods in the form of a free trade zone in a region or investment in public infrastructure*

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15 Interview, journalist and activist, April 2015.

entry to migrants or expel those already in its territory. Russia's ability to regulate the flow of migrants – through changes in work permit regulations or residency requirements – provides it with a constant lever of influence over Central Asian republics. New regulations introduced on 1 January 2015 required migrants to have an international passport rather than domestic identity documents, and to pass Russian language tests; work permits have also become more expensive. Entry into the EEU should reduce these bureaucratic burdens on Kyrgyz migrants and is one of the reasons why there has been widespread support among many Kyrgyz for membership of the new bloc (Lelik, 2015).

The level of remittances to Kyrgyzstan rose rapidly after the early 2000s, reaching the equivalent of 31 per cent of GDP in 2013, the second highest level in the world, according to World Bank figures. Migration on this scale is a powerful source of leverage that becomes institutionalised, as regular patterns of migration begin to define the country's political economy. Labour migration also produces patterns of intrusiveness that go beyond a purely economic exchange: it has effects on social stability, as families become divided, and on personal and national identity, as migrants seek to stabilise their identities at home and abroad. Perhaps unwittingly, Russia becomes involved in complex questions of social identity and nation-building in countries such as Kyrgyzstan. Migration also blurs the boundaries of the foreign and domestic domains, mixing domestic concerns in both countries with interstate and multilateral regulations and institutions. The Russian government faces constant domestic political pressure to limit the flow of migrants into Russia, where anti-migrant sentiment remains very high (Matveeva, 2013). This factor favours Russia's more selective approach to engagement in Central Asia and the Caucasus: by encouraging migration from Kyrgyzstan and Armenia, while discouraging illegal migration, especially from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Russia hopes to produce a more manageable scale of labour migration across borders.

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## 5.2. Strategic investments

Russian commercial investments by private companies were very limited in the post-Soviet period. One interviewee commented: "... if we consider the Kyrgyz-Russian, Kyrgyz-Turkish and Kyrgyz-Chinese joint enterprises, then of course with Russia we have the least of all."<sup>16</sup> There is some evidence that Russian medium-sized business investments have been increasing since 2012. However, the most significant investments have occurred through state initiative. During President Putin's visit to Bishkek in September 2012, he announced a series of state-directed economic measures that were explicitly tied to closer security and political linkages with Moscow. Russia focused on key strategic areas of investment that would produce the maximum institutionalisation of Russian influence and play to Russia's areas of particular expertise.

In hydroelectricity, Russia offered investment in the construction of the Kambarata-1 hydroelectric plant (with Russian energy holding company Inter RAO UES leading the project) and the construction by RusHydro of the Upper Naryn hydropower plant cascade (Gladilin, 2013). The Kambarata-1 plan involves constructing one of the largest dams in the world to fuel a huge hydro scheme that promises to solve Kyrgyzstan's energy needs and offer the potential for export to China. The project dates back to the Soviet period, but needs at least \$2bn in investment. It has also been strongly opposed by Uzbekistan, because of the potential impact

16 Interview, parliamentary deputy, Bishkek, November 2013.

on downstream agriculture. Some reports suggest RAO-UES was also unenthusiastic about the deal, seeing it as commercially and politically risky (Eurasianet, 2013).

Russia's second major long-term investment was in Kyrgyzstan's gas distribution system. In an agreement signed in April 2014, Russia's Gazprom purchased the struggling Kyrgyz utility company KyrgyzgazProm LLC, setting up Gazprom Kyrgyzstan as the exclusive importer of natural gas in Kyrgyzstan, and the owner of the Republic's gas transport and distribution systems. Gazprom promised some 35bn roubles of investment in 2015-2017 and an increase in gas supply from 22 per cent to 66 per cent of the population (Gazprom, 2015). The geopolitical implications of such an investment became immediately clear, when Uzbekistan refused to provide any more gas for the southern districts of Kyrgyzstan, an embargo that lasted until December 2014 (Kommersant, 2014). Uzbekistan finally relented during the 2014-15 winter, reportedly after Russian pressure. The Gazprom ownership and investment programme has been agreed at an interstate level, and the investment programme extends up to 2030. Such strategic investments ensure a long-term institutionalisation of Russia's role in Kyrgyzstan's energy sector. However, the government has few other options for investment in the sector, and Gazprom offers both investment and much needed expertise to maintain an ageing Soviet-era distribution system. For the most part, although they were criticised by the political opposition in Kyrgyzstan, which argued that such deals undermine Kyrgyz sovereignty (Kalybekova, 2013), Russian strategic investments in the energy sector appear to have been viewed by the wider population as largely legitimate.

In Armenia, Russian strategic investments in energy have been matched by similar acquisitions in the transport sector (Lewis, 2014). There have been similar intentions in Kyrgyzstan. In February 2014, the Russian oil major Rosneft appeared to have agreed a deal to manage Bishkek's Manas airport, but later reports suggested that the investment had been put on hold, as Chinese companies also bid for a \$1bn investment (Satke, 2014). Some analysts suggest that this apparent setback was the result of Western sanctions on Russia: more likely delays and problems in Russian investments in Kyrgyzstan are primarily the result of manoeuvring by Kyrgyz elites, attempting to maximise their advantage by using geopolitical competition to raise the investment stakes.

## 6. Eurasian Economic Union

An important strand in the literature on both global and regional hegemony has been its ability to reproduce dominance and enhance legitimacy through the creation of institutions. These secondary institutions provide a rule-based institutional process that allows hegemony to be informed by multilateral participation. Effective secondary institutions improve the legitimacy of hegemonic relationships by imposing constraints on the dominance of the hegemon through the use of supranational bodies and agreed rule sets to manage interstate relations, and ensuring that hegemony is characterised by the provision of public goods through such institutions. The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which entered into force among Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus on 1 January 2015, is designed to produce just such an effect of legitimation, consciously borrowing from the regulatory and institutional innovations of the European Union.

The EEU emerged on the basis of the earlier Customs Union, which had been established in 2010 among Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. The Customs Union removed customs barriers

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among the three countries, but raised tariff and non-tariff barriers with other states, leading to a sharp decline in trade across the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border. Liberalising trade across this border became an important goal for the Kyrgyz authorities and helped to persuade them to accede to the EEU, despite the potential negative impact on traders involved in a lucrative import and re-export trade in Kyrgyzstan for Chinese consumer goods. Opposition to the EEU in Kyrgyzstan was led by pro-Western liberals, some Kyrgyz nationalists, and those involved in the cross-border trade with China. But a majority of the population appear to have been in favour. In a 2014 poll, some 71 per cent of respondents favoured joining the EEU (Trilling, 2014).

Evidence from transport data provide an alternative empirical basis for the idea that deeper integration with Russia reflects more than just a political project in the Kremlin, but also institutionalises existing links at a popular level. Air link data, which have been used elsewhere to measure processes of regionalisation (Good, 2011; Derudder, 2005), reflect the importance of Russia in Kyrgyzstan's external ties. Out of 167 scheduled international flights in one week in January 2015, 109 were destined for Russia, compared with just 11 to China. Flight schedules only offer a rough approximation of existing travel and economic links, but the preponderance of links to Russia, catering above all to labour migrants, is striking. In January 2015, there were 49 flights a week to Russia from Bishkek, and 60 from Osh. By comparison there were 27 scheduled flights to Turkey from Osh and Bishkek, and 11 to China (all to Urumqi).<sup>17</sup>

During 2012-13 negotiations of a "Road Map" for Kyrgyzstan's entry into the EEU were often accompanied by public stand-offs between the two sides (Eurasianet, 2012). President Atambaev announced that he "would not be pressured by anyone", and asserted that Kyrgyzstan would only sign if the agreement met its interests (Kabar, 2013). Western analysts interpreted these public spats as evidence of a deep-seated reluctance on the part of the Kyrgyz leadership to join the new pact, perceiving "thinly disguised aversion" to the project in the statements of Kyrgyz officials (Casey, 2014a; Casey, 2014b). A more convincing account suggests that these clashes were partly about maximising various forms of financial compensation for Kyrgyzstan as, and gaining agreement to delay the implementation of the most damaging aspects of the Customs Union, particularly those related to the re-export of Chinese goods. Most polls appear to show a large majority of the population in favour of joining the EEU, although a significant minority remained sceptical about the political and economic benefits of the Union, pointing to the risk of inflation from higher prices for imported goods and the difficulties of developing more manufacturing capacity to replace the expected downturn in trade (Kloop.kg, 2014).

In May 2014 a Road Map to join the EEU was eventually agreed by Kyrgyzstan, which involved multiple regulatory and legislative changes, and a complete overhaul of Kyrgyz customs regulations and procedures. Negotiations continued to focus on the monetary compensation Kyrgyzstan requested to bolster its agricultural and industrial output to compensate for its expected losses in cross-border trade. In late November 2014, a joint Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund was agreed, including 500m USD capital and a low-interest loan of 500m USD (Kommersant, 2014, November; Yedovina, 2014). This appears to have been sufficient to persuade the Kyrgyz leadership to proceed with the deal, although the alternative – exclusion

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17 Such data can only offer approximations. Moscow and Istanbul both act as transit nodes for other international destinations. Many people from Kyrgyzstan also use Almaty airport in Kazakhstan, which offers a wider range of international destinations, including EU destinations. Data retrieved from [http://www.concept.kg/eng/business\\_travel/airtickets/schedule\\_osh/](http://www.concept.kg/eng/business_travel/airtickets/schedule_osh/) and [http://www.concept.kg/eng/business\\_travel/airtickets/schedule\\_bishkek/](http://www.concept.kg/eng/business_travel/airtickets/schedule_bishkek/)

from a Russian-Kazakh trading zone and possible new restrictions on migration – was never an economically viable option.

On 23 December 2014, President Atambaev signed the agreement for Kyrgyzstan to join the EEU, and the Kyrgyz authorities began the legislative and regulatory amendments required by the Road Map. Russia began multi-million-dollar infrastructure upgrades for its customs services, particularly on the border with China. Kyrgyzstan finally joined the EEU fully in May 2015, with full compliance with new customs procedures expected to be achieved by January 2017 (Kloop.kg, 2015). In reality, preparation was slow. At the beginning of April 2015, only one of 96 laboratories in the country had received accreditation for analysis of foodstuffs to the new standards, and a whole range of questions – from certification of goods to customs procedures – remained unclear to local businesspeople. Only the Irkeshtam border post with China – recipient of 6m USD investment by Russia – was expected to be ready by early May (Mikhailov, 2015).

The EEU represented the final step in institutionalising a qualitatively new framework for Russo-Kyrgyz relations, which combined security, economic and political cooperation in long-term, institutional forms that sought to maximise the legitimacy of Russia's hegemonic role in the region. This framework, however, faced significant challenges, primarily as a result of the downturn in the Russian economy in 2014-2015. This reduced the level of remittances for many economic migrants, which had an impact on construction and trade sectors inside Kyrgyzstan, and raised questions over Russia's commitments to long-term strategic investments in Kyrgyzstan and its ability to ensure the continued viability of the EEU.

## 7. The EEU and the New Silk Road

Although there are tensions in the Kyrgyz-Russian relationship, even Kyrgyz nationalists do not offer an alternative regional spatial imaginary for Kyrgyzstan's development. US models of Central Asia as a region linked to South Asia through Afghanistan, Turkish models of a greater Turkic world or Islamist spatial conceptions of a new political order in the region are widely dismissed in Kyrgyz society as fanciful or undesirable. Unlike Ukraine or Georgia, there is no alternative cartography among Kyrgyz nationalists that could mobilise support for a shift in foreign policy.

The only alternative spatial project builds on the growing economic and political relationship with China, and reflects the regional map constructed by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Indeed, in material terms, China challenges Russian dominance in the Central Asian region, with extensive investments in infrastructure and an apparent willingness to provide certain types of public goods through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and a "New Silk Road" project, announced in September 2014, to which it has committed 40bn USD, but which so far lacks a clear organisational structure. In March 2015 Kyrgyzstan joined the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which has an initial commitment of 50bn USD, and which Central Asian states hoped would be a major source of funds for the region.

Sino-Russian relations involve both cooperation and competition in the region, but there is no doubt that China's extensive economic plans for Central Asia are viewed as a potential threat for Russia's strategy, and there is thus some competition between rival regional structures in

*There is no doubt that China's extensive economic plans for Central Asia are viewed as a potential threat for Russia's strategy*

Central Asia. For example, China has attempted to promote the SCO (in which Russia and four of the Central Asian states are members) as the basis for economic assistance to the region, but this has been opposed by Russia, which instead proposed an alternative banking structure based on the existing Russian-led Eurasian Development Bank, based in Almaty (Gabuyev, 2014). As a result, China has proposed alternative structures to fund projects in SCO members – such as a 20bn USD China-Eurasia Fund – but it has also continued a vibrant bilateral investment programme. In December 2014, for example, Kazakhstan and China signed contracts worth 14bn USD (Gabuyev, 2014). Chinese ambassador to Russia Li Hui argued that the New Silk Road project is compatible with the EEU project (Kommersant, 2015), and the Russian and Chinese governments have opened negotiations to ensure cooperation between the two projects (Butrin & Yedovina, 2015). In practice, however, tensions between Chinese and Russian economic strategies are likely to emerge, further contesting Russia's reassertive hegemony.

## 8. Conclusion

In an op-ed in 2014, Masha Gessen argued that Kyrgyzstan had become the victim of a newly expansionist Russia, claiming that “Kyrgyzstan is a perfect lab rat: It is small and poor and extremely susceptible to Russian pressure” (Gessen, 2014). In reality, Kyrgyzstan is not simply the unwilling and impotent target of Russian expansionist policies – closer integration with Russia is supported by a large majority of the population and offers potential economic benefits for some business and political elites and for many labour migrants. Both Russian and Kyrgyz elites and much of society share a common spatial imaginary that is not challenged by any other emerging geopolitical cartography, even that of China and the SCO. Thus the relationship with Russia represents a classic hegemonic relationship, in which both coercion and consent are intertwined and relations are institutionalised in bilateral and multilateral mechanisms.

Using the concept of regional hegemony, with its emphasis on shared norms and legitimacy, offers a useful framework that emphasises Russia's potential to develop a new legitimised spatial presence in the CIS, and also emphasises the limits to its potential reassertion of influence. Russia's policy in Kyrgyzstan represents a model for developing a hierarchical relationship with a neighbouring state where pro-Russian sentiment is relatively widespread. The outstanding feature of these policies has been the ability to combine state-led political, military and economic policies, together with actions aimed at producing symbolic, discursive and ideational effects. Such policies are probably difficult to replicate in other Central Asian states, such as Uzbekistan, where nationalist sentiment is higher and Russia's levers of influence are weaker, and where legitimation of Russian dominance is therefore more difficult. Indeed, the need for Russia to acquire some level of consent and legitimation for its policies in the region suggests that its policy of a resurgent Eurasianism faces significant constraints.

Moscow's reassertive hegemony in the region also faces other serious challenges, notably in economic affairs. Russia's hegemonic position is dependent on the success of the EEU as a trading zone, the continued availability of jobs for Kyrgyz labour migrants, and success in delivering effective investments in the energy sector. As the Russian economy faces a troubled period of low growth it may prove difficult to maintain economic assistance and investment and employment for migrants. However, since its instruments of soft power are relatively ineffective, Russia's ability to continue to supply economic benefits to Kyrgyzstan is critical. If Russia is unable to deliver on its economic promises, pro-Moscow elites may face the kind of

political turmoil that has rocked Kyrgyz politics twice before in the 2000s, with unpredictable political and geopolitical consequences.

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# RUSSIAN INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING AND REGIONAL PEACE OPERATIONS: THE CASES OF GEORGIA AND MOLDOVA

## El aprendizaje institucional ruso y las operaciones regionales de paz: los casos de Georgia y Moldavia

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This article examines Russia's behaviour towards intra-state conflict in its immediate regional space since the early 1990s. Existing scholarship largely attributes Russia's approach to being a mere extension of its principal security logic based on the promotion of regional hegemonic interests. While these interests cannot be ignored, this article proposes that Russia's lack of institutional learning in doctrine and practice of peace operations has also been a central, yet neglected determinant shaping its response towards the conflicts. This, it is argued, is embedded in a persuasive sub-set of secondary security logics predicated on legitimate concerns of regional stability and security. This analysis is based on an interrogation of the regional conflicts in Georgia and Moldova as they provide the most informative cases into Russia's experience of peace operations. The article concludes with some brief comments on the current crisis in Ukraine and how this relates to Russia's response towards regional intra-state conflict.



Abstract

Russia, peace operations, institutional learning, frozen conflicts, security logics  
*Rusia, operaciones de paz, aprendizaje institucional, conflictos congelados, lógica de seguridad*



Key words

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Fechas

*Este artículo examina el comportamiento de Rusia con respecto a los conflictos intraestatales en sus espacios regionales próximos a partir de 1990. La documentación existente atribuye la posición de Rusia principalmente a una extensión de su lógica de seguridad principal basada en el fomento de los intereses regionales hegemónicos. Aunque estos intereses no pueden ser ignorados, este artículo propone que la falta de aprendizaje institucional de Rusia de la doctrina y práctica de las operaciones de paz ha sido también un factor determinante, aunque descuidado, al dar forma a su respuesta ante los conflictos. Se argumenta que esto está integrado en un subconjunto persuasivo de lógicas de seguridad secundarias, basadas en la preocupación legítima por la seguridad y estabilidad regionales. Este análisis se basa en el cuestionamiento de los conflictos regionales en Georgia y Moldavia, puesto que ambos son los casos más reveladores de la experiencia de Rusia en operaciones de paz. El artículo concluye con unos breves comentarios sobre la crisis actual en Ucrania y cómo se relaciona esta con la reacción de Rusia al conflicto regional intraestatal.*



## 1. Introduction

Russia's experience of peace operations has been both extensive and diverse. Moscow has committed forces to manage the string of inter-ethnic conflicts around its regional periphery, contributed troops towards the missions in the Balkans until 2003, continues to participate, albeit on a minimal scale, towards missions in Africa, and it is playing a central role in organizing the development of the Collective Security Treaty Organization's (CSTO) peace operations' capability in Central Asia. Russia's regional experience of managing intra-state conflict – either through the (symbolic) auspices of regional organizations or unilaterally – has received the most scholarly (Allison, 2013; Arbatova, 2010; Mackinlay, 2003; Lynch, 2002, 2000; Kellett, 1999; Baev, 2003, 1998, 1997; Johnson & Archer, 1996; MacFarlane & Schnabel, 1995; Clark, 1994; Shashenkov, 1994; Crowe, 1992) and international attention. This is not surprising as the wave of “hot spots” that enveloped areas of Russia's immediate neighbourhood have revealed significant inferences about Moscow's post-Soviet foreign policy, and its approach towards the understanding and utilization of peace operations.

In several of these conflicts, Russia's behaviour has been called into question for being widely removed from internationally recognized doctrine and practice. Representative of this is Russia's progressively acerbic relationship with its former Soviet neighbours over the past two decades. Russia's war with Georgia in 2008 has served as a principal example for many commentators and analysts in demonstrating the prevalence of the security dilemma in shaping relations in the area of the newly-independent states (NIS), and the inherent insecurities still determining Moscow's relationship with the West. Russia's involvement in the current crisis in Ukraine has given additional value towards this thesis, further propelling relations to a heightened status of uncertainty. In light of this, the majority of existing scholarship has concluded that over the past two decades, Russian peace operations have progressively been used to “freeze” the conflicts in pursuit of maintaining Moscow's regional hegemonic status (Popescu, 2006; McNeill, 1997) and to protect Moscow's strategic interests (Allison, 2013; Mackinlay, 2003; MacFarlane & Schnabel, 1995; Crowe, 1992; Baev, 1993, p. 142). Indeed, Russia's leadership since the early 1990s has pointed out the importance of its immediate neighbourhood in relation to matters of security, but above all as a means to facilitate – no matter in what disillusioned fashion –

Russia's "great power" status. This has become Russia's principal security logic structuring its discourse and approach towards the NIS.

