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A Sociology of Dependence in International Relations Theory: A Case of Russian Liberal IR

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This article addresses the question of interaction between Western and “non-Western” international relations (IR) by analyzing liberal theory of IR that is emerging in contemporary Russia. We argue that, despite a growing diversity within Russian scholarship of liberal orientation, it remains largely a product of Western, particularly American, intellectual hegemony, and more so than any other theoretical perspective. As compared to two other existing traditions in Russian IR—realism and critical studies—liberalism remains the most dependent and therefore must be explored before any other traditions as a crucial case for understanding the dialectic of cultural dependence and hegemony in production of global knowledge. We argue that the greater dependence of Russian liberal IR results from its relatively weak indigenous tradition, perception of Russia’s material weakness as opportunity, and greater availability of Western research funds. We also discuss an alternative, less dependent version of Russian liberal IR, and opportunities that its existence implies for development of a global, de-centered international relations theory.

Scholars do not like to think about their intellectual dependence on the status of their country, and on ambitions of its political elites; it disturbs their sense of belonging to a cosmopolitan, free-floating community of science ... And yet, the link exists. And it is sometimes reinforced by institutional arrangements.
Stanley Hoffmann (1995: 225)

Western scholars can improve their understanding of the world by studying international relations (IR) as a discipline outside the West. For a long time, international relations have been developing as an excessively West-centric and pro-Western branch of research. As many scholars pointed out, IR all too often reflects political, ideological, and epistemological biases of Western, particularly American, civilization.¹ As a result, a perception has arisen throughout the world

¹For various analyses of international relations as a discipline that is ethnocentric and reflects American/Western civilizational biases, see Hoffmann 1995 [1977]; Alker and Biersteker 1984; Holsti 1985; Inayatullah and Blaney 1996; Weaver 1998; Crawford and Jarvis 2001; Tickner 2003). The ethnocentrism, of course, may be just as widespread in non-Western cultural contexts—Russian, Chinese, Iranian, and others—the issue that still awaits its researchers.

that Western IR—and Western social science in general—is nothing but a sophisticated ideology and a set of conceptual tools that serve to justify Western global hegemony. In various parts of the globe, West-centered world-order studies have often been perceived as unable to promote a just and a stable international system because of their exclusively Western orientations and a lack of empathetic understanding of other cultures. Some scholars have argued that rather than promoting the dialogue necessary for finding an appropriate international system, these projects contribute to further isolationism and hostility among international actors (Rajaei 2000; Tsygankov 2004).

If we are to move toward international studies as a more global and less ethnocentric discipline, we ought to begin taking local knowledge far more seriously than we have until recently. By exploring indigenous analytical impulses and perceptions, we may invite a dialogue across the globe and therefore enrich our knowledge about the world. This article tackles the question of interaction between Western and “non-Western” IR by analyzing liberal theory of international relations that is emerging in contemporary Russia. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union and its officially sanctioned “Marxist” social science, Russian scholars have been making intellectual headway in attempting to adjust to new realities.² Nevertheless, as this article will argue, Russian liberal perspective on international relations³ has developed a pattern of intellectual dependence on the Western liberal IR. Although there is growing diversity within the Russian scholarship of liberal orientation, liberalism in Russia’s international studies remains largely a product of Western, particularly American, intellectual hegemony, and more so than any other theoretical perspective. This explains why we have chosen Russian liberalism for closer investigation. Being the most dependent consumer of the mainstream American international relations theory, Russian liberal IR represents a crucial case for understanding the dialectic of cultural dependence and hegemony in production of knowledge. As compared to two other existing intellectual traditions in Russian international relations—realism and critical/neo-Marxist studies—liberalism therefore must be explored before any other traditions.

We advance a sociological explanation of dependence of Russian liberal IR by arguing that such state of affairs is a function of three inter-related and mutually reinforcing factors: ideas, power, and institutions. To advance the argument, we first review scholarship on hegemony and dependence in international relations theory (section 2). We then demonstrate the dependent nature of dominant approaches within Russian liberal IR by analyzing some of its prominent theories and implications they carry for national policymaking. We then compare liberal theories with those of realist and critical tradition, and argue that the greater dependence of the former results from weak indigenous tradition, perception of Russia’s material weakness as opportunity, and greater availability of Western research funds. The concluding section discusses an alternative, less dependent version of Russian liberal IR, and opportunities its existence implies for development of global, decentered international relations theory.

Hegemony, Dependence, and Cultural Turn in IR Theory

Scholars with interests in culture have long argued that international relations ought not be viewed as a product of Western discourse alone—such an approach

²On Russian emerging discipline of international studies, see Sergounin 2000; Bogaturov, Kosolapov, and Khrustalev 2002; Shakleyina 2002; Tsygankov 2002; Lebedeva 2003, 2004a; Torkunov 2004; Kokoshin and Bogaturov 2005; Tsygankov and Tsygankov 2004a, 2006.

