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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the Presented Research

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the bipolar world order came to an end, and the international system entered a period of transformation. Throughout this process, the Russian Federation emerged as one of the most important power centers in the new system, claiming to be the continuing of the Soviet Union. This raised curiosity about how Russia would determine its strategy differently from the Soviet Union's foreign policy, which was based on communist ideology and a bipolar world system. In scientific studies within international relations and other disciplines, the ultimate goal is to achieve objective knowledge and interpretations. Unlike the natural sciences, arriving at concrete scientific results in social sciences is much more challenging. This challenge allows for various narratives and subjective views to come to the forefront in the social sciences, of which international relations is a part. Over the past thirty years, numerous studies in the field of international relations have been conducted in English, the dominant research language, focusing on the transformation of Russian foreign policy since the dissolution of the USSR, based on the interpretations of Western academia and politics. However, studies conducted by non-Russian researchers that conceptualize this transformation from a Russian historical, philosophical and conceptual perspective remain in the minority.

Furthermore, studies defining Russian foreign policy from a Western perspective predominantly depict Russia as a "defeated" state of the Cold War, striving to regain what it lost, thus portraying it as a revisionist state. In recent years, these definitions have evolved to the point of interpreting Russia as a "radical revisionist" or even a "rogue state" that desires to dismantle the current international system. On the other hand, when examining the Russian perspective, distinctly different arguments and definitions become apparent. The

in-depth academic examination of these differences and their incorporation into the international relations literature is necessary to adhere to the principle of achieving objective knowledge in scientific studies.

In this context, the importance of this research lies in its aim to contribute to the literature on Russian foreign policy by providing Russian perspective from foreign researcher to reach objective evaluations. This study seeks to explain Russia's status quo and reformist aspirations based on Russian conceptualization, contrasting with the Western-dominated perspective that often labels Russia as revisionist state. By offering a balanced view that includes Russian perspectives, this research will significantly contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Russian foreign policy in the international relations discipline.

Literature review: Current status of the research on the subject

Explaining states' foreign policy behaviors solely through the dichotomy of status quo or revisionist-oriented approaches presents a reductionist perspective, neglecting the diverse strategies states employ. In recent years, the international relations literature has increasingly recognized that states can adopt stances that fall between the protective nature of status quo policies and the radical nature of revisionism. Some scholars have explored this middle ground by redefining the concept of revisionism, while others have framed it within the context of reformist policies. However, there is still no consensus in the international relations literature regarding the defining elements of revisionist, reformist, and status quo-oriented state policies. Despite this lack of agreement, substantial research has been conducted on the subject. Interest in these studies has grown particularly since the end of the Cold War, as shifts in the international system have spurred the publication of numerous works addressing these dynamics.

The international relations literature contains a substantial body of work dedicated to defining Russian foreign policy and analyzing it on both regional

and global scales. However, relatively few studies interpret Russian foreign policy through the lens of Russian conceptualizations, particularly in terms of its status quo and reformist aspirations. While the majority of these works categorize Russia, similar to other rising powers, as a predominantly revisionist state, a significant number of studies argue that Russia also pursues status quo objectives. In this context, to comprehend the status quo, reformist and revisionist aspirations of states and to analyze these concepts within the framework of Russian foreign policy at both regional and global levels from a Russian perspective, the following categories of sources have been examined:

1. Monographs and scholarly articles written on the concepts of status quo, reform, and revisionism used in explaining states' foreign policy strategies;
2. Monographs, books, scholarly articles, and official documents published by the Russian state that are included in the scientific literature on Russian foreign policy, most of which explain the Russian perspective or are written by Russian researchers:

In the first group, the works of prominent authors in the form of monographs, books and scholarly articles include notable names such as Edward H. Carr[1], Arnold Wolfers[2], Randall Schweller[3], Robert Gilpin[4], Barry Buzan[5], Kenneth

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[1] Carr, E. H. The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations / E. H. Carr. — London: Macmillan Press, 1981. — 244 p.

[2] Wolfers, A. Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics / A. Wolfers. — ThriftBooks-Phoenix, 1965. — 303 p.

[3] Schweller, R. L. Rising Powers and Revisionism in Emerging International Orders / R. L. Schweller // Valdai Papers. — 2015; Schweller, R. L. Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back / R. L. Schweller // International Security. — 1994. — Vol. 19, №. 1. — P. 72-107; Schweller, R. L. Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power / R. L. Schweller. — Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008. — 200 p; Randall L. S. Maxwell’s Demon and the Golden Apple: Global Discord in the New Millennium. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. 216 p.

[4] Gilpin, R. War and Change in World Politics / R. Gilpin. — Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press. — 287 p.

[5] Buzan, B., Acharya, A. Re-Imagining International Relations: World Orders in the Thought and Practice of Indian, Chinese, and Islamic Civilizations / B. Buzan, A. Acharya. — Cambridge University Press, 2021. — 240 p.; Buzan, B. People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations / B. Buzan. —

Waltz[6], Henry Kissinger[7], Hans Morgenthau[8], J. Mearsheimer[9], Stacie Goddard[10], Jason W. Davidson[11], Richard Sakwa[12], Steven Ward[13].

The works of Edward H. Carr, Arnold Wolfers, Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, Henry Kissinger and Robert Gilpin are regarded as milestones in the discipline of international relations for their foundational analyses of states' power dynamics, security policies, behaviors and positioning within the international system. Their evaluations of states' capacities and aspirations in terms of status quo, reformist or revisionist tendencies provide essential literary foundations for contemporary researchers. Scholars such as Barry Buzan, Richard Sakwa, Randall Schweller, Steven Ward and Stacie Goddard, who focus on states' foreign policy approaches with status quo, reformist and revisionist orientations, frequently draw upon these seminal works. Notably, Randall Schweller's "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In" holds particular significance in studies on status quo and revisionist foreign policy approaches, a subject that gained renewed prominence following the end of the Cold War. This study has taken the debates to an intense scientific level.

Wheatsheaf, 1983. — 262 p.; Barry, B., Schouenborg, L. Global International Society: A New Framework for Analysis / B. Barry, L. Schouenborg. — Cambridge University Press, 2018. — 286 p.

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[7] Kissinger, H. A. A World Restored: Metternich Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-1822 / H. A. Kissinger. — Vermont: Echo Point Books & Media; Illustrated edition, 2013, 376 p.

[8] Morgenthau, H. Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, brief ed. Rev. / H. Morgenthau; K. W. Thompson. — New York: McGraw Hill, 1993.

[9] Mearsheimer J. J. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. Updated Edition / J. J. Mearsheimer. — New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014.

[10] Goddard, S. E. Embedded Revisionism: Networks, Institutions, and Challenges to World Order / S. E. Goddard // International Organization. — 2018. — Vol. 72, №. 4. — P. 763–797.

[11] Davidson, J. W. The Origins of Revisionist and Status quo States / J. W. Davidson. — New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006.

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Analyzing the policies of rising states and those trying to enhance their capacities through the influence of hegemons, Schweller's work focuses on revisionist states and emphasizes the use of military power as a foreign policy tool by these states. Subsequent studies have introduced new perspectives, particularly emphasizing that rising powers do not always favor military methods. These works have re-evaluated the policies of states previously categorized as revisionist, proposing instead that such states often pursue reformist aspirations. In this context, recent studies by Barry Buzan, Stacie Goddard, Kai He[14], Deborah W. Larsson & Alexei Shevchenko[15], Alastair I. Johnston[16] and Igor Istomin have become prominent. The works of these authors, which classify states based on their aspirations and foreign policy actions, expand the discussion on reformist aspirations within the literature and challenge the conventional view that equates revisionist states solely with rising powers. These studies offer valuable contributions to understanding state tendencies, including status quo, revisionism, and reformism.

In the second group, the conceptualization of Russian foreign policy, its regional and global analysis and the evaluation of these policies based on status quo and reformist aspirations are notably addressed by Alexei Bogaturov[17], Anatoly Torkunov[18], Alexei Arbatov[19] Andrei P. Tsygankov[20], Pavel A.

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transformation of Russia's official foreign policy strategies. Additionally, in the first part of the study, special attention is given to the influential figure in Russian political philosophy, Philosopher Nikolai Danilevsky[47], whose work "Russia and Europe" and views provide a foundation for the contemporary "Russian civilization" concept, highlighting the relationships and differences between Russian political philosophy and European civilization. In the examination of Russian political philosophy, in addition to the views of Pyotr Chaadaev[48], one of the significant philosophers in Russian history, the works of contemporary researchers such as Viacheslav Nikonov[49], Andrei P. Tsygankov, Pavel A. Tsygankov, Andrei A. Kokoshin[50] and Natalya Narochnitskaya[51] provide important insights and evaluations. These scholars offer valuable information and assessments that contribute to the understanding of Russian political thought and its development.

Finally, in the second group, this study also includes the analysis of reports on regional and global strategies of Russian foreign policy published by leading Russian think tanks such as the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) and the Valdai Club. Additionally, principles and reports on foreign policy areas such as security, energy, and climate change, published by relevant ministries within the Russian Federation, are among the important sources of this study.

Chronological framework of the dissertation research

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The chronological scale of this study encompasses Russia's foreign policy from the end of the Cold War to the present, which is largely based on the leadership of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin.

Novelty of the Dissertation

This research provided an analytical framework to understand Russian foreign policy through the established concepts of status quo, reformism and revisionism, while also delving into the philosophical and conceptual foundations underlying Russia’s foreign policy. Within this approach, Russia’s foreign policy is examined in its multi-dimensional structure and conceptualized through its self-perception and worldview, alongside its regional and global strategies.

Purpose of the research

Following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR, the Russian Federation faced significant structural and ideological challenges throughout the final decade of the 20th century. However, since the beginning of the 21st century, Russia has progressively rebuilt its political, economic, and military power within the modern international system. By addressing its internal problems and regaining strength, Russia, unlike in the 1990s, has advanced a grand strategy that spans from the regional to the global scale. This resurgence has allowed Russia to project its power in various forms across both levels, leading to interpretations of its foreign policy as exhibiting revisionist tendencies, both theoretically and practically. However, Russia's objections to certain Western objectives and demands, such as the continuation of Western hegemony in the international system based on a liberal rules-based order, NATO expansion, the European Union and NATO's promotion of democracy, attempts to exclude the Russian Federation from global affairs, the inefficiencies of interstate organizational structures, and the neglect of the interests and aspirations of non-Western countries, have driven its pursuit of alternative regional and global organizations such as BRICS and the SCO. In Russian

conceptualization, it is evident that Russia does not harbor radical revisionist ambitions, such as the complete dismantling of the current international order to create an entirely new one. Instead, it aspires to revise the system through reforms emphasizing peaceful coexistence, mutual respect for security and state interests, equal partnerships, non-intervention in state sovereignty, recognition of great powers' spheres of influence and the promotion of a multipolar world order.

It’s possible to see that these are not pure revisionist desires, if studies of the experts on revisionism would be examined. Some of them might be categorized in status quo oriented aspirations and some of them just contains reformist aspirations. One of the most important parameters to evaluate this is which perspective, resources and concepts are used during research process. In this context, the main purpose of this study is analyzing the aspirations of Russian foreign policy in status quo and reformist tendencies in Russian conceptualization in the regional and global dimensions. The change and continuity of Russia's position in the foreign policy sphere throughout the post-Cold War period and its conceptualization from Russian perspective is a main point of this research.

Object of the research

The revisionist and reformist aspirations of the states that have lost the status as a great power is a well-known realm in the studies of the international relations and political science discipline. The growing influence of the Russian Federation on the regional and global scale in the 21st century has been a remarkable theme for researchers in the field of international relations studies. However, studies on Russian foreign policy show differences depending on their resources and perspectives. In this regard, this study is mainly focused on the conceptualizing status quo and reformist aims and aspirations of the Russian Federation from Russian perspective and their application to the global and regional issues after the end of the Cold War.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the research

Instead of drawing on any mainstream or critical international relations theories, the theoretical framework of this study is grounded in a conceptual literature review of status quo, reformist and revisionist tendencies in states' foreign policies. Subsequently, the contemporary knowledge on Russia’s political philosophy has been examined and analyzed in historical perspective alongside official documents that outline Russia’s foreign policy strategies. Finally, in light of the concepts reviewed in the literature and the analyzed Russian political philosophy and official documents, Russia’s regional and global policies have been assessed in panoramic view by considering the transformation and shifts in Russian foreign policy following the Cold War.

This research employs qualitative method. Besides, it presents panoramic view with historical perspective on Russian foreign policy. The primary research method involves a comprehensive review of Russian and English language literature, specifically analyzing Russia's status quo, reformist and partial revisionist aspirations on regional and global scale. This review draws upon Russia's political philosophy, official documents and the works of Russian scholars and experts in both English and Russian. The aim of this approach is to provide researchers with a more objective analysis of Russian foreign policy, moving beyond some of the Cold War-era biases and preconceived notions prevalent in international scholarship. By relying on leading works in Russian academia and unofficial documents and statements related to Russia's foreign policy to explain Russian conceptualization of its foreign policy, this study seeks to offer a more balanced perspective. In this context, the study incorporates qualitative research to explore the status quo, reformist and revisionist tendencies of states; the political concepts and approaches that have gained prominence in Russian politics and foreign policy since the end of the Cold War; and Russia's regional and global aspirations and their applications. The researches, opinions and analyses of prominent Russian and international

scholars, experts and policymakers are also included. Moreover, a comparative analysis has been conducted across the hundreds of works reviewed during the literature review process.

The primary challenges encountered during the research process stemmed from the extensive volume of works reviewed, the need to conduct readings in three different languages (Russian, English, Turkish), and the difficulty of accessing objective information and analyses on such a complex and comprehensive research topic. These factors posed significant hurdles in constructing the theoretical and methodological framework of the study.

2-Research questions

The main research question of the thesis is *"How could be conceptualized Russian foreign policy according to its status quo and reformist aspirations on regional and global scale?"*. Besides, additional questions for sub-sections of the research are;

-*What are main motivations of states about following status quo, revisionist or reformist oriented foreign policy strategy?*

-*What kind of concepts, perspectives and philosophies has been used to explain Russian politics at the behalf of the status quo and reformist orientations?*

-*How Russian foreign policy concepts have evolved since the end of the Cold War?*

-*What is status quo/reformist aspirations in Russian foreign policy on global and regional scale?*

Hypothesis of the research

Following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the foreign policy approach that the Russian Federation, as the continuing state of the USSR, would adopt became a subject of discussion and research in international relations studies. However, in the studies analyzing Russian foreign policy, the biased and entrenched perspectives that linger from the Cold War era hinder the production of objective works in the literature

evaluating Russia's ambitions and actions. One of the most prominent assessments, particularly in studies on Russian foreign policy dominated by a Western perspective, is the view that Russia harbors revisionist, even "disruptive," aspirations and actions. Although there are works within Russian academia that reflect the Russian perspective, doubts about the objectivity of these studies and prejudiced approaches toward them lead to skepticism, limiting their adequacy in objectively analyzing Russian foreign policy in international literature.

In this context, the aim of this study is to contribute to the literature at an international level, in English, by analyzing the Russian perspective by a foreign researcher on foreign policy, referred to as the "Russian conceptualization," through the views of Russian academia, media, and statesmen. In this regard, one of the most contentious issues in the study of Russian foreign policy—whether Russia harbors revisionist ambitions and actions—has been examined, with an attempt to provide a conceptual framework on the strategic and practical transformation of Russian foreign policy post-Cold War, as well as an analysis of Russia's regional and global policies. In addition to the structural analysis of Russian foreign policy, it is necessary to examine the concepts of revisionism, status quo orientation and reformism, which has recently gained traction in the literature, in order to evaluate whether Russia is indeed revisionist.

Based on the conceptual and structural analyses in the first chapter, this study argues that rather than purely revisionist aspirations, Russian foreign policy reflects a combination of reformist and status quo-oriented ambitions, depending on the region and global developments. However, it is also suggested that Russia has recently engaged in some reactionary revisionist foreign policy actions. Moreover, it is argued that, since the end of the Cold War, the transformation in Russia's relations with the West, the rise of a foreign policy approach based on its own political philosophy and values, and the emergence of

reformist ambitions and partial revisionist actions have become dominant in Russia's regional and global policies over time.

The main provisions for defense

1. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation has sought to redefine its foreign policy to align with the evolving dynamics of the international system. This effort has reignited debates surrounding Russia's national identity and its role in both regional and global affairs. These discussions, deeply rooted in historical deliberations about Russia's relationship with the West, have become a central focus of post-Cold War research on Russian foreign policy.
2. In the 1990s, Russia grappled with political and economic crises amidst a transforming international system. This period spurred studies in international relations that analyzed states' foreign policies through the lens of their status quo, revisionist and reformist aspirations. Classifying states in foreign policy as status quo, revisionist or reformist often influenced by biased historical perspectives, frequently mislabels rising powers as “revisionist and disruptive” while portraying established hegemonic powers as “status quo and order oriented.” This study argues that such oversimplified interpretations impede a nuanced understanding of contemporary Russian foreign policy, highlighting that states can adopt multiple strategies simultaneously. The desire for change or preservation of values does not inherently render a state radically revisionist or disruptive.
3. Transformation of Russian foreign policy strategy and rising many concepts and approaches in Russian politics has also provided Russian philosophical accumulations on political science. This historical accumulation is fundamental point of rising Russian civilization and traditional values in Russian politics.

4. Russia perceived the end of the bipolar order as a natural progression toward a multipolar system, envisioning itself as a leading global power alongside other politically and economically advanced states. However, it also interpreted the policies of the United States and its Western allies as attempts to establish a unipolar system, often characterized by the disregard of international law and the use of military force.
5. The great power statue has always been as a crucial argument in Russia's policy since the Russian imperial period. That has provided a statue to Russia as being one of the most influential powers in world politics. Change and continuation of Russia's foreign policy in accordance with its status quo and reformist aspirations, Russia has also re-gained its great power image on international scale.
6. On a regional scale, Russia demonstrates a blend of status quo and reformist aspirations across Europe, the Near Abroad, and the Middle East. It adopts a strong status quo stance against shifts in power dynamics that disregard its interests, particularly in response to NATO and EU expansions, color revolutions, and military interventions like the Iraq invasion, which it perceives as violations of international law. Despite these challenges, Russia's expanding political, economic, and military capabilities underpin its reformist ambitions. These are evident in its push for a new security framework in Europe, its strategic balancing against the United States in the Middle East, and its establishment of partnerships through initiatives such as OPEC+, the Greater Eurasian Project, and assertive responses to geopolitical crises in its Near Abroad. Together, these developments reflect Russia's aspiration to reshape regional orders in alignment with its evolving national priorities and international context.
7. On a global scale, Russia's foreign policy is shaped by its perception of the post-Cold War era as a transition toward a multipolar system, contrasting sharply with the unilateral tendencies of the United States and

its Western allies. Recognizing the dominance of the United States following the Soviet Union's disintegration, Russia initially sought to integrate into the international system while promoting multilateralism to counteract hegemonic practices. However, as geopolitical conflicts escalated, this integration became increasingly challenging. Consequently, Russia's foreign policy evolved from a primarily status quo orientation to one characterized by stronger reformist aspirations and selective revisionist actions. Initiatives such as BRICS/BRICS+, the Greater Eurasian Project, promoting trade in national currencies, advocating for reforms in international economic institutions like the IMF and World Bank, and fostering partnerships with non-Western regional organizations underscore Russia's commitment to establishing a multipolar and multilateral world order.

8. This study argues that Russia's foreign policy framework, shaped by the concepts of status quo, reformist, and revisionist aspirations, has undergone significant evolution in the post-Cold War era. During the initial phase, Russia primarily pursued status quo objectives, focusing on consolidating its national power. However, as regional and global dynamics evolved and Russia's political, military, economic, and cultural influence expanded, its foreign policy shifted toward a more assertive approach. This transition reflects a combination of status quo, reformist aspirations and partial reactional revisionist strategies on both regional and global scales.

The theoretical and practical contribution of the dissertation

The theoretical foundation of this dissertation is rooted in a conceptual analysis of Russia’s political history and philosophy, evaluated through the lenses of status quo, reformist, and revisionist paradigms. These concepts are examined in the context of Russia’s regional and global aspirations and their practical applications within the sphere of foreign policy. By adopting this

theoretical framework, the study introduces a novel and original perspective to the analysis of Russia's foreign policy, departing from the conventional reliance on mainstream and critical international relations theories that dominate the field. This approach provides a panoramic view of the foundational principles and dynamics shaping Russia's foreign behavior, offering valuable insights to both researchers and foreign policy practitioners.

The practical contribution of the research lies in its analysis of Russia's foreign policy through the lens of Russian conceptualization, enabling an understanding of these dynamics from Russia's own perspective. In doing so, the dissertation seeks to enrich the literature by offering a comprehensive account of the underlying concepts, motivations, and strategic roots of Russia's foreign policy. This perspective provides researchers, foreign policy experts, and policymakers with a nuanced understanding of Russia's strategic conduct. Rather than portraying post-Cold War Russia simplistically as a revisionist power, often characterized by reductionist views and biases prevalent in the existing literature, this study examines the conditions under which Russia has pursued simultaneously status quo, reformist, and revisionist foreign policy objectives and strategies since the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Approbation of the research results

The main provisions and conclusions of the scientific research are presented in the following scientific publications in periodical journals and monographs, included in the list of VAK Russia and Scopus/Web of Science:

1. Tekin O. Turkey's approach to escalating tensions between the West and Russia in Russia's "near abroad" / O. Tekin // Пути к миру и безопасности. – 2024. – № 2 (67). – P. 141–159. (0,81 п.л.) (Перечень RSCI)

2. Tekin O. Status quo, revisionism and reformism in the studies of western and non-western scholars / O. Tekin // Социально-гуманитарные знания. – 2024. – № 9. – P. 202–207. (0,27 п.л.) (Перечень ВАК)
3. Chernov D. N. and others. Counterintervention success: analyzing Russian and US involvement in Syrian crisis / D. N. Chernov, A. D. Nesmashnyi, O. Tekin, A. A. Igityan // Сравнительная политика. – 2023. – Vol. 14. – № 1–2. – P. 149–163. (0,85 / 0,21 п.л.) (Перечень ВАК)
4. Tekin O. End of the quest: rising “Russian civilisation” concept in Russian politics / O. Tekin // Siyasal: Journal of Political Sciences. – 2024. – Vol. 33. – № 2. – P. 241–260. (0,9 п.л.)
5. Tekin O. Rising Trilemmas in South Caucasia: Türkiye-Azerbaijan-Pakistan Versus India-Armenia-Iran / O. Tekin // International Conference on South Caucasus in The Context of Modern Global Challenges. – Baku : Azerbaijan University, 2024. – P. 228-230. (0,1 п.л.)
6. Tekin O. Kırım’ın İlhakı Sonrasında Karadeniz’de Değişen Dengeler ve Türkiye-Rusya Rekabeti / O. Tekin // Türkiye - Rusya ilişkileri: dünü, bugünü ve yarını / ed. İ. Topsakal. – Ankara : Nobel, 2021. – P. 291–309. (0,8 п.л.)

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1: Analyzing the Conceptual Dimensions of Russian Politics: Status Quo and Reformist Orientations

At first, status quo, reformist and revisionist aspirations of states are examined as one of the conceptual backgrounds of the research. Basic explanations and reasons of the states in regard adaption of status quo, revisionist and reformist oriented aspirations as a foreign policy strategy is analyzed. Then, evolution of the Russian foreign policy strategy after the

dissemination of the Soviet Union in conceptual bases is detailed and classified in the light of explanation of status quo and reformist orientations of states.

Then, conceptual background of Russian foreign policy is examined with analyzing of official foreign policy and national security concepts of Russian Federation. Their common suggestions and evolutions from 1993 to 2023 are examined.

Finally, the philosophical underpinnings of Russian foreign policy are examined with reference to the works of Nikolai Danilevsky and the leadership of President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin since the early 21st century.

Chapter 2: Regional Aspirations and their Applications in Russian Foreign Policy

After losing its superpower status, Russia, as the continuing state of the USSR, was often perceived as a regional power in global politics. However, Russia has consistently rejected this characterization. It remained one of the world's two great nuclear powers and maintained a vast sphere of influence. Nonetheless, economic instability and the challenging transformation of its state system compelled Russia to prioritize the preservation of its territorial unity and, temporarily, to accept the role of a regional power. In this context, Russia initially adopted a "near abroad" policy to extend its influence across the former Soviet territories. To achieve this, it spearheaded the establishment of organizations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Yevgeny Primakov emerged as one of the key architects of this policy, which has since been embraced by Russian foreign policy leaders.

Beyond its near abroad, Russia's involvement in the Middle East as a game-changer has solidified its position as a great power in global politics, rather than merely a regional actor. The expansion of Russia's decisive influence outside its near abroad and Europe has enabled it to reclaim recognition as an alternative power challenging incumbent powers on both regional and global

scales. Russia's prevention of Western military intervention in the Syrian regime, its role in overseeing the destruction of Syrian chemical weapon stocks, and the establishment of new partnerships with regional actors such as the Gulf states, Turkey, and Iran, underscore its great power politics and its reasserted role as an alternative power in the region. Consequently, Russia's return to the Middle East as an alternative great power serves as a critical case for analyzing its status quo and reformist aspirations on a regional scale.

The European order represents another critical issue for Russian foreign policy. The need for restructuring and reforming European political, economic and security structure after the end of the Cold War became an indispensable reality in international relations and regional security. In this context, establishing a new European security framework emerged as one of Russia's main strategic goals. This priority stems from the fact that Russia's primary security concerns have European and Atlantic roots and Russia remains one of the leading powers on the continent. However, the disregard of Russian concerns and the reluctance of Western powers to create a new European order with Russia’s partnership have led to numerous disagreements between Russia and the West. Preserving the security interests of Russia and its European allies has consequently been a central aspiration in Russia's foreign policy strategy throughout region.

In conclusion, Russia's pro-status quo and reformist aspirations and their implementation on a regional scale are assessed through key areas of focus, particularly the Near Abroad, the Middle East, and Europe.

Chapter 3: Global Aspirations and their Applications in Russian Foreign Policy

Russia's aspiration to create a multipolar world through cooperation with non-Western powers constitutes the most critical focus of this chapter. This policy reflects Russia's pursuit of recognition as a global power and an equal major player in world politics, analyzed here within the context of its foreign

policy strategy. Initially, despite its awareness and warnings regarding Western ambitions to establish a unipolar system, Russia sought to integrate into a new world order shaped by Western liberal ideals. However, upon realizing that the West did not recognize it as a major and respectable power after the disintegration of the USSR, Russia began to position itself in opposition to Western dominance. The central goal of this anti-unipolar approach was the establishment of a multipolar world system, with Russia as one of its poles.

Nevertheless, Russia has consistently sought membership in Western-created global international organizations such as the G8, WTO, OSCE, and the NATO-Russia Council (NRC). Participating in these organizations, rather than isolating itself, has been more advantageous for Russia in preserving and advancing its interests on a global scale. However, Russia's role in these institutions has often been contentious due to recurring and temporary disagreements with the West. To promote a multipolar world order and counterbalance Western hegemony, Russia has also prioritized the creation of new international organizations and the strengthening of existing ones. This approach reflects its broader strategy of rejecting Western unipolarity in the post-Cold War era. In this context, Russia has played a key role in establishing and consolidating non-Western organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS in the 21st century. These efforts aim to prevent the West from expanding its sphere of influence across regions such as Central Asia, the Islamic world, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific, while safeguarding Russian interests in these areas.

The final part of the chapter provides a comprehensive evaluation of Russia's pro-status quo and reformist aspirations, along with their application on a global scale.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study aims to analyze Russia's foreign policy stance on regional and global issues, compiling its status quo-oriented and reformist

aspirations within the framework of Russian conceptualization. This approach seeks to provide researchers with more balanced and objective insights into post-Cold War Russian foreign policy.

CHAPTER 1: ANALYZING RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN RUSSIAN CONCEPTUALIZATION: STATUS QUO AND REFORMIST ORIENTATIONS

1.1. Status Quo, Revisionist and Reformist Orientations in Foreign Policy

The construction of inter-state relations within the framework of certain rules, norms, and values, and the sustainability of this international order, along with the potential changes it may undergo over time, constitute one of the prominent study areas within the discipline of international relations. The absence of any authoritative entity above states reveals the existence of an international system where the regulation, sustainability, and change of inter-state relations are dependent on the behaviors and policies of states themselves. Within this international system, the development of relations between states involves a struggle where all states, without exception, are engaged in seeking power and balance for their own security and welfare.

While some states believe that the current system aligns with their development, security, and interests, others consider it inadequate for fulfilling their needs, preferences, and aspirations, thus advocating for its alteration or replacement. In addition to this assessment, some states believe that the current system is suitable for some of their demands and needs. However, they desire amendments to regulations they perceive as incompatible with their evolving capabilities, in ways that would be favorable to them. Indeed, these different attitudes adopted by states lead to varying policies and behaviors. These divergent approaches in foreign policy also give rise to a struggle for superiority among them, which is referred to as the pursuit of hegemonic power among states in the discipline of international relations. This struggle for superiority can occur both independently among individual states and in the form of blocs

among alliances formed by states. Ultimately, it results in a competition based on power struggle within the system.

International relations experts and political scientists have attempted to analyze the power struggle emerging within the international system by classifying states and conducting analyses. In these analyses, the international system has been central, and the policies of states, which are the dominant elements of the system, have been observed. As mentioned in the evaluations above, and in the literature of international relations, states that believe the existing established system meets its needs and desires are considered status quo states, while states that do not believe the current established order meets their desires and needs and consequently demand change are defined as revisionist states. Observing that these two classifications do not fully explain the policies of some states, experts have made an alternative definition, albeit without much depth in the literature. These are reformist states, which believe that the existing system meets its needs and desires but needs to be reformed in proportion to its evolving capacities over time.

Realist theorists, who evaluate the struggle of states to construct, preserve, and change the international system through status quo, revisionist, and reformist policies as quests for power and balance, stand out with their studies on this issue. Realists who have made significant contributions to the research and analysis of this topic in the literature of international relations include Edward H. Carr, Henry Kissinger, Hans Morgenthau, Arnold Wolfers, A. F. K. Organski, Kenneth Waltz, Robert Gilpin, and Randall Schweller. Among the constructivist theorists who emerged as a different interpretation of the realist perspective, Charles Kupchan has also made different evaluations regarding the status quo, revisionist, and reformist tendencies of states. Some contemporary studies based on the works contributed to the literature by these prominent

figures have been published by Stacie Goddard[52], Steven Ward[53], Jason W. Davidson[54], Alastair I. John[55], Kai He[56], Jorg Kustermans[57], Alexander Cooley[58], and Igor Istomin[59].

According to assessments made particularly by classical realists and neorealists during the Cold War era and immediately thereafter, Rising Powers are generally defined as states showing revisionist and reformist tendencies, while hegemonic powers constructing the existing order are labeled as status quo states. For example, Randall Schweller, in his article published in Valdai in 2015, defines the international system by focusing on the competition between Emerging (Rising) Powers and Established (Hegemon) Powers[60]. On the other hand, Kai He, in a co-authored work, argues that there is a misconception in the international relations literature that Rising Powers are revisionist states and Hegemonic Powers are status quo states[61]

Assessments regarding whether states pursue status quo, revisionist, or reformist policies within the current international system are based on the analysis of the objectives of their foreign policies, the means they employ to

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[52] Goddard S. Embedded Revisionism: Networks, Institutions, and Challenges to World Order 69. Goddard, S. E. Embedded Revisionism: Networks, Institutions, and Challenges to World Order / S. E. Goddard // International Organization. — 2018. — Vol. 72, №. 4. — P. 763–797.

[53] Ward, S. Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers / S. Ward. — Cambridge University Press, 2017.

[54] Davidson, J. W. The Origins of Revisionist and Status quo States / J. W. Davidson. — New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006.

[55] Johnston, A. I. Is China a Status Quo Power? / A. I. Johnston // International Security. — 2003. — Vol. 27, №. 4. — P. 5-56.

[56] He K., Feng H., Chan S., Weixing H. Rethinking Revisionism in World Politics / K. He, H. Fenge, S. Chan, H. Weixing // The Chinese Journal of International Politics. — 2021. — Vol. 14, №. 2. — P. 159–186.

[57] Kustermans J., De Carvalho B., and Beaumont P. Whose Revisionism, Which International Order? Social Structure and Its Discontents / J. Kustermans, B. De Carvalho, P. Beaumont // Global Studies Quarterly. — 2023 — 3(1). — P.1-13. — DOI: 10.1093/isagsq/ksad009.

[58] Cooley A., Nexon D., Ward S. Revising Order or Challenging the Balance of Military Power? An Alternative Typology of Revisionist and Status quo States / A. Cooley, D. Nexon, S. Ward // Review of International Studies. —2023. — Vol. 45. №. 4. — P.689–708. — DOI: 10.1017/S0260210519000019.

[59] Istomin I. A. Institutional Revisionism in International Politics: The Product of Rising, the Child of Decline or Something Else? / I. A. Istomin // Valdai Discussion Club Report. — 2021.

[60] Schweller, R. L. Rising Powers and Revisionism in Emerging International Orders / R. L. Schweller // Valdai Papers. — 2015.

[61] He K., Feng H., Chan S., Weixing H. Rethinking Revisionism in World Politics / K. He, H. Fenge, S. Chan, H. Weixing // The Chinese Journal of International Politics. — 2021. — Vol. 14, №. 2. — P. 159–186.

achieve these objectives, and the outcomes they desire to attain. These analyses rely on categorizations made to understand the changes occurring in the international system and the resulting consequences. Jason Davidson suggests that categorizing states as status quo, revisionist, or reformist enables the understanding of crucial outcomes such as war and peace[62].

1.1.1. Status Quo Oriented States

States achieve their status in the international system, which shapes the legal functioning within the established international order, through processes and rules, norms, values, and institutions they construct. Like many realist theorists, Henry Kissinger associates this with the broad-scale wars that emerge at the end of hegemonic struggles, asserting that the victors of these wars construct the order[63]. Recent developments such as the European Concert, based on the balance of power and formed by the victorious coalition led by Russia, Britain, and Austria-Hungary after the Napoleonic Wars, the League of Nations established by the victorious powers of England and France after World War I, and finally the United Nations built by the allies led by the USA and the USSR after World War II (Yalta and Potsdam), can be seen as examples of Kissinger's assessment in contemporary history. Kissinger highlights in the established order where norms and values adopted by the major powers are institutionalized as rules, the emphasis on meeting the security needs of all major powers[64]. Similarly, Timofei Bordachev emphasizes the necessity for major powers not to be demeaned in the established international system and not to be excluded from

[62] Davidson, J. W. The Origins of Revisionist and Status quo States / J. W. Davidson. — New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006.
[63] Kissinger, H. A. A World Restored: Metternich Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-1822 / H. A. Kissinger. — Vermont: Echo Point Books & Media; Illustrated edition, 2013, 376 p.
[64] Ibid.

institutions and regulations where major decisions are made[65] (Bordachev, 2023).

Following dramatic changes in the functioning of the global order within the international system, the question of how the order created by hegemonic powers based on security, interest, norms, values, and rules will be sustained becomes a crucial factor in the formulation of states' foreign policy strategies. States that shape their foreign policy strategies according to the conditions, norms, rules, and regulations of the existing system seek to demonstrate whether they are satisfied with the functioning of that order. In this context, Hans Morgenthau defines states that are satisfied with the power distribution in the existing order and aim to maintain it as status quo states[66]. States committed to the status quo are entirely reliant on maintaining the current order and are opposed to any changes in power distribution that would affect the functioning of the system. After referencing many realist theorists, Alastair I. John, by stating a similar view to A.F.K Organski and J. Kugler, identifies status quo states as those that design the rules of the game in the current system and benefit from these rules[67]. Additionally, Stacie Goddard emphasizes former and partly declining hegemonic states that desire to preserve the current system to maintain their dominance, portraying these states as status quo states struggling to preserve the existing system[68]. Kenneth Waltz, a pioneer of neorealism and structural realism, also expresses that states satisfied with maintaining the established balance of power and sharing in power seek to preserve it, labeling

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[65] Bordachev T. Signs of a New International Order / T. Bordachev // RIAC. — accessed April 27, 2024, https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/signs-of-a-new-international-order/.

[66] Morgenthau, H. Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, brief ed. Rev. / H. Morgenthau; K. W. Thompson. — New York: McGraw Hill, 1993.

[67] Johnston, A. I. Is China a Status Quo Power? / A. I. Johnston // International Security. — 2003. — Vol. 27, №. 4. — P. 5-56.

[68] 69. Goddard, S. E. Embedded Revisionism: Networks, Institutions, and Challenges to World Order / S. E. Goddard // International Organization. — 2018. — Vol. 72, №. 4. — P. 763–797.

them as status quo states[69] (Waltz, 2001). Like Alastair, Barry Buzan also categorizes states pursuing policies to establish and sustain the current system as status quo states[70] (Buzan, 2001). Buzan suggests that states shape their policies based on their capabilities regarding power, status, influence, and access to resources in the current system, and evaluates states content with the distribution of these elements as those desiring to preserve the functioning of the international system, resistant to change (Buzan, 2001). Among recent scholars, Steven Ward also assesses states resistant to any change in the distribution of power and the functioning of the order as status quo states (Ward et al., 2019). In their work with Cooley and Nexon, Ward evaluates status quo states as more inclined towards conflict compared to reformist and revisionist states due to their resistance to change (Ward et al., 2019). In light of all these assessments, status quo states can be defined as those emerging victorious after major power struggles, prioritizing their own interests in a sustainable manner, satisfied with the values, norms, and rules established by major powers, desiring their preservation, and willing to resist if necessary.[71]

Representatives of defensive realism, one of the prominent ideas of realism, generally define states as units following status quo policies because they claim that all states are essentially seeking to maximize security[72]. On the other hand, representatives of offensive realism, which prioritize power maximization, generally consider all states, with some exceptions, as revisionist units desiring change[73]. Regarding the status quo states mentioned as exceptions

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[69] 223. Waltz, K. N. Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis / K. N. Waltz. — Columbia University Press, 2001.

[70] Buzan B., Schouenborg L. Global International Society / B. Buzan, L. Schouenborg. — Cambridge University Press, 2018. — 276 p.

[71] Tekin, O. Status Quo, Revisionism and Reformism in the Studies of Western and Non-Western Scholars / O. Tekin // Sotsial'no-Gumanitarnyye Znaniya. — 2024. — No. 9. — P. 202-207.

[72] Schweller, R. L. Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back / R. L. Schweller // International Security. — 1994. — Vol. 19, №. 1. — P. 72-107.

[73] Ibid.

in Schweller's generally defined offensive realist perspective, Mearsheimer's arguments highlight their revisionist tendencies over time, capacity accumulation, and the fact that they are already satisfactory regional hegemons[74] (Mearsheimer, 2001).

The dramatic changes in the balance of power in the international system following the end of the Cold War and dissolution of the USSR, the rise of new regional and global powers, and debates about whether states are satisfied with or demand change from the existing order have been brought back to the forefront. Randall Schweller brought this issue back to the international relations literature by classifying states as either adhering to status quo or revisionist strategies in his article *Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In* published in 1994[75]. Additionally, the end of the bipolar system and the quest of hegemonic powers, led by the United States, to establish a unipolar order, along with the desires of other major powers such as Russia and China for a multipolar order, have gradually increased efforts to understand the functioning of the international system through the classifications of status quo and revisionist states.

1.1.2. Revisionist Oriented States

The Cold War ended without a major war among the hegemonic powers, coming to a bloodless conclusion. However, the dissolution of the bipolar world order, which persisted for about 40 years after World War II, and the collapse of one of the two hegemonic powers, the Soviet Union, necessitated the establishment of a new international order. The academic impact of these developments began with Randall Schweller's published article, and subsequently, with the rise of global powers such as China, Russia, India, Brazil,

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[74] Mearsheimer J. J. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. Updated Edition / J. J. Mearsheimer. — New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014.

[75] Johnston, A. I. Is China a Status Quo Power? / A. I. Johnston // International Security. — 2003. — Vol. 27, №. 4. — P. 5-56.

and regional powers like Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, etc., the desire to study this topic in the literature started to grow. However, despite similar definitions, conceptualizations, and analyses on the concept of revisionism made by realist theorists and geopolitical experts in many subsequent works in the literature focusing on the struggle for hegemony among states, the different change strategies pursued by states have not allowed these conceptualizations to reach a generally accepted clarity. This has led to the concept of revisionism being highly popular but poorly defined in the discipline of international relations[76].

Although there isn't a strong definition regarding whether states pursue revisionist policies, there are numerous assessments in the literature of international relations, particularly from the pioneers of the realist movement, focusing on states that pursue revisionist policies. For instance, Arnold Wolfers, referenced by Randall Schweller and many other scholars working on the topic, defines revisionist states as those dissatisfied with power distribution, international norms and institutions, territory, status, and prevailing ideological understandings in the current international system and harbor a desire to change them[77]. Henry Kissinger, prior to Wolfers' work first published in 1962, characterized revisionist states as those adopting policies and behaviors against the order constructed by states victorious in the struggle for hegemony in the international system[78]. However, Kissinger also refers to a legal order wherein all major states' security needs are met[79]. Robert Gilpin, renowned for his contributions to security studies in the literature of international relations, evaluates revisionist states as those seeking fundamental changes in power

[76] He K., Feng H., Chan S., Weixing H. Rethinking Revisionism in World Politics / K. He, H. Fenge, S. Chan, H. Weixing // The Chinese Journal of International Politics. — 2021. — Vol. 14, №. 2. — P. 159–186.
[77] Wolfers, A. Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics / A. Wolfers. — ThriftBooks-Phoenix, 1965. — 303 p.
[78] Kissinger, H. A. A World Restored: Metternich Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-1822 / H. A. Kissinger. — Vermont: Echo Point Books & Media; Illustrated edition, 2013, 376 p.
[79] Ibid.

distribution, hierarchical prestige, and the rights and rules governing inter-state actions in the international system[80]. Randall Schweller evaluates revisionist-oriented states as those who prioritize what they desire over what they currently possess and are willing to disrupt the status quo if necessary, even resorting to military power[81]. Furthermore, in a more recent article published at Valdai, Schweller categorizes revisionist states as latecomers or emerging powers who seek to expand their control and spheres of influence, enhance their prestige in the functioning of the current international system, increase their position in the world economy, and expand their capacity and influence in international institutions[82].

Recent works referencing foundational studies on states' status quo or revisionist-oriented foreign policy approaches have, to a large extent, reiterated existing definitions with similar arguments, albeit with some adaptation to contemporary developments[83]. However, like Schweller's works, these studies have focused not only on defining status quo and revisionist states but also on the reasons driving them towards such policies, the instruments, methods, scopes, and intensities of these policies. In contemporary international relations, studies aimed at understanding and explaining state strategies in issues such as balance of power, power struggles, the causes of wars, and the construction of

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[80] Gilpin, R. War and Change in World Politics / R. Gilpin. — Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press. — 287 p.

[81] Schweller R. L. Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back / R. L. Schweller // International Security. — 1994. — Vol. 19, № 1. — P. 72-107.

[82] Schweller, R. L. Rising Powers and Revisionism in Emerging International Orders / R. L. Schweller // Valdai Papers. — 2015.

[83] Goddard, S. E. Embedded Revisionism: Networks, Institutions, and Challenges to World Order / S. E. Goddard // International Organization. — 2018. — Vol. 72, №. 4. — P. 763–797.; Johnston, A. I. Is China a Status Quo Power? / A. I. Johnston // International Security. — 2003. — Vol. 27, №. 4. — P. 5-56.; Kustermans J., De Carvalho B., and Beaumont P. Whose Revisionism, Which International Order? Social Structure and Its Discontents / J. Kustermans, B. De Carvalho, P. Beaumont // Global Studies Quarterly. — 2023 — 3(1). — P. 1-13.; Davidson, J. W. The Origins of Revisionist and Status quo States / J. W. Davidson. — New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006

peace have provided diversity in understanding and detailing revisionist actions, even though they have not definitively reached a consensus on their definition.

Why States Follow Revisionist Oriented Policy

Among the many reasons cited for states to pursue revisionist-oriented policies, one of the most prominent is the "dissatisfaction" of certain major powers with the distribution of power and resources in the current system, the dominant ideological understanding, and the functioning of norms, institutions, and frameworks constructed by dominant powers.[84] This dissatisfaction leads them to seek satisfaction corresponding to their power, prompting rising or newly developed states to seek changes according to their desires in some areas or throughout the entire system. While Kenneth Waltz explains that dissatisfaction with change of balance of the power struggle in the world system[85]. Charles Doran put forward changes in the states' internal, political, demographic, economic and international positions in the world system[86]. Besides, Arnold Wolfers notes that the dissatisfaction arising from the desire of states to have their values, which include ideological, territorial, status, market, international norms and law, and the functioning of international institutions, more prominently represented, leads these states to pursue revisionist policies[87] Paul Kennedy, on the other hand, emphasizes the expanded foreign policy approaches of rising powers vis-à-vis declining existing hegemonic powers[88].

In addition to the dissatisfaction of revisionist states with the current international system, their increasing capacities and capabilities, along with the

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[84] Tekin, O. Status Quo, Revisionism and Reformism in the Studies of Western and Non-Western Scholars / O. Tekin // Sotsial'no-Gumanitarnyye Znaniya. — 2024. — No. 9. — P. 202-207.

[85] Waltz K. N. Theory of International Politics / K. N. Waltz. — New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979.

[86] Doran C. F. War and Power Dynamics: Economic Underpinnings / C. F. Doran // International Studies Quarterly. — 1983. — Vol. 27, № 4. — P. 419-445.

[87] Wolfers, A. Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics / A. Wolfers. — ThriftBooks-Phoenix, 1965. — 303 p.

[88] Kennedy P. The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000 / P. Kennedy. — New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

decline of the existing hegemons in the established order, also emerge as significant factors. Mearsheimer characterizes all states as actors seeking power maximization, while he considers states that do not pursue revisionist policies as rational powers patiently waiting for their time[89]. Furthermore, Randall Schweller emphasizes the hegemonic war cycle, highlighting the ongoing power struggles between existing hegemonic powers and emerging or rising powers throughout the history of international relations[90]. This perspective generally codes rising powers as challengers or revisionists, addressing what Kai He considers a misguided bias.

Another significant factor highlighted in the works of Davidson[91], Ward[92], and Charles Kupchan[93] is domestic factors that lead states to pursue revisionist policies. In these studies, the authors emphasize that elites influential in domestic politics, as well as rising values such as religion and nationalism (Paul Kennedy also emphasizes the rise of nationalism inside), can lead states to harbor revisionist tendencies in their foreign policies. That mainly reflect constructivist perspective towards motivations of revisionist orientations of states.

Finally, Davidson also argues that according to classic realist idea, power vacuum also might entail rising revisionist aspirations of states, especially which have vulnerable states in its region[94].

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[89] Mearsheimer, J. J. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. Updated Edition / J. J. Mearsheimer. — New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014.
[90] Schweller, R. L. Rising Powers and Revisionism in Emerging International Orders / R. L. Schweller // Valdai Papers. — 2015.
[91] Davidson, J. W. The Origins of Revisionist and Status quo States / J. W. Davidson. — New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006.
[92] Ward, S. Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers / S. Ward. — Cambridge University Press, 2017.
[93] Kupchan, C. A. No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn / C. A. Kupchan. — New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
[94] Davidson, J. W. The Origins of Revisionist and Status quo States / J. W. Davidson. — New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006.

How and Which States Follow Revisionist Oriented Policy

Indeed, how states adopt policies while pursuing revisionist-oriented goals, the scope and depth of their revisionist desires, and the methods and tools they employ to achieve their revisionist aspirations are among the other aspects that theorists and experts' studies. The different views that emerge regarding the classification of states as revisionist or the purpose, method, scope, and depth of their revisionist policies are primarily based on various conceptualizations proposed on this subject. For example, Schweller categorizes revisionist states based on their dissatisfaction into limited-aims revisionist and unlimited-aims (revolutionary) revisionist states[95]. Unlimited-aims or revolutionary revisionist states are defined as those having issues with the entire system rather than any specific element within it, seeking to change or dismantle it entirely. Nazi Germany and Napoleonic France's revisionist policies can be cited as examples. Additionally, Schweller argues that not all revisionist states aim to completely change or eliminate the current international system. Limited-aims revisionist states, according to Schweller, harbor the desire to expand their prestige, spheres of influence, and to partially or completely alter international norms according to their priorities within the existing international system[96].

In contrast to Schweller, Robert Gilpin believes that all revisionist states aim to fundamentally change the distribution of power, prestige hierarchy, and the rules governing international relations, regulating states' rights and norms that influence their spheres of influence. Barry Buzan, like Schweller, believes that states' revisionist policies entail different goals, intensities, and methods, and in this context, he analyzes revisionist states in three different categories:

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[95] Schweller, R. L. Rising Powers and Revisionism in Emerging International Orders / R. L. Schweller // Valdai Papers. — 2015.
[96] Ibid.

orthodox revisionist, revolutionary revisionist, and radical revisionist states[97]. Buzan categorizes orthodox revisionist states as those involved in classical power and status struggles, similar to Schweller's limited-aims revisionist states. He defines revolutionary revisionist states as those pursuing policies against the fundamental values of the international system organized by dominant powers. With the concept of radical revisionist states, Buzan suggests that some revisionist states act as actors emphasizing their desire for reform within the existing international system. With these classifications, Buzan also emphasizes the need to distinguish between the level and intention of states' revisionist policies.

Igor Istomin suggests that since the 19th century, states have been in competition to construct norms, rules, and institutions within the international system, leading to a competition between status quo and revisionist states. However, Istomin emphasizes that while the revisionist policies attempted by regimes like Napoleon or Hitler in Europe were mainly based on territorial expansion seen as access to resources, today's trend is more focused on determining norms, rules, and expanding influence in international institutions rather than territorial expansion[98]. Similar arguments to Istomin's can be found in recent studies, which primarily focus on a quest for reform and revision regarding the functioning of institutions and the design of norms, values, and rules. Davidson asserts that norms, rules, and institutions are crucial in producing and sustaining social hierarchy, determining legitimate actions in international politics, and regulating inter-state interactions. In this context, Davidson categorizes states' revisionist policies into distributive, normative, and

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[97] Buzan B., Acharya A. Re-imagining International Relations: World Orders in the Thought and Practice of Indian, Chinese, and Islamic Civilizations / B. Buzan, A. Acharya — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

[98] Istomin I. A. Institutional Revisionism in International Politics: The Product of Rising, the Child of Decline or Something Else? / I. A. Istomin // Valdai Discussion Club Report. — 2021.

radical elements. While distributive revisionist actions are characterized as power struggles primarily aimed at material gains, Davidson draws attention to normative and radical revisionist actions in contemporary international relations, where norms, rules, and institutional functioning are questioned and sought to be altered[99]. Similarly, Stacie Goddard evaluates the policies of revisionist states in the context of institutional position, stating that depending on the intensity and degree of their revisionist actions, states adopt "network-related" policies[100]. In this context, revisionist states have embraced "exit, rule-based revolution, hegemonic violence, and institutional engagement" methods as foreign policy strategies. They are defined based on their low or high levels of revisionist tendencies depending on the narrowness or breadth of their networks[101].

Davidson and Istomin, in their respective studies, have emphasized the realist perspective stemming from the absence of a complex, supra-state legitimate body in global governance and the increasing number of regional and global actors alongside the declining trend of globalization[102]. The desire to question, change, or abolish the functioning of norms, rules, and existing international institutions in international relations arises from the problems highlighted by Istomin and Davidson and the deficiencies within the system.

In their studies on the status and identity quests of Russia and China, Deborah W. Larson and Alexei Shevchenko propose the "social identity theory," which offers a different interpretation of states' goals, methods, and tools[103]. According to this theory, states are classified based on the methods of social

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[99] Davidson, J. W. The Origins of Revisionist and Status quo States / J. W. Davidson. — New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006.

[100] Goddard, S. E. Embedded Revisionism: Networks, Institutions, and Challenges to World Order / S. E. Goddard // International Organization. — 2018. — Vol. 72, №. 4. — P. 763–797.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Davidson, J. W. The Origins of Revisionist and Status quo States / J. W. Davidson. — New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006.

[103] 113. Larson D. W., Shevchenko A. Quest for Status: Chinese and Russian Foreign Policy / D.W. Larson, A. Shevchenko. — New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

mobility, social competition, and social creativity within the policies they pursue. In the interpretation of social mobility, Larson and Shevchenko explain that states position themselves within the same group by emulating existing hegemonic powers; these states can also be viewed as following the dominant status quo powers, as defined in Schweller's bandwagoning concept. In the social competition interpretation, states are described as competing with revisionist desires to surpass the current dominant powers. Meanwhile, social creativity describes the desires of revisionist states to establish an alternative system to the existing one, as termed revolutionary revisionist policies by Kissinger, Schweller, and Buzan[104].

Finally, the bias of “rising powers” identified by He, Feng, Chan and Weixing regarding which states pursue revisionist policies is evident among academic trends in the 21st century, particularly with examples like Russia and China[105]. However, the foreign policy strategy pursued by the United States during the G. W. Bush administration, introducing concepts such as "pre-emptive strike," "humanitarian intervention," and “responsibility to protect (R2P)” into the literature and international politics, and during Donald Trump's presidency, actions taken against the functioning and universality of existing international organizations (such as the WTO and WHO) within the framework of mercantilist and isolationist policies, are analyzed as clear examples of how even the existing hegemonic powers can pursue revisionist policies[106].

Additionally, in the works of Buzan and Goddard, we can observe that states can adopt foreign policy strategies focused on both status quo and

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[104] Larson D. W., Shevchenko A. Quest for Status: Chinese and Russian Foreign Policy / D.W. Larson, A. Shevchenko. — New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

[105] He K., Feng H., Chan S., Weixing H. Rethinking Revisionism in World Politics / K. He, H. Fenge, S. Chan, H. Weixing // The Chinese Journal of International Politics. — 2021. — Vol. 14, №. 2. — P. 159–186.

[106] Ibid; Istomin I. A. Institutional Revisionism in International Politics: The Product of Rising, the Child of Decline or Something Else? / I. A. Istomin // Valdai Discussion Club Report. — 2021.; Schweller, R. L. Rising Powers and Revisionism in Emerging International Orders / R. L. Schweller // Valdai Papers. — 2015.

revisionist policies simultaneously[107]. This situation suggests that categorizing states purely and exclusively as either revisionist or status quo powers may not be accurate. The idea that states can pursue both status quo and revisionist policies, along with the variations in the intensity and degree of revisionist policies, leads to the notion that the concept of revisionism can evoke the idea, as asserted by Gilpin, of fundamentally altering the existing international system. Therefore, theorists and scholars also propose another classification referred to as reformist states.

1.1.3. Reformist Oriented States

The conceptualizations regarding states pursuing reformist-oriented policies do not hold a separate and significant place in the literature of international relations compared to the studies on revisionism. This is because in many studies over time, policies based on states' desires to reform the international system have been classified within revisionist-oriented actions. In this context, to better distinguish and understand the concepts, this study evaluates the stance of states with reformist-oriented foreign policy approaches within a different classification, focusing on the analyzes of revisionist-oriented policies.

Reformist states, as defined in Barry Buzan's concept of radical revisionist states, Stacie Goddard's classification of rules-based revolutionary revisionist states, the understanding of rising powers adopting the “hold up and change” strategy by Scott L. Kastner, Margaret M. Pearson, and Chad Rector, Steve Chan's collaborative work on defining the policies of states embracing a soft revisionist strategy, and Steven Ward's joint work on reformist state definitions, can be understood as follows: In light of the common assessments in all of these studies, reformist states are those that do not desire fundamental changes in the

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[107] Goddard, S. E. Embedded Revisionism: Networks, Institutions, and Challenges to World Order / S. E. Goddard // International Organization. — 2018. — Vol. 72, №. 4. — P. 763–797.

current international system; instead, they are content with the system but believe that it should be reformed in proportion to their evolving capacity, taking into account changing international conditions in terms of material, normative, and prestige-sharing aspects.[108]

In the policies adopted by reformist states, there is a tendency to embrace cooperative attitudes with hegemonic powers within the current international system, aiming to express desires for peaceful change through the collaboration arising from these partnerships. Schweller's argument in "give a seat emerging power at the table[109]," regarding the hegemonic war that has turned into a vicious cycle between revisionist states and status quo states, aligns with Organski's theorization on power sharing and the partial transfer of power from existing dominant powers to rising powers in the context of power transition theory[110]. Additionally, Morgenthau's propositions based on Organski's analyses further support the desires of reformist states.

Reformist states may desire certain profound changes in the international system, and it is difficult to claim that they solely harbor reformist intentions[111]. However, among the politics of reformist states employ to achieve their goals, the method of threatening or using military means is not preferred. Instead, they actively engage in efforts to establish areas of cooperation with other states that desire reform in the international system, working towards the establishment of complementary or alternative institutions and alliances. For example, China's leadership in the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as a result of long-standing resistance to reform demands within the IMF and World

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[108] Tekin, O. Status Quo, Revisionism and Reformism in the Studies of Western and Non-Western Scholars / O. Tekin // Sotsial'no-Gumanitarnyye Znaniya. — 2024. — No. 9. — P. 202-207.

[109] Schweller, R. L. Rising Powers and Revisionism in Emerging International Orders / R. L. Schweller // Valdai Papers. — 2015.

[110] Organski A. F. K. World Politics. / A. F. K. Organski. — Michigan University, 2nd Ed., 1968.

[111] Cooley A., Nexon D., Ward S. Revising Order or Challenging the Balance of Military Power? An Alternative Typology of Revisionist and Status quo States / A. Cooley, D. Nexon, S. Ward // Review of International Studies. —2023. — Vol. 45. №. 4. — P.689–708.

Bank by the United States, and Russia's adoption of policies aimed at making BRICS an alternative center for international economy and politics, along with China, India, and Brazil, serve as examples. In the foreign policy approaches of reformist-oriented states, a cooperative framework based on win-win rather than zero-sum actions is desired, contrasting with the aggressive revisionist actions often associated with hard revisionist states. Timofei Bordachev's assessment, paraphrasing Kissinger's views, that changes based on revisionist policies rely on a gradual process in the international system[112], actually indicates the gradual changes desired by reformist states within the contemporary international system.

1.2. Conceptual Foundations of Russian Foreign Policy

Official documents are formulated to explain the foreign policies of states at a theoretical and conceptual level and to serve as a guide for their implementation. This method, typically adopted by states classified as major or superpowers and pursuing policies on regional and global scales, has also been embraced by the Russian Federation, which emerged in the international system as the continuing state of the Soviet Union following its dissolution.

Since 1990s, in response to various international developments and the evolution of Russia itself, several official documents titled “The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation” and “Russia’s National Security Strategy” have been published. These documents serve as the official proclamations of Russia’s foreign policy and national security strategy. The document released on April 23, 1993, although not officially termed a "foreign policy concept" at the time, is retrospectively recognized as such. This document, implemented by then-President Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin and titled

[112] Bordachev T. Total Revisionism of World Politics / T. Bordachev // Valdai Club. — Accessed June 11, 2024. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/total-revisionism-of-world-politics/.

“Basic Provisions of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation,” is acknowledged as Russia's first official foreign policy concept. Subsequently, in alignment with Russia’s development and transformation and the shifts and progress in international relations and the international system, new foreign policy concepts were issued on June 28, 2000, July 12, 2008, February 12, 2013, November 30, 2016, and March 31, 2023, updating the official principles of Russian foreign policy.

Although the officially published foreign policy concepts of Russia contain common fundamental arguments and priorities, they also include certain modifications based on the national and international conditions, developments, trends, and possible future plans of their respective periods. In this context, the analysis of the construction, development, and transformation of the concepts of Russian foreign policy through these official documents has been utilized in this study as a significant research resource for conceptualizing Russian foreign policy from the Russian perspective.

1.2.1. Construction of the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation

Official documents containing concepts of Russian foreign policy are published in the form of organized texts categorized under different headings. These texts typically begin with the explanation of the general provisions of Russian foreign policy, followed by a summary of Russia's perspective on international relations and the contemporary international system. After outlining Russia's understanding of current regional and global developments, the basic principles, strategic objectives, and priority areas of its regional and global policies are then explained. At the end of the documents, the state organs implementing the announced foreign policy strategies and the contributing units are specified.

General Provisions of the Russian Foreign Policy in Official Documents

In the Russian foreign policy concepts, the general provisions in the first subheading explain the content of the foreign policy concepts, their legal basis, their connection with other official documents, the current definition of the Russian state, its place in the current international system, and the main directions of the current Russian foreign policy.

In the Russian foreign policy concepts, the content systematically covers the fundamental principles of Russian foreign policy, its strategic objectives, and its primary priority areas based on Russia's interests. The legal basis for these plans includes the Russian constitution, the generally recognized principles and norms of international law, the international treaties to which Russia is a party, federal laws, and regulations of the federal authorities of Russia. The Russian foreign policy concepts align with and complement the state's national security doctrines, military doctrines, and doctrines on issues such as military, humanitarian, transportation, technology, and environment on the global agenda. However, fundamentally, as the broad outlines of Russian foreign policy are drawn, these concepts can be seen as a reference source for other doctrines.

In the Russian foreign policy concepts, the definition of the Russian state varies according to the understanding, priorities, and strategic objectives of Russian foreign policy at the time they were published. While these differences and their causes will be analyzed in more detail below, a common definition that stands out is Russia as one of the most influential powers of the international system. Evaluations of Russia's place, mission, and objectives in the current international system vary based on national and international developments. The international system is described as multipolar or multicentric in all documents, and Russia is identified as one of these centers or poles. Additionally, it is noted that Russia is one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and is aware of its responsibility for establishing and maintaining international peace and order. Finally, the fundamental directions of Russian

foreign policy change according to the developments in the international system and the development of Russia's national and international political, military, economic, social, and cultural capacities. Russia's changing priorities and the strategic objectives that need to be updated are important elements in determining the main directions of its foreign policy.

After the general provisions are announced, generally; Russian foreign policy is explained in subheadings regarding the formation of the new world order after the Cold War, global and regional changes, international law, international security, international economic relations, and current global agenda topics, as well as information support for foreign policy activities, and the responsible legal units for the development and implementation of foreign policy. The subheadings and contents determined for these topics have been subject to different definitions and evaluations over time, depending on national and international developments. However, apart from these differences, there are common concepts and foreign policy priorities present in all foreign policy concepts.

1.2.2. Common concepts and Priorities in the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation

Since 1993, the foreign policy concepts published by the Russian Federation have undergone certain changes in response to national and international developments. However, there are some issues that consistently feature common assessments and priorities. These fundamental and unchanging topics in Russia’s foreign policy strategy include:

- Definition of the state
- Structure of the foreign policy
- Structure of the contemporary international system
- Cooperation and Integration in post-Soviet geography
- International economy

- International law
- International security
- United Nations and Security Council
- New European order and relations with the US
- Relations with the NATO and NATO Expansion
- Russian compatriots
- Russian image in the world

In the general provisions section of the Russian foreign policy concepts, the first issues addressed are the definition of the Russian state and the structure of its foreign policy. Although different definitions have been provided in the foreign policy concepts published over time, the common expression used is that Russia is a “great power” and “one of the most influential centers of the modern world.” Besides, Russia always is defined as a “responsible power”, based on its status as one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, in the international system. Regarding the structural assessment of Russian foreign policy, the concepts describe it as consistent, predictable, transparent, flexible, multi-vector, and pragmatic.

In the second section of the Russian foreign policy concepts, the structure of the contemporary international system and Russia’s perception of the current international order are explained with similar definitions. Russia’s common assessments made at different times emphasize the need for the international system to be reorganized in light of changing international conditions. Additionally, since 1993, Russia has noted that following the bipolar world order, there exists a “polycentric” or “multipolar” world order. Therefore, it is assessed that the international system is in a transitional process, experiencing varying degrees of intensity due to the changing conditions, and this process is accompanied by its own difficulties. Besides, Russian aspirations on this issue to transition to more democratic international relations and world order. The pathway to achieving this involves transforming the international system into a

more diverse and inclusive structure in contrast to unipolar aspirations of any sides. Common assessments also point to the presence of rising regional and global powers in the international system, particularly highlighting the growing significance of Asia-Pacific region, China and India as emerging powers in international relations. In the assessments regarding rising powers, it is emphasized that Russia needs to develop its relations with rising powers such as China and India. By doing so, Russia aims to contribute to the transition of the existing international order to a polycentric and multipolar system and to achieve national gains.

In Russia's foreign policy concepts, following assessments of the current development of the international system, the priority issue is the establishment of cooperation in the political, economic, and security dimensions in the post-Soviet geography. This cooperation aims to create common economic and trade areas within the CIS framework and is intended to be ensured within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Policies directed towards the region are considered a high priority area in foreign policy, both for the development and security of Russia and the former Soviet republics.

One of the topics evaluated under a separate subheading in the Russian foreign policy concepts is the structure and transformation process of the international economy. Regarding the development of the international economy, Russia's foreign policy concepts emphasize the following elements: expanding the areas of regional and global economic cooperation, globalizing the economy under more equal and just conditions, prioritizing a mutual benefit and respect for interests and adhering to new international regulations.

International law holds a significant place as another subheading in the Russian foreign policy concepts. As Russia integrates into the new international order as the continuing of the Soviet Union, the supremacy of universally accepted rules of international law, particularly the United Nations Charter, emerges as a priority in Russian foreign policy. For Russia, the principles of

state sovereignty in international law, the binding nature of United Nations Security Council resolutions, and the importance of preserving the Council as the sole authority to authorize the use of force without exceptions are emphasized. Additionally, it is repeatedly stated in every foreign policy concept that all states are equal subjects under international law.

From Russia's perspective, the elements of international security and national security have interwoven with varying intensities at different times. Moreover, considering the state relationships intertwined with globalization and regionalization trends, the indivisibility of security stands out as a key issue. The indivisibility of security argument, which Russia has consistently emphasized over the past thirty years, is interpreted in conjunction with the assertion that states are equal and sovereign entities under international law and norms. One of the main arguments in Russian foreign policy concepts is that states' security concerns and national interests in international relations should be based on mutual respect and benefit. In this context, the sovereignty of states, as the most authoritative legal entities in international relations, must not be violated, and any external intervention without the approval of the UN Security Council, regardless of the justification, is never acceptable. Such actions are seen as increasing the risk of regional and global conflicts and eroding international norms and law.

Furthermore, preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, reducing their numbers, and banning nuclear testing are key elements in Russia's foreign policy concepts, emphasizing the need for adherence to international regulations and the enhancement of cooperation. In this regard, Russia expresses its support for all international cooperation and initiatives concerning the longstanding international security and nuclear proliferation threat on the Korean Peninsula. Additionally, Russia demonstrates its openness to international cooperation in combating transnational criminal organizations, terrorism, human and drug trafficking, and criminal groups, which have risen and diversified alongside

globalization trends. Moreover, the necessity for solutions based on international law and diplomacy is underscored, particularly concerning security issues in the Middle East, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. The importance of international cooperation is also highlighted in addressing national and regional security risks arising from Afghanistan and in combating extremist ideological and religious structures.

In the context of establishing and sustaining the new international system after the Cold War, the role of internationally recognized organizations with indisputable legitimacy occupies a significant place in Russian foreign policy concepts. The foremost international organization highlighted in this regard is the United Nations and its authoritative body, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). From Russia's perspective, the powers and structure of the UNSC, consisting of permanent members, are indispensable arrangements that must be preserved. However, it is proposed that the representation within the UNSC be increased to reflect changing international conditions. Additionally, it is emphasized that the UNSC's role in resolving international issues and establishing peace needs to be strengthened. In this context, rational reforms concerning the UNSC’s function and structure are recommended. Lastly, it is underscored that the UNSC is the sole legitimate authority on the use of force, except in cases of self-defense.

Relations with Europe and the United States hold a significant place in Russian foreign policy concepts, both in terms of cooperation opportunities and competition. Following the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the conclusion of the bipolar system, developing relations with Europe and the United States has been seen as crucial for Russia's political and economic development. However, the structure of these relationships has always been explained in Russian foreign policy concepts as needing to be based on mutual benefit and respect, with both parties as equal partners. In this context, the necessity of building a new European security system where no state is

isolated has been consistently emphasized. It is also noted that the OSCE should play an active role based on its inclusive nature and the Helsinki Accords. It is highlighted that Russia is an important part of European history and culture, and that Russia is committed to cooperation with Europe within the framework of the aforementioned principles.

Regarding relations with the United States, Russia prioritizes the importance of international security and strategic stability, emphasizing the need to establish relations as equal partners based on mutual values and interests. Russia strongly opposes, as highlighted in all foreign policy concepts, any efforts by the United States to establish a missile defense system in Europe that excludes Russia. Regarding cooperation with the United States, Russia expresses openness to collaboration based on mutual respect and commitment in preventing and reducing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, deployment of intermediate and long-range missiles, and banning nuclear weapons testing. Lastly, Russia expresses its desire for relations with NATO to be conducted under the 1997 Russia-NATO Founding Act and the 2002 Russia-NATO Council arrangements. Russia firmly rejects NATO's expansionist policies and opposes them in any form.

In Russian foreign policy concepts, another common theme outlined under a separate subheading is the necessity for Russia to cultivate a positive image worldwide and ensure information security through active policies facilitated by civil society organizations and media channels. Additionally, particularly following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there is a highlighted focus on protecting the social, cultural, educational, legal, and political rights of ethnic Russians, Russian citizens, and Russian speakers residing outside the

borders of Russia in other CIS countries and around the world. It is emphasized that coordinated efforts with CIS countries are necessary in this regard[113].

