# Russia and its 'New Security Architecture' in Europe:
## A Critical Examination of the Concept

### Andrey S. Makarychev

## Abstract

The paper first summarises Russia's present critique of the international security architecture and its aspiration to build something new and better. The author then presents a matrix of four models of international society as a framework within which to try and discern what Russia may be seeking. While it is clear that Russia objects to one of these models, that of a unipolar US-led world, its current foreign policy discourse and actions offer no clear guidance as to what its aims are in this regard, as there are confusions and contradictions in the different elements of official Russian discourse.

# Contents

# RUSSIA AND ITS 'NEW SECURITY ARCHITECTURE' IN EUROPE:

## A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPT
## CEPS WORKING DOCUMENT NO. 310/JANUARY 2009
### ANDREY S. MAKARYCHEV[*]

## Russia's critique of the existing security architecture and the search for a new one

One of the most important effects of Russia's war against Georgia in August 2008 was a new set of approaches to the future of European security being actively promoted by Dmitry Medvedev and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. According to their interpretation, the Georgian war was not a particular incident (an exception) but a structural event, a landmark comparable to Russia's own 'September 11' to be symbolised as a 'moment of truth'.

Lavrov called the events of August 2008 a systemic breakdown, which necessitates the reparation of the deficient architecture of security.[1] What is interesting is that this claim is substantiated by two different sets of arguments.

One of them contains conceptual explanations as to why the existing security institutions are weak and inefficient. *Firstly*, the current security architecture proved unable to prevent a number of violent crises, from the Balkans to the Caucasus. *Secondly*, what is wrong, in Russia's view, is that the European security landscape rests upon obsolete 'bloc approaches'. *Thirdly*, the prevailing approaches to security are excessively ideologised. Though neither of the prominent Russian speakers explains the exact meaning of this invective, one may guess that it may boil down to Russia's criticism of the conflation of normative/democracy-related and security arguments. Thus, Russia insists that security decisions (including NATO enlargement) should not be based upon the assessments of the state of democracy in one country or another. *Fourthly*, in today's Europe, to the dissatisfaction of Russia, certain countries and their groups enjoy special (exclusive) rights in security-making – a clear allusion to NATO. *Fifthly*, Lavrov compared today's security arrangements to a patchwork,[2] a metaphor pointing to fragmentation and lack of due uniformity.

Perhaps the most noticeable logical problem looming large at this juncture is that the Kremlin tends to find the roots of the current imperfections in international security in both 'bloc approaches' and unipolarity.[3] In the meantime, these are different concepts and could hardly be equated with one another in a single frame of analysis. To some extent, what Medvedev and Lavrov dub the 'bloc approach' – which necessitates at least two competing groups of allied

---

[*] Head of Academic Department, Civil Service Academy, Nizhny Novgorod.

[1] Sergey Lavrov, "Rol' sotrudnichestva RF-ES i biznes-soobschestv storon v usloviakh finansovo-ekonomicheskogo krizisa" ("The role of cooperation between the RF-ES and business communities of the parties concerned in the situation of financial and economic crisis" – our translation), 10 December 2008 (http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/F54FF6DCD2C14E6DC325751B00501E13).

[2] Sergey Lavrov, interview with *Helsinki Sanomat*, 9 November 2008 (http://www.mid.ru).

[3] Dmitry Medvedev's speech at the World Policy Conference, Evian, 8 October 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/10/207422.shtml).

states – contradicts the model of a unipolar – i.e. America-dominated – world (which, in one of Lavrov's most recent revelations, no longer exists and makes the entire enterprise of subverting it futile).

In a second – less conceptual and more pragmatic – type of argument advanced by Medvedev, these conceptual interrogations are devoid of any importance. "Today Russia is not part of any politico-military alliance… Yet we are interested in our voice being heard in Europe… We would like to have a platform where we could discuss a variety of issues".[4] In other words, Russia simply needs an institutional playground for making its standpoint known internationally, since, according to the logic behind this reasoning, all decisions taken *without* consulting Russia are implicitly *anti-Russian*.

Therefore, a 'new security architecture', as opposed to an 'old' one, has to, logically speaking: a) be able to prevent violent conflicts; b) be of a 'non-bloc' nature; c) avoid ideological connotations; d) exclude the possibility of exceptional security status for the strongest nations; e) contain 'suturing' mechanisms allowing for more coherence between all countries; and f) put Russia on an equal footing with other participants. It might seem that Russia is gradually moving towards a more or less 'rigid' definition of security, yet there are two key problems with the implementation of this 'grand project'. Firstly, Russia lacks a clear vision of its own role in it. The attempts to symbolise the war against Georgia as constitutive of a new Russian security posture seem to be full of contradictions, since they only complicate the answer to the question of what Russia is aiming for in international politics. Instead of providing a background for a new, more coherent understanding of Russian security identity, the war blurred the identification lines and raised a host of new questions. Post-war self-assertive Russia under closer scrutiny appears to be at a crossroads and is torn apart by multiple controversies, mostly conceptual ones.