³In this article, we focus on liberalism as a branch within Russia’s newly emerging international relations discipline, rather than as a political ideology influential in national domestic and foreign policy discussions.

would reflect a status quo bias and deprive us of the same transformative logic that John Ruggie (1983) found missing in static neorealist thinking. Over time, a number of scholars have issued a strong challenge to Western intellectual hegemony in international studies. Critics of modernization theory revealed its unilinear and progressive pro-Western bias (Wiarda 1981; Oren 2000). “Non-Western” feminists scrutinized ethnocentric assumptions common in Western feminist scholarship (Oyewumi 1997; Mohanty 2002). Scholars of world order projects argued that such projects are complex visualizations of Self in its interaction with significant Other(s) and that each world order project is best viewed as dialectical and multicultural, with a diversity of ideas and social visions coexisting and often competing for influence (Alker, Amin, Biersteker, and Inoguchi 1998). More recently, scholars in the area of critical geopolitics analyzed cultures and civilizations defining them as processes of relating to various meaningful environment (Cox 1995; Jackson 1999; O’Hagan 2002; Tsygankov 2007). In their own way, each of these research groups has demonstrated multiplicity of visions and ideas allowing a considerable room for engagement with IR theories across the globe.

Much of criticism of Western international relations theory as hegemonic and unable to fully account for the Other can be traced to postcolonial approaches (Vitalis 2000; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; Barkawi and Laffey 2006; Jones 2006). Much like modernization theory that historically assisted the state in justifying its colonial practices, theory of international relations offers no reciprocal engagement with the Other and merely expects the Other to follow the West’s lead. Western IR theory allows little conceptual space for “non-Western” theorists treating them as dependent subjects (“subalterns”) and consumers of the already developed knowledge. Taking the Other seriously or engaging in a dialogue with it means committing to assumptions of the Other’s equality to the Self in terms of defining parameters and boundaries of knowledge. On the other hand, ethnocentric, or excessively pro-Western theories proclaim their commitment to exclusively defined values of their environment and are closed for possible dialogue with and fertilization from the external environment. Such theories assume superiority of the Self and its moral community, and inferiority of the Other thereby justifying the legitimacy of hegemonic actions toward the Other. The authors of ethnocentric ideas are willing to promote their visions outside their social universe because they are firmly committed to their concept of “virtue” and “good.” Postcolonial scholarship argues that, in contrast to ethnocentrism, production of a more global knowledge requires defining the Self and its moral values as something open to negotiation, rather than absolute, exclusive, and essentialist; and viewing the Other as different, but morally equal and, for that reason, as a source of potential learning. In practical terms, such approach would promote negotiations to establish mutually acceptable norms and reduce space for hegemonic actions. Table 1 summarizes the content of hegemonic theories by comparing them to those that are culturally sensitive.

These biases hidden in hegemonic international relations theories reveal themselves in multiple research agendas. To illustrate this point, let us briefly consider the “democratic peace” debate in the discipline (the list can certainly

TABLE 1 The Content of Hegemonic and Culturally Sensitive Theories

	<i>Hegemonic theories</i>	<i>Culturally sensitive theories</i>
Self	Morally superior Defined in exclusive terms	Open to (re)negotiation Inclusive
Other	Morally inferior	Equal in moral capacities, a source of potential learning
Self vs. Other	Promote Self’s values/interests	Negotiate mutually acceptable values

be continued and extended beyond Western International Relations). Proponents of the democratic peace argument⁴ are often perceived as demonstrating a pro-Western hegemonic agenda. One critique has been that the democratic peace claim is a historical and reflects American values of what is “democratic” and that those values themselves have been shaped by the United States’ perception of external threats (Oren 1995, 2002). Another critique has pointed out that social structures, in which democratic orders take root, may vary considerably. In some cases, such social structures are far from conducive to promoting peace and stability. For example, in the postcommunist context, democratization may be accompanied by state weakness thereby becoming a permissive condition allowing the re-emergence and the rise of a previously dormant militant ethnic nationalism. As a result, not only do some of the newly established democracies go to war against each other, but also they may do so in part as a result of their moving away from authoritarianism (MacFarlane 1997; Mansfield and Snyder 2007). The discovered “law” of democratic peace then bears an excessive imprint of the Western culture, and by insisting on its universal applicability, the theory contributes to the hegemony/dependence relationships in the global context.

Russian Liberal IR—a Discourse of Dependence on the West

Russian liberal IR theory remains heavily shaped by Western approaches. Although there are deep divisions and disagreements within Russian liberalism (Tsygankov and Tsygankov 2004b), those who favor following American theories enjoy a position of a considerable dominance. In international relations theory, this position of dominance means that overwhelming majority of conceptual tools gets borrowed from Western, particularly American, colleagues without their appropriate rethinking to fit the local realities.⁵ In practical terms, such intellectual dependence often implies these theories’ inability to account for Russia’s own interests which at times is accompanied by policy recommendations insensitive to needs of the state and its people. This section offers a brief review of Russian dominant liberal IR theories in the context of their theoretical status and implications for national policy.