1.2.3. Evolution and Changes in the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation

The foreign policy concepts of the Russian Federation have evolved significantly from 1993 to 2023, reflecting changes in global and regional power dynamics, Russia's increasing role in international affairs, and its responsibility in global development. Key updates in these concepts include reassessments of Russia's priorities and strategic objectives.

Russian State Identity

- Russia is consistently described as a "great power" and a major center of international influence.
- Since 2008, Russia has been defined as the largest state in Europe and the largest Euro-Asian power.
- Post-2013, conservative and traditional values have been emphasized in Russian foreign policy.

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[113] All of the content in this part of the study contains information from all Russian Foreign Policy Concepts since 1993. Therefore, at the end of the part, citations for all concepts were given in common citation. These concepts are: Osnovnyye polozheniya kontseptsii vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Federal'nyye zakony. Rasporyazheniyem Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii B.N. Yel'tsina ot 23 aprelya 1993 g. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.russiamatters.org/sites/default/files/media/files/1993%20Foreign%20Policy%20Strategy%20RUS.pdf.; Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii 28.06.2000. [Electronic resource] — URL: http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901764263.; Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii 15.07.2008. [Electronic resource] — URL: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/news/785.; 97.Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii 12.02.2013. [Electronic resource] — URL: http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186.; Rossiyskaya Federatsiya. Prezident. Ukaz ot 30 noyabrya 2016 g. № 640 "Ob utverzhdenii Kontseptsii vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii" // Sobraniye zakonodatel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii. [Electronic resource] — 2016. — № 49: 6886. URL: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451; Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii V. V. Putinym 31 marta 2023 goda. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/.

- The 2023 concept describes Russia as a unique country-civilization with deep historical ties to European and Eurasian cultures and a key player in global security.

Evolution of the Contemporary World Order and Russian Stance

- Post-2000, Russian foreign policy concepts have increasingly highlighted international security risks, the shift towards a multipolar world, and threats from radical ideologies and military interventions without UN approval.
- Since 2013, there has been a focus on the decline of Western power, the rise of Asia-Pacific, and the need for a new international system.
- The 2023 concept warns of increased risks of regional and global wars and nuclear conflicts.

Russia in the Post-Soviet Region

- All foreign policy concepts stress the importance of economic and institutional cooperation within the post-Soviet space.
- Initiatives like the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and support for countries like Ukraine (until recent conflicts) are key elements.
- Russia emphasizes respect for self-determination within international law, as highlighted by its stance on conflicts in regions like Ukraine, Transnistria, and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Russian Image and Russian Compatriots

- Since 2008, demographic issues have been addressed, with policies supporting Russians and Russian-speaking populations abroad.
- Concepts emphasize promoting the Russian language and countering extremist ideologies and historical revisionism.
- Public diplomacy and "soft power" have been highlighted, although recent concepts criticize its misuse in international relations.

Russian Relations with the US, Europe, and NATO

- Relations with the US focus on mutual respect, non-interference, and adherence to agreements.
- Concepts since 2008 highlight Russia's counter-balancing stance against unilateral US actions and NATO expansion.
- Relations with Europe are seen as crucial, but recent concepts reflect growing frustrations and propose reduced emphasis on Europe unless attitudes change.

Russian Global Agenda

- Environmental security, technological development, and energy policies are key issues.
- Russia supports international cooperation on climate change and energy, but criticizes the politicization of environmental issues.
- Technological advancements and cooperation in energy extraction and transportation are emphasized.

Russian Relations with Non-Western Powers, Regions, and Institutions

- Since 2008, strategic partnerships with China, India, and Brazil and organizations like SCO and BRICS have been emphasized.
- Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council and other regional organizations have been developed.
- The 2023 concept introduces the Greater Eurasia initiative, focusing on sustainable development and new trade routes.

Development and Implementation of Russian Foreign Policy

- Authorized bodies include the President, Federation Council, State Duma, Government, State Council, Security Council, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Advisory roles are played by political parties, experts, civil society organizations, and the Russian Orthodox Church.

- Recent concepts (2016-2023) do not include the earlier commitment to a rule-of-law state and democratic society[114].

1.2.4. Evolution of the Russia's National Security Strategy Documents

In Russia's national security concepts, under the titles "Russia in the Global Society" and "Russia in the Modern World," assessments are made on the development and transformation of international relations and the international system. Examining these sections is crucial for conceptualizing Russian foreign policy in light of official documents and analyzing the transformations it has undergone in foreign policy. The first prominent issue regarding the transformation and evolution of international relations and the system in the national security concepts of 2000, 2009, 2015, and 2021 is their definition in the post-Cold War era. The national security concepts published in 2000 and 2009 emphasize that two trends emerged in the international system following the end of the Cold War. These are:

- An order characterized by the prominence of multilateral governance mechanisms based on the improved integration of politically and economically strengthening states,

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[114] All of the content in this part of the study contains information from all Russian Foreign Policy Concepts. Therefore, at the end of the part, citations for all concepts were given in common citation. These concepts are: Osnovnyye polozheniya kontseptsii vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Federal'nyye zakony. Rasporyazheniyem Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii B.N. Yel'tsina ot 23 aprelya 1993 g. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.russiamatters.org/sites/default/files/media/files/1993%20Foreign%20Policy%20Strategy%20RUS.pdf.; Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii 28.06.2000. [Electronic resource] — URL: http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901764263.; Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii 15.07.2008. [Electronic resource] — URL: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/news/785.; 97.Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii 12.02.2013. [Electronic resource] — URL: http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186.; Rossiyskaya Federatsiya. Prezident. Ukaz ot 30 noyabrya 2016 g. № 640 "Ob utverzhdenii Kontseptsii vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii" // Sobraniye zakonodatel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii. [Electronic resource] — 2016. — № 49: 6886. URL: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451; Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii V. V. Putinym 31 marta 2023 goda. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/.

- The construction of a new international system desired to be regulated through unilateral, coercive actions by developed Western countries led by the USA, based on their dominance in the international community and ignoring international law.

Following the end of the bipolar world order, Russia supports the sustainability of the first trend as the natural course of the new world order, believing that this process will lead to the construction of a multipolar system. It views the construction of a new international order through the unilateral actions of the US and its Western allies, based on their own interests, as revisionist desires that endanger the stability of the international system.

In the national security strategy documents published in 2015 and 2021, the interpretation of two trends in the international system has given way to the formation and transformation of a multipolar world order. The 2015 and 2021 documents, which contain much broader evaluations compared to published in 2000 and 2009, emphasize Russia's internal security, values, traditional and civilizational characteristics, unique structure, and the rising risks of regional and global conflicts due to the aggressive policies of the declining Western hegemony. These aspects are in parallel with the foreign policy concepts published in 2013, 2016, and 2023. Finally, in response to the encirclement policies of the US-led Western states and their attempts to politically and economically weaken Russia, there is an emphasis on Russia's increasing international influence and responsibilities. There are warnings about the rising risk of military conflict between and within states, highlighting the growing importance of military power and capability.

As the foreign policy concepts, Russian national security strategy documents, although containing more limited and less ambitious policies in the 2000s, include warnings about conflicts arising from the policies of the US-led Western bloc in the international system. In 2015 and 2021, however, they emphasize more active and ambitious policies based on the transition to a

multipolar order and the transformation of the international system, fundamentally prioritizing the preservation of national values and interests over revisionist desires[115].

1.3. Philosophical and Conceptual Foundations of Russian Foreign Policy after the End of the Cold War

Russian politics and foreign policy, in particular, are deeply rooted in the nation's history, traditions, and the values inherent in Russian civilization. In recent history, Russian politics has undergone significant transformations, ranging from the imperial strategies of the Russian Empire to the ideology-driven policies of the USSR, and the creation of the Russian Federation's foreign policy strategy. Despite these structural and dramatic changes over the past 300 years, the continuity of strategic thought and discussions has remained in philosophical foundations of the Russian foreign policy.[116] The Russian Federation has emerged on the global stage, inheriting a state culture that has consistently been one of the leading actors in international relations over the past three centuries. This historical and social consciousness is deeply ingrained among ordinary citizens and governmental elites in Russia, shaping the political stance and foreign policy of the contemporary Russian state. Additionally, the special place of European civilization in Russian social and political values is another historical fact that cannot be overlooked. The organic and evolving ties

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[115] All of the contends of this part of the study rely on official documents of Russia's National Security Strategy, which were published in 2000, 2009, 2015 and 2021. These are:
Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 10.01.2000 № 24 "O Kontseptsii natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii". [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.prlib.ru/item/352298.; Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 12.05.2009 № 537 "O Strategii natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii". [Electronic resource] — URL: http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&firstDoc=1&lastDoc=1&nd=102063972.; Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 2 iyulya 2021 g. № 400 "O Strategii natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii". [Electronic resource] — URL: http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202107030001.; Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 31.12.2015 № 683 "O Strategii natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii". [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_191669/af6dbeb87d5a61b838f49f4571aa1a49c82b35fd/.

[116] Koktysh K. E., Sergeyev V. M. Konflikty elit v trekhsotletney istorii rossiyskoy modernizatsii / K. E. Koktysh., V. M. Sergeyev // Polis. Politicheskiye issledovaniya. —2023. № 1. S. 173–182.

with Europe have been a constant in Russian history, influencing its social and political landscape. Andrei Pavel Tsygankov characterizes the European and distinct civilizational structure of the Russian state as “historical dualism”, highlighting the coexistence of European and Asian values within Russian civilization[117]. This historical dualism has been a constant since the establishment of the Russian Empire under Peter I. It underpins both domestic and foreign policy debates regarding the new political stance and foreign policy orientation of Russia, which has re-emerged as a significant actor in the new emerging world order as the continuing of the Soviet Union.

In order to analyze philosophical foundations of the Russian Federation foreign policy after the end of the Cold War and dissolution of the USSR, theoretical and conceptual debates within Russian politics since the 1990s have to be comprehended and examined for that. It is crucial to understand evolution of the Russian foreign policy throughout last three decades. The confusion and efforts to recalibrate Russian politics have prompted the articulation of various concepts, ranging from modernist to civilizationist perspectives. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the abandonment of communist ideology necessitated a fundamental re-evaluation of the Russian Federation's political stance and foreign policy strategy. One of the key questions arisen in this re-evaluation process immediate post-Cold War period in Russia in regard for new political stance and foreign policy strategy of the new Russian state. It has entailed quest for creation of the new Russian stance and philosophical foundations and historical accumulations of the Russian politics come to forward in this process. So, that quest began with enormous discussions in Russian politics along 1990s and have evolved into the rising of the Russian civilization concept throughout last decade with the leadership of the President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin.

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[117] Tsygankov, A. P. Crafting the State-Civilization: Vladimir Putin’s Turn to Distinct Values / A. P. Tsygankov // Problems of Post-Communism. — 2016. — Vol. 63, №. 3. — P. 146-158.

1.3.1. Quest for the New Strategy in the Russian Politics in 1990s

The emergence of a non-ideological structure in the new Russian state has created challenges in formulating a coherent national stance. The transition to this new statehood has been marked by various political, economic, social, and security crises. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia grappled with the specter of internal disintegration, leading to a pervasive sense of disorientation and ideological fragmentation.

During the first decade of the Russian Federation, philosophical and conceptual discussions and theoretical quests ensued as politicians, scholars and political experts sought to delineate an appropriate strategy for the continuing state of the USSR, Russian Federation. In the realm of theory, various ideological frameworks were employed by both political scientists and public figures to elucidate the evolving stance of the Russian Federation. These included liberal and realist strategies neocommunism ideals, updating of the Eurasianist though and right-radical approaches (Zagorski et al.[118], 1992; Kosolapov[119], 2002; Kulagin[120], 2002; Zyuganov[121], 1995; Tsipko[122], 1996;

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[118] Zagorsky A., Zlobin A., Solodovnik S., Khrustalev M. Russia in a New World / A. Zagorsky, A. Zlobin, S. Solodovnik, M. Khrustalev // International Affairs. — 1992. — No. 7. — P. 3–11.; Zagorsky A. Russia in the European Security Order / A. Zagorsky — Moscow: Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), 2017.

[119] Kosolapov N. A. Kontury novogo miroporyadka // Vneshnyaya politika i bezopasnost' sovremennoy Rossii. 1991-2002 / Exe. Edit. Tatiana A. Shakleina. — Moscow: Moskovskiy Gosudarstvennyy Institut Mezhdunarodnykh Otnosheniy (Universitet) MID Rossii Rossiyskaya Assotsiatsiya Mezhdunarodnykh Issledovaniy Ino-tsentr (Informatsiya. Nauka. Obrazovaniye). — 2002. — Vol. 4. — P. 93–114.; Kosolapov N. Analiz Vneshney Politiki: Osnovnyye Napravleniya Issledovaniy / N. Kosolapov // Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya. — 1999. — No. 2. — P. 77–85.

[120] Kulagin V. M. Mir v XXI veke: mnogopolyusnyy balans sil ili global'nyy Pax Democratica? / V. M. Kulagin // Vneshnyaya politika i bezopasnost' sovremennoy Rossii. 1991-2002 / Exe. Edit. Tatiana A. Shakleina. — Moscow: Moskovskiy Gosudarstvennyy Institut Mezhdunarodnykh Otnosheniy (Universitet) MID Rossii Rossiyskaya Assotsiatsiya Mezhdunarodnykh Issledovaniy Ino-tsentr (Informatsiya. Nauka. Obrazovaniye). — 2002. — Vol. 4. — P. 145-162.

[121] Zyuganov G. Russia and the Contemporary World / G. Zyuganov // The Brown Journal of World Affairs. — 1995. — Vol. 2, No. 2. — P. 117–131.

[122] Tsipko A. Why Gennady Zyuganov's Communist Party Finished First / A. Tsipko // Demokratizatsiya. — 1996. — Vol. 4, No. 2. — P. 185-199.

Sakwa[123], 1998; Flikke[124], 1999; Barygin[125], 1995; Kuzmin[126], 2007; Belenkin[127], 1997). In addition that a plethora of concepts such as Atlanticism, peaceful co-existence, pluralism, pragmatism, polycentrism, multipolarity, great power/influential power (velikii derjav), civilized Eurasia, and Slavophile arguments were articulated by Russian scholars throughout this period[128]. These theoretical and conceptual debates not only aimed to elucidate the new political stance of Russia but also informed discussions on its foreign policy strategy.

Throughout the 1990s, certain theoretical and conceptual approaches gained prominence over others, influenced by both internal and external factors. Initially, liberal-neoliberal approaches and the concept of Atlanticism held sway[129]. Subsequently, realist/neorealist perspectives gained traction alongside notions such as Eurasianism, derjavnost, velikii derjav (great power), pragmatism, multipolarity, and pluralism, particularly with the ascendancy of figures like Yevgeny Primakov, Sergei Stankevich, and Gennady Zyuganov in Russian politics[130]. Simultaneously, isolationist, Slavophile, and civilized Eurasia concepts also gained prominence (Zeleneva, 2023). Ultimately, the inadequacy of one-sided theoretical and conceptual perspectives necessitated the emergence of constructivist and liberal constructivist theoretical approaches, coupled with a pragmatic, statist modernization agenda and pluralist-based

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[123] Sakwa R. Left or Right? The CPRF and the Problem of Democratic Consolidation in Russia / R. Sakwa // Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics. — 1998. — Vol. 14, No. 1-2. — P. 128-158.
[124] Flikke G. Patriotic Left-Centrism: The Zigzags of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation / G. Flikke // Europe-Asia Studies. — 1999. — Vol. 51, No. 2. — P. 275–298.
[125] Barygin I. N. Osnovnyye tendentsii evolyutsii sovremennykh rossiyskikh krayne pravykh / I. N. Barygin // Politiko-pravovoye ustroystvo reformiruyemoy Rossii: plany i real'nost'. Vyp. 3. SPb. — P. 74–86.
[126] Kuzmin, A. Pravoradikal'noye dvizheniye v sovremennoy Rossii: osobennosti ideologii i perspektivy razvitiya. Chast' 2 / A. Kuzmin // Politicheskaya ekspertiza: POLITEKS. — 2007. — P. 99-109.
[127] Belenkin B. Rossiyskiye periodicheskiye izdaniya o natsional-ekstremizme, 1992-1996: bibliograficheskiy ukazatel'. — Moscow: Zvenia Publication, 1997.
[128] Sergunin, A. Explaining Russian Foreign Policy Behavior: Theory and Practice. / A. Sergunin — ibidem-Verlag Stuttgart, 2016.
[129] Bogaturov A. D., ed. Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya v Tsentral'noy Azii: sobytiya i dokumenty. / A. D. Bogaturov — Moskva: Aspekt Press, 2011.
[130] Sergunin, A. Explaining Russian Foreign Policy Behavior: Theory and Practice. / A. Sergunin — ibidem-Verlag Stuttgart, 2016.

strategy during the initial term of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin's presidency[131] (Tsygankov, 2016).

On the other hand, Russia's post-Soviet trajectory triggered a rekindling of intellectual debates reminiscent of the 19th-century discourse that preceded the Bolshevik Revolution in the early 20th century. End of the 18th century and throughout 19th century, philosophical discussions revolved around Russia's mission, ideals, and character, with emphasis on modernist/pro-Western and conservative/civilizationist perspectives. In the aftermath of the Soviet era, marked by the dissolution of imperial structures and the global embrace of the nation-state framework, Russia found itself in uncharted territory. As Nikonov highlights, the concept of the nation-state was foreign to Russia's political culture, having been overshadowed by Soviet ideologies that downplayed Russian identity and uniqueness[132].

The practical challenges of transitioning to a post-Soviet statehood reignited the intellectual debate that had characterized 19th-century Russia. The 1990s witnessed a struggle for ideological dominance within Russia, pitting Atlanticist and liberal views advocating for integration with European civilization against conservative, nationalist, Eurasianist, and civilizationist perspectives emphasizing the distinctiveness of Russian culture and civilization. At the heart of this turmoil and ideological struggle was the quest to bestow upon post-Soviet Russia a coherent identity, a set of ideals, and a mission.

Throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries, discussions revolved around whether Russia was part of Europe, opposed to Europe, or constituted a civilization distinct from Europe, at the center of philosophical, historical, linguistic, and literary studies in Russia. Leading these debates were

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[131] Tsygankov, A. P. Crafting the State-Civilization: Vladimir Putin’s Turn to Distinct Values / A. P. Tsygankov // Problems of Post-Communism. — 2016. — Vol. 63, №. 3. — P. 146-158.

[132] Nikonov, V. Russkaya Tsivilizatsiya / V. Nikonov — Moscow: Prosveshenie Publication, 2021.

philosophers, writers, and intellectuals such as Aleksandr Radishchev, Nikolai Karamzin, Pyotr Chaadaev, Nikolay Danilevsky, Konstantin Leontyev, Alexei Khomyakov, Aleksandr Pushkin, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Vladimir S. Solovyov, who are championed pro-Western/liberal, nationalist, Pan-Slavic, and Eurasianist ideas[133].

Pro-Western Oriented Philosophical Foundations of the Russian Politics

The inception of liberal modernist and Westernist ideologies is often attributed to Alexander Radishchev in philosophical discussions in the Russian, who influenced by the French Enlightenment and atheism, emphasized compassion and humanity. Radishchev, along with other liberal thinkers known as pro-Western oriented, voiced opposition against serfdom, autocracy, bureaucracy and backwardness. He was advocating for reforms inspired by the examples set by Britain and France in 18th century[134]. Among Russian intellectuals, Pyotr Chaadaev emerged as a leading proponent of Westernist ideas. According to Andrzejz Walicki, a renowned scholar of Russian history and philosophy, Pyotr Chaadaev's Philosophical Letters, initially published in French in 1831 and later in Russia in 1836 in the journal Teleskop, sparked intellectual debates in 19th century in Russian Empire[135]. Across his six Philosophical Letters, Chaadaev expounded upon themes of Europe, Russia, faith, and societal development. Notably, in the sole letter published in Russian journal Teleskop, Chaadaev argued that European society represented an advanced civilization contributing to humanity, contrasting with Russia's perceived lack of historical or contemporary contributions[136]. The ensuing

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[133] Narochnitskaya, N. A. Rossiya i russkiye v mirovoy istorii / N. A. Narochnitskaya. — Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya, 2005.
[134] Nikonov, V. Russkaya Tsivilizatsiya / V. Nikonov — Moscow: Prosveshenie Publication, 2021.
[135] Walicki, A. The Flow of Ideas: Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to the Religious-Philosophical Renaissance / A. Walicki ; I. Grudzinska-Gross, A. W. Tymowski (Ed.) — Peter Lang Edition, 2014.
[136] Chaadaev P. Philosophical Letters and Apology of a Madman / Translated and introduced by Zeldin M.-B. — Knoxville, Tennessee, 1969.

discourse and resistance against Chaadaev's ideas, including his subsequent house arrest by Emperor Nicholas I following the publication of his article in Teleskop, played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of conservative and nationalist thought in Russia[137].

The trajectory of Westernization policies in Russia, initiated during the reign of Peter the Great and reaching its zenith under Catherine the Great in the 18th century, underwent a significant shift towards more conservative and nationalist tendencies during the rule of Nicholas I in the 19th century. The personal intervention of Emperor Nicholas I in the restriction of Chaadaev, the closure of the Teleskop magazine where the first of his Philosophical Letters was published, and the subsequent exile of its editor to Siberia underscored the extent to which Nicholas I was directly involved in shaping the intellectual landscape of the era. Under Nicholas I's reign, rather than embracing integration with European civilization, Russian politics increasingly emphasized the notion of Russia as a distinct and unique civilization with its own place within the international system and history of the humankind. This marked a departure from the earlier Westernization policies and reflected a broader shift towards conservative and nationalist ideologies in Russian governance and strategy of the Russian foreign policy. However, the emergence of revolutionary constitutional ideas following the French Revolution and the Russian savior role of the European monarchic imperial system from Napoleon throughout Napoleonic Wars prevented Russia from completely isolating itself from the political developments in Europe. Despite this, Russia did not intend to fully detach itself from European affairs.

On the other hand, in the reign of Alexander II, significant reforms were initiated, including the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and the introduction of

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[137] Nikonov, V. Russkaya Tsivilizatsiya / V. Nikonov — Moscow: Prosveshenie Publication, 2021.

certain constitutional arrangements under the monarchy. These reforms, however, were not solely driven by liberal or Westernist ideologies but rather by the political authorities responding to prevailing intellectual and social demands. Nonetheless, the intellectual discourse surrounding liberal and Westernist ideas spearheaded by figures like Radischev and Chaadaev played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of Russian politics and contributed to the partial modernization of Russia in the 19th century.

In the 20th century, the trajectory of Westernist and liberal ideas in Russia underwent a transformation, giving rise to the development of revolutionary and socialist ideologies within the Russian intelligentsia. This evolution was spearheaded by Alexander Herzen and the “Narodniks”, a movement advocating socialist principles and comprising numerous members of the Russian intelligentsia. The Narodniks, who played a role in the lead-up to the Bolshevik Revolution, emerged from intellectual debates that sought Western-style modernization, akin to liberal aspirations[138] (Nikonov, 2021). Another notable figure in this intellectual ferment alongside Herzen was Vissarion Belinsky. During the Soviet era, characterized by Russian socialism and communist ideology established in the aftermath of World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, liberal ideas struggled to gain significant traction. The dominance of socialist and communist ideologies within the Soviet system hindered the advancement of liberal thought during this period.

However, the Soviet political model underwent dramatic changes during the final years of the union. Mikhail Gorbachev played a pivotal role in leading this historical transformation, reshaping both the Soviet political structure and its foreign policy strategy. Gorbachev's leadership was characterized by efforts to contain re-integration attempts with the West, while simultaneously

[138] Nikonov, V. Russkaya Tsivilizatsiya / V. Nikonov — Moscow: Prosveshenie Publication, 2021.

advocating for openness within the Soviet political system to demonstrate goodwill and sincerity towards the Western alliance. Gorbachev's policy, often referred to as "New Thinking," marked a significant departure from the classical Soviet ideology-based approach. This shift encompassed substantial changes in Soviet foreign policy and ideological orientation, signaling a willingness to engage in dialogue and cooperation with Western powers.

Symptomatically, the 'New Thinking' was not quite new, to the extent that it was influenced by American neoliberal interdependence theories. Gorbachev's and Yakovlev's foreign policy advisers, such as Nikolai Kosolapov and Georgi Shakhnazarov, read Joseph S. Nye and Robert O. Keohane Transnational Relations and World Politics (1971) and applied its basic assumptions in designing the foreign policy speeches of Gorbachev and Shevardnadze[139].

However, Gorbachev's maneuvers aimed at fostering equal partnership and mitigating ideological conflicts between opposing poles. As Gorbachev's successor, Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin assumed leadership roles as the last President of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSC) and the first President of the Russian Federation. Yeltsin sought to continue and enhance the integration of Russia into the Western political system, building upon Gorbachev's vision of positioning Russia as an equal partner in the new emerging global order.

The advocates of modernization prioritize Russia's imperative to modernize and associate civilization with contemporary human achievements. This perspective entails aligning Russian cultural values with those of Western states, viewing the West as the vanguard of modernity and the epitome of progressive civilization in the modern world. This approach reflects a return to

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[139] Tsygankov, A. P., Tsygankov, P. A. Pluralism or Isolation of Civilisations? Russia’s Foreign Policy Discourse and the Reception of Huntington’s Paradigm of the Post-Cold War World / A. P. Tsygankov, P. A. Tsygankov // Geopolitics. — 1999. — Vol. 4, №. 3. — P. 48.

the European roots of the Russian Empire, which were institutionalized through significant reforms in the 18th century. Modernizers consistently advocate for Russia's deep integration with European-Atlantic economic, political, and security institutions. During the initial years of the Russian Federation, President Boris Yeltsin and his ministers and advisers, including Andrey Kozyrev, Yegor Gaidar, and Anatoly Chubais, believed that strategic partnership and cooperation with Western institutions, as well as the swift adoption of Western-style state structures and market principles, were essential for Russia's salvation and the resolution of its pressing challenges[140].

…the new Russia's leaders saw their country as an organic part of Western civilisation, whose "genuine" Western identity was hijacked by Bolsheviks and the Soviet system[141].

Prominent historians and philosophers like Vasili Klyuchevski and Pavel Milyukov have argued that the evolution of the Russian Empire differs from that of European states, yet it would undergo a similar process to achieve a civilized state and society[142]. In this context, the implementation of neo-liberal theory was pursued due to its widespread acclaim as a suitable approach in the new world order for all states worldwide following the end of the Cold War. The pro-Westernist modernist followers in Russia staunchly advocated the superiority of the Western capitalist system. Under Yeltsin's leadership, members of the new elite aimed to address the diagnosed problems of the Russian state through ambitious yet often unrealistic measures. Their aspirations primarily focused on rapid economic and political transformations to elevate Russian political and economic standards to the level of the European-Atlantic bloc. Pro-Western

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[140] Bogaturov A. D., ed. Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya v Tsentral'noy Azii: sobytiya i dokumenty. / A. D. Bogaturov — Moskva: Aspekt Press, 2011.

[141] Tsygankov A. P. Finding a Civilisational Idea: 'West,' 'Eurasia,' and 'Euro-East' in Russia's Foreign Policy / A. P. Tsygankov // Geopolitics. — 2007. — Vol. 12, No. 3. — P. 383.

[142] Tsygankov A. P. Finding a Civilisational Idea: 'West,' 'Eurasia,' and 'Euro-East' in Russia's Foreign Policy / A. P. Tsygankov // Geopolitics. — 2007. — Vol. 12, No. 3. — P. 375–399.

modernizers believed that the “Western victory” at the end of the Cold War would compel societies and states to embrace a Western-style liberal and capitalist new world order as the sole path for development.

However, this Western-oriented theoretical and conceptual approach in Russian policy was not widely embraced by Russian society. This sentiment was evident in the results of the 1995 Parliamentary Elections in Russia[143]. Under the leadership of Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist Party (KPRF) significantly increased its representation in the State Duma, gaining over a third of the total seats with a net increase of 115 seats compared to the previous election. Conversely, the Democratic Choice of Russia – United Democrats (DVR – OD), known as proponents of liberal and Westernist policies, suffered a decline, losing 53 seats and securing only 9 deputies, as led by Yegor Gaidar.

Unique Civilizationist Oriented Philosophical Foundations of the Russian Politics

The foreign policy approach of the Russian Empire was largely founded on the notion of Russian civilizational and historical distinctiveness, viewing Russians as the heirs of the Roman Empire and Byzantium. The French Revolution of 1789 bifurcated Europe into two opposing camps: constitutionalists and monarchists. The Russian Federation emerged as a proponent of a monarchical form of government, characterized by strong leadership under the Tsar and a loyal society bound by traditional values and Orthodox Christianity. Russian Emperor Nicholas I epitomized this vision, championing a robust monarchy and the preservation of orthodox values and autocratic governance throughout the first half of the 19th century. However, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent establishment of the Soviet

[143] Russian Federation Parliamentary Chamber: Gossudarstvennaya Duma. Russian Federation: Parliamentary Elections, Gossudarstvennaya Duma, 1995. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 17, 2024. — http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2263_95.htm.

Union in 1922 ushered in a new form of government based on communist ideology. Despite this dramatic shift in governance, both Joseph Stalin's concept of the "socialist fatherland"[144] and Nicholas I's nationalist vision underscored a common perspective in Russian foreign policy: isolation from foreign intervention in government affairs and the protection of a strong state apparatus under the unwavering leadership of a strong and wise leader.

In this context, philosophical debates and quests within Russian politics, particularly following the constitutionalist revolutions in Europe, have been deeply entrenched in identifying Russia's political orientation. Nikolai Danilevsky stands out as one of the most significant scholars whose arguments continue to be referenced by Russian academics and officials, including Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin[145]. A critic of Russia's pro-Western tendency, Danilevsky advocated for the internalization and cultivation of Russia's indigenous institutions and capabilities, promoting a path of progress distinct from European civilization. In this sense, Danilevsky could be considered the first prominent figure to systematically challenge the West-centered, universalist approach and to defend the distinctiveness and uniqueness of Russian civilization as a primary mode of philosophical debates in Russian politics. His classification of civilizations as “historico-cultural types” is predicated on the recognition of the uniqueness of civilizations worldwide. He argued against the notion that any civilization, particularly the European civilization, could become universal and homogenize other civilizations and cultures within it. Instead, Danilevsky emphasized the richness of humanity lies

[144] Tsygankov, A. P. Crafting the State-Civilization: Vladimir Putin’s Turn to Distinct Values / A. P. Tsygankov // Problems of Post-Communism. — 2016. — Vol. 63, №. 3. — P. 146-158.
[145] Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club // [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 13, 2024. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243.

in the diversity of cultures exchanging values and traditions throughout history[146].

Furthermore, Danilevsky was a pioneer of the argument asserting that Russia is not a part of European civilization. He posited that the core histories of European Civilization and Russian Civilization are fundamentally different. While European Civilization represents a continuation of the Roman-Germanic Civilization, Russian Civilization traces its lineage back to the Orthodox-Byzantine Civilization[147]. Danilevsky's concept of "all humanity" (vsechelovechestvo/всечеловечество) represents a distinct foreign policy concept that aligns with the multipolarity-based politics of Russian foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. This concept emphasizes cross-cultural relations, in contrast to Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations theory[148].Danilevsky's evaluations regarding the interactions of civilizations go beyond those of Samuel Huntington. In his renowned work "Russia and Europe," Danilevsky argues that the Slavic civilization is younger and more dynamic than European civilization, still progressing along its path[149].

Danilevsky contends that European civilization has abandoned Christianity and has increasingly embraced a statist approach since the French Revolution. In response, Russia must prioritize the protection and integration of Slavic peoples and consolidate state power to contend with European states in the Eurasian territory. He underscores the necessity of a robust struggle between states in foreign policy matters[150]. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union,

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[146] Danilevsky N. Rossia i Evropa, Vzglyad na Kulturnyye i Politicheskiye Otnosheniya Slavyanskogo Mira k Germano-Romanskomu (Russia and Europe, A View of the Cultural and Political Relationship of the Slavic World to the Germanic-Romanic) / N. Danilevsky — Moscow: Institute of Russian Civilization, 2011.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Tsygankov A. P. In the Shadow of Nikolai Danilevsky: Universalism, Particularism, and Russian Geopolitical Theory / A. P. Tsygankov // Europe-Asia Studies. — 2017. — Vol. 69, No. 4. — P. 571.
[149] Danilevsky N. Rossia i Evropa, Vzglyad na Kulturnyye i Politicheskiye Otnosheniya Slavyanskogo Mira k Germano-Romanskomu (Russia and Europe, A View of the Cultural and Political Relationship of the Slavic World to the Germanic-Romanic) / N. Danilevsky — Moscow: Institute of Russian Civilization, 2011.
[150] Ibid.

Danilevsky's renowned book "Russia and Europe" was edited and published in Russia in 1991, with its first edition achieving a sale number of 70,000 copies. It quickly became a handbook in Russian academia. In recent Russian academic studies, influential Eurasianist, nationalist, politician or Slavophil thinkers, philosphers such as Gennady Zyuganov, Natalya Narochnitskaya, Andrey Kortunov, and Alexander Dugin have been significantly influenced by Danilevsky's ideas. They acknowledge the importance of Danilevsky's ideas for the current Eurasianist approach[151]. Andrey Pavel Tsygankov, a prominent scholar in Russian foreign policy studies, underscores the significance of Danilevsky's ideas for Russian thinkers like Vadim Tsymbursky and Natalia Narochnitskaia. He highlights their admiration for Danilevsky's arguments about the concept of Russian civilization in their studies[152]. In summary, Danilevsky's philosophy primarily emphasized the prioritization of Russian national and traditional values in Russian policy, as well as the unique structure of Russian civilization.

However, this discussion was overshadowed by the ascent of communist ideology in the Russian Empire. Despite variations in understanding communist ideology within the USSR, debates regarding the Western and unique roots of Russian identity and civilization persisted sporadically throughout Soviet rule in Russia. The Marxist understanding of "World Revolution" and "living together in peace" advocated by Vladimir I. Lenin, as well as Joseph Stalin's "Communism in one nation" strategy, echoed elements of the chronic identity and civilization debates in Russian history. Following Stalin's death, the structure of Russian relations with the “Other (West)” became a recurring question in Soviet history. The abandonment of Stalinist policies necessitated a

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[151] Tsygankov A. P. In the Shadow of Nikolai Danilevsky: Universalism, Particularism, and Russian Geopolitical Theory / A. P. Tsygankov // Europe-Asia Studies. — 2017. — Vol. 69, No. 4. — P. 571.
[152] Tsygankov A. P. In the Shadow of Nikolai Danilevsky: Universalism, Particularism, and Russian Geopolitical Theory / A. P. Tsygankov // Europe-Asia Studies. — 2017. — Vol. 69, No. 4. — P. 571.

reevaluation of Russian policy towards the West and beyond. In the 1970s, Lev Gumilev, a renowned historian and anthropology expert, emerged as a proponent of Eurasianist ideas in the USSR, drawing inspiration from Danilevsky's philosophy. Gumilev argued that European civilization had a distinct culture that was incompatible with Russian civilization, and thus should not be conflated with it[153].

During the pre-Russian Federation period, civilizationist and nationalist concepts and arguments took shape as outlined briefly above. The articulation of these concepts influenced the emergence of post-Soviet civilizationist and nationalist approaches in Russian politics and foreign policy strategy. The main problem facing the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet period revolved around clearly defining its identity, mission, and place in the new world system. In his influential work “The Clash of Civilizations”, Samuel P. Huntington categorized the Russian Federation as a "torn country," along with Turkey and Mexico[154]. Huntington described a torn country as one with a single predominant culture aligning it with one civilization, but whose leaders aspire to shift it toward another civilization. Examples of this phenomenon include the reforms of Peter the Great in Russia and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in Turkey. While Huntington's definition is subject to controversy, the discussions surrounding growing Russian identity following the dissolution of the USSR have been a tangible reality. Debates regarding Russian European identity and the unique structure of its roots have been at the forefront, with questions arising as to whether one identity supersedes the other. This debate unfolded during the final years of the USSR and persisted into the early years of the Russian Federation.

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[153] Shlapentokh D. Lev Gumilev: The Ideologist of the Soviet Empire / D. Shlapentokh // History of European Ideas. — 2012. — Vol. 38, No. 3. — P. 483–492.
[154] Huntington S. P. The Clash of Civilizations? / S. P. Huntington // Foreign Affairs. — 1993. — Vol. 72, No. 3. — P. 22.

From the Eurasianist and conservative perspective, the answer to the question of Russia's identity is clear-cut. Russia is viewed as a unique civilization with both European and Asian roots, as well as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious structure. It has historically been governed by consolidated executive power, reminiscent of the regime during Tsarist or Imperialist Russian times. Consequently, there should be no confusion about Russia's essence or character. Slavophil arguments also align with this perspective to some extent, although there are some distinctions. In certain sources, Slavophilism in the 20th and 21st centuries have been categorized within the Eurasianist framework. However, they have diverged into different camps, such as the modern or democratic Eurasianist perspective and the radical Eurasianist perspective. One of the main differences between Slavophil arguments and modern Eurasianism lies in their views on civilization. According to the Slavophiles, Russia is neither European nor Asian but possesses its unique civilization. They advocate for Russia to isolate itself from European civilization in order to safeguard its uniqueness. Similar discourses about the Russian state and civilization have also been utilized by neo-communist and right-radical elements within Russian society. The primary and common arguments in this regard emphasize sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and self-limitation in the use of domestic resources[155].

At the end of the USSR, the primary expectations of Russians following the drastic transformation of the state structure were the resolution of economic collapse and improvement of living conditions. However, instead of addressing the structural problems of the Russian state, the predominance of a wild capitalist, neoliberal, and Atlanticist approach exacerbated societal conditions.

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[155] Tsygankov, A. P., Tsygankov, P. A. Pluralism or Isolation of Civilisations? Russia’s Foreign Policy Discourse and the Reception of Huntington’s Paradigm of the Post-Cold War World / A. P. Tsygankov, P. A. Tsygankov // Geopolitics. — 1999. — Vol. 4, №. 3. — P. 47-72.

Moreover, the loss of Russia's great power status in international relations and the Western perception of the Russian state and its stature as defeated, weak, and needy were widely perceived by most Russians as a humiliation by the West. The immediate and disproportionate integration of Western values, coupled with the disregard for Russian traditional and civilizational values, elicited a counter-reaction from society and security and political elites.

Throughout the early years of the 1990s, up until the anti-Yeltsin Parliament case in 1993, radical right groups like Memory of the Nation (Pamyat Naroda) and National Salvation Front (Front Natsionalnaya Spasebniya) emerged in Russian politics. These groups garnered some support in parliament, but their influence sharply waned following the parliament shelling incident in 1993[156]. Nevertheless, their counter-reactions to pro-Western modernist perceptions during the initial years of the new Russian politics, characterized by the predominance of liberal perceptions set up by Foreign Minister Andrei V. Kozyrev and Minister of Finance, and later First Deputy Prime Minister Yegor T. Gaidar, significantly impacted President Yeltsin's perceptions[157].

Nationalist and traditionalist demand from Russian society were on the rise during the pre-election process. Additionally, uncertainties persisted regarding the adjustment of the new Russian state flag, national anthem, or other symbols in the post-Soviet period, presenting significant issues in Russian politics throughout the 1990s. This period witnessed a quest for a new national idea amidst shifting political dynamics and societal expectations in official level. Nikonov describes one of the intriguing developments of this search period as

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[156] Blakkisrud H. Russkii as the New Rossiiskii? Nation-Building in Russia After 1991 / H. Blakkisrud // Nationalities Papers. — 2022. — Vol. 51, No. 1. — P. 64–79.

[157] Arbatov A. Russia’s Foreign Policy Alternatives / A. Arbatov // International Security. — 1993. — Vol. 18, No. 2. — P. 5–43.

follows: Nikonov was also one of the parts of that official quest in Rossiskaya Gazeta in that time[158].

After the 1995 parliamentary elections in Russia, Boris Yeltsin issued directives to his advisors to address these issues and formulate a new, coherent Russian national strategy. However, their suggestions for creating a nation-state or a federal multi-ethnic and multi-religious structure in Russian politics and governance lacked consistency and solid grounding. Nonetheless, these efforts contributed to the amplification of national and traditional values and civilizationist approaches within Russian politics and government elites. Consequently, in contrast to the Western-based theoretical-conceptual approach, Eurasianist, neo-communist, Slavophil, and right-radical discourses gained traction, fueled by the growing nationalist sentiments in society following the perceived failure of Western-supported approaches in Russia. The significant victory of the Communist Party in the 1995 parliamentary elections and the appointment of Yevgeny Primakov as foreign minister underscored the Eurasianist leaning in Russian politics.

Throughout the latter years of the 1990s, the predominance of Eurasianist, neo-communist, and Slavophil arguments in Russian society and politics reflected a resurgence of imperialist sentiments reminiscent of the Russian Empire. However, these ideologies did not encompass the entirety of the Russian Empire's strategy. The main political stance and strategy of Russia largely focused on reclaiming its deserved great power status in international relations, consolidating integration with former Soviet republics (CIS countries), advocating for a multi-polar world structure in the post-Cold War era, balancing US hegemony by fostering cooperation with non-Western nations such as China, India, and the Muslim world, and highlighting the grand history of the Russian

[158] Nikonov, V. Russkaya Tsivilizatsiya / V. Nikonov — Moscow: Prosveshenie Publication, 2021.

state. Despite garnering some positive responses from society, these perspectives failed to address the chronic problems of the post-Soviet Russian state. Particularly, the persistence of widening economic disparities exacerbated by the shock therapy measures, coupled with a search for new concepts, paradigms, and methodologies, underscored the challenges facing the Russian Federation. This was evident in the 1999 elections, where the Communist Party led by G. Zyuganov, the previous victor in the 1995 elections, lost 44 seats in the Duma, while the party of V. Zhirinovsky, leader of the nationalist faction, lost 34 seats, and Y. Primakov's political standing waned[159]. New figures such as Sergei Shoigu's Unity Party (backed by Yeltsin and Putin) and unknown independent candidates claimed 178 of the 450 seats in the Duma. This shift highlighted society's quest for fresh faces and approaches in Russian politics. The absence of new political figures also emerged as a significant challenge amidst the ideological and structural upheavals.

The gradual shift from the neoliberal transition understanding to the Eurasianist/realist approach was influenced by various internal and external factors. However, this change and emergence in Russian policy cannot be divorced from the expectations and sensitivities of Russian society and Russia's status in international relations. Throughout the last decade of the 20th century, Russia's political stance and foreign policy strategy faced complexities, leading to destabilization in both internal and external spheres. This period might be characterized as turbulence of the philosophical and conceptual discussions, which entailed reflexive and uncertain strategies in domestic and foreign affairs that often resulted in critical shifts and unpredictable outcomes. Consequently, none of the philosophical or conceptual approaches could adequately explain or

[159] Russian Federation: Parliamentary Elections, Gossoudarstvennaya Duma, 1999. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 22, 2024. — URL: http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2263_99.htm.

guide Russian politics during the 1990s, given the ongoing political, economic, and social challenges.

The economic crisis of 1999 significantly lowered living standards in the country, while NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia, despite Russian opposition and without UN Security Council approval, undermined Russia's narrative of being a great power or one of the most influential centers of the new world order. Amidst these challenges, the most crucial issue remained the lack of a concrete foundation for Russia's identity, mission, and ideals in the new world order. Prominent Russian intellectuals such as Yuriy Mamleev[160], Andrei Kokoshin[161] and Vyacheslav Nikonov[162] emphasized the necessity of convincing the Russian people of a shared mission and ideals. They argued that if the Russian people were convinced of such a mission, they would possess the resilience to endure economic and political hardships.

1.3.2. Vladimir V. Putin and his Growing Leadership in Philosophical and Conceptual Quest in Russian Politics

The predominance of specific conceptual and philosophical perspectives in Russian policy underscored the necessity for new viewpoints capable of ensuring the sustainability and stability of the Russian state across all domains. Andrei P. Tsygankov, a prominent Russian scholar specializing in post-Soviet Russian studies, has extensively researched this subject[163]. Tsygankov suggests that the failures of liberal and realist perspectives in Russian foreign policy stem from a lack of comprehensive approaches to critical issues within the field of new Russian studies, as well as a misinterpretation of the aspirations of Russian

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[160] Mamleev, Y. V. Rossiya Vechnaya / Y. V. Mamleev — Moscow: Traditsiya Publication, 2020.

[161] Kokoshin A. Real'nyy Suverenitet v Sovremennoy Miropoliticheskoy Sisteme / A. Kokoshin. — Yevropa, 2012.

[162] Nikonov, V. Rossiskaya Matritsa / V. Nikonov — Moscow: Russkoe Slovo Publication, 2014.

[163] Tsygankov A. P. Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity. 3rd ed. / A. P. Tsygankov. — Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013.

society. When one perspective dominates, it often leads to a dearth of well-rounded arguments that consider contrasting ideas. Consequently, there emerged a need to establish more comprehensive and robust perceptions and concepts to foster a consistent political understanding and form of governance.

The late 1990s saw the continuation of the crisis in the post-Soviet era. In this turbulence and at the end of the 1990s, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin was appointed as prime minister by President Yeltsin. Subsequently, on 31 December 1999, Boris Yeltsin resigned in his traditional New Year speech as the Russian President. Russia then held presidential elections on 26 March 2000, and Vladimir V. Putin assumed office as the second president of the Russian Federation.

It's fascinating how Putin's article "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium" emerged just one day before Boris Yeltsin's resignation, offering a glimpse into Putin's perceptions and approaches. Published in the renowned Russian newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta, the article largely emphasized the unity of Russia's multi-ethnic and multi-religious population under the umbrella of a strong Russian state[164]. This piece provided insights into Putin's potential nationalist inclinations, yet it also revealed some Westernist positions. For instance, Putin advocated for strong cooperation with Western powers and highlighted the European roots of Russia during his speech in the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany in 2001. On the other hand, he was emphasizing Russian unique cultural structure as multi-religious and multi-ethnic in contrast to European nation-state type. Besides these evaluations, it's essential to recognize that Putin's stance on cooperation with the West was

[164] Putin V. V. Rossiya na rubezhe tysyacheletiy // Nezavisimaya Gazeta / V. V. Putin. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 11, 2024. — URL: https://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millenium.html?utm_source=pocket_saves.

contingent upon the principle of equal and reliable partnership, as aspirations of the foreign policy stances of Gorbachev and Yeltsin towards the West.

Putin's political vision and career in the Russian political landscape provided an opportunity to establish consistent political methods, both domestically and in foreign affairs. This presented a chance to address existing problems and restore Russia to a respected position through the implementation of systematic working schemes. A systematic approach involves clearly defining current problems in order of importance, identifying suitable solutions, and successfully implementing those solutions. While theory-based organizational models existed in social sciences, such as during the communist ideology-based regime era under the USSR, Putin's systematic working style primarily focused on rational and pragmatic solutions.[165]

During his first eight years in the Kremlin, Putin's approach centered on addressing threat perceptions, consolidating central administrative power, and tackling economic issues. This approach also contains in the nationalist and civilizationist perspective in Russian political philosophy: consolidation central power and life standards of the Russian people. When Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov analyzed the Russian foreign policy philosophy, he cited letters of the Russian ambassadors to the Tsar Alexander II in regard of the Russian success to the reach of its final borders in the history and their suggestions for enforcement of the Russian central power and providing better life conditions to the Russian people[166]. This pragmatic and rational approach emerged from the accumulations of Russian political philosophy and great history. Besides failures of attempts to develop new paradigm-based policies throughout the 1990s also triggered need of the new productive strategy for the Russian Federation in the beginning of the

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[165] Tekin, O. End of the Quest: Rising “Russian Civilization” Concept in Russian Politics / O. Tekin // SİYASAL: Journal of Political Science. — 2024. — Vol. 33, No. 2. — P. 241-260.

[166] Lavrov, S. Russia’s Foreign Policy Philosophy / S. Lavrov // International Affairs. — URL: https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/journals/iarj/v59i4/f_0029393_23842.pd

new century. Conflicting pro-Western modernist and Unique civilizationist concepts and approaches prevalent during this time worsened the consequences of the USSR's disintegration rather than resolving them. Numerous theoretical and practical forms were attempted, as happened throughout 19th century in Russia, within short intervals of less than ten years, leading to the emergence of new chaotic problems.

Under Vladimir Putin's leadership, the new government in Russia prioritized addressing the country's core issues. Correct diagnoses of the chronic problems of the country were the beginning of that process. Then, at first and foremost was the need to resolve questions surrounding national values, the national anthem, and identity, ensuring they resonated with Russian society. This led to the reintroduction of symbolic elements like the double-headed eagle from the Byzantine Empire and the USSR anthem with updated lyrics as the Russian national anthem. These are the using the historical and philosophical accumulations of the Russian political culture which more proper of the demands and aspirations of Russian people in contrast to the alien and emulated pillars to Russian public. Secondly, the Russian language and culture were imbued with a global and regional mission, especially within the post-Soviet geography or historical land in philosophical context. Initiatives like the establishment of the Rossotrudnichestvo organization in 2007 aimed to promote and teach Russian language and culture abroad. Thirdly, careful attention was paid to Russia's multi-ethnic and multi-religious makeup, ensuring that no ethnic or religious group faced discrimination in politics or social life. Article of Putin published in Nezavisimaya Gazeta addressed this sensitive issue[167]. Fourthly, the sanctity of sovereignty and independence was emphasized. Unlike in the 1990s

[167] Putin V. V. Rossiya na rubezhe tysyacheletiy // Nezavisimaya Gazeta / V. V. Putin. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 11, 2024. — URL: https://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millenium.html?utm_source=pocket_saves.

when Russia's national budget in the Duma required approval from the IMF due to joint economic programs, Putin's government aimed for greater autonomy and control over economic decisions.

During Vladimir Putin's first two terms as president, his administration took significant steps to reinforce Russia's economic freedom and sovereignty. One notable action was the early settlement of IMF debts in 2006, demonstrating the country's commitment to financial independence[168]. Alongside economic autonomy, Putin's government highlighted political sovereignty, emphasizing the importance of a robust military and historical victories like the triumph over the Nazis in World War II, known as the Great Patriotic War, as symbols of national pride and sovereignty. Addressing the issue of population decline became another focal point of Putin's administration, along with efforts to restore the Orthodox Church's institutional reputation. In 2007, laws were enacted to incentivize childbirth and provide allowances, while acknowledging the political and traditional significance of the Russian Patriarchate, which historically served as a unifying element in Russian society.

Furthermore, in 2005, Putin underscored the importance of Russia finding its own path based on its unique values and history to build a democratic and equitable society within the Russian Federation[169]. Advisers like Vladislav Surkov expanded on this idea by proposing the concept of "sovereign democracy," suggesting that Russia could develop its own interpretation of democracy centered around state authority[170].

Vladimir Putin's first presidential term saw the development of a presidential program that effectively appealed to both elites and ordinary

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[168] Sakwa R. Putin: Russia’s Choice / R. Sakwa. — London: Routledge, 2007.

[169] Poslaniye Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsii (Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation). — 2005. — Prezident Rossii (President of Russia). [Electronic resource] — URL: http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931.

[170] Krastev I. Sovereign Democracy, Russian-Style / I. Krastev // Insight Turkey. — 2006. — Vol. 8, No. 4. — P. 113–117.

citizens by synthesizing existing concepts and paradigms from the 1990s. This program aimed to strike a balance between Russia's European identity for modernization and integration with the West while also highlighting the unique cultural structure of Russia, which encompasses diverse ethnic and religious elements. Putin articulated the status of the new Russian state as a “normal great power”, a term that resonated with pro-Western modernist elites advocating for integration with the West and Unique civilizationist elites emphasizing Russia's historical identity and national pride[171].

By using the term "normal" to define Russia as a great power, Putin's approach not only addressed the aspirations of pro-Western modernist elites for integration and cooperation with the West but also appealed to the desires of Unique civilizationist elites and ordinary citizens with identifying Russia as a great power (velikii derjav). This strategic framing of Russia's role in the international arena effectively reconciled competing ideological perspectives within Russian society, contributing to a sense of unity and purpose. This also reflects the strategic mind of the most well-known Russian diplomat Aleksandr Mikhailovich Gorchakov, after Russian fail against Ottoman-British-French ally in the Crimean War in 1853. Main strategy of the Russian Empire under the wisdom of the Foreign Minister Gorchakov contended recovery of the central power and economic conditions of the state, using diplomacy as an effective tool and patient stance to reform post-Crimean War status quo in the Black Sea region and great power rivalry on global scale[172]. Gorchakov strategy had on many similarities Russian Federation’s strategy under the Presidency of Putin

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[171] Tsygankov A. P. Finding a Civilisational Idea: 'West,' 'Eurasia,' and 'Euro-East' in Russia’s Foreign Policy / A. P. Tsygankov // Geopolitics. — 2007. — Vol. 12, No. 3. — P. 375–399.; Levada Center. Memory and Pride. [Electronic resource] — Accessed 14 June, 2023. — URL: https://www.levada.ru/en/2020/11/05/memory-and-pride/.

[172] Splidsboel-Hansen F. Past and Future Meet: Aleksandr Gorchakov and Russian Foreign Policy / F. Splidsboel-Hansen // Europe-Asia Studies. — 2002. — Vol. 54, No. 3. — P. 377–396.

with rational and pragmatic suggestions in domestic and foreign affairs for recovery of the Russian prestige and power in the regional and global scale.

1.3.3. Ascendancy of Russian Civilization Philosophy in Contemporary Russian Politics

Following the 2012 presidential elections, Vladimir Putin regained his position as President, succeeding Dmitry Medvedev. An examination of Putin's tenure during his initial years in the Kremlin, alongside pertinent developments during Medvedev's presidency, offers valuable insights into the factors driving the ascent and consolidation of Russian influence within the realm of global politics. The presidential election unfolded against a backdrop of multifaceted local, regional, and global occurrences. Noteworthy among these were widespread protests in Russian urban centers challenging the government's authority, allegations of electoral irregularities in Duma (Russian Parliament) elections, the Arab Spring uprisings, NATO's contentious intervention in Libya, and discord with Western nations concerning the evolving European security framework and the ongoing expansionist aspirations of both NATO and the European Union towards Russian borders.

During his presidency spanning from 2000 to 2008, Putin's Russia predominantly pursued a non-aggressive stance towards the West, prioritizing the consolidation of sustainable economic development and centralized power within Russia. Concurrently, Putin endeavored to cultivate pragmatic cooperation with Western powers in select domains while forging new partnerships with non-Western states and organizations. Russia, albeit unable to counteract the material aspects of globalization, notably manifested resistance to its ideational facets, as elucidated by Safranchuk and Lukyanov[173]. This ideological resistance stemmed primarily from Russian apprehensions regarding

[173] Safranchuk I. A., Lukyanov F. A. The Contemporary World Order: The Adaptation of Actors to Structural Realities / I. A. Safranchuk, F. A. Lukyanov // Polis. Political Studies. — 2021. — No. 4. — P. 14-25. (In Russ.)

Western political paradigms, particularly the promotion of neoliberal values, which were perceived as antithetical to Russian interests. This ideological discord underscored Russia's aspirations for a transition from a US-dominated unipolar global order to a multipolar framework, as articulated by Safranchuk and Lukyanov[174].

Towards the conclusion of his second term, Putin commenced a perceptible pivot towards a more assertive posture vis-à-vis the West, embracing nationalist, realist, and security-oriented policies in the realm of foreign affairs. This shift was characterized by heightened investments in the defense industry, the propagation of Russian national and traditional values at both domestic and regional levels, and the facilitation of non-Western regional and global initiatives such as BRICS, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Noteworthy speeches, wherein Putin criticized Western attitudes towards Russia and unilateral/unipolar policy on regional and global scale, further underscored this recalibration in foreign policy. Notably, his address at the Munich Security Conference in 2007 vehemently opposed the US-led unipolar world order, NATO expansion, and Western transgressions against state sovereignty and international law in pursuit of self-interests and prerogatives[175]. The materialization of Putin's critiques and the embodiment of Russia's conceptual and philosophical resistance to Western paradigm-based hegemony were exemplified by Russian endeavors to assume leadership within BRICS, as evidenced by the organization of inaugural ministerial meetings in Russia in 2006 and 2009[176].

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[174] Ibid.

[175] Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy // kremlin.ru. [Electronic resource] — Accessed July, 25, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034

[176] Denisov I., Kazantsev A., Lukyanov F., Safranchuk I. Shifting Strategic Focus of BRICS and Great Power Competition / I. Denisov, A. Kazantsev, F. Lukyanov, I. Safranchuk // Strategic Analysis. — 2019. — Vol. 43, No. 6. — P. 588-602.

An examination of Putin's initial eight-year tenure as Russian President reveals a central objective: the reaffirmation of Russia's stature as a European great power. However, a discernible shift in Putin's beliefs and perspectives emerged in early 2008, primarily attributed to the aforementioned reasons. This transformation unfolded notwithstanding Putin's endorsement of Dmitry Medvedev, whose leadership was perceived as embodying a more Western-oriented and cooperation-desired political stance, during the presidential elections in March. Scholars have generally construed this transition as Putin's final endeavor to afford the West an opportunity to influence Russia's trajectory in tandem with Western powers. Nevertheless, throughout his subsequent four-year tenure as prime minister, Putin also endeavored to navigate a delicate equilibrium vis-à-vis Medvedev's governance.

Preceding his inaugural presidential term, Putin authored an another article published in Nezavisimaya Gazeta two months ahead of the 2012 presidential elections[177]. The article broached various themes, notably the multi-ethnic and multi-religious fabric of Russian society, alongside the construct of Russian identity and its distinctive philosophy. Putin voiced apprehensions regarding the potential escalation of ethnic nationalist sentiments, even if rooted in Russian ethnicity. Amidst the buildup to the 2012 presidential elections, Russia confronted several salient national security challenges, delineated as follows:

- The intricacies of internal and external migration, coupled with the looming specter of heightened ethnic Russian nationalism.
- The discernible menace emanating from radical Islamic factions, whose ascendancy coincided with the unfolding of the Arab Spring across the

[177] Putin V. V. Rossiya: natsional'nyy vopros // // Nezavisimaya Gazeta / V. V. Putin. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 11, 2024. — URL: https://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1_national.html?utm_source=pocket_saves.

Middle East. Fears persisted regarding the potential spillover effects of these movements onto Russian territories and adjacent regions.

- An overarching concern pertained to the prospect of the Arab Spring movements transposing onto Russian soil, thereby potentially catalyzing a novel color revolution threat.

These issues constituted pivotal considerations during that epoch.

Amidst these circumstances, the emphasis on Russian identity as emblematic of a diverse, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious society, while concurrently safeguarding its traditions amidst global flux, emerged as a pivotal political imperative for the Russian state under the stewardship of Vladimir Putin. Towards the conclusion of 2013, Putin delivered his customary address at the Valdai Club, wherein a principal tenet underscored the imperative to disengage from the notion of Russia as the inheritor of the USSR's legacy, advocating instead for the embrace of Russian civilization as the cornerstone guiding Russian strategic outlooks.[178]

In his discourse, Putin acknowledged the swiftly evolving global milieu and its ramifications for states, societies, and cultures. He underscored the imperative of crafting a novel strategy to safeguard Russian interests, values, traditions, and the multifaceted fabric of Russian society. In this vein, he introduced the concept of the "state-civilization," drawing upon the insights of prominent Russian philosophers and authors such as Nikolai Danilevsky, Konstantin Leontyev, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. These intellectual luminaries offered profound reflections on the essence of the Russian state and its symbiotic rapport with Russian society. In essence, Putin's overarching objective

[178] Tekin, O. End of the Quest: Rising “Russian Civilization” Concept in Russian Politics / O. Tekin // SİYASAL: Journal of Political Science. — 2024. — Vol. 33, No. 2. — P. 241-260.

was to assert Russia's distinct identity and global standing while adapting proficiently to the exigencies and transformations of the contemporary epoch[179].

Indeed, the advent of the Ukrainian crisis in late 2013 marked a perceptible shift in Russia's stance towards a more assertive, protectionist, and unwavering posture. The gradual deterioration of Russian-US relations following NATO's intervention in Libya, which exceeded its authorized mandate, and the cessation of the reset policy between the two nations in 2012, acted as catalysts for the adoption of civilization-based politics in both domestic and foreign spheres by Russia[180]. Color revolutions, the expansion of NATO, and the potential accession of Ukraine and Georgia to the alliance have not merely been construed as conventional national security concerns by Russia. Rather, they have consistently been perceived as existential threats to the integrity of Russian culture, civilization and survival in the Eurasian context. While Huntington famously envisioned a clash of civilizations in his seminal work, the emergence of the Russian civilization concept eluded his prognostication. From the Russian standpoint, Western policies vis-à-vis Russia have also been interpreted through this prism, contributing to what is perceived as a reckless, irrational, and pervasive approach towards Russia since the conclusion of the Cold War.

Consequently, the philosophy of Russian civilization has wielded substantial influence over security paradigms within Russian politics, particularly in the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis. Russia has espoused a robust and assertive geopolitical posture in its contiguous regions and has actively endeavored to reshape select facets of the global order, with the objective of fostering a more equitable and multipolar framework. Illustrative

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[179] Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club // [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 13, 2024. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243.

[180] Safranchuk I. V. Russian-U.S. Relations: Torn between the Practical and Ideational Agendas / I. A. Safranchuk // Russia in Global Affairs. — 2018. — Vol. 16, No. 4. — P. 96-121.

instances include as termed in Russian discourse, “accession of Crimea”, Russia's engagement in conflicts within Syria and other arenas across the Middle East, the deepening of strategic partnerships with China and other emergent powers, and the delineation of explicit red lines in defense of national security imperatives and the preservation of indigenous values against external incursions.[181] Rather than persisting in the pursuit of a nebulous political stance, identity, and mission for Russia in the post-Soviet era, the decision to orientate strategic trajectories around the tenets of Russian civilization has engendered a more resolute and assertive foreign policy posture, as encapsulated above.

In 2021, an article disseminated via the Kremlin's official website, Vladimir Putin articulated assertions that elicited divergent interpretations from disparate quarters. While some construed his remarks as indicative of resurging imperialist aspirations on Russia's part, others posited that Putin sought to underscore the historical affinities and shared values between Russia and Ukraine. Putin underscored the distinctive fabric of Russian civilization and its enduring historical bonds with Ukraine and Belarus. He contended that Ukraine and Belarus are integral components of the broader Russian state-civilization and advocated for their reunification[182]. That means in the Russian foreign policy philosophy, this pronouncement heralded a more assertive geopolitical posture on the part of Russia and a heightened protectionist stance vis-à-vis Western encroachments within Russia's proximate domains.

Prior to the outbreak of pro-Western demonstrations in Ukraine in 2013, Russia conveyed analogous indications. Nonetheless, Western disregard for Russian aspirations, coupled with escalating Russian assertiveness, ultimately precipitated Russia's extensive military intervention in Ukraine in 2022. In his

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[181] Tekin, O. End of the Quest: Rising “Russian Civilization” Concept in Russian Politics / O. Tekin // SİYASAL: Journal of Political Science. — 2024. — Vol. 33, No. 2. — P. 241-260.

[182] Putin V. V. On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians / V. V. Putin. [Electronic resource] — Accessed July 28, 2023. — URL: http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181.

seminal address on February 24, 2022, immediately preceding the Special Military Operation, Putin underscored the erosion of Russian civilization within "Russian historical lands" and the vulnerabilities confronting Russian compatriots beyond the nation's borders as among the foremost threats to Russia[183]. The instrumentalization of the Russian civilization concept, which based philosophical and historical accumulations of the Russian foreign policy, has generally coincided with a more assertive policy orientation and novel ambitions within Russian politics. The interstate conflicts in Ukraine cannot be narrowly construed solely as matters of identity; they entail a multitude of intricate determinants.

Indeed, the notion of "Krepost Rossiya - Крепость Россия" (Russian fortress) has its origins in the scholarship of Konstantin Leontyev and has assumed prominence within Russian discourse. This concept was evoked by Sergei Karaganov, a prominent Russian intellectual, in his analyses of the Ukrainian Crisis. Karaganov posited that the conflicts in Ukraine epitomize a direct clash between Western liberal civilization and Russian Orthodox civilization. He delineated Russia as the ultimate bastion safeguarding the traditional values of Orthodox Christianity, contending that the preservation of Russian civilization is indispensable for the ethical advancement of humanity[184]. These emerging concepts and perceptions serve to illuminate the philosophical foundations and historical accumulations of the Russian foreign policy underpinning Russian politics in the 21st century. Relying exclusively on frameworks originating from Western paradigms would impede a holistic comprehension of Russian motives and strategies in the foreign policy sphere.

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[183] Address by the President of the Russian Federation // Kremlin.ru. [Electronic resource] — 2022. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843.

[184] Karaganov S. Krepost' Rossiya: Skol'ko let prodlitsya konfrontatsiya s Zapadom? / S. Karaganov // Rossiya v Global'noy Politike. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 10, 2023. — URL: https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/krepost-rossiya-i-zapad/.

The proliferation of these concepts underscores the unique viewpoint and aspirations of the Russian state and its foreign policy, as well as its envisioned role in safeguarding its philosophical cultural, religious, and historical heritage which build Russian civilization.

Conclusion of Chapter

Researchers in international relations classify states as status quo, revisionist, or reformist based on their foreign policies and power struggles. This classification helps in understanding key concepts like war and power within the changing international system. However, categorizing states as pro-status quo or revisionist oversimplifies the complexity of state behaviors. States may exhibit multiple tendencies at different levels or regions. Furthermore, there are some biases and reductionist analysis on this categorization. For instance, rising powers are often labeled as disruptive, while hegemonic powers are seen as order-oriented. That complicates an objective analysis of Russia's foreign policy as a rising power.

Russia's strategy incorporates a mix of status quo, reformist, and revisionist goals across different regions, influenced by its historical power and security concerns. As clearly seen in the evolution of the published Russian foreign policy concepts since 1993, initially, Russia aimed to integrate into the international system, seeking a multipolar world in contrast to U.S. dominance. However, increasing geopolitical tensions have shifted Russia's stance, prompting a more assertive approach that blends reformist efforts, like advocating for changes in global institutions (e.g., the UN, IMF), with partial revisionist actions, particularly in regional conflicts like those in Ukraine and Georgia. Despite its recent revisionist tendencies on regional scale, Russia seeks to reform rather than dismantle the international system, preserving key elements of the current order.

In this part of the thesis analyze that status quo, reformist and revisionist oriented policies of states and evolution of Russian foreign policy concepts and

military doctrines point out that Russia’s foreign policy has undergone significant transformation since the end of the Cold War, shifting from a predominantly status quo orientation to a more complex blend of status quo, reformist, and revisionist strategies. This evolution reflects Russia’s desire to adapt to changing global dynamics, preserve its national interests, and assert itself within a multipolar world order. Central to this transformation is the rise of the “Russian Civilization” concept, which has shaped Russia’s strategic identity under Vladimir Putin's leadership. By synthesizing historical, intellectual, and geopolitical influences, Russia has pursued a distinctive approach that balances efforts to reform international institutions with recent revisionist actions in regional conflicts. This nuanced foreign policy reflects Russia’s ambition to not only preserve status quo of the existing international system but also to reform and partly revise it in line with its growing influence and aspirations.

CHAPTER 2: REGIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS IN RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

2.1. European Security; Russian Interests and Security Concerns

Russia's aspiration to build a new security concert in Europe dates back to the Helsinki process of 1975 and the establishment of the OSCE. For the last fifty years, the policies pursued to build a new European security, which emerged in the softening phase of the rivalry between the US and the USSR, have experienced obstructions at certain points. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, there was a historic opportunity to create a new concept of European security. From the Russian perspective, this process, which Gorbachev had worked hard to build during the last Soviet period, failed because Russian officials did not receive the same enthusiasm and effort from the Western officials.

The unification of East and West Germany and the disappearance of the threat of the spread of communism in the post-Soviet era gave rise to the idea that a new security umbrella could be built for Europe, including Russia itself. First Gorbachev's rhetoric of a new Atlantic-Eurasian security schema from Vancouver to Vladivostok, and then the ideas of a new European security from Lisbon to Vladivostok, mentioned by Yeltsin, Putin and Medvedev until Putin's third presidential term, found no response from the Western powers[185]. In this regard, the problem of trust between the two sides, which remains as a remnant of the Cold War, Russia's loss of power, the West's triumphant power attitude and the struggle for hegemony are the biggest obstacles to the establishment of a new security concept in Europe. In this context, the process is characterized by the acceptance of the dominant understanding that the construction of a new security concept in Europe, including Russia itself, is not a realistic expectation.

[185] Bordachev T. Europe, Russia and The Liberal World Order; International Relations after the Cold War / T. Bordachev // Routledge Handbook, 2022.

At this stage, Russian foreign policy began to prioritize Russian national interests and Russia's security concerns rather than seeking cooperation with the West on establishment of the new European security context.

2.1.1. Historical Context and Alternative Visions of European Security Architecture

From the early 18th century to Bolshevik Revolution, Russia played a significant role in European politics as a vast empire and a crucial balancing factor. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia believed it was returning to the pre-Soviet era of European politics. In the post-Soviet period, Russian foreign policy aimed to become a prominent power in European politics once again and to develop strategic cooperation with Western powers. The political elites, influential Russian businessmen, and the demands of Russian people appeared to support this direction of development[186]. The communist ideology and the main source of ideological division was seen as the conflict between the West and Russia had been abandoned. Based on this post-Cold War reality, Russian foreign policy thinking believed that with the end of ideological divisions, Russia should be recognized as an equal partner and an important player in European politics[187].