Yet despite the discernible relationship between Russia's wider strategic aims and its behaviour towards the management of conflict along its regional periphery – which became more apparent during the mid-2000s –, the intrinsic problems of the regional conflicts' settlement processes are attributable towards a further factor which has yet to be considered: the inability to *institutionally learn*. Ramesh Thakur (2006, p. 41) crucially points out that each peace operation "has to make and learn from its own mistakes". In this light, this article argues that due to the absence of other solutions to resolve regional intra-state conflict, freezing can also be considered a *deliberate* policy in order to maintain regional stability. This approach has stemmed from Russia's lack of effective institutional learning in the doctrine and practice of peace operations, which has left it incapable of facilitating a durable settlement to the conflicts. In other words, Russia's failure to learn from and distinguish between previous mistakes and successes has negatively impacted its ability to facilitate a resolution to these conflicts. This explanation draws upon a persuasive sub-set of secondary security logics, which have been exercised both independently from and in support of Russia's wider strategic aims. These include: the maintenance of Russia's peripheral security, the protection of the Russian diaspora and the preservation of regional order and stability. These security logics are typically ignored or at the very most considered vehicles for the promotion of Russia's principal security logic. This is an unfair assessment of the core drivers underpinning Russian policy, as Moscow has legitimate concerns about real and credible threats that exist along its border.

The article therefore explores the relationship between Russian institutional learning and the politically charged environment in which it has unfolded, as a means to understand Russia's contribution towards regional processes of peace operations. This highlights the complexities of Russian behaviour as it pertains to both a foreign policy and issue area level of analysis, moving beyond a crude understanding of peace operations as a mere extension of strategic aims. This is important not only to dispel myths about Russia as a simple Westphalian security-actor, but primarily to interrogate how Russia understands the function and purpose of peace operations. The article begins with an overview of Russia's external policy towards the NIS since the early 1990s, in order to discuss the interplay of Russian regional security logics. It then provides a brief illustration of the evolution of doctrine and practice since the early 1990s, as a basis to juxtapose Russian regional responses in order to highlight the extent of its institutional learning in the following section. To demonstrate this, the article will only focus on the case-studies of Moldova and Georgia given that these intra-state conflicts offer the most informative insight into Russia's regional experience to date. The conclusion provides some brief comments on the current crisis in Ukraine and considers to what extent this is related to Russia's approach towards the management of regional intra-state conflict.

## 2. Russian regional security logics

Since the end of the Cold War, Russia's policy towards the NIS has been directed towards maintaining a regional sphere of interest. This has evolved amongst a thick-set of concerns about credible threats to Russia's security and of the region as a whole. The Caucasus remains an area of profound instability where threats such as extremism, terrorism, transnational crime, weak governance and intra-state conflict persist. Yet, in relation to the former, policy-

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makers have persistently advocated Russia's standing as a "great" but "normal" power, with a *legitimate* regional area of interests (see Kozyrev, 1992, p. 15; Primakov, 1996; Lavrov, 2012). Roy Allison (2013, p. 122) comments that "[f]or Russian leaders Moscow's relationships with CIS states were legitimately hierarchical; Russian leadership was assumed, as was renewed regional integration, centred around the gravitational pull of Moscow". Although Moscow has become the dominant regional actor, the former Soviet space is a complex region where the interests of external and local actors both "criss-cross and overlap" (Garnett, 1998, p. 64) creating possibilities of cooperation and confrontation. In this context, while the Kremlin may consider its regional neighbourhood a vital sphere of interests, Dmitri Trenin (2009, p. 18) points out that "Moscow's influence, although considerable, is nowhere dominant".

How to approach this region has become a focal concern for Russian policymakers, which although it "had for centuries been a matter of domestic policy for Moscow overnight [it] became a foreign policy challenge of the greatest immediacy" (Donaldson, 2000, p. 302). In this politically charged environment, Russian interests have been articulated in a thick set of secondary security logics, which have remained consistent over the past two decades. During the 1990s, Russian policy towards the NIS gradually emphasized Moscow's special ties to and interests in the region. President Yeltsin declared to the UN in 1995 that his country's "economic and foreign policy priorities lie in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. [...] Russia's ties with them are closer than traditional neighbourhood relations; rather, this is a blood relationship" (The Kremlin, 1995). Foreign Minister Kozyrev affirmed the importance of the immediate regional neighbourhood, pointing out the inevitable security vacuum and incursion of potentially hostile external actors if Russia was to leave this region (The Moscow Times, 1994). The issues concerning the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) regarding the withdrawal of Russian troops and military bases from the former Soviet Republics reflected this logic in Russian regional policy, in that "firmly upholding the interests of the Russian-speaking population" in the neighboring republics is considered a precondition to withdrawal (Kozyrev, 1993). While this security logic prevailed under Primakov, it was made clear that Russia did not "want to restore the Soviet Union. Sovereignty of the countries of the CIS is irreversible" (Primakov, 1996). Alongside this thinking, Moscow saw itself as the natural guarantor of peace in the CIS through "the strengthening of regional stability, conflict prevention and resolution of local conflicts, especially near the Russian borders" (Ivanov, 1996).

After Yeltsin's tenure in office, Russian regional policies towards its immediate neighbourhood continued to adopt similar security logics. After the war with Georgia in 2008, President Medvedev's infamous words suggested the prevalence of the principal security logic in Russia's external policy. Medvedev declared "Russia, like other countries in the world, has regions where it has privileged interests. These are regions where countries with which we have friendly relations are located" (New York Times, 2008). The Russian Foreign Ministry (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005) echoed Yeltsin's 1994 comments, also emphasising the multi-faceted relationship between the regional counterparts, adding, "the Commonwealth is a living organism which continues to develop in accordance with the new conditions". With continued focus on the CIS, the protection of Russian citizens abroad prevails, as stated in the latest foreign policy concept (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013), as a central security logic. The concept also emphasizes the importance of conflict settlement and that Russia must endeavour to promote good relations with the NIS, and prevent regional conflicts.

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Russia views integration of the regional neighbourhood as not only favourable to the NIS, but also towards the maintenance of Moscow's hegemony. While Russia has acknowledged that the NIS are able to choose their own direction of development (Primakov, 1996), Moscow has also made it clear to the region that the adoption of a path at the expense of Russia's interests will incur consequences. Russia has occasionally utilized the distribution of gas instrumentally, interfered in the political elections of neighbouring states, and has shown a willingness to use force when necessary. The current crisis in Ukraine has, for many Western commentators, demonstrated the lengths to which Russia's leadership will go in pursuing a deliberately confrontational policy for the protection of what they consider to be unconditional interests. Despite this, secondary security logics detached from their wider rationale of strategic interest have also played an influential role in shaping Russia's behaviour towards this neighbourhood, particularly the conflicts on its regional periphery. Therefore, the degree in which Russia has engaged in the evolution of international doctrine and practice, as noted below, is central to understanding the interplay of these security logics.

### 3. Transitions in doctrine and practice of peace operations

Conducting and contributing towards peace operations remains a challenging undertaking for intervening forces, particularly with the increased complexities of intra-state conflict (see Kaldor, 2007). The threshold for a participating actor's institutional ability to learn quickly and effectively has become extremely high, and since the early 1990s the evolution of doctrine and practice has been extraordinary. The issue area of peace operations has become considerably discursive and acquired a complex and at times confusing terminology (Wagnsson & Holmberg, 2014, p. 325). Indicative of this, are stabilization operations and counterinsurgency (COIN) which have until recently entered the peace operations' lexicon due to the recent experiences of largely Western military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. There is an ongoing debate, however, concerning the conceptual linkages of stabilization and COIN to existing doctrine and practice of peace operations.

Making sense of this policy area has proved to be challenging for the analyst. The UN's Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines (also known as the Capstone Doctrine) (2008, pp. 17-18; also see Paris, 2004, pp. 38-39) provides a succinct catalogue of methods recognized here under the banner of peace operations and including the following concepts and definitions thereof. *Conflict prevention* is the application of structural or diplomatic measures to ensure that tensions and disputes do not escalate into violent conflict. *Peacekeeping* attempts to preserve the peace and to help in establishing agreements achieved by the peacemakers. It includes the observation of cease-fires, the separation and confinement of military forces, the delivery of humanitarian aid, and the protection of civilians (in its robust form). *Peace enforcement* involves the application, with the authorization of the Security Council, of a range of coercive measures, including the use of military force. Such actions are authorized to restore international peace and security in situations where the Security Council has determined the existence of a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression. *Peacemaking* includes measures to address and to stop conflicts already in progress and involves diplomatic and mediation efforts to bring each conflicting party to the negotiating table. *Peacebuilding* involves establishing the foundations for sustainable peace and development by addressing core problems that affect the functioning of society and the state.

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In relation to these approaches, it is possible to discern broad shifts in doctrine and practice. The cardinal principles of *consent*, *impartiality*, and *the non-use of force except in self-defence* have experienced extensive recalibration in an attempt to craft the most effective and appropriate methods (McCoubrey & Morris, 2000, p. 49). What is noticeable is the revision of the ways these principles have been mutually conceptualized at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. In addition, the multiplicity of actors has also increased, facilitating other means such as peacebuilding and conflict prevention. There are, however, particular underlying continuities present in these broader shifts of doctrine and practice: first, such operations possess a humanitarian dimension and are for the maintenance of peace; second, the use of force has become increasingly recognized as an acceptable and necessary measure in specific circumstances; third, intervening actors must also employ methods beyond military force, including peacebuilding for operational success; fourth, the salience of state sovereignty remains highly contested if a conflict threatens international peace.

The end of the Cold War marked a period in which there was a renewed focus upon the United Nations as the arbiter of international politics. Alongside traditional enforcement actions against Iraqi forces in 1991 under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (which gives the Security Council the right to use force as a last resort in order to maintain peace), peace operations have remained a central component in the UN's arsenal to maintain international peace. The early 1990s proved to be a steep learning curve for both the United Nations, as a result of the circumstances in which intervening forces found themselves. Former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace* (1992) was the first report which advocated the expansion of the UN's role in managing conflict, emphasizing the necessity for the wider use of force (specified under Chapter VII, Article 42) – alongside peacekeeping and conflict prevention – in order to maintain ceasefires (ibid: paragraph 44).

Imbued by the UN's call for firmer measures to preserve peace in war-torn societies, these peace operations were much larger, launched into situations where the conflict was still raging, and utilized more robust methods (Frantzen, 2005, p. 47). Inevitably, there was confusion and failure in places such as Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia where intervening forces attempted to interpret UN doctrine as a means of best practice, thereby blurring the lines between peacekeeping and peace enforcement (Gray, 2008, p. 282). US involvement in Somalia confirmed the dangers of becoming a party to the conflict through a lack of consent and impartiality, and the use of disproportionate force. As understood at the time, the danger of crossing the *consent-divide* (referred to as the "Mogadishu Line") from peacekeeping to "war-fighting" was persistently reiterated in other conflicts, such as Bosnia (see Rose, 1998).

The perceived failures in doctrine and practice of the early to mid-1990s, and the greater use of peace enforcement demonstrated by Operation Deliberate Force (1995) in Bosnia resulted in a renewed degree of caution by the UN as to the role of an intervening force (see Boutros-Ghali, 1995). Adam Roberts (1994, p. 41) explains that during this period doctrine and practice faced an inherent dilemma where intervening forces had to choose between either losing credibility for not acting (as in Rwanda and in the "safe areas" in Bosnia) or losing impartiality for potentially overreacting (as in Somalia in 1993). This debate unfolded in the academic community where some commentators argued for a return to traditional forms of peace operations, or as a minimum a strict adherence to robust peacekeeping without recourse to the use of force (Tardy, 2011; Thakur, 1994). Others claimed that present methods were acceptable but required further integration and coordination (Berdal, 2000; Goulding, 1993, p. 461).

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Departing from the dilemma premised on the consent-divide, and the UN's cautionary stance, many actors favoured the latter path (UK, 2012, 2011, 2004; NATO, 2001, 1995). This direction in development emphasized the necessity for more forceful, yet integrated methods alongside deeper civil-military cooperation through a reconceptualization of consent in the multifunctional peace support operation (PSO) (Bellamy & Williams, 2010, p. 279). According to NATO (2001, p. 21) the PSO is based on the consent and/or non-consent of the parties to the agreement and not against any biased or predetermined designation. In this regards, the PSO owes no allegiance to any party to the conflict and can *shift* between a peacekeeping and peace enforcement posture depending on the levels of consent. The salience of the use of force and the adoption of multifunctional approaches have also been promoted by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO), as illustrated by the so-called Brahimi Report (Brahimi, 2000, chapter 2, paragraph 50, p. 9).

Peace operations have gradually taken on this new character in which the impartial and proportionate use of force is more readily acknowledged. There has also been a discernible effort in promoting peacebuilding in regions of conflict, demonstrated by the wide endorsement of multidimensional or comprehensive peace operations by a multitude of actors, where "a range of components including military, civilian police, political, civil affairs, rule of law, human rights, humanitarian, reconstruction, public information and gender" (UN, 2003, p. 1) are deployed for the long term maintenance of peace. Accordingly, doctrine and practice attributed to the PSO and multidimensional operations have been employed by both the UN and regional actors at different times and in different conflict zones during the post-Cold War period, ranging from the Balkans, to the Democratic Republic of Congo, and most recently Mali.

Certain actors, largely situated within the Western liberal democracies, have attempted, however, to revise further doctrine and practice through the reshaping of global norms regarding the provision on the use of force. David Chandler (2012, p. 224) contends that the turn towards coercive intervention in human security framings which focus on non-Western subjects has come to dominate security discourses surrounding peace operations. Military intervention, as a form of peace enforcement under Chapter VII of the Charter, has been adopted and used across state borders to prevent or stop states from persecuting their own citizens (Holzgrefe, 2003, p. 18). Although widely deemed illegal if legitimate, the NATO bombing campaign Operation Allied Force (1999) against Belgrade raised further questions about the validity of norms concerning state sovereignty.

This issue has become further entrenched within international discourse through the promotion of R2P and the notion of sovereignty as responsibility as put forward in the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) (2001), and unanimously endorsed by the General Assembly in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. The concept of R2P stipulates that it is: first, any state's responsibility to protect its citizens from fear and want; second, the international community must engage in preventive measures by assisting the state's capacity to fulfil the requirements of the first pillar; third, if the state fails in its responsibility towards its citizens, the UN Security Council must use all necessary methods in a timely and decisive response in the protection of these citizens. Yet the concept of R2P has been diluted considerably from its original form and has altered nothing as the P5 members of the UNSC, to a large extent, still pursue policy in accordance with their vital interests, the criterion for intervention has been limited to specific circumstances, and the UNSC has ensured that it is not obliged to invoke R2P in times of crisis (Hehir, 2010, p. 222). R2P has also received considerable

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opposition and disapproval from particular members of the UN who fear that the erosion of sovereignty will result in anarchy, and view military intervention under R2P as both a pretext for regime change and a cloak for the promotion of post-colonial hegemonic interests (Thakur, 2013, p. 66; Morris, 2013, p. 1280). Besides the case of Libya (2011) – which in retrospect is less of a triumph than first realized – R2P continues to face widespread contestation, and has failed to be invoked in situations such as Darfur (and possibly Syria) where there are legitimate grounds for intervention. Irrespective of its architects' intentions, R2P has not substituted existing approaches even in the most extreme cases of human rights abuses. It is questionable whether R2P, as a means to reconceptualize the use of force under the traditional banner of humanitarian intervention, has offered a new direction in the management of conflict.

#### 4. Russia's doctrinal understanding

This section will provide an overview of Russia's doctrinal understanding in light of the above discussion. Prior to Russia's involvement in the individual peace operations that began to populate the former Soviet space during the 1990s, Russian military forces and diplomatic ministries had little experience that could reflect a sound grasp of the fundamental rules of engagement characterizing peace operations. Russian defence and security culture had been crafted and shaped by the Soviet military machine responsible for conducting on the one hand large-scale conventional warfare (aimed at defeating NATO), and on the other high-intensity counter-insurgency operations (Afghanistan). Thus, Russia entered the 1990s without any knowledge about how to conduct a peace operation, and with the disastrous Afghan experience still fresh in the institutional thinking of the Russian power ministries.

Since its regional participation in such operations, Russia has sporadically engaged in the minor development of doctrine. This doctrinal thinking has been defined in Russian terminology as *mirotvorchestvo*, which in its literal sense means "peacemaking" or "peace-creating" (Allison, 1994). There has been further debate as to Russia's precise doctrinal understanding of peace operations. Some scholarship contends that *mirotvorcheskii operatsii* (peace-creating operations) are used to enforce a peace on the opposing parties as

Russian military views on the conduct of peacekeeping operations are strikingly different from thinking in the West. Perhaps the fundamental difference concerns the concept of low-intensity conflicts. While Western theories suggest a rather ambivalent link, in Russia peacekeeping remains part and parcel of conflict-waging. (Baev, 1998, p. 216)

This argument is based on the behaviour of Russian military units during the initial stages of conflict in the regional wars of the 1990s. Others advocate that Russia's adoption of peace-creating is an umbrella term used to cover a range of methods, in accordance with the evolution of international doctrine and practice (Nikitin, 2014). This contrast is significant when determining the nature of Russia's thinking and intentions underpinning its approach. As will be demonstrated below, Russia's doctrinal approach is characterized by the latter understanding.

As early as 1992 the newly formed regional organization, the CIS, introduced the Agreement on Groups of Military Observers and the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The document was the first collective effort by the CIS to draft a set of guidelines as to the application of peace operations. The agreement, however, was modest in scope only focusing on peacekeeping methods that were based on a strict adherence to consent,

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impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence (Article 2). The agreement did, nevertheless, recognize “assistance [in] ensuring human rights and freedoms, [and] the provision of humanitarian assistance” as the additional responsibilities of peacekeeping duties (Article 3). Russia’s Military Doctrine (1993) was more ambiguous, vaguely mentioning that Russia would use various approaches such as political, diplomatic, and other peaceful means to ensure the security of Russia and the international community. Foreign Minister Kozyrev (1993) in an article for *Krasnaia Zvezda* offered further insight, stipulating that the responsibilities of a peace operation may include the separation of the warring sides, monitoring of both the ceasefire and the delivery of aid, demilitarization of the conflict zone, and the establishment of safety areas.

During the mid-1990s Russia and the CIS engaged in further doctrinal development through the Regulations on the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (Commonwealth of Independent States, 1996). This did not depart, however, from existing doctrine as consent was still viewed as central to the integrity of an operation (paragraph 3); the intervening force must still adhere to the principles of impartiality (paragraph 23), and could only use force in self-defence or in defence of civilians (paragraph 27). Russia also recognized the utility of peace enforcement as a means to restore intra-state peace, yet still conceptualized its understanding of force on the consent-divide:

Elements of enforcement as well as the dosage use of a forceful military factor (in separation of the parties, establishing buffer zones, carrying out emergency humanitarian tasks, etc.) do have the right of existence as extraordinary measures for the restoration and maintenance of peace. The Somali and Yugoslav experiences have, however, highlighted the practical incompatibility of traditional and enforcement mandates in one operation. (Lavrov, 1996, p. 26)

In a peacekeeping capacity, Russia’s understanding also acknowledged that the role of intervening forces should consist of a diverse catalogue of responsibilities, including: the monitoring of ceasefire agreements, separating the warring parties, promoting the de-concentration of the parties, restoring law and order for the restoration of the state and public functions, and facilitating the smooth delivery of humanitarian aid to the civilian population (CIS, 1996, paragraph 6; also see Russia’s Military Doctrine, 2000). Since the 1990s, while the Russian Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) have failed to craft further official doctrine available in the public domain, Russia’s understanding has remained consistent since it normalized after the initial period of doctrinal disorder and regional conflict. Moreover, Russian representatives at the United Nations have occasionally commented on the necessity of conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction efforts as a means to sustain peace before and after periods of conflict (Churkin, 2009; Lavrov, 1996).

Russian doctrinal understanding of peace operations has primarily remained in accordance with international thinking that was prevalent during the early to mid-1990s; and, although the doctrine developed in this period remains relevant today, it lacks the comprehensive nature of subsequent doctrine and the willingness to incorporate force beyond defensive measures, transcending passive and static approaches. While Russia has gradually come to recognize the use of an array of methods – as in accordance with the UN Capstone Doctrine – under the broad banner of peace-creating, it is unclear in Russian thinking how these instruments operationally coexist in relation to the above notions. This is especially apparent regarding the use of force in peace-creating operations, where there is still an inherent degree of “mission creep” in the

*Russian doctrinal understanding of peace operations has primarily remained in accordance with international thinking that was prevalent during the early to mid-1990s*

Russian military and policy community concerning the impact of force on the consent-divide. Russia has also consistently supported state-sovereignty and opposed the strategic use of force which it views as inadmissible in international affairs (Putin, 2013; Lavrov, 2011). Moreover, while there have been remarks regarding the necessity of civil-society initiatives by Russian diplomats at the UN, this has not suggested a systemic level of understanding and expertise regarding these approaches throughout the Russian political and military establishments. Pavel Baev (1993, p. 141) points out that “[t]he idea of peace-building (i.e. social reconstruction) remains essentially foreign, mainly due to the dangerous erosion of the socio-economic fabric in the newly-born states, all ripe for social conflicts”.

