

THE PLACE OF THE POST-SOVIET SPACE IN THE FOREIGN POLICY PLANNING OF RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

To resolve the conflict-prone situation in the post-Soviet space and to be able to predict its further development, it is important to study the evolution of policies and political technologies used by Russia in respect to the post-Soviet countries. The general problem of technologies and practices of political influence in the foreign policy planning of modern Russia deserves public attention. In the twenty-first century, political communication, as well as the functions of political leaders, have undergone fundamental changes. In the middle of the second decade of the new century, communication in politics was, for the most part, a slow, one-sided process, mostly involving exchange of information. With the development of the mass media, citizens started receiving more and more opportunities for monitoring the actions of politicians, up until the mass media engaged in the competitive struggle for the interpretation of events. In some states, this struggle has started since the middle of the twentieth century, in others it is only escalating. In the electronic information era, each action of politicians potentially becomes the object of discussion for many segments of the population, in connection with which foreign policy planning is undergoing significant transformations. On

the one hand, the society receives an opportunity to control the actions of political leaders, to assess their actions through the media and to influence political decisions. On the other hand, in addition to the main responsibilities of a political leader in running a country, the task emerges, which is no less important,—managing information. In connection with this there appears a new type of foreign policy planning—a rhetorical one. If previously, a sensible and deliberative discourse in interaction with the elite was typical of the institutional leader, and his most important skills were the knowledge of the bureaucracy and the ability to make reasoned decisions, then for the “rhetorical” leader, the ability to persuade comes to the fore, and power is partly based on the popular image and people’s support. The loss of control over information flow can lead to a gradual loss of control over the state, and hence shift the center of political power. This fully applies to Russia, including the processes of its foreign policy planning in the post-Soviet space and the implementation of the plans already developed. International environment and the internal situation in Russia influence foreign policy to varying degrees. Thus, the stronger became the state power, and more stable, and less vul-

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nerable its economy, the weaker grew the influence of the country's internal situation on the adoption of foreign policy decisions. The publication's relevancy lies in considering cooperative projects in the post-Soviet space during the period of increased com-

petition between Moscow and Brussels for the privileged cooperation and integration with the Central Asian countries. The situation is a challenge for both the current policy of the Russian Federation and the stability in the countries of the post-Soviet world.

KEYWORDS: *foreign policy, political science, political discourse, Russia, post-Soviet space, strategies and political technology.*

Introduction

The Russian foreign policy is largely reactive. Its formulation is the consequence of responding to developments in international and domestic environments. Official documents noted and acknowledged the factual validity, without forming a strategy to address the problems or new approaches, and only provided assessment of a current situation. After the year 2000, Russian policy has become more proactive. The consequences of events of the first half of 2014 in Ukraine (inclusion of Crimea in the Russian Federation, the separatist movement in the east of the country) became the starting point for the changes in the geopolitical map of the western part of the post-Soviet space. This gives reason to believe that the year 2014 was the beginning of a new phase in foreign policy. In addition, the elections in the U.S., EU countries, and a number of post-Soviet states, as well as the exit of Great Britain from the EU and war in Syria also became new defining points in planning the current foreign policy of Russia¹. However, at this time, the content of this new phase is not clear, and it is still premature to analyze its reflection in the Russian foreign policy in an integrated, comprehensive manner.

Russia has begun to show new foreign policy initiatives for the long-term². Official Moscow, including the Moscow elite, feels the need for democratization, strong property rights, and impartial courts. However, there is evidence of electoral polarization or asymmetry, similar to the situation, which existed in the U.S.S.R. The regional elites of the conditional "East," which were not in evidence until recently, have consolidated and are relegated to carrying the burden of support for the authorities. Putin is the President of the provinces, unlike Yeltsin. Putin is the President of geographical, as well as social provinces. "Capital" cities offer significantly less support, and in 2018, this will remain unchanged. Today, the situation is frighteningly reminiscent of the Soviet Union on the eve of collapse, when elites from the Eastern republics, accustomed to receiving money from Moscow, advocated the status quo, while the Europeanized west understood that it is impossible to proceed further in that way and that there need to be radical changes. Moscow then introduced new approaches to the integration and security, it initiated new forms of cooperation and presented projects for bailing out its immediate neighbors from the economic crisis.

¹ See: A. Ivakhnik, "Geert Wilders—gollandskiy Trump. Predvybornaya rasstanovka v Niderlandakh," available at [<http://politcom.ru/22113.html>], 2 March, 2017; I. Karabulatova, B. Akhmetova, K. Shagbanova, E. Loskutova, F. Sayfulina, L. Zamalieva, I. Dyukov, M. Vykhristyuk, "Shaping Positive Identity in the Context of Ethnocultural Information Security in the Struggle against the Islamic State," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 1, 2016, pp. 84-92.

