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RUSSIAN “CLASSIC”
IR THEORIES*Valery Konyshev and Alexander Sergunin***Introduction**

In the early 1990s, the Russian theoretical vision of world politics was heavily affected by the Soviet legacy in terms of concepts, theories, and methodological approaches. The core of this legacy was formed by the Marxism-Leninism teaching, which included the next key elements: international economic relations considered as prevailing over political; a global rather than state-centric vision of international policy emphasized the role of classes, social groups, and elites in creating the mechanisms of domination; all international conflicts originate from the capitalist nature of the Western states striving to international exploitation of poor states; the historical mission of the Soviet Union was to facilitate the global revolutionary process toward socialism; Western IR theories were hardly criticized and interpreted as ideological support of imperialism rather than science.¹

At the same time, it should be mentioned that since the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, the Soviet IR theory has undergone a rather unusual change. The Soviet IR has tacitly incorporated a number of postulates of structural realism (neo-realism), paying more attention to such categories as state, national interests, balance of power, and “spheres of influence.” Similar to the Western neorealists, Soviet scholars made great strides in developing a system approach to world politics.² However, in the Gorbachev era, for several years, there was a shift of the Soviet IR thinking from the pro-realist approach to a combination of liberalism and globalism with a prevalence of the latter. This mixture of Marxism and Western concepts named New Political Thinking stressed ideas of “all-humankind” values and interests over national, claimed the end of confrontation with the West, and focused on mechanisms of cooperation and peaceful coexistence instead.³

During the 1990s, Russian political thought was affected by the end of the Cold War; the breakdown of the USSR; the re-emergence of Russia as a separate, independent entity; and the challenges of the globalizing world. Additionally, after the collapse of Marxism, which had served as an official theoretical basis for the social sciences, a sort of theoretical vacuum had emerged. In these hard conditions, political and academic elites had to redefine Russia’s national interests and the conceptual basis of its international strategy, and make adjustments in foreign policy.

Initially, the Russian post-Soviet IR discourse was manifested by the so-called “Atlanticism”-“Eurasianism” debate. While “Atlanticism” was considered a pro-Western type of thinking, which aimed to integrate Russia to the Western economic, political, and security institutions,⁴ “Eurasianism” was oriented to the uniqueness of the Russian civilization and its great destiny as a bridge between the East and West.⁵ The process of consolidation of some Russian domestically oriented elites produced a new group – Derzhavniki, who were guided by the principles of strong state power and self-sufficiency, as well as the protection of Russian identity, national interests, and values as the opposite of the pro-Western way of modernization.⁶ These approaches became the basis for the further development of Russian IR theories, which are discussed later in this chapter.

It should be noted that, with time, the Russian IR discourse took more or less the same shape as the global one. Now all three “classic” IR theory paradigms (neorealism, neoliberalism, and globalism), which oppose the “non-traditional” postpositivist approach, can be identified in present-day Russia. This study aims to examine how these three “classic” paradigms interpret Russia’s national interests, the most important problems of international relations, trends of world policy, and their vision of the optimal trajectory of Russia’s foreign policy.

Neorealism

The “Eurasianists” and Derzhavniki, with their advocacy of Russian national identity and national (rather than “all-humankind”/global) interests, paved the way towards the rehabilitation of the realist/neorealist school of thought in Russia. Currently, neorealism is a dominant IR paradigm in Russia. There are several theoretical schools within this strand of Russian international studies. Some of them were developed from the Soviet theoretical legacy; others drew on the principles of the Western version of neorealism. For example, the system-structural approach, which has both Western and Soviet origins, focuses on the study of the role of various systemic factors of nature – domestic, geopolitical, geoeconomic, geostrategic – on foreign policy making and the distribution of power in the international relations system. These studies are aimed not only at identifying the factors that make international politics holistic but also at explaining how and why the heterogeneous components of the world process and different paradigms of social and political development coexist. In this regard, the question being discussed is, “What is Russia’s place in this complex configuration of international interactions and interlinks?”

The historic-systemic school, to a larger extent, is based on the late Soviet legacy. This school pays significant attention to long-term historical developments of specific states and the international relations system at large. The philosophy of history serves to a greater extent as a theoretical basis for this school.

The sociological approach has much in common with the historic-systemic school but emphasizes the study of the role of social and political institutions, groups, and individual actors, in both foreign policy making and world politics.

The so-called neoclassical realism is gradually gaining momentum in Russian neorealism. This school tends to concentrate its research on issues such as the role of domestic factors, specific historical circumstances, and the peculiarities of the decision-making system in shaping a state’s foreign policy.

The hegemonic stability theory is rather popular among the Russian neorealists as well. According to the proponents of this theory, because of the competitive and potentially conflictual nature of the international system, it takes a dominant power with preponderant power resources – a hegemon – to set the norms and rules of the international order and ensure at least

some level of compliance by other states. Currently, there is a lack of such hegemony, and, for this reason, the international relations system is unstable and turbulent.

As for the specific problems of Russia's foreign policy and the international relations system, neorealists prefer to focus on categories traditional to this paradigm, such as national interests, national security, the conflictual nature of world politics, power distribution, and struggle.

With the rise of Russian neorealists in the mid-1990s, the balance of power, rather than the balance of interests, was again in fashion. National, not international, security became the matter of primary concern. According to the neorealists, Russia's national security strategy should depart from the real power of the state; provide for the rational use of resources; and combine and interact with internal, foreign policy, socio-economic, scientific, technological, and informational, as well as all other aspects of life and work among the state's people.