## 5. Russian regional operations: putting it into practice

Putting its doctrinal understanding into practice has been a challenge for Russia’s power ministries. The disintegration of the Soviet Union triggered a period of political, economic, and societal turmoil in Russia’s immediate neighbourhood. As a result, a string of deep and protracted conflicts erupted along Russia’s regional periphery. Many Russian military units found themselves in the midst of these intra-state conflicts on deployments related to a bygone era. With minimal to no experience, intermittent guidance from Moscow, and in some cases strong cultural and ethnic ties with the region, the local units were far from ideal as a means to legitimately mitigate the violence. As noted above, while the principal security logic has driven Russian behaviour towards the NIS as a whole, the continuity of the relationship between Russia’s wider strategic aims and its contribution in practice towards the individual settlement processes is more ambiguous. Interceding in this relationship is Russia’s failure to learn institutionally from practice and to adapt to the changes on the ground, limiting Russia’s options in solving the conflicts.

The use of force in Russia’s approach towards the conflicts in Moldova and Georgia has been erratic and inconsistent. During the early 1990s, Russian troops participated alongside the separatist entities of Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia in an effort to establish peace by defeating Moldovan and Georgian government forces. Typical of this behaviour was the conflict that erupted in Moldova in 1992 between the central authority in Chisinau and the Transnistrian separatists. The war began as a result of Transnistria’s attempt to secede from a nationalist Moldova and policies of unification with Romania (Hill, 2012, pp. 49-50). Major hostilities broke out in 1992 with a Moldovan offensive against Transnistrian forces around the city of Bendery, followed by skirmishes in the ensuing months. Violence also erupted in South Ossetia (1992) and Abkhazia (1992) due to similar nationalist sentiment influencing the policies of Georgia’s government in Tbilisi, and a desire by the separatists to become further reliant on Russia as a means to gain independence (Ozhiganov, 1997, pp. 341-342). In each case, Russian troops stationed amidst these “hot spots” took an active part in the cessation of the violence, providing logistical support, and occasionally using force. In Transnistria the Russian 14<sup>th</sup> Army commanded by General Alexander Lebed intervened on the side of the separatists and helped to repel Moldovan attacks on Bendery in 1992 resulting in an end to the hostilities, while in Georgia, Russian local military forces began to provide support and direct military assistance against Georgian government forces. After the Sochi Talks and ceasefire agreement in 1993, Abkhazian troops reinforced by Russian military units launched a major offensive aimed to expel Georgian forces from Abkhaz territory. However, in each case, there is no definitive evidence to suggest that Russian military units received direct orders from Moscow. Baev (2003,

*The use of force in Russia’s approach towards the conflicts in Moldova and Georgia has been erratic and inconsistent*

p. 140) goes as far as to suggest that “the decision to launch an operation [...] or to withdraw, was taken in the Kremlin; all the details, however, were left to the military to sort out without even a symbolic political oversight”.

Despite Russia’s violation of the rules of engagement underpinning internationally recognized doctrine and practice at the time through a lack of consent, impartiality, and the use of disproportionate force, Russian troops – on an ad hoc and reactive basis – engaged in an approach which by the mid-1990s had become more acceptable in terms of the use of force. General Lebed pointed out that “[s]urprise, precise, powerful pre-emptive strikes, as well as the availability of backup mobile armoured groups, forced the initiators of the military conflict to come to the negotiation table” (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 1994). The Russian Foreign Ministry also remarked that the only way to bring about a swift and lasting peace is to use “forcible methods in order to convince an enemy or more precisely a conflicting side to embark on a path of negotiations and seek peace” (Lynch, 2000, pp. 116-117). Nevertheless, this practice was not perfected or built upon suggesting that, in fact, these levels of force were reactive and outcomes largely determined by the inexperience of local Russian troops, and the typical turmoil following early periods of political transition from the break-up of a contiguous land empire.

Caution should also be taken when considering whether the use of force against Georgia in 2008 was also a reflection of Russia’s understanding of peace operations. Russia justified its actions based on secondary security logics in preventing further humanitarian catastrophe, maintaining stability and order, and in self-defence (Medvedev, 2008) as a result of Georgia’s attack on both South Ossetia and the Russian peacekeeping contingent stationed in the area. In spite of this, it is widely agreed that Moscow’s reaction towards Tbilisi demonstrated a *political* decision primarily in support of the principal security logic. Roy Allison (2009, p. 173; 2008; 2014) points out that Moscow’s actions towards Georgia in 2008 and the subsequent recognition of Abkhaz and South Ossetian independence is “strongly influenced by political self-interest and Russian views about its entitlement within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region”. A caveat is placed, however, on the generalizability of these conclusions on Russia’s behaviour towards the entirety of these regional conflicts.

In this regard, analysis should refrain from overstating Russia’s use of force during the initial stages of the conflicts and in 2008 as a basis to explain Russian peace operations (see Sagramosa, 2003; Lynch, 2000; Baev, 1998), since the use of force in both Moldova and Georgia has not been utilized on an operational or strategic level outside of these specific episodes. Indeed, after the enforcement of the ceasefires in these regions, peace operations based on wider-peacekeeping mandates were established through trilateral formats (Joint Control Commission) in South Ossetia (1992) and Transnistria (1992), and (symbolic) institutional arrangements under the CIS in Abkhazia (1992). The UN monitored the Abkhazian operation through the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), while in South Ossetia and Transnistria the OSCE provided observer missions.

These individual operations failed to adapt to the changes on the ground and were wedded to traditional interpretations of consent, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence. Russia’s approach towards peacemaking reveals this doctrinal thinking, in that the formats of the settlements were established on the basis of a collective consensus of all the parties. Russia, as the dominant arbiter in the settlement processes, remained committed to this format as it was shaped by doctrine that emphasized the logic of mutual decision-making. In relation to

*Analysis should refrain from overstating Russia’s use of force during the initial stages of the conflicts and in 2008 as a basis to explain Russian peace operations*

the settlement processes in Georgia, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov (2004) commented that “[w]e are convinced that the route to settlement lies in the active use of these mechanisms and in the inducement of the sides to find via these mechanisms mutually acceptable agreements”. Russian policymakers argue that only an inclusive dialogue can provide an opportunity for a common agreement and lasting peace (Yakovenko, 2003). Russia on several occasions promoted peace agreements – most notably the Russian Draft Memorandum on the Basic Principles on the State Structure of a United State in Moldova (The Kremlin, 2003) (generally referred to as the Kozak Memorandum) – in these settlement processes to have them rejected not only by the opposing sides, but also by the formal observers on the grounds that they either favoured Russia or were not mutually beneficial for the opposing parties. Russia’s refusal to change the format of the JCC and the peacemaking framework to allow for further flexibility in decision-making, has been accused of deliberately freezing the conflicts in order to serve Russian regional strategic interests (Popescu, 2006, p. 7 & 2012, p. 4). While the status quo indeed served Russia’s wider strategic aims, Russia’s opposition to the altering of the political framework derived from a concern that such an action would irrevocably change the shared understanding of consent to which its approach remained committed – however problematic in terms of effectively solving the conflicts and in light of the international progression of doctrinal thinking.

Similarly, there were instances which necessitated the adaptation of peacekeeping functions to reflect the evolutionary trajectory of international doctrine and practice, especially in relation to the use of force. This is particularly the case regarding the settlement process in Abkhazia, where the opposing parties consistently breached the mandate of the peacekeeping mission. In 1998, for instance, a resumption of large scale violence between Abkhaz and Georgian-backed paramilitary forces caused further chaos to an already unstable region. According to a representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russian forces did not act in order to stop the crisis as “under the current mandate the ‘blue helmets’ [Russian peacekeepers] only have the right to intervene in the actions of subversive and terrorist groups by *agreement* and in *cooperation* with the conflicting parties” [emphasis added]. There were further occasions during this peacekeeping mission – the area of the Kodori Gorge was a haven for Georgian paramilitary units – where the use of force, at a tactical and operational level, was overlooked as a means of deterrence. At the same time, in South Ossetia, coinciding with Georgia’s Rose Revolution and Mikheil Saakashvili’s rise to power in the mid-2000s, tensions and incidents began to increase without further measures being implemented on the ground. Certainly, not all situations warranted the use of force as a means to facilitate the settlement processes, as in Transnistria the atmosphere of hostility between the opposing sides has yet to provoke any large scale military clashes. Ultimately, in circumstances where the use of force was necessary to establish peace, Russian forces lacked the political will for fear of causing further destabilization and the institutional understanding of its value in such settings, rather than a profound level of self-interest about where and when to deploy it.

This uneasiness in using force is a feature of the deliberate but unorthodox development of the trilateral peacekeeping formats in Transnistria and South Ossetia. Russian military and policy planners believed that such arrangements – where the parties to the conflict are included in the peacekeeping forces – would facilitate further transparency. This, it is advocated, enables the forces to abide by the notions of consent and impartiality. In Abkhazia, while it was a unilateral rather than trilateral force, Russia also built its operation upon corresponding notions. Yet in each of these conflict zones Russia failed to apply comprehensively its understanding of pea-

*Russian forces lacked the political will for fear of causing further destabilization and the institutional understanding of its value in such settings*

cekeeping in relation to either/or all of the following: the protection and return of refugees, the delivery of humanitarian aid, and the facilitation of order through law enforcement. As a result, the individual missions failed to exercise a pro-active peacekeeping approach. Abkhazia serves as a prime example of this where the Russian peacekeeping contingent failed to expand their mandate to include police functions, and did not make a sustained attempt to return refugees (although due to the inadequate size of the operation it was virtually impossible for the intervening forces to ensure the return of refugees *en masse* into a post-conflict zone which was still insecure). The situation was similar in South Ossetia where the trilateral peacekeeping contingent, while acting as a buffer between the opposing sides, was a static force only engaging in mine-clearance and regular patrolling (Reeve, 2014). There is evidence, however, of doctrinal development through the training of law enforcement personnel by the Russian Ministry of the Interior (MOI) (2015)<sup>1</sup>. This, however, has been minimal and aimed at international rather than regional missions, with little cross-border interaction between the power ministries in cultivating effective regional approaches.

The disconnection between Russian doctrine and practice regarding the scope of peacekeeping responsibilities in these conflicts is apparent. In practice, Russia has failed to acknowledge that peace operations have become progressively multidimensional and, therefore, humanitarian aid and post-conflict reconstruction has been limited in these areas of instability. For instance, the Co-Chairman of the Joint Control Commission commented in 2004 that the peace operation in South Ossetia was beginning to fail as “there was still an atmosphere of distrust between the sides” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004) because complete demilitarization had not occurred, roads and communications were still largely blocked which remained the principal obstacles to the delivery of aid to the civilians in the conflict zone, and the advancement of economic rehabilitation was negligible. Indeed, since the beginning of Putin’s first presidential term, Russia has even used bilateral trade as a political lever (Tolstrup, 2009) against each of the parties to the conflicts. Yet, through organizations such as the Ministry of Emergency Situations (EMERCOM)<sup>2</sup> there have been some attempts to alleviate the above problems, as in 2006 where EMERCOM, via a convoy transiting through Ukrainian territory, delivered aid to the people of Transnistria (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006). These operations, however, have been modest due to low level institutional coordination between the MoD and EMERCOM. Only after the war in 2008 have EMERCOM’s peacebuilding activities increased indicating the underlying political agenda behind Russia’s regional policies. In addition, where NGOs have engaged in peacebuilding initiatives this has been met with considerable suspicion by Russian authorities (Ivanov, 2004) and as a consequence interaction with the peacekeeping forces has been negligible.

*Russia has failed to acknowledge that peace operations have become progressively multidimensional*

## 6. Conclusion

Since the early 1990s, the development in doctrine and practice of peace operations has demonstrated a gradual progression of the aims, purposes, and methods used to facilitate peace as a means to transcend the containment or freezing of the conflict. While there are nuances between certain actors – particularly amongst the P5 in the Security Council – this

<sup>1</sup> The MOI has to a limited degree invested in training facilities for law enforcement officers and staff of internal affairs agencies deploying on peacekeeping missions.

<sup>2</sup> For further insight see Renz (2010).

article has revealed a number of trends which have either emerged or have been reinforced to reflect changes in the perception of security and how to tackle intra-state conflict (Tardy, 2004, p. 3). These include: a further emphasis on the humanitarian dimension of operations, an acceptance of the use of force as a necessary measure in specific circumstances, a reliance on methods which target the root causes of conflict, and an acknowledgement that the norm of sovereignty remains a highly contentious issue even if a conflict directly threatens civilians and international peace.

In this light, Russia's approach towards the post-Soviet conflicts, as demonstrated in Georgia and Moldova, has shown that the deliberate freezing of the settlement processes has not only been an expression of Russia's regional principal security logic, but also a consequence of Russia's institutional failure to learn doctrine and practice as it has evolved over the past two decades. Freezing the conflicts – regardless of the sporadic and selective peacemaking initiatives – was considered by Russia's political leadership as a viable option in support of Moscow's secondary security logics. Rather, Russia's approach towards the management of the conflicts lacked the institutional knowledge for the provision of durable peace in Transnistria, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia. This has been demonstrated by Russia's equally intransigent approach towards doctrine and practice. With regards to the latter this is even more problematic, because while it largely adheres to a set of core principles – consent, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence – it has failed to consistently apply instruments such as peacebuilding and wider forms of peacekeeping as recognized by its own doctrine. This approach has primarily been shaped by Russia's inexperience in managing conflict, a lack of adaptation to the rapid changes on the ground, and as a result of further explanations in Russian security culture.

Nevertheless, how the Russian leadership has chosen to approach regional intra-state conflict in the last decade has certainly unfolded amidst the interplay of Russia's secondary and principal security logics. Indeed, the credibility of Moscow as an impartial third party guarantor has been compromised on particular occasions especially since the early- to mid-2000s. This interaction between security logics has become a *tension* reflected in Russia's approach towards the current crisis in Ukraine, demonstrating concerns for the loss of hegemonic status and for the spread of regional instability. This has resulted in a “Jekyll and Hyde” policy where the political leadership in Moscow has been acutely aware of its interests being side-lined by external actors in Ukraine and in the region as a whole. This has led to the orchestrating of a referendum in the Crimea, the use of information warfare to domestic and international audiences, and to the provision of (at least) tacit support for separatist forces in the Donbas, in what one scholar has labelled a “deniable intervention” (Allison, 2014). Despite this, the Russian leadership also views itself as a guarantor of peace, justifying its policies towards the crisis as preserving the international legal order from actors intentionally violating basic principles of law through the incitement of revolution in Kiev (Putin, 2014), through the protection of the Russian diaspora (ibid), and through the maintenance of regional stability and order (Lavrov, 2015). Russia has therefore engaged in peace-brokering in Geneva and Minsk, and continues to deliver humanitarian aid, albeit under controversial circumstances, to the worst affected areas of the fighting.

Problematically, Russia has been selective about the doctrine and practice it has engaged in. Thus, explanations based on the effectiveness of Russian institutional learning have less bearing on how Moscow has chosen to approach this crisis. Yet, to what extent Russia's response towards this intra-state conflict demonstrates *the* watershed in how it responds to regional intra-state violence is a question which requires further attention. What is certain, however,

*The credibility of Moscow as an impartial third party guarantor has been compromised on particular occasions especially since the early- to mid-2000s*

is that policy towards regional conflict is primarily contingent upon the manner of interaction between Russia's layers of security logics as they navigate a neighbourhood populated by actors who are increasingly looking westwards for their security.

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# TRANSITIONAL TIMES. RUSSIAN AGENCY AND INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

## Momentos de transición. El organismo ruso y la intervención internacional

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Since the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the ongoing Ukraine conflict, speculation has been rife about the likely direction of Russia's foreign policy and its relations with the West. Relatively little analysis has so far situated Russia's actions in a wider context of debate about international intervention and post-modern values. This article seeks to achieve this. Relying on insights from Foreign Policy Analysis in relation to agency-structure debates, it argues that Russia's recent actions have to be seen as a response to longer developments in relation to international intervention. Additionally, it focuses on the need to recognise the impact of units on systemic structures and thus contributes to the literature on the agency-structure relationship. The article situates Russia's foreign policy in the wider context of modern versus post-modern thinking, arguing that the primary driver of Russian foreign policy today is to ensure the international system that finally emerges after the transition from Cold War structures is a reformed one in which Russia has a say and in which firm principles of international law and order are established and maintained.



Abstract

Russia; international intervention; Foreign Policy Analysis; post-modernity; sovereignty; agency-structure

*Rusia; intervención internacional; Análisis de Política Exterior; posmodernidad; soberanía; organismo-estructura*



Key words

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Fechas

*Desde la anexión rusa de Crimea en Marzo de 2014 y el conflicto en curso en Ucrania, han proliferado las especulaciones sobre la posible dirección de la política exterior rusa y sus relaciones con Occidente. Relativamente pocos análisis hasta el momento han situado las acciones de Rusia en un contexto de debate más amplio sobre la intervención internacional y los valores posmodernos, que es lo que este artículo pretende conseguir.*



Abstract

*Apoyándonos en las ideas del Análisis de Política Exterior sobre los debates organismo-estructura, se argumenta que las acciones recientes de Rusia deben ser consideradas como una respuesta a la evolución a largo plazo de la intervención internacional. Además, se centra en la necesidad de reconocer el impacto de las unidades sobre las estructuras sistémicas y por lo tanto contribuye a la bibliografía sobre la relación organismo-estructura. El presente artículo sitúa la política exterior rusa en el contexto más amplio del pensamiento moderno versus el posmoderno, argumentando que el motor primordial de la política exterior rusa en la actualidad es asegurarse de que el sistema internacional que emerge tras las estructuras de la Guerra Fría es un sistema reformado, en el que Rusia tiene voz y en el que se establecen y se mantienen los principios fundamentales del derecho y del orden internacionales.*

## 1. Introduction

Russian foreign policy continues to divide, confuse and perplex us. That has been very clear in the last year and more since the conflict in Ukraine broke out. Predictably, much analysis has focused on the person of Putin himself, what he thinks, his manoeuvrings in relation to other political and economic elites at home and his view of the wider world. However, it is well understood that foreign policy analysis must be situated in a number of levels of analysis and therefore range of contexts. Analysis must also take account of temporal factors, decisions made about the origins of events and actions. This article contends that Russia's interventions into Ukraine since the outbreak of conflict in 2014 must be situated in a wider context of post-Cold War international intervention<sup>1</sup> and seen as part of a wider attempt by Russia to be treated as an equal partner, most particularly by the West. It contends also that this motivation reflects a Russian understanding that the international system has dynamic as well as static qualities and that Russia therefore seeks to influence the structures of the international system and does not accept simply being influenced by them. At the base of much of Russian foreign policy activity lie questions of sovereignty: what is it; who has it; how is it best assured; and who has authority to breach it. These are the defining questions of the post-Cold War world and, as far as academic and policy debates go, nowhere are the stakes as high than in the matter of humanitarian crises and the international interventions that have often been carried out to end them. It is in this arena, however, that Russia and the West have most often become entangled.

The then-US President George H. W. Bush's 1991 New World Order speech set the US and many of its western allies on a post-Cold War course to ensure the protection of the human rights of all citizens, even where that meant breaching the principle of non-intervention into the affairs of states. In the period prior to that, from 1945 and the creation of the United Nations (UN), Cold War structures had resulted in practices that shifted understandings of sovereignty away from interpretations that emphasised sovereignty as responsibility to a point where the rights of states predominated – all too often at the expense of their citizens. Atrocities such as those committed in the 1990s in Iraq, Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo followed in the wake of similar Cold War atrocities and to this extent constituted nothing new. Calls for military intervention after 1991, however, were made in the context of a changing international system in which new possibilities for action were identified and in which the subversion or

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1 References to international intervention throughout the article largely refer to military intervention rather than other forms, such as sanctions, that intervention can take.

even bypassing of the UN also became possible, even deemed necessary. The First Gulf War and subsequent incursions onto Iraqi territory set the stage for an ongoing debate about the interlinked concepts of sovereignty, (non-)intervention, responsibility and human rights. The US and some of its western allies, notably France and the UK, played an important part in raising and shaping the debate but Russia, as early as Bosnia in the early 1990s, had grave concerns about the dangerous consequences of interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign states. It was in relation to Kosovo that Russia's position on so-called humanitarian interventions began to crystallise and for nearly a decade, Russia rhetoric on this was consistent with its actions. Its invasion of Georgia in August 2008 and annexation of Crimea in 2014 gave the lie to the rhetoric, however. Some states, it seemed, were more sovereign than others.