² See: A. Ivakhnik, "Dmitrii Oreshkin: 'Dolgosrochnym rezul'tatom prezidentskikh vyborov budet narastanie razdrzhenia i apatii, a mozhet byt, dazhe i agressii,'" available at [<http://politcom.ru/22148.html>], 5 March, 2017.

For the Russian society, 2016 became the year of depression and fatigue. The euphoria of 2014 was a thing of the past. In 2015, there came a feeling of tangible disappointment about the ability to effectively use Western sanctions to stimulate economic growth by using protectionist policies (so-called “contra-sanctions”). The rise in the agro-industrial sector is due to the deterioration in the quality of products, whereas the overall rate of industrial growth is sufficient only for transition from recession to stagnation. It has become apparent that the “bounce” in oil prices will not occur in the near future and reliance on economic convergence with China is becoming all the more problematic—China is perceived not only as a partner, but also as a potential threat.

The whole of the 2016 has passed in the atmosphere of depressing tendencies, growth of fatigue in society and political apathy. At the same time, the United Russia party was able to win decisively in parliamentary elections, and Donald Trump’s victory in the U.S. gave hope for the discharge of tensions in foreign relations. All of this together significantly affects the defense planning of the Russian Federation.

Methods and Materials

The theoretical development of the question of integration in literature, both Russian and foreign, is based on different approaches and interpretation of the given term. The empirical material is also available to furnish information on integration processes in the world.

On the subject of a discourse on the foreign policy of the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet space, the works of such Russian authors as N.K. Arbatova, E.G. Baranovskiy, N.N. Vladislavleva, R.T. Mukhaev, V.B. Kniazhinskiy, and Yu. Nikitin³ are of interest. Bearing in mind the general conceptual provisions of different theories on integration, as well as the fact that the integration projects of Moscow are focused on Western European experience, the present publication views integration as a process, in which the principle of supranationality implies the creation of a supranational institute and the transfer to it a part of the state’s competencies. The orientation of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation is geared toward the expected result. The former orientation toward the EU, as a model of integration, has been proven to be unproductive. Integration, in the understanding of the Russian leadership, as it is presented in the statements of Russian officials and in official foreign policy documents, is the process of “convergence” of countries, interested in the adoption of common standards in different spheres.

Results

The growing influence of the Internet in the information process and active development of currently virtually unregulated social networks complicate the task of administering the information flow in the planning of foreign policy. In these conditions, the only possible way to remain the main regulator of interpreting events is the use of political rhetoric of electronic-information society. Thus,

³ See: *Evropeiskiy soiuz i regionalnye konflikty*, ed. by N.K. Arbatova, M.N. Kokeev, IMEMO RAS, Moscow, 2011, 143 pp.; E.G. Baranovskiy, N.N. Vladislavleva, *Metody analiza mezhdunarodnykh konfliktov*, Nauchnaia kniga, Moscow, 2002, 240 pp.; R.T. Mukhaev, *Geopolitika*, Yuniti-Dana, Moscow, 2010, 839 pp.; V.B. Kniazhinskiy, V.M. Potapov, N.Yu. Dubinina, et al., *Zapadnoevropeiskaia integratsia: proekty i realnost*, ed. by V.B. Kniazhinskiy, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, Moscow, 1986, 205 pp.; Yu. Nikitina, “Ot integratsii k regionalizmu: evoliutsia teorii regionalnogo mezhdunarodnogo sotrudnichestva,” *Vestnik MGIMO-Universitet*, No. 6 (15), 2010, pp. 134-139.

the legitimacy of a politician, as well as the existing political regime itself, largely depend on political communication and discursive strategies in a crisis.

The evolution of conceptual approaches of Russian policy regarding the post-Soviet countries has its roots in political and psychological perception of Moscow in regards to the former Union republics. After 2000, in official statements, there appeared definitions of Eurasian space and Eurasia, applied in the context of certain structures of cooperation (EurAsEC [Eurasian Economic Community], CES [Common Economic Space]). In the process of finding a discourse, capable of re-connecting states, the leadership in Moscow was gradually abandoning Soviet terminology. The official documents refer to a growing number of institutional structures of cooperation. In the Russian policy, the same cooperation projects (more precisely, the terms defining these structures) have been approached several times (Customs Union, the Economic Union), but only implemented depending on the extent to which this has been facilitated by external factors.