In fact, in the 1990s, the neorealists represented one of the first schools of thought in Russia to propose extending the concept of national security to include both "hard" and "soft" security issues. As the neorealists underlined, the state security strategy should contain a comprehensive analysis and classification of the existing and potential threats to Russia's security, as well as internal and external mechanisms for the prevention and elimination of these threats. It also should ensure a coordinated effort on the part of both the state and the people as a whole to provide security at the national, regional, and global levels, as well as the organization of internal and international interaction in solving urgent and long-term security problems⁷.

The neorealists distinguish between four main categories in terms of Russia's national interests. First, there are functional interests – economic, political, social, military, humanitarian, and environmental. Second, the groups of interests depending on the longevity – short-term, mid-term, and standing interests. Third, interests need to be categorized depending on their importance – vital, important, or marginal. Finally, domestic and foreign policy interests should be clearly defined. The neorealists stress that in an interrelated and interdependent world, the national interests of different countries may overlap, cross, or even clash in various political forms, ranging from "soft" to "hard."

The neorealists suggested that after the Cold War, the internal threats to Russia's security were underestimated and need more attention: disintegration because of inter-ethnic and center-region contradictions, degradation of socio-economic conditions resulting from economic decline and deep social differentiation, organized crime and corruption, cultural and spiritual degradation, the degradation of the environment, and the lack of information security.

To cope with external and internal threats, Russia should first accomplish its domestic reforms. The neorealists believed that the cohesion of all levels of security – intra-regional, national, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), European, Asia-Pacific, global – should be reached. This should be aided by the rational and effective use of all forces and means currently at the disposal of the Russian state. Moreover, the neorealists preferred political, diplomatic, economic, and other peaceful methods to meet security challenges. However, they did not rule out the use of military force if differences between states' vital interests could not be reconciled.⁸

Since the 1990s, the regional priorities of the neorealists include three main circles of Russian interests: 1) "near abroad"/CIS; 2) East Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East; and 3) the West (the United States and Western Europe). The remainder of the world meanwhile was of peripheral importance to Russia. In line with other schools of thought, the neorealists have stressed the Eurasian geopolitical location of Russia. However, Russian foreign policy on the continent should be defined by real interests rather than messianic ideas (a critical comment on the "Eurasianist" philosophy).

According to the neorealists, the “near abroad” was (and is) the first regional priority in Russia’s international strategy. The main goals of Moscow’s foreign policy in the “near abroad” were to prevent the rise of unfriendly regimes and the emergence of ethnic and religious conflicts, to establish stable relations with its neighbors, to protect Russian citizens’ human rights, to shape a common security space on CIS territory, and to resolve territorial disputes with the New Independent States (NIS).⁹

The second circle of Russia’s national interests includes Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East. The neorealists were critical of Boris Yeltsin’s policies towards Central and East European countries because Moscow has been unable to prevent their drift towards the West both in economic and security terms. According to the neorealists, Eastern Europe must be shown, through clever initiatives in various fields, that it will be safer and more prosperous, not in the role of a *cordon sanitaire* thrown around Russia, but functioning as a connecting link between Eurasia and Western Europe.¹⁰

Russian policy towards the Middle East should be determined by its interests in the “near abroad” – the Trans-Caucasus and Central Asia. Potentially, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan could be Russia’s opponents. According to Lukin,¹¹ Russia has to vigorously resist Islamic fundamentalism, the spread of which threatens to destabilize the situation both near and inside the CIS. It was essential, however, to seek various avenues of agreement and develop mutually beneficial interstate relations with the biggest Islamic countries (including Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and the Arab states). At the same time, Russia must rebuff all attempts by Islamic extremists to encroach on Russian economic, political, and military interests.¹²

As for the Far East, the neorealists have noted Russia’s weakness and declining role in the region. Rogov¹³ admitted that some of the ex-Soviet republics could be drawn into the spheres of interest of such regional centers of power as China or Japan. Arbatov¹⁴ even suggested that China may represent the greatest external security threat to Russia in the long run. He and other neorealists did not approve of too quick a military rapprochement with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and warned of the possibility of Russia’s one-sided dependence on Beijing.¹⁵ For that reason, Arbatov¹⁶ observed that the interests of Russia in the region may best be served by the maintenance of the United States’ political role and limited military presence. If the United States were to withdraw, the Japanese reaction could be none other than re-militarization in view of the rapid growth of economic and military power in China. A clash between these two giants could draw Russia into the conflict as well. In addition to keeping the United States’ military presence, Russia’s national interests would be best served by a new multilateral security system in the region.

According to Rogov, the third circle of Russian interests included Moscow’s relations with the West, in particular with the United States and Western Europe. As for the United States, the neorealists saw a number of areas in which the two states had common interests: 1) accomplishing Russian economic and political reforms; 2) developing a bilateral arms control regime (in particular, further reductions in strategic armaments and a nuclear test ban); 3) preventing the rise of resurgent regional powers, which could violate the existing power balance; 4) nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons non-proliferation; and 5) peacekeeping.¹⁷

At the same time, the neorealists have singled out some sources of tension between Russia and the United States – Russia’s inability to move fast with its domestic reforms; the lack of a common enemy, which is indispensable for any military-political alliance; the model of mutual nuclear deterrence inherited from the Cold War; the United States’ refusal to admit Russia into the Western community; the preservation of the system of military-political alliances set up by

the United States during the Cold War; NATO and EU enlargement through admitting the Soviet Union's former "clients" but not Russia itself; NATO's aggressive policies in the Balkans; and Russia's arms and dual-use technology transfers to Third World countries.¹⁸

Concerning European security problems, since the mid-1990s, the neorealists have focused first of all on NATO and EU enlargement. They did not oppose the latter and regarded the former as detrimental to the regional security system. The neorealists did not favor NATO's dissolution. On the contrary, they acknowledged the Alliance's positive role in the maintenance of European security both in the Cold War era and beyond.¹⁹ But they also believed that NATO should not be extended and strengthened at the expense of Russian security. According to the neorealists, to prevent a new clash between the East and the West, the OSCE should become the main collective security organization on the continent.²⁰ The neorealists have also focused on the search for a compromise with the West. They have proposed both a delay in NATO's expansion by a number of years and that its eventual enlargement be limited to the Visegrad countries only and not be extended to the Baltic States. They have also proposed a special Russia-NATO charter to ensure Moscow's security (no further expansion to the CIS countries, no military bases and nuclear weapons on the territory of new members, the continuation of arms control dialogue, and so on).²¹ The Russian-NATO Paris Agreement (May 1997) was concluded, in fact, on the basis of these principles.