This article seeks to understand the logics by which Russia can, on the one hand, argue that states are sovereign and any breach of their sovereignty a breach of international law and, on the other, invade the sovereign territories of two neighbouring states, arguing that these do not constitute breaches of sovereignty. The work is theoretically informed by Foreign Policy Analysis, specifically in relation to the need to ensure the application of an interactive approach that sees actors as responding to each other as well as to domestic and international structures (Hermann, 1995). After setting out the rationale for such arguments and identifying the further implications for analysis, the article moves to setting out the contexts in which Russia has formulated its ideas on international intervention. It argues for a return to debates about whether the international system reflects modern or post-modern values, a debate sidelined by the events of September 11, 2001. In the final section, I examine what Russia has said in relation to international intervention, arguing that its proclamations and policy must be understood as emerging in a time of transition, for Russia as a state, as well as the international system itself.

*The US and some of its western allies played an important part in raising and shaping the debate but Russia, as early as Bosnia in the early 1990s*

## 2. Interactive theorising in Foreign Policy analysis

That actions breed reactions is a given in foreign policy and persuasive arguments have been made that direct us to understand why any actor behaves in the manner that it does. Twenty years ago, for instance, the question was posed:

How does one create an interactive theory that takes the perspective of an actor in the system, rather than that of the system itself, while at the same time taking into account that the actor is constantly responding to perceived external feedback to its prior actions, new initiatives of others, differing situations, and shifts in the international structure? (Hermann, 1995, p. 256)

This was an argument to see that the unit and cognitive levels of analysis (Ziegler, 2012) were not disconnected from the structural one. However, the disadvantage of such subjective accounts has since become clear. They have led to *cul de sacs* in analysis of foreign policy with agreement on what constituted the original action seldom achieved. As a result, in analysing Russian foreign policy today, all too often analysis falls into us and them type argumentation featuring finger pointing and talk of “inevitable” in responses. Such blocks reflect a wider failure to consider sufficiently i) the agency that actors have in respect of the alternative responses and ii) that actors do not merely respond to structural shifts, they also create them.

To take the first of these, ultimately, it must be remembered, all actors have choices available to them. Even those who lean more towards the structure side of the agency-structure debate can (albeit they do not always do so) recognise that structure does not dictate the nature of the reaction. That this is so has been amply demonstrated by those who focus on agency (Hudson, 2005), particularly at the cognitive level (Danilovic, 2002; Holsti, 1970; Johansen, 1980; Mintz, 2002). Empirical evidence also suggests a high level of self-evidence for arguing for a good degree of agency, else how do we explain weaker actors outperforming their stronger competitors? In contributing to the fight to find a resolution of the agency-structure debate, Carlsnaes has persuasively argued that:

Whatever specific solution is proposed for the agency-structure problem, it must at a minimum include the notion that agents produce and reproduce, while *par passu* being determined by, international and domestic social structures. This constitutes, broadly speaking, the “codetermination” aspect of the issue. (1992, p. 260)

This article therefore recognises that other actors’ behaviour may have produced responses in Russia but that a) Russia had a choice of responses to make; b) Russia’s responses will have elicited responses from others; and c) all the agents’ responses have capacity to wreak change upon international structures. Through a focus on Russia’s responses to developments in international intervention in the post-Cold War period, I argue that the structures in respect of intervention have been and remain in a time of transition and that this transitional period facilitates an even greater potential for change than in more settled times. In addition, Russia itself is in a time of transition – adapting to the loss of the Soviet Union while still seeking to retain its influence, both regionally and globally. At the cognitive level, depending on the subject of the analysis, transition is more common as leaders and/or their advisors and ministers come and go.

My arguments for seeing the international system as being in a period of transition are supported by the developments we have seen in relation to humanitarian intervention, discussed in more detail below. However, those developments themselves need to be situated within a context that explains what the system is changing from and to. Debates about intervention are, it is argued, indelibly intertwined with debates about the modern and post-modern. In the next section, therefore, I examine the literature on the post-modern, situating Russia within it.

*For the decade from 1991 until 9/11, much scholarly literature argued that we had moved or were moving from a modern into a post-modern world*

### 3. Russia in a dual context of transition

For the decade from 1991 until 9/11, much scholarly literature argued that we had moved or were moving from a modern into a post-modern world. The post-modernist literature was rooted in debates about interdependence, globalisation, European integration and international intervention. Since 9/11 and the War on Terror, to judge by the backgrounding of this formerly prominent debate, the post-modern age has retreated. What has been lost in this retreat, however, is an analytical sense of how the sands of the international structures, particularly in respect of sovereignty, continue to shift. For Russia, however, the sense of transition has remained. In the 2000 Russian Military Doctrine, its authors referred to the document as belonging to “a transitional period”, that transition referring not only to Russian’s internal transformation but also that of the “system of international relations” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000). It is only in very recent years, that there has been a suggestion that Russia has completed its own transition (Hellevig, 2012), although this remains in doubt. Russia’s support for Eurasian Eco-

conomic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, its returned focus to the former soviet republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia and its extremely troubled relationship with the EU and NATO are all suggestive that Russia has decided on an Eurasianist identity but more time is needed before such final judgments can be made. International structures also remain contested, most particularly in relation to the concept of sovereignty that should dominate and the emphasis that should be given to the protection of human rights versus the inviolability of state borders. Positioning any actor in relation to a system that is in flux is fraught with difficulties. This is, perhaps, why Russia has alternately been called a revisionist and a status quo power. More usefully, and consistent with the discussion above on agency and structure, Russia is treated here as a reformist state (Konyshev & Sergunin, 2014).

### 3.1. The modern versus the post-modern world

As Syria's conflict continues, it is estimated by the UN that over 200,000 have died, 1 million been injured and 7.6 million displaced (OCHA, 2015). Syria is yet another in a long line of civil conflicts that have made the world ask whether it is really more important to protect the sovereignty of states than to protect those citizens for which those states have responsibility. In the 1990s, after the genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda, this question was at the top of many scholarly agendas, culminating in a body of literature that argued we were witnessing the materialisation of a post-modern state system. The emergence of the European Union in 1992, a firm declaration of the desire or certain European states to unite politically as well as economically, also gave impetus to this debate. The fact of and response to 9/11 brought an abrupt halt to such analyses. Yet many of the same phenomena that occasioned the modern versus post-modern debate remain in evidence. In this section, that debate is rehearsed in order to demonstrate the nature of the context in which Russia is operating and to reveal, therefore, its capacity to affect international structures.

The Westphalian state system is the beginning of the modern state system, characterised by an emphasis on state sovereignty, defined territories, the balance of power and an international state system based upon these basic principles (Caporaso, 1996; March & Olsen, 1998). The post-modern era is characterised by changes in state borders, fragmentation and increasing contact at the national, international and sub-national levels that undermines state autonomy (March & Olsen, 1998). These are accompanied by the rise of international-level institutions, organisations, networks, etc., which also compromise state dominance. Michael Smith (2003) speaks of a “post-modern’ or ‘post-sovereign’ foreign policy” where power and resources are “diffuse” (2003, p. 569). Wallace (1999), also remarks upon the blurring between the domestic and the foreign, concentrating in part on the emergence of collective security measures, and arguing, essentially, that post-modernism in this respect is dependent upon the absence of threat (1999, p. 519). One of the reasons for the decline of the post-modern debate after 9/11 was precisely this association with security; the attacks on US territory seemingly gave the lie to any idea that it was not the rules of the modern world that prevailed.

Yet the debate also contained reflections on the ordering of the world and its evolution that remain relevant today. For Trainor (1998), for instance, the modern era began with the end of the feudal, medieval era and post-modernism with the decline of the nation state and the decreasing importance of the individual as compared to the collective. He also characterises the

*The post-modern era is characterised by changes in state borders, fragmentation and increasing contact at the national, international and sub-national levels that undermines state autonomy*

post-modern era as a universe constituted of various communities, each conscious of existing within “ever wider worlds”. Here, as in many of the ideas about post-modernism, are underlying references to globalisation and its effects. States’ awareness of being under scrutiny, for instance, stems not least from the communications revolution that distinguishes the global from the international. The emphasis on deterritorialisation and its effects on state sovereignty, whether in relation to increased contact across people, the increasing emergence and salience of both international organisations and networks or to the blurring of borders between the domestic and the foreign, is common to globalisation literature too. Trainor went on:

The current trend, however, seems to be towards a less contractual/atomistic and more organic/substantive’ view of the international community, one which raises complex questions about the (post) modern state, its role as a medium of the international community and the source of its authority when it acts in the latter capacity. (1998, p. 141)

This argument about the authority of the international community to act was recognised most obviously in the subsequent work of the ICISS (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty) and the acceptance of the Responsibility to Protect by the UN General Assembly in 2005. It is this lack of clarity about authority to act that also captures the concerns of Russia, not least because arguments about a post-modern world order seemed most often to reflect the argument that the modern world’s structures were defunct, delegitimised and therefore could be bypassed, for Russia the most obvious proof being the 1999 NATO bombing of Belgrade in response to the crisis in Kosovo.

Perhaps the most definitive argumentation on modernism and post-modernism, however, is delivered by Robert Cooper (2000, 2004). Despite agreeing that the origins of the modern state system lie in Westphalia, Cooper said no single political system was discernible in today’s world. He identified a three-way division: the pre-modern, modern and post-modern worlds and contended that states could, under certain circumstances (war, civil war, for instance), descend into the chaos of the pre-modern era, becoming, in effect, “pre-states” (Cooper, 2004, p. 1). In the modern state system, “the classical state system remains intact”; the status quo is retained through balance of power or hegemonic tactics; states are sovereign, so domestic and foreign affairs are separate and the principle of non-intervention is vaunted; states monopolise force, important in this conception of the world where security is achieved through the exercise of force. For Cooper, the post-modern had some way to go, for, “[t]he concepts, values and vocabulary of the modern world still dominate our thinking” (2000, pp. 16-17). For him, the post-modern world was brought into existence with the Treaty of Rome and the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), although Cooper contends that these two treaties constitute only a step into a post-modern world. Full transition is contingent particularly upon the development of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but other institutions seen as belonging to this order were identified as The Court of Human Rights, the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. What each of these has in common is monitoring and therefore a high level of transparency. Therefore, for Cooper, distinguishing itself from the modern system, the post-modern system lacks the reliance on balance and de-emphasises sovereignty, the line between the domestic and the foreign as well as borders. Echoing Wallace (1999), Cooper said, “[i]n this environment security, which was once based on walls, is now based on openness and transparency and mutual vulnerability” (Cooper, 2004, p. 30).

*The most definitive argumentation on modernism and post-modernism, is delivered by Robert Cooper*

**Table 1: Modern versus Post-Modern**

Modern	Post-Modern
State sovereignty	State autonomy undermined by increasing contact at international level
Non-intervention	Humanitarian intervention
Defined territory	Fragmentation: shared responsibility for borders
Balance of power	Collective security
International state system	Internationalism: increasing numbers of international institutions & organisations
Separation of domestic and foreign	Blurring of domestic and foreign
State monopoly of force	Diffusion of power and resources
Defence of status quo	Transformation

Table 1 sets out the differences between the modern and post-modern. It renders visible also the fact that the West, versus the Rest, falls most easily into the post-modern column. Indeed, Cooper<sup>2</sup> claimed membership here for the EU Member States<sup>3</sup> but warned also that these types of relations pertained only to intra-EU relations and that bilateral relations between an EU state and a non EU state might still be defined by the rules of the modern state system. Russia was singled out as “an important problem” (2000, p. 27), with signs that it could meet the conditions of any of the three types of state, although ultimately Cooper argued against a pre-modern categorisation. Arguments for Russia as a modern state resided in the power of the state itself and the continued reliance on balance, claims made all the forcible by events since then. A possible Russian claim to post-modernism was substantiated by the CFE Treaty and the initial presence of OSCE observers in Chechnya; claims undermined again by Russia’s withdrawal from one and evident doubts about the other. Cooper understood, however, the vulnerability of the post-modern world and therefore the security logics that might prevail:

[C]haos, or at least the crime that lives within it, needs the civilized world and preys upon it. Open societies make this easy. At its worst, in the form of terrorism, chaos can become a serious threat to the whole international order. (Cooper, 2004, p. 77)

As a final point on the post-modern world, it is important to remark that the role of norms and ideas is elevated here. Power takes on ideational connotations and the international world is conceived of as an intersubjective rather than objective reality, implying a large measure of dynamism and the capacity of international actors to shape their own practices. However, much of the post-modern literature emerged primarily as a commentary on the experiences of the Western world, particularly Europe. Much also, Cooper excepted, suggested a somewhat linear quality to developments internationally. The abrupt cessation of the debate meant that

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2 It is worth remembering that this was four years prior to the enlargement to former Soviet and satellite states.

3 Wallace (1999) claims that the five states situated around the Rhine valley and delta constitute the post-modern core.

little attention was paid to when and how certain aspects of post-modernism were taken up by non-western states as the developments associated with post-modernism impelled other actors into more intensive integrative tendencies. For impelled they were, as the following quote from the former Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ivanov, makes clear:

But why should Russia participate in everything? Maybe we should limit our actions to the sectors which directly affect the interests of the country? Such an approach does not take into account the situation in the context of globalization. The contemporary world is very interdependent and interrelated. Security is indeed today more indivisible than hardly ever before. In support of this thesis I will cite but one example – the entry of Switzerland into the United Nations.

Is any further proof necessary that a common understanding has formed in the world of the need for collective efforts and of the indivisibility of security. (Ivanov, 2002)

Also under-analysed was the question of how post-modern structures emerged and how they could be sustained. For all the talk of “absence of threat”, the EU, the flagship organisation of post-modernism, emerged from threat and the desire to overcome its worst effects. As we have seen cracks in the European Union emerge, however, one cannot help but wonder whether a continued focus here may also have brought policy suggestions about how to maintain forward progress.

Another critical absence noticeable now is an understanding of whether and how the emergence of the EU has spawned the appearance of other regional organisations and, crucially, how each impacts upon the other. Cooper’s insights in relation to how states could step back into and well as forward into different eras deserve attention now in the context of the advent of Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), a regional organisation that abuts with the EU. The EEU reflects both Russia’s response to the sense of threat it feels from EU enlargement, as well as its own and others’ understanding that collective action and integration can bring benefits that make any reduction in sovereignty worthwhile. As far as external actors go, when the EEU was first mooted, few, if any concerns were expressed by other actors, indeed the World Trade Organisation spoke benignly of itself and one of the EEU’s earlier precursors, EurAsEC (Eurasian Economic Community) as “overlapping” arrangements (World Trade Organization, 2011, p. 5). On the one hand, the creation of Eurasian Economic Union and its intentional modelling upon the European Union would look to be a positive step, indicating Russia had accepted some of the precepts of the post-modern world and was committed to regional cooperation and integration. After all:

For those concerned with international order, regionalism has many positive qualities. Aside from promoting economic, political and security cooperation and community, it can consolidate state-building and democratization, check heavy-handed behaviour by strong states, create and lock in norms and values, increase transparency, make states and international institutions more accountable, and help to manage the negative effects of globalization. (Fawcett, 2004, p. 429)

On the other hand, the Ukrainian conflict, originating in a clash in 2013 between ideas on whether integration into the EU or EEU represented the better alternative for Ukraine, suggests that ordering arrangements associated with the post-modern world bring as much capacity for conflict as those of the modern.

*For all the talk of “absence of threat”, the EU, the flagship organisation of post-modernism, emerged from threat and the desire to overcome its worst effects*

## 4. Russian responses to international intervention

The questions of what constitutes humanitarian intervention, who should undertake it, under what circumstances and when have occupied much space in debate about international relations and the relationship between states and their citizens. The United Nations itself, born out of the failures of the League of Nations, is built on an understanding that states are sovereign but that sovereignty is not without limits. Protection of human rights also sits at the heart of the UN identity. Practice in the years between 1945 and 1991, however, strayed far from a belief that sovereignty did not grant states the right to behave as they would without impunity, prompting, amid a changing international system, Bush Senior's once famous, now infamous, New World Order speech in 1991 in which in reference to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, he said:

What is at stake is more than one small country; it is a big idea: a new world order, where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind -- peace and security, freedom, and the rule of law. [...]

We will succeed in the Gulf. And when we do, the world community will have sent an enduring warning to any dictator or despot, present or future, who contemplates outlaw aggression.

The world can, therefore, seize this opportunity to fulfill the long-held promise of a new world order, where brutality will go unrewarded and aggression will meet collective resistance. (Bush, 1991)

This speech and the actions that followed were possible in the context of a time when the Berlin Wall had fallen and the Soviet Union was liberalising. A mere eight years later, however, Russia was questioning the new world order that had emerged.

### 4.1. The Kosovo crisis

The crisis in Kosovo that captured the attention of the world in 1998 has proved to be the pivotal moment in the opposition of Russia to the Western narrative of humanitarian intervention. It is not necessary to tell the story of the events in Kosovo here, except to identify the crucial verdict on the legality or otherwise of the NATO action against Belgrade. The question of legality centred on whether the UN had authorised the NATO air strikes that began in March 1999. Article 2 of the UN Charter relating to the sovereignty of states became relevant in the legality debate, as was Art. 24.1., which confers the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security on the UN. When either voting for or abstaining from UN Security Council Resolutions 1160, 1199 or 1203, Russia was on record, stating its position that none authorised the use of force (United Nations, 1998a, 1998b). Art. 33.1. under Chapter VI on dispute settlement was an additional focus given the relatively quick resort to use of force to end the crisis.

On less than firm ground with legalistic arguments, the case was made for intervention on humanitarian grounds: "[t]his is a just war, based not on any territorial ambitions but on values. We cannot let the evil of ethnic cleansing stand" (Blair, 1999). NATO was requiring states (Russia) to make a conceptual leap that was not underpinned by international law or even wide agreement. It was true that the Preamble to the UN Charter offered some scope with its emphasis on Rights and this, coupled with the experiences of Bosnia and Rwanda in the preceding years led to advocates of the NATO intervention arguing that its critics (Russia) were relying on

*The crisis in Kosovo in 1998 has proved to be the pivotal moment in the opposition of Russia to the Western narrative of humanitarian intervention*

outdated concepts, constituting a grossly prejudicial position. Russia simply continued to play by the rules of the modern world order, of which it believed itself and all other states, to be a part. The failings of the UN system should also be acknowledged, however. The inevitable boycotting by Russia and China of a further UN Resolution to authorise military action against Belgrade was reason enough, seemingly, to permit the breach, indeed it forced it. Russia was not alone though in questioning the legality of the NATO action. The point for dissenters was that defence of human rights is not the primary basis of international law while the inviolability of sovereign states is. To this end, Bradshaw says, “[b]ombing Serbia was not merely a case of preventive, or coercive, diplomacy. It was aggression. It was also illegal” (Bradshaw, 1999, p. 5).

The ultimate verdict on the NATO air strikes was that they were illegal but legitimate. This put Russia on the wrong (modern) side of the debate about the relative priority of state sovereignty versus human rights in international relations. But for the Russians this was not just about a traditional sphere of influence, nor was it solely about the European security architecture. This was about the role of the state, what protections were available to it and, crucial to this last point, the role of the United Nations:

In our eyes, an extremely dangerous precedent for the resolution of situations of conflict has been established -- not on the basis of the UN Charter, of international law, the principles and norms of the OSCE, but on the basis of a primitive law of force. (Yeltsin, 1999, p. 62)

Fedorov (then-President of the Foundation for Political Research, Director of the political programmes of the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy) explained further the significance as Russia saw it:

For the first time, over the last ten years one of the sides in this world has not only secured a military-political victory, but is using the results sufficiently openly to form its own new policy on a global scale. We need to honestly tell ourselves that the Kosovo crisis has become the de facto beginning of a new political redivision of the world, the depth and limits of which will be determined above all by the USA and NATO. (Fedorov, 1999, p. 19)

Legitimacy had now become a major problem as the post-modern met the modern world. Insufficient attention was paid in the West at this point to the fact that post-modernity was easily interpreted as a fig leaf for Western ambitions. From the perspective of non-Western states, the future shape of world politics looked as if was being decided by a few states and would be the result of the definition and implementation of a few states’ foreign policy objectives. This was precisely the point that Russia appreciated early on and on which it sought a wider debate. The UN was sidelined during the Kosovo Crisis and it was this event that sparked off much subsequent discussion about whether the UN still had a role to play in international relations and what that role should be (Glennon, 2003). Yeltsin’s claim in the midst of the airstrikes that: “We are on a higher moral plane than the Americans” (in Ulyanov, 1999, p. 1), however, would be fatally undermined by its own actions in Georgia 2008 and Ukraine 2014.

