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Abstract

The gap between the structural reality surrounding Russia and the cognitive level of Russian foreign policy making is highlighted. The literature on Russian foreign policy is reviewed, distinguishing between ‘optimists’ and ‘pessimists’. The analysis differentiates between ‘milieu goals’ and ‘possession goals’ and traces the pursuit of these goals in Czarist Russian, Soviet and postcommunist Russian foreign policy. The conclusion is that possession goals – hard-core realism, as it were – remain the dominant feature of Russian foreign policy (as in the Soviet era). This challenges the theory of democratic peace. This finding is then subjected to a policy-oriented criticism of Russian foreign policy. Three examples of dysfunctional Russian foreign policy are addressed: the misguided pursuit of multipolarity, myth and reality about regional priorities, and Russian self-destructive partisanship in ex-Yugoslavia. The final section raises the eternal Russian questions of *Kto vinovat?* and *Shto delat’?*¹ On the causal factors behind the observed traits of irrationality, the analysis emphasises the volatile, ‘praetorian’ decision-making environment. Concerning policy implications, the dialogue with Russia must address features of realism, for instance by marketing the virtue of internal balancing, and as for concessions, formally dismiss foreign policy doctrines of spheres-of-influence like the Monroe doctrine as anachronistic in an era of globalization.

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¹Students of Russia will recongize ‘*Kto vinovat?*’ (‘Who is to blame’) as the title of a classical work by the Russian political thinker Alexandr Herzen published in 1845. The title ‘*Shto delat’?*’ (‘What is to be done?’) was chosen by Nikolai Chernyshevsky, another 19th century Russian political thinker, for his even more agenda-setting work in deliberate response to Herzen. The two phrases are eternal aphorisms in political debates in and about Russia.

1. Introduction

This paper is based on a decade of frustrations about the lack of reformist goal-orientation in Russian politics. To an outside observer the *decadence* of Russia's political life is striking at a time when Russia's domestic problems remain as serious as ever. This decadence is manifested in the time and energy wasted by the Russian political elite on mostly irrelevant issues of foreign policy, e.g. advocating multipolarity in reaction to US dominance in world affairs, opposition to the entry of East Central European members into NATO, etc. This pattern of preoccupation with foreign policy at the expense of domestic reform is reminiscent of Czarist Russia at the turn of the former century, when Russia (among other things) became engaged in a fatal war against newly industrialized Japan over influence in Korea. Also the Soviet Union was decadent, as exemplified by its lopsided Third World activities (Skak, 1989). What follows goes beyond the academic ethic of analysis and into the normative realm of policy criticism, criticism of the object of study. I shall even consider something as unacademic as the policy implications inherent in my analysis of postcommunist Russian foreign policy.

The paper begins by describing the paradox of decadence, in this context the gap between the structural reality surrounding Russia and the cognitive level of Russian policy-making. Then follows a brief introduction to selected Western writings on Russian foreign policy representing what I call the optimistic and the pessimistic schools of thought. Section four presents the theoretical platform of my personal analysis of Russian foreign policy which is based on the Swiss-American analyst Arnold Wolfers' distinction between milieu goals and possession goals. Section five, entitled '*Back in the U.S.S.R.?*', contains a historical review of the pursuit of milieu goals and an assessment of their overall significance in Czarist Russian, Soviet and postcommunist Russian foreign policy respectively. The pursuit of possession goals is then traced in both Soviet and recent Russian foreign policy and their overall significance is assessed. My findings will challenge what has been called the theory of democratic peace.

Together with my general argument on foreign policy decadence, this calls for further evidence which I shall set forth by presenting three cases of arguably dysfunctional Russian foreign policy. A section deliberating on how to explain the irrational features of Russian foreign policy follows under the Russian heading *Kto vinovat?* Here I turn to decision making dynamics and the concepts praetorianism and groupthink. Finally, I consider policy implications on how to pursue a genuine dialogue with Russia under the Russian heading of *Shto delat'?* The conclusion recapitulates my findings and dwells in broader terms on Russia as an actor in world politics.

2. The gap between reality and policy in Russia

My use of the ontologically contested keyword 'reality' is not meant to suggest that the concept is straightforward. I use it in order to employ a method corresponding to

my aim of criticizing Russian foreign policy behaviour. My ambition is not to give a 'full picture' of the reality surrounding Russia, which would be both futile and unnecessary. What I am going to do is to sketch the basic context and conditions of current Russian foreign policy and its policy implications for Russia. Concerning foreign policy analysis I intend to highlight the mismatch between the structural level of Russian foreign policy and the cognitive level (to which I shall return later), i.e. Russian perceptions and consequent foreign policy conduct.

Reality: What we saw before, during and after Gorbachev assumed power was the collapse of communism as a viable system of governance. This led to the implosion of the Soviet state, and hence the loss of superpower status, while the current situation is the questionable Russian claim to even great power status. True, Russian wishes of being the legal successor to the Soviet Union were never contested. Russia therefore inherited the permanent seat in the Security Council of the United Nations and other legal obligations, as well as the Soviet nuclear and residual military capacity and, finally, the still vast territory of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic. The disappearance of the Soviet superpower made evident what was implicit in liberal conceptions of power in international affairs: There is only one superpower – the United States – but luckily for Russia and the rest of us, the remaining unipole is a basically benign, democratic actor in world politics (Kagan, 1998; Nye, 1990).

My use of the neorealist concept of polarity as key to describing international power relations thus does not imply acceptance of neorealism's indifference to the authoritarian or democratic nature of great poles of power – it's insistence that states are 'like units' (Waltz, 1979). On the contrary, I believe that the empirically founded theory of democratic peace found in liberalism is valid and worth citing when describing the structural reality surrounding Russia today (Zacher and Matthew, 1995, pp. 122-3). Russia's departure from communist dictatorship towards a fragile democracy entails that now more than ever, Russia finds itself in an international environment *conducive* to meeting Russia's desperate need for catching up on civilian productive capacity and implementing a rule of law that respects human rights, etc. But contrary to the expectations of many Russians, this does not imply that large infusions of economic aid are forthcoming, nor that the solution to Russian problems necessarily lie therein.² What matters is the breathing space accorded to Russian decision-makers, enabling them to concentrate on transforming Russia into a more prosperous and benign open society, to quote Karl Popper's apt term. More importantly, when it comes to key issues such as institutionalizing the rule of law and respect for human rights, only Russian efforts can save Russia. Above all, Russians *must want* to transform their country (cf. Schroeder, 1992; Shin, 1994).

² In their controversial book *Hjärnridån* ('The Iron/ Brain Curtain', a pun in Swedish) Swedish scholars point out that the Marshall aid played a marginal role in Germany's Wirtschaftswunder and conclude that like Germany, Russia must 'do the job herself', and not rely on the IMF or other donors (Gerner, Hedlund and Sundström, 1995, p. 224).

On the domestic front Russia is characterized by a Third World economic performance. Experts cite underdevelopment syndromes like utterly low productivity and an economy of pretense (Gaddy and Ickes, 1998; Tikhomirov, 2000). The difference from the Soviet era is primarily that nowadays, poverty and appalling living conditions are reported in the media and openly spoken about. The majority of the population have therefore become wholly disillusioned about the transition from communism. Unfortunately, there are no quick and easy solutions, only long-term, persistent reform efforts.

Russia as a political unit is further characterized by regional fragmentation. Although Russia is not likely to formally disintegrate as a state, it is quite absurd to consider Russia a unitary actor because centre-periphery foreign policy divergences are manifest on a par with diverging bureaucratic interests, etc. (Melvin, 1995; Godzimirski, 2000). To cite but a few examples: former Nizhni Novgorod governor Boris Nemtsov has openly challenged Moscow's policy of rapprochement with Belarus, while Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov lays claim to the Ukrainian naval city of Sevastopol; Far Eastern governor Evgeni Nazdratenko sought to block the Russo-Chinese treaty on border demarcation. This illustrates that at minimum, and as a result of democratization, the Kremlin faces a tremendous task of reconciling clashing interests throughout the continent-sized country. The most tricky issue is perhaps the status of the exclave Kalininsgrad as part of Russia at a time when its immediate geographic neighbours, Poland and Lithuania, are joining the EU and NATO, perhaps a Berlin problem in the making (Makarychev, 2000). Kaliningraders want a Berlin-like agreement with the EU, which would also serve the economic interests of Russia in general (cf. *Moscow News*, no. 37, 24-30 Sept. 1998). If this solution is to materialize, however, Russia shall have to modify its hawkish approach to the West (see below).