Secondary Nature of Russian Liberal Concepts

The Soviet disintegration has ended the dominance of the official Marxism and created conditions for greater openness and interaction with ideas and theories developed in the West. As healthy as the process of intellectual pluralization has been for growth of social science, it came with a threat of subverting indigenous impulses of epistemological development. As the prominent Russian scholar Aleksei Bogaturov (2000) wrote, many scholars actively embarked on learning Western theories and methodological apparatus, but often failed to go much beyond attempting to fit local realities into what is often a straightjacket of alien theoretical concepts. Another scholar (Konyshchev 2007:20) observed that loss of Marxism’s dominance in social sciences created a theoretical vacuum which was rapidly filled by uncritical acceptance of Western, particularly American, ideas. Accompanied by insufficient attention to political processes in Russia, this state of international studies may inhibit development of indigenous thought. Kalevi Holsti (1985) once expressed the concern that some intellectual movements outside the mainstream may be able to erode the foundations of the discipline of international relations and obstruct its further development. If this concern has

⁴For a summary of the debate, see Brown, Lynn-Jones, and Miller 1996.

⁵On pervasive influence of American IR theories on Russian international studies, see also Lebedeva 2004a:276; Konyshchev 2007:20.

any merit in the Western context of a well-established tradition of IR theory, then it is even more applicable to Russia that is only beginning to establish its discipline of international studies.

The concepts and theories that seem dominant in Russian liberal IR are the same concept and theories that are well familiar to Western, particularly American, academic audience. What makes Russian liberal IR dependent, however, is not the fact that each of these theories was first developed in the West. Rather, it is that they are not received critically and with appropriate rethinking of how they might fit local realities. For the purpose of illustrating the point, it might be sufficient to briefly review status of some prominent theories in Russian liberal IR—democratic peace, international institutions and norms, transnational civil society, and economic globalization (the list, of course, can be continued). Each of these theories has been introduced in the Russian context without sufficiently broad cultural reinterpretation that is required for adaptation to local realities.

Democratic peace theory in the Russian IR⁶ repeats some of the points that have already been made in the American literature and that emphasize existence of domestic constraints on waging wars by Western liberal states and a peaceful way of resolving disputes among them. Some representatives of the theory insist that Russia too would do well to adopt standards of Western pluralistic democracy if it wants to be peaceful and “civilized” even if this means to grant the right to use force to the only superpower in the world, the United States (Kremenyuk 2004). There is little reflection among these scholars on the nature of democracy or Russia’s social conditions and their compatibility with those of Western liberal democracies.⁷ Russian scholars of democratic peace rely in their research on Western ratings of democracy, such as the one produced by Freedom House, and they justifying their choice of Freedom House as the “only one currently available instrument of quantitative measurement of political regimes’ characteristics” (Kulagin 2004:116). Democracy is understood to be a West-centered universal phenomenon, and cultural, historic and political foundations of its emergence and consolidation stay out of analysis. Yet these foundations differ considerably outside the West which may lead to diversity of democratic systems within the non-Western world. Even within individual Western nations forms of democracy and its very definition may change quite radically.⁸ Nor do Russian scholars of democratic peace scrutinize the notion of peace which is typically associated with the absence of war between states, not with the avoidance of social and economic violence. North and South continue to differ in defining democracy and peace, which may help to account for the theory’s frequent perception in the South as a justification of American imperialism.⁹ It follows that these members of Russian liberal IR readily accept their dependence on intellectual and even political agenda of the United States and other Western states.

Russian liberal scholars of international institutions and transnational civil society too offer little of analysis of their historical, cultural, and political conditions. Not infrequently, liberals treat the world’s institutional development as predominantly West-centered. They describe the emerging world as “democratic unipolarity” (Kulagin 2002) implying its Western origins, and they believe that

⁶For a sample of representative work, see Davydov 1999; Kulagin 2002, 2003; Kremenyuk 2004.

⁷Outside the democratic peace scholars, such reflections do exist. See, for example, Kapustin 2001; Torkunov 2006; Volodin 2006.

⁸Ido Oren (2002) showed, for example, that definition of democracy within the United States has changed dramatically at least twice over the twentieth century—from a good governance under Woodrow Wilson to fighting poverty under the great depression and to elections and pluralistic institutions in the 1960s. On contested meaning of democracy in the United States, see also Foner 1998.

⁹On the North-South division in viewing democratic peace, see Tickner 2001: 103.

“[Francis] Fukuyama and [Robert] Heilbrunner were basically correct in arguing the ‘end of history’ thesis which implied the absence of a viable alternative to Western liberalism” (Shevtsova 2001). This group has no quarrels with accepting the hegemonic role given to the West, particularly the United States, to regulate and secure the contemporary world order. In words of Victor Kremenyuk (2006), an “emergence of the only superpower, which took upon itself the responsibility to maintain world order, played a positive role in the formation of world society ... In many ways, it is the unipolar system that was able to control anarchical elements in international relations and made the rule of law more effective.” Other scholars envision the world in which nonstate actors, movements and networks are at least as powerful as states in shaping the contemporary world order (Barabanov 2002:45–46, 49–50), which these scholars view as a challenge to the very nature of great powers-based international system. During 2004–2005, the Russia’s leading international relations journal *Mezhdunarodnyye protsessy* (International Trends) has organized a discussion, which sought to clarify concepts of international relations and world politics, the latter being reserved by some participants for capturing the growing diversity of nonstate actors.¹⁰ Consistently with the West-centered view of the world, Russian liberals also argue that nonstate ties and interactions are especially developed within the area of Western economically developed and democratic nations, and weak outside the area of Western democracies. This is why the region of the most economically developed nations “remains the center of the global civil society” (Baluyev 2007).