As far as the post-9/11 world order was concerned, the neorealists believed that the Afghanistan and Iraq wars have demonstrated the return of the world to the 19th-century-like anarchical model based on power politics, selfish national interests, and hard competition between major players. They emphasized the inability of international organizations and international law to prevent new wars and the rise of hegemonic powers. Instead, they suggested several possible models for the "neo-anarchical" world. Some of the Russian neorealists believed that the era of US unilateralism was looming ahead²² and advised the Russian leadership to choose sides – either join the US-led pole as a junior partner²³ or try to counterbalance the American superpower with the help of other power poles – the EU (or certain European countries, such as France and/or Germany), China, CIS, and so on.²⁴

Another group of neorealists see the world as a chaotic combination of ad hoc and shifting coalitions in which different states pursue their national interests. The neorealists warned the Russian leaders that since these coalitions will be of a temporary (short-term) rather than permanent (long-term) nature, Russia should not invest too much in them and should change allies and alliances when they stop to serve Russia's national interests.²⁵ They pointed to US-Russia cooperation on Afghanistan (2001) and the Russia-France-Germany strategic triangle in the case of Iraq (2003) as examples of such ad hoc coalitions.

Finally, some neorealists believed that a multipolar model of the world was still possible, and Russia could become one of the power poles, especially in the post-Soviet geostrategic space.²⁶ More specifically, this model of the "manageable anarchy" could result in the creation of a "concert of powers" international security system in which Russia could play a significant role. The G-8 was seen as an embryo of such a less informal but more flexible and reliable security regime.²⁷ President Putin's speech at the Munich conference on international security (February 2007) went along the same lines.²⁸ Some neorealists suggested including China and India in the G-8 and transforming it into a G-10 to make this institution more authoritative and representative.²⁹ The UN Security Council should not be neglected either. It could be useful when there is a consensus between five permanent members, or it could be used by Russia (and its allies) to block (or make illegitimate) undesirable initiatives and strategies.³⁰

The “Arab awakening,” a series of “color” revolutions in the post-Soviet space, and, more recently, the Ukrainian and Syrian crises forced the two latter neorealist groupings to merge and shift to a more pessimistic view of world politics. For the Russian present-day neorealists, it is absolutely clear that the so-called “collective West” (particularly, the US and the EU) should be blamed for the Ukrainian crisis.³¹ This hard-line school believes that by helping the nationalist forces in Ukraine to oust the pro-Russian regime of Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014, the West wanted to withdraw this country from Moscow’s sphere of influence and sideline Russia in the post-Soviet space. They fully approve Vladimir Putin’s policies on Crimea’s integration into Russia and supporting the breakaway Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics (DPR and LPR). The radical version of this school even suggested not limiting the concept of “Novorossiia” (New Russia) to Donbass only, but including other Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine in it (from Kharkov to Odessa) and helping the local pro-Russian forces “liberate” these territories from the Kiev-based “junta.”³²

As far as the future of the Ukrainian question is concerned, initially, the Russian neorealists believed that the “frozen conflict” scenario was the most probable one because the warring parties have no more resources to continue the conflict in its open form.³³ This option could not bring peace and stability to the region but could stop military activities and killing civilians and create the necessary conditions for rebuilding the region’s economy and social institutions. This scenario was possible in an environment where neither of the parties was interested in serious concessions or compromises, but at the same time, they were not in a position to implement their maximalist program. Ukraine had limited resources for defeating the separatists if it did not want to risk escalating tensions with Russia. If Russia were to increase support to the self-proclaimed republics of Donbass, it would risk entering a new Cold War.

However, the relative status quo (including the frozen conflict status) was maintained for only eight years. The Kremlin, irritated by Western reluctance to guarantee Ukraine’s neutral status and stop weaponizing the country, which made Kiev’s new invasion of Donbass inevitable, initiated a special military operation in both Donbass and Ukraine itself in February 2022. The most radical scenario suggested by the neorealists in 2014, which aimed to include the Eastern and Southern parts of Ukraine to Russia and destroy Ukrainian military potential, became a dramatic reality.

The neorealist legacy has had a fairly mixed record. On the one hand, neorealism has contributed positively to the Russian foreign policy debate. The neorealists have helped overcome the crisis in Russian foreign policy thinking, which was generated by the struggle of two extremes represented by such schools of thought as Atlanticism and Eurasianism. The neorealists succeeded in articulating Russia’s real security interests and priorities to both domestic and foreign audiences. Moreover, the spread of their ideas made Russian security thinking more predictable and understandable for the West. The Russian national security strategies, in fact, drew heavily on the realist ideas. On the other hand, the coming of neorealism with its emphasis on national interests, national security, and national sovereignty implied an obvious return to the old paradigms belonging to the age of classical modernity, which was based on power policy and the preferable use of coercive instruments in international politics. They failed to develop any concepts suggesting a more cooperative model of the international relations system.

As for the future development of the realist tradition in Russian IR, it is inspired by both its own experience and Western neorealism. One can, for example, observe the rising interest of Russian scholars³⁴ in neoclassic realism, which is a combination of structuralism and system vision of international policy on the one hand and focus on state attributes and internal factors to explain its foreign policy on the other.