Efforts to improve relations between European states and the Soviet Union actually began with the initiatives of Mikhail Gorbachev and bore fruit in 1990 when the parties accepted the Paris Charter. Prior to this, there was already a successful communication channel established through the 1975 Helsinki Accords and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It's worth noting that Russia, as the continuing state to the Soviet Union, already had the infrastructure in place for establishing relations with Europe. In this

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[186] Russian Public Opinion – 2007. — Moscow: LevadaCenter, 2008. — 208 p.

[187] Suslov D. The Russian Perception of the Post-Cold War Era and Relations with the West. / D. Suslov — Harriman Institute, Columbia University, 2016.

context, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, official cooperation and a strategic partnership between Russia and the European Union were first established with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in 1994. Later, in 1995, Russia joined the Council of Europe, and in 1997, Russian parliamentarians became members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe[188]. Timofei Bordachev's characterization of the beginning period of interaction between Russia and European states from 1986 to 1997 as a missed golden opportunity for Russia's integration into European politics[189].

Although Russia initially adopted a foreign policy strategy emphasizing integration with Europe and the development of strategic cooperation in the post-Soviet era, the roles assigned by both sides in European and international politics after the Cold War were fundamentally different. These fundamental differences led to significant disappointments in Russia's efforts to establish relationships with leading European powers such as the European Union, Germany, and France. Firstly, European states and the EU failed to understand that, from Russia's perspective, the Chechen crisis that began in 1994 was a struggle for its existence and the preservation of the unity and integrity of the state. Instead of recognizing this, they heavily criticized Russia on moral and ethical grounds that have entailed Russia to develop a profound sense of mistrust toward its European partners.

Furthermore, the military intervention in Yugoslavia by NATO in 1999 without the UN Security Council’s approval, led by the United States and European states, as a turning point in Russian foreign policy. Russia had been greatly disappointed by its efforts to establish new relationships, such as equal

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[188] Forsberg T., Haukkala H. The European Union / T. Forsberg, H. Haukkala; A. P. Tsygankov (Ed.) // Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy. — Routledge, 2018. — P. 269-282.

[189] Bordachev T. Europe, Russia and The Liberal World Order; International Relations after the Cold War / T. Bordachev // Routledge Handbook, 2022.

partnerships and shared interests, in post-Cold War Europe based on U.S. and EU hegemony. The events mentioned above, which we have identified as a turning point, did not arise solely from Russia's defensive foreign policy concerns. The reluctance of the EU and leading European powers to be as enthusiastic as Russia in developing cooperation with Russia is also a factor. Furthermore, Russia perceived the EU's insistence on imposing its liberal democratic values as a patronizing attitude. For example, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in 1994 came into effect as a result of EU criticisms of Russia's policies in the separatist Chechen uprising, which Russia considered as an internal matter, and resulted in Russia's setback in 1997. In addition, Russia's continuous exclusion from the EU's eastward expansion and the increasing influence of anti-Russian attitudes of new member states expanding towards Russia within the EU were other sources of discomfort. So, what were the factors that led to changes in the steps taken to increase cooperation and Russia's integration into the new European order from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s? How can we explain the transition and change process in Russian foreign policy and its reasons?

The shift in Russian foreign policy from Greater Europe that also reflects Russian aspirations for improvement of its relations with post-Soviet countries in its Western near abroad,[190] to Greater Eurasia has been driven by a change in mindset among the policymakers, public demands, the unsustainability of the existing conditions from Russia's perspective, and Russia's desire for a more active foreign policy. First and foremost, a crucial factor was the change in leadership that occurred in Russian foreign policy in the mid-1990s, driven by the public's reaction in parliamentary and presidential elections. President Boris

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[190] Grabowski V., Malgin A. V., Narinsky M. M., eds. Evropeiskie Strany SNG: Mesto v ‘Bol'shoi Evrope’. — Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya, 2005.; Malgin, A. V. ‘Novaya Vostochnaya Evropa’ i Strategicheskie Interesy Rossii / A. V. Malgin // Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta. — 2011. — No. 6. — P. 14-15.

Yeltsin's administration, which was known for its pro-Western and Atlanticist orientation, led by figures like Andrei Kozyrev, was replaced by a team led by Yevgeny Primakov, representing a Eurasianist and nationalist perspective. Under Primakov's leadership, while Russian foreign policy still prioritized cooperation and partnerships with the EU in European politics, it also signaled a willingness to pursue new partnerships and collaborations if European partners did not share the same approach. Another significant change was the shift in Russia's perception towards post-Soviet space. After Primakov, Russia began to consider that the EU's eastward expansion excluded Russia and adopted a strategy that prioritized competition rather than cooperation in the region. Structures like the CIS, CSTO, and common economic spaces, established to enhance cooperation with former Soviet republics, also aimed to prevent further increase in the influence of the US and the EU in the former Soviet space within Russian foreign policy. This shift towards Greater Eurasia reflected a broader change in Russia's foreign policy orientation, which sought to assert itself more vigorously on the international stage and protect its interests in its immediate neighborhood and beyond.

One of the reasons for Russia's attempts to establish partnerships with the EU and the US was to strengthen and maintain its great power status in international politics, a status that has existed for the last three centuries, by improving its relations with hegemonic powers. However, over time, Russian foreign policy has come to view the EU's attitude towards Russia as just as pejorative, dismissive, and condescending as that of the United States. The European Commission's decision in 1999 to adopt a common strategy towards Russia further contributed to Russia's perception of the EU in this manner.[191] In this strategy, which not only fails to recognize Russia as a global actor but also

[191] Council of the European Union. Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia: European Council, Cologne, 3 and 4 June 1999. — Publications Office, 1999.

does not define it as a partner in foreign policy[192]. Russia's response to NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia shortly thereafter was the publication of an official strategy for developing relations with the EU, which included medium-term planning for improving relations with the EU. Although it may not contain a comprehensive analysis or a solid foundation, Russia adopting an official strategy for its relations with the EU for the first time after the end of the Cold War is an important development[193]. Russian foreign policy has long been managed through concepts related to national security, military, and foreign policy, and these concepts have been officially published as the state's official foreign policy understanding. However, given the importance of relations with Europe, it was also important to adopt and publish a separate strategy. In the official EU policy declaration, which also served as a response to the EU's common Russia strategy decision, Russia declared that it does not have the goal of becoming an EU member and that its concerns about pursuing common goals and desires, as mentioned above, would no longer take precedence in Russian foreign policy[194]. Russian researcher and expert on Russia's European politics, Prof. Nadia Arbatova, also expresses that Russia has become increasingly skeptical towards the EU since 1999[195].

The foundations of Russian foreign policy adopted in the 2000s regarding the EU were laid with the changes that occurred in the late 1990s. In this context, Russian foreign policy towards Europe began to be based on several dimensions, such as security, the establishment of pragmatic trade partnerships, the secondary importance of maintaining routine relations with the EU, the

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[192] Council of the European Union. Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia: European Council, Cologne, 3 and 4 June 1999. — Publications Office, 1999.
[193] Bordachev T. Europe, Russia and The Liberal World Order; International Relations after the Cold War / T. Bordachev // Routledge Handbook, 2022.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Arbatova, N. Russia and the European Union: Deferred Partnership / A. Arbatova // Social Sciences. — 2021. — Vol. 52, No. 3. — P. 34–52.

development of bilateral relations with leading states like Germany and France, balancing the influence of the United States in Europe, and enhancing Russia's regional and global influence. Russia accepted the EU's projects and plans that excluded Russia initially but gradually shifted to more assertive and aggressive rhetoric as its interests and security concerns were not adequately addressed.

During Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin's first presidential term, Russia's desire to improve its relations with Europe and the United States was still considered one of the key issues in foreign policy. There were discourses that emphasized Russia's historical ties with Europe and its European identity. President Putin's speech in the German Bundestag was one of the clearest examples of this[196]. Cooperation in areas such as energy and counterterrorism took precedence. After 9/11 attacks, the bilateral relationship with the United States began to develop under the framework of global counterterrorism cooperation, which also paved the way for improved relations with the European Union. However, it wasn't long before Russia's foreign policy approach, centered on security concerns regarding the United States and the EU, started its gradual ascent, which would reach its peak in contemporary times.

The United States officially withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 and subsequently adopting arbitrary policies prompted Russia to enhance its relations with leading European powers within the European Union, such as Germany, France, and Italy. In fact, Russia anticipated that, with the European Union's significant economic power, particularly with the adoption of the Euro as a common currency, it would become a significant pole in the multipolar world order envisaged for the post-Cold War era[197]. However,

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[196] Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia. Speech in the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] — Accessed September 25, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21340.

[197] Khudoley K., Ras M. The History of Russia-European Union Relations / K. Khudoley, M. Ras ; T. Romanova, M. David (Ed.) // The Routledge Handbook of EU-Russia Relations: Structures, Actors, Issues. — New York: Routledge, 2022.

Russia's expectations were proven wrong due to several factors, including the United States' audacious and lawless post-9/11 policies, which elicited only feeble responses, the formation of a pro-American clique within the European Union by new Eastern and Northern European member states, and the European Union's weakness in producing a cohesive common foreign policy despite being a strong union. There has been also European security issue for post-Cold War Europe and the US aspirations to preserve its military presence in Europe with NATO and lack of common defense strategy of the EU countries has become a chronic problem for the EU and Russia[198]. Nonetheless, Russia pursued partnerships and opportunities within the European Union for some time to balance American hegemony in Europe and the world. The convergence of important NATO and EU member states like Germany and France against the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003, as well as the development of bilateral relations during France and Germany's EU presidencies, were the outcomes of these efforts

Russia did not adopt a foreign policy goal of becoming an EU member, as stated in its mid-term strategy for improving relations with the EU in 1999. There has never been such a desire in Russian foreign policy. The main strategy adopted in European politics by Russia since the late 1990s can be summarized as follows: protecting and enhancing economic and political interests, expressing concerns and taking measures against security risks arising from NATO enlargement first and then EU enlargement, NATO's continued military presence moving closer to Russia's borders, attempts by the United States to establish a missile defense system project in Europe with support from some Central and Northern European states, and finally, efforts by the United States and the EU to establish pro-Western governments in former Soviet republics

[198] Danilov D. European Defence: Tough Questions // Valdai Discussion Club. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 20, 2023. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/european-defense-tough-questions/.

within Russia's natural sphere of influence through color revolutions based on liberal ethics and moral norms. All of these developments have led to security policies taking center stage in Russian foreign policy in the context of European politics.

The speech delivered by Vladimir Putin at the 2007 Munich Security Conference was indeed clear indicators of the changes occurring in Russian foreign policy, and that can be seen as an official declaration to Western powers and the world at large. In the post-Cold War era, there was a dictation of a single ideological and moral norm worldwide, leading to arbitrary and unlawful practices based on these norms, while the desires and concerns of non-Western states, including Russia, were often ignored. Putin openly voiced Russia's concerns and issued warnings that if these concerns continued to be disregarded, there would be severe consequences[199]. However, once again, these warnings were not taken seriously by the European powers and the United States.

2.1.2. Security Context and NATO Expansion

Russian reactions to the policies of the EU and the US that counter its interests and ignoring its political and security concerns had been in lower-toned and less assertive discourses in the first decade of the post-Cold War period. Russian foreign policy was conducted with an awareness that Russia was in a state of political and economic vulnerability following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Remained problems from the USSR, challenges of the transition period, wild capitalism, and uncontrolled privatizations of the 1990s, especially in strategically valuable sectors such as energy companies, significantly hindered the Russian ability to manage the country's economy effectively.

Russia began to understand that it was being excluded from determining institutions and decisions in Europe's new political, economic, and security

[199] Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy // kremlin.ru. [Electronic resource] — Accessed July, 25, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034

order. Russia could attend NATO meetings and security conferences, express its opinions, but it had no decision-making power or veto power. Russia could become a member of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), register delegates, but its wishes and concerns were not taken into account in decisions related to the Yugoslavia-Kosovo crisis or the expansion of the EU to the east. Russia-NATO Council also had been a similar position throughout its partial functions until 2022. For example, Firstly, Georgian Crisis in 2008 and then beginning of Ukrainian Crisis at the end of the 2013 has damaged functions and meeting of this council. However, although reinforcement of the meeting of council in 2018, mission of the council become an element for the US for consolidation of alliance position against Russia–NATO Council[200].

Another issue is in economic sphere, Russia had to wait for a long time to become a member of organizations like the G8 and WTO. Expectations of receiving significant economic assistance from institutions like the World Bank and IMF led to disappointments, as these expectations came with conditions, including economic reforms and internal political changes based on Western liberal arguments. It became increasingly evident in Russian foreign policy that Western and Russian interests and concerns were significantly different. This period from the 1990s, which brought more disappointments than meeting expectations in foreign policy, up to the mid-2000s, led to a transition in Russia's foreign policy understanding. It shifted towards a more assertive strategy based on geopolitical competition and pragmatic gains.

[200] Danilov D. The Russia–NATO Council: Will There Be a Dialogue? // Russian International Affairs Council. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 21, 2023. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/sovet-rossiya-nato-sostoitsya-li-dialog/.

With the end of the Cold War and the signing of the Paris Charter in 1990, a new security order from the Atlantic to the Urals was planned. In this context, in 1990 in Paris:

- Confidence and Security Building Measures,
- Vienna Document,
- Treaty of Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty),

were signed[201]. The mentioned agreements aimed to address the deficiencies in transparency, mutual trust, openness, permission for the observation of activities and military facilities of each other, and disarmament during the Cold War. However, over time, the effectiveness of these agreements, to which the Soviet Union (later considered its continuing state, Russia, along with Central Asian states), the United States, and European states were parties, has diminished. The deteriorating and strained relations between Russia and the West in the 21st century, reaching the point of rupture, have led to mutual accusations regarding the erosion of the effectiveness of these agreements.

For Russia, one of the prominent reasons for the violations and rendered ineffectiveness of these agreements, built to reduce the risk of conflict and prevent the erosion of trust, is the European states that acquiesce to the continued U.S. hegemony in Europe. The foundation of this perspective embraced in Russian foreign policy is the consistent neglect and marginalization of Russian aspirations and concerns by European states and the United States. The security context of Russian European policy, shaped and developed by regional and global developments up to the present, can be briefly summarized by the following dynamics:

- Establishment of a new security concept in Europe with the initiative of Russia, Europe and the US, after the end of the Cold War,

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[201] Charter of Paris for a New Europe. — Paris, 1990. — URL: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/6/39516.pdf

- The prevention of the ongoing military hegemony and expansionism of the United States and NATO in Europe, alongside the inability to establish a new security concept,
- The explanation to the parties that any security policies and defense projects that exclude Russia make the establishment of peace and tranquility in Europe impossible,
- The risk of the disappearance of buffer zones between Russia and Europe,
- The increasing danger of Russophobia in Europe, exacerbated by the events that erupted in Ukraine in late 2013 and have since turned into a military conflict in 2022.

In the 1990s, Russia realized that it could not reach a conclusive outcome in partnerships that seemed to either exclude it in critical decision-making stages or include in part non-critical issues in the new political and security order in Europe. Experiencing a rapid recovery in economic and political issues in the 2000s, Russia underwent a change in rhetoric, adopting a more ambitious and assertive stance in foreign policy. The statement made by President Putin at the 2007 Munich Security Conference, as mentioned above, was a clear indication of this shift. The military intervention in Georgia in 2008 was a practical demonstration of Russia's assertive rhetoric in foreign policy.

The declaration of Russia's changed foreign policy and its willingness to use hard power, when necessary, also served as a clear warning to the United States and Europe. The main theme of this warning was that Russia would openly react to any scenario where it was excluded from the equation in the geographical areas it considered its sphere of influence. This warning aligned with the idea that a change has been essential in the existing order in Europe, where Russia was excluded, the functions of the OSCE were limited or lost, and NATO's military hegemony continued and gained.

Russian foreign policy actions indicating the need for a new security concept in Europe include the decision in 2007 to suspend the implementation of

the CFE Treaty[202]. Russia declared that it had ratified the relevant agreement in its national assembly but decided to suspend its implementation, stating that the United States and European states did not fulfill their obligations to ratify the agreement in their assemblies, using the presence of Russian Peacekeeping Forces in Moldova and Georgia as an excuse[203]. In 2015, Russia also decided not to participate in relevant treaty meetings but continued to remain within the framework of the Joint Consultative Group (JCG), leaving the open door for possibility of a new agreement[204]. However, according to a recent statement from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as of November 7, 2023, the CFE agreement is considered obsolete from Russia's perspective and declared official withdrawal from the treaty[205].

The CFE agreement, crucial for disarmament, reducing the risk of conflict, and establishing mutual trust in Europe and the Atlantic region, as mentioned earlier, was not approved by the assemblies of the United States and most of European states. In 2011, statements from the United States asserted that Russia violated its obligations under the agreement, and the U.S. would not fulfill its obligations towards Russia further complicating the status of the agreement that had become "lame on both feet" since the 1990s.

The past thirty years have clearly demonstrated the failure of the new security design in Europe under the 1990 Paris Charter, as conflicts in Europe have escalated gradually, leading to an increased risk of conflict. In her studies, Tatiana Parkhalina has been analyzed necessity and difficulty of the new

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[202] Lachowski, Z. The CFE Treaty One Year After Its Unilateral Suspension: A Forlorn Treaty? / Z. Lachowski // Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. — January 2009.

[203] Ulyanov M. Statement by Mikhail Ulyanov at the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference, Vienna, July 2, 2008 // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed December 15, 2023. — URL: https://www.mid.ru/print/?id=1733988&lang=en.

[204] Russia Suspends Joint Consultations on Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 19, 2024. — URL: https://tass.com/russia/781973.

[205] Foreign Ministry Statement on Russia Sending Notifications to States-Parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 19, 2024. — URL: https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1886348/.

European security order in post-Cold War era and roles of the US, EU and Russian Federation[206]. The changing power capacities of states at regional and global levels, along with the corresponding shifts in their policies, prompted the expression of a new European security concept emphasis in Russian foreign policy at the presidential level. In 2009, then-Russian President Dmitry A. Medvedev proposed a new security concept to European states and the U.S., but it received no productive response[207]. Therefore, Russia explicitly stated that it would perceive arrangements in Europe, such as the Missile Shield Project, as direct moves against Russian second-strike capability[208]. Finally, before the initiation of the Special Military Operation in Ukraine, there was once again a mention of the need for a new European security concept to restore peace in Europe. However, this proposal, once again, did not receive a concrete response from the United States and European states[209].

The exclusion of Russia from the security system that established in Europe after the Cold War, coupled with the expansion of a system based on NATO dominance towards Russian borders, represented another historical security threat for Russia. Since Russia became an empire in the 18th century, there have been areas generally considered as buffer zones between Russia and major European powers. This factor, traditionally significant for Russia to keep

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[206] Parkhalina T. G. Rossiya — NATO: Desyat' let spustya // Evropeiskaya bezopasnost': sobytiya, otsenki, prognozy / T. G. Parkhalina. — 2007. — Vol. 8, No. 24. — P. 11–13.; Parkhalina T. G. Rossiya v sisteme evropeiskoy bezopasnosti / T. G. Parkhalina; L. I. Glukharev (Ed.) // Evropa peremen: kontseptsii i strategii integratsionnykh protsessov. — Moscow: Kraft+, 2006. — 352 p.; Parkhalina T. G. Novye vyzovy bezopasnosti i rol' NATO / T. G. Parkhalina // Mir peremen. — 2005. — No. 3. — P. 73–80.; Parkhalina T. G. Otnosheniya Rossiya — NATO: Problemy i perspektivy / T. G. Parkhalina // Aktual'nye problemy Evropy. — 2004. — No. 4. — P. 114–134.

[207] Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia. Dmitry Medvedev Suggested Holding a Pan-European Summit to Launch the Process of Developing a New Treaty on European Security // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] — Accessed December 6, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/48723.

[208] Trubnikov V. I. Problems and Prospects of Russia – US / NATO Cooperation in the Sphere of Ballistic Missile Defense / V. I. Trubnikov (Ed.) — Moscow: IMEMO RAN, 2011. — 40 p.

[209] Moscow Will Insist Washington Guarantees Security for Russia's Western Borders — Diplomat // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 21, 2024. — URL: https://tass.com/world/1373249.

threats as far away from its homeland as possible, carries the risk of disappearing with NATO's expansion towards Russian borders. One of the missions of Russian Special Military Operation initiated in Ukraine in February 2022 was the potential loss of Ukraine's status as a neutral buffer zone between Russia and Europe. Before launching the military operation in Ukraine, Russia sought to address was the reconstruction and preservation of the neutral status of areas like Ukraine, which serve as buffer zones between Russia and Europe and Russian natural influence zone but could not find any common point with the West, again[210].

Finally, one of the prominent elements in Russian foreign policy towards Europe in the past decade has been the fight against Russophobia. Following the internal turmoil that began in Ukraine in late 2013, and the claims that Russia supported separatist activities in eastern Ukraine and illegally annexed Crimea, the United States and European countries initiated unilateral sanctions against Russia. The content and scope of the sanctions gradually increased and reached an unprecedented level with Russia's initiation of the Special Military Operation in Ukraine in 2022. In the latest stage, the sanctions not only encompass military, political, and economic isolation of Russia but also Russian identity, culture, and language. Sanctions have affected individuals who do not openly oppose policy of Russian government. This has led to a strategy in Russian foreign policy towards Europe that emphasizes preserving Russian identity, language, and culture, taking measures against Russophobia, and supporting Russophile movements in international organizations in Russia and abroad.

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[210] US, NATO Must Respond on Russia’s Security Guarantees Demands Substantively — Putin // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 21, 2024. — URL: https://tass.com/russia/1406687.

2.1.3. From Strategic Partnership and Cooperation to Selective Engagement and Geopolitical Conflicts

The European Union claims that the main reason for the deterioration of relations with Russia after the Cold War is Russia's adoption of harsh policies, especially in its near abroad. However, when we look at Nadezhda Arbatova's assessments on this issue, the background of the worsening EU-Russia relations lies in a larger geopolitical rivalry. In a 2021 interview with the Russian news agency Interfax, Arbatova expresses that Russia's harsh policies adopted in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine since 2014 are not the main causes but rather the consequences of the deteriorating EU-Russia relations[211]. Arbatova states that in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, there is a conflict of expanding direct spheres of influence between the EU's Eastern Partnership Program and Russia's Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) projects in the region referred to as Russia's near abroad. Although the countries targeted to be involved in both projects are almost entirely the same, Ukraine and later Georgia and Moldova are at the center of both projects[212]. The conflicts in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine since 2014 are a result of this intense project competition. From the Russian perspective, the reason for Russia being the side using military force is the need to take national security measures against the increasing threats of NATO and EU expansionism towards its near abroad, despite all warnings.

Fall of Interdependence, Escalation of Tensions and Breakdown of Relations

[211] Rossiya i YES: pochemu vse poshlo ne tak? // Interfax.ru. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 14, 2023. — URL: https://www.interfax.ru/world/752227.
[212] Ibid.

Interdependence, as an approach within the liberal theory in the field of international relations, is a concept put forth by prominent representatives of the liberal perspective, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. According to this concept, initially explained by Keohane and Nye, dependence is clarified, and subsequently, the situation of mutual dependence arising from interdependence is elucidated. In essence, when external factors play a decisive role in influencing the politics of a country, that country becomes dependent on these external factors and actors. The mutual aspect of this situation between two countries is referred to as mutual dependence, indicating that they are interdependent[213]. According to the interdependence approach, the aim of developing relations between Russia and European countries, as well as the European Union, after the Cold War, and integrating Russia into Europe, was for both sides to enhance economic cooperation, increase mutual dependence, and thereby establish a strategic partnership while avoiding the risks of geopolitical conflicts.

In theory, this planning aimed to create a mutual beneficiary relationship for both sides in the post-Cold War order. However, Robert Keohane, in another research, claimed that creating interdependence on regional or global scale is mostly rely on political and military powers of states. He gives post-II. World War American political economy policy in global affairs in this context and he emphasized that creation of interdependence also provides extension of hegemon's influence.[214] In this sense, immediate post-Cold War period was an opportunity for Europe and the Russian Federation to improve their relations and take advance against each other in the new European political, economic and security context. Therefore, creation of interdependence was a highly

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[213] Keohane R. O., Nye J. S. Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition / R. O. Keohane, J. S. Nye // International Organization. — 1977. — Vol. 32, No. 2. — P. 513-531.

[214] Keohane R. O. After Hegemony; Cooperation and Discord in World Political Economy / R. O. Keohane // New Jersey, Princeton; Princeton University Press. — 303 p.

suitable approach for ensuring security in Europe and increasing political, economic, social, and cultural sharing and gaining between the parties in the region. However, geopolitical conflicts and conflicting interests that this approach did not account for or adequately anticipate overcame the desire to prevent conflicts between Russia and Europe resulting from mutual dependence. In 1999, when the trade volume between the two sides was only $52.8 billion, the total trade volume had steadily increased, surpassing $300 billion until the global economic crisis in 2008[215]. Despite some short-term declines due to economic sanctions imposed following conflicts between Russia and Georgia and the impact of the global economic crisis, before the onset of the Russia-Ukraine crisis in 2014, the total trade volume between the two countries had reached approximately $400 billion.

Loredana Maria SIMIONOV

Table 1 - Main indicators of EU-27 and Russia (2012)*

	UE-27	Rusia
Indicators for area and population(2012)		
Area	4.324.782 km²	17,098,242 km²
Population	503.824.373	142.500.482
Population growth rate	0,212%	-0,01%
Economics indicators(2012)		
Unemployement rate	10,5%	6,2%
GDP	16.584 bln USD	2.015 bln USD
GDP per capita	34.500 USD	17,700 USD
GDP growth rate	-0,2%	3,6%
Trade indicators(2011)		
Exports	2.017 bln USD	542,5 bln USD
EU Exports in Russia	140,36 bln EUR	
Imports	2.397 bln USD	358,1 bln USD
EU Imports from Russia	256.89 bln USD	
Trade Balance	-380 bln USD	184,4 bln USD
Total trade value EU-Russia	397,24 bln USD	

Source: Author's calculations based on data provided by: *CIA Worldfactbook*, at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html, accessed on 14.12.2013

Figure 1: Comparision of EU and Russia (2012) - Simionov

Russia has become the largest trading partner for the European Union, it has risen to become one of the most significant trading partners alongside the

[215] Simionov L. M. A Comparative Analysis of the EU Member States Regarding Their Interdependence with Russia / L. M. Simionov // CES Working Papers. — 2015. — Vol. 7, No. 1. — P. 179-192.

United States and China[216]. In 2014, according to data from the Russian National Bank, approximately three-quarters of the foreign direct investment in Russia came from EU countries[217].

In an equation where trade volume has risen so rapidly in a short period, the factors straining relations between the two sides are their inability to avoid geopolitical risks and the failure of diplomacy. The underlying rationale behind the economic development of Russia-European Union relations is described by both countries as a strategic partnership and cooperation in bilateral relations[218]. Efforts in this context to develop political, military, social, and cultural relations at an institutional level have been previously mentioned. The overlapping of the EU's Eastern Partnership Program and the EAEU's targeted expansion areas led to the beginning of processes that have evolved until today, reaching a point where geopolitical conflict risks became unmanageable[219].

The expansion of the European Union (EU) towards Russian borders along with NATO and the processes initiated by Color Revolutions in Russia's near abroad clearly indicated the potential for geopolitical risks and conflict between the parties. Despite the mutual economic benefits in their bilateral relations and efforts to enhance regional and global impact capacity, conflicts could not be prevented. The unilateral actions of Georgia in 2008, leading to Russia's military intervention, and the Euromaidan crisis in Ukraine at the end of 2013, culminating with Crimea's accession to Russia in 2014, brought tensions to a peak. Another major factor contributing to these processes was the EU's

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[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Busygina I. M. et al. Russia–European Union: Potential for Partnership / I. M. Busygina, et al.; I. S. Ivanov (Ed.) — Moscow: RIAC, 2013. — 80 p.
[219] Bordachev T. Europe, Russia and The Liberal World Order; International Relations after the Cold War / T. Bordachev // Routledge Handbook, 2022.

failure to respond positively to Russia's request for the creation of a new European security concept.

Political and economic conflicts of interest in the post-Soviet geography were escalated to a global conflict dimension with the Arab Spring and the active military presence of both parties, along with the United States, in Syria. During these periods, while defining its unity policy towards Russia, the EU decided to characterize relations with Russia after Crimea and Syria not as partnership or cooperation but as Selective Engagement[220]. The continuous politicization of relations, the inability to find common ground, and the lack of trust and willingness, described by Ivan Timofeev as "Russian fatigue," led the course of relations to this point. With Russia's declaration of a Special Military Operation in Ukraine in February 2022, the understanding of Selective Engagement has now entirely shifted to a point where the parties consider each other as enemies.

Despite fluctuations in economic relations between the parties, the stability of trade continued, even after Color Revolutions, Crimea's accession to Russia, and the proxy war in Syria. Although the idea of reducing conflict risks through mutual dependence was now perceived as futile, the parties pragmatically continued their commercial relationships that supplemented each other's needs. However, since February 2022, there have been and continue to be challenging ruptures between the parties, with gradual elimination of mutual economic gains, aiming to minimize them according to the EU's planning[221].

Finally, despite the transformation of Russia-EU relations from strategic cooperation to hostility, there are still areas where they should collaborate in

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[220] Fischer S., Timofeev I. Selective Engagement between the EU and Russia / S. Fischer, I. Timofeev // EU-Russia Expert Network. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 28, 2024. — URL: https://eu-russia-expertnetwork.eu/reports/selective-engagement.

[221] EU Trade with Russia - Latest Developments // Eurostat. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 19, 2024. — URL: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=EU_trade_with_Russia_-_latest_developments.

addressing common spheres of influence and regional and global crises. Issues such as ending conflicts in Ukraine and creating a conducive environment for peace talks, JCPOA negotiations, the ongoing civil war in Syria, the Israel-Palestine conflict, irregular migration, and climate change stand out as topics where they should work together. In a speech during his visit to China in 2021, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that there was no longer any relationship between Russia and the EU and that it was no longer possible to establish one. He emphasized that Russia now prioritizes establishing bilateral relations with European countries[222]. Cooperation and partnership platforms that were intended to be established after the Cold War have almost completely disappeared. Russia now sees this disappearance as an opportunity to establish a new order based on equality and the pursuit of common interests.

Pipeline Networks and the Energy Crisis

One of the significant issues that has persisted as both a gain and a challenge in Russia-EU relations since the collapse of the Soviet Union is the import of Russian natural resources to Europe. A crucial factor that has contributed to the recovery of Russia's economy in the post-Soviet era is its abundant energy resources and the capacity to transport them through pipelines. Until February 2022, European states were the largest consumers of Russian gas, playing a pivotal role in the economic recovery of Russia. Despite ongoing gas imports from Russia by EU countries, there is a joint decision to completely cease Russian gas imports by the end of the 2020s[223].

Since the construction of the Friendship (Druzhba) pipeline in the 1960s, which stretches from Tatarstan to West Germany, Russian gas has been imported

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[222] Russian Foreign Minister Says EU 'Destroyed' Relations with Moscow // The Moscow Times. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 29, 2024. — URL: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/03/23/russian-foreign-minister-says-eu-destroyed-relations-with-moscow-a73331.

[223] Ambrose, J. EU Agrees Plan to Enable Member States to End All Gas Imports from Russia // The Guardian. [Electronic resource] — December 8, 2023. — Accessed December 9, 2023. — URL: https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/dec/08/eu-enable-member-countries-end-all-gas-imports-russia.

to Europe. Another pipeline, the Brotherhood (Bratstvo), was constructed in the 1980s as a second line, running 4000 km from Siberia to Western Europe, contributing to the transportation of Russian gas to Europe during the Cold War.

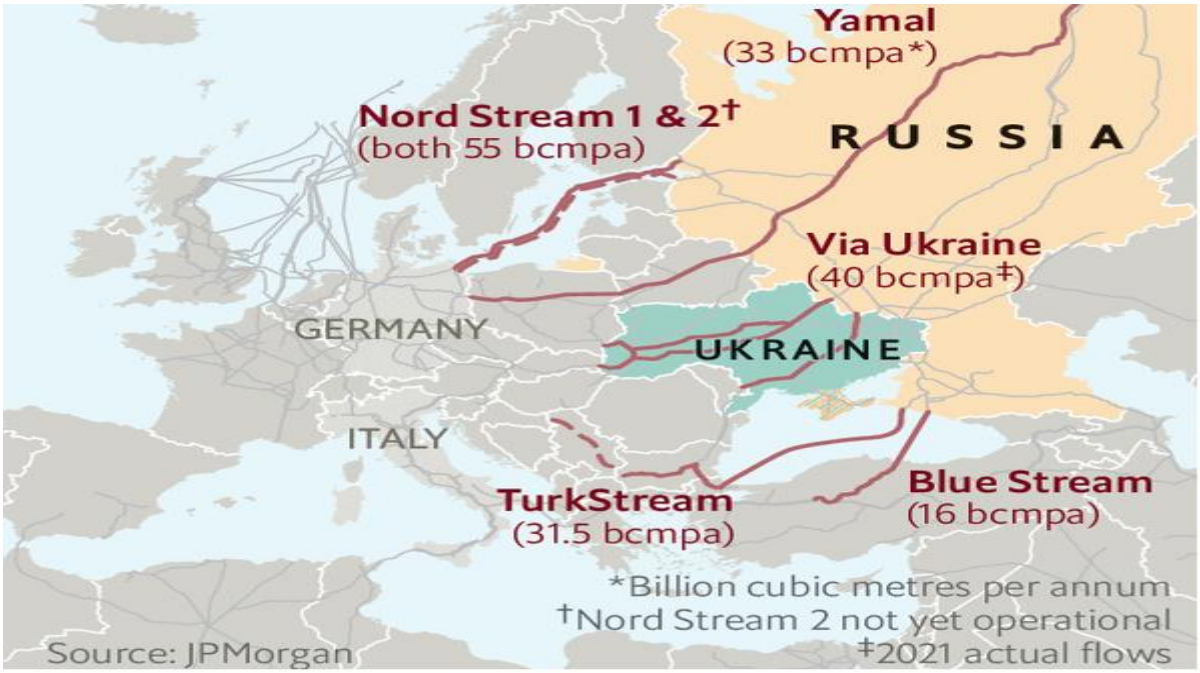


Figure 2: Natural Gas Pipelines from Russia to the Europe - The Economist[224]

The persistence of the Friendship (Druzhba) and Brotherhood (Bratstvo) pipelines as a legacy issue for Russia is due to these pipelines passing through certain former Soviet republics and Eastern Bloc countries that shifted their focus entirely towards developing relations with the EU and NATO after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russia's need for the transit route through these countries in its natural gas exports to Europe implies a dependency on these nations for the security of its energy transportation. Among the Baltic countries, Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine, Ukraine has been the country where Russia faced the most challenges in its energy exports through this route. The transportation of gas to Europe through Ukraine via the Yamal pipeline made Russia dependent on the route through Ukraine for gas exports to Europe before the construction

[224] How Will Europe Cope if Russia Cuts Off Its Gas? // The Economist. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 29, 2023. — URL: https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/01/29/how-will-europe-cope-if-russia-cuts-off-its-gas.

of the Nord Stream, Blue Stream, and Turk Stream pipelines. Ukraine, holding the position of being a transit route for Russia through its pipelines, has effectively used this position as a sort of weapon against Russia. This allowed Ukraine, as a country dependent on Russian gas, to sign agreements with Russia to purchase gas at prices well below market value. However, despite this, relations between Ukraine and Russia became strained after the pro-Western developments known as the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine after 2004, and Russia has occasionally cut off natural gas supplies to Ukraine.

Instead of using Ukraine and other countries as transit routes, Russia opted to construct the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to directly transport natural gas to Europe. Nord Stream 1, built under the Baltic Sea without traversing the territory of any country until the heart of Europe, provided a gas flow close to the natural gas shipments sent to Europe via Ukraine. This pipeline marked the first step in eliminating Russia's energy transportation dependency on Ukraine. As a second step, despite objections from Eastern European countries, the Baltic countries, the United States, and the United Kingdom, Germany cooperated with Russia for construction of Nord Stream 2 in 2015, based on cost and performance quality considerations. This project, worth approximately $10 billion, would allow Russia, upon completion and obtaining the necessary licenses, to bypass Ukraine at its discretion in exporting gas to Europe. The construction of the project was completed in 2022, and if the necessary licenses were obtained, the gas flow through the pipelines would be activated. However, following Russia's Special Military Operation in Ukraine, one of the primary targets of the sanctions imposed by the US and the EU was to prevent the operation of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Succumbing to pressure from the US and the EU, Germany halted certification of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline[225].

[225] Nord Stream Operation out of Question Due to Halted Certification // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 19, 2024. — URL: https://tass.com/world/1744471.

Besides, pipelines also were damaged after unknown attacks at the end of the September in 2022. Interestingly, some of the Western officials blamed Russia about attacks to the pipelines which constructed by Russia. However, Russia defined it as a terrorist attack and Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov claimed the US and UK one way or another behind of these attacks[226].

The U.S. Quest for Dominance in Europe and the Desire to be an Alternative to Russian Gas

The understanding summarized by Lord Ismay as NATO's European policy, "Americans in, Russians out, and German downs"[227], is an approach that can be argued to have persisted for the United States even after the Cold War. Following the rising of the United States into the 21st century as the sole hegemonic power, its rapid adoption of a unilateral political stance that quickly disturbed its European partners could be considered an arbitrary choice. However, this hegemonic inclination, apart from Russia, has garnered significant reactions from European allies of the United States, particularly Germany and France. The diplomacy to create an international response environment with Germany and France against the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and the gradual rising political and economic relations between the EU and Russia, also sparked debates about the formation of a Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis. In France, the current anti-U.S. stance adhered to by the De Gaulle understanding is known, but the U.S. policy of keeping Russia distant from Europe and encircling it by expanding NATO eastward is a clear and open argument in Russian foreign policy. In addition, a prominent U.S. strategy to keep Germany in check is to

[226] Kremlin Says US, UK Involved in Nord Stream Terrorist Attack 'One Way or Another' // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 17, 2024. — URL: https://tass.com/politics/1681179.

[227] NATO Russians Out, Americans In, Germans Down: Updated, Reversed // National Review. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 17, 2024. — URL: https://www.nationalreview.com/2017/07/nato-russians-out-americans-germans-down-updated-reversed/.

compel Germany to remain under the U.S. security umbrella and limit the development of its relations with Russia.

In the 1960s, J. F. Kennedy attempted to obstruct the Friendship (Druzhba) project, which was under construction, through the application of contemporary sanction policies. He refused to permit the sale of necessary technical materials during the construction process. Eventually, Russia completed the construction, addressed the deficiencies arising from sanctions through its own production and capabilities, and opened the pipeline for trade[228]. In the 1980s, a similar policy was implemented by Ronald Reagan, this time for the Brotherhood (Bratstvo) project. He prohibited the sale of compressors to the Soviet Union and issued threats of sanctions against any U.S. and Western European companies that would contribute to the project[229]. The project was completed and continues to be actively used. We witnessed a similar policy in the recent period during Donald Trump's presidency when he accused Germany of being under "Russian captivity"[230]. President Trump, along with many U.S. politicians, heavily criticized Germany regarding the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and cooperation in Germany-Russia relations. Particularly, reactions to Germany conducting bilateral relations in a way that makes it dependent on Russian gas have led to suggestions of the U.S. recommending LNG gas as an alternative to Russian gas. Just as Reagan recommended U.S. coal and energy resources in the 1980s, Trump also expressed that the U.S. LNG gas could be taken instead of Russian gas[231].

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[228] Prince T. U.S. Efforts to Derail Russian Pipelines to Europe Have Failed Since the 1960s. Will Nord Stream 2 Be Any Different? // Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. [Electronic resource] — Accessed August 15, 2023. — URL: https://www.rferl.org/a/us-efforts-stop-russia-pipelines-will-nord-stream-2-be-different/30107938.html.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Trump Accused Germany of Becoming ‘Totally Dependent’ on Russian Energy at the U.N. The Germans Just Smirked // The Washington Post. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 29, 2024. — URL: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/09/25/trump-accused-germany-becoming-totally-dependent-russian-energy-un-germans-just-smirked/.
[231] Commentary: A Win for Trump’s Gas Diplomacy // Reuters. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 29, 2024. — URL: https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN1BB01J/.

In the realm of Russia's natural gas exports to Europe, the various pipelines, land connections, and maritime transport capabilities stand in contrast to the United States' efforts to revitalize the LNG market in the region. Russia's ability to bypass Ukraine in gas exports to Europe through the Nord Stream projects and the initiative of the Three Seas Initiative, encouraged by the United States to sell LNG gas as an alternative to Russian gas, have gained prominence. The Three Seas Initiative, involving political, economic support from the United States, and the inclusion of Ukraine and Moldova as partner countries, aims to import LNG into Europe through ports in the Adriatic, Black Sea, and Baltic Sea, connected by highways to the heart of Europe[232]. Despite efforts to “save” Europe from dependency on Russian gas, these projects and sanctions have led Europe to become increasingly reliant on the United States' liquefied natural gas exports.

While Joe Biden's presidency has generally repaired strained ally relations from the Trump era, the possibility of a Republican candidate with a similar understanding of Europe and the Ukraine crisis winning the elections raises concerns, especially for the Western European countries, including Germany. In Russian foreign policy understanding, the European Union and leading European countries should not allow such intense interference from the United States in European politics and Russia-Europe relations. According to Russia, the European Union possesses the power and capacity to be a pole in a multipolar world order. To become a significant power in international relations with this capacity, the EU should break free from the shackles of the United States and NATO, formulating independent policies.

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[232] Kim A. 3 Seas Initiative: America’s Opportunity in Europe to Advance National Interests // The Heritage Foundation. [Electronic resource] / A. Kim. — Accessed March 29, 2024. — URL: https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/3-seas-initiative-americas-opportunity-europe-advance-national-interests.

2.1.4. Russian Conservative Stance against Liberal Values

In the literature of international relations and political science, the emergence and prolonged existence of the Cold War in international politics are primarily attributed to the clash of ideologies and efforts to establish superiority over one another. Throughout the Cold War, it is known that the Western Bloc advocated liberal-capitalist values, while the Eastern Bloc pursued a political ideology based on communist-socialist values. The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the successive abandonment of communist ideologies by all Eastern Bloc countries, signifying the conclusion of the conflict between the two major superpowers and their strong ideologies. The declaration of victory by the Western Bloc, led by the United States, following the end of the Cold War, and the subsequent global spread of liberal-capitalist values, including in Russia, influenced by globalization, along with the politics based on the "End of the History" perspective in the West, became a new reality in the post-Cold War era for a brief period.

However, this perspective has led to the formation of an opposing front that believes a form of ideological hegemony has been established, which initially adopted and spread as more of an economic strategy. This ideological hegemony, later expanding with the emphasis of its arguments in the political arena, is rooted in the desire to intervene in the internal affairs of states and expand the boundaries of rights and freedoms in an unclear manner. It is believed that this hegemony undermines and attempts to eliminate the unique conservative and traditional values of civilizations.

Led primarily by rising regional and potential global powers such as Russia, China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Iran, Turkey and Hungary this front has placed significant importance on elevating a conservative understanding based on their own civilizations and traditions in their foreign policies against the declining Western hegemony. Even within the United States and European countries, there are significant civil society organizations, political parties, and

groups that, while often associated more with far-right factions, advocate for the promotion of conservative and traditional values, expressing discomfort with the interference of liberal values in the cultural and social values of society.

While this front is not an organized and cohesive entity, it is led by leaders who share the desire to prevent the penetration of liberal values into their own cultures. Under this theme, they find common ground in anti-Western rhetoric. Although these countries do not formally identify themselves under a common organizational umbrella, Western academia and politicians often classify them collectively as "illiberal regimes" in their discourses[233]. The assessment by the Indian-American political scientist Fareed Zakaria, following the Cold War, emphasizes the importance of the spread of liberal values first in the economy, then in social life and culture, and finally the transition to liberal democratic values in non-Western states. This emphasis is underscored in the context of the sustainability of the Western hegemony under the leadership of the United States and can be seen as indicative of efforts to establish a world order based on what could be termed a uniform ideology rooted in liberal values[234].

The mention of Russia at the beginning stems from its direct involvement in a heated and sometimes confrontational relationship with the West since Vladimir Putin was elected president for the third time in 2012. This period has been characterized by direct conflicts, both overt and covert, with the West. Putin's approach can be traced back to his article published in Nezavisimaya Gazeta just before his third presidential term in 2012. In this article, he highlighted a new political understanding for Russia, emphasizing a multi-

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[233] Zakaria F. The Rise of Illiberal Democracy / F. Zakaria // Foreign Affairs. — 1997. — Vol. 76, No. 6. — P. 22-43.; Laruelle, M. Illiberalism: A Conceptual Introduction // Illiberalism Studies Program. [Electronic resource] / M. Laruelle. — April 2021. — Accessed January 18, 2024. — URL: https://www.illiberalism.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Laruelle-Illiberalism-A-Conceptual-Introduction-ILLSP-April-12.pdf.; For more see, Aron H., Snyder J. The International Politics of Illiberalism / H. Aron, J. Snyder // In: Laruelle M., ed. The Oxford Handbook of Illiberalism. — Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2023;

[234] Zakaria F. The Rise of Illiberal Democracy / F. Zakaria // Foreign Affairs. — 1997. — Vol. 76, No. 6. — P. 22-43.

identity "civilization" concept based on Orthodox Christianity and interfaith-cultural dialogue in contrast to the West's expansionist approach relying on the export of liberal values[235].

In Russian foreign policy, the adoption of a position against liberal values led by the EU and the U.S. under the concept of "Russian civilization" based on traditional and conservative values has become a significant parameter in European politics over the past decade. Disputes encompassing various political, military, and socio-cultural elements, ranging from the events in Ukraine starting in late 2013 to migration to Europe and the handling or prohibition of LGBT arguments, have turned into areas of increasing tension between Russia and Europe.

Russia's approach to its relationship with Europe, grounded in historical depths rather than categorizing it simply as Western-Russian relations based on traditional values, reflects the official stance it has adopted against the hegemony of liberal values. In the latest foreign policy concepts where the strategy pursued in Russian foreign policy is explicitly outlined, the structure of the Russian state is defined, and among the initial general provisions, there is an emphasis on the traditional cultural values and historical depth in its ties with Europe[236]. This articulation of the official stance underscores Russia's commitment to preserving its cultural and historical identity in the face of what it perceives as the dominance of liberal values. By anchoring its relationship with Europe in historical context and cultural values, Russia distinguishes its approach from a simple dichotomy of Western versus Russian relations,

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[235] Putin V. V. Rossiya: natsional'nyy vopros // // Nezavisimaya Gazeta / V. V. Putin. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 11, 2024. — URL: https://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1_national.html?utm_source=pocket_saves.

[236] Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii V. V. Putinym 31 marta 2023 goda. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/.

reinforcing the idea that its stance is rooted in a broader historical and cultural perspective.

.....deep historical ties with the traditional European culture and other Eurasian cultures, and the ability to ensure harmonious coexistence of different peoples, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups on one common territory, which has been developed over many centuries, ...[237]

The 2023 foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation also emphasizes that the destructive activities of liberal values, intertwined with neoliberal ideological attitudes, interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, and their stance against traditional spirit and moral values have led to a breakdown in all areas of international relations[238].

While Russia continues an individual struggle against the spread of liberal values, which are integral parts of Western hegemony and are used as a tool in foreign policy, it also adopts a foreign policy strategy to garner an international reaction in this regard. In diplomatic engagements, particularly with non-Western countries and parties that believe in highlighting traditional values and moral norms within the Western framework, there is an emphasis on expressing shared sensitivities to encourage an international response. In this context, one of the unchanging provisions in foreign policy concepts is found under the priorities of Russian foreign policy, specifically under the heading "Establishment of an equitable and sustainable world order," which includes the following statement:

"Consolidate international efforts to ensure respect for and protection of universal and traditional spiritual and moral values (including ethical norms common to all world religions) and counter the attempts to impose pseudo-

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[237] Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii V. V. Putinym 31 marta 2023 goda. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/.
[238] Ibid.

humanistic or other neo-liberal ideological views, leading to the loss by the humankind of traditional spiritual and moral values and integrity[239]*."*

Christianity in Russian Foreign Policy Approach towards Europe

The place of Christianity as a common history and cultural heritage in Russia's relations with Europe, as well as the development of a traditional and conservative understanding in Russian foreign policy, highlights the role of Christianity in the socio-cultural dynamics of both European and Russian societies. This perspective has shaped Russia's foreign policy approach towards Europe, emphasizing the role of Christianity in the cultural fabric of both regions. In the context of the Syrian civil war and the rise of ISIS terrorism in Syria and Iraq, concerns about the protection of historical Christian monuments and the challenges faced by Christian communities created a shared foreign policy area. However, apart from the Hungarian government led by Viktor Orban, cooperation in this regard has not been established.

In Russian foreign policy, there have been several statements by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and President Vladimir Putin emphasizing the promotion of traditional and conservative values, often based on the common Christian identity in relation to Europe. These statements generally warn that neoliberal policies in Europe are eroding the traditional values of Christianity, leading to the disruption of the fundamental settings derived from Christianity in European societies. Lavrov's statements during the Easter celebration in 2017 highlighted these dangers, calling for cooperation with European states and the Vatican to preserve the traditional values of Christianity. In these remarks, he pointed out

[239] Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii V. V. Putinym 31 marta 2023 goda. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/.

the perceived threats to Christianity's traditional values and urged collaboration for their protection[240].

Similarly, in 2021, President Putin, in his message congratulating Pope Francis on his 85th birthday, mentioned that there could be many common efforts for the protection of Christianity and Christian values, as well as increasing dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches[241]. However, Russia's proposals for creating new areas of cooperation with Christianity at the forefront did not receive a significant response from Europe. The emphasis on the importance of Christian values in the foreign policy approach that highlights Russian civilization is crucial not only for the preservation of traditional ties and historical depth with Europe, as indicated in foreign policy concepts, but also in light of the erosion in Russia's relations with Europe due to current political developments.

Despite the challenges and the erosion of historical and traditional connections in Russia's relations with Europe, permanently eliminating the connections between societies and states with these historical and traditional ties is not feasible. However, in Russian foreign policy, there are repeated warnings that the continued submission of European politics to American hegemony and the destructive understanding of liberal values will lead to increased instability in Europe and the world.

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[240] Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Speech at a Reception for Orthodox Easter, Moscow, April 18, 2017 // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 22, 2024. — URL: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1545555/.

[241] Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia. Congratulations to Pope Francis on His Birthday // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] — Accessed October 9, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67382.

2.2. Near Abroad; Natural Influence Area, Energy Politics and External Threats

As a well-known issue, after disintegration of the Soviet Union, fifteen independent states emerged and Russian Federation, as one of them, was accepted as heir of the USSR. Except the Russian Federation, former Soviet republics in geographical definitions are;

Baltic States; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

Eastern European; Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine

Caucasia; Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia

Central Asia; Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

In this context, near abroad has become one of the renowned concepts in Russian foreign policy studies that basically contains Russian foreign policy towards these above mentioned former Soviet republics and post-Soviet space. Among of these regions and states, Baltic region and countries have to be separated with their solid integration with Western institutions and state structure. Russian limited aspirations due to some fundamental reasons towards these countries and this region are also other points for sharp differentiation of the region from the Russian near abroad policy.

As heir of the Soviet Union and regional hegemon, Russian Federation always has several aspirations and perceptions throughout its region. Some of them had been status quo oriented and some of them had contained reformist, revisionist desires. However, status quo and reformist aspirations of the Russian Federation in the near abroad had changed or transformed in time. Local, regional and global developments had played decisive roles on these changes. Projection of these developments to Russian near abroad politics has entailed the predominance of some concepts and perceptions in Russian perspective in different periods. Although the beginning of the story was different, protection of ethnic Russian and Russian speaking populations, security-based politics,

great power statues, sphere of influence, and reintegration had been prominent in Russian politics in the first decade of the Russian Federation. Then, security-based policy had become tougher, and the energy issue had gained attention as a political instrument and become a vital sphere of Russian near abroad policy in the second decade of the Russian Federation. Besides, Russian compatriots and the Russian minority in the former Soviet republics have also regained momentum with following more assertive foreign policy understanding of Russia. In the last phase of Russian politics along near abroad, integration, historical land, natural influence areas, and external threats have evolved into prominent concepts and perceptions since the beginning of the 2010s, and their importance is growing day by day in the near abroad policy of Russia.

In Russian foreign policy, there are different priorities for the “near abroad” based on regional distinctions. The policy towards Eastern Europe, which includes countries on Russia's western and southwestern borders, is primarily security-oriented. Russia seeks to protect its western borders and considers the expansion of Western organizations like NATO and the EU in this region a security threat. In Central Asia, the focus is on integration, economic cooperation, and maintaining Russia's dominant position. The aim is to foster economic and political cooperation with Central Asian states to ensure stability and maintain its influence towards the region. The Caucasus region involves energy cooperation with Azerbaijan, strong ties with Armenia, and oversight of breakaway regions like South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia. Russia is also vigilant against Western expansion, particularly the influence of the EU and NATO in the region. These distinct policy priorities reflect Russia's efforts to secure its influence, protect national security, and preserve its interests in its "near abroad." The approach may vary by region, but the overarching goal is to maintain Russian influence and stability while countering perceived Western threats.

In Russian foreign policy, the Eurasianist approach has come to the forefront in dealing with the “near abroad”, but a strong and comprehensive institutional structure in the region has not yet been established. The organizations established so far have either had a wide membership but weak integration or limited membership with strong integration[242]. This situation necessitates that Russia not only focuses on integration and creating a common framework in its relations with regional countries but also exercises caution in its bilateral relations.

In this context, from Russia's perspective, the foreign policies of the near abroad countries are crucial, considering factors such as:

- The economic intensity of their relations with Russia and other potential dominant powers.
- The natural resource wealth and energy policies of these countries.
- Their solidarity with Russia in their foreign policies and their stance in UN votes.
- Their attitude towards Western sanctions imposed on Russia.
- Their stance on Russia's policies towards Syrian, Crimean, and Ukrainian issues.
- The extent of their relations with Russia's regional and global competitors and their efforts to join other political-military organizations.
- The situation of Russian ethnic and Russian-speaking populations in these countries.

All of these factors play a significant role in shaping the foreign policies of Russia towards the near abroad.

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[242] Safranchuk I. Russia in a Reconnecting Eurasia: Foreign Economic and Security Interests / I. Safranchuk. — Lanham: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2016.

2.2.1. Natural Influence Area and Great Power Statue

Natural influence area or sphere of influence concept has always been one of the critical issues for all of the regional and global powers in the political history. However, definition or perception of the natural influence area generally has different meanings for each regional and global actor. Clash of interests and threat perceptions of the regional powers and desires of the global and hegemon power(s) could be overlapped and that entails disagreements, conflicts and even wars between these powers. In this sense, acquiring acceptance from regional and global actors and obtaining their consents in hard or soft way are crucial issues to be known as a great power that has natural influence area in its region. In this sense, the natural sphere of influence can be explained as the hierarchical superiority of one of the states or alliances in a given region over the other subjects, which is highly recognized by external actors[243].

One of the most significant aspirations behind Russia's recognition of the post-Soviet space as its natural sphere of influence is its belief in the necessity to establish absolute dominance in its near abroad to be considered as a great power. For an actor who believes that their influence extends beyond regional impact to global politics, the aspiration to be an absolute power in their region is an expected request. In order to wield influence on global issues, an entity must initially secure international recognition. To attain this recognition, the entity in question must first demonstrate its absolute authority within its own region to external parties[244]. Russia, with a historical experience that acknowledges the requirements and capabilities that a state with the potential to impact global developments should possess, has this understanding. Based on this historical experience, the Russian state's mindset also recognizes that the status of a great

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[243] Jackson V. Understanding Spheres of Influence in International Politics / V. Jackson // European Journal of International Security. — 2020. — Vol. 5, No. 3. — P. 255–273.
[244] Ibid.

power primarily requires undisputed hierarchical superiority in its own region, namely its near abroad. However, the most significant challenge in Russia's great power and near abroad policy is that its hierarchical superiority in the region is not acknowledged by external actors, and these external actors often adopt a policy of intervention in the region without considering Russia's concerns and interests. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, including the period when Russia had a foreign policy approach that prioritized cooperation with the West, one of its most important strategies has been to maintain absolute dominance and hegemony in its near abroad, either alongside or against the West, while positioning itself as a great power.

USSR had known as one of the two undisputed superpowers in post-World War II period. However, after the dissolution of the USSR, statue of the Russian Federation has been a controversial issue in the international politics. However, it has always been crystal clear from Russian perspective; “Russia has been one of the most important powers in the world since its imperial period and it is a great power”. Russians also has known that its superpower statue has gone with disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the United States left as a sole superpower in the new world order. On the other hand, Russia must not be seen as a middle-regional power in this sense. Therefore, Russian Federation also must be had a sphere of influence in this logic. However, different perceptions and definitions about statue of the new Russian state has entailed struggle between Russia and external actors in post-Soviet space.

Power statue quest of the states generally emerged from their aspirations and dissatisfaction in regard their place in the existing international system[245]. Russian aspirations and dissatisfaction about existing system and its post-Cold War place in the new world order has gradually grown, while recovering its

[245] Larson D. W., Shevchenko A. Quest for Status: Chinese and Russian Foreign Policy / D.W. Larson, A. Shevchenko. — New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

economic and political problems inside. Russia's increasingly interrelated capacity and aspirations have also brought with them the audacity to assert its national interests and highlight security concerns. Russia's desires to protect and emphasize its national interests and security concerns, as expressed in its discourse, began to be strongly articulated during Vladimir Putin's second presidential term. Russia demonstrated this at times through a "carrot-and-stick" policy, withholding the carrot and resorting to threats with the stick, particularly towards neighboring countries like Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, and West. The enforcement of Russia's red lines was embodied in measures such as embargoes, gas cutoffs, and pricing adjustments in trade following the color revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine.

On the other hand, the shift from a conciliatory rhetoric in Western relations to a more protective and warning tone was one of the significant outcomes of this transformation. Vladimir Putin's famous statements at the 2007 Munich Security Conference and the warnings issued by Russia's then-NATO representative, Dmitry Rogozin, in 2008 regarding the potential NATO membership of Georgia and Moldova, serve as practical examples of the change in rhetoric[246].

2.2.2. Regional Integration

Integration politics of the Russian Federation in near abroad contains political, military-security, economic and socio-cultural strands. In the political sphere of that policy, Russian Federation has tried to protect and develop political bounds of the former Soviet countries and central role of the protection and progress of these bounds since last days of the USSR. In this purpose, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was founded and extended

[246] Defying Russian Warnings, Moldova and Georgia Head for EU Pact // Reuters. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 1, 2024. — URL: https://www.reuters.com/article/world/defying-russian-warnings-moldova-and-georgia-head-for-eu-pact-idUSKBN0EL1BO/.

throughout the region. In military-security sphere, Collective Security Treaty – then Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)- was founded with initiative of the Russian Federation. As a final attempt to consolidate bounds between former Soviet States, Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) was created to improve economic relations and interdependence among post-Soviet countries. Russia has tried to pursued simultaneously strategy for its economic and social integration with the Western economic and political institutions and regional integration among post-Soviet countries in its near abroad.[247] In this part of the integration politics of the Russian Federation in near abroad has aimed creation of free trade area throughout post-Soviet region. In the final strategy and discourses of Russia, all of this integration projects also contains Russian aspirations for creation of the common Russian civilization culture and Greater Eurasia collaboration in near abroad.

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

Independence decisions of the socialist republics in succession, Belarus Soviet Socialist Republic, Ukraine Soviet Socialist Republic and Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic left from fifteen republics in the USSR at the end. Before disintegration of them, Common Independent States (CIS) was found by the leadership of the Boris Yeltsin in 8 December 1991. The core idea of the establishment of this organization was preserving special bounds between these states and integrating other former soviet republics[248]. According to the interpretation of many experts on Russian foreign poli, the mission of the CIS project was the peaceful dissolution of the former Soviet states and, in doing so, creating a suitable framework for establishing new forms of relations after the

[247] Koktysh K. E., Sergeyev V.M., Igityan A.A. Dolgaya zhizn' organicheskoy metafory Russo: opyt dekonstruktsii kontseptov amerikanskoy politiki v Yevrope i Yevrazii / K. E. Koktysh., V. M. Sergeyev., A. A. Igityan // Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta. —2024. № 5. S. 6–21.

[248] Sakwa R., Webber M. The Commonwealth of Independent States, 1991-1998: Stagnation and Survival // Europe-Asia Studies. — 1999. — Vol. 51, No. 3. — P. 379–415.

disintegration[249]. In this regard, the CIS was founded on a relatively successful basis, as it encompasses the highest number of former Soviet republics following the dissolution of the USSR, with the exception of the Baltic countries, which had chosen early integration with the West. While the number of member states reduced to 9+1 after conflicts between Russia and its neighboring countries, Georgia and Ukraine, the CIS still retains its distinction as the most comprehensive post-Soviet organization.

First and foremost, the most critical mission of all international organizations established in the post-Soviet space within Russian foreign policy is their successful role in achieving political, military, economic, and socio-cultural integration. Additionally, the significance of the CIS as an international organization in Russian foreign policy concepts is generally emphasized as follows:

- Strengthening the organization's capacity and international role in an order where Russia maintains a strong position.
- Coordination among CIS countries in international organizations like the United Nations, ensuring that they align with or complement Russian foreign policy strategy rather than opposing it.
- Prioritizing the maintenance and enhancement of the international status of the Russian language, with CIS countries playing a primary and supportive role.
- Protecting and improving the rights of the Russian-speaking and ethnically Russian populations in member countries.

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[249] Bogaturov, A. D. Meždunarodnye otnošenija i vnešnjaja politika Rossii = Contemporary International Relations and Russia’s Foreign Policy / A. D. Bogaturov. — Moskva: Aspekt Press, 2017.; Leichtova, M. Misunderstanding Russia: Russian Foreign Policy and the West. / M. Leichtova — Farnham, Surrey, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014.; Makarychev, A. Inside Russia’s Foreign Policy Theorizing: A Conceptual Conundrum / A. Makarychev // Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe. — 2013. — Vol. 21, №. 2-3. — P. 237–258.

- Highlighting the preservation of the values of Russian civilization that have continued for centuries as a supportive element in relations between member countries and Russia,
- Facilitating information and intelligence sharing,
- Taking a leading role, alongside the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAUE), in deepening political, military, economic, and socio-cultural integration among member countries.

Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, one of the most significant challenges for the newly independent states, including Russia, was dealing with internal and external threats. These societies, which had lived under Russian rule for many years, had vulnerabilities in ensuring the institutional structure and regime security of their states. Additionally, there were disputes among many countries regarding borders and areas of sovereignty, some of which escalated into conflicts. These issues included the Moldova-Transdniestria conflict, the Georgia-Abkhazia & South Ossetia conflicts, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue between Armenia and Azerbaijan, border delineation and power struggles among Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan etc. From Russia's perspective, these problems had two significant consequences:

- The potential for these conflicts, both between countries and within their borders, to escalate into larger regional conflicts and pose a danger of spilling over into Russian territories.
- The opportunity for Russia to exert its political and military influence towards the region in order to facilitate the establishment of peace as a means to resolve these conflicts.

After gaining their independence, internal and external conflicts have evolved over time in the post-Soviet countries and become subjects of the "frozen

conflict" concept. These frozen conflicts have been interpreted as tools for Russia to leverage its influence in the region[250]. Russia's roles in unresolved disputes and ongoing conflict risks in Moldova, Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan, for various reasons, help expand its spheres of influence in these countries and the regions they are located in. However, at the same time, it imposes political, military, and economic responsibilities on Russia. In Russian foreign policy, the need arose to establish a security umbrella with regional countries under Russian leadership, ensuring burden-sharing in the management of these conflict zones, strengthening legitimacy, and gaining international recognition for Russia's influence in its near abroad.

On the other hand, regional cooperation is of critical importance in addressing issues such as drug trafficking, human smuggling, illegal trade, organized crime, the rise of radical Islamist narratives originating from Afghanistan and the Middle East, and external interventions in the internal affairs of states that have recently declared their independence. Russia finds itself in a delicate position in dealing with these challenges. In addition to its own domestic issues, addressing regional problems necessitates more than acting alone or developing bilateral relations to share the burden and expand its sphere of influence.

In the pursuit of solutions to these issues, the idea of leading the post-Soviet countries in establishing a security organization and transforming the region into a shared security zone, with the organization serving as the dominant military power, quickly became one of the top priorities in Russian foreign policy. In this context, to create a common security space, firstly, Collective Security Treaty (CST) signed by Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Armenia and Tajikistan in 1992. After 7 years, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova

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[250] Blank S. Russia and the Black Sea’s Frozen Conflicts in Strategic Perspective / S. Blank // Mediterranean Quarterly. — 2008. — Vol. 19. — P. 23–54.

became one of the parts of this treaty. Unlike other Central Asian states, Uzbekistan has generally followed different politics in regard its relations with Russia. Uzbek leader Islam Kerimov and political elites of state had adapted policy that relies on balancing Russian influence in the region and on Uzbekistan. In this reason, Uzbekistan has tried to establish relations with other strong actors of the region, the United States and China.

In Russian foreign policy, the expansion of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)'s capabilities and responsibilities, convincing member countries of the opportunities provided by being under the CSTO umbrella, gaining acceptance of Russia's unquestionable leadership through the military and political support it provides to the organization, and instilling the idea that the countries can rely on the organization for their national security are all crucial aspects for the integration and development of the CSTO.

The institutional dimension of the organization has been progressively developing each year, with the aim of establishing a NATO-like defense structure in the post-Soviet region in terms of its mission. However, the ongoing trust issues among member countries, both with Russia and among themselves, and the chronic problems that carry a risk of conflict with non-member states, have hindered the progress of this integration and institutionalization process [251]. Nevertheless, Russia's role as a mediator in issues among regional countries and the existence of peacekeeping forces under the CSTO framework provide significant opportunities for overcoming these problems or at least preventing them from escalating to a conflict level.

After the conflicts that arose following Russia's issues with the West, first with Georgia and then with Ukraine, the different positions taken by Russia and member countries in these conflicts, as well as coordination problems and

[251] Denisentsev S. A., Lavrov A. V., Lyamin YU. YU., Nikol'skiy A. V.; pod red. K. V. Makiyenko. Soyuzniki. — M.: Tsentr analiza strategiy i tekhnologiy, 2020. — 176 p.

passive attitudes in issues such as security risks following the resurgence of the Taliban's control after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan in 2020, have raised questions about the CSTO's capacity and effectiveness. In particular, the CSTO's reaction to respond to the demand to invoke Article 4[252], which was made by Armenia, claiming that the conflict with Azerbaijan was an attack on its national sovereignty, and the fact that member countries adopted different stances from Russia in regard recognition of Crimean accession to the Russian Federation and the Russia-Ukraine conflicts, highlighted the fragility of unity within the organization.

However, within the organization, there is a strong sensitivity to non-interference in the internal affairs of member countries, particularly since the color revolutions in various post-Soviet countries in the early 2000s. The most recent example of this was seen when the CSTO sent peacekeeping forces to Kazakhstan in January 2022 in response to Kazakhstan's claim that the internal unrest was supported by foreign powers[253]. The CSTO's quick contribution to suppressing the events and restoring peace in Kazakhstan within a short period demonstrated the organization's capacity. On the other hand, the fragile trust and coordination structure within the organization, as mentioned above, do not allow the CSTO to institutionalize further or play a more active role as an instrument of Russian foreign policy in regional developments.

Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)

The Eurasian Economic Union is perhaps the most comprehensive and highly developed organization among those established in Eurasia between Russia and post-Soviet countries. Since 1994, it has undergone a long process of

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[252] Collective Security Treaty Organization. Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://en.odkb-csto.org/documents/documents/dogovor_o_kollektivnoy_bezopasnosti/#loaded.

[253] Events in Kazakhstan Showed Effectiveness of CSTO — Ambassador to Russia // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 19, 2024. — URL: https://tass.com/politics/1390545.

development and transformation. Although the number of member countries is still relatively low, the Eurasian Economic Union continues to gain economic attractiveness for post-Soviet countries. In Russian foreign policy, the implementation of free-market liberal economic policies based on World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations in Eurasia, the removal of barriers to the circulation of goods, services, and people, the elimination of mutual customs tariffs, and the establishment of an economic cooperation environment based on a win-win approach are of great importance.

In Russia's foreign policy approach to its near abroad, the establishment of economic integration and the creation of free trade areas among post-Soviet countries are priorities that are as significant as security-centered foreign policy objectives. While Russia initially prioritized integration into the Western capitalist economic order after the dissolution of the USSR, starting from the mid-1990s, it took numerous steps to enhance economic relations with post-Soviet countries. This ultimately led to the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015. The idea of establishing economic partnerships among post-Soviet countries in Eurasia was first proposed by Nursultan Nazarbayev, the President of Kazakhstan, in 1994. However, in the process of the union's development, expansion, and institutionalization, Russia, as the largest economy in the region, played a leading role.