Secondly, Russia is not certain of the kind of international order in which the concept of 'security architecture' may be inscribed. What is more or less clear is that Russia is trying to prioritise its relations with the European Union countries in tackling security issues. Yet the process of communication between two subjects presupposes what Slavoj Zizek called "the third agency to which we both submit ourselves".[5] This alleged "third agency" is dubbed by the Slovenian philosopher as an "impersonal symbolic Order", or "the multitude of empirical others" associated by rules, institutions and regulations. To translate this theoretical statement into political language, the interrelationship between two neighbours is always conditioned by 'the third' to which each of them relates/refers in one way or another.[6] Within the context of the analysis of EU-Russia security dialogue, the idea of the 'third agency' can be introduced through the concept of the *International Society* (IS) which will be understood in this paper in the traditions of the English school. "A society of states (or international society) exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, forms a society in the sense that they conceive of themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions".[7] In other words, cont(r)acting with each other in the security domain, both parties have to refer and appeal – in one way or another – to a wider set of international norms. However, Russia and the EU usually

---

[4] Dmitry Medvedev's meeting with the members of the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., 16 November 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/11/209249.shtml).

[5] Slavoj Zizek, "Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence", in *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 139.

[6] Ibid., p. 144.

[7] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 13.

either have different versions of the IS in their minds, or they tend to confuse – intentionally or unintentionally – the IS with other concepts, such as the international order, the international system, etc.

Another reference to Zizek could also be instrumental at this juncture: in his mind, it is insufficient to assume that there are pre-existing, established political subjects capable of exploiting the norms. "It is not only that the subject has to adopt a stance towards the norms that regulate his activity – these norms in their turn determine who and what is or is not recognized as subject".[8] This argument is of importance for further analysis since it raises a question of what kind of Russia as an international subject emerges from the debates on a new security architecture in Europe? More specifically, we need to know not only what kind of security Russia supports, but also how the security discourse changes Russia's identity and international subjectivity.

My general approach to these questions starts with an understanding of Russian identity as 'ontologically dislocated', or unstable, divided, split and unfixed. This is basically due to two main factors. Firstly, Russian identity (as, in fact, any identity) is heavily dependent "upon an outside which both denies that identity and provides its conditions of possibility at the same time",[9] as Ernesto Laclau rightly claims. This dependency can be discerned in the very fact that the 'new security architecture' discourse emerges as a series of speech acts that address mostly European countries and are grounded in one or another version of international society. Secondly, Russia's hegemonic moves lead to an inconsistent combination of different roles this country tries to play. In the interpretation of its past, Russia is both a destroyer of the Soviet empire (an argument constitutive for Russia's role as a co-sponsor of the end of the Cold War) and a heritor of the USSR (an argument that partly explains Russia's resistance to the *Holodomor*[10] and *Katyn*[11] discourses). In terms of Russia's present identity, it seems to be a mixture of a typically Realpolitik pragmatism (Medvedev argues that Western countries just have to accept the "reality" of secession of the two territories from Georgia and avoid hysterical reaction to "virtual situations"[12]), on the one hand, and a liberal assumption that explains foreign policy by domestic developments (in Putin's interpretation, it is the presidential election in the US that predetermined the position America took in this conflict[13]), on the other. Russian identity includes both institutional commitments (Medvedev has vehemently called for a new treaty on European security) and what might be called 'reluctant unilateralism' (in Medvedev's assessment, Russia and NATO "may say good-bye to each other", but it is NATO that has the stronger interest in continuing the cooperation). Russian identity mixes up particularist assumptions (each act of recognition is particular and singular, Medvedev says[14]) and universal

---

[8] Zizek, op. cit., p. 139.

[9] Quoted in Aletta J. Norval, "Theorising Dislocations", paper presented at the workshop on New Stability, Democracy and Nationalism in Contemporary Russia, Basel, 26-27 September 2008, p. 3.

[10] *Holodomor* refers to the death by starvation of millions of Ukrainians under Soviet rule. In March 2008, the Ukraine parliament (and governments of many other countries) recognised the actions of the Soviet government as an act of genocide. The joint declaration at the United Nations in 2003 defined the famine as the result of cruel actions and policies of the totalitarian regime, and on 23 October 2008 the European Parliament adopted a resolution that recognised the Holodomor as a crime against humanity.

[11] The **Katyn massacre**, was a mass murder of thousands Polish military officers, policemen, intellectuals and civilian prisoners of war by the Soviet NKVD (secret police) in 1940.

[12] Dmitry Medvedev's interview with Al Jazeera TV, Sochi, 26 August 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205783.shtml).

[13] Vladimir Putin's interview with CNN, 28 August 2008 (http://www.government.ru).

[14] Dmitry Medvedev's interview with "Russia today" TV station, Sochi, 26 August 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205773.shtml).

explanations (by describing actions in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in terms of "we did what others have done in Kosovo",[15] Medvedev in fact accepted the logic of the 'chain effect'). The enumeration of these examples of dislocations could be developed further.