*Legitimacy had now become a major problem as the post-modern met the modern world*

## 4.2. From Georgia to Ukraine

The events of the recent years confirm that without lasting peace and sustainable development, it is impossible to ensure human rights. In its turn, the protection of human rights should contribute to security and development of people rather than serve as a pretext for illegal interference in the domestic affairs of States. (Lavrov, 2012)

It is precisely this type of discourse that gives cause to wonder whether Russian actions in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine 2014 were motivated, in part anyway, to make clear the dangers of the path Western states have taken in relation to international intervention. Certainly, the statement encapsulates the central difficulty in the development and projection of post-modern values in international intervention, i.e. mistrust over motives. This is not to suggest such mistrust is inevitable, rather, it can be a response to others' actions.

9/11 came in the very early days of Putin's first term in presidency. Russia had itself been on the receiving end of terrorist acts and for this reason, initially stood by the US in its War on Terror, arguing that this was part of a global fight against terrorism. Like George W. Bush, Putin painted this as a clash between the civilised and uncivilised world.<sup>4</sup> By 2007, Russian discourse had shifted into a much more critical stance in which the world was portrayed as unipolar.

Unilateral and frequently illegitimate actions have not resolved any problems. Moreover, they have caused new human tragedies and created new centres of tension. [...]

We are seeing a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law. [...] One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. [...] Well, who likes this? Who is happy about this? (Putin, 2007)

It was not that Putin ignored the dilemma presented to the world by conflicts inside states.

When the UN will truly unite the forces of the international community and can really react to events in various countries, when we will leave behind this disdain for international law, then the situation will be able to change. Otherwise the situation will simply result in a dead end, and the number of serious mistakes will be multiplied. Along with this, it is necessary to make sure that international law have a universal character both in the conception and application of its norms. (Putin, 2007)

Ignoring the disingenuous nature of this rhetoric, what successive conflicts, crises and international interventions had shown was that it was vital to see the further development and application of international law; vital too that law was not seen to be applied in a partial fashion. Just a year after the Munich speech, Russia would invade Georgia, without impunity. The International Criminal Court, still opposed by China, Russia and the US, has so far only opened investigations into cases related to conflicts on the African continent. This situation suggests that justice is partial and that powerful states are immune from its application. Events in Georgia 2008 and Ukraine from 2014 suggest Russia has internalised this message.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Georgia's territory comprised two regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which had had a high degree of autonomy under the USSR. In the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, both sought independence from Georgia. Early violence was stemmed in South Ossetia with the intervention of the OSCE and the 1992 Sochi ceasefire agreement, which established an OSCE observer mission and a CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) peacekeeping mission. Abkhazia's conflict reached the UN. As a result, in 1993, a UN Monitoring Mission, UNOMIG, was authorised under UNSC Resolution 858, to verify compliance with the ceasefire agreement that had been reached in 1992 between Georgia, the Abkhaz forces and Moscow. Often described as two frozen conflicts, in fact, small

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<sup>4</sup> See O'Loughlin, Ó Tuathail & Kolossov for a detailed analysis of Russian discourse on 9/11.

flare-ups between them and Georgia have been a condition of their situation since the fall of the USSR. What made Georgia's attack on rebels in South Ossetia in August 2008 different this time was that it came in the wake of a seeming promise earlier that year of eventual NATO membership to Georgia.

Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008 occurred while the eyes of the world were focused on the Beijing Olympic Games. The Russians cast their actions as a defence of Russian citizens, an argument that is heard with disquiet today in those places with ethnic Russian citizens, not least the Baltic States. Then-President Dmitry Medvedev sent an additional message about what the Georgian hot war signalled for Russia:

[...] the recent events in the Caucasus signify the end of any illusions that still remained after Russia became an independent state. [...] These were illusions that the world is a fair place, the security system based on the current division of political influence is optimum and keeps the world in balance, and the main players on the global political stage are in a state of equilibrium. But none of this is so. (Medvedev, 2008)

In expressing his (and Russia's) disappointment with developments so far, Medvedev also identified the problem as he saw it.

I do not think the bipolar world that existed during the years of confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact has any future prospects. But it is just as clear today that the single-polar world is completely unable to manage crisis situations. (ibid)

He went on to speak of the necessity of states following international law and of making a place for Russia at the decision-making table. At this point, Medvedev compared this moment in Russia's history to that of 9/11 in the US psyche (Medvedev, 2008), the thrust of the message that this was a turning point and one that needed to be recognised in the same way as 9/11 had been. Again, this was evidence that Russia believed it was neither impossible nor too late for others to impact on western-imposed structures. What was missing, however, was the coalition of support for the Russian message of Russians, versus Georgians, as victims, in the same way that had come for the US in their message. This was not least because it was difficult to avoid the idea that Russia's invasion of Georgia was motivated primarily by an attempt to prevent further NATO (and EU) enlargement eastwards

In this latter regard, the Russian reaction was very successful, not least because it has suffered few, if any, repercussions. Indeed, in 2009, Russia vetoed the rollover of UNOMIG's mandate, which therefore ceased. Further success is seen in developments today. Russia has recognised the secessionist territories, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as independent, signing border and alliance and partnership agreements with them. Further, at the time of writing, Russian troops, setting out the boundaries of the disputed secessionist state of South Ossetia have moved those boundaries even further into Georgian territory than expected (BBC, 2015). As Mchedlishvili (2015) has said, with all its other preoccupations, Europe is unlikely to respond effectively (or at all) to this.

The effect of Russia's unfettered successes in Georgia was for it to grow confident about the extent to which it could regain influence over the former soviet republics (the Baltics, arguably, aside), consolidating its view that the international system structures continued to be in a state of flux and therefore could simultaneously be subverted and influenced. In 2012, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had said:

*The effect of Russia's unfettered successes in Georgia was for it to grow confident about the extent to which it could regain influence over the former soviet republics*

In general, we are convinced that today when the world lives through a transition period that is characterized by instability in the spheres of economy, politics or intercivilizational relations, it is particularly important for the UN member States to be able to rely on accepted rules of conduct, and to agree on a joint response to the threats to global stability. We should not allow irresponsible actions dictated by expedient interests to shatter the system of international law. The world order is threatened by arbitrary interpretation of such essential principles as non-use or threat of force, peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their domestic affairs. (Lavrov, 2012)

Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 suggests this constituted yet another disingenuous statement but it is telling of the fact that Russia, like other states, will take its opportunities, especially where previous experiences (Georgia in this case) suggest they are at liberty to do so. As shown elsewhere in this special issue (see Lewis on Kyrgyzstan), Russia seeks to establish legitimacy for its attempts to maintain primacy in the region. This can be achieved by drawing attention to the many pockets of instability that exist. What Ukraine suggests is that Russia is also willing to create or at the very least exacerbate conflict in order to achieve its wider aim of regional dominance. There is the additional possibility that should not be discounted that Ukraine is Russia's clear message to the West that: *this is where your focus on human rights versus sovereignty gets you. If you want to change us – change yourselves first.*

### 4.3. Concluding remarks

In light of the rather personalised analysis that we often see in Russia-West discourse, this article has argued for a need for analysis to rely more heavily on the insights of existing frameworks, especially those that facilitate the type of intersubjective enquiry that the relationship between Russia and the West demands. Russia's foreign policy often seems to divide analysis in a manner that Chinese foreign policy, for instance, does not. That is in part because Russian foreign policy discourse references the West extensively, often suggesting Russia is a victim of Western attempts to deny it its proper place in the world. It is in part as well, however, because Russia challenges the West to think more closely about its own actions and the likely effects of those. It is important that those challenges are appropriately considered if we are to understand fully the possible range of responses and to understand the impact those responses may have on other actors, as well as international system structures.

Structures, whether at the domestic or international levels, can impel actors to respond (although the manner of that response is not prescribed), but they can also themselves be affected by actors. The analysis here constitutes a reminder too that the dynamic and interactive nature of foreign policy means that no one actor can be held to blame for everything in relation to a conflict such as we see in Ukraine today. Nor, because of the failings of actors b, c or d should we absolve actor a for its reprehensible actions. Thus, adopting a subjective account does not mean forgiving breaches in accepted standards of behaviour but it is a minimum requirement if actors are to understand how to build to a convergence of opinion on important issues relating to international peace and stability, as well as human rights.

As the casualties in Syria and in other ongoing conflicts continue to mount, we seem no closer to having resolved the question of whether the sovereignty of states takes precedence over human rights; and this notwithstanding the Responsibility to Protect. As Russia moves

*What Ukraine suggests is that Russia is also willing to create or at the very least exacerbate conflict in order to achieve its wider aim of regional dominance*

further from the West, so it makes clear that it will use its Security Council veto to prevent military – and other – forms of intervention. China, more used to abstaining in UN Security Council votes on intervention where its interests are not affected, is looking increasingly willing to use its veto as well. This, and other evidence (see Salzman in this issue) is suggestive of a future where China and Russia will stand together to oppose future attempts to secure a UN resolution to intervene in the internal affairs of another state. At the same time, Russia's interventions in Georgia and Ukraine may yet serve to make the West rethink its stance on intervention (and other matters such as EU and NATO enlargement) if it decides that Mearsheimer (2014) is correct and that the Ukraine crisis is the outcome of Western, rather than Russian actions. Per Cooper (2000, 2004), international structures can “regress” as well as “progress” and in future, Syria may yet prove to be the case that signalled a retreat from post-modern championing of human rights into a modern defence of the sovereignty of states, even where that means a failure to protect.

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# EN BUSCA DE COHERENCIA Y RESULTADOS: LA POLÍTICA EUROPEA DE VECINDAD EN MOLDAVIA Y GEORGIA

## Looking for coherence and results: the European Neighbourhood Policy in Moldova and Georgia

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Los dos Estados más comprometidos con la Política Europea de Vecindad en el Este, Moldavia y Georgia, son un buen ejemplo de que dicha política puede tener un cierto impacto positivo en la sociedad, economía y política de los Estados socios a través de la promoción de reformas democráticas y económicas. No obstante, su impacto hasta ahora ha sido considerablemente limitado cuando se trata de resolver los conflictos secesionistas de estos países: Transnistria en el caso de Moldavia, y Abjasia y Osetia del Sur en el caso de Georgia. A lo largo de este trabajo se intentará defender que la razón de ello reside en el hecho de que los intereses de algunos Estados miembros superan los intereses comunes de la UE, especialmente cuando temen las reacciones coercitivas del Kremlin, debido a la importancia energética de Rusia.



Resumen

Asociación Oriental, Georgia, Moldavia, Política Europea de Vecindad, Unión Europea  
*Eastern Partnership, Georgia, Moldova, European Neighbourhood Policy, European Union*



Key words

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Fechas

*The two States that have engaged the most with the European Neighbourhood Policy in the East, Moldova and Georgia, are a good example that this policy could have a certain positive impact on the society, economy and politics of the partner States through the promotion of democratic and economic reforms. Nonetheless, until now, the policy's impact has been significantly limited when dealing with the resolution of the secessionist conflicts of these countries: Transnistria in the case of Moldova, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the case of Georgia. Throughout this paper the author will defend that the reason for this lies on the fact that the interests of some Member States weight more than the EU common interests, especially, when they fear Kremlin's coercive reactions, given Russian energy significance.*



Abstract

## 1. Introducción

Desde noviembre de 2013, la prensa no cesa de escribir sobre la crisis en Ucrania. Sin embargo, muchos han olvidado el origen de este conflicto: el momento en el que Viktor Yanukovich rechazó el Acuerdo de Asociación con la Unión Europea (UE) antes de celebrar la Cumbre de Vilnius. Este suceso desembocó en una serie de protestas pro-europeas que acabó con la destitución del presidente Yanukovich. Ante tal situación, la península de Crimea celebró un referéndum ilegal que ha supuesto la anexión *de facto* de dicho territorio a Rusia. Asimismo, a raíz de ello, las regiones de Donetsk y Lugansk, al este del país, se han proclamado repúblicas independientes *de facto* con el apoyo de fuerzas rusas.

En definitiva, en un año y medio, Rusia ha vuelto a demostrar su falta de respeto hacia la integridad territorial de sus vecinos tras anexionarse ilegalmente Crimea. Desde entonces, la situación de Ucrania amenaza constantemente con desestabilizar el vecindario a pesar de contar ahora con un nuevo gobierno elegido democráticamente en mayo de 2014, liderado por Petro Poroshenko, quien finalmente ha firmado y ratificado aquel Acuerdo de Asociación que fue objeto de las protestas iniciales (Popescu, 2014; Parlamento Europeo, 2014b).

Pero para entender la crisis en Ucrania, y la situación de la región en los últimos años, es muy importante estudiar y analizar los factores institucionales que engloban a este tipo de acuerdos. Los Acuerdos de Asociación son instrumentos legales impulsados por la Asociación Oriental iniciada en 2009 dentro del marco de la Política Europea de Vecindad (PEV), para diferenciar el vecindario sur del oriental y promover así una mayor integración dentro de la UE a los países de Europa del Este y del Cáucaso Sur: Bielorrusia, Ucrania, Moldavia, Georgia, Azerbaiyán y Armenia (Boonstra & Shapovalova, 2010). No obstante, la situación de Ucrania ha provocado que en los últimos meses se hable poco de los otros dos países, Moldavia y Georgia, que también han ratificado su Acuerdo de Asociación en 2014 (EurActiv, 2014; RFE/RL, 2014b).

Según el *Eastern Partnership Index* de 2012, 2013 y 2014, Moldavia y Georgia han sido los países que mejor ejecutaron la PEV dentro del ámbito de la Asociación Oriental, mientras que Ucrania ostenta el tercer puesto (Kvashuk, Solonenko & Ursu, 2013; Lovitt, 2015). Además, mientras Moldavia y Georgia tienen una población aproximada de 4 millones de habitantes, Ucrania tiene una población de cerca de 46 millones (Martín, 2012, p. 363). Por tanto, no sería muy coherente comparar el impacto de la PEV en Moldavia y Georgia junto con Ucrania si se tiene en cuenta esta diferencia demográfica, además de la inestabilidad actual de este último país, ya que difícilmente se podrá considerar la ejecución de la PEV un éxito en Ucrania hasta que no se estabilice la situación.

Por todo ello, se ha considerado relevante analizar los dos casos más exitosos de la Asociación Oriental para así entender mejor la dinámica del vecindario oriental. A lo largo de este estudio se analizará parte de la literatura sobre la PEV y su impacto en el Este mediante el lanzamiento de la Asociación Oriental en Moldavia y Georgia, junto con el papel que tiene Rusia en la región. Posteriormente, se incluirá una tabla donde se resumen numerosos documentos oficiales de la UE relativos a la PEV en Moldavia y Georgia para entender mejor el contexto institucional de la política desde su creación.

Por último, se realizará un análisis teórico del presente estudio para reforzar la hipótesis de que los Estados orientales más comprometidos con la PEV, Moldavia y Georgia, son un ejemplo de que dicha política puede tener un cierto impacto positivo en la sociedad, economía y política

*En un año y medio, Rusia ha vuelto a demostrar su falta de respeto hacia la integridad territorial de sus vecinos tras anexionarse ilegalmente Crimea*

de los Estados socios a través de la promoción de reformas democráticas y económicas. Sin embargo, su impacto hasta ahora ha sido considerablemente limitado cuando se trata de resolver los conflictos de estos países. A lo largo de este trabajo se intentará defender que la razón de ello reside en el hecho de que los intereses de algunos Estados miembros superan los intereses comunes de la UE, especialmente cuando temen las reacciones coercitivas del Kremlin, debido a la importancia energética de Rusia.

## 2. Una nueva política, para una nueva Europa

Tras la caída del comunismo en Europa, la UE no podía ofrecer la perspectiva de adhesión a todos sus nuevos vecinos. De este modo su atractivo se reducía de manera considerable y el incentivo por parte de muchos Estados vecinos para transformar sus instituciones a nivel político y económico era menor; es decir, el *soft power*<sup>1</sup> de la UE en la región se reducía enormemente. Por tanto, la UE necesitaba ofrecer a su nuevo vecindario oriental una alternativa a la ampliación. Con la intención de reforzar iniciativas previas como los Acuerdos de Colaboración y Cooperación (PCA), se creó una nueva política que aumentase los incentivos a través de una mayor integración en la UE mediante, por ejemplo, la liberación de visados a cambio de reformas políticas, económicas y sociales (Dannreuther, 2006, pp.188-190). Así pues, en 2003, la Comisión Europea publicó *Wider Europe* donde proponía una nueva política dirigida hacia los vecinos del Sur y del Este y, un año más tarde, el *Documento de Estrategia* de la PEV salía a la luz estableciendo la nueva política (Comisión Europea, 2003, 2004).

Cabe destacar que el proceso de concepción de la PEV coincidió con la publicación de la primera Estrategia Europea de Seguridad, *Una Europa segura en un mundo mejor* (Consejo Europeo, 2003). En dicho documento se expresa la necesidad de garantizar la seguridad del vecindario para así fortalecer la seguridad de la comunidad europea. La Estrategia también defiende que la seguridad es necesaria para el desarrollo, ya que los países en conflicto cuentan con un desarrollo económico pobre y con unas instituciones políticas muy débiles. Igualmente, el documento reconoce otras amenazas cada vez más presentes en nuestra sociedad como el terrorismo o la expansión del crimen organizado y de los Estados fallidos, pudiéndose referir también indirectamente a la situación que vive Moldavia con Transnistria o Georgia con Abjasia y Osetia del Sur, territorios que suponen limbos legales para Europa.

En definitiva, dos razones principales impulsaron la creación de la PEV: (1) la necesidad de ofrecer una alternativa a la adhesión a los Estados vecinos y (2) la necesidad de estar rodeados por países estables y prósperos aumentando así la seguridad de la región (Kleenmann, 2010, p. 120).

Además, la PEV surge finalmente para ambos el vecindario sur y oriental con cuatro novedades que aumentan su incidencia. En primer lugar, (1) ofrece mayor integración en la Unión en lo que respecta a las cuatro libertades de movimiento (personas, bienes, servicios y capital); (2) La PEV es más selectiva y el enfoque que le da a cada Estado socio está adaptado a sus circunstancias; igualmente, (3) en términos financieros, la PEV dispone de mayor coherencia y cohesión al con-

*Tras la caída del comunismo, la UE no podía ofrecer la perspectiva de adhesión a todos sus nuevos vecinos. De este modo su atractivo se reducía de manera considerable*

1 A lo largo de este trabajo, por *hard power* se hace referencia a la capacidad que tienen ciertos actores de disuadir a otros a través de medidas coercitivas (militares o no). Por el contrario, el *soft power* se refiere a la capacidad de persuadir a otros sin necesidad de amenazarlos, es decir, la capacidad de atraerlos. El *soft power* suele ser una herramienta útil para solucionar problemas desde la raíz, por ejemplo, impulsando valores políticos que promuevan el fortalecimiento de democracias a través de una política exterior de un Estado en una región (Nye, 2011, pp. 20-21, 81-84).

tar con un único instrumento de financiación denominado Instrumento Europeo de Vecindad y Asociación (IEVA) para el periodo 2007-2013; y (4) la financiación de la PEV no solo está mejor distribuida sino que también iba a ser más cuantiosa en comparación con los instrumentos financieros que se dirigían a los países vecinos antes de 2007<sup>2</sup> (Dannreuther, 2006, pp. 190-193).

Asimismo, la PEV se basa en dos conceptos básicos: la condicionalidad positiva —la integración depende del progreso del Estado socio— y la diferenciación de la asociación —la intensidad de la relación con la UE dependerá de los valores que comparta cada socio con la Unión— (Kleenmann, 2010, p. 125). Por ello, la UE es muchas veces considerada como una potencia normativa, es decir, un actor que promueve en el exterior sus normas y valores (Manners, 2002). Por tanto, la PEV puede considerarse como una alternativa a la ampliación y otra forma de extender el poder normativo de la UE. Sin embargo, al no ofrecer la posibilidad de adhesión, esta política pierde gran parte de legitimidad y capacidad (Haukkala, 2008, pp. 1604, 1611).