Neoliberalism

Despite the dominance of the neorealist paradigm, the neoliberal perspective on international relations is also represented in Russia, although it is rather weak in the present-day Russia. The declining role of neoliberalism is explained by its seemingly pro-Western image. In a situation when the West put pressure on Moscow through various means because of the Ukrainian crisis, IR theoretical approaches based on ideas of cooperation and partnership with international players who are perceived as anti-Russian actors are unpopular for obvious reasons. However, several schools can be identified within the neoliberal paradigm: neofunctionalism, which aims to explain the phenomena of international integration and globalization; interdependency theory, which believes that despite numerous conflicts and diverging interests, many countries of the world still depend on each other in many ways; liberal intergovernmentalism, which aims to explain which factors encourage different countries to cooperate with each other; international regime theory, which favors the creation of formal and informal international regimes to secure international cooperation and prevent conflicts; and the Russian version of the soft power concept, which, however, is different from the Joseph Nye one.

As mentioned earlier, most neoliberal ideas were borrowed from Western political thought represented by neoliberal theories, including interdependence, interaction of economic and political factors in international politics, and a normative approach to understanding international policy. Neoliberalism emphasizes globalization trends in the world economy, which strengthen the trend toward global management of economic and political developments and generally increase the relevance of international legal frameworks, thus reducing global anarchy. Neoliberals believe that the development of multilateral institutions and regimes could guarantee stability of the international system. Although the trend toward a multipolar world is not neglected in the neoliberal perspective, it argues that the future development of the international system is no longer predominantly determined by the shape and outcome of rivalries among the major centers of economic and military power but, increasingly, by the dynamics of their common development and interdependency.³⁵ The neoliberals argue that the geopolitical drive for control over territories does not matter anymore and suggest that it should be replaced by geo-economic thinking.³⁶

The debate between neorealists and neoliberals in Russia on the more practical aspects of diplomacy has mainly concentrated on two issues: integration of the post-Soviet space and European security. For instance, Zagorski³⁷ argued that the real dilemma of Russian politics in the CIS was not further disintegration versus integration, but rather reintegration versus eventual "natural" new integration on the basis of democratic and market reforms yet to be completed. Zagorski also argued that to pursue the latter option one needed to recognize that the major building blocks of the experience of the EU did not apply to the CIS, and another NAFTA-type of soft integration should be the goal.

In the 2000s, the neoliberals pushed forward the idea of a "multi-track" integration that included several models ranged from the Russian-Belorussian Union State (confederation), Customs Union, Eurasian Economic Community, and, finally, Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) to some loose cooperative arrangements under CIS auspices. Priority was given to further development of the EAEU, which was seen as a "brain child" of Russian neoliberalism. A treaty aiming for the establishment of the EAEU was signed on May 29, 2014 (i.e., after the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis) by the leaders of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia and came into force on January 1, 2015. Two more CIS countries – Armenia and Kyrgyzstan – joined the Union in 2015. Along with basic neoliberal principles, the EAEU introduced the free

movement of goods, capital, services, and people and provided for common transport, agriculture, and energy policies, with provisions for a single currency and greater integration in the future. The EAEU's creation was a result of a difficult compromise between Vladimir Putin and Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who suggested the idea of the Eurasian economic integration in the mid-1990s. Where Putin had wished for common political institutes like parliament, a common passport, and common currency within the EEU, Nazarbayev remained steadfast in confining the organization to a purely economic union.³⁸

Despite some ups and downs in the development of EAEU cooperation, which were generated mostly by external factors such as Western sanctions against Belarus and Russia and the coronavirus pandemic, the whole project proved its effectiveness and continues in a quite dynamic way.

As for European security, in the 1990s, the major controversial issue was NATO enlargement. The neoliberals have argued for a cooperative solution, explaining that the predominant interest of Russia in Europe should be the strengthening of multilateralism as a guarantee that there will be no return to balance of power politics in Europe.³⁹ Pro-Western neoliberals viewed no serious threat stemming from NATO enlargement. They believed that NATO extension was a natural reaction of the former Soviet satellites to Russia's unpredictable behavior. The neoliberals also were discontent with Yeltsin's inability to make full use of the opportunities that were opened to Russia in the framework of different security arrangements ranging from Partnership for Peace (PfP) to OSCE programs.⁴⁰

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the neoliberals considered NATO the main guarantor of stability in Europe.⁴¹ They believed that Russia was interested in NATO's responsibility for the stability of borders in Central and Eastern Europe, a region with a number of potential hotbeds of instability that could endanger Russia and the CIS member-states. The neoliberals thought that once NATO accepted the Central and Eastern European countries, which are currently anti-Russian, it will no longer have an incentive to be hostile to Moscow and that they would become more benevolent neighbors to Russia. In this view, partnership between NATO and Russia could become an instrument of conflict resolution in Russia's relations with its neighbors.⁴² Moscow should have good relations with NATO to allow free hands in coping with the "arch of instability" extending from the Black Sea and North Caucasus through Central Asia farther on to China.⁴³

The neoliberals pointed out that NATO is not an aggressive organization but an alliance of democracies.⁴⁴ It is a defensive rather than offensive security organization. The neoliberals maintained that Russia has to focus on its domestic problems, which they consider much more dangerous than NATO enlargement. They proposed that Russian diplomacy should be focused on dialogue with NATO on disarmament and confidence building.⁴⁵ More generally, NATO has been regarded as a mechanism that helped modernize societies, overcome nationalistic aberrations, and condition the thinking and behavior of new political elites.⁴⁶ Some neoliberal analysts even believed that the "national humiliation" experienced by Russia in the case of NATO enlargement was useful for the future democratic transformation of this country. According to some accounts, NATO's extension forced Yeltsin 1) to progress with economic reforms; 2) to pay more attention to Russia's neighbors such as Belarus, China, Iran, and Japan; and 3) to start real military reform.⁴⁷ According to the liberals, NATO overreacted to Milosevic's Kosovo politics by bombing Serbia but should remain Russia's main partner in ensuring European security⁴⁸.