History of Eurasian integration
1994 – President Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan suggests establishing a practical, economically interconnected union of states in the Eurasian space;
1995 – The Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Belarus, and the Russian Federation sign the Agreement on the Customs Union (CU) aimed at removing obstacles to free economic interaction between the parties' businesses;
1996 – The troika countries and the Kyrgyz Republic sign the Treaty on Deepening Integration in Economic and Humanitarian Areas;
2001 – The Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) is established;
2003 – The Agreement on Forming Common Economic Space is signed;
2007 – Treaty on the Establishment of the Single Customs Territory and Formation of the Customs Union is signed;
2010 – The Customs Union starts to operate;
2012 – Common Economic Space is established;
2012 – The Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) is launched;
2014 – Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is signed;
2015 – The EAEU is launched.

Figure 3: History of Eurasian Integration - Valdai Club

The Valdai Discussion Club, one of Russia's most important think-tank organizations, has published a report titled "Eurasian Economic Integration: Between Absolute and Relative Benefits."[254] This report, authored by prominent figures in Russian academia, provides a detailed account of the development process of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). As per the information in the mentioned report and the table above, the development process of the Eurasian Economic Union is described. The process began with the gradual removal of customs tariffs to facilitate free trade under the leadership of Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Russia. This process officially culminated in the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015. Following the founding three countries, Armenia and then Kyrgyzstan quickly became members of the Union in 2015. However, the membership applications of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which were previously members of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), are still pending, and the process has not yet been completed[255].

[254] Bordachev T., Likhacheva A., Korolev A., Safranchuk I., Malashenkova O., Malyutina D. Eurasian Economic Integration: Between Absolute and Relative Benefits // Valdai Discussion Club. — May 14, 2019. — Accessed June 18, 2024. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/eurasian-economic-integration-report/.
[255] Ibid.

The data showing a parallel trajectory of economic development and GDP growth between Russia and Kazakhstan based on the principle of "win-win" free trade practices highlights the positive effects of such economic cooperation. Russia and Kazakhstan, being significant trade partners in the post-Soviet region, have experienced concurrent economic developments, as demonstrated in the graph below, using WTO data.

In a report published in 2020 by the Moscow-based Center for Strategy and Technology Analysis (Tsentr analiza strategii i tekhnologiy), it was noted that the increase in energy prices, integration into the global economic system, and the expansion of trade volumes have led to gradual growth in the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) metric of GDP for both Russia and Kazakhstan. This growth is also directly proportional to the improvement in the trade capacities of the two countries[256]. This data underscores the mutual benefits of their economic cooperation.

[256] Denisentsev S. A., Lavrov A. V., Lyamin YU. YU., Nikol'skiy A. V.; pod red. K. V. Makiyenko. Soyuzniki. — M.: Tsentr analiza strategiy i tekhnologiy, 2020. — 176 p.



Figure 4: Report “Soyuzniki” in the Center for Analysis Strategies and Technologies (in Russian)

In Russian foreign policy, the Eurasian Economic Union's importance, both economically and politically, has been increasing each year. While Russia responds individually to NATO's expansion policies in the security field, it also counters the European Union's Eastern Partnership Program, which aims to expand towards Russia's borders. However, in the economic realm, there is a collective effort within the Eurasian Economic Union partnership. The turmoil that erupted in Ukraine at the end of 2013 had its origins in the then-Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych’s preference for joining Russia's Eurasian Economic Union project rather than partnering with the EU under the Eastern Partnership Program[257]. In this context, from Russia's perspective, the Eurasian

[257] Traynor I., Grytsenko O. Ukraine Suspends Talks on EU Trade Pact as Putin Wins Tug of War // The Guardian / I. Traynor, O. Grytsenko. [Electronic resource] — Accessed November 29, 2023. — URL: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/21/ukraine-suspends-preparations-eu-trade-pact.

Economic Union serves as both an economic integration project and an effort to achieve economic independence in the near abroad, the post-Soviet region.

Following the global economic crisis that began in Western developed countries in 2008 and subsequently gained global significance of developing countries and regional powers recognized the importance of economic cooperation. They sought to keep pace with capitalist global developments and understood the significance of regional economic partnerships and collaboration initiatives. This created a favorable environment for the development of regional organizations like the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

However, these new opportunities and projects also brought about new competitive landscapes. In the case of Russia and the EAEU, the European Union's Eastern Partnership Program, as well as China's “One Belt, One Road” initiative that encompasses the Eurasian region, created another arena of competition. Nevertheless, the cooperation known as the “Strategic Partnership” between Russia and China over the past decade and the alignment of the EAEU project with the Belt and Road Initiative, along with Putin's 2016 Greater Eurasia concept, represent important outcomes of Russia's economic strategy based on a win-win approach, rather than a zero-sum game[258].

In this way, Russia chose to cooperate with China rather than confront China's attempts to establish economic dominance in the Eurasian region. This approach has resulted in economic gains and the continuation of cooperation with China, which is one of Russia's largest trading partners. It reflects a strategic decision to pursue mutual benefits and cooperation, rather than zero-sum competition.

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[258] Kuznetsova A. Greater Eurasia: Perceptions from Russia, the European Union, and China // Russian Council. [Electronic resource] / A. Kuznetsova. — Accessed January 29, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/greater-eurasia-perceptions-from-russia-the-european-union-and-china/.

Indeed, developing relations with other regional and global organizations like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and BRICS is one of the priorities in Russian foreign policy. Enhancing these relationships and increasing influence in global economic politics is a significant focus for Russia. This approach aligns with Russia's efforts to strengthen its position on the global stage, enhance economic cooperation, and expand its network of partnerships with various countries and regions. These organizations play essential roles in shaping the more inclusive and diversified international economic and political landscape, and Russia's engagement with them reflects its broader foreign policy objectives.

2.2.3. External Actors

In addition to its foreign policy aspirations aimed at integration from every direction with the former Soviet republics and relations centered around geopolitical conflict and competition with Western powers in Russia's immediate vicinity, there are also networks of relationships established with regional and global actors. In this context, the first prominent actor is China, an emerging global power. Subsequently, the policies adopted by regional powers such as Turkey, Iran, and India, which pursue active policies in Russia's immediate vicinity, are also of significance. From Russia's perspective, China and other regional powers are important actors in the understanding of foreign policy toward the immediate vicinity, representing both potential competition and potential partnership.

2.2.3.1. China; Strategic Partner and Competitor

Until recent years, relations between Russia and China have been characterized by rivalries. However, as rising powers in the current international system, both countries have reached high capacities and have begun to express new aspirations and reforms in foreign policy. The two countries' shared concerns about the US-led Western hegemony and their common demands for

the reform of the post-Cold War international order have led to a transition from a competitive relationship to a strategic partnership. In this part of the study, will be examined the global dimension of the special relationship between the two countrie. In terms of regional relations, it is clear that the two countries share common concerns as well as serious areas of competition. In this context, while the two countries share common concerns and interests in the global politics of international relations, their common geographical areas offer serious opportunities for cooperation and possible competition. The region we define as a common geographical area is Central Asia, but the Siberian region of Russia also has an important place in the relations between the two countries. Regional developments, which are part of Russia's near abroad policy in its relations with China, need a brief analysis under the subheadings of military, economic, common threat perception and energy policies.

Military Affairs

In Russian vision, the Central Asian region, which reflects the eastern and southeastern part of its near abroad policy, is as much a security concern as the regions bordering Europe. In the region, where the United States has sought to establish a foothold on the grounds of fighting global terrorism, Russia has successfully deflected this threat by acting in partnership with China and the countries of the region. Russia opened its first new military base in a foreign country after the Cold War in Manas in response to the US air base in Kyrgyzstan[259]. The US and NATO's lack of lasting support from the countries of the region for maintaining a military presence in Central Asia, and Russia's and China's joint actions due to concerns of “containment”, have led to a gradual decline in the interest of foreign powers in the region to the point of ceasing to be a threat. Russia already has military bases and important military partnerships

[259] Denisentsev S. A., Lavrov A. V., Lyamin YU. YU., Nikol'skiy A. V.; pod red. K. V. Makiyenko. Soyuzniki. — M.: Tsentr analiza strategiy i tekhnologiy, 2020. — 176 p.

in countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. For Russia, the risk level of regions where there is no US or NATO military presence is considered low. However, the possibility that China, which has invested heavily in the region economically, may establish new military assets in the region might pose a significant risk to Russia in the long term. Economic dominance could provide base for military expansion towards region. For example, although officially denied by the Chinese foreign ministry, rumors that China has a secret military base on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border is a development that Russia, along with India, can not be overlooked by Russia[260].

It is well known that protecting the great economic investments of great powers and projecting power in the geography in which they invest are steps that follow each other. Russian officials and political scientists familiar with great power strategy are well aware of this. However, as Andrey Kortunov, Director of the Russian International Affairs Council, points out, for the time being, China is perceived by Russia as a threat far removed from areas of competition. In the case of Ukraine, the hot conflict with the West and the high-stakes battlefield are the top priority. Russia cannot actively struggle both the West and China at the same time. Therefore, common grounds are found with China and areas that carry a risk of competition are considered as cooperation[261].

Economic Affairs

China's ambitious economic policies bring together many elements of cooperation and competition, both in regional and global scale. Russia does not have the conditions and opportunities to compete with China in terms of economic investments and initiatives. In addition, one of the most well-known

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[260] Tajikistan: Secret Chinese Base Becomes Slightly Less Secret // Eurasianet. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 19, 2023. — URL: https://eurasianet.org/tajikistan-secret-chinese-base-becomes-slightly-less-secret.

[261] Kortunov A. Russia Facing China: Little Red Riding Hood or Cinderella? // Russian Council. [Electronic resource] / A. Kortunov. — Accessed June 11, 2023. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/russia-facing-china-little-red-riding-hood-or-cinderella/.

features of Russian foreign policy, which is based on mutual beneficiary relations with friendly countries, is also evident in the economic dimension of Russia-China relations. The assessments that Russia's Eurasian Economic Union and Customs Union projects and China's “One Belt One Road” project are crossing projects and may cause conflicts of interest between Russia and China in the region have also been negated by the two countries' strategic partnership and win-win approach. As Russian President Vladimir V. Putin has repeatedly stated, both initiatives are seen by states as complementary projects[262].

Chinese large investments in the infrastructure systems and transportation facilities of the countries in the region and Russia's proposals to facilitate the transportation of goods and services offer great promise for the development of trade in the region. Moreover, the ability to link the economic development of the Central Asian countries to the global chain and to ensure living standards and prosperity in the countries of the region significantly increases the credibility of the region's two dominant powers. In addition to regional economic development, the success of joint projects will also contribute to the international prestige of the achievements. Thus, the number of countries wishing to join organizations such as BRICS and SCO, led by Russia and China, as observers and members is increasing day by day.

[262] Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia. Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 21, 2024. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60378.

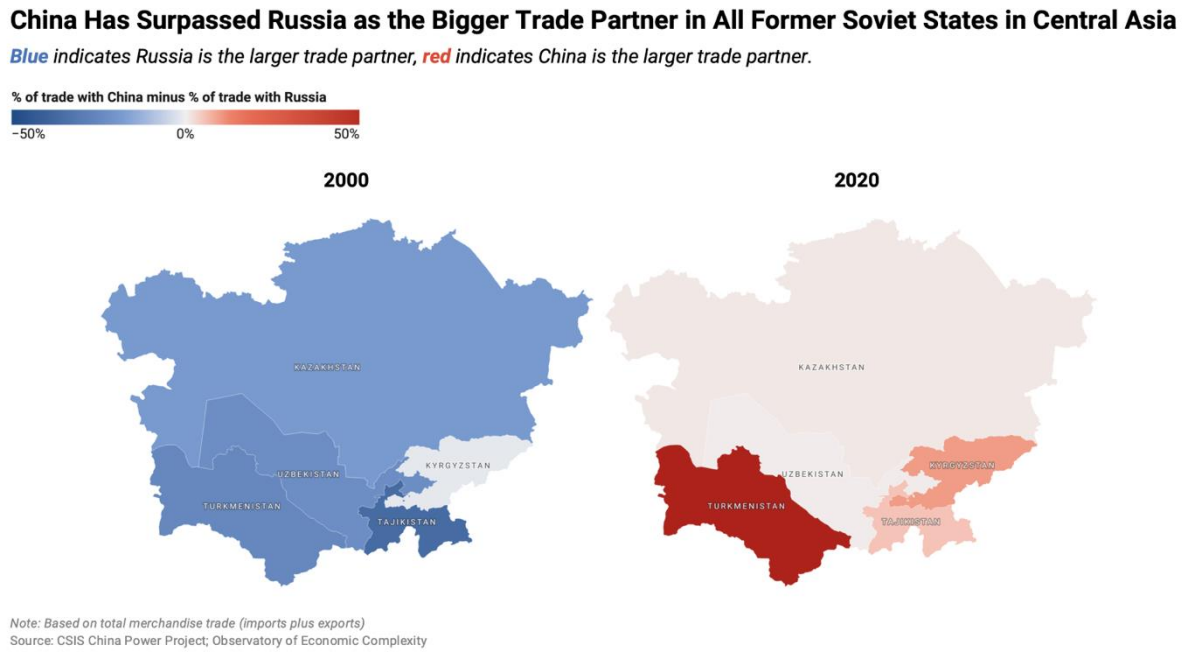


Figure 5: CSIS China Power Project

On the other hand, in the map above, which is said to be from "CSIS China Power data on China Power", a Chinese news website, the change in China's and Russia's trade with the former Soviet states in Central Asia from 2000 to 2020 in favor of China is impressive. It is clear that for Russia, China is not only a strategic partner but also a major competitor. The map shows that Russia, which had absolute dominance in all countries in 2000, was balanced by China everywhere by 2020, and China even overtook Russia in Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, as becoming the largest trading partner of these countries. Of course, this does not mean that Russia's trade volume with the countries of the region is decreasing. However, Russia's trade volume with the countries of the region has grown significantly since 2000 but the scale of China's growth, however, has been appalling.

Common Threat Perception

In Russian foreign policy concepts, national security concepts and military doctrines, the only concrete threat perception is the presence of NATO and the United States in Russia's spheres of influence and their insistence for pursuit of unilateral policies in the international system. Chinese military

doctrines also perceive the regional and global military actions of the US and its partners as direct threats[263]. China, like Russia, also express its concerns about containment policy of the US with its partners. In this context, the presence of any foreign power in the Central Asian region, which is a common cluster of the Russian near abroad policy for both countries, is known as a common threat perception. Even during periods of balance of rivalry and competition between the two countries, the presence of any foreign power in this region led to a rapprochement in bilateral relations. For example, Russia and China called for the immediate abandonment of the military bases of the United States and its Western allies in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan[264]. However, at that time, it was not possible to talk about a strategic partnership between China and Russia.

In addition, another important common threat perception for both countries are the activities of radical religious groups. For China in the East Turkestan Autonomous Region and for Russia in both the Central Asian Turkic Republics and the Muslim communities within Russia, the possible spread of radical ideas creates a serious common security concern. In this regard, developments in Afghanistan have an important place for their security concerns towards domestic and regional affairs for both of them. The two countries share common concerns about the risks posed by external interference or the activities of terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and ISIS. Cooperation on this issue is robust, both in bilateral relations and within the framework of joint international organizations like SCO.

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[263] China's Xi Blames US for 'Containment and Suppression' Amid Tensions // ABC News. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 19, 2023. — URL: https://abcnews.go.com/International/chinas-xi-blames-us-containment-suppression-amid-tensions/story?id=97676556.

[264] Russia and China Call for Closure of US Bases in Central Asia // World Socialist Web Site. [Electronic resource] — Accessed July 30, 2023. — URL: https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2005/07/base-j30.html.

Energy Politics

Given that Russia and Central Asian countries are rich in natural resources such as oil and natural gas, and China is the world's largest growing economy and industrialized country, energy policies play an important role in the cooperation and competition between the two countries. In addition to Central Asia, Russia's Siberian region also plays an important role in the transportation of natural gas and oil to China. In March 2023, during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia, Putin emphasized the growing volume of trade between the two countries, noting that Russia's oil and gas exports to China have increased significantly in recent years and that Russia has overtaken Saudi Arabia to become China's largest oil exporter[265]. In addition to the Power of Siberia gas pipeline, plans for the construction and commissioning of the Power of Siberia 2.0 are another stage in the concrete relations that have developed between the two countries in recent years[266].

On the other hand, although there is cooperation between the two countries on the oil and natural gas reserves in Central Asia, China's investments in the region in recent years and its bilateral relations with the countries in the region can be read as worrying for Russia. Russia had a very serious monopoly in the countries of the region with its Gazprom, Rosneft and Lukoil companies. The region's oil and natural gas was being exported to the world market through Russia. However, the embargoes imposed on Russia after the Ukrainian crisis and China's pipelines from Turkmenistan to Kazakhstan to transport the region's resources to China have the potential to shake Russia's dominant position in this matter.

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[265] China’s Largest Oil Supplier in 2023 Was Russia // CNN Business. [Electronic resource] — Accessed July 19, 2023. — URL: https://edition.cnn.com/2024/01/22/business/china-top-oil-supplier-2023-russia-intl-hnk/index.html#.

[266] Russia’s Putin Upbeat on Power of Siberia 2 Gas Pipeline to China // Reuters. [Electronic resource] — Accessed December 9, 2023. — URL: https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russias-putin-upbeat-power-siberia-2-gas-pipeline-china-2023-10-17/.

2.2.3.2. Regional Powers in Near Abroad

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the power vacuum that emerged in post-Soviet geography provided an opportunity for some regional powers to assume new roles in Russia’s near abroad. The pursuit of establishing spheres of influence in post-Soviet geography, where geopolitical competition has resurged, has begun to feature in the political agendas of regional powers. In this context, regional powers such as Turkey, Iran, and India have emerged as both potential rivals and potential partners for Russia in its near abroad. These countries, also known as Russia's contemporary most important partners after China, share common interests and potential areas of disagreements with Russia in the regions of the Black Sea, South Caucasus, and Central Asia.

Among these regional powers, Turkey stands out with its distinct international position, historical rivalry, special communication between leaders, and a new understanding of autonomous foreign policy. Turkey, which is an important partner and rival for Russia both regionally and globally, is a state with more variables in its relations with Russia compared to Iran and India. Turkey is a NATO member and also has the potential to harbor expansionist desires in various regions of post-Soviet geography. As a Russian diplomat put it, "Turkey is a state with imperial genes. Therefore, this is a possibility that it could be prone to expanding its sphere of influence in Russia’s near abroad. Therefore, its foreign policy activities need to be closely monitored by Russia at all times.

On the other hand, Iran, like Turkey, has a historical rivalry and cooperation with Russia and is a regional power with high potential and aspirations to expand its regional influence. Being an Islamic Republic and having concerns about exporting radical religious arguments initially caused it to be perceived as more of a potential threat, especially to the stability of Central Asia and the Caucasus, from Russia's perspective. However, the adoption of similar positions in recent years on many global and regional issues, led by a

common anti-Western rhetoric, has changed the significance and importance of Iran in Russian foreign policy.

Finally, India, which is one of the rising regional and global powers of the 21st century along with China and Russia, has a different position in Russian foreign policy compared to Iran and Turkey. India, which was once part of the geopolitical struggle known as the "Great Game" between the British Empire and the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union, became one of the significant partners of the USSR after its independence. Especially continuing cooperation in the defense industry since the USSR and common global policies led by desires for the reform of the international system and the establishment of a multipolar world order ensure that cooperation areas outweigh competition between the two countries. However, alongside the richness of common themes in global policies, there are also different regional political understandings such as the desire to develop regional spheres of influence in Central Asia, acquiring political and economic gains in relations with regional countries, and balancing China.

Turkey in Russia's Near Abroad

Turkey was among the countries with the potential to pursue proactive and ambitious policies in the post-Soviet geography following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. A process was seen as a historical opportunity for Turkey, which has historical and cultural ties in the Black Sea and Caucasus regions and sees Central Asia, considered the "ancestral homeland," as having the possibility of ethnic and cultural interaction with Turkic states. Particularly, the effort to expand its sphere of influence towards the Turkic states of Central Asia, which had been under Russian dominance since the era of the Russian Empire, had whetted Turkey's appetite.

After the Cold War, Turkey embarked on a quest to define a new strategy for itself and to delineate its spheres of influence. The country possessed significant historical, cultural, and political potential. It could expand its sphere

of influence to the extent of its capacity, from the Balkans to the Middle East, and from the Black Sea to Central Asia. Being a Western, secular, and Muslim country, it was partly supported by Europe and the US as a role model for filling the power vacuum that emerged with the dissolution of the Soviet Union[267]. In this context, Turkey's efforts to increase its influence in Russia's near abroad and to achieve new gains after the Cold War can be observed in three interconnected regions: the Black Sea, South Caucasus, and Central Asia.

In Russian care, Turkey's efforts to enhance its influence in these mentioned regions, its relations with regional countries and societies, and the gains it has achieved have led to Turkey being perceived by Russia as both a threat and a partner. In the new international system that emerged after the Cold War, Turkey, with its potential as a rising regional power, seeks political and economic development. While Turkish foreign policy is often thought by Russia and regional powers to harbor ideological and ethnic desires such as "Pan-Turkism" or "Turanism", Turkey's policies towards Russia's near abroad primarily aim at pragmatic gains[268]. The development of bilateral relations between Russia and Turkey, which brought the two countries to the level of strategic partnership in 2014, lies in the mutual adoption of this pragmatic Turkish foreign policy approach.

However, although Turkey's policies towards the relevant regions generally harbor pragmatic desires, there are differences regarding the conjuncture that emerged immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Turkey's limited capacity, as well as the foreign policy understanding, and actions adopted in the 21st century. In this context, Turkey's policies towards

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[267] Aydin M. Foucault's Pendulum: Turkey in Central Asia and the Caucasus / M. Aydın // Turkish Studies. — 2004. — Vol. 5, No. 2. — P. 1–22.

[268] Onis, Z. Turkey and Post-Soviet States: Potential and Limits of Regional Power Influence / Z. Onis // Turkish Studies. — 2001. — Vol. 5, No. 2.

Russia's near abroad might be examined in two separate periods: the 1990s and post-2000s.

Foreign Policy of Turkey towards Russia's Near Abroad in 1990s

The desire of states to expand their spheres of influence may lead to discrepancies with their capacities, resulting in serious disappointments and failures in their foreign policies. Turkey's inability to achieve desired gains in Russia's near abroad in the 1990s after the Cold War had two main reasons:

- Discrepancy between desired gains and state capacity,
- Turkey's lack of understanding of regional dynamics and the desires of newly independent states[269].

Despite the opportunity presented by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it can be said that experienced politicians like Turgut Ozal and Suleyman Demirel adopted a conciliatory approach to nationalist rhetoric within the country, regarding the development of relations with the Turkic states of Central Asia. As an example, during the dissolution process of the Soviet Union in 1990, rather than making nationalist statements in favor of Azerbaijan, Ozal pointed out that the issue was an internal problem of the Soviet Union[270].

However, the serious political and economic crises within Russia, the continuing of the Soviet Union, following its dissolution, led to a doctrinal shift from cautious to proactive policies in Turkey's Black Sea, Caucasus, and Central Asia policies. In this context, Turkey has acquired new partners in these regions, including Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the Turkic states of Central Asia, in order to achieve political and economic gains and extend its sphere of influence. Additionally, Turkey has begun to establish contacts with communities such as

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[269] Aydin M. Foucault's Pendulum: Turkey in Central Asia and the Caucasus / M. Aydın // Turkish Studies. — 2004. — Vol. 5, No. 2. — P. 1–22.

[270] Onis, Z. Turkey and Post-Soviet States: Potential and Limits of Regional Power Influence / Z. Onis // Turkish Studies. — 2001. — Vol. 5, No. 2.

the Crimean Tatars, Meskhetian Turks, Adjarians, and Circassians, later referred to as compatriot and kin communities due to their historical and cultural ties.

I. Central Asia

Initially, delegates were sent to develop bilateral relations with the relevant countries and establish regional partnerships. Subsequently, political leaders themselves either visited these countries or hosted them in Turkey. One of the most notable instances was the hosting of leaders from the Turkic states of Central Asia in Istanbul in 1992, where Turkey was presented as a "model country" as a secular and modern Muslim nation[271]. Although these policies, supported by the West, unsettled Russia and Turkey has tried to mitigated Russian concerns in regard to explain that it did not adopt any nationalist-based ideology.

Furthermore, in Russia, the Yeltsin/Kozyrev administration, aiming for integration with the West, viewed potential expansionist policies from Iran or China, which harbored radical religious elements, as more concerning than the secular Western-oriented Turkey's regional policies. Nevertheless, Russia closely monitored Turkey's policies towards Central Asia and felt the need to express its discomfort with Turkey's relations with the Turkic states. In 1994, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mikhail Vasilyevich Demurin stated that they did not want to see any formations based on nationalist principles in the relations between Turkey and the Turkic states of Central Asia[272].

In order to enhance its relations with Central Asian countries and acquire political and economic privileges, Turkey was sending Turkish businessmen to the region, with Turkish politicians making frequent visits to Central Asian countries and arrangements being made for Turkish TV channels to start

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[271] Aydin M. Foucault’s Pendulum: Turkey in Central Asia and the Caucasus / M. Aydın // Turkish Studies. — 2004. — Vol. 5, No. 2. — P. 1–22.

[272] Bilge A. S. An Analysis of Turkish-Russian Relations / A. S. Bilge // Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs. — 1997. — Vol. 2, No. 2.

broadcasting in these countries. Additionally, leaders of Central Asian countries were continuously invited to Ankara. It is known that from the beginning of 1991 to the end of 1992, the leaders of Central Asian countries officially made at least 12 visits to Ankara[273].

Alongside these efforts, in 1992, the Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TIKA) was established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Turkey. According to Turkey's assertion, TIKA was established:

- To enhance Turkey's relations with the Turkic states of Central Asia,
- To assist the development of the Turkic states of Central Asia into modern states following their independence,
- To facilitate their integration into the international system[274].

Subsequently, the institution's scope of activity was expanded globally after being attached to the Prime Ministry and later to the Presidency of Turkey. The initial purpose of the institution was as stated above. Shortly after the establishment of TIKA, another institution aimed at increasing cultural interaction between Turkey and Turkic states, called TÜRKSOY, was founded. However, the activities of this institution remained limited during the 1990s.

While Turkey's policies towards Central Asia were filled with great enthusiasm and excitement, the desire of Central Asian states to adopt Turkey as a model country remained more of a rhetoric than a reality. Despite some democratic and modern reforms, the Central Asian Turkic states did not have aspirations to become Western-type democratic states. Their leaders primarily sought to maintain their positions, settle border disputes in their favor, and tackle the economic problems inherited from the dissolution of the USSR. The amount

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[273] Aydin M. Turkey and Central Asia: Challenges of Change / M. Aydın // Central Asian Survey. — 1996. — Vol. 15, No. 2. — P. 157–177.

[274] Fidan H. Turkish Foreign Policy towards Central Asia / H. Fidan // Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies. — 2010. — Vol. 12, No. 1. — P. 109-121.

of grants and credits Turkey could offer for the economic development of these countries was limited. Despite the activities of TIKA and other state institutions, Turkey's contribution to the region in the 1990s remained slightly above $1 billion[275]. Additionally, Turkey's efforts to integrate the region's countries into a capitalist economic system were also limited.

In relation to this, it is known that after declaring independence, the regional countries pursued balanced policies with regional and global powers, adopting a multi-faceted approach to politics. They intended to establish relations with all parties to achieve political and economic gains while also avoiding falling under the control of any dominant power. Despite their independence from the USSR, Turkey failed to accurately analyze the intertwined structure of political, economic, and military relations with Russia. Additionally, despite all its difficulties, Russia's capacity remained significantly advanced that Turkey.

II. Black Sea and South Caucasia

During the Imperial era, the Black Sea and South Caucasus regions were a conflict zone between Turkey and Russia. However, after the establishment of the USSR, Turkey found itself in a position where it accepted Soviet superiority. Turkey's policies, which faithfully implemented the 1936 Montreux Straits Convention, which enabled Turkey to regain control of the Turkish Straits connecting the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, are of historical importance in Turkish-Russian relations. The successful implementation of the Montreux Convention by Turkey at all times and NATO’s acceptance of Soviet supremacy ensured that there were no problems in bilateral relations between the two countries, making the Black Sea one of the most peaceful regions during the Cold War.

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[275] Onis, Z. Turkey and Post-Soviet States: Potential and Limits of Regional Power Influence / Z. Onis // Turkish Studies. — 2001. — Vol. 5, No. 2.

After the dissolution of the USSR, Turkey has continued to maintain the policies mentioned above regarding the Black Sea. The regulations brought by the Montreux Convention were applied even during times when Russia faced difficulties, despite attempts by the United States to intervene in the region, and the Black Sea was adopted as a common sphere of influence between Turkey and Russia. However, Turkey still aimed to develop its bilateral relations with the newly independent states emerging in the Black Sea and South Caucasus regions in the 1990s, and it harbored ambitions of regional leadership by establishing regional organizations. In this context, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) was established in 1992 under Turkey's leadership, including Russia and countries with coasts on the Black Sea, as well as South Caucasus countries. Although the organization aimed to increase trade volume among member states, its impact remained limited.

Furthermore, three states stood out in Turkey's bilateral relations in the Black Sea and South Caucasus regions: Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Russia has always monitored strengthening ties of Turkey with these countries to balance its regional influence, achieve new economic gains, and strengthen its political influence. Factors such as the presence of Crimean Tatars in the region, the geographical proximity to Georgia and its Turkic communities such as the Meskhetian Turks and Adjarians, Azerbaijan's energy resources and land connection to the Turkic states of Central Asia have led Turkey to show special interest towards these states.

Foreign Policy of Turkey in Russia’s Near Abroad in 21st Century

Under Recep Tayyip Erdogan's leadership, Turkey's pragmatic and proactive foreign policy approach appeared to be compatible with Russia's foreign policy under Vladimir V. Putin's administration. Special communication between leaders facilitated the evolution of relations between Russia and Turkey from a zero-sum game mentality to a win-win approach over many years. The establishment of mutual trust and cooperation between Russia and Turkey

continued to be delicately managed, as Turkey pursued an active foreign policy approach in Russia's near abroad without provoking Russia. However, while relations progressed mutually, Turkey also has followed policy to develop partnerships to balance Russia in order to maintain and enhance its gains in the Russian near abroad. In this context, Turkish attempts to expand its cooperation with Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan beyond economic partnerships to include military collaborations is notable factor for Russian regional security policies. In this regard, main concern of the Russia has been involvement of any non-regional actors, like the US, the EU or the NATO, behind of the Turkey in its sphere of influence, alongside growing Turkey’s aspirations.

On the other hand, one of the most sensitive issues that contributed to the stable and positive trajectory of Turkish-Russian relations in the 2000s was their shared stance on the presence of external powers in the respective regions. Although the new government under Erdogan's leadership in the 2000s leaned towards a pro-Western inclination, it maintained Turkey's traditional foreign policy approach based on preserving the Montreux principles. Russia's firm stance and Turkey's independent position restricted the efforts of the United States to expand its sphere of influence, particularly during the George W. Bush administration, from the Black Sea and Middle East to the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Additionally, Turkey's preference for establishing its own independent relationship networks rather than creating an influence zone through the U.S., EU, or NATO in order to enhance its relations with the Central Asian Turkic states is also noteworthy[276].

In the 2000s, Turkey continued to enhance its relations with Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan in the Black Sea and South Caucasus regions, while also pursuing a cautious approach in responding to security crises in the region.

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[276] Fidan H. Turkish Foreign Policy towards Central Asia / H. Fidan // Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies. — 2010. — Vol. 12, No. 1. — P. 109-121.

Amid the brief military clashes between Russia and Georgia in 2008 and the ongoing Armenia-Azerbaijan conflicts, Turkey sought to assume intermediary roles to establish peace to the best of its ability. While striving to align with NATO, the U.S., and EU policies, Turkey also maintained a distance from policies that would discomfort its regional partner, Russia.[277]

Turkish Desires to be an Energy Hub and Transportation Center

Turkey's aspirations to become an energy hub and a transportation center, which remain valid today, emerged prominently in the second half of the 2000s. Initiatives such as the Blue Stream pipeline opened in 2005 for transporting natural gas from Russia to Turkey, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline which commenced operations in 2006, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline projects underscore Turkey's endeavors in this direction. Plans for transporting Russian natural gas to Europe via Turkey were also laid out during this period.

Following the failure of the Nabucco project, Turkey realized that its ambitions to become an energy hub and transportation center in an equation where Russia was sidelined had a low success rate. Therefore, subsequent initiatives, such as the Trans Anatolian Pipeline (TAP) constructed to transport natural gas from Central Asia and Azerbaijan through Turkey to Europe, along with the Turk Stream pipeline, which became operational in 2020 and facilitated the shipment of Russian gas to Turkey and Europe, ensured the utilization of pipelines. Turkey successfully conducted “pipeline diplomacy” involving Russia in its activities, to achieve favorable outcomes. Presently, there are indications of

[277] Tekin O. How Turkey Perceives Rising Escalation between the West and Russia in Russia’s Near Abroad / O. Tekin // Puti k miru i bezopasnosti. — 2024. — Vol. 2, No. 67. — P. 137-155.

joint aspirations between Russian President V. V. Putin and Turkish President R. T. Erdogan to transform Turkey into an energy hub[278].

Finally, with Azerbaijan's reestablishment of control over Karabakh in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, efforts to access natural gas through Nakhchivan via Turkey, Azerbaijan, and the Caspian Sea, as well as Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, have once again become actively prioritized in Turkish foreign policy agenda. The transportation of energy resources from the Central Asian Turkic states to Turkey and Europe has gained significant importance, particularly in the search for alternative natural gas imports to Russian gas, especially after Russia's Special Military Operation in Ukraine. Considering Russia's focus and energy on military operations in Ukraine, Turkey sees this process as timely, but Russia has continued monitoring Turkey’s activities to be ensure non-violation of its interests. However, it cannot be said that a scenario entirely excluding Russia is desired. Turkey would prefer a project in which Russian gas is also stored or included in gas shipments in Turkey.

Turkish Foreign Policy towards Central Asia

In Turkish foreign policy, the development of relations with the Central Asian Turkic states has been pursued based on economic gains and the integration of these states into international trade, rather than nationalist motives. Investments by prominent industrial companies from Turkey have gradually increased in Central Asian countries. However, compared to Russia and China, the leading regional powers in the region, Turkey's commercial relations with the Central Asian Turkic states still remain relatively weak. According to official trade figures for the year 2021, the total trade volume

[278] Cooperation between Türkiye, Russia Successfully Developing in All Areas: Putin // Anadolu Agency. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 18, 2024. — URL: https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/cooperation-between-turkiye-russia-successfully-developing-in-all-areas-putin/2983303.

between Turkey and the Central Asian countries is approximately $7.5 billion[279]. While Turkey aims to enhance relations with the region's countries both bilaterally and through international organizations, it cannot be said that the desired potential for development has been fully achieved.

In the 21st century, Turkey's relations with the Central Asian Turkic states have gained institutional momentum through newly established non-governmental and government-affiliated organizations. In this context, institutions such as the Yunus Emre Institute, founded in 2007, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), established in 2010, and TÜRKSOY have emerged as organizations conducting economic and cultural activities in the Central Asian Turkic states. In Turkish politics, these organizations, which are also elements of soft power, enhance interaction between the societies of the Central Asian Turkic states and Turkish communities through student exchange programs, artistic activities, and cultural events. When viewed from Turkey's perspective, the emphasis placed by communities long influenced by Russian culture on their own values and the integration with Turkey through shared traditions and cultural values is an important factor in Turkey's expansion of influence in Central Asia. Alongside these institutions, Turkey's efforts in the cinema sector and the opening of various levels of schools in the region are also part of these activities. In recent years, developments aimed at eliminating the alphabet differences, one of the most significant differences in cultural and social integration between Turkey and the Central Asian Turkic states, have been the culmination of this process. The transition from the Cyrillic alphabet to Latin letters, starting with Kazakhstan and eventually spreading to other Turkic states, carries considerable importance in terms of implementing common educational curricula and a

[279] Alaranta T., Silvan K. Turkey in Central Asia: Possibilities and Limits of a Greater Role / T. Alaranta, Silvan K // Finnish Institute of International Affairs. — January 2022.

shared historical perception. From Russia's perspective, while Turkey's activities may not pose as much of a threat as those of Western powers' fifth activities, the pressure on Russian culture and the erosion of Russia's soft power elements in the region due to the presence of Russian citizens and the preservation of Russian culture remain a concern.

In the first periods of Erdogan era of Turkish foreign policy, institutional development has been emphasized in relations with the Turkic states of Central Asia, with the establishment of institutional organization and the enhancement of operational areas being prioritized. The Summit of Turkish Speaking Countries, held annually since 1992, reached institutional organization under Turkey's leadership in 2009[280]. While the council's scope and influence may be limited, it represented an important initial step in increasing partnerships and resolving disputes among states. Gradually integrated since 2018, with Uzbekistan becoming a part, the council transformed into the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) during its 8th Summit in Istanbul in 2021, acquiring a new identity and mission. Aimed at gradually enhancing political, economic, and military cooperation between Turkey and Turkic states, the organization seeks to establish a customs union and common security mechanisms[281].

Although Turkey's trade volume with the region has continued to rise in recent years, it is known that it still remains significantly lower compared to the potential of the organization, as mentioned above. Regarding the development of military relations, Turkey has gained significant momentum in the defense industry in recent years and has seen a surge in exports[282]. Particularly, the sale of Bayraktar TB2 and AKINCI armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to the

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[280] Organization of Turkic States // Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 15, 2024. — URL: https://www.turkicstates.org/en/turk-konseyi-hakkinda.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Turkey and Central Asia’s Growing Partnership // IWPR. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 16, 2024. — URL: https://iwpr.net/global-voices/turkey-and-central-asias-growing-partnership.

region represents a significant development. However, the successful intervention of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) led by Russia in the events in Kazakhstan in 2021, and the continued significant purchase of Russian defense industry products by regional countries, demonstrated that Turkey or the OTS is not a strong military variable in this field.

Turkey, unable to compete with Russia and China's massive investments in the region in terms of developing commercial activities, seeks collaboration rather than engaging in a competition. Turkey cannot overwhelm Russia's Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. In this context, Turkey aims to gain new economic benefits through the Middle Corridor project, which aims to ship products from China to Europe through Turkey. Additionally, Turkey aims to reduce its dependency on transit passage through Iran, which is one of the trade routes by road with the Central Asian Turkic states. The resolution of long-standing conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan, while protecting Azerbaijan's national interests and normalizing relations with Armenia, also harbors an alternative development in Turkey's relations with the Central Asian Turkic states. Integrating Armenia, which is considered a barrier between Turkey and the Central Asian Turkic states in Armenian theses, into regional cooperation would provide political and economic gains for all parties involved.

Turkish Policy towards Rising Security Risks and Conflicts in Black Sea and South Caucasia

In the 1990s, Russia argued that Turkey actively supported the Chechens during the First Russian-Chechen conflicts. However, this argument ceased in the early 2000s with the onset of the Second Russian-Chechen conflicts as Turkey began to approach the issue as an internal matter of Russia. Nevertheless, the occurrence of Western-backed "Color Revolutions" in Georgia

and Ukraine in 2003 and 2004 heightened tensions in the region. Turkey held a foreign policy view supporting the integration of these countries with the West, including their accession processes to the EU and NATO. With NATO's second wave of expansion in 2004, including Bulgaria and Romania, the desires of Ukraine and Georgia's administrations to join NATO increased.

Turkey supported the increase in NATO allied countries in the Black Sea region. However, despite expressing support for the process of Ukraine and Georgia's inclusion into NATO, Turkey was concerned about Russia's reaction. During this period, efforts by the United States to increase its military presence in the Black Sea through Turkey with new NATO members and aspiring NATO members further heightened Turkey's security concerns. Russia's reactions to NATO expansion processes reached a peak regarding the potential membership of Ukraine and Georgia. Russia made it clear in its military intervention in Georgia in 2008 that it did not want any NATO presence on the other side of its borders in the Black Sea and the Caucasus. Turkey rejected the US request to send military ships to the region during the conflicts between Russia and Georgia, which would have violated the terms of the Montreux Convention[283]. Turkey does not want tensions to escalate in the region in any way. The security risks Turkey has faced for many years on its southern and western borders are situations it does not want to see in the Black Sea.

Turkey realized that tensions between the West, led by the United States, and Russia would escalate further in the Black Sea. Russia's clear indication of using military methods to address security concerns in the region and the active support of the US and the EU for Ukraine and Georgia's insistence on EU and NATO membership led to a new conflict process erupting in Ukraine in late 2013. The process, which erupted as an internal issue in Ukraine, led to a chain

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[283] Çelikpala M., Erşen E. Turkey’s Black Sea Predicament: Challenging or Accommodating Russia? / M. Çelikpala, E. Erşen // Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs. — 2018. — Vol. 23, No. 2. — P. 72-92.

of events in 2014 that turned into an internal war and the accession of Crimea to Russia. Turkey has adopted a foreign policy approach that still holds validity today by not recognizing Ukraine's territorial integrity and Crimea's new status as part of Russia. Turkey, holding the view that Russia is involved in the conflicts in Ukraine, reacts to Russia due to its historical ties with Crimea and its desire to advocate for the Crimean Tatars. However, despite sharp differences in views with Russia on Georgia, Ukraine, and Crimea, Turkey has mostly refrained from participating in the sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU and the US and has preferred to shape its relations with Russia according to its national interests.[284]

In late 2015, tensions between Turkey and Russia, strained further by Turkey's downing of a Russian SU-24 jet for allegedly violating its airspace along the Syrian border, also reflected in the Black Sea. During the period until June 2016, which remained tense and saw Russia imposing some retaliatory sanctions on Turkey, Turkey sought to directly make the increased Russian military presence in the Black Sea a NATO issue for the first time since the Cold War, following the accession of Crimea to Russia. President Erdogan, speaking in Poland, stated that the Black Sea had become a Russian lake and emphasized the need for NATO to increase its presence in the region[285]. Meanwhile, during the same period, Russian Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov stated that Turkey's existing military superiority in the Black Sea had completely disappeared before Crimea's accession to Russia, and an absolute Russian defense superiority had been established in the region[286].

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[284] Tekin O. How Turkey Perceives Rising Escalation between the West and Russia in Russia's Near Abroad / O. Tekin // Puti k miru i bezopasnosti. — 2024. — Vol. 2, No. 67. — P. 137-155.

[285] Erdogan, In Plea To NATO, Says Black Sea Has Become 'Russian Lake' // Eurasianet. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 16, 2024. — URL: https://eurasianet.org/erdogan-plea-nato-says-black-sea-has-become-russian-lake.

[286] General Staff: Russia-Turkey Balance of Force in Black Sea Has Changed over Years // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 16, 2024. — URL: https://tass.com/defense/899730.

This tense period concluded in June 2016 when Erdogan expressed condolences and apologizing to Putin and the families of the downed Russian jet pilots. Subsequently, Russia's immediate declaration of support for the legitimate government under Erdogan during the failed coup attempt in Turkey on July 15 led to strained relations between Turkey and the US and the EU, further motivating Turkey to enhance its relations with Russia positively. Turkey refrained from actions that would disturb Russia in the Black Sea, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. During the Karabakh War, resulting in Azerbaijan's victory in 2020, Turkey actively supported Azerbaijan while being mindful of Russia's sensitivities in the region and contributed to ceasefire and peace-building efforts. The involvement of Russia in the agreements made between the parties for the ceasefire also indicates this. However, Turkey has increased its influence in the South Caucasus to an unprecedented level since the Cold War. Even after Russia's "Special Military Operation" in Ukraine in February 2022, despite being a NATO and EU candidate country, Turkey mostly refrained from participating in historical sanctions imposed on Russia and efforts to isolate Russia, led by the US and the EU. Policies led by Erdogan, centered on its own interests and security concerns, have generally been welcomed by Russia. Gaining military cooperation with Ukraine since the agreements signed during Zelensky's visit to Turkey in 2020, their strategic partnership and the sale of Turkish defense industry products, especially the Bayraktar TB-2, to Ukraine have seriously disturbed Russia[287]. However, it is understood that Turkey's policies are based on serving its own interests rather than serving Western powers led by the US. Kremlin spokesman Peskov has stated several times that while there may be differences in opinion between Turkey and Russia, the

[287] Turkey, Ukraine Set to Boost Strategic Partnership // Anadolu Agency. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 18, 2024. — URL: https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/turkey-ukraine-set-to-boost-strategic-partnership/2008799.

parties understand each other's differences and have managed to stay in communication[288].

While Turkey mostly refrains from participating in sanctions imposed on Russia led by the United States, it is actively involved in efforts to mediate peace. In 2022, Turkey brought together Russia and Ukraine at the same table in Istanbul, achieving positive outcomes such as mutual prisoner exchanges, even though it could not establish a ceasefire or peace. Unlike the understanding that solely blames Russia for the conflicts in Ukraine, Turkey, as President Erdogan has reiterated several times, also sees the West as a party that escalates tension and creates problems[289]. Turkey's adherence to the Montreux Convention in the Black Sea crises, as in the past, and its efforts to establish peace are generally appreciated by Russia. Finally, Turkey strives to gain achievements and enhance its international prestige by mediating in conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, leading the coordinated resolution of the grain crisis with the UN, Ukraine, and Russia in 2023, and seizing economic opportunities emerging after Russia's isolation by the West.[290] It is possible to note significant benefits achieved in these endeavors so far. According to official figures, the trade volume between Russia and Turkey exceeded $65 billion in just the first three quarters of 2023[291].

Turkey will continue to expand its maneuvering space and enhance its international prestige by taking advantage of opportunities arising in the current context, while also respecting Russian security concerns in Russia's near abroad.

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[288] Kremlin Sözcüsü Peskov: Türkiye, Bizim Için Çok Önemli Bir Ortak // Anadolu Agency. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 18, 2024. — URL: https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/kremlin-sozcusu-peskov-turkiye-bizim-icin-cok-onemli-bir-ortak/2677873.

[289] Erdoğan: Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşında Batı'nın Takındığı Tavrı Doğru Bulmuyorum // Euronews. [Electronic resource] — September 7, 2022. — URL: https://tr.euronews.com/2022/09/07/erdogan-rusya-ukrayna-savasinda-batinin-takindigi-tahrik-tavrini-dogru-bulmuyorum.

[290] Tekin O. How Turkey Perceives Rising Escalation between the West and Russia in Russia's Near Abroad / O. Tekin // Puti k miru i bezopasnosti. — 2024. — Vol. 2, No. 67. — P. 137-155.

[291] Türkiye-Russia Trade Volume to Exceed $65B in 2023 // Anadolu Agency. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 18, 2024. — URL: https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/nuclear/turkiye-russia-trade-volume-to-exceed-65b-in-2023/39413.

Therefore, Russian and Turkish rivalry and cooperation in Russia’s near abroad prone to more cooperative stance rather than rivalry.

Iran in Russia’s Near Abroad

In the post-Soviet era, another prominent regional actor in Russia’s near abroad after Turkey is Iran. However, unlike Turkey, Iran's sphere of action within Russia's near abroad is concentrated in two regions: the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Due to its geographical proximity and historical ties to these regions, Iran, as a rising regional power, is seeking to exploit the power vacuum that has arisen in these areas during the post-Soviet period. Additionally, Iran's policies towards the region aim to prevent the emergence of new dominant powers, such as Turkey, alongside global actors like NATO, led by the United States and the EU. In this regard, Iran has aimed to collaborate and develop joint policies with regional and global powers such as Russia, India, and China, who are non-Western actors in the region.

Shiism and Export of Islamic Revolution

Contrary to popular belief, Iran did not adopt a revolutionary export policy in the South Caucasus and Central Asia in contrast to its policies in Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Concerns by Russia, China, Turkey, and Western countries about Iran's potential efforts to create a sphere of influence in Central Asia through radical religious groups have mostly proven unfounded. Iran has mostly focused on significant security risks in the Middle East, starting with Saddam's Iraq and later continuing with the United States. Additionally, the percentage of the Shia population in Central Asia and the Caucasus was much lower compared to the Middle East. Central Asian countries generally adhered to the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, which is also predominant in Turkey. Moreover, the potential rise of radical movements stemming from activities in Afghanistan and Gulf countries also posed potential challenges. Furthermore, these newly independent states, formerly Soviet republics, had minimal room for movement in religious, political, and social life

under Soviet rule for decades. The leaders and bureaucratic cadres of these newly independent countries were educated in secular Soviet traditions. Considering all these factors, it would not have been wise for Iran to adopt a sectarian-based revolution export strategy similar to its Middle East policies in the region.

Iran is aware of the uncompromising stance of Central Asian countries, especially Turkmenistan, against religious activities (Uzbekistan is partially more tolerant), and it recognizes the pragmatic policies pursued by these countries aiming at economic gains. Iran seeks to gain political maneuvering space by cooperating with the leading powers in the region, like Russia.

Security Concerns of Iran in South Caucasia and Central Asia

Iran's policy towards the South Caucasus and Central Asia is generally based on minimizing security risks and balancing rivals in cooperation with non-Western powers, especially Russia and China. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the new status quo in the South Caucasus and Central Asia was characterized by uncertainty. Particularly in the Caspian Sea basin, the smooth continuation of maritime boundaries, fishing, and exclusive economic zone sharing between the Soviet Union and Iran during the Cold War became complex with the emergence of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan as new independent states, alongside Russia and Iran. Additionally, conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Karabakh along the Iranian border and Turkey's stance in support of Azerbaijan further fueled Iran's security concerns and its adoption of a policy aimed at protecting its interests in the region.

Furthermore, attempts by Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and Gulf countries to increase their influence in the region through radical Sunni movements emerged as another security risk for Iran in Central Asia. Turkey's aspirations to establish close relations and integration with the Central Asian Turkic states through Azerbaijan and Georgia also raised concerns for Iran, similar to Russia, regarding the spread of "Pan-Turkism" or "Turanism," which

are forms of Turkish nationalism, led by Turkey in the region. Lastly, the policies of the United States and the EU towards the region, including efforts to exploit the power vacuum, transport energy resources to Europe, and establish a military presence, also created apprehensions in Iran similar to Russia's fears of encirclement.

South Caucasia

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Iran emerged as an ambitious power in the Caspian Sea. Throughout the Cold War, Iran had to accept the status quo set by the Soviet Union, but with the Soviet Union's collapse, Iran desired to expand its territorial waters. However, the Caspian basin, besides Iran, hosted a nuclear power like Russia and three new countries that could potentially be Russian allies. This situation initiated a contentious process that lasted for over two decades. The determination of maritime boundaries and the division of exclusive economic zones became even more significant in the late 1990s with the discovery of energy resources in Azerbaijani territories. Additionally, the intensification of maritime transportation as a result of increased trade in the region became another significant factor. This contentious process finally concluded over twenty years later at the 5th Caspian Littoral States Summit in 2018.

The legal status and division of the Caspian Sea, estimated to hold around 50 billion barrels of oil and 9 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, were addressed with a consensus signed by the leaders of the littoral states in 2018 in Aktau, Kazakhstan, a city with a coastline on the Caspian Sea[292]. This agreement resolved debates over whether the Caspian is a sea or a lake, a key point in legal regulations regarding the sovereignty rights of countries in the basin. The agreement generally provides equal spheres of influence and fishing

[292] 5 Ülke Hazar Denizi Konusunda Anlaştı. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 18, 2024. — URL: https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/5-ulke-hazar-denizinin-hukuki-statusu-konusunda-anlasti/1228982.

opportunities to countries bordering the Caspian Sea and includes the condition, desired by Iran and Russia, that no foreign power should be present in the region.

While diplomatic efforts have concluded regarding the status and spheres of influence in the Caspian Sea, it is evident that diplomacy has been insufficient in resolving conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Karabakh in the South Caucasus. The longstanding conflict between these two countries beyond Iran's northern borders has held significant importance in Iran's foreign policy agenda for many years. Although Iran generally aims to pursue a balancing policy in the conflicts between the two countries, recent developments, such as Turkey's significantly increased political and military support to Azerbaijan, and Russia's relatively passive policies, have led Iran to adopt firm rhetoric in support of the continuation of the status quo.

In particular, the last major Karabakh War in 2020, where Azerbaijan gained overwhelming superiority over Armenia with the support of Turkey, has caused great concern in Iran more than Russia. Turkey's increasing influence in the South Caucasus to a degree that could disrupt the status quo is considered a direct national security issue for Iran. At the heart of this concern lies the Zangezur Corridor, stipulated in the ceasefire conditions between Armenia and Azerbaijan through Russia and Turkey. This corridor, which aims to connect directly Turkey and Azerbaijan via Nakhchivan to the Turkic world, has significantly intensified Iran's "Pan-Turkism" concerns[293]. Additionally, the potential creation of a land connection between Turkey and Azerbaijan poses a threat to Iran's strategically important territories, which serve as trade routes between Asia and the Middle East, and Europe via Turkey. This scenario

[293] Golmohammadi V., Markedonov S. M. How Iran Perceives Turkey’s Rise in the South Caucasus / V. Golmohammadi, S. M. Markedonov // Russia in Global Affairs. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 16, 2024. — URL: https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/iran-and-turkeys-rise/.

suggests a significant marginalization of Iran in geopolitical and trade matters. Therefore, Iran has repeatedly stated that it will not accept any changes in the status quo in the region that result in its marginalization, at any cost.

Central Asia

The security concerns that stand out in Iran's security policies towards Central Asia can be summarized as:

- The desire for Turkey to form a union with the Turkic states of Central Asia based on Turkish nationalism,
- The strengthening of Sunni radical Islamist groups funded by Gulf countries in Afghanistan and Central Asia,
- US plans to take advantage of the power vacuum left by the Soviet Union and to settle in the region under the pretext of counter-terrorism.

The fundamental policy adopted by Iran to counter these security risks threatening its national interests is to enhance bilateral relations with regional countries and establish various partnerships with Russia, China and India in terms of balancing the presence of the US and Turkey in the region. The historical regional power struggle between Turkey and Iran gained a new dimension extending to Central Asia following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Iran had not previously faced a struggle for influence with Turkey in the South Caucasus and Central Asia regions since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. However, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Turkey's historical, cultural, and social ties with these regions raised concerns for Iran as happened for Russia regarding Turkey's potential expansionist policies in these areas. Nevertheless, Turkey's limited policies towards Central Asia in the 1990s, despite its great ambitions, somewhat alleviated Iran's concerns. In parallel with Russian stance, Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has occasionally issued

statements expressing concerns about the activities of any organizations based on nationalist ideology and their threat to peace in the region[294].

However, what has most disturbed Iran in recent years regarding the development of relations between Turkey and the Turkic states is the intense support Turkey provided to Azerbaijan during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, as mentioned above, and its increasing influence in the region. Consequently, following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, Iran conducted simultaneous military exercises at Azerbaijan's and Turkey's borders to demonstrate that it is not bluffing[295].

In terms of suppressing and preventing the rise of Sunni Salafi groups and radical Islamic movements in Central Asia, Iran finds common ground with both regional countries and regional powers. All powers in the region, including Turkey and the US, are aligned in the same front when it comes to preventing and suppressing the activities of Islamic radical elements in the region. However, the funding of Islamic Jihad militants in Afghanistan by Gulf countries against the Soviet Union, and the concerns about radical Islamist groups acquiring the weapons left by the Soviets after their withdrawal and overwhelmed armament of the West during conflicts, raised serious concerns, as these weapons could end up in the hands of radical groups in Central Asia, similar to the situation in the Middle East.

Finally, as mentioned above, the military bases established by the US in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have raised concerns for Iran about the possibility of the US remaining a permanent presence in the region. The invasion of Iraq in 2003, the close relationship between Gulf countries and the US, the installation

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[294] Golmohammadi V., Markedonov S. M. How Iran Perceives Turkey's Rise in the South Caucasus / V. Golmohammadi, S. M. Markedonov // Russia in Global Affairs. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 16, 2024. — URL: https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/iran-and-turkeys-rise/.

[295] Kaleji V. Eight Principles of Iran's Foreign Policy // Valdai Club. [Electronic resource] / V. Kaleji — Accessed February 21, 2024. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/eight-principles-of-iran-s-foreign-policy/.

of missile radar systems in Turkey, and the opening of US bases in Central Asia were developments that occurred in very close succession.

In response to these developments, Iran began to forge new partnerships for itself. Iran has developed its bilateral relations with Russia and China in political, military, and economic dimensions. Russian scholar Maxim Suchkov pointed that also American pressure to Iran and Russia throughout last decade has entailed tightening cooperation between them[296]. Additionally, in 2005, Iran became an observer state in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and became as a full member in 2023[297]. The policies of the organization, which openly expressed its opposition to the US military presence in Central Asia, parallel Iran's statements. Eventually, the US was forced to close its bases in Central Asia, and regional powers such as Russia, China, and Iran exhibited a shared stance on restricting the activities of external powers in the region.

Economic Gains and Cooperation with Regional Powers

The Central Asia and Caucasus regions account for approximately 3% of Iran's total trade volume[298]. However, the changing international system towards a multipolar order, increasing trade relations among non-Western countries, the shift of economic gravity from West to East, and the rising powers such as Russia, China, India, and Turkey increasing their activities in these regions enhance the importance of these regions for Iran both economically and politically. Additionally, Iran's foreign policy principles of “Neighborhood

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[296] Suchkov, M. A. Intel: How Trump’s ‘Maximum Pressure’ Campaign Is Bringing Iran and Russia Closer Together / M. A. Suchkov // Russia in Global Affairs. [Electronic resource] — Accessed November 13, 2023. — URL: https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/intel-how-trumps-maximum-pressure-campaign-is-bringing-iran-and-russia-closer-together/.

[297] Iran’s Membership of Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Expectations and Possible Scenarios // İRAM Center. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 18, 2024. — URL: https://iramcenter.org/en/irans-membership-of-shanghai-cooperation-organization-expectations-and-possible-scenarios-589/.

[298] Iran (IRN) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners // The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC). [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 23, 2024. — URL: https://oec.world/en/profile/country/irn.

Policy”[299] and economic interests constitute the basis of Iran's policies towards the region. Especially, the establishment of international organizations in the region to develop economic and political relations at an institutional level has driven Iran to seek gains by establishing connections with these evolving organizations. International partnerships unfolding in the region, starting with the North South International Transport Corridor and culminating with China's Belt and Road Initiative, offer attractive opportunities for Iran's economic gains. Alongside major projects, formations encompassing political and economic partnerships led by regional powers over the past thirty years, such as SCO, BRICS, and EAEU, occupy a significant place in Iran's foreign policy agenda.

The fundamental motivation in the relationships aimed to be developed within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) led by Russia revolves around establishing economic partnerships. In this context, Iran pursues a policy approach aimed at removing customs duties and revitalizing trade with the Eurasian countries within the EAEU. Russia and the other four Eurasian member countries also favor enhancing trade relations with Iran. However, they do not yet have the intention to directly include Iran in the customs union system. This has led the parties to gradually enhance relations through negotiations. As a result of discussions between Iran and representatives of EAEU member states, a Preferential Trade Agreement was signed in Yerevan in 2019[300]. With this agreement, customs duties between the parties were significantly reduced. Although it cannot be claimed that Iran's economy has greatly benefited, being able to improve relations with regional countries, especially Russia, and being part of significant regional projects like the EAEU

[299] Mesbahi, M. Iran’s Foreign Policy Toward Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus / M. Mesbahi ; Esposito J. L., Ramazani R. K. (Ed.) // Iran at the Crossroads. — New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2001. — P. 149–174.
[300] Kaleji V. Iran and Eurasian Economic Union Negotiations: Upgrading EAEU-Iran Preferential Trade Agreement into a Free Trade Agreement // Russian Council. [Electronic resource] / V. Kaleji — Accessed February 22, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/columns/middle-east-policy/iran-and-eurasian-economic-union-negotiations-upgrading-eaeu-iran-preferential-trade-agreement-into-/.

is important. While Iran's desire to be included in the Free Trade Agreement continues, the uncertainty and trust issue arise from the parties not fully knowing each other's commercial capacities and the quality, variety, and quantity of products they will receive from each other. However, the process of Iran's inclusion in the Free Trade Agreement is ongoing among the parties.

Iran has a strategic position with the potential to become a transit hub for commercial transportation between the North and South, as well as the West and East. In this context, two major projects stand out in Iran's foreign policy:

- The North-South International Transport Corridor (ITC or INSTC)
- Middle Corridor



Figure 6: North South Corridor Valdai Club

The North-South International Transport Corridor (ITC or INSTC), abbreviated in some sources as INSTC, traces its history back to the early 2000s and extends from Europe to St. Petersburg through the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea region

to Mumbai in India via Iran[301]. The ITC is a major commercial corridor where land, rail, and sea routes are utilized for container and cargo transportation from Europe to Russia and from Russia to India. For Russia, the ITC represents a partially alternative route for commercial transportation compared to the Suez Canal and the Turkish Straits, thus strategically positioning Iran within the corridor.

The corridor, which reduces the transportation costs to the Indian Ocean from Russia by around 30% and nearly halves the transportation time, brings economic and political benefits to the two key partners of the project, Russia and Iran[302]. Particularly, In Russian perspective the necessity to prevent its isolation by the West, especially following the Special Military Operation in Ukraine, and the need to develop alternative trade routes have significantly increased the importance of the ITC in recent months.



Source: World Bank (2023). 'Middle Trade and Transport Corridor: Policies and Investments to Triple Freight Volumes and Halve Travel Time by 2030'. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Figure 7: Major East-West Transportation Routes - World Bank[303]

[301] The International North–South Transport Corridor // SEZLotos. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 22, 2024. — URL: https://www.sezlotos.ru/en/about/the-international-north-south-transport-corridor/.
[302] What North-South International Transport Corridor Means for Iran // Russian Council. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 22, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/what-north-south-international-transport-corridor-means-for-iran/?sphrase_id=131929283.
[303] Middle Trade and Transport Corridor: Policies and Investments to Triple Freight Volumes and Halve Travel Time by 2030. — Washington, DC: World Bank, 2023.

The Middle Corridor, within the framework of China's "Belt and Road" initiative, aims to enhance trade from Asia to Europe and potentially creates a scenario where Iran is left out of the trade route. It includes a trade route through which goods and services could be transported from the Caspian Sea region overland, via Turkey, to Europe, excluding Iran. For Iran, being part of the Middle Corridor is critically important to maintain its position as a transit country between the West and East alongside Turkey, through both land and rail routes, and to continue its aspirations of becoming a transit hub in international trade through the project.

However, as seen on the map above, it is planned to transport goods and services to Europe through Georgia via the Caspian Sea or, if feasible, directly through Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan to Turkey. One of the reasons for Iran's reaction against the establishment of a direct land connection between Turkey and Azerbaijan lies here. It is unacceptable for Iran to see enrichment happening along the trade routes of countries surrounding it while being excluded from the project. Especially after the conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, the security risks associated with the Northern Corridor have increased the importance of the Middle Corridor to some extent. Iran does not wish to position itself as a confrontational or disruptive actor at this point. Instead, it continues to seek collaboration with regional powers such as China, Russia, India, and Turkey. In this context, the idea of conducting commercial transportation to Europe through Iran via Turkey emerges as another alternative route for the Middle Corridor. Iran's logistic infrastructure is conveniently positioned for it to be part of the Middle Corridor. However, Iran's desires contradict Turkey's aim to reduce its dependency on the Iranian route for land transportation.

In regard to Russian security concerns and interests, Iran's presence in the regions, South Caucasia and Central Asia, has not been perceived as a threat with improving partnership with it. Iran’s role about to counterbalance to Turkey's activities in these regions, its potential roles to enhance regional and

global trades and creation of multipolar world order is prominent in Russian foreign policy perspective.

India in Russia’s Near Abroad

One of the rising great powers in the post-Cold War era is India, alongside China and Russia. With its large population, economic advancements that have made it one of the world's top five economies, strategic geographical location, and a foreign policy approach that embraces seeking balance, India is a regional and global actor in Russia's near abroad.

Amidst global and regional developments, India remains an important trading and political partner for Russia, continuing the policy of balance that has been pursued since the Cold War era. Additionally, despite not being a member of any bloc during the Cold War, India maintained deep trade relations with the USSR and had an understanding based on developing common interests. The relationship between India and Russia continued to develop on this basis in the post-Soviet period. Furthermore, both global actors have advanced their regional and global partnerships with a desire for the transition of the international system towards a multipolar order.

In this context, the post-Soviet geography, known as Russia's near abroad, is an area where concerns are not overlooked in the relationship between the two countries, and the development of common interests is desired based on mutual trust. Central Asia stands out as the most suitable region for India's active foreign policy approach in the post-Soviet geography due to its geographical proximity, abundant energy resources, and increasing importance as a field of competition for regional and global powers. Additionally, a South Caucasus strategy has gradually emerged as an area of growing interest for India in recent years, influenced by regional and global developments. Furthermore, regional projects based on international trade and partnerships, which include both the South Caucasus and Central Asia regions, are also factors shaping India's policies towards Russia's near abroad.

Indian Policy towards Central Asia

One of the countries that first recognized the independence of the Central Asian states following the dissolution of the Soviet Union was India. The new competition opportunities arising from the power vacuum in the post-Soviet period, the region's richness in resources such as oil, natural gas, and uranium, which are crucial for the growing Indian economy, and the efforts of India's perennial rivals, such as China and Pakistan, to expand their influence in the region have been the most significant motivating factors behind India's policies towards the region. Besides, the necessity to combat radical movements and international crimes such as drug trafficking and human trafficking in the region also holds importance for India's security and interests. However, in 1990s, India's policies towards the region have remained at a low level due to the lack of direct land connectivity with the regional countries and the limited influence capacities compared to leading global powers such as Russia, China, and the United States, as well as regional powers like Turkey and Iran, who have sought to become involved in the region.

Despite these developments and the relatively passive regional policies adopted in the early years of the post-Soviet period, India's policies towards Central Asia began to gain momentum from the mid-2000s onwards. As an emerging great power in the international system, India started to adopt more active and ambitious strategies in its foreign policy. Its efforts to expand its sphere of influence in South Asian geopolitics were accompanied by a competitive stance against China and Pakistan. In this context, India, like Iran, has adopted a "Neighborhood Policy" to improve relations with countries in its near abroad. In addition, another strategy, known as the "Extended Neighborhood Policy," has found its place in Indian foreign policy, beyond its near abroad, encompassing regions like Central Asia, the Gulf region, East

Africa, and Afghanistan[304]. This foreign policy approach, determined according to India's geographical location, aims to protect India's interests and minimize security concerns. It seeks to ensure stability in these regions, prevent the expansion of influence by competitor countries like China and Pakistan to India's detriment, and achieve new gains by developing economic and cultural relations.

The “Extended Neighborhood Policy” is a strategy within India's geopolitical approach that encompasses not only Central Asia but also several other regions. Alongside this, India has developed a new approach specifically for Central Asia, termed “Connect Central Asia”[305]. In 2012, Indian Vice President M. Hamid Ansari emphasized the changing dynamics in the region following the dissolution of the USSR and stated that India needed to redefine its policies towards Central Asia to protect and enhance its economic and commercial interests there[306]. Ansari's statements provide a foundation for understanding the "Connect Central Asia" policy approach, which is based on ensuring stability in the region, developing bilateral relations with the countries of the region, especially at the economic and commercial levels, and balancing the regional activities of China and Pakistan.

In an effort to balance the regional influence of countries like China and Pakistan, India has sought to enhance its relations with Russia and the countries in the region. However, India has also worked towards developing its regional and global relations with the United States. Following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and its establishment of military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which it maintained for an extended period, Russia and China found

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[304] SCO is Providing India Platform to Widen Its Engagement with Central Asia // Russian Council. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 27, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/blogs/dipanjan-roy-chaudhury/sco-is-providing-india-platform-to-widen-its-engagement-with-central-a/?sphrase_id=131929283.
[305] Roy M. S. India’s ‘Connect Central Asia’ Policy: Building Cooperative Partnership / M. Roy // Indian Foreign Affairs Journal. — 2013. — Vol. 8, No. 3. — P. 301–316.
[306] Ibid.

themselves in a common position against the US's quest for presence in the region. Despite adopting a pragmatic approach of balancing between the US and Russia, India has also sought to avoid being left out of the frameworks created by regional powers. In this context, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has emerged as a prominent regional political organization in 2000s, and India has aimed to be part of this framework led by China and Russia. Initially, India became an observer state in the SCO in 2005 and later obtained full membership in 2017, along with Pakistan[307].

Regional Projects in India's Central Asian Strategy

India, despite its desire to improve relations with regional countries, faced limitations in infrastructure and resources necessary for such endeavors. Strengthening trade relations and mutual economic benefits with regional countries required substantial infrastructure projects. Although there is a significant potential in trade relations with these countries on a demand-supply basis, apart from Russia, it's challenging to mention another country of considerable importance to India. Under these circumstances, India has been reluctant to finance massive infrastructure projects in the region, like China, unless there's a direct gain for Indian interests. Instead, India has chosen to participate in various projects with regional powers, believing in mutual benefits.

Among these, the first notable project is the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), discussed earlier in the Iran section. Initiated in 2000 by India, Iran, and Russia, this project later included Central Asian and Caucasian countries, along with Turkey[308]. This project, creating an interregional

[307] Chaudhury D. R. India at the Helm: Future Directions for the SCO / D. R. Chaudhury // Russian Council. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 26, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/columns/asian-kaleidoscope/india-at-the-helm-future-directions-for-the-sco/.