This paper offers one of the possible theoretical ways of reflecting upon these uneasy matters. In one sense, it can be viewed as a reaction to Lavrov's invitation to the expert community to make Russia's ideas a matter of both academic and policy-oriented analysis. The approach I propose in this Working Document rests upon a peculiar combination of the critical theory and the English school, a mix that constitutes, in my view, an appropriate theoretical frame to answer the question of what conceptual choices Russia faces in articulating its new vision of security in Europe, and why the various concepts of international society have to be taken into account for policy-makers tackling security issues.

## Four models of international society

My further analysis will be based upon two presumptions that may be instrumental in identifying the four possible types (models) of international society, and, consequently, in making the menu of Russian and European options more voluminous.

First, there is a gap between the '*thick*' version of international society that is (at least) rule-based and (at most) value-driven, and the '*thin*' one that is formed when two or more states may exert some impact on one another[16] on the basis of "great power management and its consequent derivate institution, balance of power",[17] yet without any meaningful normative commitments. This dichotomy roughly corresponds to the distinction between what might be alternatively dubbed 'normative' and 'decisionist' types of IS.

Where do Russia and the EU stand in this polemic? The European Union seems to give priority to the 'thick' version of IS, with a clear emphasis on normativism understood as "a way of thinking that emphasizes the central importance of an autonomous legal order for constraining the arbitrary and personal exercise of political power".[18] The Russian stance is a bit more ambiguous: it appears to be more "systemic rather than normative".[19] As a German scholar rightly notes, Russian international discourse is torn between a "sovereignist", "exceptionalist" or "nationalist" reading of Russia as being surrounded by a fundamentally hostile environment with no reliable friends, on the one hand, and "internationalist reading" according to which Russia stays in line with the international community in managing the most deadly security challenges, on the other. Putin's

> demand for more security and control relies on two different points that cannot be
> reconciled easily… He makes his claim on the ground of the long-lasting conflict

---

[15] Dmitry Medvedev's interview with BBC, Sochi, 26 August 2008
(http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205775.shtml).

[16] Hedley Bull, op. cit., p. 9.

[17] Pami Aalto, "Russia's Quest for International Society and the Prospects for Regional-Level International Societies", *International Relations*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 2007, p. 463.

[18] Jef Huysmans, "International Politics of Exception", paper prepared for presentation at the SGIR Fifth Pan-European Conference, The Hague, the Netherlands, 9-22 September 2004, p. 7.

[19] Jef Huysmans, "International Politics of Insecurity: Normativity, Inwardness and the Exception", *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2006, p. 14.

between Russia and the West and, at the same time, the solidarity between Russia and the West…The question is: can a discourse be built on such a shaky ground?.[20]

The most recent developments, including the August 2008 war against Georgia, apparently moved Russia further away from the European understanding of IS to what might be presumably dubbed the formation of a "political subject which is absolutely free"[21] from international commitments and thus insensitive to external pressures, including normative ones. One of the key messages conveyed by the Kremlin in autumn 2008 was meant to question the primordial importance of cooperating with such institutions as NATO, G8 and WTO. Even the speculations about removing the 2014 Olympics from Sochi to a different city were met by Putin with an irascible response.

Second, two other patterns of the IS may compete with each other – a unitary (otherwise called solidarist) and a pluralist one. The unitary model (supported, by and large, by the EU) is based upon more or less homogenous rules of the game for all state actors involved, while the pluralist one (with which Russia sympathises) admits the multiplicity of political singularities potentially clashing with each other.

Based upon these two – mostly theoretical – dichotomies, an elementary matrix of four types of international society could be charted. These types are conceptually derived from the IR schools of thought, and in more practical terms will be used to assess Russia's relation to each of them.

|  | *Unitary* | *Pluralist* |
|---|---|---|
| *Decisionist/'thin'* | 1: Unipolarity (Pax Americana) | 3: Multi-polarity/poly-centricity |
| *Normative/'thick'* | 2: Cosmopolitan/ supranational rule of law | 4: Competition of norms |

A brief theoretical comeback may be useful at this point. As Ernesto Laclau argues, dislocation is the primary level of the construction of the social. To put it differently, each societal model, including those of the international society, contains irremovable ruptures and gaps within it. In the analysis that follows I will try to uncover some of them.

Apparently, **type 1** is the least desirable for both Russia and the EU, but it is exactly what makes this quadrant analytically important. It is in opposition to it that all other alternatives are being articulated, sometimes in unexpectedly ethical terms: in the words of Medvedev, unipolarity is "immoral".[22]

Yet under closer scrutiny, despite surprisingly normative language, Russia's opposition to the US-driven unipolarity appears rather inconsistent. For Moscow, Washington is certainly not a Schmittian enemy threatening it militarily, but rather an opponent who refuses to admit Russia as an equal partner in security building. What is more astonishing is that in certain situations the Kremlin does not rule out taking advantage of the US hegemony which, in Russian eyes, makes European countries gravitate towards the American geopolitical pole (in Dmitry Rogozin's indicative words, Poland is trying to be holier than the Pope in its imitation of Washington"[23]).