As for the nature of the post-Cold War European security model, neoliberals were quite pessimistic regarding the possibility of creating an effective pan-European structure in which Russia could have a major say. According to Zagorski,⁴⁹ the main objective of Russia's foreign policy

should not be joining Western European organizations but using cooperation with them to facilitate its own integration into the world economy and the community of democratic states. For example, the neoliberals were satisfied with projects and initiatives such as the EU's Northern Dimension that aimed at integrating Russia's northwestern regions into the single European economic, social, and cultural space or a Russia-NATO 20 (19 + 1) cooperative format.⁵⁰

In the 2000s, however, the neoliberal school's views on the European security architecture and its institutions have changed significantly. The neoliberals put OSCE in the center of the European security order. For example, the draft of a European security treaty (EST) proposed by then-President Dmitry Medvedev (November 2009) was obviously inspired by the neoliberal/globalist idea of a "Greater Europe," lasting "from the Atlantic Ocean to the Urals." The EST draft outlined the contours of a new European security architecture and proposed the idea of a special security treaty of a binding nature.⁵¹

Presently, the neoliberal school's attitude towards the OSCE is rather contradictory. On the one hand, the neoliberals are quite critical about the role of this organization in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, including the Georgian (2008) and Ukrainian (from 2014 to the present) ones. The Russian neoliberal analysts believe that the OSCE was often too slow and indecisive, its capacities and mandates were too limited, and its implementation process was inefficient. As for the conflict in the Ukrainian southeast, the neoliberals often accused the OSCE special monitoring mission to Ukraine of being biased in favor of Kiev.

But neoliberals still hope to use the OSCE for solving existing problems, including the conflict in and around Ukraine. For that purpose, some neoliberal experts suggested a number of improvements:

- To transform OSCE into a full-fledged treaty-based regional organization under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter
- To approve a Convention on the International Legal Personality, Legal Capacity, and Privileges and Immunities of the OSCE that was finalized in 2007 but has not been signed to date
- To expand the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center's powers regarding conflict monitoring and early conflict prevention
- To resume the pan-European dialogue on conventional arms control within the framework of the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation
- To revive discussions within the OSCE on the modernization of the Vienna Document on confidence and security-building measures

However, in the current situation of high tensions between Russia and the Western OSCE member-states, this initiative can hardly be implemented. As far as the global security regime is concerned, the Russian neoliberals are anxious about the decreasing role of international organizations and international law and the rise of unilateralism in the aftermath of 9/11.⁵² At the same time, they still believe that a broad consensus in the international community over concepts of justice is necessary to solve most global problems, like the negative consequences of climate change or fighting the pandemic.⁵³

There was a split among the neoliberals on the nature of the emerging world order. Some liberals insisted that Russia should aim to restore the crucial role of international organizations and law in world affairs. Another group of neoliberals is close to the realist camp, suggesting a switch from traditional international organizations to more flexible and informal institutions (such as the G-7/8) and the "concert of powers" model.⁵⁴ They hope this could help prevent the complete collapse of the world order and keep the chaos of international politics in a

manageable phase. In efforts to create regional balances, neoliberals see additional instruments to achieve a more stable world system. For example, balance in Europe is possible in the case of resolving the Ukrainian crisis. Prior to 2022, the neoliberals believed that recognition of Crimea as a part of Russia by the West and the reintegration of Donbass to Ukraine on the basis of Minsk agreements were possible.⁵⁵

To sum up, although neoliberals are unable to dominate or even influence Russian IR discourse significantly, they play a useful role by challenging neorealism and providing these schools with an intellectual alternative.

Globalism

In terms of a theoretical vision of the present-day world, the Russian globalist paradigm emphasizes the study of the universal historical laws that govern humankind's development. The globalists believe that globalization is an inevitable and objective process, although sometimes it takes uneven and discriminatory forms. Its primary objective is the creation of a homogenous global society that will create safe and comfortable conditions for the whole of humankind. To guarantee that globalization develops in a proper way, global governance should be established and further developed.

The Russian globalist IR paradigm consists of several schools. First of all, there are two main versions of Marxist-inspired political thought in Russia. The first is a more traditional one and is exemplified by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), led by Gennady Zyuganov. The second one is close to social democracy and has been developed by certain organizations and authors such as the Gorbachev Fund, Alexander Yakovlev, and Dmitri Furman. The former group can be called traditionalists, while the latter can be termed Social Democrats.

Traditionalists. The Communists have been unable to reconcile themselves to the demise of the Soviet Union and to the country's loss of great power status. They believe that Gorbachev and Yeltsin led the USSR to defeat in the Cold War and finally to its collapse. These two leaders are, in fact, regarded as national traitors.⁵⁶ As some pro-Communist experts have suggested, in the search for a national security doctrine, Russia should choose between two alternatives: the domination of national-state interests over cosmopolitan ones and Russia's independent position in the international relations system or an orientation towards "Western values and the joining to a 'community of civilized countries.'" ⁵⁷ The CPRF opts for the first alternative. The Communists explained their position by the general nature of relations between Russia and the West. According to their assessments, the aim of the United States is to undermine Russia's economic, scientific-technical, and military capabilities and also to isolate Moscow from promising trade partners and markets (in particular, in areas such as advanced technologies and arms trade). The West's motive for doing so, it has been argued, is to hopefully prevent Russia's transformation into a potential rival⁵⁸.