[308] The International North–South Transport Corridor // SEZLotos. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 22, 2024. — URL: https://www.sezlotos.ru/en/about/the-international-north-south-transport-corridor/.

trade network between Europe and Asia via Russia and Iran, is highly valued by Russia for enhancing trade between the north-south and east-west. President Putin mentioned that the INSTC allows for cargo to be transported via land, rail, and sea routes 2.5 times faster than other routes[309]. India's involvement in this project through its ports in Mumbai contributes to regional and international trade in a win-win approach for Russia and the regional countries involved.

In 2013, India, which refused to participate in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), is attempting to develop its relations with Central Asian countries, which are economically dependent on China, based on its own needs and these countries' demands to benefit from India's international maritime transportation. In this context, secure sea trade route between Iran's Chabahar port and India's ports in Mumbai stands out as a significant alternative route, facilitating the integration of Central Asian countries into international trade and becoming an alternative trade route for Russia following the onset of conflicts in Ukraine[310]. After Russia's military operation in Ukraine in 2022, the northern corridor between East and West poses security risks. Although the Middle Corridor remains relatively secure, the unresolved conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus and the incomplete infrastructure works for roads and railways might still make it a disputed route. Additionally, the threat to international maritime transportation from the Suez Canal in late 2023 due to Yemen's reaction to Israel’s Gaza policy has enabled India to present its own ports as prominent points for trade between the North-South and East-West.

In its policies towards Central Asia, cooperation with Russia is crucial for India primarily in terms of balancing China's regional influence. In addition, Russia is India's most important energy partner, ranging from natural gas to

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[309] Ibid.

[310] Kundu N. D. International North-South Transport Corridor // Valdai Club. [Electronic resource] / N. D. Kundu — Accessed February 26, 2024. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/international-north-south-transport-corridor/.

nuclear materials. Maintaining commercial relations with Russia is also essential for ensuring stability and security of trade routes in the region. In this regard, Russia and India have an indispensable partnership. Although India's balancing policies between the United States and Russia may occasionally unsettle Russia, India has not played any role in facilitating US influence in Central Asia.

India as a New Actor in South Caucasus

In the post-Soviet era, regional powers such as Russia, Turkey, and Iran have stood out in the South Caucasus region due to their historical, cultural, and geographical ties. However, despite not having any direct connection with the region, India has emerged as a new actor in the region due to significant shifts in power dynamics, particularly after the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and the beginning military operation initiated by Russia in Ukraine in 2022. There are two main reasons why these changing dynamics have brought India to the forefront as a new actor in the region:

- Pakistan's explicit support for Azerbaijan during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, aiming to increase its influence in the region along with Turkey.
- Russia's prioritization of its military needs in Ukraine and the strained relations with Armenia due to Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s pro-Western policy, which led to India emerging as a prominent supplier of arms to Armenia after Russia.

Pakistan and Turkey are traditional allies under the concept of "brother countries." During the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, when Turkey actively supported Azerbaijan, Pakistan also openly expressed its support for Azerbaijan. After the victory of Azerbaijan, the three countries conducted a joint military exercise called “Three Brothers” and signed a Trilateral Declaration in

Islamabad in 2021, emphasizing solidarity among the three countries[311]. Azerbaijan also supports Pakistan in the chronic Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan. However, for India, rather than Azerbaijan's stance on the Kashmir issue, Pakistan's expansion of influence in the South Caucasus cannot be ignored. In this context, while Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Pakistan have formed a trilateral alliance, India has adopted a strategy to establish a counter-alliance between Iran, Armenia, and India[312]. Iran, uncomfortable with the shifting power dynamics in favor of Turkey and Azerbaijan in the region, looks favorably upon this strategy.

After suffering a heavy defeat in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and failing to receive the expected support from Russia, Armenia has continued to prioritize improving relations with the West. Additionally, seeking alternatives to purchasing military products from Russia, Armenia has entered into numerous arms procurement contracts with India since 2022[313]. At last, Armenia has signed an agreement with India for the purchase of anti-drone systems, and according to Indian experts, after these agreements worth approximately 1.75 billion dollars, Armenia is progressing towards becoming a strategic ally of India[314].

From Russian perspective, India's formation of a counter-alliance with Iran to balance Turkey and Pakistan in the South Caucasus might be viewed as a positive development. Historical sanctions from the West, ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, intense military resources allocated to Ukraine, and the efforts of the Pashinyan government in Armenia to distance itself from Russia with pro-

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311 Turtsiya, Azerbaydzhan i Pakistan Uglublyayut Sotrudnichestvo // Anadolu Agency. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 18, 2024. — URL: https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/politika/turtsiya-azerbaydzhan-i-pakistan-uglublyayut-sotrudnichestvo/2108831.

312 India in the South Caucasus: Implications for Russia, Iran and Turkey // Russian Council. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 26, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/india-in-the-south-caucasus-implications-for-russia-iran-and-turkey/?sphrase_id=131928686.

313 Ibid.

314 Rekord Indiyskogo Oboronnogo Eksporta // Bmpd. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 25, 2024. — URL: https://bmpd.livejournal.com/4786745.html.

Western policies have led Russia to adopt relatively passive policies in the region in recent developments. However, Russia still stands as a leading power in the region. Furthermore, Turkey and Azerbaijan are increasingly emerging as significant partners for Russia. In this equation, India's actions seeking balance in the region align with Russia's interests. Moreover, India's substantial arms sales to Armenia may not necessarily contradict Russian interests in the short term due to the reasons mentioned above. However, Armenia holds a significant place in Russia's Near Abroad policy, akin to Georgia. Although the United States and the EU emerge as rival actors in Armenia as external players, India's potential aspirations to emerge as an alternative partner to Russia in Armenia cannot be overlooked. Therefore, Russia will closely monitor the development of relations between India and Armenia. In summary, Russia may see India's actions in the region as parallel to its interests, but it will carefully observe the evolution of relations between India and Armenia, considering the potential implications for its own interests.

2.3. Russian Return to the Middle East as a Rising Power

In the beginning of the new era in Russian politics after the dissolution of the USSR, Middle East has generally been described as unstable and a place which has huge potential for any conflicts in the region. Limited capacity to power projection towards region, instability and high-risk profile of the region, and adoption of policies aimed at improving relations with the West had led to the neglect of developing relations with this region throughout first decade of the Russian Federation. However, with Primakov's growing influence in Russian foreign policy, Russia's policies towards the Middle East began to change, just as its policies towards other non-Western regions changed.

Russia has one of the highest Muslim populations among non-Arab states in the world. The preservation of former Soviet partnerships in the defense industry in the Middle East region and the recognition of the importance of the

Middle East as an important potential in Russia's global energy policies are the factors that have led to the increasing importance of the Middle East in Russian foreign policy. Russia's growing influence in the Middle East is an important counterweight to the US' desire to establish a unipolar new world order with its European partners. Moreover, playing mediator role on thwarting Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons of the West and in regional conflicts offer important opportunities to enhance Russia's international prestige and restore its great power status.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Middle East policy under the heading of relations with Islamic countries has become more and more important in Russia's foreign policy concepts. Not only with Arab countries, but also with non-Arab countries such as Turkey and Iran and regional powers such as Israel. In the course of the development of relations, Russia's status quo and reformist aspirations have changed from time to time. Russia has maintained its status quo leaning aspirations towards the countries in the region with which it has win-win relations. In addition, it has adopted foreign policy strategies to preserve the status quo against the revisionist policies of Western powers in the region such as exporting democracy, bringing pro-Western leaders to power and encouraging mass demonstrations.

The region has a tarnished image of the West as a result of the major security challenges, refugee problem, and rising terrorist incidents following the US and NATO military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 and the invasion of Iraq. Another prominent feature of Russia's policies towards the region is its reformist aspirations for the distribution of power in the region in order to increase Russian influence and international prestige. The growing distrust of the Gulf countries in their relations with the Western powers, their desire to pursue more independent policies, and their strategy to balance the US influence with regional and global rising powers such as Russia and China are entailing shift of Russian foreign policy approach from status quoist tendencies to

reformist aspirations in some of its policies in the regional power struggle. As mentioned in the articles of Vitaly Naumkin, Vasily Kuznetsov and Irina in RIAC and Valdai Club, these developments also reflect transformations and gaining multipolar world desires of the Gulf countries as rising regional powers[315]. For example, Moscow, which used to make limited sales of defense industry products to the region, taking into account its relations with Western powers, has lifted these restrictions over time with the changing conjuncture and regional balances[316]. In addition, it has managed to add new countries such as Turkey, the UAE and Saudi Arabia to its sales list in defense industry.

In addition, Russia's contribution to both the countries of the region and Western powers in the fight against terrorism, which has been on the rise in the region since the end of the Cold War, is an important factor in increasing Russia's influence regionally and globally and improving relations with both regional countries and global powers. Increasing religious radical movements in the region are both a domestic security issue for Russia and an opportunity to use, test and promote its high military capacity in the fight against terrorism[317]. Russia's activities against ISIS in Syria, both in Syria and in partnership with regional and global powers, have been a clear concrete example of this in the last decade.

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[315] Naumkin V., Kuznetsov V. The Middle East and the Future of Polycentric World / V. Naumkin, V. Kuznetsov [Electronic resource] — Accessed 23 March, 2023. URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/the-middle-east-and-the-future-of-polycentric-world/.; Naumkin, V., et al. Russia in the Middle East: The Harmony of Polyphony / V. Naumkin et al. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 23, 2023. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/russia-in-the-middle-east-the-harmony-of-polyphony/.; Naumkin, V., et al. Transformation in the Arab World and Russia’s Interests / V. Naumkin et al. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 23, 2023. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/transformation-in-the-arab-world-and-russia-s-interests/.

[316] Zvyagelskaya I. D., Surkov N. Y., eds. Russian Policy in the Middle East: Dividends and Costs of the Big Game / I. D. Zvyagelskaya, N. Y. Surkov. — RIAC Working Paper No. 51/2019. — Moscow: NPMP RIAC, 2019. — 24 p.

[317] Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces - First Deputy Minister of Defence General of the Army Valery Gerasimov Meets with Representatives of the Military Diplomatic Corps Accredited in Russia // Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 18, 2023. — URL: https://syria.mil.ru/en/syria/bulletins/bulletin/more.htm?id=12267331@egNews.

In this context, Russia's re-emergence as a rising power in the Middle East will be analyzed in terms of Russia's status quo and reformist aspirations for the region, emphasizing the preservation and development of well-remembered Soviet legacy relations in the region, the establishment of new partnerships based on a win-win approach, struggle with terrorism, the rise of Russia as an alternative power and a balancing factor in the region, and Russia's great power aspirations gaining a concrete identity with its power projection towards the region.

2.3.1. Win-Win Approach; Pragmatic Relations and Gaining Friends

Some of the most important aspects that define Russia in the post-USSR period, besides its military power, are its high capacity in the energy market, its capacity to sell defense industry products, and its desire to reach the southern seas. The political and economic crises of the 1990s and the foreign policy approach, which mostly prioritized the development of relations with the West, did not allow Russia to develop these aspirations and use them actively in foreign policy. Limited capacity leads to limited aspirations and practices. On the other hand, the US military and political interventions in the Middle East countries under the theme of fighting global terrorism and Russia's re-nationalization of companies in sensitive sectors that were controversially privatized in the 1990s, especially in the energy sector, under Vladimir V. Putin's leadership, have greatly accelerated the recovery of the Russian economy.

Economic recovery brought with it political order, and it could be argued that Russia had reached sufficient capacity for new areas of foreign policy beyond the immediate neighborhood. Under Putin, Russia has also increased its foreign policy capacity. Along with it, the sensitivity of improving relations with the West was gradually abandoned and a more diversified and multi-vector foreign policy strategy was pursued. The development of relations with non-Western states, the expansion of the Russian foreign policy's field of action and the balancing of the Western powers led by the United States with the new

partnerships to be established began to be among the priorities of Russian foreign policy as an important purpose. Russian pro-active return to the Middle East and the development of its relations within the framework of these perspectives constitute the background of Russia's return to the Middle East as a rising power.

The most important issue for Russia in its relations with the Middle Eastern states is to act with an understanding based on a win-win relationship. The fact that Russia does not have an ideology-based foreign policy approach ensures that its foreign policy maneuverability is flexible and open to cooperation[318]. In addition, Russia does not impose preconditions such as "increasing democratic and liberal values, restricting the foreign policy areas of states or forcing them to make choices in their commercial relations" in the bilateral relations it has established in the region has enabled Russia to further expand the field of cooperation in the region over time. Russia's emphasis on mutual gain relations rather than the perception of unilateral gain in political and economic issues, its trust in its relations with its partners, and its lack of concern to design the region, according to its own wishes and ideology, have also made it a credible regional partner.

Gulf States and OPEC+ Initiative

Russia's plan to develop relations with Gulf countries in its Middle East policy dates back to the final years of the Soviet Union. Although the bilateral relations between the Soviet Union and the Gulf countries did not leave a very healthy legacy, it would not be incorrect to claim that the Soviet Union, particularly under Gorbachev, initiated the first attempts to develop pragmatic relations with the Gulf countries. Examples of these developments include the

[318] Russia in the Middle East: Moscow's Objectives, Priorities, and Policy Drivers // Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 18, 2023. — URL: https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2016/04/russia-in-the-middle-east-moscows-objectives-priorities-and-policy-drivers?lang=en&center=russia-eurasia.

visit of the Saudi Oil Minister to Moscow to cooperate on oil production and the Soviet Union's position against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait during the operation carried out under the UN Security Council[319].

However, in the 1990s, Russia's policies towards the Middle East took a back seat, and the perception that Gulf countries were financing Chechen terrorism became a problematic factor for developing relations from Russia's perspective. Despite all these developments, a new process began with Vladimir V. Putin's first presidential term, where Russia sought to preserve and enhance its relations with Soviet-era partners in the Middle East, while also pushing for new collaboration opportunities. In the current context, this process has reached a point where Russia has found strong partners for its strategy of tactical partnerships through organizations like the Gas Exporting Countries Forum and OPEC+, aiming to establish a multipolar world order. The current state of affairs in this process not only demonstrates the constructive and pragmatic gains in Russia's foreign policy strategy towards the region but also reflects President Vladimir V. Putin's significant personal friendships developed with leaders.

The global economic crisis of 2008 and the subsequent unpredictable fluctuations in US Middle East policy have led countries with regional and global influence based on their natural energy resources, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, to adopt more independent and balanced foreign policy choices, unlike the Cold War era. The pragmatic approach of Russian foreign policy to create and develop tactical collaborations, the transition to a multipolar world order, the establishment of a fair and equal world order, and the strategy of becoming a major power all contribute to the importance of developing relations with Gulf countries. In this context, the energy sector and the increasing regional and global security risks each year present the most

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[319] Ufheil-Somers A. Continuity and Change in Soviet Policy // MERIP. [Electronic resource] — Accessed November 6, 2023. — URL: https://merip.org/1990/11/continuity-and-change-in-soviet-policy/.

significant opportunity window for Russia to expand its regional and global influence by developing relations with Gulf countries.

The unilateral policy adopted by the United States has played a significant role in bringing Russia and the Gulf countries together in the common ground of energy and in finding common ground in regional and global security areas. In the early 2010s, the United States becoming one of the most important producers and exporters in the energy market, associated with the discovery and production of shale gas and shale oil, had adverse effects on the control of supply and prices in the energy sector, which is the most significant source of income for Russia and OPEC countries. With the dramatic increase in oil production by the United States from 2009 to 2019, becoming the world's largest oil-producing country, the market share of OPEC countries, which held 43% of global oil production in 2009, decreased to 37%. This has increased the desire for cooperation between OPEC's leader, Saudi Arabia, and leading Gulf countries such as the UAE, Qatar, Nigeria from Africa, and Venezuela from South America, with Russia, which is the world's second-largest oil producer in terms of production and supply.

In this context, in 2016, formal cooperation was established between OPEC countries and Russia in the field of oil production and supply, and an official partnership called OPEC+ was initiated. OPEC+, which can be considered a parallel organization to Gas Exporting Countries Forum, a non-Western organization in the natural gas sector, is claimed to rapidly become one of the influential international partnerships in the energy sector, similar to its parallel organization.

Transitioning to a multipolar world order is a priority in Russian foreign policy, and expanding the mission and influence of non-Western organizations is evident within this framework. Over the past decade, there has been a strained relationship between Russia and the West, particularly in conflicts such as Ukraine and Syria. Despite heavy pressure from the United States during this

period, OPEC member countries not joining the political and economic sanctions imposed on Russia since 2014 can be seen as both a regional and global foreign policy success for Russian diplomacy. One of the significant factors contributing to the ineffective outcome of sanctions aimed at isolating Russia and restricting its earnings in the energy sector, which is its most important source of income, is Russia's relationships developed with non-Western partners through OPEC+ and the Gas Exporting Countries Forum.

After the Soviet Union's military intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, the United States, through the influence of Gulf countries, flooded the market with surplus oil, leading to a significant drop in oil prices and contributing to the economic weakening of the USSR during its dissolution process. Following Russia's "Special Military Operation" in Ukraine in February 2022, one of the tactics planned by Western powers, led by the United States, to weaken the Russian economy was again to flood the market with surplus oil. Despite the significant increase in oil production by the United States within this strategy, the Gulf countries, led by OPEC, did not support this policy. On the contrary, they decided to reduce oil supply within OPEC+ in December 2022[320]. Despite the efforts of the United States and its allies to isolate Russia from the global stage and deal a severe blow to its economy, this development illustrates the changing character of international relations and the success of Russia's regional policies in the face of such pressures.

The 2022 OPEC+ decision, which Saudi and UAE officials expressed as being taken due to 'interests of all OPEC members countries'[321] actually indicates that the OPEC+ countries share the desire for a multipolar world order,

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[320] Yushkov I. OPEC+ Cuts Production / I. Yushkov // Russian Council. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 26, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/opec-cuts-production/.

[321] A Statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regarding the Statements Issued About the Kingdom Following the OPEC+ Decision. [Electronic resource] — Accessed October 10, 2023. — URL: https://www.saudiembassy.net/statements/statement-ministry-foreign-affairs-regarding-statements-issued-about-kingdom-following.

which aims to expand the influence of non-Western countries[322]. In the last decade, as the influence of Western and global organizations, of which Russia is a member, has increased, Russian foreign policy efforts to reform the international system in favor of a multipolar world order have gained more recognition.

2.3.2. Preservation of Soviet Inheritance

After the Suez Crisis in 1956, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the new dominant powers in the region, ending nearly two centuries of British and French hegemony in the region. These two superpowers struggled in the region as two actors balancing each other, seeking to expand their spheres of influence as alternatives to each other, having military bases and protecting and supporting their allies in every field. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States remained the sole hegemonic power in the region. As mentioned earlier, Russia, with its limited capacity, had largely lost the Soviet influence in the region. It has tried not to lose its historical ties with countries such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, Algeria and Egypt through defense industry sales and energy cooperation. Although it has lost much of its diplomatic and military capability in the region, the fact that it has managed to maintain its strategic alliances has enabled it to return to the region as an important actor.

In late 2015, following a request from Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to participate in counterterrorism and regime security operations in Syria, Russia succeeded in re-establishing an active position in the region for the first time since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Khmeimim Air Base and naval base located in the Tartus and Latakia regions of Syria enable Russia to be directly involved in developments in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. While Russia's military presence beyond the post-Soviet geography has not

[322] Yushkov I. OPEC+ Cuts Production / I. Yushkov // Russian Council. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 26, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/opec-cuts-production/.

reached the same level of strength and influence as the Soviet Union, it has made Russia a decisive actor in developments occurring in multiple regions, similar to the USSR.

Demonstrating its reliable partner identity inherited from the Soviet Union in the Middle East, Russia has revitalized the Soviet legacy by actively supporting the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria and engaging in international cooperation in counterterrorism efforts in the region.

Power Projection as a Great Power

In the international relations literature, the definition of great power is considered a controversial issue. In the website of the Russian Defense Ministry, great power is defined as states that have significant economic and military power, play a leading role in the international arena and have a special responsibility for maintaining peace and international security. The Great Power has always been a decisive force in the armed confrontation between nations, determining the course of wars and the post-war political structure of regions[323]. On the other hand, some of the well-known scholars who have studied on the concept of power such as Randell Schweller, Barry Buzan & Shunji Cui or researchers such as Stephen Walt, John Mearsheimer, Richard Sakwa, argue that the capacity of a state to penetrate more than one region at the same time can classify it as a great power. In this regard, Schweller[324] and Buzan&Cui[325] definitions of middle power and great power allow for the necessary distinction.

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[323] Velikiye Derzhavy // Ministerstvo Oborony Rossiyskoy Federatsii. [Electronic resource] — Accessed September 27, 2023. — URL: https://encyclopedia.mil.ru/encyclopedia/dictionary/details.htm?id=4144@morfDictionary.

[324] Schweller R. L. The Concept of Middle Power. — Department of Political Science, Ohio State University. — Prepared for the Study of South Korea as a Global Power Project, Overseen by the Expert Commission on Middle Power Diplomacy, hosted at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Korea Chair. — URL: https://www.academia.edu/7493871/The_Concept_of_Middle_Power

[325] Cui S., Buzan B. Great Power Management in International Society / S. Cui, B. Buzan // The Chinese Journal of International Politics. — 2016. — Vol. 9, No. 2. — P. 181–210.

For Russia, the Middle East was the first active foreign policy area that went beyond the immediate neighborhood after the collapse of the USSR. Russia's active economic policies in the region, which it began to pursue in the 2000s, underwent a dramatic transformation and development in the 2010s. Russia's involvement in the Syrian crisis as an active and successful military power, it has become a key actor in the resolution of the Syrian crisis and its establishment of a concrete military power in the region reveal Russia's power project for the region. Having become an undisputed alternative actor in the region, Russia has transformed its "regional power" status, which was assigned to it due to its limited capacity after the Cold War, into a game changer in another region in addition to near abroad. This enabled Russia to be a major power in more than one region at the same time and paved the way for the development of the issue of "great power status", one of the most important parts of Russian foreign policy, in favor of Russian arguments.

For instance, Russia has managed to prevent Western powers from launching a large-scale military intervention in Syria, as in Libya, first through diplomatic and then military strategies. Under Putin, Russia's diplomatic victory over the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles was a success that was achieved even before Russian active military presence in the region began. Arguments that explain Russian foreign policy solely in terms of aggressive and revisionist tendencies were insufficient to explain the diplomatic successes.

Russian power projection towards the region through Syria and its successful balancing of the US and its Western partners has created the image of Russia's rise as an alternative power, first in the region and then in global affairs, similar to its Soviet role. Russia's successes in the Syrian crisis, its role as a mediator between the conflicting parties in Libya, between the Syrian regime and Turkey, its role as a mediator in the Karabakh conflict, and its emergence as a balancing power for countries with troubled relations with the West have all been made possible by Russian military power and diplomatic successes in the

Middle East. Power projection leads to the acquisition of "great power" status, first regionally and then globally in the Russian foreign policy.

2.3.3. From Cooperation with the US to Limited Resistance and Counterbalancing It

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia's foreign policy priorities included establishing good relations with the liberal-capitalist bloc led by the United States and integrating into the new world order led by the West. The emphasis was placed on conducting relations with the West smoothly and in cooperation to ensure Russia's political integration and overcome economic challenges. In this frame, in the first half of the 1990s, Russian foreign policy prioritized avoiding conflicts with the West in the Middle East geography, which was not among its top priorities, and favoring cooperation whenever possible.

In the 2000s, developments occurred in the Middle East that heavily impacted Russia's most significant partners in the region, namely Iraq, Syria, and Iran, completely altering the regional dynamics. Concerns such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the termination of Syria's military presence in Lebanon, Palestine-Israel Conflicts and apprehensions about Iran's nuclear energy usage and its potential to produce nuclear weapons, creating a new potential for conflict in the region, were prominent. In general, Russia sought diplomatic solutions under the auspices of the United Nations for resolving these crises. It aimed to balance the unilateral actions of the U.S. through creating international awareness and to protect its regional interests.

The 2010s witnessed significant changes in the region with the onset of the Arab Spring, bringing about substantial transformations and destruction. The period also saw the U.S. and its European allies adopting more impulsive policies. This led to a shift in Russia's regional policies, reflecting a change in mindset amid its political and economic recovery. Russia, having both politically and economically recovered and adopting more assertive foreign policies, underwent a shift in mentality that was also reflected in its Middle East policies.

Following NATO's intervention in Libya and the growing threat of ISIS in the region, Russia adopted a multifaceted approach:

- *Protection of Russian Political and Economic Interests:* Russia sought to safeguard its political and economic interests in the Middle East.
- *Preservation of Regional Partners:* The focus was on maintaining strong ties with existing partners in the region.
- *Building Partnerships with Regional Powers:* Russia aimed to strengthen alliances with influential regional players such as Iran, Turkey, and Gulf countries.
- *Neutral Position in Conflicts:* Russia opted for a non-aligned stance, avoiding taking sides in conflicts and maintaining communication with all stakeholders in the region.
- *Counterbalancing the West:* In response to perceived Western dominance, Russia engaged in counterbalancing strategies, including the use of military power, as evident in its involvement in Syria since the last quarter of 2015.

This revised strategy underscored Russia's commitment to protecting its interests, preserving alliances, and strategically engaging with regional powers, all while adopting a balanced and non-partisan approach in the complex landscape of Middle Eastern geopolitics. Russia has never given up odds of cooperation with Western powers in the region, although its politics changed towards the region after NATO’s intervention in Libya and pro-Western protests in Russia in 2011. The struggle with the defeat of ISIS, demolishing the chemical weapons of the Syrian Regime with US partnership, and intelligence sharing with the US-led coalition in Syria proved the perspective of Russia in the region. However, Russia has also tried to find solutions in the regional conflicts with dual contacts with the regional countries and establishing non-Western partnerships like Astana Process.

The Occupation of Iraq by the United States and Russia's Position

As is known, prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it actively supported the international coalition led by the United States under the umbrella of the UN Security Council's approval against Iraq due to its invasion attempt of Kuwait. The UN Coalition forces' operation in Iraq, following the consent shown by the reunification of Germany and the fall of the Berlin Wall, was the second international development reflecting Russia's desire to collaborate with the United States as an "equal and sovereign" partner before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, the unilateral actions and disregard for international law by the United States in the 1990s made it increasingly difficult for Russia to continue its efforts to collaborate with the U.S., which had been expressed during the Soviet era. The event that further undermined Russia's trust in the U.S. was the bombing of Serbia by NATO, led by the U.S., without the approval of the UN Security Council. Another significant incident was the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, where the U.S., once again, bypassed the will of the UN Security Council. This action played a major role in Russia adopting limited balancing policies alongside cooperation with the U.S.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq had generated a similar unease in Russian foreign policy as NATO's bombing of Serbia. However, this time, both Russia's state structure and international developments were more conducive to the effectiveness of Russian foreign policy. Russia, under the leadership of the new President Vladimir V. Putin, was in a successful political and economic recovery process, and during this period, it did not want to directly confront the U.S. Instead, Russia adopted a strategy of building an international public opinion against the U.S., alongside powers like Germany and France, who were NATO allies but openly opposed the Iraq invasion.

Leading powers in Europe, such as France and Germany, expressed rising concerns and opposition to the unilateral actions of the U.S. and the invasion of Iraq. This led to the perception that in the new international system, European

partners were finding a collective voice against the unilateral policies of the U.S. This strategy aimed to counterbalance the U.S. by aligning with European powers that were critical of American unilateralism, contributing to the formation of an international front against U.S. actions in Iraq."

When Russia realized the inevitability of U.S. intervention in Iraq, its political approach was guided by two main concerns based on principles:

- *Protection of Economic Interests in Iraq***:** Russia aimed to safeguard its economic interests in Iraq. The Soviet Union had extended a significant debt of approximately $8 billion to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War period, and as of 2003, this debt, with inflation taken into account, exceeded $10 billion. A diplomatic process was underway to ensure that Iraq repaid this debt to Russia. Additionally, Russian companies had signed contracts with the Saddam regime for the construction of Iraq's infrastructure systems, particularly in the operation of oil wells, with the total value of these contracts reaching up to $40 billion.
- *Balancing Role without Direct Confrontation with the U.S.***:** Russia sought to play an active role in an international coalition that would counterbalance U.S. unilateral actions without directly confronting the United States. This strategy was driven by the desire to protect its interests without escalating tensions with the U.S. directly.

The postponement of debt repayment and the potential loss of lucrative contracts due to the U.S. military intervention in Iraq posed significant challenges to Russia. Considering that Russia's GDP was around $430 billion in 2003, the magnitude of the agreements and Iraq's debt to Russia becomes apparent. Beyond economic considerations, Russia also harbored concerns that a potential U.S.-friendly government established in Iraq after the invasion might emulate Gulf countries from the Cold War era. Such a government could increase oil production to weaken global oil prices, a scenario that could negatively impact

Russia's recovering economy heavily dependent on revenue from energy resources. For Russia, this scenario could have led to a return to the economic collapses experienced in the 1990s.

Despite Russia's desire for a transition to a multipolar world order and its aspiration to balance the unilateral hegemonic policies of the U.S., it was not in a position at that time to single-handedly influence such a change, as it prioritized collaboration with the U.S. for economic recovery and the enhancement of international prestige. Russia, keen on maintaining economic recovery and increasing international prestige, did not risk direct confrontation with the U.S. Instead, it aligned with France and Germany, which strongly opposed the U.S. preference for military force over diplomacy, and, with China's silent objections, became part of an international coalition against the U.S.

In this context, about a month before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, President Vladimir V. Putin visited France and Germany, and the three countries issued a joint statement emphasizing the need to resolve the Iraq issue diplomatically under the auspices of the UN and stating that the concept of preemptive strike was a unilateral action incompatible with international law[326].

The international anti-war stance led by Russia, France, Germany, and China was not able to halt the U.S., and the U.S.-led coalition, prominently featuring the United Kingdom, Spain, Australia, and Poland, initiated the invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003. While the war process that Putin labeled as "unjustified" it will be destructive for regional and global security. The disproportionate use of force by the U.S. and the deployment of cutting-edge military technology in Iraq caused considerable discomfort within Russian society and the government. The invasion played a significant role in raising

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[326] Sovmestnoye Zayavleniye Frantsii, Germanii I Rossiyskoy Federatsii V Svyazi S Prinyatiyem Rezolyutsii 1511 Soveta Bezopasnosti Oon 16 Oktyabrya 2003 Goda // Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del Rossiyskoy Federatsii. [Electronic resource] — Accessed September 24, 2023. — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_safety/1654996/.

concerns within Russia about managing military modernization alongside economic recovery.

Syrian-Lebanon-Israel Crisis in 2000s

Lebanon, its complex population structure and the legacy of the intricate political system inherited from French rule, has been a stage for local and regional conflicts since declaring independence in 1941. The presence of Palestinian refugees, territorial disputes with Syria, and years of being caught in the midst of Syrian-Israeli conflicts have made it difficult to build a strong state in Lebanon. The weak state structure has allowed non-state armed groups and regional countries to operate and gain influence in the country. The growing capacity and military strength of the Iran-backed Hezbollah organization during this period, engaging in armed actions against Israel, and collaborating with Palestinian armed groups, have turned this organization into a regional issue. Following the 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars, Lebanon became an arena of conflict involving Israel, Syria, and non-state armed groups, turning it into an international problem.

In contrast to the Soviet Union, Russia has not aligned itself with any party in the Middle East, and its desire to play a role in resolving regional conflicts and establishing peace to enhance international prestige has been embraced for the stability of Lebanon as well. In the recent past, during the period of dramatic changes in Lebanon from 2004 to 2008, Russia's stance can be seen as a miniature example of its evolving strategy toward the Middle East. Due to its military presence in Lebanon, Russia took a diplomatic approach, suggesting the involvement of the legitimate organ, the UN Security Council, to resolve the crisis, countering the desires of the U.S. and France for military intervention in Syria. The UN Security Council debated a resolution proposed by the U.S. and France, aiming to achieve stability in Lebanon by withdrawing all foreign forces, eliminating the actions of all armed groups, including Hezbollah, and holding free elections. The resolution passed with the abstention

votes of Russia and China, indicating Russia's desire for cooperation with the West in resolving crises in the region. Additionally, Russia played a crucial role in keeping Syria, one of its most significant regional partners, from facing military intervention by Western forces, similar to what happened in Iraq in 2003. The illegal military intervention in Iraq by the U.S. without the approval of the UN Security Council led Russia to adopt a more cautious approach to cooperating with the West in resolving crises in the Middle East. While initially embracing a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Lebanon, Russia realized that the situation in the country turned into a mission aiming to remove Syria from Lebanon following the Cedar Revolution protests triggered by the mysterious assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005. The Lebanon crisis, initially approached with the idea of cooperation with the West, turned into a limited reaction by Russia against the actions of Western powers, creating international awareness, and protecting its partners. The Lebanon crisis, dealing a blow to Russia's desire to cooperate with the U.S. and Western powers in the region, played a significant role in shaping Russia's stance on current developments in Lebanon and the region, as well as its thoughts on the positions of Western powers.

Russian perspective on Iran in the Middle East

In the context of Russia's Middle East policy, the development of relations with regional powers, the establishment of alternative power balances, and the enhancement of Russian interests in the region, Iran has become one of the increasingly important partners in recent years. In fact, Russia-Iran relations post-Cold War were more of a factor in the development of Russia-West relations. Russia followed a line close to the West's policy towards Iran in the region and kept its relations with Iran within limits that would not pose a problem for the development of its relations with the West. In this context, Russia did not view positively Iran's desire to purchase state-of-the-art military systems from Russia, such as the S-300 missile defense system and Sukhoi-

produced fighter jets[327]. However, in conjunction, the construction of Iran's Bushe Nuclear Power Plant was carried out by ROSATOM, with assurances given to the U.S. and Europe that Iran would not engage in any activities related to the production of nuclear weapons in this facility, aiming to limit potential reactions from them.

In the late period of the Soviet Union and until the late 1990s, Russia prioritized cooperation with the West or avoiding confrontation on the issue of Iran. However, this policy had to change with the United States' invasion policies in the Middle East, starting with Afghanistan in 2001 due to the global fight against terrorism, and continuing with Iraq in 2003. Russia, not wanting to directly oppose the U.S. at that time, adopted a measured response policy against the unilateral military intervention policies of regional countries and the U.S., which was also discomforting for European states such as France and Germany.

During this period when Russia aimed to make new friends in the region and develop existing relationships with a pragmatic understanding, the prominent issue related to Iran, especially after Ahmadinejad's election as president in 2005, was Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons and the international embargo request against Iran. Russia, inheriting an understanding from the Soviet era to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, continued its policy of cooperation with the U.S. Iran's potential efforts to acquire nuclear weapons and the consequent demands for imposing international sanctions on Iran under the UN framework became one of the last aspects in Russian foreign policy where Russia preferred cooperation with the West in the Middle East and global security policies.

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[327] Beyond Arms Embargo, Obstacles Remain to Iran’s Acquisition of Russian Weapons // Russia Matters. [Electronic resource] — Accessed September 20, 2023. — URL: https://www.russiamatters.org/analysis/beyond-arms-embargo-obstacles-remain-irans-acquisition-russian-weapons.

Being one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council and actively engaging in diplomatic efforts in the Iran and P5+1 nuclear negotiations (JCPAO), Russia played a constructive role. Russia's presence is crucial for reaching an agreement in the ongoing negotiations, especially considering the agreement reached with Iran during the Obama era, which was subsequently terminated by Donald Trump.

Starting in the last quarter of 2010, the events of the Arab Spring were jointly characterized by then-Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as 'events organized by Western states and Western-funded NGOs to redesign the region. This perspective throughout protests and conflicts in Middle East has caused change Russian politics towards region. It’s concerns against radicalization of Islamist movements in region and inside of Russia by hand of the Western powers and that brought this problem as a national security issue for the Russian Federation[328]. Following the onset of the Arab Spring, the development of relations between Russia and the West led by the United States, and Russia and Iran, took divergent paths. Russia sought to protect its interests in the region and enhance its relations with regional powers such as Iran within the emerging or intended new order. The regional policies of the United States, which did not prioritize Russian interests and aimed to weaken or eliminate Russia's partners in the region, coincided with the same period.

The NATO intervention in Libya in 2011, approved by the UN Security Council with the consent of Russia under the leadership of the United States and France, marked a turning point in Russia's Middle East policies. It signaled a shift in perception, acknowledging the Western bloc led by the United States as a force that needed to be balanced in the region. The intervention underscored the

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[328] Suchkov M. A. Russia and the Arab Spring: Changing Narratives and Implications for Regional Policies / M. A. Suchkov // Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies. — 2015.

need for Russia to reassess its position in the changing dynamics of the Middle East, especially in the face of Western-led interventions that Russia was not entirely aligned with.

Russia's relations with Iran have begun to change and develop according to its new strategy in the region, particularly in response to concerns about potential damage to Russia-West relations due to the ongoing collaboration with the West in the face of the threat of Iran developing nuclear weapons. While continuing cooperation with the West on the issue of Iran's nuclear weapons development, Russia gradually deepened its relatively low-intensity relations with Iran, partly due to concerns about damaging Russia-West relations. The delivery of S-300 missiles to Iran in 2016[329]and the completion of the sale of Mi-28 helicopters and Su-35 fighter jets in 2023[330] marked the culmination of the deepening Russia-Iran relations over the past decade.

After the start of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, which Russia termed as a special military operation, both countries faced harsh Western embargoes. In response, a rhetoric of partnerships, especially in the defense industry, developed between the two countries, characterized by mutual exchanges. However, Russia's approach to Iran still demonstrates limits and control in its deepening relationship, as seen in its reluctance to positively respond to Iran's requests for high-tech military products like the S-400 and Su-47, and its cautious stance towards nuclear negotiations under the UN framework.

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[329] Russia Completes S-300 Delivery to Iran // Arms Control Association. [Electronic resource] — Accessed September 19, 2023. — URL: https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2016-11/news-briefs/russia-completes-s-300-delivery-iran.

[330] Iran Confirms Acquisition of Russian Mi-28, Su-35, Yak-130 Aircraft // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed September 19, 2023. — URL: https://tass.com/defense/1713027.

Arab Spring and NATO's Libya Intervention

The conflict climate that emerged in the Middle East after the active armed interventions by the United States since 2001 has transformed into a regional reality. Countries began to shape their investments and regional relationships with a focus on security. The potential for the spread of conflicts in the region and the rising global terrorism threat hold special significance for Russia, which is one of the European countries with the largest Muslim population. In addition to the high percentage of Muslim population, the potential for radicalization among the Muslim population in the Caucasus region poses a significant risk.

The Arab Spring process that erupted in Tunisia in the last quarter of 2010 and spread to almost the entire Middle East has had a serious impact on Russia in terms of both its regional policies and national/international security risks. The Arab Spring has profoundly affected Russia's important partners in the region, such as Libya, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, leading to critical changes in these countries. Furthermore, the rise of ISIS, which carried out major terrorist acts regionally and globally, has prompted significant changes in Russia's policies, both nationally and regionally.

NATO's military intervention in Libya, approved by the UN Security Council, marked a turning point that fundamentally changed Russia's perspective on the Arab Spring and the regional policies of the United States and Europe during the Arab Spring process. When the Arab Spring protests erupted, Russia had planned to collaborate with Western states regarding the potential significant changes in the region. During this period, characterized by a reset in relations with the United States, prioritizing cooperation by reducing the risk of conflict, Russian President Dmitry A. Medvedev adopted an understanding of working in collaboration with the United States and Europe. He demonstrated this understanding by not vetoing and partially supporting the draft presented to

the UN Security Council by the United States and France, calling for intervention to stop attacks by the Qaddafi regime on civilians in Libya.

On March 17, 2011, Resolution 1973, aiming to establish a no-fly zone in Libya and protect civilians, was passed by the Security Council with the approval of 10 members, led by the United States and France, while Russia, along with China, India, Brazil, and Germany, abstained from voting[331]. Two days later, on March 19, 2011, NATO began implementing the military intervention authorization granted by the UN Security Council in line with the stated objectives. However, NATO's intervention in Libya went beyond the Security Council's resolutions for a no-fly zone and the protection of civilians, transforming into a military operation aimed at overthrowing the Qaddafi regime in Libya. NATO's military intervention in Libya, which exceeded its mandate and prioritized changing Libya according to its own interests and desires, completely thwarted Russia's intention to cooperate with Western partners in the region. The collaboration policy, which also led to differences of opinion between President Dmitry A. Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin, was further influenced by the large-scale protests that occurred in Russia in 2011. These protests, believed to be influenced by Western support and aiming to bring to Russia the mission equivalent to the colored revolutions, which defined the Arab Spring protests, took place after the parliamentary elections in 2011. They took on a nature that lent credibility to Prime Minister Putin's criticisms of the West regarding the Arab Spring[332].

During the Arab Spring period, Russia perceived Western involvement in Middle Eastern politics as revisionist actions aimed at changing regimes in favor

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[331] UN Security Council, Security Council Resolution 1973 (2011) [on the situation in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya], S/RES/1973(2011). [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 17, 2023. — URL: https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unsc/2011/en/76684.

[332] Naumkin, V. V., et al. Russia and the Greater Middle East / V. V. Naumkin. — Moscow: Spetskniga, 2013. — 40 p.

of Western interests. This was seen as disregarding and undermining Russia's and its regional partners' interests and security concerns. Consequently, Russia shifted its strategy in the Middle East from cooperation with the West to counterbalancing Western influence and establishing partnerships within the region.

Russian Politics towards Palestine-Israel Conflicts

Russia's fundamental stance in handling contentious issues in international relations, which is to not choose any side and to aim for direct or indirect involvement in resolving issues to increase Russia's regional and global influence, has become the main mentality adopted in the chronic conflicts of the Middle East, particularly in the Palestinian-Israeli conflicts. The Russian perspective, based on a two-state solution and embracing relations with both parties, proposes a legitimate resolution, as indicated in UN Security Council Resolution 242 adopted in 1967[333].

The conflict, which started as Arab-Israeli conflicts after World War II and evolved into Palestinian-Israeli conflicts over time, has been incorporated into Russia's official state policy since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russia, with deep political ties to both sides of the conflict, recognizes the importance of its relations with both parties when taking a stance on the issue. It is a known fact that the Soviet Union supported Israel during its establishment. The Soviet Union was the first country, along with the United States, to recognize Israel's independence. However, shortly after its establishment, Israel's explicit alignment with the U.S. and the Western bloc and the Soviet Union's convergence with Arab countries in an anti-imperialist stance created a period where the Soviet Union leaned towards the Arab/Palestinian side in these conflicts. However, with the change in Russia's ideology-centered foreign policy

[333] Gorodetsky G. Russia Between East and West: Russian Foreign Policy on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century / G. Gorodetsky — London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003.

after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, its stance on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has evolved into a more balanced position.

In the framework of Russia's understanding of increasing its role in regional and global developments, expanding influence, minimizing security concerns, and prioritizing interests, Russia's stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict has also been updated. From the Oslo Accords in 1993 to periods of unrest and tension during Israel-Hamas conflicts and to Donald Trump's 'Abraham Accords (Deal of the Century)' initiatives, Russia's official position, based on a two-state solution, has remained unchanged. In the current crisis that started with Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023, and continued with Israel's disproportionate use of force in Gaza, Russia maintains its position on the same foundational principles for two state solution.

Counter-Balancing US Influence in the Region

One of the pillars of Russia's multilateral foreign policy approach since Primakov is the balancing of the United States on a global and regional scale to the extent possible. The increasing interest of the US in the Middle East after the end of the Cold War and its subsequent active intervention in the region has led to an increasing importance of the region for Russia in time. The region's global energy policies, hosting radical Islamic movements and being an important market make it attractive for Russia. The foreign policy strategies adopted by Russia against the Western powers, which have strong political, economic and military influence in the region, can be explained as establishing multilateral relations, establishing and strengthening military presence, cooperation in the field of energy, and ensuring mobility by expanding the network of diplomatic relations.

At the heart of Russia's multilateral policy approach in the Middle East is the fact that it does not permanently position itself on one side or the other. As mentioned earlier, this gives Russia a wide room for maneuver in the region. At the same time, this opens up areas of diplomatic success and international

prestige for Russia in the region. Russia gains regional and global prestige by acting as a mediator in the Middle East. Russia is trying to play a leading role in the ceasefire or peace-building process in regional conflicts and is succeeding in gaining a positive image in the eyes of the peoples of the region. In its relations with its allies, it strives to pursue consistent and reliable actions. In this way, Russia is able to make new friendships in the region or to make existing ones lasting and solid.

In terms of multilateral foreign policy and the development of diplomatic relations, Russia has close ties with both Iran and the Gulf states. While developing its relations with Iran, Russia also takes into account the sensitivities of the Gulf countries and takes care not to take sides in its relations. Russia sells various weapons systems and even fighter jets to Iran, while at the same time responding to Gulf countries' requests to purchase air defense systems[334].

In addition to this, we can look at the policies it has actively pursued in Syria over the last decade in terms of playing the role of mediator and peacemaker. Russia has actively supported its partner, the regime of Bashar al-Assad, while at the same time being in constant contact with other parties to the conflict. Russia, which has active communication channels with the Syrian opposition and Kurdish groups, manages to keep its hand strong in publicizing its peacemaking role. In addition, the Russian state's stance on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can also be evaluated against the backdrop of multifaceted foreign policy and diplomatic success. Russia maintains relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization, a Soviet legacy, and continues its traditional dialogue with Israel.

Multilateralism allows Russia to simultaneously implement or easily change both status quo and reformist aspirations in the region. Thanks to its

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[334] UAE, Russia Discussing Upgrade of Air Defense System // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 17, 2023. — URL: https://tass.com/defense/1361107.

wide room for maneuver, this is not perceived as a breach of trust by regional countries or allies. This multifaceted foreign policy approach and the wide diplomatic room for maneuver have contributed significantly to Russia's ability to counterbalance US influence in the region. The US's limited room for maneuver due to its identity and ideology, its image that has created insecurity in the countries of the region in recent years and its bad image in the eyes of the peoples of the region make it easier for Russia to balance the US in the region.

Russia's only remaining military base in the region after the Cold War was the naval base in Tartus, Syria. The Soviet zone of action in the Mediterranean through Syria, Egypt, Libya and Algeria had been lost. At the same time, the lack of any military presence in the region rendered the planned power projection and influence expansion efforts in the region unsupportable. For Russia, the civil war in Syria offered a window of opportunity in this regard. The success of Russia's active military support for the Assad regime paved the way for Russia to establish new air bases in Syria, both in Khmeimim and Latakia. The presence of strong air, naval and ground forces at its bases in Tartus, Khmeimim and Latakia in Syria has provided Russia with a significant sphere of influence and action both in the Middle East land area and in the Eastern Mediterranean. The expanded sphere of influence has also led to a narrowing and balancing of the sphere of action of the existing great powers in the region. For instance, Russia's military presence in the region prevented the US-led coalition forces from targeting the Syrian regime in a wide-ranging manner after the alleged use of chemical weapons[335]. At the same time, the Western coalition has to coordinate with Russia for any air activity in the region.

[335] Chernov D. N., Nesmashnyi A. D., Tekin O., Igityan A. A. Counterintervention Success: Analyzing Russian and US Involvement in Syrian Crisis / D.N. Chernov, A. D. Nesmashnyi, O. Tekin, A. A. Igityan // Comparative Politics. — 2023. — Vol. 14, No. 1-2.

2.4. Status quo and reformist aspirations of the Russian Federation on the Regional Scale

Conclusion of Chapter

2.4.1. Europe

Following the end of the Cold War, the central focus in Soviet, and later Russian, foreign policy regarding the European region was the construction of a new European order that would include Russia. This was evident in discussions around the reunification of East and West Germany, references to the 1975 Helsinki Accords, the 1990 Paris Conference, and initiatives to establish a Russia-NATO dialogue. The desired outcome in all these cooperative efforts was the transition to a new system where Russia would be recognized as one of the key power centers, holding equal status with Western powers.

The foundation of Russia's desired transition lay in the elimination of one of the key elements that had driven the bipolar system during the Cold War: the dissolution of the USSR. Russia believed that the NATO-centric status quo in Europe, which excluded Russia, could not persist and advocated for either an expansion that included Russia or the establishment of a new European Concert in which Russia would be a participant. These aspirations were grounded in the historical context of Russia's role in European and great power politics before the Soviet era and its significant contribution to defeating fascism alongside the Allies during World War II.

The post-Cold War period introduced a new order, but contrary to Russia's desires, it was marked by NATO and the US military umbrella continuing to dominate European security, expanding eastward towards Russia's borders. The minimal inclusion of Russia in discussions and agreements with the EU, the US, and NATO regarding the new European order fostered a status quo-focused policy aimed at preserving its Soviet-era prestige and influence in Eastern Europe. This shift led to a transition in Russia's European policy from efforts to

establish cooperation and strategic partnerships to a level of selective engagement and geopolitical conflicts driven by national security concerns.

Underlying Russia's attempts to establish strategic partnerships and cooperation with Europe was the notion of "mutual dependence," a concept in international relations suggesting that liberalism reduces the risk of geopolitical conflicts. The economic relationships between Russia and the EU reached a point where both sides became each other's significant trade partners, indicating the desired mutual dependence. However, each side had advantages over the other: Russia with its energy exports to Europe, and Europe with its technological and knowledge-sharing capabilities. This dynamic seemed to reflect the conditions of mutual dependence theory proposed by Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane, which minimizes geopolitical risks. Nevertheless, NATO's adoption of policies such as the open-door policy and out-of-area operations, alongside the EU's insistence on liberal norms and rules aligned with the US, gradually encroached on Russia's near abroad and borders, leading to the failure of Nye and Keohane's theory in the context of EU-Russia relations. Russia was ready to cooperate on any new system in Europe that included its concerns and interests. However, in scenarios where it was excluded, Russia preferred to maintain the status quo as much as possible.

NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, led by the US without UN Security Council approval, was a turning point for Russia, marking the shift from a cooperative approach to selective engagement. Following the unsuccessful attempts at strategic partnerships and active involvement in European politics during President Putin's first term, Russia fully embraced this approach. Prominent European states like France, Germany, and Italy's emphasis on privileged partnerships and bilateral relations complemented Russia's selective engagement policy. However, perceptions of US-supported "color revolutions" in states near Russia's borders intensified geopolitical disputes and

security concerns in Russia's European policy, leading to a firmer and more decisive stance on preserving the status quo.

The persistent NATO expansions and military balance-altering policies such as the Missile Shield project, which aimed to limit Russia's military capabilities, increased the risk of geopolitical conflict. During Dmitry Medvedev's presidency, Russia proposed cooperation with the EU and the US to build a new Atlantic European order from Vancouver to Vladivostok or Lisbon to Vladivostok, but these proposals were largely ignored or superficially addressed during the "reset policy" period. The resurgence of status quo preservation tendencies in Russia's policy became evident when attempts at comprehensive reform in European politics failed. Russia's firm stance on maintaining the status quo against efforts to change the regional status of Ukraine and Georgia, coupled with the 2008 military intervention in Georgia and the 2014 accession of Crimea to Russia, underscored its willingness to defend its interests at all costs. This approach showed a shift from status quo preservation to a more revisionist stance driven by self-defense, as articulated in Russia's 2016 foreign policy concept.

One significant factor affecting Russia's relations with Europe and its desire to reform the Cold War status quo was the reduction of Europe's political, economic, and military dependence on the US. However, the EU's preference for being part of the US-led unipolar order rather than becoming a pole in a multipolar system, despite its significant economic power and political prestige in the post-Cold War era, led to Russia's disappointment in achieving a new European harmony. Whenever European states or the EU adopted independent strategies and cooperation frameworks with Russia, the US attempted to undermine these relations. An example is the US's efforts to impose sanctions on Russia and promote its own LNG gas as an alternative to Russian energy supplies.

In response to the reformist desires of the EU and the US in Europe, Russia adopted a conservative stance based on traditional and Christian values, opposing the liberal values associated with unrestricted freedoms. This dual approach in Russia's foreign policy reflected both status quo and reformist tendencies. On one hand, it sought to prevent the imposition of liberal values on other societies by promoting traditional and conservative values, while on the other hand, it aimed to lead social, cultural, and religious reforms reminiscent of the rise of Christianity and traditional values during the Russian Empire era in Europe.

2.4.2. Near Abroad

The Soviet Union dissolved without any war or external intervention, with the constituent countries deciding to secede based on the Soviet constitution. To manage this separation process in a civil and institutional manner, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus led the establishment of the CIS, and shortly thereafter, the Soviet Union officially dissolved. From the beginning of the post-Soviet era, Russia aimed to maintain political, economic, military, social, and cultural interactions within the Soviet geography under its leadership. Organizations like CIS, CSTO, and EAEU were established under this understanding, led by Russia. Since the inception of the post-Soviet period, Russia's foremost priority in its foreign policy has been the near abroad region, consistently listed first in its foreign policy concepts as a matter of prestige, existence, and national security. Considering all these factors, the near abroad stands out as the region where Russia's status quo-focused desires are most dominant in its regional policy.

From Russia's perspective, being one of the world's leading great powers since the mid-18th century, and inheriting the status of one of the two superpowers after World War II with the largest nuclear arsenal, has led it to define itself as a "great power" since its 1993 foreign policy concept. In Russian foreign policy, the new world order refers to a process of returning to a

multipolar system reminiscent of the pre-bipolar international system of great power politics following the end of the Cold War. Russia, considering itself one of the key power centers in this new international system, believes that great powers should have undisputed sovereignty in their regions and a say in their spheres of influence or natural influenced areas. In this context, the near abroad, regarded as Soviet or Russian imperial geography, is seen as a natural influenced area by Russia, meaning it will not accept any changes in the region, especially those stemming from external interventions, and will pursue a status quo-preserving policy within its capacity.

As seen in the 2008 Georgian crisis, the 2014 and ongoing 2022 Ukrainian crises, Russia has demonstrated that any revisions in the region, if inevitable, must be carried out under its control and interests. To maintain the status quo in the near abroad, Russia has spearheaded the establishment of regional organizations like CIS, CSTO, and EAEU to develop regional cooperation and coordination, aiming for integration within the post-Soviet geography. Despite facing many challenges during its most difficult years, Russia has managed to fulfill its regional leadership responsibilities with great resilience, providing many privileges to regional countries to support their security and sustainable economic development.

However, historically, the Eurasian post-Soviet geography has been a battleground for global and regional powers from both Europe and Asia seeking influence and pursuing their interests. This historical context has compelled Russia to adopt a security-centric protectionist policy while striving for regional integration. In the west, NATO and EU expansionism, in the east, the rise of China, and in the south, the emergence of regional powers like Turkey, Iran, and India necessitates Russia's establishment of relationships that can safeguard its interests, leading to the adoption of security-centric regional policies. However, it is inaccurate to say that Russia has solely pursued security-centric and protectionist policies with these actors. Russia has expressed its openness to

developing relations in all areas based on mutual gains and consideration of mutual concerns in its foreign policy statements and published concepts. In this regard, NATO and EU expansionism to Russia's borders and their detrimental impact on Russia's integration and cooperation efforts with regional countries have led Russia to adopt stricter protectionist policies in the western and southern regions.

Outside of NATO and EU-focused threats, Russia has succeeded in deepening its cooperation with China and regional actors based on pragmatic and mutually beneficial understandings. The increasing intensity of Russia's hardline status quo policies in the region, prompted by threats from Western powers, has also led to the emergence of reformist and somewhat revisionist desires in Russian foreign policy. With the rise of the Russian civilization concept in its foreign policy, these desires have transformed from merely pursuing security-centric status quo policies to realizing regional reforms and revisions in light of its increased capacity, acknowledging the inevitability of geopolitical conflicts in the region.

2.4.3. Middle East

From the decolonization process to the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union held a respected and influential position in the Middle East as one of the two superpowers. This status allowed the USSR to establish significant partnerships with countries such as Iraq, Syria, Libya, Algeria, and Egypt, which in turn expanded its spheres of influence. The political and military connections forged in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, in particular, enabled the USSR to play a game-changing role in the region. However, structural problems that peaked in the USSR's final years, the dissolution process, and the pro-Western foreign policy approach adopted by the Russian Federation in its early years, combined with limited economic resources, prevented Russia from maintaining its position as a leading power in the region. Nonetheless, the relationships established with regional countries during the Soviet era in military, political, and energy spheres

ensured that Russia always had the potential to pursue ambitious policies in the Middle East. In this context, Russia sought to maintain its presence in the region by easing or forgiving the debts owed by these countries from the Soviet era. Later, it focused on preserving relationships with its key Soviet-era partners, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, while concentrating on its own internal recovery process.

After the Cold War, despite the threats posed by the US's interventionist approach in exporting democracy based on liberal values and combating global radical Islamic terrorism, Russia adopted a pro-status quo stance, aiming to preserve the gains from the Soviet legacy due to its lack of power to counter US revisionist actions in the region. However, this approach began to change gradually with Yevgeny M. Primakov's desire for a transition to a multipolar world order and the development of policies towards the Middle East. This shift continued with the strengthening of desires to preserve the status quo by developing partnerships with regional and globally influential powers in response to the US's revisionist actions in the region, carried out without UN Security Council approval and disregarding international law.

Russia continued to follow a planned and more assertive and active policy by systematically strengthening the status quo regarding its Soviet-era gains in the region. Relations based on mutual gain established with the Gulf Arab countries, its inclusion as an observer member in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2006, the expansion of its humanitarian aid policies towards the region, and the development of relations with regional powers such as Turkey and Iran, increased Russia's influence in the Middle East. The acquisition of new partners and the expansion of its influence areas also meant the gradual balancing of the absolute hegemony and extensive influence areas of the US and its allies in the region following the Cold War.

Russia's foreign policy approach, prioritizing strategic cooperation with the West after the Cold War, similarly involved cooperation with Western countries in the Middle East. In 1990, during the final period of the USSR, it

supported military intervention against Iraq under the auspices of the UN Security Council in cooperation with Western states in response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. This cooperation, occurring at the end of the USSR's existence, indicated Russia's intention to maintain a cooperative approach with the West in the region. Additionally, Russia continued to pursue collaborative policies with Western states to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and restrict the armament efforts of regional countries. For a long time, it imposed restrictions on the sale of certain missile systems and aircraft to Iran and adopted policies in alignment with the IAEA and other permanent members of the UN Security Council regarding Iran's uranium enrichment efforts.

As Russia experienced political, economic, and military improvements and development, the continuation of US revisionist actions in the region gradually led to limited balancing efforts against these actions. Despite this trend, initially characterized by limited resistance and essentially pro-status quo tendencies, the changing regional status quo due to the US's occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq and sanctions on countries like Iran, Syria, and Libya necessitated partial changes in the existing status quo. Consequently, Russia's gradual adoption of more assertive and active policies in the region aimed to counterbalance US desires to further revise the region to its preferences, elevating the status quo-focused actions to a different phase. Russia increased its role as a significant international actor in the region by actively engaging with regional countries and European partners like France and Germany over issues such as the US invasion of Iraq, Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and discussions on Iran's nuclear activities. During this period, Russia also expanded its relations with countries like Syria, Libya, Algeria, and Egypt and their leaders.

However, the local uprisings at the beginning of the 2010s and the Arab Spring process, perceived as being used by the US and its European partners to redesign the region, led to an escalation in Russia's efforts to balance US and

allied influence. The turning point in this context was NATO's military intervention in Libya, which exceeded its intended and legitimate scope approved by the UN Security Council, aiming for regime change and redesigning Libya in favor of Western interests. This intervention almost entirely ended Russia's pursuit of cooperation with Western states in the region. Concurrently, the limited balancing policy evolved into a full counter-balance strategy, highlighted by Russia's military intervention in Syria to prevent Western and regional allies' desires for military intervention akin to Libya.

For the first time since the Cold War, Russian military power was actively present outside the Soviet geography, preventing the overthrow of its ally, the Bashar al-Assad government, fighting against ISIS and Al-Qaeda terrorism, and establishing a strengthened naval base in Tartus and an airbase in Khemeimim. This intervention marked Russia's re-emergence as a game changer in the region after the Cold War. Russia demonstrated to regional countries that it could be an alternative regional and global power during a period when US allies faced trust issues in their relationships. Successfully managing a political and military intervention process in Syria affirmed Russia's status as a great power, a narrative it had been advocating to its counterparts since the end of the Cold War. The capacity for strong counter-balance and active status quo preservation in the region was complemented by policies of expanding partnerships based on mutual gains, non-interference in internal affairs, and the inviolability of sovereignty. These developments, showcasing Russia's flexible diplomacy capable of sustaining both status quo and reformist policies, underscored its capacity to transform regional power dynamics and add new achievements to the Soviet legacy.

The establishment of strategic partnerships at an institutional level within OPEC+ and the Arab League with resource-rich regional actors like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, previously unestablished, is a new achievement. The failure of Western powers' attempts to involve Gulf countries and other

regional states in sanctions against Russia related to the Ukraine crisis exemplifies the tangible outcomes of these achievements. Additionally, successful initiatives like the Astana Process with regional actors Turkey and Iran to establish peace in the region are highlighted as successful reforms in the balance of power. Russia's increasing reformist aspirations towards the Middle East, driven by its growing capacity, have emerged more prominently than its status quo-oriented approach in recent years, as evidenced by its steps to balance Western influence and promote a multipolar world order.

CHAPTER 3: GLOBAL ASPIRATIONS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS IN RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

3.1. US Led-Western Unipolar Acts, Rising Security Concerns and Multipolar Aspirations of Russia

The Cold War culminated in a bloodless and peaceful conclusion, leading to the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, which in turn marked the demise of the bipolar international system. The conclusion of the Cold War, marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, heralded the emergence of a new international order. Prior to the dissolution of the USSR, negotiations between superpowers primarily revolved around the establishment of a new security framework spanning from Vancouver to Vladivostok. These discussions also aimed to foster enhanced cooperation and trade between Eastern and Western bloc nations.

However, the USSR's disintegration brought about profound changes, particularly in the Western attitude towards the Russian Federation, which was considered the continuing of the USSR. The dissolution of the USSR led to a shift in the Western stance, portraying the Western bloc as victorious and Russia as a defeated party in the Cold War. Consequently, from the Western perspective, there emerged an expectation that Russia would need to adapt and align with the forthcoming new world order, to be shaped by the "victorious" Western powers led by the United States.

George Bush's proclamation of victory and endorsement of liberalism during his speech in the US Congress[336] was followed by Bill Clinton's assertion

[336] State of The Un,on; Transcript of President Bush’s Address on the State of the Union // The New York Times. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 29, 2023. — URL: https://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/29/us/state-union-transcript-president-bush-s-address-state-union.html.

that the US assumed a global policing role[337]. Over time, this period unveiled a series of what can be seen as "triumphalist" actions undertaken by the US, extending from the 1990s into the mid-2000s[338].

Triumphalism, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, is "an unpleasant show of pleasure and satisfaction because you have won or done better than someone."[339] This definition aptly captures the sentiment surrounding the actions of the United States during this era. The unilateral decisions and actions of the US generated recurring criticism, leading to the characterization of the post-Cold War foreign policy as unilateral and marked by a sense of triumphalism.

The profound influence of American hegemony and the promotion of Western liberal values converged with the backdrop of Russian political, social, and economic fragility in the 1990s, representing key facets of the immediate post-Cold War landscape. The universalization of Western-style state frameworks and liberal principles found formal expression in the Paris Charter, a document predating the dissolution of the USSR in 1990. This charter enshrined fundamental ideals including human rights, international law, democracy, openness, free trade and interdependence as its core tenets.

Nonetheless, a more nuanced analysis suggests that these concepts were ostensibly endorsed with shared intentions, as long as their assessment transcended a solely Western perspective. The divergent evaluations of these concepts often arose due to their contextual interpretation within Western paradigms.

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[337] President Clinton's 1996 State of the Union Address as Delivered // The Clinton White House Archives. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 11, 2023. — URL: https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/WH/New/other/sotu.html.

[338] Torkunov A., Noonan N. C., Shakleina T., et al. Russia and the United States in the Evolving World Order. — Moscow: MGIMO University, 2018 — 414 p.

[339] Triumphalism // Cambridge Dictionary. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 11, 2023. — URL: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/triumphalism#.

Following the dissolution of the USSR, the United States emerged as the singular global hegemonic power. In this scenario, two options for establishing a new global security and cooperation framework presented themselves: the first involved the US sharing its role and authority with ascending great powers like the EU, Japan, China, and Russia. The second option entailed the US constructing a unipolar system with support from its European allies. Opting for the latter path, however, lacked historical precedent for the continuity and sustainability of a unipolar system maintained by a single hegemon. This approach echoed the application of the "end of history" theory to US foreign policy.

Consequently, the US-led Western powers adopted a predominant strategy that have relied on the dissolution of national borders, traditions, and civilizations with creation of responsibility to protect and humanitarian intervention concepts, the empowerment of Western dominance in the new international system, a Western-led international financial system, the punishment of rising powers with unilateral sanctions, and the dissemination and imposition of Western liberal values. These have become main Russian grievances towards the West throughout post-Cold War period and then, President V. V. Putin’s historical speech in the Munich Security Conference arisen as a turning point in Russian foreign policy. It changed from explaining concerns and grievances towards the West and following passive resistance to adoption of more assertive and active policy. That has been embodied in multipolar aspirations and their applications in Russian policy on global scale.

3.1.1. Russian Grievances towards Western-led Rules-based Order in Post-Cold War

Rules-based order concept have been one of the famous and controversial concepts since the end of the Cold War and it became one of the well-known targets for Russian foreign policy in regard for cross-examination of Western-

hegemon international system. For example, President Putin stated that in Valdai International Forum in 2022;

In general, it is unclear who invented these rules, what these rules are based on, and what is inside these rules.[340]

Malcolm Chalmers also studies on uncertainty and contentious of the rules-based order concept and emphasizes subjectivity and non-universal structure of it in its article; "Which Rules? Why There is No Single Rules-Based International System."[341]

In the 1990 Paris Charter, rules-based order, which was committed and agreed upon by all sides, was stressed as one of the most essential bases of the post-Cold War new world order. Its fundamental tenets are rooted in democracy, supremacy and implementation of international law, multilateralism (institutionalism), the safeguarding of human rights, conflict resolution, prevention of nuclear weapon proliferation, environmental conservation, enhancement of diplomatic practices, trade, and collaboration across all domains[342]. However, the Atlantic Charter in August 1941, in the midst of World War II, was declared by the leaders of the US and Britain, shortly after the Soviet Union was attacked by Nazi Germany. In brief, Atlantic Charter mainly relied on the supremacy of liberal values and liberal democratic system for post-World War II world order.[343] While US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British leader Winston Churchill were stating their commitments to the Atlantic Charter, the USSR was not yet part of the Alliance. Despite these developments, the process of the war had been different and the new world order

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[340] Putin: Predlagayemyy ‘Poryadok, Osnovannyy Na Pravilakh’, Pozvolyayet Zhit' Voobshche Bez Pravil // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 29, 2023. — URL: https://tass.ru/politika/16174379.

[341] Chalmers M. Which Rules? Why There is No Single Rules-Based International System / M. Chalmers. — Royal United Services Institute. — April 2019.

[342] Charter of Paris for a New Europe. — Paris, 1990. — URL: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/6/39516.pdf

[343] Roosevelt F. D., Churchill W. S. The Atlantic Charter. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 18, 2023. — URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp.

after World War II was established with the arrangements made in Yalta and Potsdam in 1945. However, the ideological divide that emerged afterward led to the emergence of a bipolar world order during the Cold War. Despite all this, efforts were made to build common values and goals in the establishment of peace and cooperation areas with the Helsinki Accords in 1975, and this process culminated in the Paris Charter in 1990. However, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Russia facing critical internal political and economic issues, there emerged a unilateral policy based on the desire for a new world order, not based on the “rules-based international order” established in the Paris Charter but rather on a "liberal rules-based international order" that seeks the superiority of Western liberal democratic values led by the US-led Western powers.

In practice, the Western-led rules-based order has been established and reinforced through institutions spanning different spheres in the post-Cold War era.[344] Within the security realm, NATO transitioned from a defensive organization to a guarantor of implementing and upholding the Western-led rules-based international order.[345] Economically, the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Bank have significantly bolstered this order. Politically, regional and international levels like the European Union, G7, and to some extent OSCE have embraced the Western-led rules-based order. The recent creation of AUKUS, driven by the US, shares similar aspirations. Furthermore, Western powers have undertaken political initiatives to extend liberal democracy beyond the Atlantic, cultivate soft power in various regions, and advance the digital and informational domains to disseminate Western liberal values in public spaces. These actions align with the

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[344] Podberezkin A., Chirkov M., Chistyakov M. Neokolonial'naya ekspansiya Prosveshchennyy egoizm kak paradigma miroustroystva v kontekste Vashingtonskogo miroporyadka / A. Podberezkin, M. Chirkov, M. Chistyakov // Svobodnaya mysl'. – 2024. – № 1(1703). – S. 97-106.

[345] Podberezkin A. I. NATO - osnova proamerikanskoy voyenno-politicheskoy koalitsii Zapada / A. I. Podberezkin // Obozrevatel'. – 2022. – № 3-4(386-387). – S. 5-22. – DOI: 10.48137/2074-2975_2022_3-4_5.

pursuit of the Western-led rules-based international order. The pivotal aspect highlighted regarding the predominance of Atlantic Charter values and regulations over those of the Paris Charter was the clear stance of excluding Russian concerns and aspirations from the process of establishing the new world order.