---

[20] Johannes Angermuller, "Fixing meanings - Political discourse in the Russian Federation after Beslan", paper presented at the workshop on New Stability, Democracy and Nationalism in Contemporary Russia, University of Basel, 26-27 September 2008, p. 3.

[21] Viatcheslav Morozov, "Sovereignty and democracy in contemporary Russia: a modern subject faces the post-modern world", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, No. 11, 2008, p. 155.

[22] Dmitry Medvedev's speech at the World Policy Conference.

[23] Quoted in *The Moscow News*, No. 35, 5-11 September 2008, p. 2.

Putin's reaction to the alleged submission of the EU to American power was even more straightforward: "If European countries continue carrying out such policies, we will have to talk to Washington about European matters".[24] Yet, in spite of the imbedded pragmatism, there are at least two flaws in this logic. Firstly, Putin's statement is a good expression of the reluctant – and often unrecognised – US-centrism in Russia's foreign policy. What Putin implicitly had in mind is that at some junctures Moscow would prefer bilateral talks with Washington to ineffective communication with the EU members. Yet it is exactly this US-centrism that Russia otherwise rebuffs as the unacceptable form of unipolarity that leads to multiple imbalances in the structure of international relations. Secondly, the above-mentioned argument contains an overt reference to a presumed European weakness and an inability to formulate and defend authentic security policies of its own. For example, Belgium, a home to both NATO and EU institutions, is sometimes portrayed in the Russian media as a "moribund" country, being on the brink of disintegration and suffocated by domestic controversies.[25] This type of Europe seems to be easy to manipulate: "Europe must decide whether it needs pipeline [Nord Stream] gas from Russia in the volumes we are offering or not. If not, we won't build this pipeline, we will instead build factories for liquefying gas and send it to global markets, including Europe",[26] Putin said in autumn 2008. The practical problem looming large at this juncture is that this discursive – and seemingly intentional - debilitation of European countries runs against Russia's policies of prioritising Moscow-Berlin, Moscow-Rome, and especially Moscow-Paris (as exemplified by the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan of post-conflict settlement in the Caucasus) axes.

**Type 2** represents an overlay of unitary/solidarist and normative platforms, a model of the IS that seems to be quite desirable for both Russia and the EU. Yet Russia is not inimical to this option as well: it is normative credentials that to a significant extent legitimise Russia's eagerness to be part of the international society. Russia tries to convince others that it is democracy that Russia seeks in the international arena, even if this type of democracy is reduced to the mere plurality of strong states under the guise of 'multipolarity'. Russia therefore seems to be ready to contribute to constructing rules of the game based upon international institutions and a more or less unified interpretation of international law. In particular, the Russian representative to NATO has called for the establishment of an international tribunal (modelled on the one already existing in The Hague) to deal with ethnic cleansings in the North Caucasus.[27]

Within this predominantly normative logic, Russia is supposed to keep integrating in the existing IS structures, however unfair or imperfect they might be. Russia's efforts to use explicitly normative arguments as constitutive of its foreign policy were evident during the 2007 conflict with Estonia over the 'memorial sites' of the Second World War. By the same token, normative judgements were one of Russia's major arguments against the Saakashvili regime in Georgia, Ukraine's NATO membership and the disenfranchisement of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic countries, etc. In this context, not only the Georgian President was lambasted "a heritor of Stalin and Beria"; according to Putin, "those who insist that Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia are to belong to Georgia are Stalinists, since they sustain the decision taken by Stalin".[28] Evidently, in this situation Putin addresses mostly the Western audience, much more sensitive to normative arguments than the Russian public.

---

[24] Ibid.

[25] Daria Aslamova, "Chemu nauchit nas Evropa?" ("What does Europe have to teach us?"), *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 4-11 September 2008, pp. 8-9.

[26] *The Moscow Times*, No. 45, 14-20 November 2008, p. 18.

[27] *Kommersant*, No. 141, 12 August 2008, p. 2.

[28] Vladimir Putin's interview with CNN, Sochi, 28 August 2008 (http://www.government.ru).

Yet acting within the normative/solidarist logic, Russia displays a number of contradictions. At least three of them deserve attention in this essay. Firstly, the August five-day-war can be paradoxically interpreted as a continuation of Russia's desperate attempts to position itself as a 'normal' international subject in a scenario lacking global normative consensus. What is more, in August 2008 the Kremlin implicitly accepted the US foreign policy philosophy it otherwise lambasted, which gave Russia a chance not only to confirm its belonging to a 'normal' group of countries but – what is of primordial importance – to claim the power to 'normalise' ('discipline and punish', to put in a Foucauldian way) those who are portrayed as 'virtual' (i.e. being subject to external manipulation) governments allegedly deviating from international standards and causing large-scale security problems.

Secondly, Russia is more a norm-exploiter than a norm-producer. It stays far-removed from multiple norm-producing initiatives on a trans-national scale, including – but not limited to – norms that regulate transparency, accountability, sustainable development, good governance, and so on. If Russia remains aloof in these debates, communicative problems with its major Western partners are inevitable.