Even the most taboo scenarios cannot be entirely excluded, for instance *warlordism* and local military units transferring their loyalty away from the centre towards local benefactors, inducing military willingness to take sides in clashes or wars within the periphery or along Russia's international borders, (Herd, 1999; Galeotti, 1999). This is a direct consequence of the miserable state of the Russian armed forces and their corresponding loss of status and influence, leading one analyst to conclude: "The spies' (the intelligence community's /MS) voices are increasingly loud and confident, the soldiers' desperate, disillusioned or disregarded" (Galeotti, 2000, p. 170).³

Policy: It is in relation to this endless list of acute domestic needs and tricky issues that Russian policy makers' approach to policy making and their penchant for profiling Russia abroad in a hawkish manner becomes truly decadent and absurd.

³ Admittedly, the latest war in Chechnia has boosted military self-confidence, but definitely not in a way conducive to the democratization of the military institution, and hence counterproductive from the point of view of Russian transformation to a more benign open society.

Postcommunist Russia's first Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Kozyrev, whose 'Atlanticist' agenda aimed at reconciling domestic and foreign policy reform needs in continuation of Gorbachev's New Political Thinking, was brushed aside at an early stage (Skak, 1996a, pp. 137-91, cf. De Nevers, 1994). Eurasianism then entered centre stage, a rather mystical geopolitical school of thought according to which Russia represents its own civilization because of its geographical location between Europe and Asia. Among the few operational foreign policy ideas inherent in this school of thought is the alleged top priority of relations with the 'near abroad', that is, the countries of the former Soviet Union. Eurasianists are united by their obsession with turning Russia into a strong state and a great power, hence the common use of the term *derzhavniki*, étatists as it were. The ideology of '*derzhavnost*', including its neglect of more mundane pressing issues of reform, unites most of Russia's political forces and therefore enjoys a quite hegemonic position in the Russian public debate.

Kozyrev's proposed official foreign policy doctrine was never adopted. Power shifted to the Security Council, whose far more Eurasianist doctrine was accepted by Russian President Yeltsin in 1993 (Skak, 1996a, pp. 144-47). In view of the fact that Kozyrev did attach top priority to the near abroad by placing it as the innermost circle in his concentric circles of interests in 1990, it appears that the true target of his multitude of Eurasianist critics was his non-imperialist emphasis on building a 'belt of good neighbourliness' to Russia's post-Soviet neighbours (Skak, 1996a, pp. 144 ff.). His cooperative approach to the United States was also contested, whereas the Security Council anticipated clashes of interest and attached greater priority to Eastern and Western Europe (*ibid.*). Actual Russian policy towards the near abroad, whether perceived as including just the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), or as including the Baltic states as well, grew quite hawkish as did Kozyrev himself. The apparently⁴ strong voter mandate supporting the loony ultra-chauvinist Vladimir Zhirinovski was used by the Russian leadership as legitimation for politicizing the issue of extending NATO membership to East Central European states.⁵ By the mid-1990s 'cold peace' therefore prevailed in Russian relations with the Western world, exacerbated by Russian brutality in Chechnia, a military crackdown that not only sent shivers down the

⁴ After the 1993 parliamentary election, which was also a referendum on the new Russian constitution, Russian political scientist and activist Kronid Liubarski documented substantial electoral fraud by local officials for the sake of getting enough votes for the constitution. They thus invented a lot of votes, including votes cast for Zhirinovski, see Liubarski in *Novoe Vremia*, no. 7 and 9, 1994. Afterwards neither the Russian government nor Zhirinovski had an interest in scandalizing the outcome, so it was accepted both in Russia and internationally.

⁵ Although the issue of enlarging NATO is significant in its own right, it does not follow that it is against legitimate Russian security interests. To paraphrase Alexander Wendt, NATO enlargement is what the states make of it.

spines of Russia's post-Soviet neighbours but also swept them further into the arms of NATO (cf. Dannreuthner, 1999-2000, p. 148 f.).

Similarly, both the Security Council and the Russian military doctrine of late 1993 stressed external threats, the most significant change from the Soviet approach being the embrace of a *tous azimuth* perception of threat. In relation to this and the unsuccessful hyperpoliticization of NATO expansion from 1995 to 1997, the most significant change in the Russian approach to domestic and external concerns came with the 1997 doctrine on national security (Sergounin, 1998; Müller, Perovic and Wenger, 1998). According to this new doctrine,

“An analysis of the threats to the national security of the Russian Federation shows that the main threats at present and in the foreseeable future will not be military, but predominantly internal in character and will focus in the internal political, economic, social, ecological, information and spiritual spheres ... The development of a qualitatively new pattern of relations with the leading world states and the political absence of the threat of a large-scale aggression against Russia, while it preserves its nuclear deterrent, makes it possible to redistribute the resources of the state and society to address (...) internal problems.” (Kontseptsia Natsional'noi Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 1997, *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 26 December, 1997, here quoted from Sergounin, 1998).

Although the 1997 doctrine was not devoid of inconsistencies and Russian chauvinistic inclinations, e.g. in its approach to the delicate issue of creating national unity, it did strike a more sophisticated and sober tone, for once reflecting real Russian options and interests, given the context of transition from communism. There is a discernable change of tenor in relation to the CIS partners: they are no longer termed ‘the near abroad’, a term associated with post-Soviet neo-imperialism, perhaps a reflection of Russian recognition that its offensive against NATO expansion cost dearly on the CIS home front (Dannreuthner, 1999-2000, *loc. cit.*).

It is consequently difficult to perceive the current Russian national security doctrine of January 2000 as anything but a step in the wrong direction. It was prepared while Vladimir Putin, now President of Russia, was in charge of the process in his capacity as chairman of the Security Council and later Prime Minister, hence *the Putin doctrine* (Averre, 2000). It reiterates the emphasis on external threats to Russian security, for example “the desire by some states and international associations to diminish the role of existing mechanisms for ensuring international security, above all the United Nations and OSCE”, “the strengthening of military-political blocs and alliances, above all NATO's eastward expansion”, “territorial claims on Russia” (this list of threats is not complete) (*Russia's National Security Concept*, 2000). The prose reflects Russian perceptions that the NATO military intervention in Kosovo set an ominous precedent for Russia in case it wanted to teach Chechnia or other subjects of the Russian Federation a military lesson (cf. Morozov and Lebedev, 1999). Russia's seemingly innocent and legal emphasis of

the United Nations as supreme authority in international affairs reflects that this is where Russia has the power of veto, which it unsuccessfully tried to use against NATO's air strikes against the Yugoslav Federation.⁶ Against this backdrop of cold peace in Russian relations with the Western world, it is rather paradoxical to learn of Putin's warm embrace of General Secretary of NATO, George Robertson, when he visited Moscow in February 2000: no lashing out at NATO's eastward enlargement, only a business-like attitude on the part of Putin, as if he had realized that Russia should beware of biting the hand that feeds it, figuratively speaking (cf. Averre, 2000). Events of the last few years, including the August 1998 economic meltdown and the most recent war against Chechnia, have entailed a loss of the goodwill that Russia so badly needs if the transition is to succeed. Analytical commentary from Germany, a great power who is a genuine friend of Russia, is becoming increasingly critical, bordering on cynical (Vogel, 1999; cf. the coverage of Russia in the periodicals *Aussenpolitik*, *Berichte des Bundesinstituts ...*, and *Osteuropa*).