Benefits of the world in which Western power and institutions dominate have been widely disputed including among Western liberals. For instance, some of them (Held 1995, 2000; Linklater 1998) have been critical of the traditional West-centered world arguing the emergence of new structures and institutions of governance at the supranational and transnational level and calling for radical global democratization transcending the currently existing system of nation states. Arguably, even this radically new vision may not be sufficiently sensitive to various local communities with their “bottom up” perspectives of the world (Dallmayr 1999). Yet many Russian liberals rarely question benefits of the West-centered world. Instead, they tend to lay the blame on Russia’s leadership, its unwillingness to relinquish the great power ambitions and its inability to successfully “adjust” to the global world. In their mind, there exist only two fundamental paths—pro-Western and great power nationalistic one. Accustomed to viewing reality in terms of dichotomies, they followed the line of some Western analysts insisting that if Russia is not a Western-style democracy, then it must be an empire¹¹ or if it is a great power, then it must be an anti-Western one (See, for example, Shevtsova 2003:173–176). Or, as the above-cited author (Kremenyuk 2006) put it, Russia that is trying to resist the power of the U.S.-based unipolar order can only be viewed as located “outside the world society.”

Finally, Russian liberal scholars are hardly imaginative when it comes to analysis of economic globalization and its social and political impacts—surprisingly so given that the Russia of the 1990s has gone through a most devastating depression in its history and therefore was hardly a theory’s successful testing ground. In line with arguments of such champions of liberal globalization, as Thomas Friedman (1999, 2005)—and even going further than them—many Russian liberals believe that globalization helps to narrow the gap between North and South

¹⁰Such was the position of Marina Lebedeva (2004b), who initiated the discussion. Lebedeva was then engaged by several other participants, whose presentations have been published by the journal. The materials of the discussion can be found at <http://www.intertrends.ru>.

¹¹For an early statement of this viewpoint, see Brzezinski 1994.

(Shishkov 2003) and that it replaces national interests with those of global civil society. The latter guarantees personal rights and freedoms that are still being suppressed by the state, especially in countries with authoritarian political regimes. Some Russian liberals go as far as to deny the significance of national interests and state sovereignty and to insist that “policy aimed at preserving sovereignty and territorial integrity in a long run has no future” (Pastukhov 2000:95–96; Sheinis 2003:33). Still others, such as Yasin (2004), posit incompatibility of Russian cultural values with economic globalization arguing that “the West possesses the most productive system of values,” associated with Protestantism, whereas “traditional Russian values are in many ways attractive, but overall not very productive” (as cited in Fedorov 2004).

Questionable Policy Implications

Such noncritical adaptation of Western theories in Russia’s context is often accompanied by policy recommendations that, should they be implemented, could only perpetuate Russia’s political dependence on the outside actors. In line with their theoretical convictions, IR liberals have recommended steps that would undermine Russia’s military, economic, and political independence. Russian liberals advocated the nation’s membership in NATO, defended the alliance’s military intervention in Yugoslavia, and even advocated its expansion at the expense of Russia’s traditional sphere of geopolitical interests. Given that NATO remains a military alliance of a formidable power with ample capabilities to present a potential threat, such policy recommendations hardly advance Russia’s security and political standing. In fact, it is hard to imagine any nation advocating expansion to its borders of a military alliance that has been historically hostile and consistently refused to admit Russia as its member.

Russian liberal IR scholars also argued in favor of state withdrawal and surrendering “state sovereignty to transnational corporations and international organizations, as do other civilized countries” (Yasin 2001). This view is based on the teleological and zero sum perspective, according to which globalization and rise of transnational organizations can only mean decline of states and their role in world politics. “The content of world politics is a transition from the system of individual states (the Westphalian system) to the system that will be mostly ruled by supranational and transnational institutions that would regulate interstate relations” (Kremenyuk 2006). It seems logical then, if you are on the liberal side, to trade state attributes for benefits of living in a more globalized world. Some proposed to transfer parts of Russian territory to foreign states—the Kuril Islands to Japan in exchange for economic credits and Kaliningrad to Germany and Scandinavian nations (Shevtsova 2001). Others suggested that Russia would be better off transferring some attributes of sovereignty to large and resource-rich regions in attempting to turn them into the “gates to the global world” (Sergeyev 2001, 230). Still others encouraged Russia to abandon independent foreign policy in favor of a “creative adjustment” to the Western dominance in the world (Trenin 2001). Yet, even though the authors of this kind of recommendations believe that Russia will otherwise be faced with marginalization and degradation (Ryzhov 2001), precisely the opposite might be true: Russia will cease to exist once it surrenders considerable portions of sovereignty, resources, and decision making power to external actors. Recent pressures on Russia to adopt West-friendly energy policies and continue subsidizing some Western-oriented regimes, such as Ukraine and Georgia, accompanied by Washington strategy of regime change in the former Soviet region, indicate the continued significance of geopolitics and great power rivalry. Not giving its due to a geopolitical environment of Russia is not

likely to help the country's transformation and adaptation to realities of a more global world.