The motivation behind Russia's drive to end the Cold War was rooted in its desire to foster an improved strategic partnership and collaboration with Western nations, especially after the decline of communist ideology both domestically and internationally. Subsequent to this aspiration, the immediate aftermath of the Cold War witnessed Russia's political landscape undergoing a significant transition and transformation – moving from a communist structure to a capitalist and democratic model with the cooperation of Western powers. As previously mentioned, Boris Yeltsin and Andrey Kozyrev were at the forefront of this Atlanticist and pro-Western approach within Russian politics in the immediate post-Cold War period. However, Russia's stance eventually shifted due to realizing imposition of the Western-led liberal order and ignorance of the Russian concerns and aspirations, rising nationalist sentiments and traditional values in Russian society. Rising popularity of the Communist Party with the leadership of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, Gennady Zyuganov's liberal and nationalist party in the elections of 1990s and Boris Yeltsin's decisions after the 1995 elections about appointment of Y. M. Primakov as foreign minister in 1996 are clear proofs to understand change of minds in Russian public and Russian politics. After this dramatic shift in Russian politics, rising of several critical domains can be identified as key areas of Russian grievances towards the Western-led unipolar system, but four of them could be put forward according to Russian global politics. These are:

- ***Violations of Sovereignty and International Law with Responsibility to Protect and Humanitarian Intervention Concepts:*** Besides Russian national and regional threat perceptions from the West as NATO

expansion towards Russian border, there are more threats perceptions of Russia towards the US-led Western powers on global scale. Putting forward responsibility to protect and humanitarian intervention concepts, firstly in Eastern Europe and then Middle East, after the end of the Cold War has evolved into excuse and justification of by-pass role of the UN Security Council, which is the sole authority to decide using hard power, in the regional and global crisis.

- ***Lack of Diversity and Inclusiveness*:** Russia's perspective highlights the lack of diversity, representation, and inclusiveness within the global system in all spheres. It contends that the Western-led order often marginalizes and excludes non-Western perspectives and interests.
- ***Hegemony of the Dollar and Economic Institutions*:** The dominance of the US dollar in trade and the preeminence of Western-driven economic institutions like the IMF, WTO, and World Bank are seen by Russia as mechanisms that bolster Western economic influence in global stage.
- ***Unilateral Sanctions and Norm Dissemination:*** Russia is one of the countries, who has been imposed tough unilateral sanctions by US-led Western powers since the Crimean accession to Russia in 2014. Additionally, the propagation of liberal values and norms by the West is often viewed with suspicion, as it is seen as an attempt to reshape internal governance structures in non-Western countries and deformation of countries own traditional values.

Russian rising voices and counter-reactions towards its these grievances in global politics has become more assertive in time and that also leads international relations to be witness of Vladimir V. Putin’s Munich Speech and Russian more concrete quest for establishment of the multipolar and the polycentric new world order.

Rising powers and Russian grievances have common arguments towards Western hegemons. However, Russian reactionist policies towards Western

hegemons due to its national security concerns may entail evaluations as Russian demands are more than its accrual capacity, as Vikash Chandra did in his analyze on rising powers and future of international order.[346] On the other hand, Russian relations with Western hegemons has more complicated structure than other rising powers like India, Brazil or China. Historical and cultural heritage of relations and security concerns of Russia towards the West has lots of dimensions and mostly relies on geopolitical issues. Therefore, Chandra's assessment on Russia and its overweight demands in contemporary international order may not be seen as correct analyze.

Responsibility to Protect (R2P), Humanitarian Intervention and Violation of Sovereignty

After the end of the Cold War and just before the dissolution of the USSR, the international community's joint action under the auspices of the UN Security Council against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991 increased the belief that the UN would emerge as a reliable organ for maintaining international peace and stability in the transition to a new world order. However, the inadequate and delayed interventions by the United Nations in response to the civilian massacres in Somalia in 1993, followed by Rwanda in 1994, and Bosnia in 1995, shook this confidence. Among the prominent reasons for the shaken confidence were the perception that selective action was taken based on the international geopolitical significance of the country or society expected to be intervened in, and allegations that major powers acted according to their geopolitical and economic interests.

All these processes led to the discussion of the concepts of humanitarian intervention and responsibility to protect (R2P) in international relations. States are institutions responsible for ensuring the security of their own citizens.

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[346] Chandra V. Rising Powers and The Future International Order / V. Chandra // World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues. — 2018. — Vol. 22, No. 1. — P. 10–23.

However, violence incidents within a country caused by armed groups due to the weakness of states, leading to civilian deaths, massacres, and genocide, are considered as issues that should be the responsibility not only of the concerned state but also of the international community[347]. In this regard, the necessity for the international community to converge under the umbrella of the United Nations for legitimate and collective intervention has arisen. However, the requirement for consensus among the permanent members of the Security Council, who have veto power over binding decisions, has turned this necessity into a source of dispute.

The humanitarian, moral, and ethical crises caused by the civilian massacres in Rwanda and Bosnia also influenced the conflicts between separatist forces in Kosovo and Serbia, which marked the final confrontational phase of Yugoslavia's dissolution process in the late 1990s. In the same geographical region, numerous measures were attempted under the auspices of the UN to prevent a recurrence of the tragedies witnessed in Bosnia. However, this process, which also involved Russia, later took on a different dimension when NATO, led by the United States, violated the rule that military force could only be legitimately used under the authority of the UN Security Council. According to Russia, Western powers led by the United States had gone as far as using military force in violation of international law to construct a unipolar, single-pole structure of the international system and extension of its sphere of influence towards the regions like Balkans.[348] This breach of international law

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[347] United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect // United Nations. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 26, 2023. — URL: https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml.

[348] Arlyapova E. S., Ponomareva E. G., Prorokovich D. Vozmozhnosti NATO v global'nom upravlenii: mesto deystviya - Balkany / E. S. Arlyapova, E. G. Ponomareva, D. Prorokovich // Vestnik mezhdunarodnykh organizatsiy: obrazovaniye, nauka, novaya ekonomika. – 2022. – T. 17. № 2. – S. 208-223. – DOI 10.17323/1996-7845-2022-02-09.

through military force was attempted to be legitimized by disregarding the concepts of “humanitarian intervention” and “responsibility to protect”.

From Russia's perspective, this development was initially perceived as a top-level national security threat and a matter of survival, and later it highlighted the possibility of unlawful military force being used against other countries and regions in the future. Indeed, despite opposition from some of America's allies and prominent European allies, Russia's concerns materialized when the United States, along with some of its allies, invaded Iraq in 2003, disregarding the United Nations Security Council. Although the invasion of Iraq by the United States was not attempted to be legitimized under the guise of humanitarian intervention, it represented a similar development in terms of being another military intervention that sidelined the UN Security Council.

In 1999, despite its objections to the “unlawful” military intervention in Serbia, Russia did not oppose the doctrinalization of the concepts of humanitarian intervention and "responsibility to protect" under the UN framework in 2005[349]. The key issue for Russia here is that the relevant UN article specifies the UN Security Council as the sole legitimate body for the international community to act in situations requiring humanitarian intervention and protection responsibilities[350]. Shortly after this regulation was established, in 2011, during the debate over humanitarian intervention in Libya in accordance with the relevant UN article regarding the responsibility to protect against the Kaddafi regime, Russia again cooperated and silently consented to NATO's request for military intervention in Libya based on the decision of the UN Security Council. However, the UN Security Council's Resolution 1973, authorizing NATO's military intervention in Libya, only included the protection

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[349] United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect // United Nations. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 26, 2023. — URL: https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml.
[350] Ibid.

of civilians and the establishment of a no-fly zone[351]. Nevertheless, NATO's operation exceeded its purpose and led to a series of events resulting in the overthrow of the Kaddafi regime, Kaddafi's killing, and the ongoing failure to achieve national unity in Libya.

Following this development, Russia's skepticism towards the concepts of humanitarian intervention and responsibility to protect has been completely dispelled from Russia's perspective. Russia has come to the conclusion that, both before and after the 2005 regulation in the UN, the relevant concepts have been used by the US and its allies as a legitimizing method for:

- Safeguarding and enhancing their own geopolitical and economic interests,
- Threatening and implementing interventions in the sovereignty of other countries,
- Arbitrarily violating international law, humanitarian, and democratic values through double standards,
- Disregarding diplomacy and dialogue in the construction of peace and stability,
- Maintaining and strengthening hegemonic positions.

Russia's firm conviction, reached after NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011, has become the fundamental rationale for the resistance against similar practices in Syria in subsequent years. This resistance, which effectively eliminates the pretext of “humanitarian intervention” based on protection responsibilities in arbitrary uses of power in international relations, has manifested a concrete stance against the construction and sustainability of a unipolar system and has advocated for multipolar arrangements. Russia's foreign policy outlook

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[351] UN Security Council, Security Council Resolution 1973 (2011) [on the situation in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya], S/RES/1973(2011). [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 17, 2023. — URL: https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unsc/2011/en/76684.

emphasizes the necessity of balancing mechanisms against unilateral actions and disregarding international law, paving the way for the international system to adopt a multipolar and multilateral structure.

Lack of Diversity and Inclusiveness in Western Rules-Based Order

The transformation of the "rules-based order" into a "Western-led" structure actually summarizes Russia's stance against the unipolar system based on Western hegemony under US leadership in the post-Cold War era. The attempt to impose the construction of political, economic, military, social, and cultural values globally through liberal democratic values implies the restriction of diversity and representation in these areas by a certain group in international relations. This danger was pointed out in Russia's foreign policy doctrine published even in the early 1990s when it prioritized integration with the West[352].

Following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR, there were two prominent organizations at the international level for Russia: The United Nations (especially the Security Council) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). While the United Nations is the only organization authorized to use force under international law and is structured to represent almost all states in the world, it is the most representative intergovernmental organization in the world. Given its binding decisions and authority to use force, the Security Council is the most prominent UN body. For Russia, the permanent membership of the UN Security Council is crucial in proving its international prestige and its status as a major power after the USSR. The unquestionable structure of the authority of the Security Council in

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[352] Osnovnyye polozheniya kontseptsii vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Federal'nyye zakony. Rasporyazheniyem Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii B.N. Yel'tsina ot 23 aprelya 1993 g. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.russiamatters.org/sites/default/files/media/files/1993%20Foreign%20Policy%20Strategy%20RUS.pdf.

determining and implementing any policy of high importance in regional and global developments in international relations suffered a major setback in 1999 when NATO intervened militarily in Serbia without the approval of the UN Security Council. In addition, the importance for Russia of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which is one of the intergovernmental organizations with the highest representation rate after the UN, being pushed into a passive position under the shadow of NATO and the EU has resulted in the questioning of international organizations dominated by Western states from the perspective of Russia.

Beginning from the second half of the 1990s, limitations in representation and capabilities of states represented in international organizations serving the interests of one or a group of states have emerged, triggering desires for a multipolar world order[353]. Additionally, the increasing role of alternative international informal mechanisms led by the United States, such as the G7, has been highlighted as another effort of narrow-scope structures to establish hegemony. This political dimension of narrow and low-representation structures also encompasses arrangements in institutions where the influence of one or a group of states predominates, such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO, forming the financial aspect of the issue. Similarly, the globalization trend, driven by hegemonic groups with low representation or unilateral policies pursued by the US as a sole superpower, has led to the international spread or imposition process of social and cultural values, creating another dimension where diversity is excluded and inclusiveness is overlooked[354]. This narrow-scope international governance approach, which encompasses the theoretical explanation of Antonio

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[353] Antonova I., Lagutina M. Russia's Perspective of a New World Order: From Multipolarity to Polycentricity / I. Antonova, M. Lagutina // In: The Routledge Handbook of Russian International Relations Studies. — Ed. Lagutina M., Tsvetkova N., Sergunin A. — New York: Routledge, 2023.

[354] Sloss D. L. Introduction: Preserving a Rules-Based International Order / D.L. Sloss ; D. L. Sloss (Ed.) // Is the International Legal Order Unraveling? — Oxford: Oxford University Press, Forthcoming. — 2022. — URL: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3891633.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony[355] and concrete implementation methods, has been viewed by Russia since the late 1990s as a matter of survival and an inevitable need for change.

In Russian foreign policy concepts, when describing Russia's foreign policy priorities, the first priority is often outlined under the subtitle "Establishment of an Equitable and Sustainable World Order," which addresses the lack of diversity in the international system. It is stated that the current international system, established to serve the interests of a single state or group of states, with low levels of representation and participation, is the greatest obstacle to establishing a stable international system based on equality and sustainability[356]. Russia believes that, as a primary condition for ensuring peace and stability in international relations, all states must adhere to international law on equal terms, and if they fail to comply, they should be punished under the same conditions. However, the existence of the veto power of the five permanent members, including Russia, in the UN Security Council, which has the authority to impose sanctions, has emerged as an obstacle to the implementation of this idea after the Cold War. Despite Russia's special authority and position in this regard, the need for reform in the UN Security Council to increase representation has led Russia to the point of expressing the necessity of such reform in international relations[357].

At the core of Russia's complaints about the restriction of increasing diversity and representation in the post-Cold War international system lies its desire to balance the leadership of the West, led by the United States, as well as

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[355] Gramsci A. Prison Notebooks. — Edited and translated by Hoare Q., Nowell Smith G. / A. Gramsci — New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.

[356] Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii 12.02.2013. [Electronic resource] — URL: http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186.

[357] Russian foreign minister attacks West as ‘empire of lies’ // CNN. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 23, 2024. — URL: https://edition.cnn.com/2023/09/23/world/lavrov-unga-intl-latam/index.html.

the desire to restrict the activities of other rising global and regional powers like itself. Additionally, global crises in international security and financial governance in the 2000s have accompanied and emphasized the lack of diversity and representation in the world order. For example, the economic crisis of 2008 resulted in a shakeup among hegemonic powers, leading to the prominence of organizations with high representation and openness to new members, such as the G-20[358]. The aspirations of rising powers like Russia to pursue more ambitious and active foreign policy activities have led to the strategy of elevating the lack of diversity into an international awareness dimension. In this context, Russia has adopted active policies towards establishing or strengthening regional and global international organizations. Regional and global organizations such as BRICS, SCO, EAEU, ASEAN, African Union, and CIS have, over time, embraced integration, cooperation, and increasing membership as policies to supplement the limited representation rights not present in existing Western-led international organizations.

One of the fundamental arguments underlying Russia's desires for a multipolar world order is the necessity for the democratization of international relations, which also needs to be considered in this context. From the Russian perspective, the transition of international relations towards a more representative and inclusive structure will lead to a more democratic, fair, and egalitarian international system[359]. However, this democratization process should occur without interfering with the diversity of nations' different cultures, social structures, civilizations, political, and economic systems. Any contrary

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[358] Lukin A. V. Russia to Reinforce the Asian Vector // Russia in Global Affairs. [Electronic resource] / A. Lukin. — No. 2 (April/June 2009). — Accessed August 18, 2023. — URL: https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-to-reinforce-the-asian-vector/.

[359] Trenin D. 20 Years of Vladimir Putin: How Russian Foreign Policy Has Changed // Carnegie Endowment for International Peace / D. Trenin. [Electronic resource] — Accessed August 19, 2023. — URL: https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2019/08/20-years-of-vladimir-putin-how-russian-foreign-policy-has-changed?lang=en&center=russia-eurasia.

development would lead to restrictions or the imposition of norms and values, which precisely fosters a lack of diversity and inclusiveness. Therefore, according to Russia's viewpoint, a democratization process in international relations should respect the autonomy and diversity of nations, allowing them to preserve their unique cultural, social, and political identities without external interference. This approach fosters a more inclusive and diverse international system where different voices are heard and respected, contributing to greater stability and harmony in global affairs.

Hegemony of the Dollar and Western Economic Dominance

After the end of the Cold War, the rising trends of regionalization and globalization have greatly accelerated international trade and financial activities. Through international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), and World Trade Organization (WTO), a liberal economic approach, along with efforts for development and market integration, has experienced a significant proliferation. Western states, led by the United States, have been supportive of these policies to promote globalization and the spread of free trade, as well as the development of international trade. In fact, beyond support, the US has pressured other states to lower their customs duties and enact regulations to promote free trade within the framework of WTO regulations[360]. China's swift admission to WTO membership, despite not meeting all the desired regulations, was also part of this process. At the heart of the globalizing and liberalizing economy was the US Dollar as the reserve currency. Following the Cold War, the US Dollar emerged as a global currency, becoming one of the cornerstones of the US international hegemony. The international reserve status of the Dollar and its status as the most widely used

[360] The Globalization Challenge: The U.S. Role in Shaping World Trade and Investment // Brookings. [Electronic resource] — Accessed August 29, 2023. — URL: https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-globalization-challenge-the-u-s-role-in-shaping-world-trade-and-investment/.

currency in international trade have provided the US with the opportunity to gain influence over other countries through decisions of the Federal Reserve or regulations on the amount of dollars in the international market.

At the outset, it cannot be said that Russia had a clear stance on improving relations with the West and ensuring its economic recovery. However, there were discomforts regarding the possibilities of obtaining loans from the IMF and World Bank, as well as the conditions proposed to meet countries' loan requests. The adaptation of liberal economic reforms through the IMF, especially involving harsh privatizations and wild capitalist practices in developing and emerging states like Turkey, Argentina, and Russia, contributed to these countries being among the most affected by the global economic crises of the late 1990s. Russia's economic recovery alongside rising energy prices and financial reforms allowed it to emerge as an international commercial actor in various sectors, particularly energy, in international trade. During this period, one of Russia's most adopted economic strategies was to increase the Central Bank's dollar reserves due to the dollar's international reserve status, thereby strengthening the country's economy against external interventions by international companies or the United States.

After Russia stabilized economically and geopolitical risks increased, it began to vocally express the need for reforms in the IMF and World Bank regarding member countries' borrowing capabilities and veto powers. Especially after the global economic crisis of 2008, the obvious need for developed economies to support developing countries in international financial regulations brought Russia's demands for reforms in quota arrangements and borrowing opportunities within the IMF and World Bank to the forefront[361]. This was not

[361] Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia. Dmitry Medvedev Addressed the World Economic Forum in Davos // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] — December 7, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/10163.

because Russia needed to borrow from the IMF or World Bank. From Russia's perspective, it was more about increasing the contributions sustainable economic development policies, focused on growth and improving relations with regional and global organizations, would bring to the country's economy, which also falls under the UN's mission. In this way, Russia not only ensures its own growth-oriented economic development but also enhances its prestige and international status by participating in development initiatives[362].

While Russia initially adopted a foreign policy based on transitioning to a multipolar and multilateral international system, it did not pursue assertive policies towards breaking the hegemony of the US dollar and the US's dominance in international financial institutions. However, unilateral sanctions imposed by Western powers led by the US against Russia following the Crimea issue in 2014 accelerated Russia's policies to actively participate in international trade through institutions such as the Eurasian Economic Union and BRICS, where it also played a prominent role. In this context, Russia officially supported the establishment of institutions such as the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015, as well as the New Development Bank (NDB) under BRICS in 2014 and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) at the end of 2015.

The emergence of these institutions aims not to eliminate the IMF and World Bank but to create alternative and complementary credit and development institutions for developing states, without harboring a revisionist desire to abolish existing ones. What distinguishes the NDB and AIIB from the IMF and World Bank is the equality of member countries' veto rights and their capacity to receive credit based on investment opportunities. Despite significant changes in the economic development and capacities of IMF and World Bank member countries over the past thirty years, with the US still holding dominant veto and

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[362] Bordachev T. Signs of a New International Order / T. Bordachev // RIAC. — accessed April 27, 2024, https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/signs-of-a-new-international-order/.

credit allocation shares (nearly eight times that of Russia and two and a half times that of China), the lack of reform despite demands highlights the increasing importance of alternative institutions[363].

In recent years, increasing regional and global conflict risks, pandemic restrictions, cash shortages in the international market, and energy crises have led to a rise in mercantilist tendencies in global level. Despite these developments, Russia, which remains open to bilateral relations, regional partnerships, and global collaborations, continues to pursue active policies with a sustainable economic development approach. Furthermore, since Donald Trump assumed the presidency of the United States in 2016, decisions to increase customs duties or impose quotas on many products previously subject to low tariffs under the pretext of "national security" within the WTO framework, as well as entering into a "trade war" with China, have significantly impacted international trade[364]. Russia's policy of promoting global vitality in trade based on regional, global, and even intercontinental agreements amid US-China trade tensions necessitated adopting a neutral and pragmatic stance. Ironically, after the end of the Cold War, the United States, which previously pressured countries to adhere to WTO regulations, liberalize quotas, and regulate low tariffs, has emerged in recent years as one of the leading states taking the most measures against free trade. The trade war between the US and China validates arguments suggesting that the US, by politicizing the dollar and trade, engaging in aggressive policies against other countries, disrupting peace and stability, and attempting to dictate countries' economic policies, is creating an environment that justifies such claims. Additionally, China, the largest trading partner of the US, facing investment and venture restrictions imposed by the US

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[363] Molchanov, M. Russia and Globalization / M. Molchanov // Perspectives on Global Development and Technology. — September 2005. — DOI: 10.1163/156915005775093322.

[364] Lukin A. The US–China Trade War and China's Strategic Future / A. Lukin // Survival. — 2019. — Vol. 61, No. 1. — P. 23-50. — DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2019.1568045.

and the EU, has facilitated further development in Russia-China trade volume, surpassing $200 billion today. On the other hand, trade wars slow down the flow of international trade and push countries towards protectionist policy approaches. This situation reflects negatively on Russia in terms of disrupting the momentum of international trade and breaking the impact of sanctions.

Since 2014, one of the most significant methods Russia has employed to undermine the US dollar hegemony is the use of national currencies in bilateral trade. Particularly among BRICS, EAEU, and SCO countries, these policies have been gaining momentum, and Russia has successfully expanded this approach to include G-20 countries in recent years. President Vladimir Putin, emphasizing the increasing use of national currencies in trade with its most important partners, China and India, has also noted a growing trend in the use of national currencies in trade with Turkey, Iran, and African countries[365]. With the escalation of the Ukraine issue into a major conflict zone and the historical significance of the sanctions imposed on Russia at the beginning of 2022, Russia's struggle against the dollar hegemony has been further accelerated. Below is a graphic published on Statista showing the distribution of currencies entering the domestic market in Russia (on the left) and those used for payments from Russia (on the right) to other countries in 2021, illustrating the situation just before the onset of severe sanctions following the Ukraine crisis.

[365] Russia Intends to Increase Settlements in National Currencies // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed August 30, 2023. — URL: https://tass.com/economy/1430549.

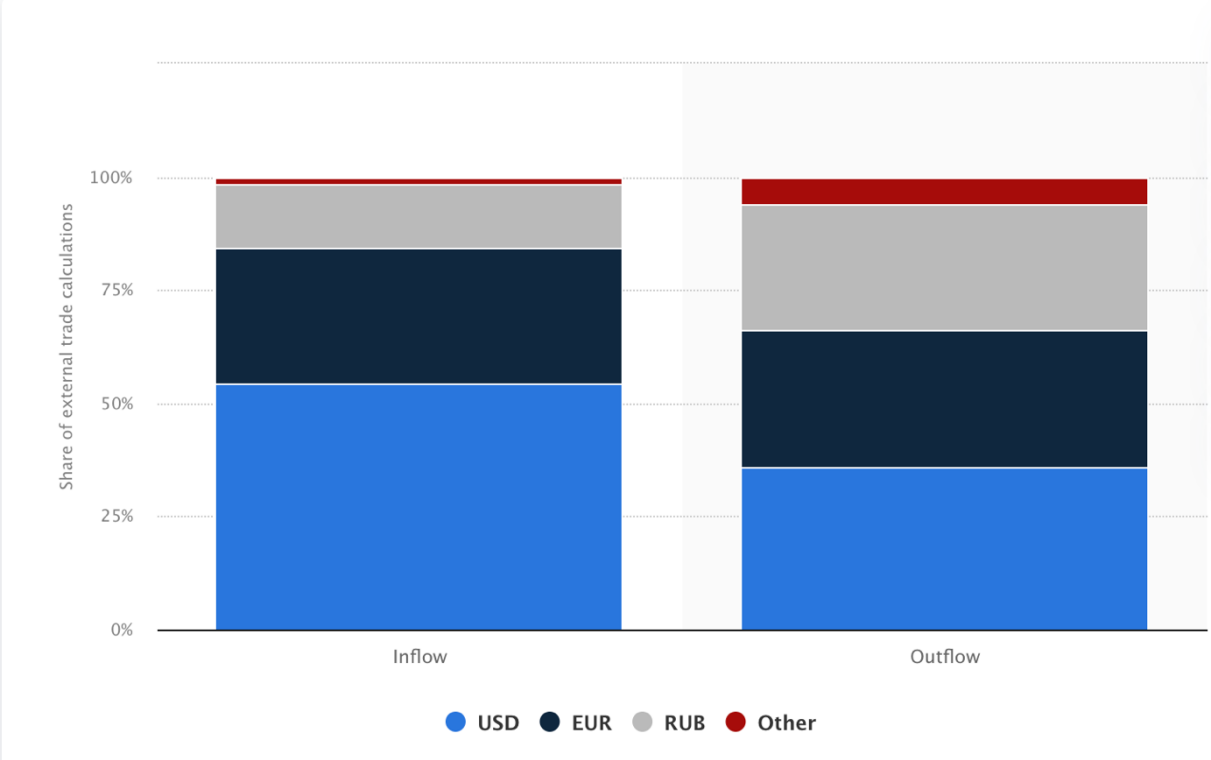


Figure 8: Share of Ruble in Russian Trade

In 2021, the majority of inflows into Russia for its exports of goods and services from other countries were in U.S. dollars, comprising 54.5 percent, followed by euros. Conversely, the outflows from Russia to pay for imports from abroad consisted of nearly 28 percent in Russian rubles[366]. On the other hand, looking at the changes that occurred after February 2022, according to statements made by Russian Economic Development Minister Maksim Reshetnikov at the Moscow Financial Forum in 2023, the usage rate of the Ruble in Russia's exports has exceeded %41 percent[367]. Additionally, it is observed that the dominance of the Ruble in trade within the CIS, especially including countries from the post-Soviet geography, has significantly increased. Again, referring to Reshetnikov's statements in an interview with Rossiskaya

[366] External Trade Currency Structure Russia by Flow 2021 // Statista. [Electronic resource] — Accessed September 11, 2023. — URL: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1093130/russia-external-trade-calculations-share-by-currency/.

[367] Share of Rubles in Russian Exports Totals 41% in July — Minister // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 19, 2024. — URL: https://tass.com/economy/1681807.

Gazeta, it is seen that the usage rate of the Ruble in Russia's trade with CIS countries has surpassed %85 percent.[368] Russia, aspiring to break the dollar hegemony in commercial activities first locally, then regionally, and eventually globally, continues to develop cooperation with developing countries in this regard.

In Russian foreign policy concepts since 2013, unilateral sanctions and the opportunities for external intervention in the economies of countries presented by dollar hegemony have been recognized as threats to regional and global stability. Alongside this, proposals advocating the spread of trade activities determined by multilateral regulations, free from unilateral sanctions and transparent, have been put forward. The assertion by the renowned Indian-American political scientist Fareed Zakaria that the dollar, which he referred to as the "last remaining global hegemonic tool" of the US, losing its status as an international reserve and trade currency could potentially signify the official collapse of US hegemony[369]. For Russia, breaking this hegemony will remain one of the central aspects of global economic policies, alongside sustainable development.

Norm Dissemination and Unilateral Sanctions

One of the most important parameters for establishing a single-centered order in the international system is the effort of the hegemon to expand its own norms and values to a global scale. Evaluating the concept of hegemony through Antonio Gramsci's conceptualization, Robert Cox emphasizes that hegemony encompasses social, political, and economic structures, stating that in structures where these three are not together, the establishment or sustainability of

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[368] Maksim Reshetnikov: Rubl' Stal Glavnoy Valyutoy v Torgovle Rossii So Stranami SNG // Rossiyskaya Gazeta. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 21, 2024. — URL: https://rg.ru/2023/10/26/maksim-reshetnikov-rubl-stal-glavnoj-valiutoj-v-torgovle-rossii-so-stranami-sng.html.

[369] Zakaria F. The Dollar Is Our Superpower, and Russia and China Are Threatening It // Fareed Zakaria. [Electronic resource] — March 24, 2023. — URL: https://fareedzakaria.com/columns/2023/3/24/the-dollar-is-our-superpower-and-russia-and-china-are-threatening-it.

hegemony is not possible[370]. The attempt to construct a global order based on its own norms and values through persuasion and coercion methods within the framework of the unipolar, unilateral, and monocentric international system sought to be built under US hegemony after the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR, indicates the social and cultural structure of hegemony as pointed out by Cox. Russia, from the late period of the USSR, and especially from the early 1990s when it prioritized improving relations with the West, emphasizes the danger of interventions in the cultural and traditional values of societies and states, and considers it a violation of sovereignty[371].

Norm and value imposition, seen as an obstacle to achieving stability and peace in international relations, has emerged in the 21st century as unilateral discourses and actions put forward by Western powers, led by the US, to gain geopolitical gains. Russia's perception of norm and cultural impositions as threats, first in the political-military sphere and then at the economic and socio-cultural levels, has convinced it of the necessity to generate alternative value judgments and cooperation opportunities. Initiatives such as the inclusion of socio-cultural values in desired areas of cooperation within CIS, SCO, BRICS, and other non-Western regional and global organizations or relations, and endeavors such as the exchange of civilizations' values, stand out. These policies aim not only to demonstrate cultural and civilizational diversity in the international system but also to introduce and highlight unique value judgments adopted in societies as a diversity element. In addition to socio-cultural

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[370] Cox R. W. Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method / R. W. Cox // In: Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations. — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

[371] Osnovnyye polozheniya kontseptsii vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Federal'nyye zakony. Rasporyazheniyem Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii B.N. Yel'tsina ot 23 aprelya 1993 g. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.russiamatters.org/sites/default/files/media/files/1993%20Foreign%20Policy%20Strategy%20RUS.pdf.

resistance factors triggering the adoption of these policies, Western hegemonic attitudes that disturb Russia can be summarized with the following points:

- The imposition of norms and values infringes upon the sacred sovereignty rights of states.
- Imposing norms and values today demonstrate the existence of a neo-colonial understanding as remnants of imperialist mentality.
- Following or advocating for the adoption and implementation of one's own norms and values by one or a small group of states harbors hypocrisy in their attitudes towards their allies and non-aligned states. This undermines the claim of these values to be international.
- The exportation of norms and values aims to eliminate socio-cultural richness in the world and eradicate civilizations.

The threat of unilateral sanctions or exposure to sanctions against states that resist norm and value expansion and embrace original political and socio-cultural understandings reflects the confrontational and counter-productive mindset of this approach.

The authority to impose sanctions on a state in the international system is legally reserved solely for the United Nations. Russia, which consistently emphasizes democratization and the rule of law in international relations against the Western-led rules-based order, believes that this monopoly belonging to the UN has been usurped by one or a group of states[372]. Following the Cold War, there have been developments, including Russia's cooperation, regarding the use of this authority within the UN framework for the preservation of international peace and stability. The arms embargo imposed on Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs during the dissolution of Yugoslavia can be cited as the first example of this.

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[372] Russian Foreign Minister Says International Criminal Court Arrest Warrant for Putin ‘Scandalous’ // Anadolu Agency. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 9, 2023. — URL: https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/russian-foreign-minister-says-international-criminal-court-arrest-warrant-for-putin-scandalous/2895831.

More recent examples include the sanctions imposed on Iran's uranium enrichment efforts in 2006, which were taken with Russia's cooperation and have been updated over time. However, over the past decade, the Western states' inability to achieve results from norm and value impositions against rising powers such as Russia, China, and Turkey, through unilateral sanctions led by the US, has emerged as one of the most significant factors exacerbating regional and global geopolitical risks. These sanction decisions taken outside the framework of the UN are not legal according to international law and also contradict trade regulations under the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Norm and value expansion, along with the parallel approach of unilateral sanctions, seen as a current major trend and development in Russian foreign policy concepts, has pushed Russia and other states affected by sanctions towards alternative channels of cooperation, leading to the formation of unofficial regional and global alternative blocs. Alongside the concept of the West, which has been prominent in international relations, concepts such as the East (Global East) or South (Global South) have emerged in recent years as rising values alternative to this neo-colonial imposition mindset. In Russia's foreign policy strategy, the desire not only to balance Western hegemony but also to establish a more representative and inclusive world order supports this rise.

3.1.2. Munich speech of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Post-Munich Dimensions

According to various politicians and scholars, Vladimir Putin's speeches in Munich bear resemblance to Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speeches, which also had a significant impact on international relations. Putin's words have reverberated widely, triggering sensational effects in the global arena. This similarity to Churchill's rhetoric has evoked discussions about the potential emergence of a new Cold War between the Western powers and Russia. Importantly, Putin's address at the security conference didn't introduce entirely

novel ideas; rather, they echoed sentiments that had been expressed by numerous academics, international relations experts, and politicians concerning the ongoing relationship dynamics between the West and Russia since the early 21st century.

However, the unique aspect was the context in which these ideas were presented by the Russian President during the security conference. By articulating these viewpoints directly towards the United States and its European counterparts, Putin's words assumed added significance. Notably, this speech marked one of the most assertive and concrete post-Cold War actions by Russia against NATO and the United States within the realm of international relations.

In this well-known speech by Putin, he addressed the specific developments that have impacted Russian security concerns. He also highlighted behaviors that have contributed to a growing lack of trust between the involved parties. Furthermore, he discussed the potential consequences if these trends were to continue unaddressed in the future.

This segment of the third chapter aims to analyze Putin's statements, emphasizing their significance in shedding light on the historical developments between Russia and the Western nations. It also seeks to identify the potential concerns that Russia foresees arising in the future. Putin's insights, as conveyed during the conference, serve as the focal point of this analysis. However, the present study takes an approach that examines these developments through the lens of the Russian perspective.

In order to analyze Putin's Munich Speech, I have outlined key topics that are prominently addressed within this extensive discourse. The focus is on highlighting these crucial themes:

Critique of Unipolar Policies: Putin critiques the unilateral policies pursued by the United States, challenging the dominance of a single global power.

Advocacy for Effective International Organizations: The Munich Speech underscores the importance of robust international institutions like the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Western Violations of International Law: Putin points out instances of Western countries disregarding international law, emphasizing the need for consistent adherence to established norms.

Warning Against Arms Race: The speech contains a warning about the escalating arms race and its potential consequences for global security.

Proposal for a New European Security Organization: Putin proposes the creation of a fresh European Security Organization that includes the active participation of the Russian Federation.

Missile Defense System Concerns: The speech addresses the crisis surrounding the deployment of missile defense systems, which had raised significant security apprehensions.

Discrepancy in Western Commitments: Putin highlights instances where Western nations failed to uphold their promises or commitments, contributing to diplomatic challenges.

Reducing Mutual Trust: Putin criticized West for unkept words and ignorance of the other countries security concerns and traditional values.

NATO Enlargement and Proximity to Russian Borders: The Munich Speech expresses concern over the expansion of NATO into regions closer to Russian borders, raising security implications.

Certainly, following a chronological approach to analyze Putin's Munich Speech is a structured and effective way to dissect its key points. At the outset of his speech, Putin references NATO General Secretary Mr. Woerner's remarks from 1990 as a foundational starting point for his address. Putin underscores these words:

"I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr. Woerner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that 'the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory glues the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee.' Where are these guarantees?[373]

This quote from Putin highlights a significant theme—namely, the unfulfilled promises made by the West to Russia after the conclusion of the Cold War. By invoking Mr. Woerner's words, Putin brings attention to the pledges that have seemingly been disregarded over time.

Building on this point, Putin addresses the subsequent developments that have impacted the trust between Russia and the West. One focal area of concern pertains to the enlargement of NATO towards Russian borders. Putin's discourse continues:

"The Adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe was signed in 1999. It took into account a new geopolitical reality, namely the elimination of the Warsaw Pact. Seven years have passed, and only four states have ratified this document, including the Russian Federation. NATO countries openly declared that they will not ratify this treaty, including the provisions on flank restrictions (on deploying a certain number of armed forces in the flank zones), until Russia removed its military bases from Georgia and Moldova. Our army is leaving Georgia, even according to an accelerated schedule. We resolved the problems we had with our Georgian colleagues, as everybody knows. There are still 1,500 servicemen in Moldova that are carrying out peacekeeping operations and protecting warehouses with ammunition left over from Soviet times.[374]

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[373] Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy // kremlin.ru. [Electronic resource] — Accessed July, 25, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034
[374] Ibid.

Following the mention of these forgotten and overlooked actions by NATO, he went on to add that subsequently;

"But what is happening at the same time? Simultaneously the so-called flexible frontline American bases with up to five thousand men in each. It turns out that NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders, and we continue to strictly fulfill the treaty obligations and do not react to these actions at all.[375]

He endorsed NATO's enlargement policy despite his earlier criticisms of the alliance's armament efforts. Putin also condemned NATO's new security concept, aligning his criticism with his disapproval of the alliance's expansionist policy. In a concluding remark, Putin expressed Russia's concerns about NATO's evolving approach to out-of-area operations, particularly in the context of activities following the Afghanistan operations. He stated;

"NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact?[376] *... why is it necessary to put military infrastructure on our borders during this expansion? Can someone answer this question?*

As previously outlined in the research sections, issues like a lack of trust, minimal mutual confidence, restricted information sharing, and knowledge gaps stand as significant components of the security dilemma that states experience. These aspects were highlighted by Putin when addressing Western counterparts of Russia. His aim was to elucidate the sharp increase in Russian security concerns, a direct result of their conduct towards Russia. Within this context, he

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[375] Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy // kremlin.ru. [Electronic resource] — Accessed July, 25, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034
[376] Ibid.

also cautioned them about the role that an arms race could play in exacerbating the situation.

During a Q&A session that followed his address to leaders and ministers from over forty nations, Putin was questioned about Russian claims concerning NATO's armament efforts. Preceding the question, the individual posing it criticized Russia's recent missile test of the Topol-V (a long-range missile) and asserted that there were no corresponding activities regarding US missiles. Thus, the questioner inquired about Russia's intentions and credibility regarding disarmament under these circumstances.

In response, Putin underscored the lack of comprehensive information regarding US missile development. He remarked, "*We are aware that they are pursuing certain projects, and we have taken measures in response, developing our initiatives.*[377]

After the 9/11 attacks, the United States declared a global war against terrorism. At that time, President G.W. Bush delivered a strong message to countries around the world, stating, "Choose your side! Will you be with us or against us?" This stance sparked considerable controversy and drew criticism from various quarters, including European partners like France and Germany. However, no country possessed the capability to effectively counter the unilateral actions of the US, which encompassed actions such as the invasion of Iraq, airstrikes in Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, and Pakistan, all in the name of anti-terrorist operations. While there were critiques from Russia, France, and Germany—especially concerning the US invasion of Iraq—none of these voices held the power to dissuade the US from pursuing its unilateral policies.

Conversely, the emergence of new regional and global players like Russia, China, and India has amplified these critical viewpoints within the United

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[377] Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy // kremlin.ru. [Electronic resource] — Accessed July, 25, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034

States. Putin's Munich Speech stood out as a particularly forceful expression of Russia's perspective, even though Russian officials had intermittently voiced their concerns prior to 2007. In his speech, Putin directly criticized the US for its unilateral actions, citing its utilization of military force in the name of universal values such as democracy promotion and humanitarian causes. He accused the US of leveraging organizations like NATO and the EU to further its national interests while disregarding international law and established international institutions, as previously mentioned. Putin's primary focus was on challenging the unipolar approach of the US, a theme he consistently addressed throughout his speech. He commenced by stating:

"It is world in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within. ...
The unipolar world that had been proposed after the Cold War did not take place either. ...

However, what is a unipolar world? One might embellish this term, at the end of the day it refers to one type of situation, namely one center of authority, one center of force, one center of decision-making."[378]

He proceeded by extending his critique to include the European partners of the US, attributing blame for the promotion and imposition of democracy in foreign countries as a foreign policy approach that the US pursued in collaboration with its Western allies. He emphatically stated:

"For some reason (who cited words, which we noted above) those who teach us do not want to learn democracy themselves."[379]

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[378] Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy // kremlin.ru. [Electronic resource] — Accessed July, 25, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034
[379] Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy // kremlin.ru. [Electronic resource] — Accessed July, 25, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034

Following that, Putin characterized the foreign policy of the US during the post-Cold War period as domineering, capricious, and in violation of international law. He criticized the preference for military approaches over diplomatic and political solutions to global challenges. Additionally, he accused the US and its European allies of disregarding and belittling other regional and global powers, as well as international organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which play crucial roles in international relations. In his address, Putin's words resonated in the following manner:

Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts. As a result, we do not have sufficient strength to find a comprehensive solution to any one of these conflicts. Finding a political settlement also becomes impossible.

...

We are seeing a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law. And independent legal norms are, as a matter of fact, coming increasingly closer to one state's legal system. One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies it imposes on other nations. Well, who likes this? Who is happy about this?

...

It results in the fact that no one feels safe. I want to emphasize this – no one feels safe! Because no one can feel that international law is like a stone wall that will protect them. Of course, such a policy stimulates an arms race.

...

Did not our country have a peaceful transition to democracy? Indeed, we witnessed a peaceful transformation of the Soviet regime – a peaceful

transformation! And what a regime! With what a number of weapons, including nuclear weapons! Why should we start bombing and shooting now at every available opportunity? Is it the case when without the threat of mutual destruction we do not have enough political culture, respect for democratic values and for the law?"[380]

Finally, he concluded his remarks by directly responding to the Italian Foreign Minister, Massimo D'Alema, who had spoken before Putin. D'Alema had defended the legitimacy of the policies of the European Union (EU) and NATO. In response, Putin delivered a striking counterargument that challenged the stance of NATO and the EU. His response was as follows:

"In any case, I understood that the use of force can only be legitimate when the decision is taken by NATO, the EU, or the UN. If he really does think so, then we have different points of view. Or I didn't hear correctly. The use of force can only be considered legitimate if the decision is sanctioned by the UN. And we do not need to substitute NATO or the EU for the UN. 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."[381]

Post-Munich Dynamics

Vladimir Putin's Munich Speech served as an unequivocal warning to the West, emphasizing the seriousness of Russian concerns and the determination to address them. Unfortunately, Russian discourses and reiterated grievances appeared to be largely disregarded once again.

Firstly, the recognition of Kosovo's independence in February 2008 and its subsequent legitimization through the International Court of Justice (ICJ),

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[380] Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy // kremlin.ru. [Electronic resource] — Accessed July, 25, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034
[381] Ibid.

justified on the grounds of recognizing the decision of a part of a state’s population without the approval of its central authority, was perceived as a direct violation of the principle of national sovereignty. This principle has been held as sacred since the Westphalian Accord in international relations.

Subsequently, the Bucharest Summit of NATO in April 2008, during which the alliance indicated the possibility of extending NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine, further confirmed Russian concerns and deepened mistrust toward the West.

Lastly, the persisting plans to establish a missile defense system in Central Europe, despite clear objections from Russia, led to a further deterioration of relations. This ongoing disregard for Russian protests culminated in one of the worst situations in Russian-Western relations since the Cold War era. In this scenario, Russia employed hard power for the first time since the conclusion of the Cold War by intervening in Georgia in 2008. This action sent a strong and more significant message to both the Western nations and countries within the region.

However, a shift occurred when Barack Obama assumed the US presidency and Dmitry Medvedev became Russia's president. Vice President Joe Biden's initiative led to a resetting of relations with Russia, aiming to reignite dialogue and address Russian concerns more seriously. Although this move fostered optimism among Russians, there were setbacks. The rejection of President Medvedev's proposal for a new European Security Concert by the US, UK, and Eastern European nations (despite France and Germany's positive reception), along with the absence of concrete measures to address Russian apprehensions regarding the European missile defense system, revived Russian skepticism about the West's intentions. Ultimately, Russia's mistrust towards the West culminated with NATO's UN Security Council resolution draft surpassing its original scope, and Russia capitalizing on cooperation efforts for its own gains in 2011.

From the Russian perspective, the intervention of the West in Russia's internal affairs through civil society organizations during the 2012 election process, similar to the way Western countries had been involved in color revolutions, became the final straw for Russia. After this controversial 4 years, Putin's third term began in 2012 and Russian stance and towards the West changed drastically. Scope of the Russian resistance against US-led Western unipolar acts extended and strengthened.

3.1.3. Russian Multipolarity Aspirations

Theoretically, Russia's aspiration for a multipolar world order was first articulated by Yevgeny Primakov in the mid-1990s. Primakov suggested that after the Cold War, Russia would have to either accept the dominance of the United States and assume the new role defined for it in international relations, or work towards establishing its great power status globally, thereby contributing to the transition from a bipolar to a multipolar system by countering negative elements[382]. He emphasized to "joint" perception of threats, counteraction to them in the international system and "joint" efforts to stabilize the new international order[383]. In addition, Russia, as a significant power, should be recognized as an equal and sovereign partner and would not allow any country (implicitly referring to the United States) to dominate the international system. In this situation, Primakov thought that to pass multipolar system from unipolar impositions, Russia must cooperate with other great powers like China and India at first. Therefore, Russia and China, with the initiative of E. M. Primakov, signed the Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New International Order in April 1997[384]. Then, E. M.

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[382] A New Testament for a Multipolar World. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 9, 2024. — URL: https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/a-new-testament-for-a-multipolar-world/.

[383] Gorokhov A. A. Yevgeny Maksimovich Primakov about a Multipolar World of the XXI Century / A. A. Gorokhov // Russian Political Science. — 2016. — Vol. 1. — P. 9-10.

[384] Kortunov A. Between Polycentrism and Bipolarity / A. Kortunov // Russia in Global Affairs. — 2019. — Vol. 17, No. 1. — P. 10-51.

Primakov visited India in 1998, in order for mediation between China and India. Idea for establishment of Russia-India-China (RIC) trilemma also came from this Primakovist multipolar desires of Russia at the end of the 1990s.

This global perspective laid out by Primakov became one of the most important subthemes in Russia's foreign policy concepts which published since 1998. After Primakov, the first prominent figure to vocally express Russia's desire for a multipolar world order was President Vladimir V. Putin. The principle of multipolarity, most prominently directed against Western dominance, finds its most vocal declaration in Putin's renowned speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy in February 2007, which is explained in detail in the previous section.

Russia's current multi-polar and multi-centered foreign policy understanding has undergone a gradual process of change since 1990s. Following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR, Russia was aware of the emergence of the United States as the strongest actor in the international system. However, it also acknowledged that the desire of the US and its allies to establish an international order based solely on their interests could pose a potential problem within the new international system[385]. The academic analysis of Russia's perspective during this period can be seen in A. Bogaturov's conceptualization of “pluralistic unipolarity”. Bogaturov emphasizes the construction of a new international system in which the US, along with other leading democratic major powers, dictates its own understanding after the Cold War[386]. In fact, in the early 1990s, while the

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[385] Osnovnyye polozheniya kontseptsii vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Federal'nyye zakony. Rasporyazheniyem Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii B.N. Yel'tsina ot 23 aprelya 1993 g. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.russiamatters.org/sites/default/files/media/files/1993%20Foreign%20Policy%20Strategy%20RUS.pdf.

[386] Shakleina T. A., Bogaturov A. D. The Russian Realist School of International Relations / T. A. Shakleyina, A. D. Bogaturov // Communist and Post-Communist Studies. — 2004. — Vol. 37, No. 1. — P. 37–51.

Atlanticist Russian foreign policy strategy attempted to convey Russian expectations to the US, the EU was also viewed as another power center since it would no longer need the military umbrella of the US after the Cold War. However, starting from 1993, NATO's expansion strategy to the east and the coordination of the EU with NATO, as well as factors such as the dissolution of Yugoslavia, led to a growing need in Russia, particularly under Primakov from 1996 onwards, to prioritize the development of relations with non-Western powers against unipolar actions.

However, from 2000s to V. V. Putin's third presidential term, the scope of the unipolar or monocentric policies led by the U.S.-led West and Russia's resistance was primarily focused on military aspects, encompassing national security concerns. Simultaneously, within Russia's foreign policy strategy, there was an understanding that prioritized not only the desire to resist the West but also to enhance relations with it. We can see this stance from Russian support to the US for struggling with global terrorism throughout V. V. Putin’s first term and D. Medvedev’s proposals for the establishment of new European security concert and letting NATO operations in Libya. These initiatives generally calling in Russian politics as attempts to properly explain its concerns and desires to the West. However, then Russia decided that the main reason of disagreements between Russia and West had not been that the West had not truly understood Russian stance in the new international system; Western perspective have not asked to Russia its concerns or desires. Then, Russian multipolar aspirations have been characterized completely counter-balance of the Western mono-centric and unipolar policy with commitment for strong counter-reaction to that.

In this regard, with Putin's reelection for a third term in 2012 and as he articulated in an article published in Nezavisimaya Gazeta just before assuming

office[387], a new phase was entered where Russia adopted a stronger and more comprehensive stance against the unipolar world order policies that imposed in several spheres. As becoming focal points in current disagreements between Russia and the West the Ukrainian conflict, which became more dramatic and serious situation after February 2022, also elevated into a global dimension from being a regional issue during this process.

Russia's aspiration for transition to a multipolar world order, its primary strategy has been shaped around themes such as the inviolability of nations' sovereignty, cooperation among civilizations, respect for the traditions and internal affairs of civilizations, recognition of states as equal entities in international law, non-imposition and promotion of any ideological values, refraining from unilateral military or economic sanctions without UN approval, and reforming the international system, including the United Nations Security Council, to align with the desires of rising regional and global powers. The establishment of a new world order that is more inclusive and representative, with a focus on regional and global peace and stability, is considered essential by Russia, and it seeks for these principles to be understood and acknowledged from the Western powers, who have tried to keep its dominance in the international system. In this context, Russia has tried to establish and enforce cooperation between countries and regional organizations to accelerate creation of well-accepted multipolar and multi-centric world. Cooperation with non-Western major global and regional powers like China, India, Iran, Brazil, Gulf states, and African countries in different platforms like BRICS, SCO, African Unions and their cooperation with Russia and Russian-led organizations like EAEU are crucial strategy for Russian multipolar aspirations.

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[387] Putin V. V. Rossiya: natsional'nyy vopros // // Nezavisimaya Gazeta / V. V. Putin. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 11, 2024. — URL: https://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1_national.html?utm_source=pocket_saves.

3.2. Russian Stance on Global Agendas and Relations with Global Institutions

3.2.1. The United Nations (UN) in Russian Foreign Policy

In the new world order established after World War II, the United Nations organization was founded as the highest supranational body and the highest authority for the application of international law in all kinds of international disputes. After the unsuccessful attempt of the League of Nations before World War II, the existence of the United Nations, established as the most comprehensive international organization in the world with significant enforcement powers, was created as a guarantor organization for the protection and implementation of international law.

After the end of the Cold War, Russia, as the continuing state of the USSR, acquired the status of a state and also inherited the permanent membership position within the UN Security Council that belonged to the USSR. The permanent membership in the UN Security Council was a status granted to countries considered as major powers with the potential to shape global politics in the new world order to be established after World War II. Despite not having the same level of power and capacity as the USSR after its dissolution, Russia still retained its position as one of the world's two largest military powers. One of the factors demonstrating that a declining global power like Russia should be one of the influential countries in the new world order after the Cold War was its permanent membership in the UN Security Council.

During the early 1990s, when Russia had a foreign policy strategy that prioritized strategic cooperation and integration with the West, it began to realize that it was being treated as a regional and weak power by its Western partners. This realization led to a change in Russia's strategy, emphasizing the need for a multipolar world order. In its new policies, Russia underscored the significant role of the United Nations (UN). Russia aimed to legitimize its efforts to counter the unilateral policies of Western hegemony, particularly led

by the United States, by highlighting the UN as the appropriate platform for legitimate discussions and solutions to regional and global issues. When examining international legal frameworks and the UN Charter, Russia's approach can be seen as one that promotes legitimate and legally sound methods for addressing international affairs.

The process that began in the second half of the 1990s, characterized by the United States and its European allies conducting operations in countries like Congo and Libya without the approval of the UN Security Council (UNSC), advanced further in 1999 when NATO carried out airstrikes in Yugoslavia without UNSC approval. For Russia, one of the most significant factors that emphasized its belief in being a responsible and authoritative great power in global affairs was its veto power within the UNSC. However, during a period when Russia was experiencing economic and structural weaknesses, its veto power in the UNSC was perceived as being disregarded and ignored. Starting from 1999, this situation became one of the most important foreign policy issues for Russia, both in terms of national security and the transition to a multipolar system.

The United Nations plays a crucial role in Russian foreign policy for several reasons. Firstly, it serves as a platform for Russia to challenge Western hegemony and to develop bilateral relations with Western countries[388]. Secondly, it provides a forum for Russia to strengthen its ties with non-Western countries and regions. Russia sees itself as a responsible and influential global power, and its engagement in UN initiatives related to arms reduction, preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, counterterrorism efforts, migration issues,

[388] Sergunin A. The United Nations / A. Sergunin; A. P. Tsygankov (Ed.) // Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy. — New York: Routledge, 2018. — P. 355-366.

combating illicit activities, and addressing climate change helps shape its international image and soft power capacity[389].

Since the time of Yevgeny Primakov, one of the priorities of Russian foreign policy has been to attain the status of a great power and gain respect as a global power. In this context, Russia's role within the UN Security Council, where it can partially deter Western powers, particularly led by the United States, from using hard power in the Middle East, and where diplomacy is emphasized as a necessary and preferable option, holds significant importance. Furthermore, ensuring that non-Western countries are represented on a solid basis within the framework of Russian foreign policy is crucial for its image and development.

However, the magnitude and intensity of the existing disagreements between Russia and the West are steadily increasing. In Russian foreign policy, despite forming partnerships with China and some non-Western rising powers in this regard, Russia believes that these partnerships should have legal and legitimate foundations. Russia references international legal rules and norms even in the use of both hard and soft power, and it emphasizes the need for reforming the UN Security Council to make it more inclusive and representative.

In particular, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has been known to emphasize the necessity for rising countries like India and Brazil to have higher levels of representation in the international system. Lavrov's statements underscore the importance of reforming the UN Security Council to accommodate a more inclusive and higher-representation structure with preservation of permanent member status of the Russian Federation[390].

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[389] The United Nations. RIAC Reader. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 14, 2024. — URL: http://russiancouncil.ru/en/un.

[390] Russian foreign minister attacks West as ‘empire of lies’ // CNN. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 23, 2024. — URL: https://edition.cnn.com/2023/09/23/world/lavrov-unga-intl-latam/index.html.

The United Nations' status as the organization with the highest level of representation and participation, as well as its possession of the most legitimate and comprehensive status to counter the unilateral ambitions of any power, makes it the most significant international platform for Russia. It represents Russia's most important international arena and partner in its foreign policy, especially growing trend of Russian capacity and assertiveness on regional and global scale. Throughout last two decade, beginning of civil conflicts and the US military interventions and attempts towards the Middle East and other regional and global clashes, Russian decisive role and responsibility in UN Security Council has provided it playing a leading role on these issues[391].

3.2.2. Russian Relations with Global Economic Institutions: International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and World Trade Organization (WTO)

The most significant aspect that has existed since the beginning of the last period of the Soviet Union and the years when Russia emerged onto the world stage as its continuing state is the integration process of Russia into the global market economy. Unlike today, it was an undeniable fact for Western countries and international organizations that Russia was a country of such magnitude and a nuclear power that could not be isolated or ignored from the international system. Therefore, it was necessary for Russia to integrate into the global economic system in some way. Efforts led by Boris Yeltsin, Andrey Kozyrev, Anatoli Chubais, and Yegor Gaidar were observed in this regard.

Russia decided to transition to a market economy to integrate into the global economic system and overcome the economic problems inherited from the USSR. With the support of the United States and the European Union, as

[391] Nikitin, A. Russia as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council / A. Nikitin. — Friedrich Ebert Stiftung International Policy Analysis. [Electronic resource] — Accessed 24 April, 2024. — URL: https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/09461.pdf.

well as international economic organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, it was decided to provide credit support for the integration of former Eastern Bloc countries and former Soviet Republics, including Russia, into the international liberal economic system. In this context, in December 1991, the process of post-Soviet states joining the World Bank was initiated, diplomatic missions were opened in these countries, and as of January 1, 1992, they officially joined the World Bank[392]. In this context, within two years, Russia established official relations with the World Bank and its associated institutions working in cooperation with developing economies for development and growth. These institutions include:

- International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)
- International Development Association (IDA)
- International Finance Corporation (IFC)
- Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)[393]

During the process of establishing official partnerships with these institutions affiliated with the World Bank, Russia also received its first loan from the World Bank in 1992[394].

Russia's process of joining the World Bank and its affiliated institutions was carried out simultaneously with the process of joining the IMF. In this context, Russia became a member of the IMF in June 1992[395]. During the process initiated for the transition to a market economy in a short period of time, the official relations established by Russia with international economic

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[392] Home // World Bank. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 27, 2024. — URL: https://timeline.worldbank.org/en/timeline/home.

[393] Russia and the World Bank: International Development Assistance // World Bank. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 14, 2024. — URL: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/russia/brief/international-development.

[394] Announcement of World Bank Approves First Loan to Russia on August 6, 1992 // World Bank. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 14, 2024. — URL: https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/558601628599556598/Announcement-of-World-Bank-Approves-First-Loan-to-Russia-on-August-6-1992.

[395] Gidadhubli R. G., Bhattacharya A. Russia's 'Big-Bang' Entry into IMF / G. R. Gidadhubli // Economic and Political Weekly. — 1992. — Vol. 27, No. 33. — P. 1728–1730.

organizations were of critical importance for the economic recovery process. The greatest expectation in Russian society and in the process of Russia's liberal integration with the West was the belief that the economic integration process could find solutions to the high levels of external debt, inflation, and unemployment issues in Russia. The external debts inherited from the USSR were around $80 billion, and Russia did not have sufficient reserves to cover this amount[396].

From 1992 onwards, the World Bank pledged to provide $11 billion in credit for use in 33 different projects in Russia; however, only a fragmented portion of this promised credit, amounting to $7.8 billion, was provided[397]. Until the economic crisis that brought Russia to the brink of bankruptcy in 1998, there were deficiencies in the Russian bureaucracy regarding the effective utilization of these loans. According to a report published by the Operations Evaluation Department of the World Bank in 2001, although the credits provided to Russia until 1998 had positive effects, these effects were stated to be marginal.

In addition to the loans obtained from the World Bank, it is known that Russia received more than $18 billion in credits from the IMF in 1993, 1995, and 1996 through various missions to cover government budget deficits[398]. The utilization of these credits, given as investments in the transition to a market economy, did not follow efficient policies, and the loans did not provide much different gain for Russia other than increasing its debts. The global significance of the economic crisis that erupted in developing economies in Asia in 1997, the "shock therapy" method planned for a harsh transition to a market economy, and the massive decrease in energy prices (the price of oil dropped to $12 per barrel)

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[396] Rutland P. Still out in the Cold? Russia's Place in a Globalizing World / P. Rutland // Communist and Post-Communist Studies. — 2012. — Vol. 45, No. 3-4. — P. 343–354.

[397] Rutland P. Neoliberalism in Russia / P. Rutland // Review of International Political Economy. — 2013. — Vol. 20, No. 2. — P. 332–362.

[398] Russia and the International Financial Institutions // Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 14, 2024. — URL: https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2000/01/russia-and-the-international-financial-institutions?lang=en&center=russia-eurasia.

led to the complete loss of the marginal positive development achieved in Russia through loans from the World Bank. Inflation soared to the 75% mark, and at the end of the crisis, the ruble had to be devalued. The loans obtained from the IMF did not help close the external debt, and with the government continuing to run deficits in the budget, Russia suddenly found itself on the brink of bankruptcy in 1998 and had to request credit from the IMF.

The process, which led to the devaluation of the ruble by about 4 times in a month and the almost total disappearance of citizens' savings due to the collapse of Russian banks, also played a significant role in the loss of trust in Western liberal economies in Russia, along with the deteriorating political relations. The reckless liberalization policies and uncontrolled privatizations pursued during the transition to a market economy caused the contributions of the IMF and the World Bank to Russia's economic reforms to remain very limited compared to many other former socialist republics. Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz harshly criticized the brutality and lack of control of transition economic policies adopted in Russia in the 1990s in his work "Globalization and its Discontents," and he found the methods of reform and improvement conducted under the guidance of the World Bank and IMF to be flawed[399].

The economic crisis of 1998 caused a significant tarnishing of Russia's image as a reliable and predictable economy both within international financial institutions and the international economic community. As the process leading towards Vladimir V. Putin's initial term progressed, international organizations expressed concerns about tendencies towards state capitalism in the Russian economy and doubts arose regarding Putin's commitment to transitioning to a

[399] Stiglitz J. E. Globalization and Its Discontents / J. E. Stiglitz. — New York: W. W. Norton, 2003.

liberal market economy[400]. However, Putin remained determined to maintain close economic relations with international organizations and pursued more disciplined and rigorous reform policies to integrate Russia into the international economy. In this context, Russia obtained an additional $3.8 billion loan from the IMF, introduced tax regulations, brought customs duties closer to international standards, and implemented stringent policies to combat corruption and improve tax collection[401].

According to the World Bank, this process observed by the IMF and the World Bank led to an unprecedented period of recovery, growth, and development in the Russian economy until 2008[402]. During this period, the World Bank shifted from providing project-based credit support to providing technical assistance after the crisis of 1998. The increase in international geopolitical tensions and the US military interventions in the Middle East under the pretext of combating terrorism led to a surge in energy prices (the price of oil reached $148 per barrel in 2008), which greatly contributed to the economic successes achieved by the Putin administration, redefining the energy sector as a leading sector in Russia's development.

During this period of recovery and development in the Russian economy, unlike the 1990s, there were no advisors from the IMF or the World Bank in the Kremlin. Between 1999 and 2008, Russia achieved an average annual growth rate of around 7% and nearly tripled its GDP[403]. Russia even managed to completely repay its $22 billion debt to the IMF ahead of schedule, as early as 2006. The repayment of the debt to the IMF signified the end of the period of

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[400] Blank S. Putin’s Presidency and Russian History / S. Blank // Russian History. — 2009. — Vol. 36, No. 1. — P. 88–116.
[401] Fojtíková L., Jančíková E., Doleželová P. Russian Participation in Global Value Chains // In: The Handbook of the Arctic. — Ed. Pak E. V., Krivtsov A. I., Zagrebelnaya N. S. — Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore, 2022.
[402] Russia and the World Bank: International Development Assistance // World Bank. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 14, 2024. — URL: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/russia/brief/international-development.
[403] Kudrin A., Gurvich E. A New Growth Model for the Russian Economy / A. Kudrin, E. Gurvich // Russian Journal of Economics. — 2015. — Vol. 1, No. 1. — P. 30-54.

irregular credits with the IMF that Russia experienced in the 1990s. While technical partnerships with the World Bank continued, cooperation primarily focused on international sustainable development projects.

Russia's Process of Joining the World Trade Organization

Alongside the process of joining international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, another prominent organization for Russia was the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO, which Russia waited for the longest time (19 years) to become a part of after the Cold War, was crucial for Russia in terms of opening its economy to foreign investments, reducing customs duties to desired international levels in line with globalization, ensuring competition in the Russian market, and facilitating Russian investors' access to investments in foreign countries[404]. However, what is emphasized by Russia today, namely the principle of "not ignoring the conditions and possibilities of nations," was not given importance in global actions at that time, and certain impositions made the membership process long and arduous. Factors contributing to this include:

- Inclusion of products advantageous at the market level for Russia into harsh competition without proper preparation,
- Demand for a significant reduction in customs revenues,
- Adjustment of products such as energy and certain agricultural products, which are offered to Russian citizens at much lower prices on the international market, to international levels for foreign companies to compete in Russia,
- Imposition of membership conditions on Russia similar to those imposed on other countries (e.g., China),
- Politicization of the process due to geopolitical crises.

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[404] Russia’s Accession to the WTO // Every CRS Report. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 27, 2024. — URL: https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL31979.html.

Despite all these challenges, Russia's application for membership in the World Trade Organization was accepted in 2011, and Russia officially became a WTO member in 2012. In an interview with Vladislav Inozemtsev at the Valdai Club after Russia's accession to the WTO, Inozemtsev briefly mentioned that Russia's WTO membership would not significantly contribute to Russian growth figures and GDP, but it would bring innovations that would increase the purchasing power of Russian citizens' income[405]. Russia's WTO membership not only provided opportunities for the free circulation and competition of Russian goods in international trade (aside from sanctions), but also elevated Russia's international prestige and image. Russia's membership in international trade regulations also emerged as a diplomatic success, allowing Russia to become one of the countries that can have a word in international trade regulations[406].

3.2.3. Russian Relations with Global Intergovernmental Organizations; G7-G8

Russia's integration into the new international system after the Cold War was marked by its relations with international organizations, which held significant importance. Following the end of the Cold War, the international organizations that continued to exert global influence were predominantly Western-oriented structures, aside from the United Nations. However, in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia, which adopted a foreign policy approach prioritizing strategic partnership and integration with the West, envisaged enhancing cooperation with the West within these organizations during the 1990s. Developing relations with international organizations was aimed at enhancing Russia's international prestige as a major

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[405] Inozemtsev V. Russia and WTO: Is the World Bank’s Optimism Justified? // Valdai Club. [Electronic resource] / V. Inozemtsev. — Accessed March 28, 2024. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia_and_wto_is_the_world_bank_s_optimism_justified/.

[406] Russia’s WTO Entry as the End of the Post-Soviet Era // Russia in Global Affairs. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 14, 2024. — URL: https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russias-wto-entry-as-the-end-of-the-post-soviet-era/.

power and becoming a decisive actor in the new world order. Among the international organizations where relations were sought to be developed and participation was desired, one of them was the Group of Seven, or the G-7 organization.

The G-7, like other international organizations, did not have a secretariat or a representative to speak for it. Events such as the OPEC Oil Embargo, the collapse of the Bretton Woods System, and the rise of global economic crises such as inflation and unemployment in OECD countries in the early 1970s prompted the leading representatives of the Western Bloc, led by the United States, to develop cooperation under a new organizational framework. The process, which began with discussions among representatives responsible for economics from the United States, Britain, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany, gradually resulted in the formation of the organization known as the G-7 with the inclusion of Japan, Italy, and Canada[407]. Leaders of EU institutions were later invited to summits, but this was not considered as the organization's new membership. Established to represent the most advanced democratic states in the world at the time, this informal organization, formed as an alternative power center, was discussed at annual summits where global issues and efforts to resolve them were deliberated by heads of state or government of the member countries.

Following the end of the Cold War, the last leader of the USSR, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, expressed the interest of the USSR in the G-7 organization in 1989. Later, as the leader of the Russian Federation, Boris N. Yeltsin also expressed interest, but Russia's membership process did not occur immediately. Initially, with Russia's invitation to the G-7 Summit held in Naples in 1994, the format of the organization was named "G7+1 (Russia)" or "Political-8."

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[407] What Does the G7 Do? // Council on Foreign Relations. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 14, 2024. — URL: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-does-g7-do.

However, this format did not last long, and at the summit held in Birmingham in 1998, Russia officially became a member of the organization, leading to the transformation of G-7 into G-8[408]. The desire of Russia to become a part of the G-7 was based on several factors:

- Increasing its international prestige as a member of this informal organization composed of the most advanced countries in the world after the Cold War.
- Obtaining the credits needed for the solution of economic problems and restructuring Soviet debts.
- Integrating into international trade within the market economy based on liberal values, of which it was now a part, to accelerate its economic recovery.

However, despite being a part of the organization known as G-8 since 1998, Russia was not allowed to participate in sessions discussing financial matters within the organization. Reasons highlighted by other G-8 members included Russia's comparatively lower economic capacity and inadequate reserves compared to G-7 countries. Nevertheless, during the economic crises that began in Asia in the late 1990s, affecting Russia significantly during its economic transformation process, Russia's membership in the G-8 held significant value in terms of addressing its economic problems.

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[408] Russia’s G8 History: From Guest to President // Russia in Global Affairs. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 26, 2024. — URL: https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russias-g8-history-from-guest-to-president/.

economic transformation process, Russia's membership in the G-8 held significant value in terms of addressing its economic problems.

Although the founding mission of the G-7 was initially centered around combating global economic crises, over time, the proportion of global issues discussed and sought solutions within the organization increased. Conflicts erupting in Eastern Europe and the Middle East after the Cold War, interstate conflicts, and the emergence of terrorist organizations made issues such as security and peacebuilding one of the most important agenda items of the G-8. In fact, the primary motive behind Russia's inclusion in the G-7 and the transformation of the organization into the G-8 format was driven by political desires. Considering Russia as the continuing state of the USSR, being one of the world's two largest nuclear powers, its role in shaping a new security architecture in Europe, its vast geography and energy resources, significant ties with non-Western countries, and its potential to play important roles in regional and global security risk mitigation, tackling issues without Russia was always at risk of being incomplete and weak. With its ongoing economic recovery and the development of diplomatic relations, Russia, through its solidarity demonstrated in combating global terrorism, international human and drug trafficking, earned the right to host the summit in 2006 through a decision taken at the G-8 Summit in 2002[409].