3. Two approaches to Russian foreign policy among Western scholars

I shall limit my review of Western academic literature on postcommunist Russian foreign policy to identifying two clashing schools of thought, i.e., the optimistic vs. the pessimistic approach to Russia. In using this terminology I realize I endow the authors with a simplicity of which they may not approve. But my categories are only ideal types in Max Weber's sense of the word. After all, there is truth to the old saying that what distinguishes the optimist from the pessimist is the former's insistence that the glass is really half-full, whereas the latter sees the same glass as being half-empty. I myself sometimes doubt my foreign policy pessimism because Russia certainly is undergoing paradigmatic change from its communist past, a change for the better, in my view.⁷ Nevertheless, by turning towards democracy Russia, like Israel, inevitably faces new standards of behaviour, and for Russia itself it is vital to reformulate foreign policy in the service of internal reform.

The optimists: British analysts Neil Malcolm and Alex Pravda challenge the thesis of American analysts Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder on the aggressiveness of countries in a state of transition towards democracy (Malcolm and Pravda, 1996). They underpin their less alarmist view of postcommunist Russia's foreign policy by highlighting the Russian public's opposition to the first war against

⁶ Without going into the details of the Kosovo case, it must be noted that the issue of legality from the point of view of international humanitarian law goes beyond the requirement of a formal mandate by the Security Council. As argued by the British expert Adam Roberts and reiterated by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, this kind of Security Council formalism misses the whole point about an organization like the United Nations (Roberts, 1999; Annan, 1999).

⁷ My optimism on behalf of Russia grows, for instance when talking to Danish colleagues like Erik Kulavig from Odense University or reading the enthusiastic, yet not naïve account of Yeltsin's Russia by an old friend and student colleague of mine at the Slavonic Department, University of Aarhus, Per Dalgaard, (Dalgaard, 1999).

Chechnia. Their core argument is the successful co-optation by the Russian government of views held by nationalistic politicians and foreign policy advisors that have the effect of softening Russian aggressiveness. In accordance with this view they see jingoism in the Russian discourse as just that: rhetoric. Their analysis is of course not without merits, but at what price, may one ask, did the Russian government adopt jingoism?

Another optimistic contribution comes from Michael McFaul (1997) of Stanford University, who finds it striking that so little interstate war has resulted from Russia's current revolution. In a direct comment to Mansfield and Snyder, he stresses the low level of Russian belligerence as an anomaly in view of the low institutionalization of democracy and threats from interest groups that have lost enormously in the democratization and marketization process (*ibid.*, p. 33; cf. Mansfield and Snyder, 1995). Their argument may nevertheless still be valid because McFaul sees the main reason for Russian peacefulness in Russian liberals' victory over their illiberal opponents, i.e. a contingent outcome. He considers Yeltsin's embrace of what he consistently terms liberalism as no trivial outcome in view of the availability of anti-Western alternatives like *Pamiat*. It is quite revealing for McFaul's belief in Russia's own democratic forces, however, that he also argues in terms of the constraints and incentives of the late twentieth century international system surrounding Russia as conducive to peacefulness, in continuation of Robert O. Keohane's theory of institutions (Keohane, 1989; Keohane, Nye, and Hoffmann, 1993). Like Malcolm and Pravda he does not really perceive Russian belligerence towards Chechnia as confirming Mansfield and Snyder. From McFaul's point of view the war demonstrates first the failure and then the triumph of Russian democracy. The decision was taken without consulting liberal Russian forces, he argues, namely by the 'party of war' which was subsequently humiliated in the war. But if one is to lend credence to the analysis of Mark Galeotti of Keele University, UK, the war party behind the first Chechnian war was neither the military, nor GRU (the body of Russian military intelligence), but the Kremlin itself, notably Yeltsin's personal security chief Aleksandr Korzhakov (Galeotti, 2000). It thus remains questionable what the wars against Chechnia actually reveal about the peacefulness of Russian political leaders, irrespective of the fact that from a formalistic point of view such non-interstate wars lie outside the realm of the theory of democratic peace.

The pessimists: Not surprisingly, Jack Snyder warns of the dangers of Soviet atavisms and war inherent in the Russian transition (1994). He also warns about the danger of Western overreaction and advises the West to act decisively to promote liberal change in Russia. He quotes the policy conclusions of another pessimist, Stephen Blank of the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College, apparently to emphasize the pitfalls of overreaction. But Blank has also on more than one occasion delivered penetrating analyses of the irrationality of Russian foreign policy and the erratic decision-making behind it (Blank, 1993; 1995; 1999).

His latest contribution, for instance, argues the irrelevance of Russia as an actor on the Asian scene because of its economic weakness and outdated approach to foreign policy:

“...Russian elites still cannot surrender their belief in “der Primat der Aussenpolitik” (The primacy of foreign policy). What I have called earlier the militarization of or militaristic trend in Russian foreign policy or what others call the geopolitical emphasis, an outlook that remains too solidly anchored in nineteenth century Realpolitik and Machtpolitik dominates Russian foreign policy.

From the public statements and writings of Russian foreign policymakers when they address Southeast Asia, it is clear that they see the region primarily through those antiquated lenses, not those of modern “geoeconomics”. And the poor results they have achieved speak for themselves.” (Blank, 1999, p. 108).

4. Theory: milieu goals vs. possession goals in foreign and security policy

As should be clear by now, I agree with Blank’s criticism of Russian foreign policy. In my choice of theoretical framework for this analysis of Czarist Russian, Soviet, and postcommunist Russian foreign policy, however, I am trying to be fair towards Russia by employing a fairly open-ended framework. Instead of immediately applying the notoriously myopic theory of neorealism upon Russian foreign policy behaviour, I shall therefore adopt Arnold Wolfers’ far more sophisticated, yet classical contribution within realism, his deliberations on milieu goals vs. possession goals (Wolfers, 1962, pp. 67-80). The virtue of this contribution is that it bridges realism and liberalism in something akin to the institutionalist ‘English school’ of international affairs that has gained prominence in recent years (Jackson and Sørensen, 1999).

Wolfers criticizes his fellow realists’ obsession with power as the sole motivating factor behind foreign policy, in particular Nicholas Spykman of the geopolitical school, who stated that “the improvement of the relative power position becomes the primary objective of the external and internal policy of states” (Spykman quoted from Wolfers, 1962, p. 72). In Wolfers’ view, the logic of maximizing the state’s own power at the expense of other states is but one of two leitmotifs guiding foreign policy behaviour, the other being to pursue milieu goals which he defines as:

“Nations pursuing them are not out to defend or increase possessions they hold to the exclusion of others, but aim instead at shaping conditions beyond their national boundaries. If it were not for the existence of such goals peace could never become an objective of national policy. By its very nature, peace cannot be the possession of any one nation; it takes at least two to make and have peace. Similarly, efforts to promote international law or to establish international organizations, undertaken consistently by many nations, are addressed to the milieu in which nations operate and indeed such

efforts make sense only if nations have reason to concern themselves with things other than their own possessions.” (*ibid.*, p. 74).

In other words, milieu goals represent *the opposite of a zero-sum perception of international affairs* and thus highlight the pursuit of common goals or, in the parlance of neoliberalism, the pursuit of absolute gains, i.e. gains achieved not at the expense of others but for the sake of reaching Pareto-optimal outcomes. As Wolfers himself notes by drawing parallels to the behaviour of individuals:

“A man is rightly considered not merely selfish but shortsighted in terms of his own interests if he puts all his efforts into the accumulation and protection of his possessions while remaining indifferent to the peace and order, the well-being of the community in which he resides or works. These are aspects of his milieu, as the term is used here. (...) The difference need not be only one of greater or lesser security of acquired possessions, it may also signify a difference in happiness, in future opportunities, and perhaps in moral satisfaction.

Nations also face these differences in their milieu, although it is up to them to decide to what extent they wish to devote their resources to the benefits they may hope to derive from helping to preserve or improve conditions prevailing beyond their borders.” (Wolfers, 1962, pp. 74-5).