Of course, not all Russian liberals are believers in the outlined recommendations and the West-centered vision of the world. Some are quite critical of such vision and advance a more pluralistic interpretation of the world's institutional developments (we elaborate on this point in the last part of the article). Yet, majority offers little of critical engagement with American theories viewing them as the ultimate authority, rather than a starting or an intermediate point in intellectual development. One cannot underestimate the fact that Russia is now wide open to the world's intellectual developments and that each of these theories found its way to the Russian academia. However, for these theories to further contribute to development of Russian IR, it is essential that they are scrutinized in terms of compatibility of their cultural, historical, and political assumptions with those of Russia.

Sociology of Russian Liberal Dependence: Ideas, Power, and Institutions

Not all theories in Russia are as dependent on the Western, particularly American, international relations theories. If the "triangular" approach that divides IR theory into liberalism, realism, and Marxism is applicable to non-Western parts of the world, then a brief look at Russian "realism" and "Marxism" might be necessary to illustrate the point. Russian realists have historically demonstrated a considerable independence of thinking. This is evident in two respects. First, some of their theories predates Western ones and therefore have developed independently of the West. For instance, much of Russia's geopolitical writings goes back to the nineteenth-century thinkers Nikolai Danilevski (1990) [1885] and Constantine Leontyev (2005) [1891], each developing their theories of "cultural-historical types" long before Oswald Spengler and Samuel Huntington developed similar theories in their "Decline of the West" (Spengler 2006 [1921]) and "Clash of Civilizations" (Huntington 1993). Although Russian geopoliticians rely on Western sources, they also continue to work within the national tradition applying insights from the already mentioned late Slavophiles, classic Eurasianists, and Nikolai Gumilev (Solovyev 2004). Second, while borrowing from the West some conceptual tools, realists use them creatively, preserving their intellectual independence. An example is their studies of world order. Although the influence of American realist scholarship on these studies is evident,¹² some of the Russian approaches to world order are more dynamic and include, not unlike the British school tradition, the notions of norms and rules. Keeping their eyes on Russia, Russian realists have also differentiated between various types of unipolar and multipolar world order (Bogaturov 2003; Shakleyina and Bogaturov 2004).

The same points can be made with regard to Russian critical theories of international relations. Beginning with Vladimir Lenin's (1976) [1904] "Imperialism," Russian and Soviet Marxists have developed their own distinct mode of theorizing international relations. Karl Marx and German social democrats' influences on Lenin did not preclude the latter from developing his own highly original theory of international capitalist order and its transformation. Various Western influences on notable Soviet theorists, such as Nikolai Bukharin and Yevgeni Varga, did not make them overly dependent on such influences. Soviet Marxists were also well aware of dangers of intellectual dependence on non-socialist, "bourgeois" thinkers and did everything in their power to develop a

¹²See Konyshev 2004, 2005 for a detailed analysis of the U.S. neorealist scholarship and its influence on Russian academia.

theory of the exploitation of the weaker by the stronger.¹³ Whether or not one is satisfied with Russian realist and critical approaches, they are considerably more culturally independent than those of Russian liberals. As a result, members of realist and critical schools typically demonstrate greater sensitivity to Russia's own interests in world politics and would hardly ever be welcoming of weak foreign policy, erosion of state authority, or expansion of a Western military alliance.

In order to explain Russian liberal IR's greater dependence on Western theories, we apply an explanation that combines several social factors. Following Stanley Hoffmann's (1995) article that exposed a hegemonic nature of American theory of international relations, we suggest focusing on ideas, power, and institutions.

Intellectual dependence of Russian liberalism in international studies can be partly explained by weakness of its indigenous tradition of thinking. At least since the early nineteenth century, Russian liberal thinking has been dominated by the so-called Westernizers who drew their inspiration almost exclusively from the West. They acknowledge Russia's difference from the West, but associate it with the former's backwardness. Westernizers believe in the existence of the single path of mankind's development, unequivocally associating this path with the West and viewing Western politico-economic institutions as the example for Russia and the rest of the world to follow. This extreme philosophy is partly a product of desperation, for unlike realists or Marxists, liberals rarely had a strong influence on Russia's policymakers, and the state historically has been much more sympathetic to the ideas of state sovereignty and economic equality. Those within Russia's liberal circles advocating vitality of national experience and importance of nationally specific democratic reform historically have been a minority.

The identified weakness of indigenous liberal tradition has been particularly revealing in the situation created by the Soviet disintegration. Immediately following the event, Russia's liberals, who finally found themselves in the position of power, pursued policies of extreme Westernization. Rather than attempting to activate domestic intellectual capital, Westernizers in power were eager to integrate with the United States and other Western nations through rapid economic reform and pro-Western foreign policy recommended by advisors in the International Monetary Fund and the White House. In this highly politicized context, the Marxist and realist thinking has been discredited by association with the old Soviet state, and the intellectual vacuum was filled with liberal American ideas. As Stanley Hoffmann (1995:213) wrote in a different context, "the rude intrusion of grand ideology into this realm gave a new lease of life to utopian thinking, and delayed the advent of social science. Not 'how it is, and why,' but 'how things should be improved, reformed, overhauled,' was the order of the day." Russia's new discipline of international relations then, almost inevitably, began its development in the shadow of American theories. Not too surprisingly, perhaps, Francis Fukuyama's thesis of the end of history has been much discussed, and pro-Western liberals in Russia frequently found it appealing (Tsygankov 2004).