Thirdly, another point of contention relates to the way in which security is 'problematised' within this normative/solidarist framework. As seen from the Kremlin perspective, the idea of security comes in a number of versions. Most of them touch upon the conceptual content of security and include:

a) *Common security* which aims at forming a comprehensive/inclusive security framework to avoid the possibility of excluding or marginalising someone on any grounds.

b) *Equal security*, which – at least, in Medvedev's words - aims at avoiding exceptional (mostly 'hard security') arrangements within the 'Euro-Atlantic security space'. Needless to say this interpretation de-legitimises the concepts of Nordic, Baltic or Barents-Euroarctic security complexes, to name but a few examples.

c) *Indivisible security*[29] which is formulated as an antithesis to the classic *Realpolitik* 'security dilemma' ("we are not supposed to build our security at the expense of others").[30]

d) *United space of collective security* with, presumably, a uniform interpretation of key principles of security.

e) *Single system of comprehensive security* to be based upon the principle of 'polycentrism' and the leading role of the United Nations.

What is baffling is not only the unnatural number of adjectives that the Russian leaders attach to the word 'security', as if trying to fill the 'empty signifier' with as many meanings as possible, but also the simultaneous characterisation of the novel 'security architecture' as both 'space' and 'system'. The semantic difference between the two is quite meaningful: the 'spatial' understanding of security contains strong allusions to the possibilities of an inter-subjective construction of security identities of all parties involved, while a 'systemic' approach is much less demanding and more mechanistic, presupposing 'single' rules of the security game to be obeyed.

The 'word games' certainly don't stop here. Thus, Lavrov explained Russia's offensive in Georgia as the pursuit of "human security",[31] which seems to be some way from the prevailing

---

[29] Sergey Lavrov, Presentation at the 16th session of the SMID OBSE, Helsinki, 5 December 2008 (http://www.mid.ru).

[30] Dmitry Medvedev's speech at the World Policy Conference.

European understanding of this concept. The least one can say is that Lavrov intentionally confused "human security" with "the responsibility to protect". Yet he simultaneously misinterpreted the idea of human security, which was initially conceived as a critical tool to shed light on the failures of state-based security and aimed against existing hierarchies of power.[32] This is one of many examples of the different meanings the EU and Russia attach to the key concepts they utilise.

By the same token, other 'word games' contain clear references to the geographical scope of the 'security architecture'-to-be, which raises new – and no less important – definitional problems. Thus, the Russian President mentioned the "Pan-European security space",[33] while on other occasions he or his colleagues referred to the "Euro-Atlantic" or even "global" scale of their initiative, which is reportedly justified by Lavrov's call to the "world community" (not just "international society") as the proper audience to discuss Russia's proposals. The key question is *whose security* we are talking about, and what the boundaries of "this security space" are. By now, what is clear is that this space has to be wider than the NATO area.[34] Much less clear is whether, for example, South Ossetia and Abkhazia have to be admitted as fully-fledged members of this 'security space' (should Moscow insist on their inclusion, the entire idea will be questioned by the lack of common understanding of who are and who are not legitimate participants of this 'space').

**Type 3** offers a model of international society grounded in the ability of sovereign powers to take political decisions of their own, a perspective rather close to the concept of *pluriversum*.[35] This type seems to be more desirable to Russia than to the EU: Medvedev all too easily drops the language of multilateralism in favour of unilateral decisionism: "As far as our military contingent [in South Ossetia] is concerned, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that not a single document, including our joint plan with President Sarkozy, previsions that this contingent would abide by any rules… It is up to us to define what troops we need there, where they will be based and what kind of military bases will be deployed over there".[36]

What is more, Russian government sometimes incites other governments to act within the logic of sovereign decisions. "We expected that the US administration would intervene in the [Georgian – South Ossetian] conflict and stop the aggressive intentions of the Georgian leadership",[37] said Prime Minister Putin; while one of the Kremlin spin-doctors Gleb Pavlovsky interpreted the Russian diplomatic standpoint as aimed at making the United States "choose between Russia and Georgia".[38] Medvedev's multiple suggestions that the Western countries need to be pragmatic and guided by their "genuine interests" (presumably comprehended by the

---

[31] Sergei Lavrov's meeting with the Council on Foreign Relations members, New York, 24 September 2008 (www.mid.ru).

[32] David Chandler, "Human Security: The Dog That Didn't Bark", *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2008, p. 434.

[33] Joint press conference of Dmitry Medvedev, Jose Manuel Barroso and Nicolas Sarkozy, Nice, 14 November 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/11/209203.shtml).

[34] Sergey Lavrov, Transcript of the presentation and questions and answers regarding the outcomes of the SMID OBSE before the Russian media, Helsinki, 5 December 2008 ( http://www.mid.ru).

[35] Alexandr Filippov, "Universalism or pluralism?", *Kosmopolis*, No. 3 (9), Autumn 2004, p. 90.

[36] Medvedev's interview with *Le Figaro* newspaper, 13 November 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/textx/appears/2008/11/209126.shtml).