No obstante, hay un aspecto que preocupa a la UE: su dependencia energética con Rusia. La PEV podría poner en peligro sus relaciones (y sobre todo, sus intereses energéticos) con el Kremlin (Dannreuther, 2006, pp. 194-196). Sin embargo, se puede decir que, en parte, la PEV ha aumentado la coherencia de la política exterior europea en su vecindario. Aunque también la competencia interna que hay entre los Estados miembros que prefieren priorizar los países mediterráneos y los que favorecen el vecindario oriental (o Rusia) no deja de suponer un obstáculo para la correcta implementación de la PEV (Herranz, 2007, p. 273). Pero si la PEV carece de coherencia y no ofrece suficiente incentivo, ¿por qué Moldavia y Georgia han decidido ratificar respectivamente un Acuerdo de Asociación con la UE?

*La UE es muchas veces considerada como una potencia normativa, es decir, un actor que promueve en el exterior sus normas y valores*

## 2.1. Una nueva iniciativa, para una Europa oriental

En mayo de 2009, la Asociación Oriental se lanzó durante su primera Cumbre en Praga tras una propuesta previa de Polonia y Suecia para definir una PEV más orientada hacia esta región y diferenciarla así de las políticas dirigidas hacia los países del Mediterráneo también incluidos en la PEV (Boonstra y Shapovalova, 2010). La rápida creación de esta iniciativa podría interpretarse como una reacción a la guerra de 2008 entre Georgia y Rusia (Pop, 2009, p. 30).

La Asociación Oriental ofrece la posibilidad de firmar Acuerdos de Asociación, dichos documentos incluyen acuerdos de libre comercio extremadamente importantes —Zona de Libre Comercio de alcance Amplio y Profundo (DCFTA)— si se tiene en cuenta que una gran parte de las exportaciones de Moldavia y Georgia van dirigidas a la UE (Kleenmann, 2010, p. 122). Asimismo, la asociación incluye también la posibilidad de firmar acuerdos para la liberalización de visados (Boonstra y Shapovalova, 2010, p. 3). En efecto, en febrero de 2014, el Parlamento Europeo aprobó la liberalización del régimen de visados que tenía con Moldavia (Parlamento Europeo, 2014a).

En cuanto a la iniciativa en sí, desde el punto de vista de la UE, los Acuerdos de Asociación cuentan con una enorme mejoría respecto a los Planes de Acción de la PEV: los acuerdos pue-

2 Antes del Marco Financiero Plurianual (MFP) 2007-2013 (el IEVA comprendía 11.181 millones de euros), la PEV se financiaba con los dos instrumentos empleados anteriormente para la cooperación con países del Mediterráneo, MEDA, y con el espacio ex-soviético, TACIS. Para el nuevo MFP 2014-2020, el IEVA se ha convertido en el Instrumento Europeo de Vecindad (IEV) con 15.433 millones de euros. Véase Parlamento Europeo y Consejo de la UE (2006); Comisión Europea (2013d); Kleenmann (2010, p. 123).

den ser «legalmente vinculantes y cuentan con un sistema de monitoreo y evaluación fuerte que incrementa la posibilidad de una implementación exitosa» (Boonstra & Shapovalova, 2010, p. 3). No obstante, la gran novedad de la Asociación Oriental es su dimensión regional que impulsa una mayor cooperación y un diálogo político multilateral a través de, por ejemplo, las cumbres celebradas cada dos años (Boonstra & Shapovalova, 2010, p. 6).

## 2.2. ¿Una nueva amenaza para Rusia?

La PEV se caracteriza por ser una política estratégica no coercitiva, ya que no conlleva sanciones, sino que ofrece incentivos acordados por mutuo acuerdo e interés. Es decir, la UE ha querido promocionar la PEV como una política exterior ética, un juego de suma positiva donde ambas partes salen ganando (Barbé & Johannes-Nogués, 2008, pp. 81-82). Sin embargo, la PEV difícilmente será vista como una política de suma positiva para todos por parte del Kremlin. No obstante, esta política no debería interpretarse como una iniciativa anti-rusa, sino como la manera que tiene la UE para transmitir su modo de hacer las cosas: con democracia (Wilson y Popescu, 2009, p. 330). De hecho, el documento inicial *Wider Europe* incluía a Rusia, quien decidió rechazar la propuesta al no querer verse al mismo nivel que los otros Estados socios y así reafirmarse como potencia en el vecindario común (Comisión Europea, 2003; Cámara, 2008, p. 90).

Por tanto, Rusia lucha por seguir siendo el país de referencia para gran parte de los países ex-soviéticos mediante, por ejemplo, la Unión Económica Eurasiática entre Rusia, Bielorrusia, Kazajistán, Armenia y, desde agosto de 2015, Kirguizistán (Leonard, 2015). Sin embargo, la integración con Rusia parece limitada, mientras que tampoco se sabe si es compatible con una mayor integración en la UE. De hecho, el establecimiento tan rápido y repentino de dicha iniciativa parece una reacción ante el lanzamiento de la Asociación Oriental: la Unión Económica podría considerarse como una alternativa a las DCFTA. Pero en 2008, las relaciones de Rusia empeoraron no solo con Occidente por la guerra con Georgia, sino que también con su vecindario al reconocer la independencia de Abjasia y de Osetia del Sur y, por tanto, al ignorar la integridad territorial de una república ex-soviética, Georgia (Zagorski, 2012).

Sin embargo, la UE continúa enfrentándose al dilema de cómo compaginar sus relaciones con el vecindario oriental con sus relaciones con Rusia. Una PEV muy fuerte podría ser considerada como una contención de Rusia (Fischer, 2010), un equilibrio de poder contra la influencia rusa. Por otro lado, la PEV también carece de un incentivo muy importante como ya se ha explicado. Al no ofrecer la perspectiva de adhesión, puede que los Estados socios acaben vinculándose más con Rusia al ofrecer más resultados a corto plazo (Dannreuther, 2006, pp. 199-200; Zagorski, 2012). Así pues, parece que la lucha por influenciar a estos Estados es comparable a la dinámica de los mercados: la fuerza de la oferta y la demanda. Mientras la UE está inmersa en su crisis económica, Rusia reclama su papel en la región a través de una política rusa de vecindad informal, con más resultados a corto plazo, mejor financiada y que no solo incluye *soft power*, sino que también *hard power* (Wilson y Popescu, 2009, pp. 317-318).

Uno de los elementos del *soft power* ruso reside en la Iglesia Ortodoxa Rusa que tiene una fuerte influencia en Estados como Moldavia. Otro elemento es el apoyo de Rusia a ciertas ONGs en regiones con gran autonomía e incluso con aspiraciones secesionistas como puede ser Gagauzia en Moldavia. No obstante, Rusia destaca por su uso de *hard power*, como lo demuestra (1) su intervención militar en Georgia o su presencia militar en Transnistria, (2) la amenaza de

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umentar los precios o de cortar el suministro de gas a Ucrania o Moldavia, o (3) el establecimiento de embargos sobre el vino de Moldavia o de Georgia, entre otras medidas coercitivas. Sin embargo, muchas de estas represalias contrarrestan los esfuerzos de Rusia por emplear *soft power* (Wilson & Popescu, 2009, pp. 319-323). En definitiva, la PEV no es completamente criticable, constituye dos grandes y raras ventajas que, por ejemplo, no suele cumplir Rusia: «continuidad política y consistencia» (Soler i Lecha & Viilup, 2011, p. 5).

### 3. El caso de Moldavia y Georgia

#### 3.1. Moldavia y su contexto

Moldavia se enfrenta a muchos problemas que desestabilizan su dinámica política, entre ellos destacan el conflicto de Transnistria, una élite política dividida, la ausencia de reformas consistentes y de un Estado de derecho en funcionamiento (Ventila, 2010, p. 5). Por si fuera poco, desde su independencia en 1991, Moldavia sigue siendo el Estado más pobre de Europa, con una economía precaria y un sistema político todavía inestable (The Economist, 2010). Además, en el momento de la independencia, Moldavia tuvo que decidir si orientarse hacia Rumanía, debido a sus lazos históricos y culturales, o hacia Rusia, debido a su importante comunidad rusófona. Por consiguiente, los primeros años de independencia de Moldavia se centraron más en el debate identitario que en las reformas necesarias (Ventila, 2010, pp. 1-2).

En las elecciones legislativas de abril de 2009, el Partido Comunista de la República de Moldavia (PCRM), quien tiene una posición más bien amistosa hacia Rusia, volvió a ganar por tercera vez. Pocos días después, la insatisfacción de los jóvenes con los resultados de las elecciones y las acusaciones de fraude electoral provocaron fuertes protestas de carácter pro-occidental que acabaron violentamente reprimidas por las autoridades. Pero el Tribunal Constitucional reconoció la legalidad de las elecciones; aunque en julio de 2009 se volvieron a celebrar elecciones ya que el nombramiento del presidente requiere el apoyo de 61 miembros de los 101 diputados que componen el Parlamento moldavo y el poder legislativo no se puso de acuerdo en dos ocasiones. En estas elecciones, la participación fue mayor y el resultado fue similar: el PCRM obtuvo la mayoría de los votos (Ventila, 2010, pp. 3-4; Deyfrus, 2009).

No obstante, en esta ocasión, la mayor parte de la oposición pro-europea decidió formar una coalición obteniendo mayoría: la Alianza para la Integración Europea. Pero la coalición tampoco fue capaz de designar un presidente demostrándose así su fragilidad. Aun así no se volvieron a celebrar elecciones ya que el Parlamento no puede ser disuelto dos veces en un mismo año (Ventila, 2010, p. 4). Cuando en marzo de 2012 se eligió finalmente al actual presidente del país, Nicolae Timofti, en diciembre de 2012, un hombre murió de un disparo durante una cacería en grupo que reunía supuestamente a miembros de la élite política moldava asociados a uno de los partidos de la alianza. El fiscal general, nombrado por dicho partido, intentó cubrir el caso y cuando este salió a la luz, el gobierno se disolvió y los partidos pro-europeos tuvieron que establecer una nueva coalición. Sin embargo, el nuevo primer ministro desde abril de 2013 hasta febrero de 2015, Iurie Leanca, volvió a estabilizar el panorama político de Moldavia (EU ISS, 2013; Trifon, 2013, p. 14) y, en 2013, el país se comprometió exitosamente a firmar el Acuerdo de Asociación (Comisión Europea, 2013c).

Todo ello, a pesar de que Rusia estuvo durante el año 2013 tratando de disuadir al pequeño Estado para que no firmase el acuerdo mediante la imposición de un embargo sobre su vino en

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septiembre —aunque Rusia alegaba que se debía a impurezas en el vino— (Solash, 2013). De hecho, a principios de septiembre de 2013, el viceprimer ministro de Rusia —y también Representante Especial de Rusia en Transnistria— Dmitri Rogozin estuvo de visita en Moldavia y dijo que la firma de un acuerdo con la UE sería una costosa equivocación por parte de Moldavia, mientras recordaba que el pequeño Estado depende completamente de Rusia a nivel energético y amenazaba con frenar la importante inmigración que hay de Moldavia a Rusia (Dempsey, 2013).

Además, según Niemann y Wekker (2010, pp. 27-28), las pocas reformas normativas realizadas por Moldavia son gracias a la UE, por ejemplo, la condicionalidad positiva de la PEV ha hecho que Moldavia ratifique tratados internacionales como el de la Convención de Naciones Unidas contra la Corrupción. Por tanto, Moldavia puede considerarse un ejemplo de que las escasos incentivos de la PEV han sido suficientes para impulsar considerables reformas. Ya el Informe de Progreso en Moldavia de 2006 destacaba numerosos cambios impulsados por Moldavia en acorde con su Plan de Acción en asuntos como la corrupción, la inmigración y la abolición de la pena de muerte (Sasse, 2008, p. 313).

Sin embargo, como lo muestra la crisis política de 2013, es demasiado pronto para asegurar que Moldavia es un caso exitoso de la PEV. Las elecciones legislativas del 30 de noviembre de 2014 se desarrollaron bajo mucha tensión entre partidos pro-europeos y partidos pro-rusos. Los primeros ganaron una pequeña mayoría manteniendo las mismas autoridades políticas en el poder; sin embargo, el partido más votado fue el nuevo Partido Socialista de enfoque pro-ruso. Una vez más los resultados de las elecciones mostraron la polarización de las élites políticas y de la sociedad moldava (The Economist, 2014). De hecho la ratificación del Acuerdo de Asociación en julio de 2014 en el Parlamento moldavo salió adelante con una modesta mayoría de votos a favor, mientras que la ratificación en Georgia tuvo un apoyo político unánime (EurActiv, 2014; RFE/RL, 2014b).

Con el nuevo gobierno desde febrero de 2015 de Chiril Gaburici, elegido en parte con el apoyo del PCRM tras las elecciones de noviembre de 2014 al no haber mayoría en el parlamento, ha habido temores de que se muestre hostil hacia ciertas iniciativas europeas (Ursu & Coalson, 2015). Pero Gaburici todavía no ha tenido tiempo de demostrar su compromiso con la UE, dimitió en junio de este año debido a acusaciones de haber falsificado sus diplomas. Desde finales de julio, el nuevo primer ministro es Valeriu Strelet, aunque puede que no por mucho tiempo, hay riesgo de que se adelanten las elecciones legislativas a 2016 (Călugăreanu, 2015)."

Mientras tanto, en lo que respecta a la resolución del conflicto con Transnistria, la UE ha sido poco eficiente o, mejor dicho, poco coherente. Por ejemplo, en dos ocasiones (2003 y 2006), la UE intentó contribuir con personal de mantenimiento de paz en dicho territorio; en el primer intento, Rusia se opuso; y en el segundo, fueron varios Estados miembros quienes esta vez rechazaron la propuesta: España, Portugal, Francia, Italia, Grecia, Chipre, Eslovaquia, Alemania y Finlandia (Wilson & Popescu, 2009, p. 326).

### 3.1.1. El conflicto en Transnistria

La parte más industrializada de Moldavia se encuentra precisamente en Transnistria, la cual representa el 17% de la población de Moldavia mientras que produce el 35% del PIB, lo que supone una gran pérdida para Moldavia (Izquierdo, 2014, p. 2; Deyfrus, 2009). En efecto, como defiende Popescu (2005), la base de este conflicto es económica y, por tanto, se podría resolver si Moldavia mejorase su atractivo económico y eliminase los intereses económicos que hacen que a los transnistrianos les convenga mantener este conflicto. Como dijo el antiguo ministro *de facto*

*Como lo muestra la crisis política de 2013, es demasiado pronto para asegurar que Moldavia es un caso exitoso de la PEV*

de Asuntos Exteriores de Transnistria, «si Moldavia fuese como Suiza, todos firmaríamos mañana mismo para reunificarnos»<sup>3</sup> (cit. en O'Neill, 2009). En cuanto a aspectos demográficos, Transnistria está compuesta por 500.000 personas, de las cuales el 38% son étnicamente moldavas, 28% rusas y 26% ucranianas; y la gran mayoría son cristianos ortodoxos (Popescu, 2005, p. 15).

Por lo tanto, no se puede decir que sea un conflicto étnico ni religioso, sino más bien económico y de desacuerdo político: tras la independencia de Moldavia, Transnistria quería permanecer en la URSS y es así como se inició una breve guerra en 1992 con el apoyo de Rusia que acabó con la intervención de ejército decimocuarto ruso, el cual ha permanecido allí desde entonces (Popescu, 2005, p. 15). El conflicto armado finalizó con un acuerdo entre Rusia y Moldavia a través del cual este último debía retirar sus tropas del territorio y Rusia mantendría una misión de mantenimiento de paz (Huff, 2011, pp. 27). Asimismo, la OSCE siempre ha estado involucrada en el conflicto de Transnistria a través de su misión y con el inicio de negociaciones de carácter político entre Moldavia y Transnistria donde Rusia, Ucrania y la OSCE participan como mediadores (*five-sided format*) (Popescu, 2005, pp. 16-17). En 2005, los Estados Unidos y la UE se unieron a dichas negociaciones como observadores (*5+2 format*), pero las negociaciones permanecieron congeladas durante años hasta que en 2011 se retomaron, aunque sin grandes resultados por el momento (Wolff, 2012, pp. 41-42).

No obstante, Rusia siempre ha favorecido las negociaciones en formato 2+1 (Moldavia, Transnistria y Rusia) para así no resolver esta disputa evitando que Moldavia se adhiera a la UE u OTAN (Huff, 2011, p. 28). Ante este contexto, según O'Neill (2009), antiguo embajador y jefe de la Misión de la OSCE en Moldavia (2006-2008), existen cinco posibles escenarios para el futuro: (1) Transnistria y Moldova se reúnen, pero la primera mantiene una cierta autonomía; (2) Transnistria se independiza por completo, aunque no es seguro que sea internacionalmente reconocida ni que pueda subsistir sin ayuda económica de otro Estado; (3) Transnistria acaba anexionándose a Rusia o (4) a Ucrania; (5) la situación continúa como está, *statu quo*.

Mientras, la UE ha apoyado a Moldavia más bien en términos diplomáticos. En 2003, la UE decidió prohibir a los líderes de Transnistria el derecho a viajar a la UE —aunque solo cuando así lo hicieron los Estados Unidos—. En 2005, la UE nombró a un Representante Especial para Moldavia e inauguró una delegación en Chisinau (Niemann & Wekker, 2010, p. 29; Sasse, 2008, p. 312). Sin embargo, Moldavia es un buen ejemplo de cómo la PEV ha impulsado la cooperación regional entre sus vecinos para aumentar la estabilidad. En 2005, Ucrania y Moldavia acordaron con la UE una Misión de asistencia fronteriza (EUBAM). Los objetivos principales de la EUBAM eran compartir la experiencia europea para proteger las fronteras de tráfico ilícitos y aumentar la cooperación aduanera entre Moldavia y Ucrania (Huff, 2011, p. 20). En efecto, a través de esta misión, Ucrania se comprometió a solo aceptar productos de Transnistria si llevaban el sello de Moldavia y, para ello, Moldavia facilitaría el acceso a dichos sellos a las empresas transnistrianas (Sasse, 2008, p. 312), lo que ilegitima a Transnistria, dándole a entender que no puede tener su propio comercio sin pasar antes por las autoridades moldavas.

*En su plan de política exterior de 1998 a 2002, Moldavia especificaba como objetivo estratégico su integración en la UE*

### 3.1.2. Las relaciones con Rumanía

En su plan de política exterior de 1998 a 2002, Moldavia especificaba como objetivo estratégico su integración en la UE. Este objetivo probablemente incrementó tras la adhesión de Rumanía

3 Cita traducida por el autor del trabajo.

a la UE en 2007 (Sasse, 2008, p. 311). En efecto, el lazo cultural con Rumanía es muy fuerte debido a su historia común, la actual República de Moldavia era una parte del histórico Principado de Moldavia (región rumana) conocida como Besarabia que el imperio ruso anexionó en 1812. Asimismo, el 80% de la población habla rumano, ya que la lengua de los moldavos es prácticamente idéntica (Deyfrus, 2009). La relación histórica, cultural e identitaria entre Moldavia y Rumanía es tan fuerte que Traian Basescu, antiguo presidente de Rumanía, cambió la ley de naturalización para permitir que casi un millón de moldavos puedan acceder a la nacionalidad rumana (O'Neill, 2009).

Mejor aún, en 2013 se anunció que Rumanía iniciaría la construcción de un gaseoducto con un coste de 28 millones de euros (en parte financiado por la UE) entre las ciudades de Iasi y Ungheni conectando el pequeño Estado a la red europea de gas (Comisión Europea, 2013a). El gaseoducto fue inaugurado en agosto de 2014, aunque sin recibir suministro ya que la empresa encargada de la distribución de gas, Moldovagaz, estaba retrasando la importación de gas desde Rumanía, lo que no es de extrañar ya que la empresa está controlada por Gazprom. Sin embargo, Vestmoldtransgaz recibió la licencia para el transporte de gas en enero de 2015 y la importación de gas desde Rumanía empezó en marzo. Por otro lado, el gas de momento solo llega a una pequeña parte de Moldavia, por eso se está construyendo una prolongación hasta Chisinau que llevará años (Barbarosie y Coalson, 2014; Moldpres, 2015a, 2015b)". Por tanto, el proyecto aún necesita más tiempo y financiación, aunque es extremadamente importante para Moldavia, ya que podría dejar de depender de Rusia en gas, algo crucial si se tiene en cuenta que (1) dos tercios de la demanda de gas de Moldavia es consumida por Transnistria, (2) la deuda que Transnistria tiene con Rusia por el consumo de gas es mucho mayor que la del propio Estado moldavo y (3) Rusia se dirige a Chisinau y no a Tiraspol para cobrar la deuda de Transnistria (Trifon, 2013, p. 13).