No less importantly, Russia's dependent liberalism is a function of the nation's material weakness. The breakup of the state and the impoverished economy were simply not the conditions able to facilitate development of independent discipline of international relations. Under these conditions, societies are more likely

¹³As E. H. Carr observed in 1977, the "study of international relations in English-speaking countries is simply a study of the best way to run the world from positions of strength. The study of international relations in African and Asian universities, if it even got going, would be a study of the exploitation of the weaker by the stronger" (Quoted in Barkawi and Laffey 2006:349).

to eagerly borrow from those more economically and politically advanced, which may further strengthen the situation of cultural dependence. Liberals are traditionally less aware of this danger. Unlike realist scholars, who view the situation of weakness as threatening national survival and prone to international instability, liberals tend to see it as an opportunity for much required reforms.¹⁴ Where realists see excessive foreign influences and a potential to develop a greater dependence on outsiders, liberals see a possibility to learn.

Finally, it is difficult to understand the phenomenon of Russian dependence on American liberal IR without discussing new institutional context presented by the Soviet disintegration. Under the conditions of extremely painful economic reform, the post-Soviet social scientists found themselves lacking even elementary resources at home. The situation of financial crisis has lasted long enough to force many of them out of the profession. Formerly state-supported social scientists scrapped for funds, while new private foundations barely existed. With salaries as low as they have been, those willing to stay in the profession have had to learn how to combine work in academia with outside employment, and many had to work three to four jobs simultaneously. Under the conditions, American agencies funding social science research have played a prominent role in shaping Russia's young international relations discipline. Each such agency—whether it is Ford, MacArthur, Soros, or any other Foundation—has had its own research preferences and operates within its own assumptions and expectations.¹⁵ In attempting to meet these preferences and expectations, Russian scholarships has often reflected American, rather than local, theoretical agendas and policy concerns. Quite often, these concerns and agendas are liberal and shaped by liberal scholarship of international relations in the United States, which made Russian realists and critical theorists less “eligible,” by definition. Although the situation is beginning to change, with more national funds for research established and available for researchers, it has prompted calls to begin studying “the reality with all of its contradictions and to build a theory that would cease to view the local characteristics as deviations from and pathologies of Western models” (Bogaturov 2000, 2002).

Table 2 summarizes our explanation of Russia's liberal cultural dependence relative to a more independent position of the nation's realist tradition of international relations.

¹⁴As Russian economy has recovered—to a large extent, thanks to high energy prices and the ability to benefit from exporting natural resources—Russian liberals became concerned that such resource-driven growth would come at the expense of Westernizing reforms. In response to predictions of Russia's economic weakening in case of a sharp decline in world oil prices, they see such weakness as a force able to push the Kremlin toward necessary modernization and democratization. For instance, Liliya Shevtsova (2007) of Carnegie Moscow Center expressed a typical liberal view that the Kremlin became obsessed with insecurity and control over economic assets, as the situation was growing increasingly unpredictable. As a result, Russia abandoned domestic modernization in favor of becoming a petrostate that “transforms market relations into affairs of state, and economic resources into political tools” (Shevtsova 2007). For similar statements by Russian liberals, see Kasyanov 2006; Milov 2007; Nemtsov 2007; Yavlinski 2007.

¹⁵Most of these funding agencies operate within liberal assumptions. These agencies rarely fund scholarship on geopolitics and national interests, but they offer support to those exploring various obstacles for peace and cooperation in the world. For example, advancing human rights and supporting nonstate organizations remains a key priority of the MacArthur Foundation (for description and a list of individual and collective projects, please see <http://www.macfound.ru/>). Indeed, some high-positioned officers of such foundations combine their work there with that of advancing human rights cause. For instance, the head of the MacArthur Foundation Jonathan Fanton sits on the board of directors of the Human Rights Watch, and he also served as the HRW President in the past (Verlin 2005).

TABLE 2 Explaining Russia's Liberal Dependence: Ideas, Power, and Institutions

	<i>Indigenous intellectual tradition</i>	<i>Perception of material weakness</i>	<i>Availability of foreign funds</i>
Liberal dependence	Weak	Opportunity	More available
Realist independence	Strong	Threat	Less available

Global IR Theory and Alternative Russian Liberalism

The argument pursued in the article does not imply that any liberalism outside the West is culturally dependent and therefore unable to stimulate indigenous development of international studies. Even under existing material and institutional constraints, some members of liberal international relations community manage to articulate national concerns and local realities. In so doing, they attempt to avoid excesses of pro-Western liberals,¹⁶ on the one hand, and geopolitically minded realists, on the other. The alternative or national liberals criticize the former group as unable to fully recognize such fundamental phenomena of contemporary world politics, as power, sovereignty, and cultural diversity. National liberals argue for the need to rethink the work of those phenomena under the global conditions. Yet they are also critical of realist thinking for exaggerating the role of power capabilities and traditional geopolitical factors in world politics.