[37] Putin's interview with CNN, Sochi, 28 August 2008 (http://www.government.ru).

[38] Gleb Pavlovskiy, "Vozvraschenie iz Gori", ("Return from Gori") *Expert*, No. 33, 25-31 August 2008, p. 60.

Russian President better), as opposed to "imagined ideological clichés",[39] also fit, by and large, the decisionist, rather than normative, foreign policy philosophy. It may lead, paradoxically, to a post-factum acceptance of the way the Kosovo controversy was resolved (for instance, trying to justify the participation of the delegations from Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the Geneva negotiations, Medvedev claimed that "there are lots of similar precedents when, say, such kind of issues were raised with regard to Kosovo, and the [newly recognized] countries from the outset were part of the talks"[40]).

Yet an even deeper problem surfaces with the pluralist/decisionist quadrant falling apart into different concepts of IS. What is known for sure is that the unipolar organisation of international society is unacceptable to the Kremlin, but what it stands for remains unclear. A number of possible options are the subject of debate:

a) *Multipolar* IS, which presupposes a certain degree of conflictuality between different poles that might be inimical to - but will contain - each other. In the Russian worldview, multipolarity connotes with democracy deprived of its strong political and normative meanings and reduced to the mere multiplicity of sovereign states, regardless of the nature of their political regimes.

b) *Polycentric* IS in which the 'poles of growth' would be able to pragmatically cooperate with each other in fields other than security. This is an ostensibly *de-politicised* version of the IS, where politics ranks much lower than economics, environment, communication and technology. There might be no place for politics proper in such a society where the distinction between 'ours' and 'not-ours' fades away, and security concerns are drastically downgraded. This interpretation clearly demarcates 'de-politicised' polycentrism from a much more politically accentuated and security-driven multipolarity of sovereign nations. The polycentric type of IS also challenges the primacy of state politics over regional "spaces of flows"[41] in an attempt to prevent the return of a more traditional power balancing with its inevitable bordering effects and the accentuation of "negative otherness", fear, violence, and hegemonic control.

c) *Multilateralism* as understood in Russia, "in its ideal form, as co-ordinated international action around key issue areas, rather than dense horizontal co-operation aimed at developing congruent policies".[42]

d) *A-polar* / network-like IS, with no domination or hegemony,[43] and with power dispersed among a variety of actors, including non-state ones.[44] This approach connotes with what might be dubbed a 'New Regionalism' school of thought that challenges fixed, centralist and security-geared frameworks of analysis. This post-sovereign/post-structuralist pattern of

---

[39] Medvedev's interview with BBC, Sochi, 26 August 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205775.shtml).

[40] Medvedev's press conference at the Eurasian Economic Community Inter-state Council meeting, Bishkek, 10 October 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/10/207570.shtml).

[41] Pertti Joenniemi, "Regionality: A Sovereign Principle of International Relations?", in Heikki Patomaki (ed.), *Peaceful Changes in World* Politics, Tampere Peace Research Institute, Research Report No. 71, 1995, p. 363.

[42] Elana Wilson Rowe and Stina Torjesen, "Key features of Russian multilateralism", in Elana Wilson Rowe and Stina Torjesen (eds), *The Multilateral Dimension in Russian Foreign Policy*, London & New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 3.

[43] Eduard Batalov, *Chelovek, mir, politika*, Moscow: Obraforum, 2008, p. 179.

[44] Alexandr Konovalov, "Mir ne dolzhen byt' mnogopoliarnym" ("The world should not be multi-polar"), *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 September 2008.

the IS violates uniformity, supports ambiguity, and encourages rather than penalises the crossing of borders and the transcending of hierarchies. It increases the tolerance for diversity, variance, decentralisation and fragmentation.[45] In Pertti Joenniemi's view, the network-based "neo-regionalism" produces ambivalence and plurality rather than clarity and order. Therefore, the security cooperation is supposed to be inclusive and blur the boundaries between the inside and the outside.

**Type 4** may be illustrated by the Kosovo debates when Putin implicitly argued that in a situation of open conflict between two constitutive principles of international law – territorial integrity and the right of self-determination – Russia supports the first principle and repudiates the second as a left-over from Soviet strategy in the times of colonialism.[46] As I have noted earlier, in the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia Russia reversed its preferences.

Another example is the collision of two different norms guiding Russia's energy policies. On the one hand, the Kremlin's demands for market prices to be paid by all customers seems to be fully legitimate and rule-based; yet on the other hand, the disconnection of energy supplies to transit countries like Ukraine conflicts with the established mechanisms of international arbitrage, which regulate commercial disputes between sovereign states, including those between suppliers and their clients.

These examples are important since they allow us to take a look at the concept of dislocation, already discussed earlier, from another angle. In Laclau's reasoning, the more dislocated a structure is, the more the field of decisions and the role of the subject expands; and, as a consequence, a decentring of the structure is coterminous with the construction of a plurality of power centres.[47] In other words, structural dislocations in a form of two competing norms open new possibilities for a political type of behaviour based upon sovereign political wills, which might either provoke antagonisms or lead to political negotiations. The political implication of this argument is clear: the existing international structures do not automatically define which of the two competing norms has to be enacted, and the decision to choose one is always political in the strict sense – i.e. it has to be based rather upon sovereign will than determined by structural circumstances.