Since organizations like the G-7/G-8 do not have a formal secretariat, the agenda items of the summits are determined through coordination between the hosting state and other member states. At the summit held in St. Petersburg in 2006 under Russia's presidency, issues such as transitioning to a more participatory system in guiding the international economy, reforming organizations like the IMF, World Bank, and World Trade Organization with this

[409] Russia’s G8 History: From Guest to President // Russia in Global Affairs. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 26, 2024. — URL: https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russias-g8-history-from-guest-to-president/.

understanding, energy security, developing partnerships in the field of education, and combating poverty in low-income countries, often referred to as third world countries, were highlighted. The next summit, which Russia would host, was planned to take place in Sochi in 2014. However, mutual accusations between Russia and G-7 countries regarding various issues, beginning with the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, followed by Russia's military intervention in Georgia, changes in the Middle East after the Arab Spring protests, and finally the internal turmoil in Ukraine starting in late 2013, led to G-8 agendas often becoming non-producer political and security-themed summits. The process of Crimea's accession to Russia in 2014 resulted in the imposition of sanctions on Russia by the West, and as part of these sanctions, Russia's G-8 membership was suspended by G-7 countries[410].

Among the sanctions imposed on Russia by the West regarding the Crimea issue, perhaps the development Russia cared least about was the decision to suspend its G-8 membership. Regarding the suspension of its membership and the relocation of the 2014 summit, which was scheduled to be held in Sochi, to Brussels, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov stated that since the G-8 is not an official organization and does not have formal membership, there could be no suspension of membership, and he pointed out that there are other more beneficial platforms for discussing international issues[411]. Russia announced its plan to complete withdrawal from the frozen G-8 membership in 2017[412]. However, Russia's expulsion from the G-8 did not bring

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[410] Luthra, G. The Russia-Ukraine Conflict and Sanctions: An Assessment of the Economic and Political Impacts / G. Luthra // Observer Research Foundation. — October 2022. — ORF Occasional Paper No. 374.

[411] Russia’s Lavrov Says No Problem If G8 Does Not Meet // Reuters. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 26, 2024. — URL: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-lavrov-g8/russias-lavrov-says-no-problem-if-g8-does-not-meet-idUKBREA2N1D820140324/.

[412] Batchelor T. Russia Announces Plan to Permanently Leave G8 Group of Industrialised Nations after Suspension for Crimea Annexation // The Independent. — January 13, 2017. — URL: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/russia-g8-kremlin-crimea-ukraine-vladimir-putin-g7-g20-a7525836.html.

any benefits in resolving regional or global issues, but rather the cessation of G-8 summits, which had sometimes served as a channel for dialogue on problem-solving, began to be seen as an issue. Therefore, several politicians from G-7 member countries, including then-US President Donald Trump, have called for Russia to be reintegrated into the organization. However, EU institutions and some members opposed these calls, citing allegations that Russia had not implemented the Minsk Protocol as a solution to the Ukraine issue. In response to these calls, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov and Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova stated that G-7 countries need to reach a consensus on this matter as a serious organization, and while Russia is open to dialogue on all issues with G-7 countries, returning to the G-8 is not on Russia's agenda[413].

Finally, following Russia's commencement of the Special Military Operation in Ukraine in February 2022, relations between Russia and G-7 countries have been nearly severed. It has transitioned to a stage where bilateral dialogue channels are completely closed, and the parties almost define each other as enemies rather than rivals. G-7, led by the United States and Britain, has become one of the leading organizations in imposing heavy sanctions on Russia since the first quarter of 2022. According to Russian officials, attempts to impose price quotas on Russian oil in international trade, the promotion of anti-Russia and anti-China statements, and the coercion of other states to adopt anti-Russia and anti-China positions illustrate that G-7 has turned into a dysfunctional organization, far from providing any solutions to international issues, and acting in a hostile manner[414].

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[413] Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova’s Comment on the G7 Statement // The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 14, 2024. — URL: https://mid.ru/fr/foreign_policy/news/themes/id/1935230/?lang=en

[414] Press Release on G7 // The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 26, 2024. — URL: https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1871538/?TSPD_101_R0=08765fb817ab20001414b3f595aa52ec1103c7a

While the Russian Foreign Ministry states that it is open to dialogue regarding the stalled relations between Russia and G-7 countries over the Ukraine issue, it seems unlikely that their relations will be restored anytime soon. Russia highlights the increasing share of G-7 countries led by the US in the international economy. Alongside the breaking of G-7's international economic hegemony, emphasis is placed on the rise of BRICS. Lastly, in his address to the Russian State Duma, President Vladimir V. Putin emphasized the increasing share of BRICS in the international economy, stating that in 2022, BRICS surpassed G-7 countries in terms of PPP and that the gap will continue to widen until 2028[415].

3.2.4. Global Energy Agenda

Russia stands out as one of the leading countries in shaping global energy policies, both in terms of fossil fuels and renewable energy sources, due to its vast energy reserves, climate, natural resources, and extensive geography. Energy, which is one of the most important sectors of national, regional, and global sustainable development strategies, holds strategic importance in Russian foreign policy discourse advocating for a more inclusive and equitable international system. Russia advocates for sustaining global energy policies through dialogue based on principles of equality and reliability. It opposes the politicization of global energy policies and their design based on the interests of a single country or group, similar to many other sectors. At the G-20 Summit held in Delhi in 2023, during a meeting focused on green energy, Valentina Ivanovna Matvienko, the Speaker of the Russian Federation Council, briefly outlined Russia's approach to global energy policies as follows:

3c671a4a4441e193750d3385a5d98ce206d3d80f608be9db925143000b22a8ee058cd80b5ad98ccfba011e2cdce8df856abed286d22122b6842af92457a89f29675b7ba8a6ff953e3c325615e

[415] BRICS Overtaking G7 in Terms of Share in Global GDP: Putin // Greater Kashmir. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 26, 2024. — URL: https://www.greaterkashmir.com/todays-paper/world-todays-paper/brics-overtaking-g7-in-terms-of-share-in-global-gdp-putin/.

Russia's principles of global energy dialogue include fairness, non-discrimination and equal cooperation[416].

Matvienko emphasizes the importance of ensuring that global energy policies are not used by states for competition and discrimination, and stresses that the capacities and needs of states should not be overlooked when determining global energy policies[417]. Highlighting the need to address the energy and technology needs of developing and underdeveloped countries, Matvienko warns against unilateral restrictions and regulations that diverge from realistic goals.

Russia's vast energy resources and investments in infrastructure development, such as pipelines and new energy routes for cheap and efficient energy transportation, along with national and regional projects, have played a crucial role in overcoming the political and economic crises of the 1990s.

The process that has made Russia a leader in the global carbon energy market has also significantly contributed to its policies aimed at maintaining and enhancing its position as a decisive actor in international developments. Following the Cold War, the gradual increase in regional and global conflict risks in international relations has led to a growing importance of energy demand and the reliable sources to meet that demand each year. Alongside the increasing energy demands of developing regional and global powers, Russia has become one of the world's largest producers and exporters of oil, coal, and gas[418]. In addition to the production and export of hydrocarbons, Russia also holds the potential to be a leading or pioneering actor in sectors such as petrochemicals, nuclear energy, electricity, hydrocarbon, and renewable energy.

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[416] Valentina Matvienko: Russia's Principles of Global Energy Dialogue Include Fairness, Non-Discrimination and Equal Cooperation // Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 13, 2024. — URL: http://www.council.gov.ru/en/events/news/148961/.
[417] Ibid.
[418] OPEC: Cooperation and the Link between Oil and Gas // OPEC. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 14, 2024. — URL: https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/press_room/912.htm.

On the other hand, the process that has led to Russia's leadership in the production and export of fossil fuel reserves has also brought the risk of excessive dependence of the Russian economy on revenue from the energy sector. More than half of Russia's export revenues and a quarter of its GDP are derived from energy revenues, leading to an average energy intensity in the economy of around 31% between 2000 and 2021[419].

Furthermore, factors such as the economic crisis of 2008, geopolitical crises involving Russia's immediate surroundings and key players in the energy market, and the use of energy as a tool in competition with the West, have prompted Russia to consider rebalancing the share of energy in its budget. Additionally, policies aimed at combating the climate crisis resulting from global climate change have brought about global changes and transition processes in the international energy sector.

Given the strategic importance of energy resources for Russia, these changes and emerging factors on the international stage have prompted Russia to formulate official doctrines shaping international energy policies. In this context, Russia has developed doctrines such as:

- Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2030 (2009)
- General Scheme for the Development of the Gas Industry until 2030 (2011)
- Long-term Program for Coal Sector Development until 2030 (2019 Ed.)
- Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2035 (2020)
- Draft Strategy for the Development and Exploration of Oil and Gas Resources of Russia’s Continental Shelf until 2020

[419] Russia - Countries & Regions // IEA. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 22, 2024. — URL: https://www.iea.org/countries/russia#.

These doctrines represent official policies that have been announced to address the evolving dynamics in the global energy landscape[420]. The doctrines primarily emphasize the leading role of the energy agenda in the development of the national economy and the formulation of policies aimed at improving the living standards of Russian citizens. However, these doctrines, which also define Russia's international energy policies, are structured equivalently with texts that determine Russian foreign policy concepts, military doctrines, and economic policies. Based on the aforementioned doctrines, the key aspects that stand out in Russia's global energy agenda can be summarized as follows:

- Energy Security (ensuring reliable customers, security of transportation, price determination, combating sanctions)
- The role of energy in achieving international sustainable development and infrastructure development for the transportation and storage of energy in foreign countries
- Increasing energy efficiency
- Digitalization in the energy sector
- “Secure" transition to green energy (Investments for renewable energy)

Energy Security and Transportation

The most prominent issue in Russia's energy agenda at both the national and international levels is energy security. The importance of the energy sector for ensuring sustainable development of the country's economy and raising the living standards of Russian citizens is consistently emphasized in the state's doctrines and foreign policy concepts. In the international dimension of energy security, the key aspects that stand out for Russia include:

[420] Mitrova, T. Energy and the Economy in Russia / T. Mitrova; M. Hafner, G. Luciani (Ed.) // The Palgrave Handbook of International Energy Economics. — Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2022. — DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-86884-0_32.

- Developing methods of transportation for energy products that are secure, cost-effective, and minimize environmental damage.
- Ensuring the reliability of contracts with countries supplying energy, establishing relations with reliable trading partners, and collaborating on the establishment and storage of energy infrastructure in friendly countries.
- Collaboration and seeking balance in response to geopolitical tensions and potential imbalances in the international energy agenda.
- Collaboration and dialogue with energy-exporting friendly and neutral countries to combat sanctions imposed on the energy sector, potential attacks on energy transportation vehicles, and interventions in determining energy product prices.
- Taking a pioneering role in reducing carbon emissions and transitioning to green energy by ensuring a balanced management between traditional energy sources (fossil fuels) and new energy sources, considering countries' national conditions[421].

Russia has implemented numerous new projects in the 21st century to store energy products and facilitate their secure and low-cost trade. Large-budget projects such as North Stream I-II, Blue Stream, Turk Stream, and Power of Siberia have been launched for the delivery of natural gas and oil to Europe and Asia via pipelines. Through these newly constructed pipelines, efforts have been made to eliminate unlawful interventions by third countries (such as Ukraine) in energy supply to countries engaged in energy trade, and assurances have been provided to international partners regarding secure delivery and flow. With these projects, Russia has been meeting Europe's largest capacity and quality energy

[421] Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2030 (Government Decree No. 1715-r of 2009) // ESCAP Policy Documents Management. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 27, 2024. — URL: https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/node/143.

demand for decades until the conflicts that began in Ukraine in 2022. Additionally, Russia supplies energy to various regions worldwide through maritime transportation routes via Turkey, Iran, and India. Finally, as of 2023, Russia has become China's largest importer of natural gas and oil[422], acknowledging its responsibilities as the world's largest energy supplier in terms of the security of energy transportation. This awareness is evident through Russia's efforts to develop new routes such as the Northern Transportation Route and to increase energy efficiency by using fuels with minimal environmental impact in maritime transportation, despite all sanctions and geopolitical conflicts. In this regard, the calls from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the formulation of global joint policies in response to recent energy crises, declines in industrialization rates, and the transition to green energy[423] are parallel to national policies.

Following the geopolitical competition with the West, unilateral cancellations of contracts and efforts by countries to invest in renewable energy products and redirect their national resources towards green energy have highlighted the need for contract security from Russia's perspective. In this regard, Russia proposes projects based on long-term contracts for Russian companies engaged in energy trade and suggests forming partnerships with reliable countries. Additionally, projects have been developed for transporting energy through pipelines to China, as well as establishing new energy infrastructures for transporting energy from Central Asian countries and China through India to other regions of the world via the Indian Ocean. Progress has been made in discussions with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan at the beginning of

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[422] Russia Becomes Top China Oil Supplier for First Time Since 2018 // Bloomberg. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 14, 2024. — URL: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-01-22/russia-becomes-top-china-oil-supplier-for-first-time-since-2018.

[423] Valentina Matvienko: Russia’s Principles of Global Energy Dialogue Include Fairness, Non-Discrimination and Equal Cooperation // Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 13, 2024. — URL: http://www.council.gov.ru/en/events/news/148961/.

2023, with the aim of completing the projects by the end of 2024[424]. Furthermore, although direct energy trade with Europe has reached historically low levels, energy partnership with Turkey, which aspires to be a central hub for energy transportation between regions, highlights plan for establishing storage facilities and increasing transportation capacities through pipelines in that country[425].

Increasing Energy Efficiency

While the importance of energy efficiency is highlighted more for Russia in terms of ensuring national economic development rather than its international energy agenda, it still holds a significant position in international energy policies. At this point, Russia's aspirations to lead in international energy trade and security rely on increasing energy efficiency. Especially, the technological dimension of Western sanctions and the transition to green energy have made enhancing energy efficiency essential for Russia. Ensuring technological self-sufficiency is crucial for the production, transportation of traditional energy products, and development in the green energy sector. Following Western sanctions, bans on the delivery of certain semiconductors and fan systems have increased costs and reduced energy efficiency in Russia's energy production, storage, and export. Construction of pipelines, establishment of new energy routes, and modernization of energy production and processing facilities are other significant factors in Russia's efforts to enhance energy efficiency.

Digitalization in Energy Sector

According to the presidential decree signed by President Vladimir Putin in 2018, Russia has begun efforts to digitize the economy. One of the most

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[424] Russia’s Expanding Energy Ties in Central Asia // Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University SIPA. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 17, 2024. — URL: https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/russias-expanding-energy-ties-in-central-asia/.

[425] Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2030 (Government Decree No. 1715-r of 2009) // ESCAP Policy Documents Management. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 27, 2024. — URL: https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/node/143.

important sectors targeted for digitalization and technological advancement in this regard is the energy sector. In fact, the Ministry of Energy announced the development of the "digital energy" program in 2019 to facilitate the process of digitalization in the energy sector. The necessity for digitizing energy and increasing technological capacity arises from the lack of domestically produced high-tech products needed in the energy sector, as well as restrictions on access due to sanctions. Moreover, the transition to green energy represents a new market, raising the possibility that even friendly countries may be cautious about sharing technology. In this regard, especially following the intensified Western sanctions, Russia prioritizes national technological investments in the energy sector, seeks collaborative technology projects with BRICS countries, and endeavors to build public opinion in international organizations to exempt the green energy sector from Western sanctions.

Transition to Green Energy "Safely"

In international energy policies, the most prominent issue in the 21st century is the transition to green energy. This process, driven by global climate change, aims to transition from energy derived from traditional fossil fuels such as natural gas, oil, and coal to energy produced from renewable and low-carbon sources[426]. As repeatedly mentioned, Russia holds a global leadership position in the production and supply of traditional energy resources. Naturally, it stands to be one of the countries' most directly or indirectly affected by any developments seeking to fundamentally change international energy policies.

Russia is aware of the inevitability and necessity of transitioning to green energy for both increasing energy efficiency and combating the global climate crisis. In this regard, the strategic planning of Russia regarding the transition to green energy is elaborated in more detail in the assessment of Russia's global

[426] What is Energy Transition? // S&P Global. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 17, 2024. — URL: https://www.spglobal.com/en/research-insights/market-insights/what-is-energy-transition.

climate agenda. Here, it is necessary to clarify the place of the transition to green energy in Russia's international energy policies. The most important emphases made by Russia regarding the changes in the international energy market are as follows:

- The establishment of a safe transition process through international dialogue.
- Not disregarding the national challenges and conditions of countries.
- Maintaining a balance between traditional energy sources and green energy sources during the transition process.
- Avoiding the imposition of unilateral regulations for the transition process.
- Ensuring that the transition process is not affected by competition and discrimination policies among countries.

For Russia, the emphasis on the "safe" transition to green energy is aimed at ensuring that the increasing international conflict risks in recent times do not spill over into many sectors and hinder global sustainable development from progressing or halting. Failure to improve the current conditions of both underdeveloped and inconsistently developed countries would not allow for global success in the transition to green energy, even if there were no geopolitical risks.

Reactions from developing economies like India to criticisms directed at Western countries during the climate conference held in Paris in 2015 for using fossil fuels highlight the need for global consensus, despite regional and global powers, to achieve global success in transitioning to green energy. Similar to China, Russia also has plans to reduce carbon emissions by 2060. While efforts are being made to increase the efficiency of fossil fuels, there is also a focus on increasing the share of energy production from modernized nuclear platforms with low carbon emissions. The desire in Europe to abandon unrealistic nuclear energy in favor of increasing coal usage, beyond just reactivating nuclear

reactors, underscores the need for realistic goals for international cooperation in Russia's global energy agenda.

Russia contributes to the proliferation of nuclear energy use in energy production by both national modernization efforts and international partnerships aimed at the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Lastly, partnerships are established for the construction of nuclear reactors and scientific collaborations through ROSATOM in countries like Turkey and Iran, and for the modernization of nuclear reactors in former Soviet countries. Furthermore, in its quest to enhance relations amidst geopolitical competition with the West, Russia strives to minimize the adverse effects of energy transition on South and East states and maintain its leadership in international energy supply on various platforms. Since 2017, the Russian Energy Week International Forum, organized by Russia, has become one of the leading global dialogue points for shaping international energy policies and markets. According to Russia, one of the most important ways to prevent the manipulation of the energy market under the pretext of transitioning to green energy by the West is to develop international dialogue channels. Events like energy weeks and conferences facilitate the enhancement of dialogues and the establishment of partnerships with countries with which Russia shares energy needs and markets.

3.2.5. Russian Global Climate Agenda

Russia's global climate agenda encompasses a developmental process spanning the past thirty years, starting from the formal recognition of the issue to the measures taken through national and international cooperation initiatives. Following the end of the Cold War, numerous initiatives were undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations to combat the climate crisis. While the aim of these initiatives was to establish global common policies against the climate crisis, the differing capacities, resources, and needs of countries have not allowed for the permanent production of common policies. However, collective

efforts initiated at the conference held under the UN framework in Rio in 1992 continued until the signing of the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015.

Russia participated in conferences held on the theme of combating the climate crisis in 1992, which led to the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and was one of the first countries to sign the agreement. Subsequently, Russia has been involved in the Conferences of the Parties (COP) since their inception in 1995, striving to contribute to international collective initiatives. In this context, Russia signed the Kyoto Protocol in 1999, which aimed to reduce carbon emissions and defined specific quotas for countries, and officially ratified it in 2004[427].

As a northern country with a geography close to the poles, Russia is one of the countries that most keenly feels the tangible indicators of climate change. Although Russia pursued a conciliatory state policy in international initiatives after the Cold War, it didn't quite believe that human actions or inactions were the main cause of global climate change. However, it can be said that this understanding officially changed with the Climate Doctrine published by the then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in 2009[428]. Russia had come to the conclusion that climate change was a global anthropogenic threat. The climate doctrine published during the Medvedev era has been updated periodically to remain relevant. Most recently, in the doctrine published in 2023, Russia's policies regarding the fight against the climate crisis are outlined[429]. In addition to the climate doctrine, Russia's environmental policies and climate agenda are

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[427] Yakovlev, I. A., Kabir L. S., Nikulina S. I. Climate Policy of the Russian Federation: International Cooperation and National Approach / I. A. Yakovlev, L.S. Kabir, S. I. Nikulina // Finansovyj zhurnal — Financial Journal. — Financial Research Institute, Moscow, 2020. — Issue 4. — P. 26-36.

[428] Climate Doctrine of the Russian Federation // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 11, 2024. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4822.

[429] Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia. Russia’s New Climate Doctrine Approved // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 8, 2024. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/acts/news/72598.

also elucidated in periodic foreign policy concepts under the heading "Environmental Protection and Global Health"[430].

In recent years, Russia's national policies on environmental protection and combating the climate crisis have also included new initiatives. Various departments within the Russian government, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Energy, and the Office of the President, coordinate and carry out intensive efforts to transition to green energy and reduce carbon emissions in Russia. Strategies such as the "Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2030" and the "Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation up to 2035" have been formulated by the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Transportation to aim at reducing problems arising from climate change[431]. In this context, national initiatives are aimed at promoting the use of electric vehicles for public transportation, reducing carbon emissions, and utilizing hydrogen. It is known that President Vladimir V. Putin has emphasized the increase in temperatures felt in Russia and worldwide in recent years, abnormal changes in seasons, and forest fires[432]. In 2021, Russia, under President Putin's orders, established a strategy with China, setting a similar timeline aiming to neutralize carbon emissions by 2060. While Russia's climate agenda involves a high level of commitment and increasing support for international cooperation initiatives in recent years, global geopolitical developments are reducing opportunities for joint action with other stakeholders.

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[430] Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii V. V. Putinym 31 marta 2023 goda. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/.

[431] Alekseev A. N., et al. A Critical Review of Russia’s Energy Strategy in the Period Until 2035 / A.N. Alekseev, et al. // International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy. — 2019. — Vol. 9, No. 6. — P. 95–102.

[432] Russia’s Putin Urges Stronger Response to Siberian Wildfires // AP News. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 24, 2024. — URL: https://apnews.com/article/europe-health-russia-fires-environment-and-nature-bdf807bb8f73ad581ddcafa5531fb8ef.

Russian Unique Structure and its Alternative Agenda

Russia, which encompasses approximately 20% of the world's forested areas and has two-thirds of its territory covered by forests, possesses a unique structure regarding the reduction of carbon emissions[433]. Additionally, with its vast natural gas and oil resources and production capacity, Russia is a leading energy exporter in the world. Given that Russia earns more than 40% of its annual income from energy exports, it is not possible for the climate agendas set by the European Union, which lacks energy production capacity, or the United States, which formulates different policies from Russia's petroleum and natural gas exports, to have the same priorities. The differences underlying the discussions following the process from the conferences held in Rio in 1992 to the signing of the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015 lie in these differences.

Russia believes that, despite accusations leveled by the European Union and occasionally the United States, the fact that Russia's energy production and exports, along with its extensive forested areas, partly neutralize the carbon emissions it causes is being overlooked. From the Russian perspective, the climate agenda is perceived as an attempt by a certain group of countries to impose their regulations on the rest of the world, politicizing climate and environmental issues in this way. Moreover, the politicized climate agenda also involves intervention in the economies and internal affairs of developing countries. It is possible to illustrate Russia's thoughts with two examples. The European Union's attempt in recent years to impose its self-determined policies on transitioning to green energy and reducing carbon emissions as an absolute argument, from its trade with other countries to its bilateral relations, has elicited a strong reaction from economies like Russia that are developing and have

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[433] Danilov-Danilyan V. I., Klyuev N. N., Kotlyakov V. M. Russia in the Global Natural and Ecological Space / V.I. Danilov-Danilyan, N. N. Klyuev, V. M. Kotlyakov // Regional Research of Russia. — 2023. — Vol. 13, No. 1. — P. 34–57.

growth targets. Additionally, in 2021, the inclusion of climate and environmental issues on the agenda of the UN Security Council, and the subsequent development where climate change was considered an international security issue and called for military intervention by the UN Security Council due to the claim that international conflicts stemmed from climate and environmental disasters, led to a veto by Russia and India and a decision of abstention by China. In response to the accusations against Russia, the Permanent Representative of Russia to the United Nations, Vasily A. Nebenzya, stated that considering the climate crisis as an international security issue and turning other countries into intervention tools is counterproductive and a politicized approach that calls into question the sincerity of combating climate change[434].

Russia strongly opposes the arguments put forth by the European Union and the United States, which impose their own truths as universal facts, as another imposition of a unipolar mindset in the fight against the climate crisis. Russia, while ready for international cooperation with all parties in combating the climate crisis, seeks not to have rules imposed on it but rather to seek a collaborative opportunity where rules can be collectively formulated, as a northern country with coastlines bordering the poles, experiencing the most tangible consequences of climate change and aiming to be a leader in utilizing its resources in the transition to green energy, instead of fighting unilateral criteria set by the EU and the US. Since Rio in 1992, many targets have been set, but the low scope and realism of these targets have not allowed the desired results to be achieved. Adviser to the President Ruslan Edelgeriyev expressed Russia's policy and recommendations regarding the fight against the climate

[434] Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 28, 2024. — URL: https://russiaun.ru/en/news/130224.

crisis at COP 28 held in the United Arab Emirates in 2023, emphasizing that global climate action should be realistic, comprehensive, and inclusive[435].

The criteria outlined by Edelgeriev also elucidate Russia's climate policies adopted in recent years. Rather than combating unilateral criteria set by the EU and the US, Russia has established its own national standards and turned towards an alternative cooperation channel based on sustainable economic development with BRICS countries. In this context, more participatory, comprehensive, and realistic policies based on South-South cooperation and the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" (CBDR-RC) are sought[436]. In line with this, in 2018, BRICS countries identified the need to enhance cooperation under the "Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Environmental Cooperation" towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals[437]. Russia and BRICS countries foresee, in accordance with the criteria adopted in Russia's 2023 Foreign Policy Concept, sustainable development, respect for countries' values and capacities in determining their climate change mitigation criteria, and ensuring that the transition process aimed at carbon reduction does not impoverish countries or create issues in poverty alleviation efforts. Within this framework, Russia desires cooperation with all parties where dialogue channels are open and positions the climate agenda among its priority policies.

3.2.6. Russian Global Security Agenda

In international relations, states' security agendas contain policies in various areas according to their threat perceptions. National and international security threats necessitate states to take measures individually or in conjunction

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[435] Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia. Ruslan Edelgeriyev Read Russia’s National Statement at United Nations Climate Change Conference or Conference of the Parties // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 18, 2024. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/administration/72940.
[436] Ibid.
[437] Joint Statement for the Fourth BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting // BRICS Utoronto. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 14, 2024. — URL: http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/180518-environment.html.

with regional and global partnerships while combating these threats. Russia's global security agenda has been shaped according to threat perceptions from both state and non-state actors following the Cold War. The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the end of the bipolar world order and led to changes in states' global security agendas in line with the evolving international system. With the rise of globalization trends, national and regional threat perceptions have also begun to acquire global dimensions. The disappearance of the bipolar world order has necessitated cooperation among states, especially major powers, in the face of global threats.

Although the 1990s required Russia to expend more energy on ensuring national security and stability, the increasing international security risks, a significant portion of which were around Russia and of a nature to affect Russia, led to the formulation of Russia's global security agenda. Russia's integration into the international system starting in the 1990s compelled it to engage in international efforts concerning the resolution of interstate conflicts, combating terrorism and extremist movements, combating transnational crimes, international drug trafficking, illegal migration, and responding to international emergencies and disasters. Additionally, Russia, as the continuing of the USSR and one of the world's two largest nuclear powers, still possessed some of the world's most advanced weapons systems and technologies. This made it a natural actor in international security and a partner with whom cooperation was necessary.

Russia articulates its global security agenda in its foreign policy concepts under the title of "strengthening international security and peace. Under this heading, Russia's understanding of addressing changes in interstate relations, the foundations on which these relations should be based, and dealing with international threats arising from the actions of non-state actors is consistently and firmly emphasized. Russia regularly emphasizes the following points to prevent problems in international security stemming from interstate relations:

- The indivisibility of international security in global and regional aspects
- The equal treatment of states as individuals under international law
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of states and the sanctity of national sovereignty
- Avoidance of international use of force except in situations based on Article 51 of the UN Charter, with diplomacy pushed to the fullest extent "without ignoring the sensitivities and national security concerns of states"
- Reconstruction of the international system based on a more participatory and inclusive mission rather than the interests and concerns of a single state or group

Efforts led by the United States to establish a Western-centric unipolar world order have failed, and simultaneously, the rise of alternative global and regional powers has led to a significant increase in security risks stemming from interstate relations in international relations in recent years. This study elaborates on the threats to national and international security in Russian foreign policy due to the increasing geopolitical tensions in other sections. However, it is necessary to briefly summarize how Russia's security agenda addresses its relations with states, the most important subject in international relations. Therefore, based on official documents, Russia's fundamental stance on relations with states is briefly summarized above. When examining Russia's official documents on communication established for ensuring international security and combating non-state actors, apart from national threat perceptions, the following points emerge prominently:

- Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons
- Combating terrorism and extremist movements (including neo-Nazi activities)
- Contribution to international peacekeeping activities

- Combating transnational crimes
- Combating disinformation
- Combating illegal migration and international drug trafficking
- Contribution to international emergency assistance situations
- Food security

These points are highlighted in Russia's official documents.

Arms control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons

In this regard, Russia has adopted a policy that has been intermittently continued since the détente period between the USSR and the US, and has continued the process of ending its military presence in Eastern Europe following the end of the Cold War. Russia has shown a positive outlook towards maintaining and even expanding the scope of treaties signed during the Cold War period, such as the INF, ABM, and START treaties. In 1996, Russia also signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty with the US and ratified it in the national assembly in 2000. However, certain unilateral activities by the US in international relations, unilateral termination of some agreements, and its failure to implement certain agreements aimed at controlling armament, even though Russia had put them into effect together with its European allies, created a trust issue in Russia.

As Deputy Director of the Department for Non-proliferation and Arms Control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Vladimir L. Leontiev, pointed out, Russia believes that there is no need to be eager to take steps on arms control and disarmament in a relationship that harbors double standards and unreliability[438]. Leontiev also mentioned that considering the rising geopolitical risks, Russia adopts conventional, pragmatic, and realistic policies

[438] Leontiev, V. Russia’s Vision for Arms Control, Disarmament, and Non-Proliferation in International Cooperation for Enhancing Nuclear Safety, Security, Safeguards and Non-Proliferation / V. Leontiev ; Maiani L. (Ed.) // International Cooperation for Enhancing Nuclear Safety, Security, Safeguards and Non-Proliferation. — Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020. — P. 41–48. — https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42913-3_8.

regarding arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation, without seeking innovative and future-oriented planning[439]. He emphasized that Russia prioritizes its national interests and national security concerns and approaches these issues within this framework. He further explains the trust issue as follows:

For instance, a country may declare it has unilaterally reduced its nuclear missiles to a number of "X". The first question is—how do we know it is true? And how the accuracy of such data may be checked? As a matter of fact, there is nothing to support such claims except "you have my word". Sounds great and sincere, but doubt may still exist, and there is no practical way to dissipate it[440]

Russia asserts that it fulfills its responsibilities regarding agreements inherited from the USSR aimed at preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and maintains a clear negative stance on the clandestine acquisition of nuclear weapons by other countries. It has demonstrated a cooperative attitude on this issue by participating in the measures that the UN Security Council should take regarding Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. Russia has complied with the sanctions imposed on Iran by the UN Security Council under the Joint Comprehensive Action Plan (JCPOA). Additionally, Iran has pursued constructive policies regarding the reinstatement of regulations canceled during the Trump administration after the end of his period. Among the new threats emerging after the end of the Cold War is the danger of non-state groups and terrorist organizations obtaining nuclear weapons. In response to this threat, in July 2006, Russia played a leading role alongside the United States in establishing the "Global Initiatives to Combat Nuclear Terrorism" organization[441]. Russia actively pursues policies for the elimination of not only

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[439] Ibid.
[440] Ibid.
[441] Greetings on the Opening of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism Plenary Meeting // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] — June 5, 2019. — URL: http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60678/print.

nuclear weapons but also chemical and biological weapons. It has not only destroyed its own chemical weapon stockpiles but also led diplomatic efforts to resolve the chemical weapon crisis in Syria in 2013.

Combatting Terrorism and Extremist Movements

The activities of separatist and ethnonationalist extremist movements and extremist religious groups, which became a global security risk following the end of the Cold War, have manifested themselves as terrorist activities. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the terrorist actions of radical and extremist Chechen groups, as well as radical Islamist groups operating in Central Asia and the Middle East, led Russia to assess terrorism as a national and international security risk. Russia initially transitioned terrorism from being predominantly a national risk in the early 2000s and demonstrated openness to collaborating with all states in combating international terrorist acts. Particularly, in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has engaged in cooperation with regional organizations such as CSTO and SCO, in addition to bilateral relations with neighboring countries, to combat terrorist organizations taking advantage of the power vacuum in Central Asia[442].

In 2015, Russia, at the invitation of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, engaged in activities outside the former Soviet territories for the first time to combat ISIS and other radical groups. Through successful operations, Russia played a significant role in minimizing ISIS activities in areas controlled by the Syrian regime in Syria. Having demonstrated its international effectiveness in counterterrorism in Syria, Russia also notes efforts to combat the activities of extremist Neo-Nazi groups, particularly in Ukraine and its surrounding areas. Russia asserts that combating Russophobia activities, particularly in Ukraine and

[442] Bogaturov A. D., ed. Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya v Tsentral'noy Azii: sobytiya i dokumenty. / A. D. Bogaturov — Moskva: Aspekt Press, 2011.

throughout Europe, is one of the objectives of the Special Military Operation that began in February 2022.

Peacekeeping Role

In the past three decades, due to civil wars, interstate conflicts, and the activities of illegal armed groups, there has been a need for external assistance to establish peace in many regions of the world. Russia, as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council and a leading power in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), has been actively involved in peacekeeping missions in various countries and regions such as South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria, Tajikistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Metohija, Angola, Chad, Sierra Leone, and Sudan. Russia has been and continues to be active in peacekeeping efforts[443]. Russia also provides financial contributions to peacebuilding within the framework of the UN and CSTO. As of 2015, Russia is known to have donated over 230 million dollars to UN peacekeeping activities[444]. Currently, Russia leads peacekeeping operations within the CSTO, and it has been a decisive actor in establishing and maintaining peace, both in conflicts immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the Middle East and Africa over the past decade.

Transnational Crimes, Illegal Migration and Drug Trafficking

Russia is one of the most active countries in combating transnational crimes, illegal migration, and drug trafficking. The activities of international criminal organizations, particularly in the former Soviet territories during the 1990s, the rise in irregular and illicit activities due to civil wars and interstate conflicts, and especially the significant presence of drug trafficking originating

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[443] Peacekeeping Operations // Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 27, 2024. — URL: https://eng.mil.ru/en/mission/peacekeeping_operations.htm.

[444] Nikitin, A. The Russian Federation in Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges, and Future of United Nations Peacekeeping Contributions / A. Nikitin; A. J. Bellamy, P. D. Williams (Ed.) // The Politics of United Nations Peacekeeping. — Oxford University Press, 2013.

from Afghanistan in Russia have made these issues prominent on Russia's security agenda. In this context, just before the dissolution of the USSR, Russia became a member of INTERPOL on September 27, 1990, participating in cooperation and information sharing activities in combating international crimes[445]. Later, on November 6, 2003, Russia became a member of EUROPOL, deepening its relations with EU countries in combating international crimes[446]. Similarly, within organizations such as the CSTO, BRICS, and SCO, regional and global collaborations have been established for combating these crimes, including intelligence sharing, extradition of criminals, and preventing the activities of criminal organizations. Within the SCO, the Anti-Drug Strategy for 2018-2023 has been developed, and within the CSTO, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center has been established to combat drug trafficking[447].

Emergency Situations

Russia considers combating natural disasters or man-made disasters originating from foreign countries as an issue of international security. Therefore, in addressing this aspect that can be considered within Russia's security agenda, Russia participates in aid activities to countries affected by disasters utilizing its experiences, technological capabilities, and equipment[448]. In assessing the construction and strengthening of international security in this matter, Russia provides practical assistance to affected foreign states and

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[445] INTERPOL Is 100 Years Old // Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 11, 2024. — URL: https://en.mvd.ru/news/item/41498907/.

[446] Fight against Transnational Crime and Terrorism // Russian Mission to the European Union. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 14, 2024. — URL: https://russiaeu.ru/en/fight-against-transnational-crime-and-terrorism.

[447] Lemarchal O. Tackling the Illicit Drug Trade: Perspectives From Russia // Russian Council. [Electronic resource] / O. Lemarchal. — Accessed May 27, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/columns/eurasian-policy/tackling-the-illicit-drug-trade-perspectives-from-russia/.

[448] Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii V. V. Putinym 31 marta 2023 goda. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/.

organizes arrangements within the legal framework[449]. Additionally, Russia contributes to training activities in foreign countries to prepare for disasters and assists in the recovery and rehabilitation process after disasters. Finally, Russian contributions were evident in search and rescue operations and post-earthquake recovery processes in Turkey and Syria following the earthquake disasters in February 2023.

Within Russia's security agenda, the primary focus is on security risks in the post-Soviet geography and measures that can be taken to address them. For the rest of the world, Russia prioritizes its national security first, followed by minimizing international security risks and building and enhancing peace. The rapidly changing structure of the international system leads to an increase in both the budget and time allocated to Russia's security agenda each year. While there continues to be an emphasis on cooperation in eliminating international threats, the understanding that prioritizes Russian interests and alleviating the concerns of Russia's allies remains central.

3.2.7. Russian Global Humanitarian Agenda

When explaining the concept of a humanitarian agenda, it is necessary to first examine whether there is an internationally accepted definition of humanitarian aid and common implementation methods. According to Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Primakov, who has been the President of Rossotrudnichestvo since 2019, there are conceptual differences between Russia and Western countries regarding humanitarian aid and the humanitarian agenda. Primakov states that Western-origin humanitarian aid and humanitarian agenda concepts are evaluated based on the freedom to access basic human needs and the capacity to improve them, while Russia also emphasizes the understanding of having the freedom to possess and preserve traditional moral and ethical values

[449] Ibid.

alongside obtaining basic needs[450]. In his work where he discusses the development process, current achievements, and shortcomings of Russia's humanitarian aid agenda, Primakov also provides recommendations for the improvement of existing policies, but unfortunately points out problems arising from the politicization of the humanitarian aid field according to Western interests[451].

The economic and political problems that peaked during the dissolution of the Soviet Union and continued to manifest throughout the 1990s led to Russia transitioning from being a donor country, as the Soviet Union was, to being a recipient of aid. However, reforms implemented around the mid-2000s, along with energy policies, facilitated the recovery of the Russian economy, enabling Russia to adopt more assertive foreign policy strategies. Within this context, there arose a need to support underdeveloped states to enhance Russia's international image and prestige as a major power. To achieve this goal, Russia began providing assistance to underdeveloped countries, particularly in the post-Soviet region, through various means such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and Regional Development Banks. Russia contributes to international humanitarian aid and sustainable development goals by establishing bilateral relations with countries in different regions worldwide and offering humanitarian assistance in various fields.

According to World Bank data, Russia's contributions to international development at regional and global levels, as well as its humanitarian aid efforts, are primarily driven by the following desires:

- Enhancing governance systems in recipient countries to ensure stability and improve conditions for trade and investment.

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[450] Primakov Y. Russia’s Humanitarian Mission / Y. Primakov // Pathways to Peace and Security. — 2018. — No 1(54) Special Issue. — P. 182-196.
[451] Ibid.

- Establishing and improving innovation and industrial capacities in recipient countries.
- Improving the economy of the recipient country.
- Establishing and strengthening national systems to combat organized crime and terrorism in the recipient country.
- Contributing to the peacebuilding process.
- Implementing social and economic projects in recipient countries[452].

In addition to the assessments provided by the World Bank, Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Primakov's aforementioned study offers a different evaluation of Russia's humanitarian agenda. According to Primakov, Russia's humanitarian agenda has two dimensions: moral and ethical aspects, and political and economic dimensions[453]. Primakov suggests that the moral and ethical dimension stems from Russia's history and traditions, as well as its sense of responsibility. On the other hand, he indicates that the political and economic motivation arises from Russia's strong sense of internal solidarity, the ability to advance its interests, and the desire to live in a more reliable regional and global order[454].

Although Russia may be a more modest donor compared to the world's leading developed economies, OECD data shows that since 2004, its budget allocated for humanitarian aid has significantly increased, especially in conjunction with the economies of developing countries. Below is a table prepared by the prominent Yuri K. Zaytsev, known for his work on Russia's

[452] Russia and the World Bank: International Development Assistance // World Bank. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 14, 2024. — URL: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/russia/brief/international-development.
[453] Primakov Y. Russia’s Humanitarian Mission / Y. Primakov // Pathways to Peace and Security. — 2018. — No 1(54) Special Issue. — P. 182-196.
[454] Ibid.

humanitarian agenda, based on OECD and the Russian Ministry of Finance data, illustrating this change in detail[455].

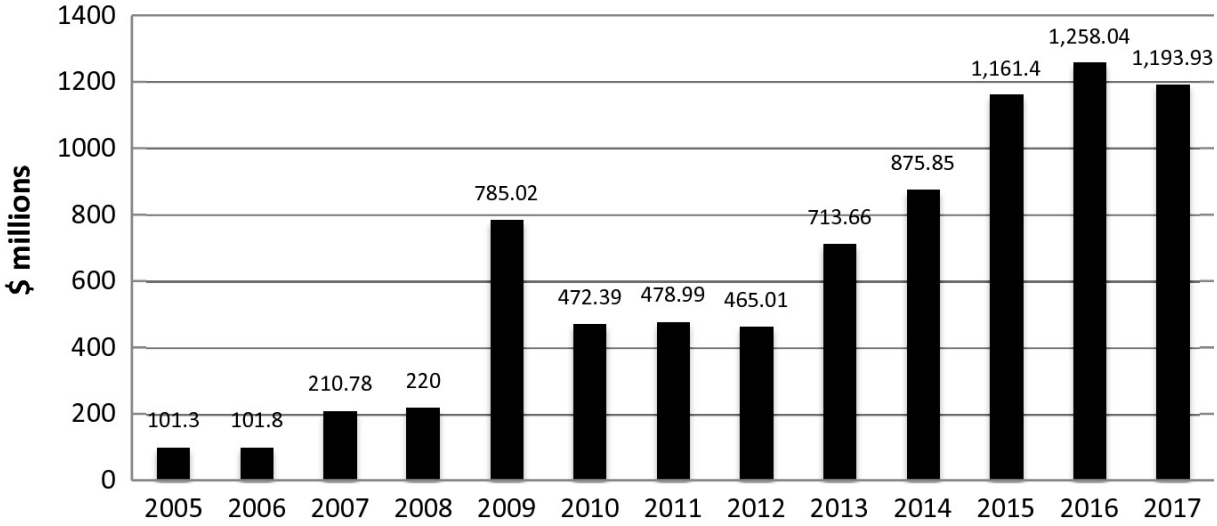


Figure 9: Gaining Russia's GDP-Zaytsev

When analyze the graph, we can see that despite the global economic crisis that began in 2008 and the ongoing geopolitical conflicts with the US and EU, Russia made a significant leap in 2009. However, there was a substantial decline in the following three years, but from 2013 onwards, there was a notable increase again. It's essential to note that the period from 2010 to 2013 coincides with the first five years immediately following the onset of the economic crisis in 2008, as well as the rising geopolitical tensions due to NATO's intervention in Libya and the Arab Spring. Since the end of the Cold War, we can observe a gradual decrease in mutual trust in Russia's relations with the West and an increase in geopolitical risks, which is also reflected in changes in humanitarian aid policies.

In Y. K. Zaytsev's research, another graph based on official figures illustrates that Russia's humanitarian aid has increased more through bilateral relations with states compared to aid provided through international

[455] Zaytsev Y. K. Russia’s Approach to Official Development Assistance and Its Contribution to the SDGs / Y. K. Zaytsev ; S. Chaturvedi et al. (Ed.) // The Palgrave Handbook of Development Cooperation for Achieving the 2030 Agenda: Contested Collaboration. — Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. — P. 475–498.

organizations. Additionally, the share of non-Western organizations such as BRICS, SCO, and EAEU is gradually increasing in international organizations[456].

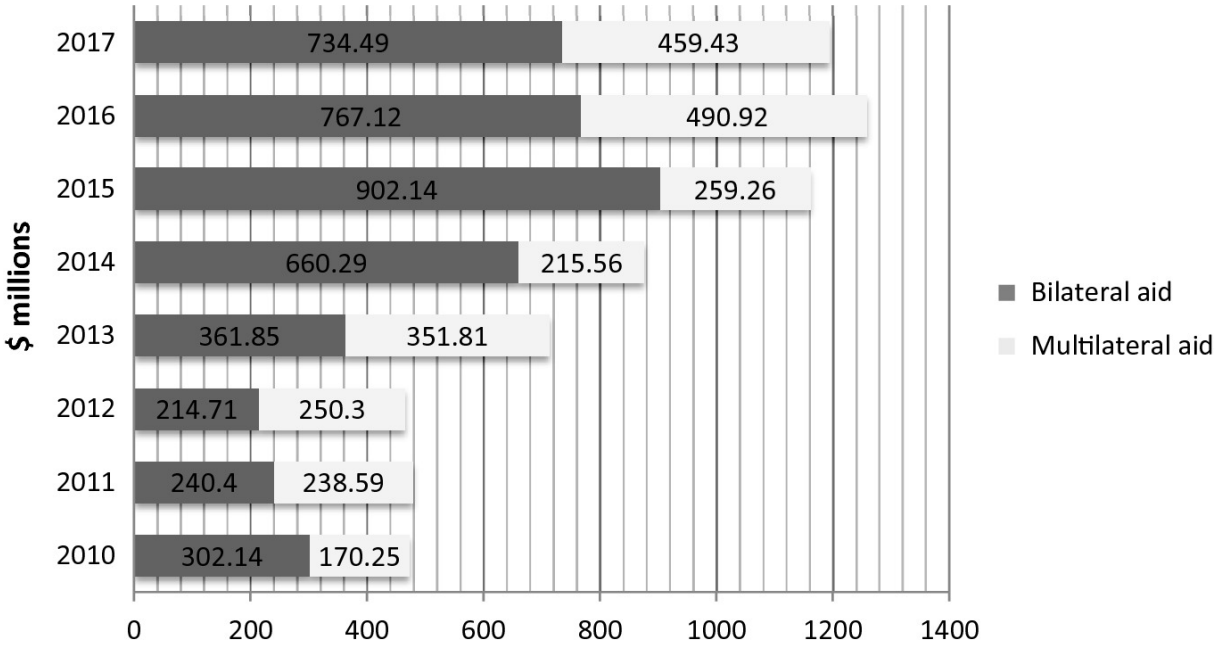


Figure 10: Russia's participation in the International Development Assistance (IDA)-Zaytsev

According to a presidential decree indicating Russia's participation in the International Development Assistance (IDA) in 2007, updates were made in 2014 and 2022, with the latest update issued by President Putin in 2023[457]. These decrees emphasize the democratization of international relations, promoting fairness, stability, respect for sovereignty rights, poverty reduction, and contributing to the development process of underdeveloped states in political, economic, social, cultural, and educational areas[458].

However, over time, these concepts, gradually released, have drawn attention to increasing concerns about information security and manipulation,

[456] Zaytsev Y. K. Russia’s Approach to Official Development Assistance and Its Contribution to the SDGs / Y. K. Zaytsev ; S. Chaturvedi et al. (Ed.) // The Palgrave Handbook of Development Cooperation for Achieving the 2030 Agenda: Contested Collaboration. — Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. — P. 475–498.
[457] Putin Updates Concept of International Development State Promotion Policy // TASS. [Electronic resource] — March 23, 2024. — URL: https://tass.com/politics/1587941.
[458] Neimark, M. A. Russia’s Humanitarian Policy Abroad: A Conceptual Reload / M. A. Neimark // Post-Soviet Issues. — 2022. — Vol. 9, No. 3. — P. 279–288.

parallel to military doctrines and foreign policy concepts. This has led Russia's humanitarian agenda to evolve towards a more selective format, also aiming to promote Russian culture and values, amid escalating geopolitical risks. The current state of this format is explained under the title of "international humanitarian cooperation" in the 2023 Russian foreign policy concept[459]. Furthermore, in the 2023 update on "International Development Assistance," there is an emphasis on not imposing dictates on how recipient countries should utilize the aid they receive and the necessity of not disregarding their own systems.

Although Russia's current level of economic contributions to other countries may not yet match those previously provided by the USSR, the number of countries benefiting from Russia's humanitarian agenda in various fields such as economic, social, cultural, scientific, health, and education has surpassed the relationships established by the Soviet Union. Amid efforts to isolate Russia from international relations, particularly heightened since the beginning of the Crimea issue in 2014 and the commencement of military operations in Ukraine in February 2022, Russia prioritizes enhancing its relations with friendly countries and with developing East and South countries. During this period of attempted isolation, combating Russophobia and contributing to the promotion of Russian culture and language remain integral aspects of the global humanitarian agenda, which continues to be a significant element of Russian foreign policy.

[459] Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii V. V. Putinym 31 marta 2023 goda. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/.

3.3. Russian Relations with Non-Western Institutions and Partnerships

3.3.1. BRICS in Russian Foreign Policy

BRICS is one of the prominent international organizations among the concrete actions of Russia's foreign policy desires for the transition to a multipolar and polycentric world order. Conceptually, the formation aiming to bring together emerging regional and global powers with Russia has been regarded as a mechanism to balance Western hegemony from the inception of the organization. The positioning of the idea of BRICS in Russian foreign policy and the desire for balance stem from Yevgeny M. Primakov's proposal to form a troika of Russia, China, and India. Therefore, before examining the presence of BRICS in Russian foreign policy and the international system, it is necessary to briefly mention the emergence of the unofficial dialogue channel known as the Russia-China-India (RIC) trilateral.

Russia-India-China (RIC)

Shortly before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, relations between the USSR and China, which had been strained by the de-Stalinization process initiated during the Khrushchev era, entered a phase of thaw once again. This process, initiated by Mikhail S. Gorbachev, also brought about a normalization of relations between India and China, with Indian Prime Minister Raven Gandhi visiting Beijing in 1988. Gandhi's visit was a strategically significant development for the USSR as it brought together two important partners at the same table. However, despite the continued thaw in relations with China due to the USSR's emphasis on developing relations with the West following its dissolution, India's importance in Russian foreign policy remained somewhat in the background compared to the Soviet era. Nevertheless, with the rise of Yevgeny Primakov's Eurasianist approach in Russian foreign policy, prioritizing the development of relations with non-Western countries, particularly in the Eurasian region, increased India's significance once again. A decision was made to revive the strategic partnership between Russia and India inherited from the

Soviet era. However, rather than focusing solely on bilateral relations, the emphasis was on creating an unofficial Non-Western bloc aimed at balancing the West alongside China.

Although Sergey Radchenko claims that the idea of the Russia-India-China triangle originated during Gorbachev's meetings with Indian Prime Minister R. Gandhi[460], it is more appropriate to highlight the ideas of Yevgeny M. Primakov, which are generally accepted in the literature and Russian perspective[461]. While Gorbachev's foreign policy, centered around "New Thinking" ideas, advocated for developing relations with non-Western states alongside cooperation with the West, it was primarily driven by pragmatic desires. However, Primakov's approach went beyond pragmatism, aiming to balance the West by forging partnerships with other major non-Western powers, positioning Russia as one of the great powers in the new international system. Therefore, it is more accurate to explain the Russia-India-China (RIC) troika through Primakov's conceptualization in 1996.

On the other hand, Primakov's desires to balance the West in order to establish a multipolar world order were met with skepticism by China and India. Both countries, seeking sustainable growth through integration into the capitalist economic system after the Cold War, had significant relations with Western powers, especially the United States, in their policies. Therefore, they openly stated that they did not want to be part of an anti-Western coalition[462]. However, both India and China were open to cooperation with Russia in developing their relations on a mutually beneficial basis. Amidst all these developments, the

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[460] Radchenko S. The Rise and Fall of Gorbachev's Vision for Asia 1985–89 // Unwanted Visionaries: The Soviet Failure in Asia at the End of the Cold War / S. Radchenko. — New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
[461] Russia, India, China Trilateral Cooperation and Prospects // Valdai Club. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 14, 2024. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia_india_china_trilateral_cooperation_and_prospects/.
[462] Denisov I. Russia, India, China Trilateral Cooperation and Prospects // SWP Research Paper. — Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2017. — URL: https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/arbeitspapiere/BCAS2017_Paper_Igor_Denisov.pdf.

trilateral meetings at the level of foreign ministers within RIC, which could be considered as a kind of infrastructure for BRICS by some, were first held in 2003 when the countries were in Washington for a UN meeting[463]. Although not convened under the guise of a formal alliance, the gathering of these three states for the first time to combat global terrorism and international crimes following September 11 added diplomatic value to the RIC brand. Although not an official alliance, their potential strategic partnership could form a massive bloc in military, political, economic, energy, and population terms. Despite being more of a dialogue channel than a formal structure, it gained fame as an intriguing troika. The shared desire among these three major powers for a more balanced, inclusive, and democratic international system, along with their participation in organizations like BRICS and SCO, ensures that RIC serves as a common dialogue channel among these states, beyond official institutions and bilateral talks. While official meetings at the leaders' level are rare, meetings of Foreign Ministers are held annually to exchange views on developments in international politics and potential partnerships. However, due to the absence of a formal structure, there are no official summits or appointments of state representatives.

In 2014, the development process of relations between Russia and the West, which also initiated sanctions and now stands at the brink of complete rupture, has elevated the dimension of partnerships established with leading powers such as China and India to the level of strategic partnership individually. Today, China and India are Russia's most important energy partners and, in addition to serving as balancing factors against Western efforts to dominate primarily in the Asia-Pacific region, they are also the strongest partners for a multipolar system. Any dialogue established with these partners through RIC,

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[463] Comment by the Information and Press Department on Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s Participation in a Russia-India-China Ministerial Meeting // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 16, 2024. — URL: https://www.mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/comments/1527102/.

BRICS, SCO, or G-20 meetings demonstrates the failure of Western efforts to isolate Russia and is crucial for deepening relations. Furthermore, for Russia, maintaining healthy relations between these two countries is also important for balancing the West.

After the border disputes in the Ladakh region in 2020, which resulted in casualties from both countries, Russia attempted to mediate through active diplomacy by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and the special dialogue President Putin had with the leaders of both countries[464]. In 2023, at the G-20 Summit held in New Delhi, President Vladimir Putin attended alongside Chinese President Xi Jinping, who instead sent a foreign affairs delegation. During the G-20 Summit, Lavrov met with both his Chinese and Indian counterparts, stating that Russia had excellent relations with both countries and that it was trying to assist in resolving issues between them. He also mentioned NATO's attempts to drive India away from China and Russia by exacerbating India's problems with China[465].

From Russia's perspective, the increasing importance of the two countries in foreign policy can be understood from the emphasis placed on developing relations with non-Western international organizations such as BRICS, SCO, and the RIC troika in the Russian foreign policy concepts published in 2016 and 2023, aimed at establishing a multipolar world order. The fact that these three countries, as part of international organizations, come together in almost every meeting in some way, demonstrates that although they may not form a large strategic bloc with their immense potentials, they maintain a sustainable partnership through dialogue.

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[464] Russia Is Trying to Be Helpful to Bring India, China Closer: Lavrov // The Hindu. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 14, 2024. — URL: https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/russia-is-trying-to-be-helpful-to-bring-india-china-closer-lavrov/article66577941.ece.
[465] Ibid.

BRICS

The last decades of the 20th century witnessed significant regional and global economic crises spanning from Russia to Argentina, Argentina to Turkey, and even reaching Japan. As the 21st century began, the pursuit of new trading partners and investment opportunities was closely aligned with the rapidly spreading capitalist and liberal economic model. Rising and potential global powers at the turn of the 21st century were notably Brazil, India, Russia, and China. These countries held the potential to become major global players if they could implement effective economic policies and integrate into international trade.

During the period of strategizing foreign investment approaches, in 2001, Jim O'Neill, the Chairman of Goldman Sachs Investment Bank, published an article titled "Building Better Global Economic BRICs" on the Goldman Sachs website. The article discussed the economic development potentials of the mentioned countries. O'Neill formed an acronym using the first letters of the countries' names, and this acronym later evolved into today's BRICS (with the addition of South Africa in 2010, represented by the "S"). The concept, initially proposed in 2001, progressed towards formalization in 2006 when the foreign ministers of the respective countries convened in New York, UN General Assembly. Ultimately, in 2009, BRICs held its first comprehensive meeting in the city of Yekaterinburg, Russia, with leaders and delegations in attendance.

Interestingly, the BRICS project, initially supported by Western banks and businessmen to enhance international trade volume and create new investment opportunities, has evolved into a potential challenger and even a recent threat to the existing world order that reflects Western hegemony. In the post-Cold War era, institutions like the G7, IMF, and World Bank, originating from the West, emerged as international organizations that directed and regulated regional and global economic developments beyond the scope of nation-states, and at times, even within them. However, these organizations proved insufficient in

preventing the global and regional economic crises that occurred in the late 1990s, as mentioned earlier. In response, a new organization was established in 1999, intended to work in coordination with the G7 and include emerging and potentially influential countries from different regions. While theoretically aiming to enhance regional representation and participation in the management of the international economy, the global economic crisis of 2008, primarily affecting G7 countries, demonstrated that desired results were not achieved.

The unequal representation and American dominance in institutions like the IMF and World Bank necessitated the creation of alternative international organizations for rising non-Western powers. In this context, the establishment of comprehensive meetings by BRICS in 2009, immediately following the 2008 global economic crisis, was not a coincidence.

During their first meeting in 2009, BRICS countries focused on discussions about improving the global economic situation, reforming financial institutions, and enhancing cooperation among member states. While prioritizing the increased influence of developing countries in global matters, there was also a need to find alternative solutions against the domination of reserve currencies in international trade, an initiative proposed by Russia.

The suggestions discussed during the initial comprehensive meeting, such as the reform of existing financial institutions (Western institutions), the need for rising powers inclusiveness and representation in global issues, and the idea of producing alternatives to the dominance of the US dollar, emphasize BRICS' role as an organization seeking a transition from a unipolar system, dominated by a single faction, to a multipolar order. As such, BRICS represents one of the most significant organizations advocating for a more participatory and multilayered reform of the existing international system, which is centered around a single pole and the dominance of a certain group.

The growing potential of BRICS in recent years, the decline of current dominant powers, and the increasing desire of rising powers to have a greater

say in international affairs all indicate that the influence of the alliance will further increase in global politics in the coming years. Although BRICS has not yet achieved complete success in terms of institutionalization like Western organizations, it continues to rapidly become a major center of attraction for non-Western countries due to its high potential. Countries like Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela, and Iran have expressed their desire to join BRICS in recent years, and during the annual BRICS leaders' meeting held in Johannesburg, South Africa, on August 23rd, it was noted that 40 countries are interested in joining BRICS. Considering that the current form of the alliance emerged with South Africa's inclusion in 2010, the fact that 40 countries aspire to join the alliance in a span of 13 years showcases the potential and appeal of the alliance. It also indicates that many countries are not satisfied with existing international organizations.

While the BRICS countries are motivated by the desire for a more inclusive and representative international order and are making efforts to enhance bilateral cooperation, the expansion potential of the alliance seems to have been somewhat overlooked. Although approvement of membership of Argentina, Egypt, UAE, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Ethiopia will join BRICS in 2024[466], there is no specific regulation regarding the conditions or criteria for joining the alliance. At this point, despite the alliance's high attractiveness, specific adjustments need to be made as soon as possible to give it an institutional structure similar to Western organizations[467]. When we consider the economic, military, and population power of the BRICS countries, it's possible to say that the alliance is operating well below its potential. The economic

[466] BRICS: Five Nations Become Full Members of BRICS // The Economic Times. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 17, 2024. — URL: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/five-nations-become-full-members-of-brics/articleshow/106483352.cms?from=mdr.

[467] The BRICS Summit 2023: Seeking an Alternate World Order? // Russia in Global Affairs. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 27, 2024. — URL: https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/brics-summit-2023/.

development demonstrated by BRICS countries over the past approximately thirty years has been emphasized both before and after the Johannesburg summit.

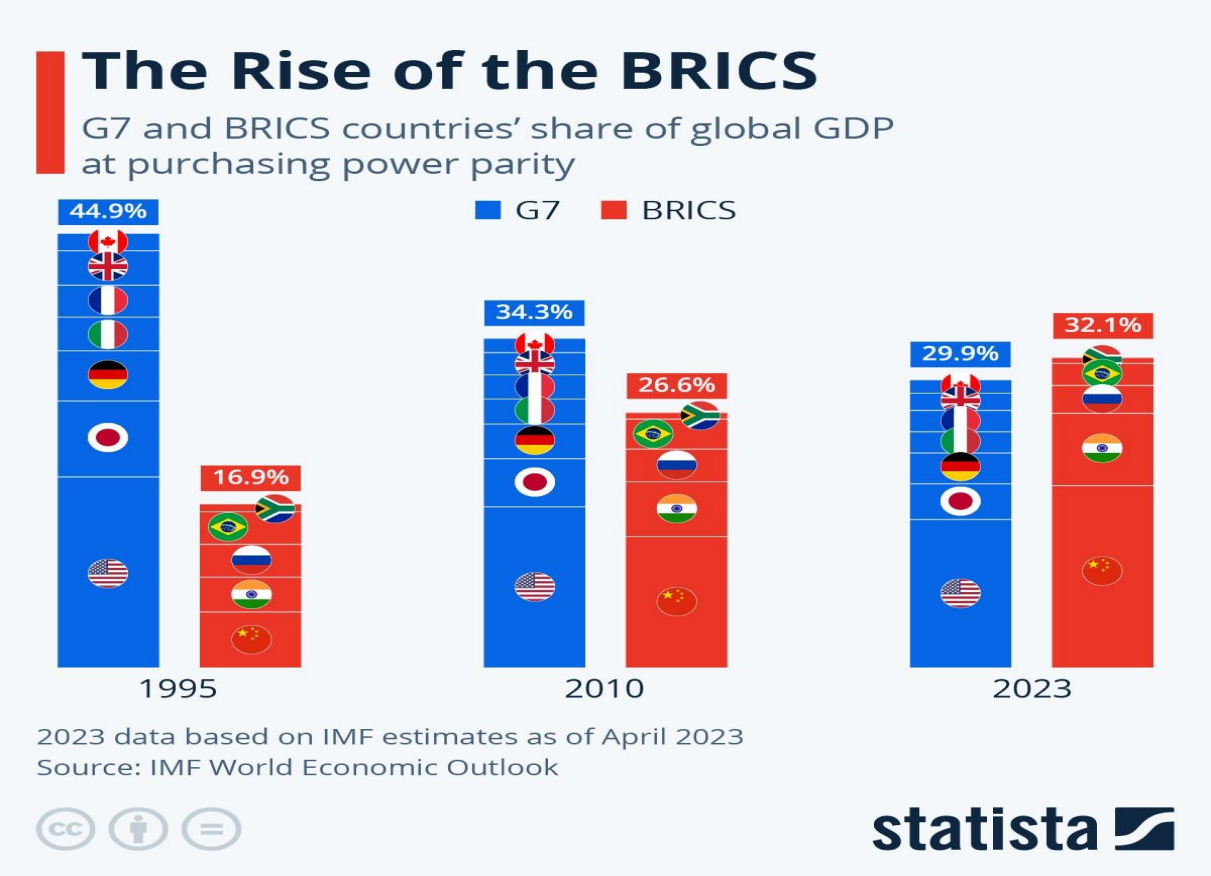


Figure 11: The Rise of the BRICS, FORBES[468]

The graph provided above, based on IMF data from Statista, highlights the remarkable economic development achieved by BRICS countries, primarily China. The transformation of BRICS into a challenger against the G7, especially through Russia initially and later China, has become a prominent theme in their foreign policy discourse. The fact that BRICS countries have managed to bridge the gap and achieve a higher capacity, closing in on the GDP ratios of G7 countries in terms of purchasing power parity from being almost one-third in 1995, is a significant accomplishment. Particularly, when we consider the

[468] Rise of BRICS Bloc Continues Through Expansion [Infographic] // Forbes. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 14, 2024. — URL: https://www.forbes.com/sites/katharinabuchholz/2023/08/25/rise-of-brics-bloc-continues-through-expansion-infographic/?sh=5aa29a6225ce.

military, economic, and informational pressures exerted by Western powers, led by the U.S., against China and Russia, which have been concerned about losing their hegemony in recent years, the story of this success gains a more meaningful shape.

It's worth noting that after the Ukraine-Crimea crisis that began in 2014, Russia started facing unilateral economic sanctions from Western countries and organizations. This escalated to an unprecedented level with the large-scale military intervention in Ukraine in 2022. Among the reasons Russia hasn't achieved the economic progress that China and India have is the impact of these events.

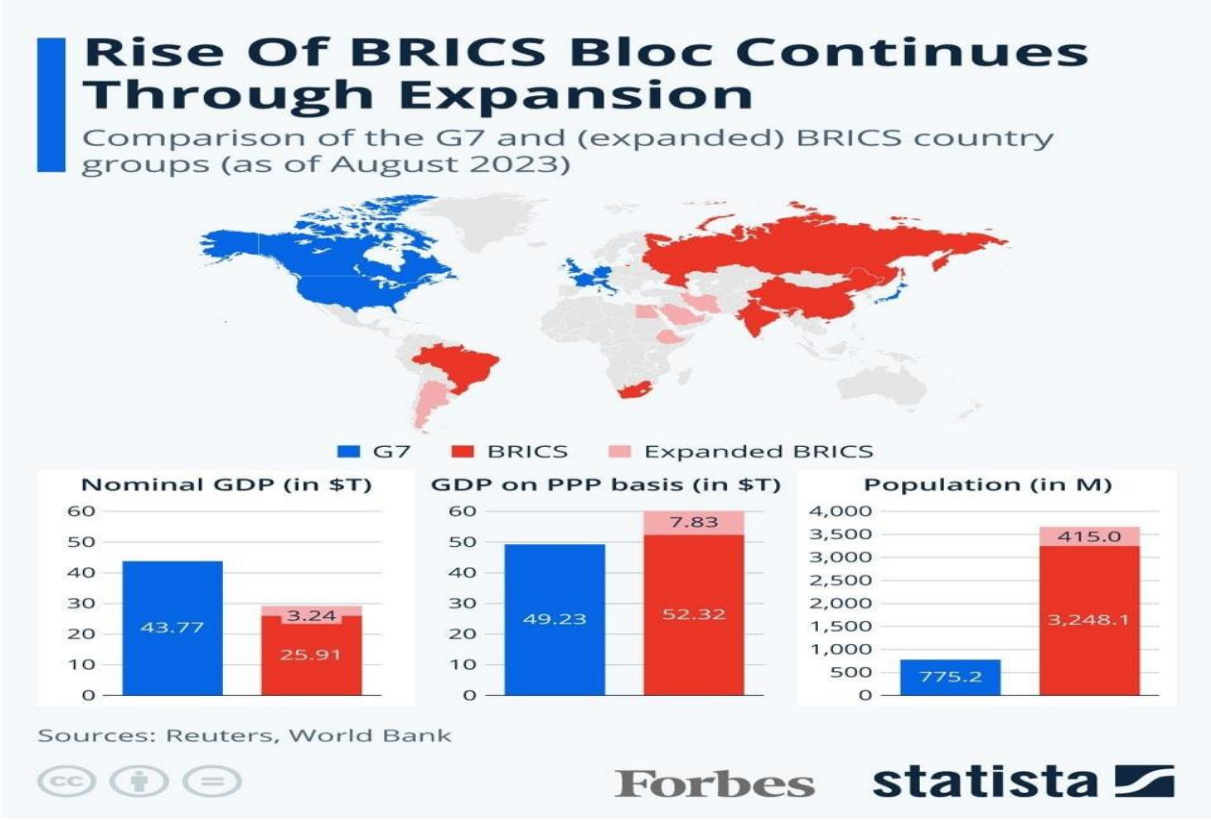


Figure 12: Rise of BRICS Bloc Continues Through Expansian, FORBES[469]

Indeed, while BRICS countries have a superiority in terms of GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP), G7 countries still maintain a high capacity in

[469] Rise of BRICS Bloc Continues Through Expansion [Infographic] // Forbes. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 14, 2024. — URL: https://www.forbes.com/sites/katharinabuchholz/2023/08/25/rise-of-brics-bloc-continues-through-expansion-infographic/?sh=5aa29a6225ce.

terms of nominal GDP values. Of course, the significant population advantage in favor of BRICS countries, compared to G7 countries, is also a crucial factor in this scenario. The population difference plays a significant role in shaping the overall economic size and potential of these two groups. On the other hand, BRICS' efforts to develop alternative financial institutions and enhance their effectiveness can be seen as part of their policy to transition from a unipolar world system based on Western hegemony to a multipolar system. In this context, the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) were established in 2015 as a result of putting these desired policies into practice. One of the most distinguishing features of these institutions compared to Western financial organizations is that their stakeholders hold equal voting rights. The five related BRICS countries each have an equal 20% share within the New Development Bank[470].

However, it's noteworthy that even though BRICS countries collectively constitute more than 29% of the world economy in terms of nominal GDP and over 36% in terms of PPP, their combined representation in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is only around 15%[471]. Given that these BRICS countries comprise approximately 45% of the world's population and have control over around 30% of the global landmass (39.7 km2)[472], their aspiration for greater participation and representation within the current international system aligns with the dynamics of rising powers.

In addition to the developments under the umbrella of BRICS, there are also new initiatives under the identity of BRICS+ to enhance international

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[470] Bezerra V. S. Institutionalization of the BRICS Discourse: How Does the NDB Embody the Group's Views on Global Financial Governance? / V. S. Bezerra // BRICS Journal of Economics. — 2020. — Vol. 1, No. 4. — P. 70–81.