As Wolfers suggests here, the distinction between milieu goals and possession goals is also a distinction between long-term gains and short-term benefits. It must be emphasized that the pursuit of milieu goals is not the prerogative of small idealistic states like the Nordic countries, but is discernible in great power behaviour as well. One example is French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur’s visionary proposal for a European Stability Pact aimed at turning the postcommunist EU-applicants and their Eastern surroundings into a *security community*, in Karl Deutsch’ apt term. Balladur’s idea was later implemented by the European Union and monitored by the OSCE. In direct continuation of this initiative, German Minister of Foreign Affairs Joschka Fischer launched the Balkan Stability Pact in 1999. There is of course also the classical example of the American Marshall aid (cf. Kagan, 1998). It is therefore not at all “unfair” to ask the question about Russia’s pursuit of milieu goals, especially not now that the country has allegedly embraced non-zero sum democratic norms and values.

To detect the pursuit of milieu goals in past and present Russian foreign policy thus requires the identification of such topics as cooperation with other countries in the preservation of peace and order, compliance with provisions of international law, efforts to strengthen international institutions and organizations, the pursuit of norms of human rights and the rule of law, and other practices aimed at improving conditions beyond Russian territory, *constructive behaviour* that seeks to alleviate the condition of anarchy in international affairs.

Possession goals, by contrast, are defined as when

“a nation is aiming at the enhancement or the preservation of one or more of the things to which it attaches value. The aim may apply to such values as a stretch of territory, membership in the Security Council of the United Nations, or tariff preferences. Here a nation finds itself competing for others for a share in values of a limited supply (...) Because of the possessive nature of these goals, they are apt to be praised by some for being truly in the national interest, while condemned by others as indicating a reprehensible spirit of national selfishness or acquisitiveness.” (Wolfers, 1962, pp. 73-4).

Kenneth Waltz' contemporary neorealism corresponds neatly to Wolfers' ideal type of possession goals (Waltz, 1979). Like Spykman, the neorealists argue the primacy of relative gains and the irrationality of international cooperation except for the purpose of checking imbalances in power; they further stress material capabilities, notably military strength, over ideas, norms and institutions. As noted by Wolfers, the parlance of national interests is often indicative of possession goals. Another cue for empirical analysis to examine the salience of balance of power considerations, external threat perceptions etc.

My final comment on Wolfers' framework is my contention that the qualitative features of the the international system makes a difference in the distribution of milieu goal- vs. possession goal-inspired foreign policy. The more institutionalized the international system – the more it resembles an orderly society rather than an anarchy – the greater the incentives for participation and constructive behaviour. I am not stating anything original in this respect, as this is more or less what is argued by the American scholars Robert O. Keohane, Stanley Hoffmann and the entire English school of international affairs – the latter through the concept of international society on the systemic level of international relations (Jackson and Sørensen, 139 ff.; Keohane, 1989). As I have already portrayed Russia's international surroundings as fairly benign and shall now go on to stress the highly institutionalized nature of international relations in Russia's Transatlantic 'near abroad' (Keohane, Nye and Hoffmann, 1993), one might expect me to posit *a hypothesis of a strong milieu goal orientation in Russian foreign policy*. But in continuation of the more sceptical argument set forth in this paper, it is more honest to launch the rival hypothesis at this stage, according to which *Russia conforms more to the neorealist model of possession goals than to the liberal model of milieu goals*. The test of these two hypotheses – the contest between them – follows below.

5. Back in the U.S.S.R.? Milieu goals vs. possession goals in Czarist Russian, Soviet and postcommunist Russian foreign policy

Once again a disclaimer: This is of course not the place to deliver a comprehensive, systematic analysis of the entire history of Russian foreign policy in terms of milieu goals and possession goals dating back to the Czarist era. I shall therefore limit myself to identifying the overall patterns.

Milieu goals: The implication of Keohane and Hoffmann's point about the strong institutionalization of post-1945 European security politics is that a search for milieu goals in pre-1917 Russian foreign policy may be futile. That is true, to a certain extent. Yet both West European and Russian milieu goal orientation is best perceived of as something developing gradually on the basis of refinements of state practices throughout history. Russia was to a large extent something of an outsider in European politics due to her ambition of becoming a rival Third Rome. Even so, Russia did participate in the so-called Holy Alliance of the early 19th century, established in order to preserve the status quo, and undertook several military interventions to maintain the prevailing European balance of power at the time of the Concert of Europe. Indeed, one senses that this great power concert remains a role model for the contemporary Russian elite because it accorded Russia special great power privileges, just like the contemporary Contact Group on Yugoslavia counting Russia, the United States, Germany, France, Britain and Italy. Possession goal considerations therefore cannot be entirely separated from milieu goals in this and other cases, as I shall demonstrate below. In any event, the conclusion concerning Czarist Russia is that it was much more part of the great power "establishment" in international affairs than was its successor, the revolutionary Soviet state, until World War II.

The Bolshevik seizure of power thus initiated a paradigmatic change of status to that of pariah or rogue state. Foreign intervention followed because of the security dilemma created by this change of power (Snyder, 1994; Walt, 1992). As noted by many historians, however, Soviet Russia was soon forced into a pragmatism bordering on milieu goals in its behaviour on the international scene. The Bolsheviks came to appreciate the protection inherent in the institution of state sovereignty and began to practice state building in tandem with foreign policy activity. Soviet diplomats accordingly participated in some international conferences in the interwar era and, more importantly, the Soviets generally observed the norm of *pacta sunt servanda* (legal obligations are to be honoured) within international law throughout the history of the Soviet Union. A quite absurd case in point is the Soviet-German treaty of Rapallo (1922). The Kremlin meticulously adhered to the provisions in this agreement, including cooperation in the military sphere, long after Hitler's ascent to power. Conversely, during World War II the Soviet Union received about 22 per cent of American lend-lease assistance (*Den Store Danske Encyclopædi*, 1998, vol. 12, p. 92).

The undercurrent of self-interest in these and other examples of Soviet milieu goals behaviour is fairly evident. A further example is the Soviet embrace of international organizations like the United Nations after the decolonization of the Afro-Asian world, when that forum could be exploited during the Cold War. The exception that proves the rule was the fact that the Soviets participated in the Helsinki Conference on European Security and Cooperation in 1975, where new humanitarian norms were laid down, thereby circumventing the principle of non-

interference into the internal affairs of states. Only the New Political Thinking of the Gorbachev years meant a real change in both Soviet outlook and actual policy (Herman, 1996). Gorbachev and his political allies had realized the backwardness of Russia and the acute need for reform and therefore switched to a world view close to the liberal model of complex interdependence (Keohane and Nye, 1977). Although this exposition underscores the dimension of enlightened self-interest on behalf of the Soviet Union inherent in Gorbachev's foreign policy agenda, it would be grossly unfair to dismiss his policy as merely a case of possession goals. His priority of "universal human values" dismantled the entire institution of the Cold War and thus represented paradigmatic change for the better, both in international affairs and within the Soviet empire itself (Skak, 1992).

As already mentioned in my brief introduction to postcommunist Russian foreign policy, the successors to Gorbachev and his Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, Yeltsin and Kozyrev, tried to follow in their footsteps, but were deflected from New Political Thinking towards Eurasianism and neo-imperialism. Milieu goals quickly ceased to enjoy a privileged position in the Russian discourse on foreign policy. This is not to imply, however, that contemporary Russian foreign policy is devoid of such of long-term considerations. For instance, there is an element of honest humanitarian concern in Russia's otherwise aggressive campaign for protecting the rights of ethnic Russians living along Russia's borders, a new 20-25 million people large diaspora issue in international relations born by the dissolution of the Soviet state (Kolstoe, 1993). But the openly cynical attitude of, say, Deputy Director of the Institute of Europe and presidential advisor Sergei Karaganov – who is often singled out as a moderate! – in his deliberations on how to exploit the presence of Russians outside Russia's borders is most disturbing (Skak, 1996a, 171-3; Karaganov, 1992).

Thus, Russia more often than not displays a self-serving attitude in its apparent pursuit of milieu goals. Russian partisanship in the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, allegedly in order to help their Serbian brethren, has above all been instrumental for propelling Russia into a position of influence. This has been successful as an exercise in the pursuit of short-sighted possession goals: Russia was accepted as a member of the Contact Group (Jakobsen, 2000). Likewise, apparent Russian concern about strengthening the OSCE is mainly an opportunistic strategy aimed at weakening NATO's role in Europe, as illustrated by the sharp drop in Russian enthusiasm for the OSCE after the 1999 summit in Istanbul, where Russia was the target of severe criticism for its genocidal brutality in Chechnia. One should therefore not naively take the noble Russian claim of defending the institutions of international law such as the United Nations at face value, as illustrated by the Putin doctrine presented above. Russia is interested in strong international institutions benefitting Russia and its leadership, not interested in strong institutions as such.