## Russia and the four models

As we may see, Russia feels both at a disadvantage in the existing architecture of the IS and aims at becoming an important shaper of it. Against this uncertain background, it seems reasonable to explore the extent to which Russian foreign policy may lead to the materialisation of three out of four options described above (the first type of international society, namely the US-centred, is way beyond what Russia might support).

**Type 2** (a conflation of normative and unitary/solidarist concepts of IS) leaves Russia with a perspective of repositioning itself as an autonomous pole in the 'top league' of the 'Euro-Atlantic' community of nations, along with United States and the European Union. Ideally, Russia might start thinking of itself as a truly global power through investing its resources in multilaterally solving the most pressing challenges of climate change, environmental decay, transnational crime and corruption networks, terrorism and international piracy,[48] human

---

[45] Pertti Joenniemi, op. cit., pp. 338-373.

[46] Vladimir Putin's interview with journalists of G8 Countries, 4 June 2007
(http://www.kremlin.ru/texts/appears/2007/06/132365.shtml).

[47] Aletta Norval, op. cit., p. 3.

[48] The first Russian-British experience of fighting Somali pirates in November 2008 looks quite encouraging in this respect.

trafficking, energy security, etc. Within this framework, Russia could play a self-ascribed role as guardian of international law, as was the case in the aftermath of Kosovo's independence, yet the recognition of Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia has obviously undermined the viability of this track.

**Type 3** (a combination of decisionist and pluralist foundations of IS) presupposes that Russia might refuse to recognise the legitimacy of some elements of Western IS (such as NATO, for example, that, according to the logic of the Kremlin, has to be left in the past). This scenario may hypothetically envision the confrontation with the West, especially over NATO enlargement in areas adjacent to Russia. Since the accession of Ukraine and Georgia is not on the immediate agenda of NATO, the chances for this least desirable perspective do not seem to be high.

**Type 4** (the competition of different norms) suggests that Russia might prefer to recognise the legitimacy of Western IS yet in the meantime to isolate itself from – or even counter-balance – it. Russia might wish to invest in constructing alternative international societies (to be based, hypothetically, on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Collective Security Treaty Organization, or even the amorphous Brazil-Russia-India-China 'BRIC' group). This is likely to be the model most clearly advocated by Russia in the near future, but its plausibility rests first of all upon China's willingness to join in such a venture. The prospects for this do not look good beyond superficial political declarations, as China's refusal to back Russia in the war with Georgia illustrated.

What appears at the intersection of these perspectives is that Russia as an increasingly self-assertive political subject is internally divided or, as critical thinkers would say, dislocated. These divisions are not by-products of different political platforms publicly competing with each other, but rather the result of internal dislocations inherent in and constitutive of Russia's security identity. It is this lack of fixity and certainty that sometimes makes other countries perceive Russia as an aggressive country with erratic behaviour obsessed with its great power ambitions. Yet, as I have ventured to demonstrate, Russia's attempts to rebuild the entire security architecture in the Euro-Atlantic world are structurally incomplete. The concluding argument of this paper, therefore, may be split into two interrelated parts. On the one hand, each country's identity is "relationally defined", i.e. is "more or less partial, never fully achieved"[49]. This explains why so many contradictions are embedded in Russia's security posture: "interests and identities are constantly modified and adapted as they are iterated in different institutional contexts".[50] There are always external factors – more specifically, related to the construction of international society – that impede or distort the implementation of 'grand designs', including the Kremlin project of rebuilding the security architecture. On the other hand, the structural foundations of international society are also dislocated: neither of the four models of IS is self-sufficient, and the boundaries of each are fuzzy. For example, the competition of norms (type 4) may be intersecting with the decisionist acts of power that would prioritise one norm over other(s) (type 3). Against this background one may presume that any attempts to offer a universalised concept of security will resemble wishful thinking which, nevertheless, performs the crucial function of constructing political subjectivities in a still anarchical and de-centred world.

---

[49] Aletta Norval, op. cit., p. 6.

[50] David Howarth, "Populist Reason or Populist Peril? Evaluating Some Recent Theories", paper presented at the workshop on New Stability, Democracy and Nationalism in Contemporary Russia, University of Basel, 26-27 September 2008, p. 5.

# References

Aalto, Pami (2007), "Russia's Quest for International Society and the Prospects for Regional-Level International Societies", *International Relations*, Vol. 21, No. 4, p. 463.

Angermuller, Johannes (2008), "Fixing meanings", Political discourse in the Russian Federation after Beslan, paper presented at the workshop on New Stability, Democracy and Nationalism in Contemporary Russia, University of Basel, 26-27 September, p. 3.

Aslamova, Daria (2008), "Chemu nauchit nas Evropa?", (What does Europe have to teach us?) *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 4-11 September, pp. 8-9.