The Russian leadership in the post-Soviet space acts in several institutional directions: the wide format of the CIS, some narrower organizations (Customs Union, EurAsEC and CSTO), and supports the existence of the de facto frozen Union state of Belarus and Russia. At the same time, efforts were made to establish bilateral relations with a view to engage in their projects the “Common Neighbors”—Moldova and Ukraine. These attempts can be recorded up until 2013-2014. At present, the situation is changed and the rhetoric and policy in respect to those states is also changed, especially regarding Ukraine; new emphasis is being used in the discourse concerning Belarus, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Among the tools of foreign policy, applied to the “near abroad countries,” the negative ones are dominant: refusal of providing privileges in the form of cheap resources, transfers of military equipment, political support, etc. These tools are effective in relations with countries that have weak economies and are partly dependent on Russia (Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine) and with countries with a strong central authority and the lack of institutions for its control (Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). However, they are effective only in the short term, after which the states begin to gravitate to another integration center—the EU, which uses positive foreign policy tools that we are observing in the situation with Ukraine, partly in Belarus; meantime, Kazakhstan is leaning more and more toward the countries of the Persian Gulf, Azerbaijan—toward Turkey. These trends cannot but disturb Russia. A new twist was the development of relations between the Russian Federation and nascent government of Kyrgyzstan, which decided to orient itself toward Russia⁴. The President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, paid a visit, in early March, to the three Central Asian republics in order to seek a solution to a whole set of issues: economic, cultural, humanitarian, and, mainly, the one related to security.

The situation in Crimea and the East of Ukraine began to develop as a single scenario, however, at some point the expected implementation of the “Crimean scenario” for DNR and LNR was suspended. The post-Soviet area is not only the priority of Russian foreign policy, but a part of the tactic in respect to other international actors, such as the EU and U.S. For Russia, the implementation of its interests in the post-Soviet realm is directly linked to its position in the international arena. The deterioration of political positions in the post-Soviet countries is perceived as detrimental to the international stature of the Russian Federation.

Problems of cooperation between Russia and the EU in the post-Soviet space are reduced to inertia due to the lack of both new dynamic impulses and political will on both sides for their solution. The big role is played by misperceptions and mistrust of each other, formed during the Cold War.

⁴ See: “U Putina v Tsentralnoi Azii vse ‘skhvacheno’,” Rosbalt, 3 March, 2017, available at [<http://www.rosbalt.ru/world/2017/03/03/1596033.html>], 5 March, 2017.

The vulnerability of Russia to the initiated sanctions is understandable in that the liberal paradigm predicted the exploitation of the model of consumption of the finished Western products, technologies and services in lieu of the influx of petrodollars entering the country's economy. This policy predetermined the increased level of dependency on external agents. Therefore, the sanctions, on the one hand, indicated the severe level of dependence on the Western world and inherent vulnerability of the state. On the other hand, they could have provided the potential chance for the consolidation of society and enhancement of sovereignty.

Table 1

**The Index of Developmental Goals and Architecture of the Policy
for Increasing the Sovereignty of Russia**

Target Setting	Measures to Implement
Self-sufficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —production of means of production; —production of consumption goods; —innovative products; —investments in the real sector of the economy.
Social stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —growth of real incomes of the population; —low inflation; —stability of the national currency rate; —lack of social stratification, equitable redistribution of resources; —security of accumulated savings in the banking system; —social policy: transparency of pension payments and insurance.
The adequacy of investments in the economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —public investment in major infrastructure projects aimed at the development of the country; —foreign investment only in the priority industry and limits on rent income; —private investment through the availability of credit; —waiver of storage of Russian foreign exchange reserves in securities of the Western countries.
Stability of the financial system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —the Bank of Russia must not be conductor of the will of the IMF; —the main task of the Central Bank is to conduct monetary policy, stimulating economic growth in the country; —the Central Bank provides stability of the Russian ruble; —the Bank of Russia serves the interests of the national security of Russia and not the interests of the foreign state; —adopting measures to prevent capital outflows.
The security of banking operations and Russian assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —the growth of gold in the structure of the international reserves; —the investment of reserves and international reserves in the real sector of the Russian economy; —development of own payment cards as an alternative to the two largest players—Visa and MasterCard;

Table 1 (continued)

Target Setting	Measures to Implement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —the use of national system in internal settlements to replace services of SWIFT; —expansion of the use of the ruble in international settlements.
Diversification of foreign trade activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —changing the structure of exports in favor of the science-intensive production, machines and equipment; —expansion of trading partners base interested in Russian science-intensive exports; —abandoning the model of a susceptible state, in which Russia serves the interests of the foreign capital or foreign consumer (China's example).