Possession goals: Throughout its history Czarist Russia pursued multiple possession goals, the most consistent and controversial being the territorial

expansion of Russia originally conceived as a security policy strategy. But Czarist Russian expansionism was not confined to the military sphere, or to outright rivalry with other great powers, external balancing in the jargon of neorealism. It also entailed a healthy dose of *internal balancing*,⁸ efforts of modernization and later industrialization, and finally political modernization which was brought to a grinding halt when the Bolsheviks seized power.

Stalin's drive for industrialization could be interpreted in the same light, but with the important qualification that his strategy of internal balancing was very much a short term measure of preparing for war in continuation of the notorious Bolshevik zero-sum outlook and perception of Soviet interests (Seton-Watson, 1960, p. 155). By contrast, the Czarist agenda was plain: Russian participation in world affairs. The pragmatism of Stalin's foreign policy is evident in the conduct of Soviet diplomacy by its first two foreign ministers, called Peoples' Commissars on Foreign Affairs, Georgi Chicherin and Maxim Litvinov. What is often lacking in analyses of their roles in early Soviet foreign policy, however, is recognition of the fact that there was much more than met the eye to Soviet behaviour in the interwar years and beyond. I am hinting at the roles played by Comintern and similar sinister institutions whose purpose was to project and protect Soviet power abroad, e.g. Stalin's *Osoby Sektor* ('special department'), the OGPU and NKVD (precursors of the KGB; Haue, 2000).

As noted by several authors, Stalin's nationalistic strategy of 'socialism in one country' coincided with his transformation of the Comintern into a servile instrument in his hands (Moltke, 1976). Through a veritable oath of loyalty to the Soviet Union, the notorious twenty-one conditions within the Comintern, foreign communists were transformed into a network of agents in the service of the Kremlin (Seton-Watson, 1960, p. 73 ff.). As has been documented by recent archival research and my own interviews with Polish and Russian scholars, the Comintern was not effectively dissolved in 1943, merely reorganized (Bordiugov et al., 1995; Skak, 1996, pp. 101-2). The Comintern phoenix called *Otdel Mezhdunarodnoi Informatsii* ('Department for International Information', from 1943 until, I gather, 1946), together with other Soviet instruments of power such as the Red Army, was instrumental in the aggressive Soviet pursuit of possession goals in East Central Europe following World War II (Skak, *ibid.* and forthcoming).

In more general terms the Soviet zero-sum discourse of '*kto-kogo*' ('who wins over whom?') is quite indicative of the neorealist instinct for relative gains

⁸ Neorealism stresses the urge towards checking power imbalances on the international arena primarily through the principle of balancing, that is, to ally oneself with the weaker party in a power relation, as Britain did in the 19th century. Kenneth N. Waltz (1979, pp. 163 and 168) mentions two different balancing strategies, namely *external balancing* – to address power asymmetries directly on the external scene – or *internal balancing* aimed at balancing the power of one's opponents indirectly by strengthening one's capabilities at home. As can be seen here, the latter may entail legitimate and rational policies of reform.

cultivated by Bolshevism. Thus, Brezhnev and his Politburo colleagues saw the Helsinki CSCE summit as an opportunity to legalize the Sovietization of Eastern Europe by freezing current borders. Partly in vain, they meanwhile tried to expand Soviet power and influence in the Third World (Skak, 1989). As argued above, only Gorbachev's ascent to power entailed a change in priorities away from possession goals toward milieu goals.

Concerning postcommunist Russian foreign policy, the point I want to argue in my choice of the headline *Back in the U.S.S.R.* is not that Russia simply continues to pursue Soviet possession goals. Marxism is no longer around to mechanically politicize world affairs and domestic developments. Accordingly, pragmatism is much more prominent together with a genuine inclination towards coexistence with the Western world within the new (partly old) Russian political elite. But the approaches of *kto-kogo* and relative gains have resurfaced in a full-blown realist discourse anchored in the unsophisticated notion of *national interest*. This, indeed, is the catchphrase of contemporary Russian foreign policy thinking, as reflected in the multiple doctrines, strategies and foreign policy programmes of the 1990s and to this very day. A policy based on the concept of national interest typically ignores the complexity engendered by interdependence and easily slides into parochialism and habitual thinking (Chipman, 1993; Skak, 1996a, pp. 24-6). There is a great paradox in the Russian embrace of this concept. Although nearly everybody readily agrees that Russia is badly in need of a unifying national idea, nobody ever challenges the far from straightforward notion of national interest, but simply takes its empirical contents for granted. Given the multiethnic national makeup of Russia and the sometimes sharply diverging interests between centre and periphery, the absolutely unreflected reference to Russia's national interest is disquieting. This has sneaked Great Russian chauvinism into the country's foreign policy.

A rather offensive type of possession goal reasoning continues to be keenly felt both in Russian rhetoric and policy, namely sphere-of-influence thinking which is literally what is suggested by the term the 'near abroad'. Presidential advisors to Yeltsin Andranik Migranian and Evgeni Ambartsumov have drawn explicit parallels to the U.S. Monroe doctrine concerning the Americas in their attempts to legitimize Russia's 'near abroad' policy (Skak, 1996a, p. 66).⁹ The vehement Russian campaign against NATO enlargement thus cannot be seen in isolation from the Russian perception that, at minimum, the states of the former Soviet Union remain within the Kremlin's exclusive sphere of influence and, at maximum, that also the former Warsaw Pact allies belong to this category. Russians simply cannot come to terms

⁹ Even the Beatles got it right right when writing "Well the Ukraine girls really knock me out./ They leave the West behind/ And Moscow girls make me sing and shout/ That Georgia's always on my mind' (Lennon/McCartney: 'Back in the U.S.S.R.', *untitled White Album*, 1968, Northern Songs). Compare the lyrics of a popular 1978 Soviet pop song: 'Moi adres – ne dom i ne ulitsa. Moi adres – Sovetski Soyuz' (My address is no house, nor street. My address is the Soviet Union).

with the fact that, for instance, the three Baltic states are now fully sovereign actors in international affairs (Clemmesen, 1998). Russians see the NATO enlargement as that organization's own aggressive expansionism eastwards (this, they know, would be the case if Russia yielded power on a similar level as NATO), not as it really is: a *reactive* policy of accommodating the specific wishes of East Central European applicants. Another striking example is the note sent by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Avdeev to the Russian State Duma, according to which the Soviet Union did not annex the Baltic states by force in 1940 (*RFL/RI Newslines*, vol. 2, part II, no. 12, January 1998).

Soviet atavism in the form of zero-sum perceptions is also evident in hypersensitive Russian reactions to the economic and political presence of foreign countries in its 'near abroad' backyard. The United States, Turkey, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Chinese citizens – in approximately this rank of priority – all belong to the contemporary Russian enemy image even when the topic is evidently variable-sum games of trade and economic cooperation. This may be an understandable psychological reaction to an all too obvious exposition of Russian economic and institutional weakness, but it is hardly rational in a long-term perspective. Ordinary people in Siberia and the Far East have an obvious welfare interest in trading with the Chinese, who would thereby help to expand the choice of goods available and lower prices. An even more ominous Soviet atavism is the Russian resort to war in the case of Chechnia and the military coercion surrounding the entry of Azerbaidzhan and Georgia into the CIS (Skak, 1996a, p. 159). The Russian role in the pro-Soviet secessionist republic of Transdniestria in Moldova has been ambiguous too. The popularity among Western political scientists of the non-military aspects of security has had the unintended side-effect of inspiring the Russian establishment to 'securitize'¹⁰ several new issues and to propel a brand new body, the Security Council, into a position of power not unlike that accorded the old Politburo.