Batalov, Eduard (2008), *Chelovek, mir, politika*, (*A person, the world, the politics*) Moscow: Obraforum, p. 179.

Bull, Hedley (2002), *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 13.

Chandler, David (2008), "Human Security: The Dog That Didn't Bark", *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 39, No. 4, p. 434.

Filippov, Alexandr (2004), "Universum ili pluriversum?", (Universalism or pluralism) *Kosmopolis*, No. 3 (9), Autumn, p. 90.

Howarth, David (2008), "Populist Reason or Populist Peril? Evaluating Some Recent Theories", paper presented at the workshop on New Stability, Democracy and Nationalism in Contemporary Russia, University of Basel, 26-27 September, p. 5.

Huysmans, Jef (2004), "International Politics of Exception", paper prepared for presentation at the SGIR Fifth Pan-European Conference, the Hague, the Netherlands, 9-22 September, p. 7.

Huysmans, Jef (2006), "International Politics of Insecurity: Normativity, Inwardness and the Exception", *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 37, No. 1, p. 14.

Joenniemi, Pertti (1995), "Regionality: A Sovereign Principle of International Relations?", in Heikki Patomaki (ed.), *Peaceful Changes in World* Politics, Tampere Peace Research Institute, Research Report No. 71.

Joint press conference of Dmitry Medvedev, Jose Manuel Barroso and Nicolas Sarkozy, Nice, 14 November 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/11/209203.shtml).

*Kommersant*, No. 141, 12 August 2008, p. 2.

Konovalov, Alexandr (2008), "Mir ne dolzhen byt' mnogopoliarnym" (The world should not be multi-polar), *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 September.

Lavrov, Sergei (2008), meeting with the Council on Foreign Relations members, New York, 24 September (www.mid.ru).

Lavrov, Sergey (2008), "Rol' sotrudnichestva RF-ES i biznes-soobschestv storon v usloviakh finansovo-ekonomicheskogo krizisa", (The role of cooperation between the RF-EU and business communities in the financial and economic crisis) 10 December (http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/F54FF6DCD2C14E6DC325751B00501E13).

Lavrov, Sergey (2008), "Stenogramma vystuplenia i otvetov na voprosy rossiiskikh SMI po itogam SMID OBSE", (Transcript of the presentation and questions and answers regarding the outcomes of the SMID OBSE before the Russian media), Helsinki, 5 December (http://www.mid.ru).

Lavrov, Sergey (2008), "Vystuplenie na 16 zasedanii SMID OBSE", (Presentation at the 16th session of the SMID OBSE), Helsinki, 5 December (http://www.mid.ru).

Lavrov, Sergey (2008), interview to *Helsinki Sanomat* newspaper, 9 November (http://www.mid.ru).

Medvedev, Dmitry (2008), interview with "Russia today" TV station, Sochi, 26 August (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205773.shtml).

Medvedev, Dmitry (2008), interview with Al Jazeera TV, Sochi, 26 August (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205783.shtml).

Medvedev, Dmitry (2008), interview with BBC, Sochi, 26 August (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205775.shtml).

Medvedev, Dmitry (2008), meeting with the members of the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., 16 November (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/11/209249.shtml).

Medvedev, Dmitry (2008), speech at the World Policy Conference, Evian, 8 October (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/10/207422.shtml).

Medvedev's interview with BBC, Sochi, 26 August 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205775.shtml).

Medvedev's interview with *Le Figaro* newspaper, 13 November 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/textx/appears/2008/11/209126.shtml).

Medvedev's press conference at the Eurasian Economic Community Inter-state Council meeting, Bishkek, 10 October 2008 (http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/10/207570.shtml).

Morozov, Viatcheslav (2008), "Sovereignty and democracy in contemporary Russia: a modern subject faces the post-modern world", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, No. 11, p. 155.

Norval, Aletta J. (2008), "Theorising Dislocations", paper presented at the workshop on New Stability, Democracy and Nationalism in Contemporary Russia, Basel, 26-27 September, p. 3.

Pavlovskiy, Gleb (2008), "Vozvraschenie iz Gori" (Return from Gori), *Expert*, No. 33, 25-31 August, p. 60.

Putin, Vladimir (2007), interview with journalists of G8 Countries, 4 June (http://www.kremlin.ru/texts/appears/2007/06/132365.shtml).

Putin, Vladimir (2008), interview with CNN, 28 August (http://www.government.ru).

Putin, Vladimir (2008), interview with CNN, Sochi, 28 August (http://www.government.ru).

Putin's interview with CNN, Sochi, 28 August 2008 (http://www.government.ru).

Rowe, Elana Wilson and Stina Torjesen (2009), "Key features of Russian multilateralism", in Elana Wilson Rowe and Stina Torjesen (eds), *The Multilateral Dimension in Russian Foreign Policy*, London & New York: Routledge, p. 3.

*The Moscow News*, No. 35, 5-11 September 2008, p. 2.

*The Moscow Times*, No. 45, 14-20 November 2008, p. 18.

Zizek, Slavoj (2005), "Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence", in *The Neighbor. Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.