Table 3 summarizes some lines of disagreements within Russian schools of international relations. Despite the national prominence of the above-described discourse of the U.S.-influenced liberal IR, Russian scholars continue to disagree on interpretation of the nature and the role of polarity and international institutions, economic globalization, democratization, global civil society, and appropriate foreign policy orientations.¹⁷ With regard to polarity and international institutions, the disagreement is whether movement toward a more democratic world order should be dependent on the United States-based unipolar structure of a world order. Pro-Western liberals have supported the U.S. military interventions in Yugoslavia and Iraq, whereas national liberals have seen those as a deviation from, rather than a contribution to, a new world order. The latter favor improving the structure and the role of the United Nations, and they believe that the United States can only be effective in exercising its leadership in the world if it takes into consideration other states' interests and rely on the existing international institutions. This, as some national liberals concede, may be more likely if Russia recovers as a great power, and a multipolar world is therefore more likely to become more peaceful and democratic/multilateral than a unipolar one. For a contrast, Russia's geopolitically minded realist scholars have no faith in either international institutions or a more democratic world order. Instead, they have consistently emphasized growing national power as the main interests of Russia in world politics.

¹⁶In trying to challenge the dominance of pro-Western liberals, Russia's alternative liberals build on a long historical dispute between so-called Old and New liberals. In the late 19th–early 20th century, the so-called New liberals, such as Pyetr Struve, Pavel Novgorodtsev, and Sergei Gessen, saw Russia as a distinctively strong socially responsible state. This vision differed from the one defended by the Old liberals of primarily constitutionalist orientation, such as Boris Chicherin and Pavel Milyukov. The New liberals remained committed to reformist agenda, but they insisted that Russian state must actively assist the society during reforms and remain a strong power in international relations (for analyses of Russia's liberal currents, see especially Fisher 1958; Walicki 1992; Wiedle 2000).

¹⁷In summarizing these discussions, we rely heavily on the our edited volume on new directions in Russian international studies (Tsygankov and Tsygankov 2004a).

TABLE 3 Russian International Relations Debates and Representative Authors

	<i>Pro-Western Liberals</i>	<i>National liberals</i>	<i>Realists</i>
Polarity and international institutions	U.S.-dominant institutions as a factor of peace/stability (Kremenyuk 2004)	International institutions and a less unipolar world (Batalov 2005)*	Power and multipolar world (Ivashev 2002)
Economic globalization	Unites the world Presents opportunity for Russia (Trenin 2006)	May be divisive Requires a national adaptation strategy (Volodin and Shirokov 2002) [†]	Divides the world Threatens Russia (Panarin 2002)
Democratization and democratic peace	The dominant trend (Kulagin 2002) [‡]	Must reflect local conditions (Tsygankov and Tsygankov 2005)	Covering West's power ambitions (Dugin 2004)
Civilizational nature of world politics	West-dominant Russia should join the West (Trenin 2001)	Pluralist Russia as a cross-cultural synthesis (Shakhnazarov 2000) [§]	Pluralist Russia as an anti-Western Eurasia (Tsyburski 1999) [¶]
Russia's foreign policy orientations	Pro-Western (Sheinis 2003)	Multi-vector (Gadzhiev 2007)	Anti-Western (Zyuganov 1999)

*For emphasis on institutions, rather than polarity, see also Davydov 2002.

[†]See Gorbachev 2003 for analyses of economic, political and cultural dimensions of globalization.

[‡]See also Kulagin 2004.

[§]For a different "unity in diversity" argument, see Cheshkov 2006.

[¶]See also Tsyburski 2001.

A similar debate concerns the nature of economic globalization. Most pro-Western scholars emphasize that globalization is here to stay and that it has opportunities for Russia if the latter adopts pro-Western institutions and follows pro-American policies. For national liberals globalization may present opportunity, but only under the condition of formulating Russia's own formula of adaptation. In the absence of such a formula, Russia is doomed to become a Third World country with low living standards for its population, political instability, and dependent foreign policy. Finally, realists typically go even further, claiming that globalization is a project of the strongest that has nothing in store for the weak. Russia has already been destroyed by globalization and is now better off pursuing isolationist policies. The debate on democratization and democratic peace is in its infancy, but it begins to remind the disagreement among Western liberals, constructivists and realists. While the former insist on universal spread of democratic ideas and their essentially peaceful nature—at least when it comes to relationships among democracies—constructivists challenge the commonly used notions of "democracy" and "peace," and realists deny the very significance of internal characteristics in international struggle for power and security.¹⁸ Russian realists go further and see democracy as little more than ideology covering a struggle for the world's domination.