All in all, it is clearly possession goals and not milieu goals that turn the scales in postcommunist Russian foreign policy. Although the significance of actual Russian belligerent behaviour is subject to discussion both qualitatively and quantitatively, Russia is a show-case of rather hard-core realism, not liberal milieu goal orientations, as suggested by the proponents of the theory of democratic peace. This is not a pleasant conclusion, and it therefore merits further argument, both morally and analytically. Below I discuss three significant areas of Russian possession goal inspired foreign policy and thereby return to my initial thesis of decadence and irrationality. In support of this argument I shall cite evidence suggesting that (some of) the Russians themselves realize the shortsightedness of this pattern of behaviour.

¹⁰ Here I refer to the so-called Copenhagen school of security studies centered around Ole Wæver, now professor of political science at the University of Copenhagen. See Buzan *et al.*, 1999.

6. Three cases of irrational Russian foreign policy behaviour

The misguided pursuit of multipolarity: For close to a decade now, Russia has been a somewhat hyperactive actor in world politics, an actor conforming to the neorealist ideal type of external balancing. The parlance of Russian foreign policy makers is a textbook neorealist discourse on polarity that more specifically argues the necessity of creating a ‘multipolar’ world, in contrast to the “unipolar structure of the world with the economic and power domination of the United States”, to quote the recently announced new doctrine on foreign policy (*International Herald Tribune*, 11 July, 2000). Now, some may argue that this is merely rhetorical etiquette; after all, the bulk of this foreign policy doctrine and Putin’s conduct in general show signs of retreat from confrontation with the West. Indeed, but as long as such rhetoric continues and keeps misperceptions alive, Russia does continue to shoot itself in the foot. Die-hard realists will of course never cease to consider their perception of bipolarity (Waltz) or multipolarity (classical realists) as a means to balance unipolarity as the true cure for peace via the restoration of a more symmetrical balance of power.

Leaving theoretical consistency aside, however, practitioners of international affairs are well advised to study Robert Kagan’s argument in favour of unipolarity, with the important proviso that the hegemon must be not an authoritarian superpower, but a compromise-seeking actor guided by norms of democracy like the United States. Kagan sees U.S. unipolarity as good news because:

“the benevolent hegemony exercised by the United States is good for a vast portion of the world’s population. It is certainly a better international arrangement than all realistic alternatives. To undermine it would cost many others around the world far more than it would Americans – and far sooner. As Samuel Huntington wrote five years ago, before he joined the plethora of scholars disturbed by the “arrogance” of American hegemony: “A world without U.S. primacy would be a world with more violence and disorder and less democracy and economic growth than a world where the United States continues to have more influence than any other country shaping global affairs”” (Kagan, 1998, p. 26).

The point of a world with one competent, democratically and globally committed leader is exactly that: it provides *leadership* and thereby helps enormously to alleviate the state of anarchy in a world of multiple sovereign actors and minor powers with institutions that are anything but omnipotent, though of course still significant stabilizers.

For Russia itself, today’s *Pax Americana* is a genuine peace that offers Russia a historic chance for demilitarizing Russian society and security policy. Russia now enjoys “hard security guarantees” in the form of the democratic peace – provided that Russia itself behaves non-coercively and does not slide back into authoritarianism. As in the case of the United States, this does not mean that Russia is safe from threats of terrorism or from its authoritarian neighbours. It does mean,

however, that Russia generally enjoys an international environment conducive to its demand for implementing reform in terms of a rule of law etc. The alternative scenario of multipolarity would ruin Russia – economically, militarily and institutionally. This is so because, much as Russia may aspire to greatpowerhood, it basically remains a weak state in nearly every possible aspect – something that Putin clearly realizes, as illustrated by his drastic attempts to re-centralize the centre-periphery relationship (Corwin, 2000). True multipolarity would turn every great power actor, including the United States, into cynical opportunists guided only by the maxim of Lord Palmerston, that states do not have eternal friends, only eternal interests. Russia would loose vastly more than it does today if world politics degenerated into aggressive balancing. Interestingly, this insight is reflected in a contribution by Alexei Pushkov, a prominent foreign policy commentator:

“But even the ideal, multipolar world is no more than an illusion. The main reason why it is impossible is the enormous disparity between the United States and the other “poles” or, at least, the contenders for this role. With “poles” like these, the United States will inevitably continue to be the main, most powerful pole for a very long time to come. It is no less important than a multipolar world without a clear leader is extremely dangerous. But what would happen if the Americans were to abandon their leading role? Who would be able to step into their shoes: Europe? Russia? China? Japan? How could Moscow or Paris resolve or even partially defuse serious crises without the levers of influence that are available to the United States?” (*Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, May 30, 1998; here quoted from Blank, 1999, pp. 100-01).

None other than the semi-hawkish Sergei Karaganov, head of the Russian Council on Foreign and Defence Policy (SVOP), now urges Moscow to cease pursuing a foreign policy that smacks of the superpower policies pursued by the Soviet Union during the cold war. Instead he pleads for a foreign policy that avoids confrontation, “particularly with the countries on which global development depends” (*RFE/RL Newslines*, vol. 4, Part I, no. 68, 5 April, 2000). He seems to have arrived at the conclusion that Moscow’s pursuit of multipolarity is misguided. He emphasizes that “we are only an instrument wielded by China ... and it’s time we recognized it” (*ibid.*). Karaganov is alluding to the so-called strategic partnership with China dating from 1996 that has been cultivated throughout the 1990s by Russia in an attempt to observe Lord Palmerston’s principle and ignore rational as well as irrational Russian prejudice against China, e.g. China’s lack of democracy. The limits of Sino-Russian strategic partnership are thus fairly evident, as also noted by Jennifer Anderson (1997). Although a normalization of Sino-Soviet relations is fully rational and good news, it would make better long-term sense for Russia to cultivate an intimate relationship with a democratic bloc of states like the European Union.¹¹

¹¹ This is what Roland Dannreuthner recommends as policy advice to the West to help Russia withdraw its attention from NATO developments. The EU has already decided to announce a *Common Strategy towards Russia* at the Cologne 1999 summit – the first

Myth and reality about regional priorities. As argued by Mark Galeotti (and myself above), the debate between the Atlanticist and the Eurasianist factions in Russian foreign policy “is a dead debate now; in part thanks to the security agencies, the Eurasians have conclusively won” (Galeotti, 2000, p. 160). Eurasian regional priorities dominate Russian foreign policy on the surface, as everybody writes and repeats that the ‘near abroad’ is a top priority. In reality, however, this region has never been of key concern to Russian policymakers, which is powerfully illustrated by the consistent fiscal veto on the subject of a more vigorous pursuit of CIS integration and the union with Belarus (Dannreuthner, 1999-2000). It was only when Russia was confronted with the counterproductive effects of its anti-NATO campaign by the GUUAM group (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Moldova) that developments within the CIS group of countries really attracted attention (*ibid.*). One opinion poll among the Russian political elite revealed that only 5 percent accord CIS relations top priority (with only slightly higher scores for China and East Central Europe), whereas Western Europe and the United States attracted a combined score of 58 per cent (Skak, 1996a, p. 165). These figures also highlight the obvious truth that Russian politicians would be bored to tears if the only international summits they were to attend were those in Minsk and Tashkent, and not Brussels, Paris or Washington. For better or worse, it is the United States that holds a special position in the Russian political mind, not Estonia or any other country in the world (Melville, 1996).

Self-destructive partisanship in ex-Yugoslavia: One outcome of the Eurasianists’ victory over the Atlanticists was that Moscow assumed a more openly pro-Serbian attitude. Not that Russia has been entirely obstructionist in its defence of the Serbian party to the multiple conflicts, on the contrary. But by more vocally supporting the Serbs and opportunistically harping on the theme of Slavic brotherhood, Russia arguably encouraged Serb brutality on the battlefield and intransigence at the negotiating table.¹² Although “the Serb connection” made Russia necessary as a participant in the Contact Group, the Russians made it difficult to take them seriously. Thus, Yeltsin spoke of genocide when NATO finally took action against the Serbs in the summer of 1995 – at a time when his own troops were involved in a truly genocidal war against the people of Chechnia, to quote Mike Bowker (1998, p. 1258). Yet, this is actually not the main point I want to raise here. In this connection, my main argument concerns the shortsightedness of Russian partisanship on behalf of the Serbs. First, Russia is home to about 10-20 million

‘common strategy’ within the new EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. This summer a ‘*strategic partnership*’ between the EU and Russia was announced, indicating Moscow’s wish to strike a balance between a China- and EU-focus.