[471] G7 vs BRICS GDP 2024 // Statista. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 14, 2024. — URL: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1412418/gdp-development-g7-brics/.

[472] Bazarkina D. Yu., Pashentsev E. N. BRICS Strategic Communication: The Present and the Future // Russia in Global Affairs. — 2021. — Vol. 19, No. 3. — P. 64–93.

cooperation and address international disputes[473]. These efforts aim to play a more active role in international developments under the BRICS identity. Despite its institutional shortcomings in many aspects, BRICS stands out as one of the strongest alternative international organizations in terms of transitioning to a multipolar system and breaking Western hegemony in the international system, provided that the existing chronic issues among member countries, particularly China and India, are resolved.

While the organization was initially thought to be created with a financial purpose and operates below its potential, its global mission should not be overlooked. After each annual summit, the organization releases declarations not only concerning economic issues but also addressing all international developments[474]. This highlights the global mission of the organization. For Russia, the organization's mission, especially with the increasing interest from China, signifies an important international organization beyond the former Soviet territories, with the potential to break the unipolar Western hegemony.

Russian involvement in BRICS holds significant importance for its global policies. It encompasses several key aspects: breaking Western hegemony in international trade on the basis of reserves and regulations, establishing a new world order characterized by multipolarity and the governance of major powers after the demise of Western hegemony, triggering and supporting active resistance against Western hegemony by other emerging regional and global powers, and countering the effects of sanctions imposed on Russia over the past decade.

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[473] The Mechanics of BRICS+: A Tentative Blueprint // Russia in Global Affairs. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 14, 2024. — URL: https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/the-mechanics-of-brics-a-tentative-blueprint/.

[474] Denisov I., Kazantsev A., Lukyanov F., Safranchuk I. Shifting Strategic Focus of BRICS and Great Power Competition / I. Denisov, A. Kazantsev, F. Lukyanov, I. Safranchuk // Strategic Analysis. — 2019. — Vol. 43, No. 6. — P. 588-602.

In this context, strengthening relationships with relevant countries under the BRICS framework is crucial. It's important to note that Russia cannot single-handedly challenge the Western bloc when it comes to reforming the international system or preserving certain values. Russian knows this reality, and thus, its partnership with rising non-Western powers under the BRICS umbrella allows for a shared burden in its struggle. This collaboration not only helps Russian own efforts but also aligns with the broader goal of creating a more balanced and multipolar world order.

Russian efforts to strengthen its ties with BRICS countries, especially in the areas of technology and information security, are aimed at countering Western isolation. By enhancing relationships, increasing trade figures, and ensuring that these countries maintain a stance against unilateral Western sanctions, Russia seeks to mitigate the impacts of broadened Western-originated policies, particularly in the aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis.

Given the extensive scope of Western efforts to isolate Russia, the policies of engaging in economic and political relationships with China and India have become prioritized in Russian foreign policy. This strategic approach serves to counterbalance the effects of isolation while promoting collaboration in key areas such as trade, technology, and security.

3.3.2. G-20 in Russian Foreign Policy

The scope of the G-7, established during the Cold War period to isolate the USSR and enable the Western Bloc to develop common political and economic policies, remained very limited in the post-Cold War era. The presence of emerging regional and global powers with globalization, and the increasing interdependence among countries, necessitate more inclusive international governance. Additionally, efforts to establish a new world system with the United States at its center after the Cold War also required burden-sharing. Within this framework, efforts were made to create new groups of states, including both developed and developing countries, in a more

participatory and inclusive format. This quest, which started as G-22 and G-34, culminated in the G-20[475].

The mission of the G-20, whose first meeting took place in 1999, was to serve as a channel for dialogue and cooperation to combat global economic crises and ensure financial stability. In this context, the meetings were attended by the Financial Ministers and Central Bank Governors of member countries. For approximately a decade, the impact capacity and collaboration opportunities of the G-20 summits remained limited within this format. However, following the global economic crisis that began in the US banking credit system in 2008 and later spread worldwide, the need for developing participatory and inclusive global policies became unavoidably evident. In this regard, it was decided to transition to the current format of the G-20, where summits are held with the direct participation of heads of state and government unless expressly prevented. The first meeting in this format took place in Washington in 2008. Thus, G-20 summits transformed into an international organization that attained a high-value status in states' foreign policies and leaders' agendas.

It is crucial for state leaders and various diplomatic representatives, along with their delegations, to have direct opportunities for bilateral and multilateral discussions. Additionally, with its inclusive membership representing approximately two-thirds of the world's population and constituting 85% of the world economy's GDP and 75% of global trade, the G-20 is one of the largest, most diverse, and inclusive organizations in the world[476]. Although it lacks an official organizational structure and secretariat, there is an annual organization plan where each member state takes turns hosting the summit. Since the summits began convening at the level of heads of state and government, starting

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[475] Larionova, M. Is It G8 or G20? For Russia, of Course, It’s Both / M. Larionova // Studia Diplomatica. — 2010. — Vol. 63, No. 2. — P. 81–90.

[476] About the G-20 // Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 8, 2024. — URL: https://www.mfa.gov.tr/g-20-en.en.mfa.

with Russia's hosting in 2013, they have had a mission not only to discuss global economic issues but also to address and improve conditions on a global scale. In this context, G-20 summits serve as an international platform where leaders gather to discuss and organize meetings and events on various issues, including ensuring global financial stability, enhancing trade, preventing all forms of illegal trade and piracy activities, combating bribery and corruption, and addressing political issues aimed at peace and stability.

Reflecting one of the leading desires of Russian foreign policy, the need for international relations to be more participatory and diverse to change the Western-centric hegemonic order is evident. Since 2008, G-20 summits have served as a platform where the world's top 20 economic powers discuss international financial stability, sustainable development, and the resolution of global issues, with high-level representation from members. With its structure accommodating both non-Western developed and developing states, the G-20 has increasingly become an important foreign policy tool for Russia in its understanding of transitioning to a multipolar world order.

Before the first G-20 summit at the leaders' level, then-Russian President Dmitry A. Medvedev emphasized the place of the G-20 in Russian foreign policy and Russia's perspective on the G-20. He stated the necessity of transitioning to a more just and equitable order in the management of the international economy, which was under Western hegemony[477]. Medvedev stated that Russia's top priority was reforming the international financial order, emphasizing the need for international financial institutions and the distribution of state shares in these organizations to align more collaboratively and inclusively with the mission of the G-20[478]. The belief that the investment and

[477] Larionova, M. V. Russia in G20: Factors of Success and Objectives for the Future / M. Larionova // Vestnik RUDN. International Relations. — 2017. — Vol. 17, No. 2. — P. 349–371.

[478] Larionova, M., Rakhmangulov M., Sakharov A., Safonkina E., Shelepov A. The Russian Federation G20 Presidency: in Pursuit of a Balance Between Fiscal Consolidation and Sustainable Growth / M. Larionova, M.

credit rates of countries in the IMF and the World Bank should be reformed, and these institutions should acquire a more international identity has always been a part of Russia's G-20 policies.

In addition to the easing effects of the 2008 economic crisis, the positioning of countries within the G-20, including Russia and the United States, in opposing positions following the Arab Spring protests that began in the Middle East in late 2010, has led to the G-20's meeting themes focusing more on geopolitical issues rather than global development and stability. Geopolitical points of contention, such as the internal unrest in Ukraine in late 2013 and the subsequent accession of Crimea to Russia in 2014, have further contributed to the G-20 meetings becoming mired in counter-productive arguments[479].

In the past decade, during which Russia has prioritized developing relations with non-Western countries and international organizations, G-20 meetings have provided opportunities for bilateral and multilateral unofficial diplomatic discussions from Russia's perspective. For example, since 2018, Russia, often at the forefront, along with the BRICS and RIC (Russia-India-China) countries, have had the opportunity to conduct unofficial additional discussions during G-20 summits[480].

After Crimea's accession to Russia in 2014, Russian membership was suspended in the G-8 group by the G-7 countries. Although being part of the same platform as the Western-centric most powerful economies in the global economy carries international prestige, the position of the G-20 in Russian foreign policy, which desires a more inclusive, multipolar, and diverse

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Rakhmangulov, A. Sakharov, E. Safonkina // International Organization Research Journal. — 2013. — Vol. 8, No. 4. — P. 122–179.

[479] G20 Leaders Call for Peaceful Resolution of Ukraine Conflict at New Delhi Summit // TASS. — Accessed November 10, 2023. — URL: https://tass.com/politics/1671645.

[480] Kapoor N. Russia and the G20 Summit: Achievements and Prospects // Observer Research Foundation / N. Kapoor. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 13, 2024. — URL: https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/russia-and-the-g20-summit-52600/.

international order, has more parallel content. Since 2014, despite Western sanctions and efforts towards political, social, economic, and cultural isolation, partnerships and dialogues established within the G-20 have created significant opportunities for Russia. Especially after the Special Military Operation initiated in Ukraine in 2022 and the almost complete rupture of bilateral relations with the West, pressures exerted by Western powers, led by the US, on the rest of the world regarding their relations with Russia, have led organizations like the G-20, which include many stakeholders, to become pressure breakers. For example, the absolute coordination within the G-7 against Russia could not be achieved within the G-20 framework at the summits held in Indonesia in 2022 and India in 2023, despite all pressures[481]. This situation symbolizes the success of Russian foreign policy effectiveness and the increasing resistance to Western hegemony by different views worldwide. Russia also seeks to be the voice and supporter of the East and South countries, meaning the rising non-Western informal blocs, within this environment[482].

3.4. Regional Unions in Russian Foreign Policy

3.4.1. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

One of the unique organizations in the relationships that Russia has established with actors from different regions of the world in the post-Soviet period is The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Formal relations between Russia and ASEAN began in 1991 when a Russian Deputy Foreign Minister attended an ASEAN Ministerial Meeting for the first time. Subsequently, Russia joined the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1994 and became a

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[481] Bose N. G20 Leaders Begin Two-Day Summit Overshadowed by Divisions Over Ukraine // Reuters. [Electronic resource] — September 9, 2023. — URL: https://www.reuters.com/world/g20-leaders-begin-two-day-summit-overshadowed-by-divisions-over-ukraine-2023-09-09/.

[482] Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Interview with the Brazilian Newspaper O Globo // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — February 21, 2024. — URL: https://mid.ru/en/nota-bene/1933588/.

full dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1996[483]. Despite the establishment of formal relations between Russia and ASEAN in the 1990s, the period when Russia's internal problems did not allow for effective policies in foreign policy, significant progress was not made in the development of relations. However, with the development of relations between South and East becoming one of the priorities of Russian foreign policy in the 2000s, ASEAN-Russia relations began to intensify. In this context, in 2004, Russia joined the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, which emphasizes sovereignty in the relationships established between regional countries[484].

The intensification of bilateral relations between Russia and ASEAN began with the organization of the first Russia-ASEAN Summit in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, in 2005[485]. Following the inaugural summit in 2005, the parties issued a statement emphasizing comprehensive and progressive partnership and signed the Comprehensive Program of Action for 2005-2015, which focused on enhancing economic relations[486]. Subsequently, in 2007, the "ASEAN – the Russian Federation Dialogue Partnership Financial Fund" was established, with Russia investing $1.75 billion in this organization. While the investment in this fund aimed at fostering joint projects in various sectors such as scientific, socio-cultural, technological, and commercial may not have been substantial, it held symbolic importance in terms of institutionalizing the relationship[487].

Despite plans for a comprehensive partnership spanning a decade until 2015, it was five years later, in 2010, that the second Russia-ASEAN Summit

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[483] History of ASEAN — Russia Dialogue Partnership // ASEAN - Russia. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 10, 2024. — URL: http://en.russia-asean20.ru/russia_asean/20160309/9413.html.
[484] Ibid.
[485] Lavrov S. V. Russia and ASEAN Can Achieve a Great Deal Together / S. V. Lavrov // International Affairs. — Special Issue, 2010.
[486] Ibid.
[487] Lavrov S. V. Russia and ASEAN Can Achieve a Great Deal Together / S. V. Lavrov // International Affairs. — Special Issue, 2010.

was held, this time in Hanoi. In addition to the goals of enhancing economic relations agreed upon at the first summit, objectives were added to enable joint and rapid responses to disasters and environmental issues, sharing of cultural and scientific knowledge, and partnerships in education. As a result, significant progress was made in various areas such as ensuring regional security and stability, combating international crimes, increasing mutual trade volume, sharing experiences in science, culture, and education, and boosting tourism activities, marking the first serious developments in the efforts of the past twenty years.

While Southeast Asian countries were among the least affected by the Western-centric international economic crisis in 2008, experiencing a slight decline in growth rates, their economies were still growing. These countries exemplified Russia's emphasis over the past fifteen years on the shift of the world's economic and political center from west to east. In the same year as the 2010 summit, the ASEAN Center at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), one of Russia's most prestigious universities affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was established. Through a memorandum signed by ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Surin Pitsuwan and MGIMO Rector Prof. Anatoly Torkunov in 2009, it was decided to establish the center for conducting academic studies on ASEAN and organizing events on Russia-ASEAN relations[488].

A similar cultural and educational exchange to the establishment of the ASEAN Center in Russia occurred in 2016 when the "Year of Russia" was declared in ASEAN countries with the aim of promoting Russian culture[489]. In

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[488] ASEAN Centre: The Year of the 25th Anniversary of ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Partnership and the 30th Anniversary of Bilateral Relations. — URL: https://mgimo.ru/upload/2022/02/brochure-asean-center-2021.pdf

[489] Koldunova E. Asian Multilateralism: A Test of Strength // ASEAN MGIMO. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 27, 2024. — URL: https://asean.mgimo.ru/en/opinions/koldunova-asian-multilateralism-riac-08-22.

the same year, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of dialogue between Russia and ASEAN, a "Commemorative Summit" was held, and for the first time, Russia-ASEAN talks took place on Russian soil, in Sochi. The declaration issued at the summit emphasized the need for a new comprehensive action plan for the years 2016-2020, aiming to break the downward trend in relations following the unilateral sanctions imposed by the West after the Crimea issue[490].

Since the beginning of the Russia-ASEAN dialogue in 1996, the trade volume between Russia and ASEAN had risen to $22.5 billion by 2014, despite pressures that arose in 2014 due to economic sanctions desired by the United States and EU countries against Russia over the Ukraine-Crimea issue[491]. Although relatively modest compared to other global and regional powers such as China, the United States, Japan, and South Korea, this increase in bilateral relations reflected significant progress. However, following the difficulties caused by the sanctions, Russia-ASEAN relations experienced a significant decline in trade volume, dropping to approximately $14 billion[492]. Additionally, long-term cooperation plans that Russia had planned in the energy sector with some ASEAN countries were severely affected. Furthermore, the decline in trade relations coincided with a phase influenced by various security issues such as tensions in China-India relations, potential tensions in the South China Sea, and the military coup in Myanmar in 2021. This led Russia to increase its sales in another sector in the region, the defense industry sector. According to SIPRI data, with arms sales of over $3 billion to the Southeast Asia region where

[490] Ibid.
[491] Koldunova E. Russia-ASEAN: Limits and Opportunities / E. Koldunova // Valdai Discussion Club. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 10, 2024. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-asean-limits-and-opportunities/.
[492] Ibid.

ASEAN countries are located between 1998 and 2018, Russia ranks high in arms sales in the region[493].

In response to the sanctions imposed since 2014 under Western leadership and attempts to isolate Russia from the international community, one of the active diplomatic initiatives of Russian diplomacy has been the Russia-ASEAN partnership. This partnership was elevated to the level of Strategic Partnership with a summit held in Singapore in 2018, amidst efforts to counteract Russia's isolation. Following the summit, there was an emphasis on expanding cooperation in the fields of information and communication technologies[494]. Most recently, in 2021, the fourth Russia-ASEAN summit was held, during which a comprehensive action plan covering the years 2021-2025 was adopted. The theme of the summit, "Building a Peaceful, Stable and Sustainable Region," highlighted collaboration on combating international drug trafficking[495].

Russia also endeavors to develop its relations with ASEAN through other regional organizations. One prominent regional organization in this regard is the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), led by Russia. In 2018, a memorandum was signed between the EAEU and ASEAN under the framework of the Greater Eurasian Partnership, aiming to enhance interregional cooperation focused on sustainable economic development. Russia's desire is to minimize and ideally eliminate customs duties between the EAEU and ASEAN. In this context, customs duties have been lifted between Vietnam and the EAEU, with the aspiration for this to serve as a precursor to similar arrangements across all

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[493] Wezeman P., Kuimova A. Russia's Arms Sales in Southeast Asia / P. Wezeman, A. Kuimova // SIPRI Yearbook 2019: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. — 2019. — Vol. 23, No. 1. — P. 19-22.
[494] EAEU and ASEAN Successfully Develop Trade and Economic Cooperation // Eurasian Economic Commission. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 12, 2023. — Accessed March 10, 2024. — URL: https://eec.eaeunion.org/en/news/eaes-i-asean-uspeshno-razvivayut-torgovo-ekonomicheskoe-sotrudnichestvo/.
[495] Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation. ASEAN-Russia Trade and Investment Work Programme 2021-2025. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 22, 2024. — URL: https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/file/a1ac7fcf334f2cc67d2cab94c15fd78a/ASEAN-RUSSIA%20TRADE%20AND%20INVESTMENT%20WORK%20PROGRAMME%202021-2025.pdf.

ASEAN member states[496]. However, recent geopolitical developments at both regional and international levels have made achieving these aspirations even more challenging, despite being processes that would typically require an extended period of time. Nevertheless, Russia continues to pursue its goal of economic liberalization by strengthening bilateral relations with individual ASEAN member countries, even if full elimination of customs duties with the entire ASEAN remains elusive[497]. It is expected that Indonesia will follow Vietnam in this regard by 2025.

Apart from the EAEU, Russia and ASEAN also collaborate in other significant partnerships such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Community, ASEAN+8, and the East Asia Summit. In these organizations, ASEAN member states and Russia share common ground on matters such as promoting inclusivity in the international system, preventing the politicization of international issues, and maintaining a balance of power in the region. Additionally, Russia actively participates in ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meetings.

As noted by Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, ASEAN is aware that, as an international organization, it cannot effectively achieve regional and global stability without establishing partnerships with major powers like Russia, as it does not include any of the world's major powers within its membership[498]. ASEAN operates within the sphere of influence of major powers such as China, the United States, and India, and views Russia as a balancing factor against these powers. Russia, in turn, believes that ASEAN, with its GDP capacity of over $3 trillion and a population of over 670 million, could be a significant

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[496] Korolev A. Proactive vs Reactive: Interim Results of the EAEU's Foreign Economic Policy // Working Paper No. 83/2024 / Ed. by Melnikova J., Nechaeva L., Gryzlov G., Trotskaya K., Gavrilova S. — Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC). — Moscow: NP RSMD, 2024. — 36 p.
[497] Ibid.
[498] Lavrov S. V. Russia and ASEAN Can Achieve a Great Deal Together / S. V. Lavrov // International Affairs. — Special Issue, 2010.

power center in building a multipolar world order. These parallel aspirations have led to developments such as joint naval exercises in the disputed South China Sea in 2021[499].

In Russia's official foreign policy documents, such as its foreign policy concepts, there is regular emphasis on developing relations with ASEAN based on transparency, respect for mutual sensitive national values, and partnership in avoiding geopolitical conflicts in the region, given the changing world order and the region's complex multilayered structure.

3.4.2. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

Russia's desire to transition to a multipolar world order under Primakov's foreign policy vision, which includes efforts to prevent Western powers from establishing influence in Russia's near vicinity and strengthening their claim to be a regional and global superpower through bilateral and multilateral partnerships, laid the foundation for one of the first organizations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

SCO, initially established with priorities such as border security in post-Soviet Central Asia, joint efforts against terrorism and separatist movements, and combating human, arms, and drug trafficking, actually originated as a manifestation of Russia and China's aspirations to counter the multipolar world order and Western dominance in their respective regions. Following the announcement of the Russian-Chinese Strategic Partnership in April 1996, Russia and China, along with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, formed a partnership known as the "Shanghai Five" prioritizing border security and counterterrorism efforts.

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[499] Koldunova E. Russia-ASEAN: Limits and Opportunities / E. Koldunova // Valdai Discussion Club. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 10, 2024. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-asean-limits-and-opportunities/.

In particular, efforts to overcome existing border disputes, including those involving Russia and China, among the regional countries, and the desire to prevent regional conflicts and promote cooperation played a significant role in bringing this group of five nations together. The unilateral policies pursued by the United States in the latter half of the 1990s, with goals of "global counterterrorism and the export of democracy," and its subsequent implementation of these policies in various regions of the world in the early 2000s, led Russia and China to set aside their disagreements and conflicting interests in favor of cooperation. After acceptance of Uzbekistan’s membership to the Shanghai Five in 2001, the organization transformed into a community with a broader mission and adopted the name "Shanghai Cooperation Organization."

In 2001, the inclusion of states like India, Pakistan, Mongolia, and Iran as observer members alongside Uzbekistan demonstrated the expansion potential of the organization. In this context, in 2017, India and Pakistan, and in 2021, Iran had their full membership applications accepted by the SCO. Finally, with Iran's full membership in the organization formalized, Belarus also initiated its full membership process at the summit held in Samarkand in 2022. In addition to the expanding number of full members, the organization also includes 14 dialogue partners, including regional powers like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. This makes the organization possess significant potential. What began as cooperation among five countries has expanded over a quarter of a century to include up to 9 countries, reaching significant political, economic, military, and population potential, akin to groups like BRICS. However, just like BRICS, SCO also finds itself at a point where it is lacking in implementing its significant potential in a concrete manner.

In Russian foreign policy, initially, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) had an importance for developing relations with China, maintaining the status quo in the region, and ensuring border security in its

foreign policy. However, over time, other elements have come to the forefront, including building trust-based cooperation among regional countries, countering terrorism and separatist movements, balancing China's growing influence in the region, and, most importantly, thwarting the efforts of Western powers led by the United States to increase their influence in the region in a way that disrupts the status quo.

Through partnerships established within the SCO, particularly in the energy sector, new opportunities for collaboration have been created, multiple diplomatic partnerships with other international organizations have been established, and the goal has been to increase prosperity and wealth in the region.

Between 2000 and 2007, Russia's counter-initiatives within the SCO played a crucial role in countering the United States' efforts to gain influence in the region. Collective reactions were formed to counter attempts to foment "color revolutions" in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as to pressure the closure of U.S. military bases in the region, which the U.S. continued to use under the pretext of "counter-terrorism" in Afghanistan. In this regard, after the 2005 SCO summit, a summit declaration was issued calling for the prompt closure of the U.S. military base in Uzbekistan and the termination of U.S. military presence in the region. This declaration played a significant role in the closure of the U.S. base in Uzbekistan later that year, as it was supported by Uzbek authorities.

In 2007, during his famous speech at the Munich Security Conference, Vladimir Putin emphasized the transition to a multipolar world order, a point that was reiterated a month later at the August 2007 SCO summit in Bishkek. Claims that the SCO had an anti-Western or an alternative mission to NATO have been officially denied on numerous occasions. However, Putin's emphasis on the need for a multipolar world order and the breaking of Western dominance through organizations like the SCO, as stated during the 2007 Bishkek Summit,

marked a significant shift. It openly indicated that the organization sought to be a counterbalance to the unipolar system led by the United States.

In this context, Russia's insistence that rising countries like India and Pakistan, with their economic, military, and cultural wealth, should join the SCO was not in vain. Adding a global purpose and mission to the organization's increasing regional influence was of great importance to Russia, especially as it entered a period of active and intense competition with the unipolar world order in the 2010s.

Iran, which had been awaiting membership due to its long-standing desire, finally achieved full membership in the SCO in 2023, starting the process in 2021. This was another significant step against Western hegemony and a move towards establishing a multipolar world order.

Russia indeed takes the initiative within the SCO when it comes to joint military exercises and conducting new bilateral trade agreements in the member countries' national currencies. The organization's joint military exercises are important for deepening cooperation in ensuring military security. Additionally, these joint military exercises can be beneficial in reducing distrust and conflict risks stemming from chronic border disputes among member countries.

For years, Russia has been conducting military exercises called "Vostok (East)," where the participation of Russian and Chinese armies together was well-known. However, in September 2022, especially during a year when Russia's military intervention in Ukraine was ongoing, and there were concerted efforts by the West to isolate Russia, the "Vostok-2022" military exercise involved Russia, China, and India, along with 11 other countries in the region. This demonstrates that the relationships established within the SCO have proven to be highly beneficial not only in overcoming regional disputes but also in deepening military ties.

Furthermore, the SCO's relationships with other organizations in the region, such as the CIS, CSTO, ASEAN, and EAEU, in which Russia plays a

leading role and has established important partnerships, hold significant strategic value in Russian foreign policy for preserving and expanding its regional influence.

3.4.3. African Union

The African Union stands out as the most organized and institutional structure established after African states gained independence following the colonial era. Immediately after the dissolution of the USSR, during a period when Russia prioritized strategic cooperation and integration with the West and also made some budget cuts, many Russian representations in Africa were closed. However, despite this, more than 30 Russian diplomatic missions continued their activities in Africa[500]. With the rise of Yevgeny Primakov in Russian politics, Russia's desire to transition to a multipolar world order and to develop relations with non-Western states and regions became priorities of foreign policy. This political understanding laid the groundwork for Russia to develop its policies towards Africa and to reach a high level of representation capacity. In this context, alongside efforts to enhance bilateral relations with African states, developing relations with the African Union, the most comprehensive and organized organization in Africa, has become increasingly important over time. Especially in recent years, as part of Russia's strategy to establish a more inclusive and comprehensive world order, the African Union could rise as another power center, providing the most comprehensive representation of African states.

The representation of the African Union as a sovereign organization representing Africa in a multipolar world order has become an argument supported in Russian foreign policy within the framework of the reasons mentioned above. In this context, Russia has supported the African Union's

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[500] Shubin V. Is Russia Returning to Africa? // Valdai Club. [Electronic resource] / V. Shubin. — September 14, 2023. — URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/is-russia-returning-to-africa/.

participation in the economic and political cooperation opportunities established by the BRICS countries within the framework of BRICS+. Additionally, Russia has long supported the African Union's representation in international forums such as the G-20, similar to the European Union, and the African Union obtained official representation status at the G-20 summit held in Delhi in 2023. Alongside Russian support for increasing the international status of African states and their representation rates in international organizations, it can be stated that Russia prioritizes the development of comprehensive bilateral relations with African states through its representation in the African Union.

In addition to its bilateral relations, Russia has also played a leading role in developing relations between regional organizations it spearheads, such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and the African continent. In the first Russia-Africa Forum in 2019, numerous agreements were signed under Memoranda of Understanding between Russia and African countries, as well as between the EAEU and the African Union[501]. Aimed at developing political and economic partnerships based on mutually beneficial win-win relationships without violating the sovereignty and values of the parties involved, these partnerships have seen trade volume between Russia and African Union countries reach $18 billion, and between the EAEU and the African Union, $26 billion[502]. Despite the developments in recent years, the Russian side continuously emphasizes that there is still significant untapped potential for further growth.

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[501] EAEU and Africa Intend to Develop Cooperation on Food Security Issues // Eurasian Economic Commission. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 8, 2024. — URL: https://eec.eaeunion.org/en/news/eaes-i-afrika-namereny-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-voprosakh-prodovolstvennoy-bezopasnosti-/.

[502] Forum Participants Discuss Prospects for Cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and African Countries // Russia-Africa Summit. [Electronic resource] — June 8, 2024. — URL: https://summitafrica.ru/en/news/uchastniki-foruma-rassmotreli-perspektivy-vzaimodejstvija-evrazijskogo-ekonomicheskogo-sojuza-i-stran-afriki/.

The first Russia-Africa Summit held in the city of Sochi in 2019, marked a rise in Russia's institutional-level development of comprehensive official partnerships with African countries represented by the African Union. However, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic immediately after the first summit, geographical distances, and inadequate infrastructure within African countries hindered the achievement of the targeted progress set during the summit. Nevertheless, with the lifting of pandemic restrictions caused by Covid-19, it was decided to once again develop institutional-level relations between the parties and hold the Russia-Africa Summit under the title "Russia-Africa Partnership Forum Action Plan 2023-2026[503]. Within this framework, in July 2023, a more comprehensive and successful outcome was achieved in Saint Petersburg compared to the first summit, where three years of planning were conducted, marking a significant diplomatic success. Despite the isolation policies imposed by the West against Russia following its military operations in Ukraine in February 2022, as well as pressures from other countries to adhere to these policies, the level of this diplomatic success can be clearly seen in the figures shown in the graph below.

[503] Russia-Africa Partnership Forum Action Plan 2023-2026 // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 28, 2023. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5971.

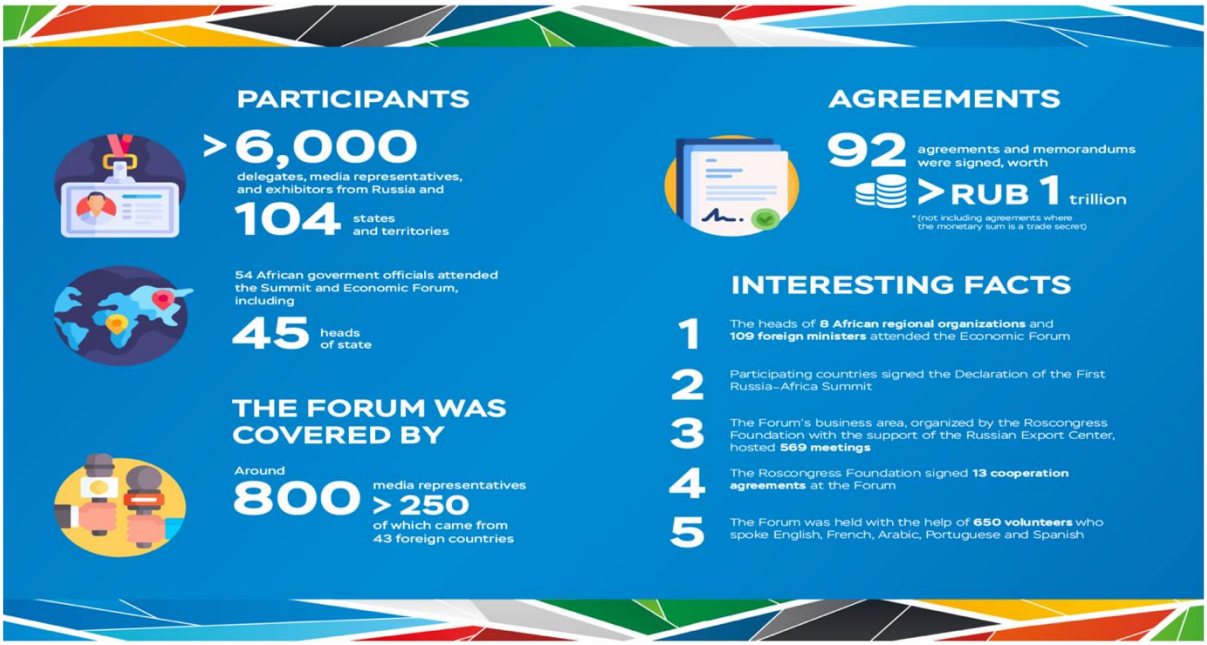


Figure 13: Russia-Africa Summit

A major forum was held, hosting over 6,000 participants, with representation from 45 out of 54 African countries at the level of heads of state. This forum resulted in the signing of 92 agreements and memoranda, with a total cost exceeding 1 trillion rubles[504].

Russia's principles for developing relations with the African Union through both bilateral relations and international organizations it leads or is part of are outlined in the Africa section of the foreign policy concept published in 2023. These principles align with Russia's general foreign policy strategies, including a polycentric approach, respect for national sovereignty, opposition to external interventions, and the recognition of independent power centers in the transition to a multipolar world order[505]. Furthermore, Russia's strategy in its relations with developing and underdeveloped countries, focusing on sustainable development, also stands out in its dialogue with the African Union.

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[504] About the Forum // Russia-Africa Summit. [Electronic resource] — Accessed June 8, 2024. — URL: https://summitafrica.ru/en/about-forum/.

[505] Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii V. V. Putinym 31 marta 2023 goda. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/.

In statements made by President Vladimir V. Putin just before the Russia-Africa Summit in 2023, he highlighted Russia's contributions to the development of African countries, including the construction of large-scale structures since the mid-1980s and industrial investments. He also emphasized the consistent increase in the number of African students coming to Russia for education every year[506].

Finally, Russia views the African Union as the sole authorized regional organization for ensuring regional security and establishing peace in Africa. It continues its activities in providing training for regional country soldiers, supplying military equipment, and offering advisory services to build peace and security in the region, addressing issues ranging from terrorist activities to border conflicts among countries. Russia demonstrates solidarity against any intervention by foreign states or potential violations of sovereignty concerning African states, both within the framework of the UN Security Council and through bilateral relations, by providing assurances.

3.4.4. Arctic Council

The sustainable development strategy and the historical territories make the Arctic region politically significant for Russia. With approximately 24,500 km of coastline, Russia accounts for one-third of the Arctic region. The Arctic region, which includes nine regions of Russia, is home to more than two and a half million people, consisting of indigenous peoples and Russian citizens. This population constitutes a higher proportion than the total population of all other coastal states, and 70% of the high-level economic investments directed towards the Arctic region are located there. The Arctic region, which accounts for 11% of Russia's total GDP and 20% of its total exports, holds a significant place in

[506] Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia. Article by Vladimir Putin "Russia and Africa: Joining Efforts for Peace, Progress and a Successful Future" // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] April 22, 2024. — URL: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71719.

Russian foreign policy due to its energy resources, potential as an alternative trade route, and its inclusion in the climate agenda. Russia's foreign policy concept in 2023 also include a separate subsection titled "Arctic," outlining the foreign policy strategy for the region[507].

Following the Cold War, the Arctic Council stands out as a regional organization of which Russia is a part, driven by its desire for cooperation with neighboring countries and the tackling of regional/global challenges. Cooperation regarding the Arctic region began with the policies of states with coastlines and close geographical proximity focusing on themes of climate change and global warming. Subsequently, the Arctic Council was established at a conference where Russia and seven other states, namely the United States, Canada, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland, convened in Ottawa, Canada[508]. One of the most significant features that distinguishes this council from other organizations established in the relatively cooperative atmosphere following the Cold War is the provision explicitly stating that military matters will not be included on the council's agenda[509]. Until 2022, geopolitical and military matters were not included in the council's agenda, despite various disputes between Russia and other member states in different areas and on different issues, which could potentially overshadow cooperation in the Arctic region. However, in February 2022, Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, termed a "special military operation" by Russia, was considered as "occupation" by the other 7 members of the council. As a result, these members decided not to participate in the events organized within the council during Russia's presidency

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[507] Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii V. V. Putinym 31 marta 2023 goda. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/.

[508] Sergunin, A. Russia and the Arctic Council: Toward a New Cooperative Agenda? / A. Sergunin; M. Lebedeva, V. Morozov (Ed.) // Turning Points of World Transformation: New Trends, Challenges and Actors. — Singapore: Springer Nature, 2022. — P. 117–138.

[509] Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council, September 19, 1996, Ottawa, Canada. — URL: https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/items/fb29e6d2-d60c-43ca-8e46-fa7a505033e0

term in March 2022[510]. These developments, which nearly brought all activities of the Arctic Council to a standstill, also disrupted the collaboration activities that had been remarkably successful for 26 years, setting an example for cooperation.

The presidency of the council, which began with Canada's presidency in 1996, changes every two years. Russia has held the presidency twice, in 2003-2005 and 2021-2023. Regarding Russia's priorities for the council, Foreign Minister Lavrov outlines them under four main headings:

- People of the Arctic, including indigenous peoples
- Environmental protection
- Socio-economic development
- Strengthening the Arctic Council[511].

These four main headings emphasized by Lavrov when Russia took over the presidency from Iceland in 2021 summarize the priorities that Russia has set in its relations with the council, which has been in existence for about thirty years.

In Russia's Arctic strategy, ensuring sustainable development in the region, improving the welfare and living standards of the indigenous peoples of the region, and the potential economic benefits to the region from the alternative Northern Sea Route, which could become a global trade route along with the melting ice due to global warming, stand out. Improving the living standards of more than two and a half million citizens living in the region, industrialization of the nine oblasts, and providing sustainable contributions to the development of the country's economy are of strategic importance for Russia.

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[510] A Suspended Arctic Council: New Hope with Norway’s Chairmanship. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 26, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/columns/arctic-cooperation/a-suspended-arctic-council-new-hope-with-norway-s-chairmanship/.

[511] Russia Became Chairman of the Arctic Council: Our Priorities // Russian Geographical Society. [Electronic resource] — Accessed May 21, 2024. — URL: https://www.rgo.ru/en/article/russia-became-chairman-arctic-council-our-priorities.

In addition, issues affecting the environment and human health, such as radioactive waste resulting from nuclear tests, oil spills, and the potential emergence of new pathological viruses due to melting ice, also hold significant importance in Russia's Arctic policies. In order to achieve common struggle and common sustainable development in light of all these factors, Russia has emphasized the importance of enhancing cooperation with Arctic countries under the framework of the Arctic Council and adhering to previously established strategic plans as a crucial element.

Although the Arctic Council adopted a format in 2013 where countries appointed their official representatives and diplomats, it never evolved into an organization with a corporate identity. Unlike many corporate entities, the council, where decisions and planning are made by consensus, even established three agreements of binding nature for member countries, such as Search and Rescue (SAR), oil spills prevention, and science cooperation. While there have been occasional discussions in Russian foreign policy about transforming the council into a corporate organization, it was preferred for the council to remain in a more loosely structured format[512].

In March and June 2022, the decision by other members of the council, sometimes referred to as the Arctic Seven (A7) by experts and politicians, to exclude Russia from council activities in response to Russia's Ukraine policies has brought the future of the council to a contentious point. Although Russia has reacted to statements made by the A7 countries, it continued its presidency within the council in line with the strategic goals planned until May 2023 and then handed it over to Norway[513]. However, Russia began to intensify its rhetoric

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[512] Experts Discuss the Future of Cooperation in the Arctic // RIAC. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 23, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/news/experts-discuss-the-future-of-cooperation-in-the-arctic/.

[513] A Suspended Arctic Council: New Hope with Norway’s Chairmanship. [Electronic resource] — Accessed February 26, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/columns/arctic-cooperation/a-suspended-arctic-council-new-hope-with-norway-s-chairmanship/.

against the exclusionary activities of the other 7 members and arguments blaming Russia towards the end of 2023.

First, the cooperation that had existed for about thirty years with the Arctic countries under the framework of the Barents-Euro Arctic Council, which existed before the establishment of the Arctic Council over the Barents Sea geography, came to an end due to Russia's uncompromising attitudes of exclusion, and Russia formally announced its withdrawal from this council[514]. In February 2024, Russia stated that it would not make its annual contribution to the Arctic Council fund under the current conditions[515]. Subsequently, Nikolai Korchunov, the Russian Foreign Ministry's Ambassador at Large and Russia's Senior Arctic Official to the Arctic Council, indicated that if member countries continue not to fulfill their obligations of scientific cooperation and information sharing required by binding council agreements, Russia does not exclude the possibility of formally withdrawing from the council[516].

The Arctic Council, which has been of significant importance in Russia's Arctic policies for about 28 years, has become politicized despite the principle stated in its founding agreement that "military matters should not be included in the council's agenda." This deviation from the principle led to Russia not mentioning its activities within the council in its 2023 foreign policy concept for the region. Additionally, Russia has developed new strategies for collaboration and information sharing in scientific activities, investments, and trade

[514] Russia in the Arctic Council // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] — Accessed March 16, 2024. — URL: https://mid.ru/tv/?id=1809093&lang=en.
[515] The Future of the Arctic Council: Working Paper No. 75 / 2023 [A. Vylegzhanin, M. Lysenko, N. Viakhireva, A. Snyatkov; edited by E. Karpinskaya, N. Viakhireva, M. Lazovich, K. Trotskaya, S. Gavrilova]; Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC). Moscow, NPMP RIAC, 2023 – 24 p.
[516] V MID nazvali usloviye dlya vykhoda iz Arkticheskogo soveta // RIA Novosti. [Electronic resource] — Accessed 31 May, 2024. — URL: https://ria.ru/20240206/arkticheskiy_sovet-1925595556.html

development in the region with countries like India and China, which are non-coastal observer states, aiming to enhance scientific activities in the region[517].

3.4.5. Organization of Islamic Cooperation

"Muslims are an inalienable part of the people of Russia, the President stressed, adding that inter-religious harmony was one of the strengths of the country, its legacy, wealth and advantage[518] *."*

President Vladimir V. Putin, while addressing representatives of the Islamic world at the Organization of Islamic Conferences event held in Malaysia in 2003, where a Russian head of state was invited for the first time (the organization was named as such until 2011), described Russia in this way. After President Putin's participation in the Malaysia event, Russia intensified its diplomatic relations with Muslim countries and was accepted as an observer member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2005.

With a Muslim population of over 20 million, Russia stands out as one of the top 20 countries with the highest Muslim population in the world[519]. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there was a shift in Russian politics from prioritizing relations with the West to focusing on developing relations with the East and South, as mentioned earlier in Primakov's understanding of Russian politics. One of the innovations brought about by this understanding in Russian foreign policy was Russia's quest to enhance its relations with the Islamic world. Initially, Russia focused on improving its bilateral relations with prominent regional powers in the Islamic world such as Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Subsequently, Russia sought to develop institutional-level relations with

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[517] Chen C. China-Russia Arctic Cooperation in the Context of a Divided Arctic // The Arctic Institute - Center for Circumpolar Security Studies. [Electronic resource] — Accessed April 4, 2023. — URL: https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/china-russia-arctic-cooperation-context-divided-arctic/.

[518] Putin V. Delivered a Speech at the Organization of Islamic Conference Summit // President of Russia. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 15, 2024. — URL: http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/29550.

[519] Musul'manskoye Naseleniye Po Stranam // Sputnik Azerbaydzhan. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 26, 2024. — URL: https://az.sputniknews.ru/20220404/musulmanskoe-naselenie-po-stranam-440701302.html.

regional organizations representing the Islamic world. Among these institutions, the most prominent ones are the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League.

As mentioned above, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, of which Russia became an official observer member in 2005, was established in 1969 with the aim of becoming the collective voice of the Islamic world in regional and global developments[520] The organization, comprising 57 member states and 5 observer states, representing a population of more than 2 billion, was created to foster cooperation across various fields including security, economy, education, social, and cultural interactions, and to formulate common policies. With its potential and inclusive structure encompassing many countries, it is regarded as one of the influential organizations in the multi-centric and multi-polar new world order in Russian foreign policy[521]

In Russian foreign policy concepts, under the section explaining the place of the Islamic world in Russian foreign policy under the heading "Islamic World," there is an introduction stating "relations with friendly Islamic countries..." This reflects the fundamental mentality underlying Russia's relations with the Islamic world, which is based on mutual respect for national and traditional values, the sanctity of sovereignty, and mutual benefit, as outlined in the Russian Foreign Policy Concept.[522]

President Putin has repeatedly described Russia's multicultural, multi-faith, and multi-ethnic structure as the unique civilization of Russia. This description is supported by Russia's foreign policy concepts, which emphasize

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[520] Organization of Islamic Cooperation. History // OIC. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 11, 2024. — URL: https://new.oic-oci.org/SitePages/CommonPage.aspx?Item=1.

[521] Kosach G. Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Priorities and Policies / G. Kosach // RIAC. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 26, 2024. — URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/organization-of-islamic-cooperation-priorities-and-policies/.

[522] Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiyskoy Federatsii V. V. Putinym 31 marta 2023 goda. [Electronic resource] — URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/.

interfaith dialogue with the Islamic world, increasing interaction between Russian Muslims and Muslims living in the rest of the world, sharing and respecting values and traditions. Furthermore, Russia's foreign policy approach, which embraces the preservation and support of traditional values and moral norms, contains many parallels with the Islamic world. It is known that following the tension with the Western world after Russia's Special Military Operation in Ukraine in 2022, there has been an emphasis on developing relations with the East and South. In this context, it is noteworthy that despite pressure from the West, Islamic countries, as important representatives of the East and South, have pursued independent policies prioritizing their national interests in their relations with Russia. This demonstrates that despite many challenges in the past two decades, Russian foreign policy has successfully established relations with Islamic countries on a solid ground.

Until the early 2000s, the Chechen issue in Russia and the policy differences experienced particularly in Syria during the Arab Spring process represent the most significant conflicts that emerged between Russia and the Islamic world after the Cold War. However, Russia has largely managed to persuade the Islamic world, especially in the early 2000s, that the Chechen issue is primarily an internal matter, and once the radical elements among Muslim Chechens are eradicated, Russia remains an integral part. The visit of Chechen leader Ahmet Kadyrov to Saudi Arabia in 2004 and his meetings with top officials of the state, were considered a successful visit, as it convinced the Gulf countries, believed to be the main sponsors of Chechen militants, that Russia had resolved the Chechen issue.[523] It portrayed that Russia does not have an issue with Muslims and that the Chechen problem is not a religious issue in

[523] Al Shishani M. B. Ahmad Kadyrov’s Visit to Saudi Arabia // Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst. [Electronic resource] — January 28, 2004. — Accessed January 13, 2024. — URL: https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/8705-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2004-1-28-art-8705.html.

Russia but rather a struggle against separatist radical movements. Another indication of Russia's efforts to improve its image regarding the Chechen issue in the Islamic world was the call by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, for separatist Chechens who still hadn't surrendered their weapons to lay down their arms during an event he attended in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, in 2010.

Regarding Syria, although the different positions adopted created some obstacles for Russia in developing relations with member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League for a while (Syria's membership in the Arab League was suspended in 2011, and its membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation was suspended in 2012), these differences have moved away from a problematic point with the stabilization of conditions in Syria. Finally, in 2023, Syria's membership in the Arab League was reactivated under the presidency of Bashar al-Assad, and Russia welcomed this development[524]. The return of Syria to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation will likely occur as part of the normalization process in its relations with Turkey. Russia continues its efforts to mediate in this regard.

In addition to the record-level development of bilateral relations between Russia and member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in recent years, Russia has also continued to develop its institutional relations gradually since becoming an observer member of the organization in 2005. Immediately after Russia's observer membership in 2006, under the leadership of Yevgeny M. Primakov and former President of Tatarstan Mintimer Sharipovich Shaim, "The Group of Strategic Vision: Russia - Islamic World" was established[525]. This institution aims to enhance economic, political, and military cooperation as well

[524] Russia and China Agree on Continued Strategic Cooperation, Dialogue on Ukraine // TASS. [Electronic resource] — Accessed January 13, 2024. — URL: https://tass.com/politics/1717625.
[525] Shadiq A. Analysis of Russia’s Status as an Observer in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation / A. Shadiq // Proceedings of the 1st Conference on Recent Innovations. — 2018. P. 340-347.

as scientific and cultural exchanges between Russia and Islamic countries. Led by the Republic of Tatarstan, which hosts Russia's largest Muslim population, the group continues its work under the initiative of Tatarstan's leadership.

The Republic of Tatarstan plays a central role as a cultural and Islamic center in Russia's relations with the Islamic world and, naturally, in the development of institutional relations with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In this context, the "Russia - Islamic World: KazanForum" has been serving as the main platform since 2009 for Russia to enhance its relations with Islamic countries and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, particularly in the field of economics. Every year, the forum sees an increase in participants and the number of agreements reached between Russia and Islamic countries. The interest shown in the forum in 2023 can be seen in the infographic below.



Figure 14: Kazan Forum in Russia in 2023

Russia's foreign policy approach, which has been advancing parallel views with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for many years, has become more visible in recent years. Issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, transition to a multipolar world order, respect for traditional values, the sanctity of national sovereignty, combating terrorism and Islamophobia, and achieving mutual gains are highlighted as areas where parallel foreign policy approaches

converge. In terms of mutual gains, economic benefits have prominently featured in bilateral relations. Recently, Russia has taken steps to integrate its relations with the Islamic Development Bank and Islamic banks, with the aim of increasing investments from Islamic countries in Russia. In a decree issued in 2023, Russia announced a trial decision to introduce Islamic banking systems in regions with significant Muslim populations, such as Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Dagestan, and Chechnya, until 2025. Such initiatives aim to deepen relations between Russia and Islamic countries and help Russia achieve its desire to transition into a multi-centric world system, along with other regional organizations like the OIC.

3.5. Status quo and reformist aspirations of the Russian Federation on the Global Scale

Conclusion of Chapter

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR marked a change in the status quo based on a bipolar world order. However, the scope and extent of this change, and who its architects would be, were not absolute certainties. The options included establishing a new system or reforming the existing one. Yet, for the construction of a new system as a revisionist act, the actors who would build this new order needed to be indisputable and absolute hegemons. In the history of international relations, system-based changes have generally occurred after major wars, with the victors emerging as indisputable hegemons. Concrete recent examples include the establishment of a new system by the victorious Allied Powers after World War I, based on the League of Nations and Wilson's Principles, or the construction of a new system by the Allied Powers through the Yalta and Potsdam conferences after World War II. Similarly, the transition to a bipolar system following World War II, marked by the rivalry of two undisputed superpowers, was again formed by regulations under the unquestioned leadership of these absolute hegemons by other states.

However, the manner in which the Cold War ended differs from the form of systemic change brought about by the recent historical examples given above. As Russian academic Dmitry Suslov noted, the end of the Cold War did not witness the sight of enemy tanks in Moscow or a moment of surrender. It was not an end marked by an absolute victor or loser. On the other hand, it was a fact that the United States remained the sole superpower in the new order. However, this hegemony coexisted with emerging regional powers with high global influence, such as China, Japan, and the European Union, as well as significant actors like the Russian Federation, which inherited the USSR's legacy and was one of the world's two largest nuclear powers. In this scenario, the global strategy adopted by the U.S. as the hegemonic power would determine the new international system. The U.S. would either build a unipolar international system based on its hegemony with its allied states or accept the construction of a more conciliatory international system by sharing power and authority with emerging or potentially influential actors.

The decision of the U.S., along with its allies, was to construct a unipolar system centered around itself. During the 1990s, efforts were made to create a new status quo based on this understanding. In contemporary times, the refusal of regional and global actors, especially Russia, to accept this new status quo has led to their characterization as disruptive revisionist states. Considering all this, at the core of regional and global conflicts in contemporary international relations lies the U.S.'s desire and insistence on constructing a unipolar system as a hegemonic power following the Cold War.

3.5.1. Counter Unipolarity and Multipolarity

Russia’s interpretations of international relations and foreign policy rest on the idea that the end of the Cold War did not produce a clear winner or loser, and that the USSR transitioned from an ideology-centered foreign policy to one grounded in peaceful coexistence. The expectation underlying this idea of a peaceful transition is that the status quo established after the last major

international change should be upheld. The determining developments in this thinking highlight the new international system built through the Yalta and Potsdam conferences. This system, wherein the United Nations is the largest legal organization among states, the UN Security Council is the sole authoritative body on international issues, and state sovereignty is considered sacred based on strict adherence to international law, is the order that Russia believes should prevail after the Cold War.

In this context, considering there has been no new revisionist arrangement that would nullify the legal validity of the decisions taken after the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, and given that the norms and rules of the international system established after World War II, along with the international organizations that regulate these rules, continue to exist, Russia's belief in adhering to the international order created by the Yalta and Potsdam agreements reflects a status quo-oriented foreign policy perspective. The order established after World War II was not a unipolar world order but an international system where major powers enjoyed privileges, as exemplified by the creation of the UN Permanent Representatives. This counters the unipolar world order that the U.S. and its allies are trying to establish and reflects Russia's status quo-oriented desires in its foreign policy.

Russia has adopted a status quo-oriented approach in response to the efforts of Western hegemonic states and organizations, led by the U.S., to revise the post-Cold War international system according to their own priorities and interests. These efforts include:

- The imposition of liberal values globally,
- The expansion and transformation of NATO, an organization founded with a defense mission during the Cold War, into a military force under U.S. leadership for the export of liberal values and out-of-area operational activities,

- The use of concepts like "Responsibility to Protect (R2P)" and "Humanitarian Intervention" to legitimize the violation of state sovereignty, expanding the use of force authority beyond the UN Security Council,
- The establishment of economic domination through foreign exchange reserves, using this domination as a pressure tool against other states through unilateral sanctions, which contravene UN and international trade regulations.

In this context, Russia's global policies reflect a response to these partial revisionist or reformist actions by Western powers by advocating for:

- The prevention of the imposition of any value, norm, or rule that lacks international legitimacy under the UN framework on other countries, allowing states to protect their own values without imposing them on others,
- The adherence to the post-Cold War understanding of disarmament and conflict risk reduction, ensuring that no regional organization expands into the spheres of influence or national security zones of other states,
- The preservation of the principle of inviolability of state sovereignty based on the UN Charter, and preventing any state or organization from military intervention without a UN Security Council resolution, unless self-defense conditions based on the UN Charter are met,
- The necessity of not using international trade elements as unilateral sanctions and pressure methods independent of international agreements and UN regulations post-Cold War.

Russia supports the preservation and adherence to these existing international arrangements.

On the other hand, Russia's approach to transitioning to a multipolar international system in response to the efforts of Western states, led by the U.S., to establish a unipolar world order contains reformist desires. At the forefront of

these reformist desires is the aim to increase the representation and diversity within international systems and organizations in parallel with states' capacities and changes in international relations. This desire for diversity and increased representation extends from international political organizations like the UN to international economic organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO.

Another reform-oriented understanding that reflects Russia's aspirations for a multipolar system is the construction of a system based on the diversity and interaction of civilizational and national values, in opposition to the U.S.-led attempts to establish a unipolar world order grounded in liberal norms. This involves creating a multicultural and multi-civilizational system where relationships, exchanges, and partnerships are established among various civilizations and national values. This system would stand in contrast to the hegemonic attempts to dominate the social, cultural, educational, and information security dimensions.

3.5.2. Global Institutions and Global Agendas

In Russia's global policies, the most important international organization is the United Nations and its affiliated bodies and regulations. One of the clearest indicators that Russian foreign policy does not exhibit radical revisionist tendencies on a global scale is its view of the preservation of the UN's existence and mission as a red line in its foreign policy. Additionally, as stated in the Russian foreign policy concepts published since 1993, there is a reformist understanding that seeks to increase representation and diversity while maintaining the positions of the current permanent members, based on a commitment to the UN Charter and institutions, as well as a multipolar international system founded on geographic and civilizational principles.

Regarding global economic organizations, Russia's current foreign policy clearly harbors reformist desires, although it is difficult to claim that these contain radical revisionist tendencies. Russia's fundamental stance towards existing international economic organizations is that the representation and

credit ratios of countries should be reformed to be proportional to their current capacities. Moreover, it advocates that these organizations should remain outside of contemporary geopolitical conflicts and approach the application or violation of rules equally for all countries. Particularly following the global economic crisis of 2008, with the rise of non-Western states, the desire to balance the capacity between emerging states and the existing Western hegemonic powers has intensified. In recent years, as countries defined as the East and South have developed stronger total economic capacities relative to Western countries, the tone of Russia's calls for reforms in international economic organizations has grown increasingly assertive. The U.S.'s ongoing efforts to thwart Russia and China's desires for reforms within the IMF and World Bank since the 2008 crisis have led Russia, among other nations, to pioneer the establishment of new regional and global economic organizations under the BRICS umbrella. The substitution of existing organizations with alternative ones following the neglect of reform demands without the use of military force stands out as the tangible implementation of these reform desires.

Lastly, the G7 structure, seen as a parallel international governance body with low representation and driven solely by the desires of a particular elite, is perceived to exclude Russia and align with influential states that disregard UN rules and international regulations. Although the G7/G8 structure was viewed for a long time after the end of the Cold War as a representation of historical great power politics and an important part of the international system, the notion that it imposes liberal values and operates unilaterally, distancing itself from UN regulations and common interest policies, has rendered it insignificant in Russian foreign policy.

Russia's stance on energy, climate change, global security, and the humanitarian agenda reflects both status quo and reformist desires. In energy regulations, Russia adheres to arrangements made under the UN framework or within the scope of internationally accepted agreements, indicating a status quo

approach based on international law. This status quo approach is also evident in Russia's resistance to unilateral ideas imposed by Western states and their allies, which ignore the national conditions and capabilities of other states. Similarly, in its climate agenda, Russia emphasizes adherence to regulations made under the UN framework and internationally accepted agreements. This focus on the UN and international agreements demonstrates a status quo approach that aligns with existing international legal arrangements. However, Russia also exhibits reformist tendencies in its climate policies, expressing openness to reforms that consider the conditions and capabilities of all countries.

In addressing international threats and ensuring global security, Russia clearly follows a status quo-oriented approach. This is evident in its foreign policy, which emphasizes adherence to the UN Charter and existing international agreements, the UN Security Council being the sole authoritative body, the inviolability of state sovereignty, and the need to combat international threats with equal determination without discrimination.

Russia's international humanitarian agenda also reflects a status quo-oriented approach due to its adherence to UN norms and regulations. However, its role in enhancing its international prestige and its desire to play a significant role in regional and global crises show reformist tendencies. Russia's transformation into a donor country, and the active role of the Russian Orthodox Church and other civil society organizations in the humanitarian agenda, illustrate this understanding.

3.5.3. Role of the Non-Western Institutions and Partnerships

The desire of rising powers to reform the current system, thwarted by declining hegemonic powers, has driven these emerging powers to establish alternative organizations. In this context, BRICS stands as the most active and comprehensive political and economic formation created by rising regional and global powers, primarily Russia and China, within the existing international system. It can be considered one of the attempts to create an alternative system

that scholars like Kissinger, Schweller, and Buzan refer to as "revolutionary revisionist" and Larson & Shevchenko call "social creativist revisionist". However, it is more accurate to state that BRICS does not contain anti-Western rhetoric or policies and serves as a complementary alternative organization concerning the existing international economic institutions. Describing BRICS and its affiliated institutions as an alternative structure aiming to dismantle the current system would not be entirely correct.

On the other hand, given the geographical representation of BRICS member countries, which expands each year, it can be said that BRICS, while currently harboring reformist demands, has the potential to become a revolutionary revisionist structure if institutionalization and alliance bonds within the organization are developed. In Russian foreign policy, BRICS holds great importance, particularly in terms of promoting civilizational interactions and breaking Western dominance in the international economy based on foreign exchange. BRICS emerges as one of the concrete global implementations of Russia's fundamental reformist desires, aiming to ensure diversity in interstate relations, increase representation, and promote inclusiveness.

The G-20 has increasingly become a significant international organization for implementing Russia's reformist aspirations in its foreign policy, especially after the global economic crisis of 2008 and the short-lived military conflict between Russia and Georgia. These events led to anti-Russian policies from the US and the EU, including sanctions and Russia's removal from the G-8. Russia's policy of advocating for greater voice and representation for emerging powers in the international system, and increasing diversity and representation, has made the G-20 more important each year as a platform to counter attempts by the US and its allies to isolate Russia.

Organizations like BRICS and the G-20, which are not under the absolute influence of Western hegemonic states, are crucial for Russia to communicate its perspectives and concerns to the world, especially regarding regional and global

developments and geopolitical disputes that escalate to armed conflict. This aspect of Russia's foreign policy, which falls under the domain of information security, is critical for conveying that Russia's reformist demands do not harbor radical revisionist desires.

3.5.4. Multivector Practices in Russian Foreign Policy: Relations with Regional Unions

In the global politics of Russian foreign policy, the relationships established and developed with regional organizations reflect both status quo and reform-oriented aspirations. The political, economic, military, cultural, and educational relationships within these organizations are important for demonstrating the multilateral and flexible nature of Russian foreign policy, whether through maintaining existing benefits with status quo tendencies or achieving new gains with reformist desires.

Status Quo Oriented Aspirations

Russia's relationships under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Arctic Council (AC) reflect its desire to protect its gains in these regional organizations' spheres of influence and to prevent external actors from expanding their influence. Russia holds a leading actor position in both organizations. While being open to any cooperation based on mutual interests and concerns and promoting mutual gain, these regions are seen by Russia as matters of national security on political, economic, and military grounds. Therefore, Russia will not allow the risk of changing the regional power balance within the activities of these organizations.

Unlike the SCO, the Arctic Council's other members are Western states. After Russia's military intervention in Ukraine in February 2022, Russia was excluded from the council's activities. The pursuit of unilateral gains in these regions by the US and its allies has increasingly hardened Russia's desire to maintain the status quo in these areas.

Reformist Oriented Aspirations

Russia's relationships with organizations such as ASEAN, the African Union, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which have been increasing in intensity each year across three different regions, reflect reformist-oriented aspirations. The institutional relationships established with these organizations and strategic partnerships formed with some member countries highlight Russia's reformist-focused multilateral relationship network. This approach is based on a multipolar order and reflects a desire for various actors to be actively involved in the international system

CONCLUSION

The end of the Cold War eliminated the bipolar world order and the dissolution of the Soviet Union eradicated the ideology-based foreign policy approach. The international system has evolved into a new process and the Russian Federation, as the continuing of the Soviet Union, was striving to establish a new foreign policy understanding to integrate into the new world order. The vacuum created by abandoning the foreign policy approach centered on communist/socialist values, which had lasted for approximately 70 years, led to a process in Russia similar to the intense discussions on the nature of relations with the West/Europe and national identity that occurred in the 19th century. The ideas proposed about Russia's identity, status and role in the international system after the Cold War have become subjects of researches in Russian foreign policy, aiming to determine the strategy of post-Cold War Russian foreign policy. In this quest, the re-construction of the foreign policy understanding coincides with the phase of transition and transformation in the international system, where the roles of other major powers, alongside Russia, are also being defined.

As Russian experts, politicians and academics have pointed out, the bipolar world order did not conclude with a defeat marked by enemy tanks entering Moscow after a major war. There was no official victor or vanquished, and the process that ended the Cold War and transitioned to a global order emerged from Gorbachev's “new thinking” policies, initiated by the Soviet Union. On the other side of the coin, there was the United States and its allies, who saw themselves as the absolute winners of the Cold War and aimed to design the new international system according to their interests and understanding. The third side of this equation included rising regional and global powers from different geographies, such as China, India, Japan and Brazil.

In the 1990s, Russia was in a state of crisis due to its political and economic structural problems, but the international system was also undergoing a different kind of transformation. This period gave rise to studies in

international relations that, similar to those describing 19th-century Europe in political history, discussed foreign policy approach and strategy based on the status quo, revisionist and reformist desires of states.

At the core of the debates in Russian politics during the 1990s had been the preservation of the country's territorial integrity and its ties with former Soviet republics, the resolution of the ongoing economic crisis, the improvement of living standards for Russian citizens and the integration into the new international system. However, following the abandonment of a long-standing ideology-based political approach, there were significant discussions on how to achieve these desired developments and what ideas the planned strategies should be based on. This led to a clash between pro-Western and unique civilization approaches in Russia. These debates in Russian politics also brought about changes and transformations in Russian foreign policy. Despite significant turmoil in domestic politics, Russia's desires in foreign policy were not exceedingly complex. In Russian conceptualization, the end of the bipolar order naturally led to a multipolar system, given the existence of many politically and economically developed states across different regions. In this process, Russia would take its place as one of the leading power centers in the world. However, another interpretation of the transformation of the international system by Russia was that the US and its Western allies, seeing themselves as the victors of the Cold War, were attempting to establish a unipolar system, willing to ignore international law and norms and even employ military methods. In Russian foreign policy concepts and national security strategy documents up until the 2010s, the international system was interpreted in this manner, and Russia's desire was explained as being part of the multipolar world's formation process without disrupting it.

The period of turmoil in Russian politics during the 1990s came to an end in 2000 with Vladimir V. Putin's rise to the presidency. This transition was marked by the adoption of a pragmatic politics that synthesized pro-Western and

Unique ideas, the resolution of structural economic problems, and the improvement of citizens' living standards. The consolidation of power and order in domestic politics also allowed for more active and ambitious actions in foreign policy. Moreover, regional and global developments also pushed Russia to adopt more assertive and vigorous policies. During the 1990s, Russia had adopted a relatively passive foreign policy approach, partly by choice and partly out of necessity, focusing more on its internal issues and preserving national unity.

The classification of states in foreign policy strategies as status quo, revisionist, or reformist-oriented states, when based on preconceived and biased understandings of the past struggles of great powers, tends to label rising powers as “revisionist and disruptive” and contemporary hegemonic powers as “status quo and order-oriented”. According to this study, these incomplete and incorrect interpretations are considered one of the factors that hinder an objective and accurate understanding of contemporary Russian foreign policy. A state can simultaneously pursue status quo, reformist and revisionist policies on different levels. The desire for change or to preserve values does not make states radically revisionist or disruptive entities as long as it is based on international norms and law. However, the interpretation of existing norms and values and the increase in national security concerns can lead to different methods depending on changes in the international system. The origin of these methods is important. For instance, from the Russian perspective, the legitimization of Kosovo's independence process by the International Court of Justice represents a change that allows for the accession of Crimea to Russia via a referendum to be evaluated on a legitimate plane.

For nearly three centuries, Russia has been one of the world's leading power centers, and in terms of foreign policy, the most prominent regions for Russia are its historic lands, the near abroad or its natural sphere of influence, the European region with which it has political, historical, and cultural ties, and

the Middle East, which has helped establish Russia as a global power center. On a global level, Russia's role in the transformation and construction of the international system, its relations with Western and non-Western international organizations, and its interactions with regional organizations that are part of the transition to a multipolar world order are also significant. The foundation of Russia's strategy towards these regions and on a global scale includes several goals and desires: protecting and advancing Russian interests, balancing and, if possible, preventing anti-Russian policies, minimizing national security risks and establishing relationships and partnerships that are based on mutual respect for states' own traditions, values, interests and norms. Some of these desires have status quo-oriented objectives, while others incorporate reformist aspirations.

On a regional level, Russia has some common status quo desires in Europe, the Near Abroad, and the Middle East, but it also has mostly reformist aspirations and, to some extent, revisionist applications. Primarily, Russia adopts a strong status quo approach against changing power balances in these regions that disregard its desires and concerns, apart from filling the power vacuums after the end of the Cold War. Examples of this include NATO and EU expansion towards Russia's borders, interference in countries' internal affairs through color revolutions and regime changes through military methods without national security risks based on self-defense, such as the invasion of Iraq. These actions both alter regional power balances and violate international laws and norms, against which Russia has taken positions. On the other hand, Russia's growing political, economic and military capacity, along with its assertive and ambitious policies, reflects its mostly reformist aspirations and applications in these regions, with some final-stage revisionist tendencies and practices. Russia's insistence on constructing a new security concert in Europe, actively balancing the US and its allies in the Middle East, as seen in Syria, and forming new partnerships through organizations like OPEC+ and leading structures like

CIS, CSTO, and EAEU to build an order closed to external interventions in the Near Abroad similar to the 19th-century understanding of natural influence area or sphere of influence, all demonstrate the changes Russia aspirations and believes should occur in these regions in light of changing national and international capacities and conditions.

On a global level, whether Russian foreign policy contains status quo or reformist/revisionist aspirations primarily depends on how it views the post-Cold War period. As mentioned earlier, Russia sees the post-Cold War era as naturally evolving towards a multipolar system. This perspective contrasts with the policies of the US and its Western allies, who are perceived to be attempting to turn the international system into a unilateral order through revisionist actions. Russia was aware that, following the dissolution of the USSR, the US emerged as a dominant figure due to the absence of a counterbalancing superpower. Nonetheless, Russia believed that by integrating into the international system and global trade and establishing new cooperation opportunities, hegemonic arbitrary practices could be mitigated in a system conducive to multilateralism. However, the management of this process has become increasingly challenging each year for Russia and its foreign policy partners, especially with the rise of geopolitical conflict risks. This development has caused Russia's globally integration-focused foreign policy, which initially had status quo inclinations, to shift towards rising reformist and partial revisionist aspirations. Developments such as BRICS/BRICS+, Greater Eurasia, the promotion of international trade based on national currencies against the hegemony of the dollar, the reform of international economic organizations like the IMF and World Bank according to countries' current capacities, calls for partial reform of the United Nations, and the emphasis on a multipolar and multilateral world order highlight the prominence of these reformist aspirations.

Finally, the process initiated in February 2022 in Ukraine, referred to by Russia as a “Special Military Operation”, represents a radical revisionist action

in Russian foreign policy on a regional scale. However, considering the justifications for the Special Military Operation, such as maintaining Ukraine's neutral status and preventing NATO's expansion, the Russian conceptualization views this radical revisionist action as an effort to preserve the post-Cold War status quo. On the other hand, the developments of the Special Military Operation, which have evolved over the past two years into a process involving territorial changes, are considered radical or revolutionary revisionist actions in classical definitions.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that Russia's foreign policy orientation, analyzed through the lenses of status quo, reformist and revisionist paradigms within the framework of “Russian conceptualization”, has undergone significant evolution since the post-Cold War period. During the early post-Cold War era, Russia's foreign policy was predominantly characterized by status quo aspirations, aimed at consolidating its national power and stabilizing its position in the new international system. However, subsequent regional and global developments, coupled with Russia's growing political, military and economic capacities, have led to a transformation in its strategic outlook. This shift reflects an increasingly assertive balance-desired approach, integrating elements of status quo preservation, reformist initiatives, and partial-reactionary revisionist claims, underpinned by the incorporation of traditional and cultural values as a cornerstone of its foreign policy strategy.

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