### 3.2. Georgia y su contexto

Tras la Revolución Rosa de 2003, se inició un nuevo régimen encabezado por Mikheil Saakashvili, quien durante años lideró un gobierno reformista pro-occidental, pero al mismo tiempo reprimió a la oposición de manera autoritaria (Ditrych, 2013). No obstante, su lucha contra la corrupción en dicho país dio su fruto cuadruplicándose así el presupuesto estatal desde que Saakashvili había asumido el poder (Jégo, 2014, p. 130). Pero aunque el gobierno de Saakashvili haya modernizado el Estado, todavía quedan por hacer muchas reformas en lo que respecta a la democracia. Además, parece que la lucha contra la corrupción fue selectiva, ya que la independencia judicial es aún escasa y sigue habiendo un sentimiento de impunidad (Leonard & Grant, 2005, pp. 2-3). En cuanto a los territorios secesionistas, la actitud de Saakashvili fue mucho más proactiva que la de su predecesor E. Shevardnadze. El presidente intentó reforzar el control de fronteras de ambos territorios separatistas, pero también tuvo otras iniciativas constructivas como ofrecer mayor autonomía a las dos regiones y legalizar la doble nacionalidad (Leonard & Grant, 2005, p. 5).

Sin embargo, en octubre de 2012, las elecciones legislativas de Georgia dieron por vencedor a una nueva coalición, Sueño Georgiano, compuesta de numerosos y diversos partidos de la oposición y liderado por un multimillonario, Bidzina Ivanishvili, cuya fortuna procede de negocios en Rusia. La cohabitación con el ya debilitado Saakashvili no fue fácil en absoluto, sobre todo si se tiene en cuenta que la visión política de la coalición es ambigua y parece más bien centrada en vengarse

*En 2012, las elecciones de Georgia dieron por vencedor a Sueño Georgiano, liderado por un multimillonario cuya fortuna procede de negocios en Rusia*

del gobierno anterior. Por ejemplo, Ivanshvili insistió en aprobar una enmienda constitucional que redujese el poder del presidente. Debido al temor que tenía Saakashvili de que el nuevo gobierno pudiera acercarse a Rusia, accedió a votar a favor de esta enmienda a cambio de que hicieran una declaración conjunta en la cual se reafirmase la prioridad de Georgia para integrarse en las estructuras de la UE y OTAN. Igualmente, existen temores de que la justicia de Georgia esté siendo cada vez más selectiva; al parecer el nuevo gobierno está obsesionado con detener y sentenciar a personas relacionadas con el partido de Saakashvili (Ditrych, 2013). Pero la cohabitación entre Saakhashvili y Ivanishvili finalizó tras las elecciones nacionales de 2013: el Sueño Georgiano volvió a ganar y se nombró como presidente a Giorgi Margvelashvili y como primer ministro al Irakli Garibashvili, quienes también parecen estar enfrentados demostrándose también la fragilidad política del nuevo Sueño Georgiano (Coalson, 2014).

No obstante, es esencial que la UE permanezca presente en la región ya que tiene varios intereses directos en Georgia: (1) que los objetivos de la Revolución Rosa se cumplan para así construir una democracia fuerte en Georgia, la cual sería la primera democracia consolidada en el Cáucaso Sur; (2) que la región permanezca estable ya que está próxima a la cada vez más amplia UE (ahora comparten frontera marítima); (3) que el oleoducto (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) y el gaseoducto (Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum), al igual que otros proyectos en construcción, que pasan por Georgia desde el Mar Caspio no peligren, ya que abastecen en parte a la UE reduciendo su dependencia en Rusia; (4) que no haya una guerra en el continente; y (5) que Georgia no acoja terroristas extremistas propagándose sus actividades por la región del Mar Negro (Lynch, 2006, pp. 66-68).

### 3.2.1. El papel de la UE

En 2003, la UE designó un Representante Especial para todo el Cáucaso Sur con el fin más bien de apoyar los mecanismos de resolución de los conflictos que de intervenir en ellos. Cuando la Misión de observación de las fronteras de la OSCE en Georgia se desintegró en 2004 debido a que Rusia la vetó, Tbilisi sugirió a la UE que cogieran el relevo. La UE planteó cuatro posibilidades: (1) substituir la misión de la OSCE por completo, (2) apoyar una misión similar, (3) lanzar una misión de entrenamiento para las autoridades fronterizas o (4) enviar tres expertos para aconsejar reformas. Por miedo a enfadar a Rusia, la UE acabó decidiendo implementar la opción más pobre de todas: mandó a tres expertos, aunque posteriormente se enviaron más (Popescu, 2007, pp. 10-15).

Por otro lado, como reacción a la Revolución Rosa, entre julio de 2004 y julio 2005, la UE lanzó la Misión de la UE para el Estado de Derecho en Georgia (EUJUST Themis) con el objetivo principal de cambiar el sistema judicial en un único año, un objetivo bastante ambicioso. La misión estaba compuesta por un equipo de ocho expertos encargados de reformar el sistema judicial penal del país (incluida la abolición de la pena de muerte) y de aumentar la seguridad promoviendo el control de fronteras y la cooperación regional (Popescu, 2011, p. 192; Huff, 2011, p. 18).

En octubre de 2008, como respuesta a la guerra entre Rusia y Georgia en agosto de 2008, la UE lanzó la Misión de Observación de la UE (EUMM) en Georgia y con el fin de controlar la retirada de las tropas rusas y georgianas, y el respeto de las minorías y de los derechos humanos en general (Popescu, 2011, p. 194). No obstante, el éxito de EUMM es extremadamente limitado: las autoridades de Rusia, Abjasia y Osetia del Sur le han denegado constantemente el acceso a las zonas en conflicto (Huff, 2011, pp. 22-23). Además, esta reciente presencia en la región

*En octubre de 2008, como respuesta a la guerra entre Rusia y Georgia, la UE lanzó una Misión de Observación en Georgia*

debe tratarse con cuidado: la misión debe estabilizar la situación sin llegar a legitimarla (Freira & Simao, 2013, p. 18). Por ejemplo, la UE lanzó a finales de 2009 una Política de Compromiso y No-Reconocimiento para Abjasia y Osetia del Sur, de este modo puede reforzar relaciones con ambos territorios sin negar la integridad territorial de Georgia (Huff, 2011, p. 33).

### 3.2.2. Los dos conflictos secesionistas: Abjasia y Osetia del Sur

El conflicto en Osetia del Sur es menos importante en cuanto a magnitud. En 1989, la población de esta región era de solo aproximadamente 100.000 habitantes, de los cuales un 66% eran osetas y un 29%, georgianos. A partir de ese año, Osetia del Sur solicitaba ser más que una región autónoma de Georgia: una república autónoma como la de Osetia del Norte en Rusia. Pero en pleno auge del nacionalismo georgiano, durante la caída de la URSS, Georgia decidió retirarle la autonomía que ya tenía lo que inició un conflicto armado (Lynch, 2006, p. 19). Así se inició una guerra civil entre Georgia y Osetia del Sur que finalizó en 1992 con un acuerdo de paz mediado por la OSCE quien estableció desde entonces una misión de observación, mientras que Rusia también estableció una misión de mantenimiento de paz (International Crisis Group, 2007, p. 1).

En el caso de Abjasia, la guerra duró hasta 1994 y fue la ONU quien estableció una misión de observación (UNOMIG) junto con otra misión de mantenimiento de paz rusa (Huff, 2011, p. 32). La guerra de Abjasia provocó el desplazamiento de aproximadamente 280.000 personas, mientras que la de Osetia del Sur (1992) causó menos desplazados internos y eran mayoritariamente osetas que decidieron pasarse a Osetia del Norte (Lynch, 2006, pp. 18-20). Por tanto, en término demográficos, Abjasia ha cambiado drásticamente. Según el censo de 1989 de la URSS y el censo de 2011 de Abjasia, en 1989 había aproximadamente un 18% de abjasios y un 46% de georgianos en Abjasia; mientras que en 2011, el porcentaje de abjasios aumentó hasta un 51% y el de georgianos se redujo hasta un 18% (Zhemukhov, 2012).

Asimismo, en 2009, tras la guerra, Rusia vetó las misiones de la OSCE y de la ONU, lo que provocó que la única misión vigente en el país sea ahora la EUMM (Huff, 2011, pp. 32-33). Mientras tanto, Rusia sigue incrementando su presencia en Georgia y está construyendo una valla a lo largo de la frontera que separa Osetia del Sur con el resto de Georgia, una acción inaceptable ya que restringe a los georgianos el acceso a ciertos recursos básicos como el agua (Ditrych, 2013). Ahora pues, existen cinco escenarios posibles para los conflictos de Abjasia y Osetia del Sur: (1) reconocer su respectiva soberanía internacionalmente; (2) atacar y destruir su gobierno como hizo Rusia en Chechenia en 1999 —una opción en absoluto preferible vista la guerra entre Georgia y Rusia en 2008—; (3) reintegrar los territorios en una Georgia federal a la fuerza o (4) pacíficamente; o (5) mantener el *statu quo* (Coppietiers, 2007, pp. 9-12).

### 3.3. La política europea de vecindad en Moldavia y Georgia

A continuación, se incluye resumido en una tabla un estudio de la legislación y de las comunicaciones oficiales que se han considerado más relevantes en relación con la PEV en Moldavia y Georgia desde su creación hasta la firma de los Acuerdos de Asociación.

*La guerra civil entre Georgia y Osetia del Sur finalizó en 1992 con un acuerdo de paz mediado por la OSCE, que estableció una misión de observación*

Tabla. Documentos de la PEV relevantes para Moldavia y Georgia<sup>4</sup>

Legislación	MOLDAVIA	GEORGIA
Wider Europe, 2003	Comunicación de la Comisión Europea para Parlamento Europeo y Consejo de la UE.	No incluye a los países del Cáucaso Sur (Georgia, Azerbaiyán y Armenia)
	Incluye a Rusia.	
	Con la nueva ampliación de 2004: (1) necesidad de una estrategia en relación con los nuevos vecinos de la UE para no crear divisiones e inestabilidad en la región; (2) necesidad de una política que no incluya la posibilidad de adhesión a corto y medio plazo.	
	Proposición de: (1) mayor integración en UE y cooperación; (2) establecimiento de Planes de Acción; (3) condicionalidad (según cumplimiento de reformas); (4) diferenciación.	
Documento de Estrategia, 2004	Rusia ya no aparece y considera a los tres países del Cáucaso Sur tras publicación de la Estrategia Europea de Seguridad en 2003.	
	Planes de Acción bilaterales diferentes y elaborados según principios comunes. La Comisión Europea es encargada de controlar el progreso en cada país.	
	Conceptos clave: (1) diferenciación, (2) titularidad compartida, (3) valor añadido: de simple cooperación a mayor integración en la UE y otros incentivos.	
Planes de Acción	2005	2006
	Promover más que una simple cooperación bilateral: mayor integración en las estructuras de la UE. Continuar apoyo a la resolución de los conflictos secesionistas.	
	Prioridades principales	
	1) Transnistria 2) Estado de Derecho 3) Libertad de expresión y de los medios de comunicación 4) Sistema judicial y capacidad administrativa 5) Reducción de la pobreza 6) Lucha contra la corrupción 7) Control de fronteras 8) Comercio: origen de los productos 9) Lucha contra el crimen organizado 10) Control de migraciones	1) Estado de Derecho y sistema judicial 2) Perspectivas para la economía e inversión y lucha contra la corrupción 3) Reducción de la pobreza y cohesión social 4) Cooperación en asuntos de seguridad, fronteras y justicia 5) Cooperación regional 6) Conflictos secesionistas 7) Cooperación en política exterior y de seguridad 8) Transporte y energía
1ª Reforma, 2006	Puntos fuertes: (1) integración en la UE, (2) titularidad compartida, (3) Planes de Acción concretos, y (4) IEVA de 2007 a 2013.	
	Puntos flojos: (1) integración comercial, (2) movilidad de las personas, y (3) conflictos congelados.	
	Reformas: (1) negociar DCFTA, (2) facilitar régimen de visados, (3) aumentar cooperación política y regional (especialmente en la región del Mar Negro).	
IEVA 2007-2013	General = 11.181 millones de EUR	
Programa Indicativo Nacional (PIN) 2007-2010	209,7 millones de EUR	120,4 millones de EUR
	40-60% destinado a promover la reducción de pobreza y el crecimiento económico	1/3 destinado a promover la reducción de pobreza y las reformas sociales

<sup>4</sup> Tabla elaborada por el autor del trabajo mediante el resumen de las siguientes fuentes oficiales de la UE: Comisión Europea, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b, 2011, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d, 2014. Comisión Europea y Alto Representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad, 2011, 2013a, 2013b. Comisión Europea y Dirección General de Relaciones Exteriores, 2007a, 2007b, 2010a, 2010b. Consejo de la Unión Europea, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015b. Parlamento Europeo, 2014a. Parlamento Europeo y Consejo de la Unión Europea, 2006.

Legislación	MOLDAVIA	GEORGIA
	Evoluciones destacables	
Informes de progreso en 2007 (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↑ Elecciones locales</li> <li>↑ Reforma parlamentaria</li> <li>↑ Sistema judicial</li> <li>↑ Lucha contra la corrupción</li> <li>↑ Prevención del tráfico de personas y de la tortura</li> <li>↑ Libertad de asociación y de los medios de comunicación</li> <li>↑ Lucha contra la discriminación</li> <li>↑ Apoyo EUBAM</li> <li>↓ Bloqueo negociaciones 5+2</li> <li>↑ Crecimiento PIB<sup>5</sup></li> <li>↑ Reducción déficit presupuestario</li> <li>↓ No progreso significativo en reducción de la pobreza ni en desarrollo sostenible</li> <li>↑ Preferencias comerciales<sup>6</sup></li> <li>↑ Entorno empresarial</li> <li>↑ Lucha contra blanqueo de dinero</li> <li>↑ Derechos de propiedad</li> <li>↑ Cooperación policial y judicial</li> <li>↑ Transporte interno</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↓ Elecciones generales</li> <li>↑ Derecho de las minorías</li> <li>↑ Prevención de la tortura y maltrato en prisiones</li> <li>↑ Sistema judicial y su acceso</li> <li>↑ /↓ Resolución conflictos</li> <li>↑ /↓ Control migraciones y derechos de los desplazados internos</li> <li>↑ Crecimiento PIB, 2007: 12%</li> <li>↑ Déficit comercial</li> <li>↑ Comercio con UE (29,2% del comercio exterior de Georgia)</li> <li>↑ Entorno empresarial</li> <li>↑ Recaudación impuestos</li> <li>↑ Cooperación energética</li> </ul>
Cumbre de Praga, 2009 (Asociación Oriental)	Lanzamiento de la Asociación Oriental bajo los principios de diferenciación y condicionalidad.	
	Acelerar cooperación multilateral a nivel regional y cooperación política e integración económica a nivel bilateral, a través de un Acuerdo de Asociación.	
PIN 2011-2013	273,14 millones de EUR	180,29 millones de EUR
	1/3 destinado a promover democracia y Estado de Derecho	
2ª Reforma, 2011	Destaca la importancia de cooperar con el vecindario para acabar con amenazas que afectan a la nueva frontera de la UE.	
	Resultados limitados hasta ahora: la UE necesita mayor coordinación con Estados miembros y Estados socios.	
	Beneficios mutuos a través de la condicionalidad de respetar el Derecho de Estado y del rendimiento de cuentas mutuo.	
	Nuevo enfoque: (1) aumentar compromiso en la construcción de democracias consolidadas, (2) incrementar integración económica para el desarrollo; y (3) reforzar la Asociación Oriental y la otra asociación regional con el Mediterráneo.	
Cumbre de Varsovia, 2011 (Asociación Oriental)	Progreso en la promoción de movilidad y negociaciones para un Acuerdo de Asociación con Moldavia y Georgia.	
	Evoluciones destacables	
Informes de progreso en 2012 (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↓ Estabilidad política</li> <li>↑ Sistema judicial y lucha contra corrupción</li> <li>↓ Prevención de la tortura y maltrato en prisiones</li> <li>↑ /↓ Libertad de expresión: reforma, pero prohibición de ciertos símbolos comunistas</li> <li>↑ Leyes contra discriminación y para la protección de minorías</li> <li>↑ Participación en EUBAM y negociaciones 5+2</li> <li>↓ Crecimiento PIB en 2012: -0,1% (2011: +6,8%)</li> <li>↑ Comercio con la UE (50% del comercio exterior de Moldavia)</li> <li>↑ VLAP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↓ Elecciones parlamentarias</li> <li>↑ Justicia selectiva</li> <li>↑ Lucha contra la corrupción</li> <li>↑ Detenciones sin juicio</li> <li>↑ Libertad de asociación</li> <li>↑ /↓ Representación y discriminación de minorías</li> <li>↓ Relaciones con Abjasia</li> <li>↑ Reducción desempleo</li> <li>↑ /↓ Crecimiento PIB en 2012: 6,1% (2011: 7%)</li> <li>↑ Déficit de cuenta corriente</li> <li>↑ Entorno empresarial</li> <li>↑ Servicios financieros</li> </ul>
Cumbre de Vilnius, 2013 (Asociación Oriental)	Acuerdo de Asociación junto con DCFTA (firmado el 27 de junio de 2014)	Acuerdo de Asociación junto con DCFTA (firmado el 27 de junio de 2014)
Liberalización de visados	Aprobado por el Parlamento Europeo en febrero de 2014	VLPA presentado en febrero de 2013
IEV 2014-2020	General = 15.433 millones de EUR	
Cumbre de Riga, 2015. (Asociación Oriental)	Implementación de los Acuerdo de Asociación y DCFTA como prioridades principales e importancia de disminuir la escalada de violencia en el vecindario este.	

5 Durante el primer semestre de 2007, el crecimiento del PIB era de un 8%, aunque debido a una sequía, el crecimiento total del ejercicio fue positivo, 4,8%, pero inferior al de 2006 (Comisión Europea, 2008b, p. 7).

6 Entre 2006 y 2007, las exportaciones de Moldavia a la UE aumentaron asombrosamente un 40,8% (Comisión Europea, 2008b, p. 8).

Como se puede observar en la tabla, desde su creación la PEV no ha cesado de evolucionar y de especializarse manteniendo los conceptos de condicionalidad positiva, diferenciación y titularidad compartida. Asimismo, podemos ver cómo en los Planes de Acción se prioriza entre otras cosas los conflictos secesionistas, lo que es coherente con el hecho de que la UE quiera aumentar la estabilidad y seguridad de su vecindario, como bien argumenta la Estrategia Europea de Seguridad del Consejo Europeo (2003). Pero dicha prioridad no se refleja en los presupuestos de la PEV. Como hemos destacado, el primer Programa Indicativo Nacional (PIN) se centraba en la reducción de la pobreza y el segundo, iba enfocado hacia reformas para fortalecer el Estado de derecho.

Otro aspecto destacable es la inclusión de Rusia en el documento *Wider Europe* de la Comisión Europea (2003) aunque finalmente no se incluyó en el *Documento de Estrategia* de la Comisión Europea (2004) manteniéndose así sus relaciones bilaterales fuera de este marco institucional. Otro cambio que llama la atención es que los tres países del Cáucaso Sur no estaban incluidos en el documento *Wider Europe* (2003). Sin embargo, un año más tarde, tras la publicación de la Estrategia Europea de Seguridad, que expresaba su preocupación por los conflictos próximos a las fronteras de la UE, el *Documento de Estrategia* (2004) incluyó la región del Cáucaso Sur en su política. Pero la UE tampoco se involucra realmente en sus conflictos, por lo que la verdadera razón por la cual han decidido incluir la región podría ser más bien por intereses energéticos. Después de todo, la Estrategia Europea de Seguridad también destaca su preocupación por la seguridad energética.

No obstante, aunque la UE no le ponga un remedio eficaz, la seguridad en general no deja de ser una preocupación para la Unión. Tras la guerra de 2008, no podemos hablar de conflictos congelados y la UE necesita estar cada vez más presente en el terreno si no quiere presenciar otra guerra. Además, es necesario que la UE sea consciente de la gran diferencia que existe entre el conflicto en Moldavia, de carácter económico-político, y los dos conflictos en Georgia, de carácter étnico (Popescu, 2005). Asimismo, Transnistria no ha sido reconocido como Estado por parte de Rusia, mientras que Abjasia y Osetia del Sur fueron reconocidos tras la guerra de 2008<sup>7</sup>.