Two other debates are important for Russian IR scholars. The debate about cultural foundations of world politics is an extension of that on international institutions, yet it is quite distinct. Many Russians do not share cultural assumptions that are often taken for granted by the majority of scholars working in Western academia. Only pro-Western liberals perceive the world as America-centered and the West as the only viable and progressive civilization. From the national liberal perspective, the world is culturally pluralist. Russia too is culturally distinct, and it is open to influences from various parts of the world. The challenge

¹⁸For a good summary of realist critique, see Rosato 2003. For a constructivist analysis, see Oren 2002.

for the world and for Russia is to establish a “unity in diversity” regime, in which different cultures might be able to maintain intense dialogue and cooperation by observing certain globally acknowledged rules, yet still follow their own internally developed sets of norms. Realists too see the world as culturally diverse, but, not unlike Samuel Huntington, they see the world in mutually exclusive terms and emphasize conflict over cooperation in relationships among different “civilizations.” Consistently with these cultural characterizations of world politics, Russian IR scholars recommend three distinct foreign policy orientations. While pro-Western liberals recommend siding with the United States and other Western countries, national liberals favor more diverse or “multi-vector” policies. Finally, realists are typically most anti-Western and argue in favor of building close relations with Asian and Muslim nations to contain the West’s drive for “domination.”

Today, when challenges confronting Russia’s include both greater integration in the world and preservation of state ability to govern and devise appropriate strategy of integration, Russia’s alternative liberalism has important advantages. Relative to those unduly fascinated with American liberal theories, Russia’s national liberalism is in a better position to theoretically contribute to understanding Vladimir Putin’s policy of great power Westernization that seeks to meet the identified challenges. Russia’s liberal theorists owe it to its own nation and to global international relations theory to fully incorporate into its own discussions concepts that, for some time, have been shaping political debates.¹⁹ Those debates seem directly relevant for understanding opportunities and constraints of the above-discussed Western theories of democratic peace, globalization, and international institutions. For instance, the concept of “sovereign democracy” introduced by the Kremlin’s ideologists (see, for example, Surkov 2006) strongly indicates prominence of the state in Russia’s democratic transition. However, these concepts are yet to find their way to the Russian academic discourse. Another important debate that concerns a future of Russia’s integration with Europe addresses the nation’s geopolitical identification. Again, think tankers and pundits outside academia seem to have already suggested interesting concepts that go beyond the known dichotomy of Russia as either “West” or “Eurasia.”²⁰ Unlike pro-Western liberals, who commonly see Russia as in need to “return” to Europe,²¹ some scholars has assumed that Russia already *is* in Europe/West. By their historical accounts, Russia has been a West longer than some other nations, including the United States. Therefore the challenge for Russia is not to be included in, but develop a deeper awareness of itself as a legitimate member of Europe and of its special ties with the world. Put differently, Russia has to intellectually absorb the world/West, rather than let itself be absorbed by it. It is now time for academic community of national liberal orientation to submit those ideas to the test of rigorous theoretical discussions.

¹⁹It is worth noting that the national political dominance of pro-Western liberals throughout the 1990s in Russia and the world came at a price of weakening indigenous liberal trends and strengthening those of xenophobic nationalism. On implications of such developments for Russia’s liberalism, see Tsygankov 2005a,b.

²⁰See, for example, the idea of Russia as a member of “Euro-Eastern” family of nations that is a European nation with great power capabilities and special relations outside Europe. For a comparative analysis of Russia’s civilizational visions, see Tsygankov 2007.

²¹For instance, Dmitri Trenin (2006), while granting Russia a right to pursue a distinct path, assumes that the country needs to “become” a part of Europe and the “new” West. Russia, he says, has been historically European, yet it often “fell out of” Europe (2006:63, 167) as a result of failed reform efforts. If this is the case, then what Russia really needs is to “return” to Europe, rather than preserve its identity and distinctiveness.

The existence and development of the alternative Russian liberalism suggest opportunities for de-centering international relations theory.²² Moving in the direction of creating a global, rather than West-centered, international studies would require, as our Stanley Hoffmann-inspired argument suggests, a more politically decentralized world. Yet it would also necessitate a vigorous competition of ideas particularly concerning the nature of international relations theory's pro-Western ethnocentrism. The problem is, of course, twofold. On the one hand, mainstream international relations theories developed in the West expect others to follow their heuristics, along with open and hidden assumptions acting as if other non-Western cultural communities do not exist. This discursive strategy effectively shuts all the "non-Western" voices sterilizing the field and perpetuating the discipline's hegemonic nature. On the other hand, the non-Western or postcolonial scholars themselves often fall victims of such discourse offering little of critical engagement with it and only reinforcing the identified hegemony/dependency dialectic. To undermine this hierarchical system, movement from both directions is required.

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²²One interesting development that may weaken dependence of Russia's liberal assessments of their country's standing in world politics on various Western ratings is publication of "Geopolitical Atlas of Contemporary World" (Melville, Ilyin, Meleshkina, Mironyuk, Polunin, and Timofeyev 2006). The ratings developed by Russian analysts differ from those of Western agencies, such as Freedom House and Fund for Peace, considerably. (For details, please, see these organizations' websites at <http://www.freedomhouse.org> and <http://www.fundforpeace.org>.) While recognizing the constraining role of various threats on Russia's development, Russian analysts assign for their country relatively high ratings of "stateness" and "international influence." Unlike the Freedom House, they also classify Russia as a democracy, albeit an imperfect one, which may encourage scholars of international relations to re-evaluate meaning of the concept in Russia's conditions.

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