¹² This is acknowledged by Mike Bowker of the University of East Anglia, UK, an analyst who otherwise insists that Moscow’s stance is broadly defensible, when comparing the diverse range of opinions in Europe and elsewhere on how to deal with Yugoslavia. Besides, Moscow yielded little influence over its Serbian allies (Bowker, 1998).

Muslims and several other non-Orthodox Christian confessions. These people increasingly care about confessional issues, whereas few Russians ever really could be bothered about the fate of the Serbs. Several voices of concern and protest were in fact raised by the political leaders of the Muslim republics Bashkortostan and Tatarstan during NATO's air raids over Yugoslavia – concern that Russia did *not* support NATO's attempt to come to the rescue of the Muslims of Kosovo (*RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 3, part 1. no. 75, 19 April, 1999). Cynics, Muslim or non-Muslim, may argue that whatever illusions that existed about interethnic and –confessional peaceful coexistence and reciprocity inside the Russian Federation have long since been crushed by the wars in Chechnia and the terrorist bombs in Moscow. But because of the disastrous effect of exactly these events, it is urgent that Moscow save and restore civic multinational nationhood¹³ by accomodating, for instance, the legitimate interests of moderates. The fact that real threat perceptions in Moscow are so narrowly focused on Russia's southern perimeter speaks volumes about how dysfunctional Russian policy in ex-Yugoslavia really is.

Secondly, Russia's policy is shortsighted in terms of its long-term interests in Serbia and the Balkans. Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic will fall from power sooner or later, and new leaders with quite different priorities will step in, perhaps with quite adverse effects for Russia. Earlier this year Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov addressed the Duma and accused Milosevic of being 'undemocratic' and called upon him "to go into dialogue with his people" (*Denmark's Radio*, middagsradioavisen, 9 June, 2000). At about the same time rumours were reported worldwide concerning probings between Clinton and Putin on the possibility of persuading Milosevic to flee to Miami, another indication that the Russians are beginning to have second thoughts about their lopsided engagement in ex-Yugoslavia.

7. Kto vinovat? Foreign policy decision-making dynamics in Russia

I hope by now to have convinced the reader that there are, indeed, inconsistencies and irrationalities in the way in which Russia pursues its interests on the international scene. This invites the question: why? Why has foreign policy so far escaped the control of moderates and Westernizers (or 'Atlanticists', as they are called by Eurasianists)? Despite the headline 'who is to blame', I believe the answer lies not just at the level of individuals – although they may carry responsibility – but rather at the level of processes and structures, the decision-making environment of postcommunist Russia. The fact of democratization in Russia is significant, but also in a negative sense, as argued by Mansfield and Snyder. They argue that only when a country is a consolidated democracy does the logic of the democratic peace with

¹³ I am here hinting to the preamble of the Russian 1993 Constitution, compare "We, the multinational people of the Russian Federation bound together by common fate on our land ..." (author's italics). *Konstitutsia Rossiskoi Federatsii*, *Rossiskaia Gazeta*, 10 November, 1993.

its more mundane foreign policy agenda set in (Mansfield and Snyder, 1995). The pattern of *praetorianism* will otherwise tend to prevail, defined as, on the one hand, an opening of the political space and political mobilization of actors and, on the other, a situation of no established rules of the game, no regularly functioning channels of interest articulation, no culture of compromise-seeking etc., which by definition characterizes societies in transition from communist one-party rule to democracy (Snyder, 1990-91; Skak, 1996a, pp. 10-5 and *passim*; cf. Crow, 2000 pp. 95-6). In a praetorian setting, political entrepreneurs recklessly pursue their own parochial interests and align themselves with other powerful actors in *coalition logrolling*, thereby neglecting or manipulating the interests of median voters (Snyder, 1991, p. 17 ff.; 1996).

Snyder acknowledges that “the relationship among democratization, nationalism and war is complex and contingent” (1996, p. 37); which is perhaps why he only looks into grim episodes of praetorian short circuits in great powers in his 1991 study of the ‘myths of empire’. As I discovered in my 1996 study of postcommunist foreign policy, praetorianism played only a marginal role in a proudly nationalistic country like Hungary. In the words of Jack Snyder Hungary is a miracle of forbearance in view of the various measures of discrimination against Hungarians in Hungary’s neighbouring countries (Snyder, 1996, p. 35). And likewise in Lithuania, a list one could continue: Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova ... (Skak, 1996a, pp. 192-289). At issue are circumstances and ideographic factors of political culture, and often features of *identity*, as argued by the so-called social constructivists, who reject the sterile materialist reasoning of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism (‘absolute vs. relative gains’; Katzenstein, 1996).

On the subject of identity, what really distinguishes Russia from all other postcommunist countries – apart from Russia’s vastness – is Russia’s political history and culture of being the *centre of an empire*. This can be identified as a root cause of the neo-imperialist noise in democratic Russia’s foreign policy (Skak, 1996a, p. 65 ff.). The imperial political culture implies that the transition from communism is seen as much less legitimate inside Russia than outside,¹⁴ and the result is a much less goal-oriented policy of reform compared to the general pattern in the residual postcommunist states, not least a much less goal oriented foreign policy (cf. e.g. Ukraine).

In effect, what I am suggesting here is that there is a certain degree of popular mandate behind Russia’s curious foreign policy pattern. This is undeniable, although the influence on foreign policy exercised by Russian civil society is quite ambiguous, as pointed out by a Finnish scholar (Pursiainen, 2000). First, there are doubts about the validity of the Zhirinovski electoral landslide – (cf. fn. 4 above).

¹⁴ As Richard Rose’s, Christian Haerper’s and several other international sets of survey data show, Russian dissatisfaction with the current economic and political system is clearly more pronounced than among the peoples in East Central Europe, as is nostalgia for the past (Skak, 1996b, p. 12).

Second, the thesis that people in Russia vote on foreign policy issues is highly dubious. Until recently, foreign policy issues were notoriously low on the list of priorities of the Russian rank and file, even during much of the NATO enlargement controversy (cf. Melville, 1996). Third, even if one accepts as fact that the ordinary Russian's concern about external events has grown due to NATO enlargement and the NATO intervention in the Kosovo crisis, this in itself does not challenge the praetorian model of voter manipulation, but may actually confirm it (cf. Snyder, 1996).

Who, then, is to be accused of manipulation and logrolling? According to article 86 of the 1993 Constitution, formal power over Russian foreign policy is vested in the President. The problem with this provision is that Yeltsin was never particularly interested in foreign policy (Crow, 2000). Real power therefore slipped to various contestants for power – people and bureaucracies who perceived an interest in turning the apparently simplistic we/they issues of foreign policy into a political football (Skak, 1996a, pp. 55-61, 144-91). In continuation of this, recent scholarship points to the increasing role played by *the Russian intelligence community* in shaping Russian foreign policy (Galeotti, 2000; Hoppe, 1999; Yasmann, 2000). Both Mark Galeotti and Victor Yasmann see the SVR ('*Sluzhba Vneshnei Razvedki*') as a source of Russia's tough stance on NATO expansion and towards the 'near abroad'. The SVR further acted as a proponent for nuclear sales to Iran. Concerning NATO expansion, SVR's role was evident and can be traced directly to the person who headed the institute in the mid-1990s, Evgeni Primakov (*Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 26 November, 1993). Quite tellingly, he was later appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs and subsequently Prime Minister, and might have won the year 2000 presidential election, if not for Putin's rise to preeminence.