Similarly to the neorealists, the Communists emphasize the invariable nature of the country's national interests, which do not depend on a concrete regime or dominant ideology. They believe that the main Russian national interest inherited from its history consists of preserving the country's territorial and spiritual integrity. The idea of a powerful state based on multi-ethnicity is the equivalent of the Russian national idea. Thus, the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the weakening of the Russian state have undermined Russian security and worsened its geostrategic position. The Communists believe that Russia is not part of the West or of the East. It should define its own, independent way. But they understand the term *independent way* differently from the more radical *special path*, seeing both Russian and world history as the result

of objective processes rather than messianic ideas. However, they acknowledge the need for a national ideal or doctrine that could consolidate Russian society.⁵⁹

According to traditionalists, some global developments could challenge Russian national security:

- Resurgent powers that aim at changing their regional and global status (Germany, Japan, China, India, Brazil, South Africa)
- The rise of regionalism in the world (such as the EU, NAFTA, ASEAN), which could potentially increase Russia's isolation
- The aggravation of global social, economic, and environmental problems
- A decrease in the significance of nuclear deterrent force and the rise of unstable regional alliances with high conflict potential⁶⁰

Some measures on global and regional levels could contribute to a more favor strategic environment for Russia. The UN is considered the leading organization in peacekeeping and solving international conflicts; that should be strengthened. At the same time, Communists opposed the idea of the expansion of UN Security Council membership. They criticized attempts to replace the OSCE with NATO as the principal security organization in Europe and called for improving security regimes on the principles of equality and reciprocity.

Speaking on regional security priorities – again, similarly to the neorealists – traditionalists regard the CIS and “near abroad” as the first priority for Moscow’s foreign policy. As they believe that the Soviet Union has been dissolved illegally, the Communists have tried to foster the reunification of the former Soviet republics. Even so, they have ruled out the use of force to restore the USSR.⁶¹ The Communists put pressure on the Yeltsin government to protect Russian minorities abroad.

As for Europe, the CPRF has pointed out that NATO’s eastward expansion violates the balance in a number of ways. The enlargement inevitably destroys the existing “security buffer” between Russia and NATO. It also brings NATO’s military presence to Russia’s borders, including military bases and probably nuclear weaponry. They predicted that NATO extension may provoke a Russian military build-up on its western and northwestern borders and accelerate the creation of a military alliance within the CIS while resuming the confrontation between the East and the West on a military bloc basis.⁶²

The Communists actively pressed the Kremlin through their faction in the parliament, opposing any contact with NATO after bombing Serbia in 1999 and the Kosovo intervention. They did not stop criticizing the Kremlin for its “appeasement policies” with regard to NATO. For example, they heavily criticized the Putin administration for “swallowing” the 2004 round of NATO’s eastward expansion that included three post-Soviet republics.⁶³

As for other regions, the Communists have proposed restoring Russia’s links with its traditional friends and allies such as Iraq, Libya, North Korea, and Cuba.⁶⁴ This could prevent America’s unchallenged worldwide leadership and provide Russia with profitable orders for its troubled arms industry. They have accepted *detente* in Sino-Russian relations as well as an active arms export policy in the region because it strengthens Russia’s international authority and supports the defense industry. Many leaders of the CPRF are fascinated with the Chinese model of socialism and believe that Gorbachev should have used the PRC’s experience to reform the Soviet Union. At the same time, the CPRF is concerned with the future security orientation of China and the correlation of forces in the Asia-Pacific area, which is turning out to be quite unfavorable for Russia.⁶⁵

The CPRF has strongly supported President Putin's 2014 decision to reintegrate Crimea into Russia and support the Donbass rebels. They also supported the Kremlin in its military intervention in the Syrian conflict.⁶⁶ The Communists, however, noted that these moves should be made in a more decisive way, regardless of the Western opinion. For this reason, they fully supported Putin's special military operation in Ukraine in 2022.

It should be noted that, unlike in the domestic sphere, the CPRF has failed to produce any coherent and clearly pronounced foreign policy doctrine. Instead, it has operated with an amalgam of the party leadership's statements and remarks, which have made it difficult to reconstruct the CPRF's foreign policy platform. Despite its significant domestic influence, the CPRF has, in fact, been unable to influence the Russian discourse on IR theory.

Social Democrats. After his resignation in December 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev and his allies Aleksandr Yakovlev and Georgi Shakhnazarov committed themselves to the creation of a social-democratic movement in Russia to confront the Communist coalition. The Gorbachev Fund and the journal *Svobodnaya Mysl* [Free Thought] became the most important pillars of the emerging social democracy in Russia. Although the Social Democrats failed to form any influential political coalition, they produced some foreign policy concepts that affected the Russian IR discourse. For example, the Social Democrats have contributed to the Russian discussion of national interests. Contrary to the Gorbachev doctrine of the 1980s, which was grounded in the unconditional priority of "all-human" interests over national interests, the Social Democrats have admitted that national interests are the subject of primary concern for any country. They define national interests as a manifestation of the nation's basic needs (survival, security, progressive development).⁶⁷ National interests may be subjective in terms of their form or way of expression, but they are definitely objective in terms of their nature.

The Social Democrats, however, do not limit themselves to the acknowledgement of the significance of national interests. They believe that, in an interdependent world, international actors cannot afford to solely pursue their own interests. Since the international environment has become multidimensional, the actors should take into account both the national interests of other players and universal (all-human) interests. According to the Social Democrats, narrow-minded nationalism is absolutely outdated and detrimental not only to the world community but, in the end, also to a nation conducting a nationalist policy.⁶⁸

The Social Democrats regard the creation of a global civil society as the only way of replacing national interests with "all-human" values. In their view, a world civil society could be based on a system of horizontal links between both intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with economic, political, environmental, and cultural issues. Some experts have proposed the creation of a world government to resolve global problems and to save humankind from imminent catastrophe.⁶⁹ Thus, the Kantian project of "perpetual peace" – the methodological basis of the Gorbachevian New Political Thinking (NPT) – could be put into practice.