Sin embargo, aunque la PEV no se haya realmente involucrado en los conflictos congelados, esta política ha tenido un impacto en la sociedad moldava y georgiana como podemos ver en los dos informes de progreso que se han seleccionado (2008 y 2013). De hecho, el cambio político pro-europeo de Moldavia coincidió con el lanzamiento de la Asociación Oriental, lo que probablemente haya sido un factor crucial para potenciar sus relaciones. En efecto, tanto Moldavia como Georgia han atravesado un cambio de gobierno que, por un lado, significa algo bueno: la oposición ha llegado a ganar las elecciones; pero, por otro lado, ambos países están gobernados ahora mismo por coaliciones inestables al estar compuestas de partidos muy diversos o por partidos con una dirección política ambigua.

Igualmente, durante estos últimos años, Rusia no ha cesado de sentirse amenazada por la PEV y su Asociación Oriental. Previamente a la Cumbre de Vilnius, en noviembre de 2013, Rusia se aprovechó de su ventaja energética e importancia comercial para amenazar a los Estados socios y convencerles de no firmar el Acuerdo de Asociación, mientras que la UE solo puede ofrecer principios democráticos y una mayor integración en la UE (Dempsey, 2013). En el caso de Ucrania, el Acuerdo de Asociación que iba a firmar en la Cumbre de Vilnius no ofrecía suficientes beneficios inmediatos, además de que Rusia hubiera reprimido económicamente a

*Desde su creación, la PEV no ha cesado de evolucionar y de especializarse manteniendo los conceptos de condicionalidad positiva, diferenciación y titularidad compartida*

7 Ambos Estados *de facto* son reconocidos por Rusia, Venezuela, Nicaragua y Nauru. Previamente fueron reconocidos por Vanuatu y Tuvalu hasta 2013 y 2014 respectivamente (RFE/RL, 2014a).

Ucrania a través de embargos y cortes en el suministro de gas. Esto, junto con el hecho de que la UE se negó a negociar dicho acuerdo con la presencia de Rusia al tratarse de negociaciones bilaterales, hizo que en noviembre de 2013 se iniciase la actual crisis de Ucrania (Rizzi, 2013).

Aun así, la Cumbre de Vilnius tuvo algunos resultados positivos. En primer lugar, Moldavia y Georgia se comprometieron a firmar sus respectivos Acuerdos de Asociación, los cuales fueron ratificados por el parlamento moldavo y georgiano en julio de 2014 (EurActiv, 2014; RFE/RL, 2014b). Por ello, vistos los últimos acontecimientos en Ucrania —a pesar de que el nuevo gobierno finalmente también ratificase en septiembre de 2014 el Acuerdo de Asociación (Parlamento Europeo, 2014b)—, es muy probable que la PEV y su Asociación Oriental se aferren en los próximos años a Moldavia y Georgia, para así perder la poca influencia y estabilidad que le queda a la UE en su vecindario oriental, aunque sería de extrañar que su política hacia los conflictos congelados cambie drásticamente en un futuro cercano.

Además, dichos acuerdos no solo son importantes para Moldavia y Georgia en lo que respecta a la cooperación política, también incluyen las DCFTA. Según un estudio de dos consultorías, Ecorys y Case (2012, pp. A13-14, B9-10), la DCFTA permitirá a Moldavia aumentar sus exportaciones en un 16% y, en el caso de Georgia, un 12%. Esto demuestra que los incentivos de la PEV y de la Asociación Oriental no son tan bajos como muchos autores defienden. En el caso de Moldavia, en febrero de 2014, el Parlamento Europeo acordó un régimen de liberación de visados, lo que es un incentivo enorme si se tiene en cuenta que la economía del país depende de remesas, 24% del PIB en 2012 (Izquierdo, 2014, p. 6). En cuanto a Georgia desde febrero de 2013, la UE ha estado desarrollando un Plan de Acción para la liberalización de visados (VLAP) con dicho Estado (Ditrych, 2013).

#### 4. Una perspectiva teórica

Como ya se ha mencionado previamente, podría decirse que Rusia intenta mantener el *statu quo* de los países *de facto* de la región para prevenir a los Estados involucrados (en este caso, Moldavia y Georgia) de asociarse con Occidente (la UE y la OTAN), quienes durante las ampliaciones de los últimos años han ganado excesiva influencia, desde la perspectiva rusa, en la región del Mar Negro. Por tanto, se puede decir que Rusia ve la PEV como una política que busca un equilibrio de poder contra el Kremlin<sup>8</sup>.

En definitiva, como hemos podido ver a lo largo de este estudio, Rusia destaca por emplear el *hard power* a través de la presencia militar de tropas tanto en Transnistria como en las regiones separatistas de Georgia. Igualmente, el uso de la coerción económica para persuadir a Moldavia y Georgia de, por ejemplo, no firmar los Acuerdos de Asociación es también una muestra de que Rusia es una potencia asidua del *hard power*. Por otra parte, se puede decir que la UE representa a una potencia occidental centrada en el uso de *soft power* mediante el cual cree que puede transformar y cultivar a otras sociedades en los valores comunes de la Unión, siendo

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8 Como el neorealismo o realismo estructural defienden, dentro de la anarquía que supone la arena internacional existe un cierto orden. Este orden viene marcado por la distribución del poder y de los intereses de los Estados, los actores principales de la comunidad internacional, que con la intención de mantener el *statu quo* —una situación de relativa estabilidad— actúan siguiendo el concepto de equilibrio de poder. Es decir, los Estados se asocian o alían entre sí con el fin de hacer frente a otras potencias que puedan estar ganando cada vez más poder y, así, reequilibrar la estructura de la comunidad internacional. Asimismo, según el neorealismo, a través de la cooperación, los Estados se preocupan más por las ganancias relativas, es decir, se centran principalmente en lo que pueda beneficiarles a ellos. Véase Powell, 1991; Waltz, 2000; Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2011, pp. 42-47.

así una potencia normativa, a través de reformas democráticas y liberales. No obstante, la UE debe compartir su influencia en la región con Rusia y es difícil combatir el *hard power*, que aporta resultados a corto plazo, a través del *soft power*, el cual conlleva más tiempo para alcanzar resultados sostenibles: el establecimiento de democracias liberales y la estabilidad de la región.

En efecto, la teoría de la paz democrática defiende que dos Estados democráticos, es decir, con una democracia liberal en funcionamiento, no participarán en una guerra entre sí (Owen, 1994). Por una democracia liberal nos referimos a una democracia consolidada donde no solo se celebran elecciones, sino donde también hay una separación de poderes y un poder judicial independiente, donde se respetan las libertades individuales y el pluralismo político, y donde existe un Estado de derecho y un control por parte de los civiles sobre los militares (Tarzi, 2007, p. 49). Por tanto, el fortalecimiento de democracias implicaría un vecindario mucho más seguro al haber menos probabilidad de que estallen conflictos armados en la región.

Sin embargo, el éxito limitado de la PEV es una muestra de que dicha política ha sido demasiado ambiciosa y que no ha contado con suficientes recursos. Y por recursos no se quiere hacer referencia a una escasa financiación, sino más bien a una falta de voluntad por parte de los Estados miembros de crear una política común y ambiciosa de carácter regional. Por tanto, podemos decir que por mucho que el modelo del neoliberalismo institucional<sup>9</sup> haya funcionado para la creación y desarrollo de la UE como una organización supranacional *sui generis* (Magnette, 2005, p. 190) que desafíe el concepto realista de que los Estados son los actores principales en las relaciones internacionales (Ataman, 2003), parece que su ampliación tiene límites (o que por lo menos necesita un pausa) y que hace que finalmente los intereses propios de cada Estado miembro prevalezcan sobre temas como la política exterior, un ámbito que suele simbolizar la soberanía nacional de cada Estado y que pocos querrán ceder.

En otras palabras, parece que el neoliberalismo institucional acaba cuando el neorrealismo aparece: los Estados no dejan de ser los actores principales de la arena internacional que, después de todo, velan primero por sus intereses (ganancias relativas) y, si eso, por los intereses comunes (ganancias absolutas)<sup>10</sup>. Esta conclusión puede hacer pensar que tal vez la UE sea una potencia de *soft power* no tanto porque crea en ello, sino más bien porque es más fácil ponerse de acuerdo para utilizar las armas diplomáticas que las armas en sí, aunque exista un interés común por mantener en Europa una seguridad económica y energética. Y es en este último aspecto donde probablemente residen las mayores discrepancias. La fuente de un conflicto es muchas veces la escasez de recursos y, actualmente, la escasez de fuentes energéticas. Por consiguiente, es comprensible que aquellos Estados miembros que energéticamente dependen más de Rusia no quieran enfadarla interviniendo en Moldavia. O que aquellos Estados miembros que tal vez puedan beneficiarse de nuevos gaseoductos en el Cáucaso Sur piensen que es mejor intervenir en Georgia, ya que no afecta negativamente a sus intereses energéticos. La diversidad de Estados miembros ha hecho que los intereses sean a veces difícilmente reconciliables y, por tanto, más Europa podría significar una Europa más grande pero menos ambiciosa y profunda en lo relativo al alcance de sus políticas.

*Parece que el neoliberalismo institucional acaba cuando el neorrealismo aparece: los Estados no dejan de ser los actores principales de la arena internacional*

9 El neoliberalismo institucional se basa en la promoción de la cooperación a largo plazo —haciendo hincapié en las ganancias absolutas, por ejemplo, en la seguridad colectiva— y de las instituciones como forma de aumentar la seguridad regional, en el caso de la UE, e incluso internacional, en el caso del Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas. Véase Powell, 1991; Keohane, 1998; Goldstein & Pevenhouse, 2011, pp. 65-69.

10 Véase notas al pie 8 y 9.

## 5. Conclusiones

Tras este estudio se puede deducir que la PEV surgió por una serie de circunstancias: una UE más extensa tras las ampliaciones de 2004 y 2007 y una Europa más reformista tras la Revolución Rosa de Georgia y la Revolución Naranja de Ucrania. Asimismo, la PEV nace prácticamente a la vez que la Estrategia Europea de Seguridad, en la cual se destaca la necesidad de un vecindario estable para una Europa segura. Ciertamente es que la PEV no ha tenido el mismo éxito en todos los Estados socios, aunque Moldavia y Georgia pueden considerarse como las dos grandes excepciones de este fiasco, tras realizar progresos considerables en sus sistemas políticos y economías, y tras decir el sí quiero a los Acuerdos de Asociación.

No obstante, la actuación de la PEV para resolver los conflictos de dichos países ha sido muy limitada. En efecto, a través de este trabajo se ha querido demostrar la influencia que ha tenido el Kremlin en suavizar los objetivos de la PEV. Es decir, con tal de no enfadar a la potencia energética, muchos Estados miembros han preferido no intervenir de más en Transnistria, Abjasia u Osetia del Sur. En el caso de Ucrania, el éxito de la PEV es aún muy limitado, su situación actual es aún demasiado inestable como para afirmar un éxito de la política en el país. Sin embargo, la UE debe aprender de sus limitaciones con Moldavia y Georgia para no cometer los mismos errores con Ucrania, tras la anexión de Crimea a Rusia y la secesión *de facto* de Donetsk y Lugansk.

En definitiva, podemos dar por demostrada la hipótesis inicial: la PEV en el vecindario oriental ha logrado progresos en campos como el pluralismo político o la lucha contra la corrupción en Moldavia y Georgia. Sin embargo, no ha sido lo suficientemente eficaz ni coherente a la hora de intervenir en los conflictos secesionistas de estos dos Estados, debido a que los Estados miembros tienen diferentes intereses con Rusia lo que hace que una política exterior común sea difícilmente ambiciosa. En definitiva, habrá que esperar a ver cómo la nueva Alta Representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad, Federica Mogherini, y el nuevo Comisario de la PEV y Negociaciones para la Ampliación, Johannes Hahn, abordarán los antiguos y nuevos retos del vecindario oriental.

De momento, el Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior y la Comisión han lanzado una consulta, abierta incluso a la sociedad civil, para valorar la PEV y así proponer al Consejo una lista de reformas para este otoño (Consejo de la UE, 2015a, pp. 8-9). Igualmente, la UE está en proceso de rediseño de la Estrategia Europea de Seguridad del 2003 para 2016 (Bendiek & Kaim, 2015), queda pendiente ver si por fin la UE tendrá una posición clara y firme respecto a sus problemas con Rusia.

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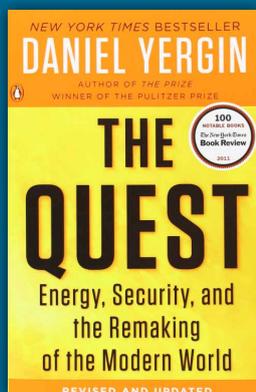
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## RECENSIONES | BOOK REVIEWS

**THE QUEST: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World** | Daniel Yergin

Por David Prieto Steffen



## THE QUEST: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World

Daniel Yergin

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### THE QUEST IN 2015

Daniel Yergin reinforces his position as the foremost analyst of energy policy with *The Quest: Energy, Security and the Remaking of the Modern World*, a 800-plus tome that continues to be relevant four years after its initial publication. Backed by his consulting firm Cambridge Energy Research Associates and his unique exposure to key energy actors, Yergin manages to create an enticing sequel to his Pulitzer Prize winning book *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power*. Like its predecessor, energy and its essential role to the human endeavour continues to be the protagonist, but oil gives way to electricity in an attempt to illustrate the present state of the global energy theatre and how it will play into the future.

Shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union we are introduced to the “Native Son” and president of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, a key actor in the New World of Oil. What ensues in the Caucuses is a derby of pipeline politics at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century where American preoccupations of Iran and Russia’s relations with the Near Abroad would determine the outcome of the \$4 billion Baku to Tbilisi to Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline coined by the Native Son as the “Deal of the Century”. The strategic importance of the BTC supply was accentuated with the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014 – 80% of Russian exports to the European Union passed through pipelines in Ukraine.

What did 9/11, Hugo Chávez, the Niger Delta, and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have in common? According to Yergin, they demonstrate that the threats to reliability and security of supply can come in unexpected ways and collude into “aggregate disruption”. 9/11 triggered the Bush Administration’s War on Terror reducing Iraq’s output after the invasion to zero; Hugo Chávez’s re-election resulted in a countrywide strike that reduced Venezuela’s output to bare minimums; the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta shut 40% of Nigeria’s total output; and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita knocked out 29% of total US oil production and refining capacity. With the demand shock brought by the emerging economies and the proliferation of the paper barrel, crude oil reached the historical peak price of \$147.27 on July 11<sup>th</sup> 2008.

The summer of 2015 has seen crude oil prices plummet to a six-year low with West Texas Intermediate (WTI) futures oscillating close to the \$40 a barrel mark, a current glut in stark contrast to the tight market during the Great Recession. Why? Yergin delves into three key factors during *The Quest* that might give us an idea. First, after the demand shock and birth of the Supermajors described by Yergin, the new world order adjusted to a market accustomed to robust Chinese growth that is currently dwindling, and whose currency, the Yuan, has been devalued.

Second, the current glut in supply is partially a result of unconventional production hailed as the future new

conventional by Yergin. Shale gas grew from 2% to 37% of natural gas supply in the United States between 2000 and 2012. Canada's proven oil reserves were adjusted by an almost fortyfold increase to 180 billion barrels after the breakthrough of oil sands production. In 2012, about 27% of total world oil production was produced offshore in both shallow and deep waters. By definition shale gas and tar sands are not unconventional anymore, and vast unlocked reserves like tight oil, presalt and the Arctic might follow suit to commercial recovery in the following decades.

Third, the Obama Administration is at the influx of what Yergin has coined "The Game Changer". A nuclear Iran that would alter the balance of power in the Gulf and threaten the security of world oil and gas supplies – "the most complex, contentious, and potentially most difficult issue were the risk of energy and foreign policy interests colliding is high". President Obama announced a comprehensive long-term plan that would prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons on July 14<sup>th</sup> 2015. Built on verification rather than trust, Iran's entire nuclear supply chain would be subject to transparency measures for 25 years by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in exchange for a phased relief from international sanctions that would snap into place if Iran were not to follow through. The deal embodies a diplomatic compromise that does not suit particular constituencies both domestically and abroad, yet President Obama's intention to veto any legislation that would prevent its successful implementation speaks for the game changing nature of the deal. The thawing of US-Iran relations has resulted in further supplies of oil in the world market.

The Obama Administration's management of Iran's nuclear program contrasts with the catastrophic management of various crises described in *The Quest*. Albeit Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Hurricane Katrina, Deepwater Horizon and Fukushima Daiichi disasters occurred separately, they all echo Admiral Hyman Rickover's "Investigations of Catastrophic Accidents Involving Man-Made Devices" letter to President Carter in 1979. As Yergin continues into the history of climate and carbon, an ominous analogy surfaces between climate change and the poorly managed catastrophes described previously. Yergin's summary of the official report on Fukushima for the National Diet of Japan (2012) illustrates this:

a "man-made disaster," the result of "a mind-set" of complacency, reinforced by too-close relationships among regulators, company, and politicians. Underlying it all was a "culture" that prevented recognition, discussion, and preparation for a low probability but extraordinary high-impact and highly dangerous accident. As a result, "many opportunities for taking preventive measures" were not taken, and "the measures in place to prevent a severe accident" were "far from sufficient". (As cited in Yergin, p. 416)

The connection between nuclear disasters and climate change might be farfetched, but *The Quest* introduces us to the genius John von Neumann, who recognizes that both simulating atomic explosions and predicting weather patterns were nonlinear problems in fluid dynamics that required vast amounts of computation at break-neck speed.

*The Quest* provides vital context before the upcoming Paris Climate Conference in December. Yergin's exhaustive and impartial story of energy is essential to understand the reality of our economy and way of life, including surprising insights that deconstruct popular misconceptions. For example, Yergin argues that Hubbert's Peak Oil theory is erroneous as most of the world's supply is not the result of discoveries, but of reserves and additions resulting in a peak continuously receding into the future, or rather a plateau. Unconventional production echoes on the supply side what the author calls on the demand side "The Fifth Fuel" – efficiency. Dow Chemical serves as Yergin's poster child for efficiency, that with an investment of \$1 billion saved \$9 billion. For Yergin the fifth fuel is crucial with an industrial sector that consumes a third of the world's energy and is responsible for 36% of carbon emissions. The globalization of demand has blurred traditional state positions as Hu Jintao (2006) declared: "Energy insecurity for China, also means energy insecurity for the United States – and vice versa" (As cited in Yergin, p. 215). The new world order where developed countries outsource their energy consumption to developing countries sees US and China as the largest emitters of carbon dioxide, although the former also accounts for half the world's total budget for climate change research and the latter is the biggest market for wind and the largest manufacturer of solar cells. Moreover, using timely

data Yergin differentiates installed capacity with electricity actually generated to explain the position of renewable energy technologies. Similarly, he also explains how the concept of grid parity obscures the cost to the entire system by focusing only on the direct cost to the consumer.

*The Quest* is driven by one key question – Can today's \$70 trillion world economy be sure it will have the energy it needs to be a \$130 trillion economy in two decades? Yergin concludes with ruthless insight. For the next two decades 80% of world energy will continue to be carbon based. Figures provide us context – 1 trillion barrels of oil have been produced since the Industrial Revolution and there are at least 5 trillion barrels of which 1.4 trillion are commercially recoverable. The crux of the matter becomes fuel choice: coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear, renewables, efficiency,... *The Quest* demonstrates time and time again that the business of electric generation is subject to alternating current of public policy and dramatic swings in markets and popular opinion that lead to major and abrupt changes in direction in what Lawrence Makovich calls "The Quandary". Takayuki Ueda argues that without the San Denchii Kyodai – fuel cells, solar cells and batteries – cutting emissions by 80% will be almost impossible. For Yergin, there is no guarantee

that the investment at the scale needed will be made in a timely way, or that government policies will be wisely implemented. The scale and complexity of our energy system triggers extensive lead times. *The Quest* proves Winston Churchill's (1913) precept to Parliament again and again. The fundamental touchstone of energy security is the diversification of supply, "On no one quality, on no one process, on no one country, on no one route, and on no one field must we be dependent" (As cited in Yergin, p. 267).

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