It is tempting to conclude that this heralds the victory of the FSB ('*Federal'naia Sluzhba Bezopasnosti*') – headed by Putin from 1998 until he became Prime Minister – over the SVR. Yet, a more general and valid conclusion is perhaps the one drawn by Mark Galeotti, that it is too simplistic to speak of Russian foreign policy as being manipulated by Russia's so-called power ministries, if the emphasis is primarily on the Russian Ministry of Defence and the Army in general. He observes that power has slipped to the intelligence community at the expense of military professionals in the contemporary Russian game of *kto-kogo* (Galeotti, 2000). The problem with this outcome is that it fails to solve the problem of the lack of a democratic culture in Russia, because also "the spies" are notorious for their non-democratic instincts (Hoppe, 1999). Turning to foreign policy, my own conclusion concerning the Putin era is that his background promises more of the same in terms of flawed views on international affairs, worst case analysis and possession goal thinking – the entire *groupthink* syndrome that has marred Russian foreign policy during the last decade (cf. Janis, 1972).

President Putin may be efficient and honest in certain respects. He is certainly trying to correct the course of Russian foreign policy by turning to *internal*

balancing – strengthening Russia on the home front – as seen in the foreign policy doctrine announced in July, and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov’s recent speech to the Duma (*Denmark’s Radio*, 10 July, 2000; *International Herald Tribune*, 11 July 2000). Yet, Putin does not truly believe in the milieu goals that Russia so badly needs.

8. *Shto Delat’?* Policy implications in terms of how to deal with Russia

Unfortunately, there is not much the outside world can do to influence events in Russia, not only because of Russia’s size but also because decision-makers and ordinary people in Russia now have the upper hand in determining what is to happen. This does not imply, however, that the West should adopt a passive wait-and-see attitude. The entire logic of milieu goals adhered to by the democratic community on world affairs is based on foreign policy activism, not isolationism. Input from abroad is a critical factor in Russia’s transformation, not least in the form of ideas and constructive proposals, inputs from democratic political cultures.

More specifically, the West must face the fact that Russia’s foreign policy – just like China’s – continues to be heavily realist-inspired. A genuine dialogue with Russia therefore presupposes a certain amount of empathy with the realist mindset, which is not to say that the West should let Russia have its way in international affairs. The point is rather the opposite, namely to persuade Russia to focus on reform instead of foreign policy. The way forward is to convince Russian policy-makers that this is a sound neorealist strategy of internal balancing, a necessary strategy of building up capabilities,¹⁵ as one never knows when things will turn sour in international affairs. In particular, the Russian *derzhavniki* must be made to understand that it is imperative that Russian state strength be built on the principle of *legitimacy*. Furthermore, the insight that there is only one enduring way of accumulating legitimacy – namely Max Weber’s classical model of legal-rational authority that presupposes the rule of law, democratic change of government and respect for human rights – must be communicated to our Russian partners.¹⁶ In other words, the West should avoid repeating the mistake of lending political support to individual Russian politicians – be it Yeltsin or Putin – and concentrate on marketing institutional and structural progress, e.g. by reacting to clamp downs on the media.

¹⁵ Kenneth Waltz, the founding father of neorealism, identified seven components of power in his deliberations on polarity, i.e. the distribution of capabilities across units: Size of population and territory, resource endowment, military strength, political stability and competence (Waltz, 1979, p. 131). Several Russian Achilles’ heels are among them!

¹⁶ I can identify with many of the ideas advanced by Wolfgang Ischinger of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He insists on the implementation of a rule of law in Russia, of turning Russia into a *Rechtsstaat* as a key provision for Russian recovery (‘Die Zukunft Russlands liegt in Europa’ = ‘the Future of Russia lies in Europe’; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 July, 2000).

This approach does not depart from the West's own milieu goals. On the contrary, as the institution of the rule of law is a clear-cut case of a variable sum game where everybody wins because of the transparency and credibility created by the rule of law. Russia, its leadership, the citizenry and even Russian crooks (who do, of course, deserve fair trials and justice), foreign investors and the world in general stand to win.

Nevertheless, there is still room for creative thinking along neorealist lines to further genuine dialogue with Russia. What I have in mind is a proposal for making specific concessions to Russia in order to communicate the principle of reciprocity in our relations with this country. Given the destructive Russian instinct of sphere-of-influence thinking and the not illogical argument upon which it is based nowadays, cf. p. 15 above that ever since the Monroe doctrine of 1843, the United States has always had its own "legitimate" sphere-of-influence in the Americas, it is time to reconsider this particular element of U.S. foreign policy. At any rate, the Monroe-doctrine is an anachronistic reminiscence of a bygone era of undisputed US imperialism towards its southern 'near abroad', and hence quite unsustainable in our era of NAFTA and democratic changes of regime in Mexico and points south. If we want Russia to abandon its neo-imperialist practices in its 'near abroad', we must establish conditions of democratic peace internationally wherever democracy exists.

9. Conclusion: Russia as an actor in world politics

This paper is written from a normative stance so as to expose the decadence and irrationality of postcommunist Russian foreign policy. Section two thus dwelt on the mismatch between the structural reality surrounding Russia and the Russian cognitive level of foreign policy making. True, both before and after Vladimir Putin came into power we have seen certain signs of retreat from untenable patterns and positions, but in view of Russia's loss of goodwill following the August 1998 economic meltdown, corrections of the course steered are long overdue. Section three introduced selected Western contributions on Russian foreign policy, divided into the optimistic and the pessimistic school, of which I belong to the latter.

The reason for my sceptical attitude towards the alleged paradigmatic change away from Soviet manners was elaborated in sections four and five which first presented the analytical framework of milieu goals versus possession goals and thereupon applied it to the entire history of Czarist Russian, Soviet and post-communist Russian foreign policy. I was able to trace certain milieu goals through all three epochs of Russian foreign policy, e.g. the legalism of *pacta sunt servanda*. Yet, this liberal and democratic leitmotif is clearly underdeveloped in Russian foreign policy, not least today after the transition from communism. This finding challenges the theory of democratic peace and tends to underscore the rival hypothesis on the war-proneness of newly democratizing states (Mansfield and Snyder, 1995).

Contemporary Russian foreign policy thus primarily displays realist and neorealist possession goals behaviour and thinking: zero-sum perceptions of relative gains, chauvinistic and myopic 'national interest' reasoning, and neo-imperialist impulses of neglecting the sovereignty of neighbours in the 'near abroad'. Even if postcommunist Russia has waged but few wars and none of a formally interstate nature, old Soviet instincts of coercion remain disturbingly intact.

In section six I broadened my argument by examining three cases of arguably dysfunctional foreign policy. I began by challenging the wisdom of Russia's pursuit of multipolarity by citing Robert Kagan's thoughts on the topic (1998). The interesting point is that it is possible to document that even Russian analysts are beginning to realize the myopia of their multipolar vision. I then addressed the myths and realities about Russia's regional priorities and, finally exposed the possible negative repercussions of Russia's pro-Serbian partisanship in ex-Yugoslavia.

Section seven asked who or what is to blame for excessive and counter-productive Russian foreign policy activity and pointed to the model of praetorian decision-making in explanation. However, we must add Russian ideographic factors of identity to this explanation, that is, Russian identification with its imperial past, including the imperialistic superpowerhood of the Soviet era. The analysis pointed to the Russian intelligence community as the culprit concerning the manipulation of Russian foreign policy towards Eurasianism.

Section eight proposed various answers to the question about how to change this state of affairs in Russian foreign policy. I propose that the West combine its emphasis on milieu goals in its dealings with Russia with a dialogue that stresses certain neorealist tenets. As already anticipated by Putin, marketing the virtue of internal balancing is one obvious way to proceed, while another is to persuade the Americans to officially abandon the Monroe doctrine in order to convince the Russians that we are sincere about reciprocity, thus sending a strong signal that there is no such thing as spheres of influence in an era of democratization and globalization. In particular, the *sine qua non* of a domestic rule of law must be communicated to Russia instead of the Western tendency to align itself with individuals in the Russian political game.

In sum, as an actor in world politics Russia is a weak state, desperately trying to convince the world that it is a unitary actor, one to be reckoned with – true to its own realist conviction. To be fair, however, it is also a unitary actor slowly coming to terms with its own weakness and need to concentrate on becoming genuinely strong in world affairs.

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