Along with other IR schools, the Social Democrats perceive the world as moving from a unipolar (the United States as the only superpower) towards a multipolar structure. None of the countries or ideologies will be able to impose their model on the others. The Social Democrats disagree with Fukuyama's (1992) thesis on the worldwide domination of the liberal-democratic model. Various civilizational models will compete in the foreseeable future. A future world will be born out of the interaction of two contradictory processes – integration and regionalization. The future poles of power will emerge on the basis of economic, religious, and cultural differentiation.⁷⁰

In discussions about Russian identity, the Social Democrats stress that Russia is part of Europe, and Russians are part of the European nation.⁷¹ For that reason, Russia should aim at entering pan-European economic, political, and security structures. "Europe" is also defined in

a civilizational rather than geographical sense: the Gorbachevian project of a Common European House or "Europe from Vancouver to Vladivostok" is still popular among the Russian Social Democrats.⁷²

The Social Democrats have proposed a model of "multidimensional partnership" that is directed at cooperation with the major players of the world, regardless of their geographical location. According to this model, Russia's policy should not be based on geopolitical choice but rather should be oriented towards establishing long-term and stable bilateral relations as well as promoting multilateralism.⁷³ However, it remains unclear which methods should be used to create such relations and how to convince other powers to accept this model.

To sum up, the social-democratic foreign policy doctrine has taken over many concepts and principles of Gorbachev's NPT, but the latter was complemented with some advocacy of Russia's national interests and balanced policies towards the East and the West.

The environmentalists. The environmentalist version of Russian globalism was one of the first that redefined the concept of security in the post-Soviet period.⁷⁴ Adepts in this school suggested that, contrary to military or geopolitical threats, which are mainly hypothetical, ecology directly affects the nation's economy, health, and climate. Under the pressure of environmentalism, nearly all leading schools of foreign policy thought included an ecological dimension in their concepts of security. A special section on ecological security was put into the National Security Concepts of the Russian Federation of 1997.⁷⁵ Environmentalists believe that Russia, along with other states, should develop new thinking based on a common interest in survival in the face of global problems.⁷⁶

Environmentalists are quite radical in their recommendations regarding solutions to global problems. They recommend the dissolution of political boundaries and a de-ideologizing of international relations (of course, except for environmentalism itself). In order to cope with ecological problems, they say that humankind should be able to forecast both the near and distant future. Since only scientists are able to make good forecasts, this stratum should be elevated to the very top of society and charged with political management as well. National and international economies should be based on new technologies targeted at the rational exploitation of natural resources. Rather than public and private properties, cooperative property will be the best form of ownership to deal with environmental issues. Furthermore, transnational rather than national bodies should be in charge of global problems as nation-states are unable to cope with them any longer⁷⁷.

According to the environmentalists, managing ecological problems is merely the first step in humankind's progressive development. The main objective looming ahead is to move from a program of survival to one of sustainable development. The latter can be described as a social order based on harmonious relations with nature and the prevention of major internal and external threats to stability and social well-being.⁷⁸

It goes without saying that these ideas are by no means original. Russian environmentalists have borrowed many of them from their foreign "colleagues." The Rome Club papers, the Brundtland Commission report, and the ideas of Bertrand Russell are among the most authoritative theoretical sources for the Russian ecologists.⁷⁹ However, the environmentalists have been less successful in their attempts to influence Russian discourse on future security challenges. Russian foreign policymakers and analysts regard this part of environmentalists' problematique an exotic intellectual exercise, hardly relevant to present-day Russia. They are concerned with Russia's compelling needs (including some ecological issues) rather than with challenges in the distant future. However, this situation may change if Russia is able to resolve its most acute social and economic problems and, hence, is more able to pay attention to ecology.

Peace research school (PRS). Methodologically, PRS is based on Johan Galtung's⁸⁰ theory of structural violence. This school tries to explain that violence is deeply embedded in both the society and the international relations system. For PRS adepts, the structural violence is a socio-political phenomenon rooted in the capitalist society and economy. They believe that the forms of contemporary exploitation are not essentially different from those depicted by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Lenin.

Along with the structural violence, its cultural variation is becoming a popular theme in Russian peace research. They note that the so-called "color" revolutions in the post-Soviet space and Arab countries were often facilitated by the West, with the help of public diplomacy based on the cultivation of liberal/democratic values among the local youth and political opposition. For this school, cultural violence can be even more dangerous than other forms of violence because it not only reinforces other "angles" of the "conflict triangle,"⁸¹ but it can also have long-term negative and unexpected effects.⁸²

The PRS notes that, in general usage, "peace" conveys the notion of "the absence of war" and not a particular ideal condition of society. According to Galtung, peace seen merely as the absence of war is considered to be "negative peace," and the concept of "positive peace" should be used to describe a situation in which there is neither physical violence nor legalized repression. Under conditions of positive peace, war is unanticipated. A state of positive peace involves large elements of reciprocity, equality, and joint problem-solving capabilities. There have been many different proposals for the positive definitions – integration, justice, harmony, etc. – all of which call for further conceptualization. Analytically, peace is conceptualized by the Russian scholars in a series of discrete categories ranging from various degrees and states of conflict to various states of cooperation and integration.⁸³ The dominant trend in Russian PRS research is to interpret peace as synonymous with the category of sustainable development.⁸⁴ Some scholars believe that "positive" peace can be seen as a sort of a social order in which not only are major security threats absent, but the favorable conditions for human creativity are also provided.⁸⁵

The PRS's positions on conflict resolution and mediation (CRM) offer a broader understanding of conflict than the other IR paradigms. The PRS approach is based on the assumption that conflicts are a natural product of various contradictory processes in society. The PRS does not reduce the causes of conflict to the legal ones (as the neoliberals do) but additionally identify the economic, social, identity, political, military, environmental, cultural, ideological, religious, and other factors.⁸⁶

The PRS does not limit CRM methods and techniques to legal instruments and procedures. This school believes that to resolve a conflict and preclude its re-emergence, its causes should be first eliminated. Consequently, the CRM arsenal is broader, including the "legalists" (negotiations; cease-fire, truce, and peace agreements; peacekeeping and peace enforcement mechanisms; etc.) and post-conflict peace building and development that envisage a radical transformation of the society and its institutions with the aim of eradicating the causes of the conflict.⁸⁷

To prevent new conflicts, the PRS suggests creating an early warning/monitoring mechanism. The latter should be based on a system of indicators that monitor dangerous developments and identify conflict-prone areas. The PRS believes that conflicts can be resolved and lasting peace is possible if not only governments but also societies talk to each other and develop horizontal contacts. That's why peace researchers welcome the active participation of non-state actors in CRM activities: people-to-people, NGO-to-NGO, company-to-company contacts, the so-called "people's" or "civil diplomacy."⁸⁸

Despite its marginal positions in the Russian IR community, the PRS continues to provide Russian scholarship with innovative insights into basic IR issues such as causes of war and conflict, nature, sources and manifestations of violence, essences and ways of achieving both

"negative" and "positive" peace, transformation of the international relations system in the post-Cold War era, and so on.⁸⁹ This type of research continues to challenge Russia's predominant IR paradigms, thus forcing them to develop their concepts, argumentation, and research techniques.

Conclusion

It should be noted that despite significant theoretical differences between the three Russian "classic" IR paradigms, all of them maintain an intensive and rather fruitful dialogue with each other. Moreover, from a holistic point of view, they often complement, rather than contradicting or excluding each other, making the Russian IR landscape more diverse and richer.

The current state of affairs in Russian IR can be described as follows:

- Neorealism has become a dominant IR paradigm in Russia over the last 25 to 30 years.
- Most of the Russian IR schools give a priority to the protection of Russian national interests; the secondary role is awarded to "all-human" or global values.
- Again, many Russian foreign policy schools agree that Russia should remain a great power with a major voice in the international community.
- Other goals should not be given priority in Russia's foreign policy over the country's domestic needs. Foreign policy should serve these needs rather than being a goal in itself (as it often was in Soviet times).
- Russia's main national interest consists of ensuring the country's security and territorial integrity.
- Today, world security includes not only military and geopolitical but also societal, environmental, cultural, and other dimensions vital to the individual and society.
- Russia should not be biased in favor of either the West or the East. Instead, its policy should be even handed and oriented to cooperation with all countries.
- Among Moscow's regional priorities, the "near abroad" is the most important one. Russia has special geopolitical, strategic, economic, and humanitarian interests in the post-Soviet geopolitical space and should be recognized as an unchallenged leader in this area.
- Russia should resist the rise of US unilateralism but, at the same time, if possible, maintain a cooperative US-Russia agenda on issues such as fighting international terrorism, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms control, and disarmament.
- Russia should be more assertive in voicing its specific interests in relations with the West. It should not hesitate to differ with Western views if Russia's vital interests are at stake.
- Moscow should be more realistic in assessing the West's attitudes towards Russia – in particular, its position on Russia's admission to Western economic, political, and military institutions.

This intellectual consensus has made it possible to produce a number of governmental concepts and doctrines such as the foreign policy concepts, military doctrines, and national security concepts/strategies.

It should be noted, however, that a consensus has been reached on those issues mainly dealing with Russia's immediate security needs. While many schools are able to identify threats to the country's security, they are still not ready to go beyond negativism and construct a positive security concept for the future.

Russian IR schools continue to differ on many important theoretical and practical issues: the meaning of Russia's national interests and security; the correlation between "hard" and "soft"

security; the future of national sovereignty; the role of international organizations in ensuring national and international security; civilizational orientations; the use of military force in international relations; functional and regional priorities; particular ethnic, religious, and territorial conflicts; and so on.

The Russian IR discourse still aims at responding to the fundamental question: What is Russia about? This discourse is a way towards nation building rather than defining the country's future foreign policy and security agenda. This is hardly surprising, given Russia's newly born polity, culture, and even boundaries, as well as its unfinished reforms. It is understandable why fairly old-fashioned approaches such as Eurasianism, realism, and geopolitics could come to dominate Russian security debates. As these concepts refer to national interest, national security, national sovereignty, and territory, they seem a reliable theoretical basis for searching for a national identity.

Russian and other countries' experience shows that these concepts may provide both society and the political elites with some intellectual support for building a foreign policy consensus. However, as the country departs modernity and faces the challenges of postmodernity, many quasi-reliable paradigms (including realism/geopolitics) do not work.

What can easily be predicted, however, is that Russian IR debates will not stop with the reaching of a consensus on a neorealist basis. That is the starting point rather than the end of these debates. With the achievement of a certain level of socio-economic and political stability, as well as a more favorable international environment, new concepts with an emphasis on human and societal security will likely challenge collectivist and state- or nation-oriented theories. The entire landscape of the Russian IR discourse will be even more diverse in the years to come. Plurality rather than unification and consensus building will probably become the main characteristic of this discourse. A completely different set of priorities could be the focus of future IR debates: ensuring domestic stability and territorial integrity and preventing the rise of hostile powers and alliances may be replaced by concerns such as the environment, mass disease, international terrorism and narco-business, migration, the increasing vulnerability of economic and information networks, and so on.

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