This was precisely the set of measures, which should have been implemented in the country to counter the external agents and reduce desovereignization. In other words, the sanctions became a chance for Russia, not the verdict. In the new version of the foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation, the statement on the desire of Russia to work on liberalization of the visa regime with the U.S., which was contained in the document of 2013, is no longer there.⁵

In the published document it is also stated that Russia is categorically against “attempts to interfere in the domestic affairs of States with the aim of unconstitutional change of regime using both soft power (in particular, media) and terrorist and extremist groups.”

Discussion

The array of studies, which address the problems of political influence of global and regional actors on the post-Soviet political process, is large enough.⁶ Although the study of many of the authors had a contractual character, they made a significant contribution to the examination of specific political characteristics of such important regional developments as the Russian-Ukrainian, Kazakhstan-Chinese, Russian-Belorussian, Russian-Tajik relations and attitudes, the Chechen campaign, etc.

Among the Russian authors, it is worthwhile to note works, in which the subject of research was the periodization of development of the post-Soviet regional system and the integration processes within it. Among them are the works of L.B. Vardomskiy, R.S. Grinberg,⁷ L.S. Kosikova,⁸ A.V. Mal-

⁵ See: *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, available at [http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/2542248], 4 March, 2017.

⁶ See: A. Shadzhe, I. Karabulatova, R. Khunagov, Z. Zhade, “Ethnopolitical Influence in Regulating National Security in Border Territories of the Countries in the Caucasian-Caspian Region,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 3, 2016, pp. 66-75.

⁷ See: R. Grinberg, L. Vardomskiy, *Desiat let posle raspada SSSR: nekotorye rezultaty i perspektivy evoliutsii prostranstva SNG*, The Ekspertiza Round Table Report *Post-Soviet Space: Ten Years Later* at the Conference organized by the Gorbachev Foundation, 6 September, 2001, available at [http://www.gorby.ru/activity/conference/show_77/view_26373/].

⁸ See: L. Kosikova, *Integratsionnye proekty Rossii na postsovietskoye prostranstvo: idei i praktika*, Report to the Academic Council of the Department of World Economy and Political Research, Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 2008, 66 pp.; idem, “Region SNG na novom etape razvitiya i problemy strategii i politiki Rossii,” in: *Postsovietskoye prostranstvo: realii i perspektivy*, ed. by B. Shmelev, Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 2009, pp. 115-142.

gin. This question was addressed by M. Weber, T. Parsons, D. Colas, M.V. Ilyin, A.Yu. Melvil, A.I. Soloviev, S.Yu. Chumikova, A.V. Skiperskikh, E.V. Reutov, T. van Leeuwen.⁹ Problems of crisis situations in politics and society were investigated by G.G. Pocheptsov E.Yu. Kanaeva, I.V. Mkrumova, I.S. Karabulatova, W. Benoit, J.B. Thompson.¹⁰

The term “post-Soviet space” is applicable as an umbrella concept for countries that share the common history of coexistence within a single state.¹¹ However, this territory is no longer a geopolitical monolith—there have been significant schisms. The concept of space indicates a presence of some significant homogeneity among the states of the given territories, but the post-Soviet area becomes more and more heterogeneous with the passage of time.

T.A. Alekseeva, considering the foreign political processes of the countries of the post-Soviet world, notes their similarity in the communication process with the Russian Federation.¹² The uncertainty and incoherence¹³ are the dominant features of their foreign policies. Uncertainty generates instability and distrust of neighbors, resulting in tension and regional conflicts.

Conclusion

In the Russian foreign policy, the goals and objectives, reserved for the post-Soviet countries, have remained practically unchanged for almost 25 years: to build close relationships, assert its own influence and not allow the extraneous presence of third parties in the area. Evolved were some policy emphases: the terms that define the post-Soviet space, institutions, and spheres of cooperation. The evidence of the extreme importance for the Kremlin of the Asian question is the fact that last year Putin twice visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and hosted the Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen presidents. There were also many meetings of a multilateral format. Moreover, elections are coming to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, and Russia is extremely interested in the “adequacy” of the new or old-new power in these republics. Today, it is more productive to create local alliances and develop strategies in the regional areas—the Caucasus, Europe and Central Asia—taking into account

⁹ See: D. Colas, *Sociologie politique*, Presses Universitaires de France, 2006; A.Yu. Melvil, *et al.*, *Politologia*, A Textbook, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University), Russia’s Foreign Ministry, Prospekt Publishers, Moscow, 2013; A.I. Soloviev, *Politologia: politicheskaia teoria, politicheskie tekhnologii*, A Textbook, Aspekt Press, Moscow, 2000; S.Yu. Chumikova, *Politicheskaia kommunikatsia kak resurs legitimnosti zakonodatelnoi vlasti sub’ekta Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Abstract of the thesis on political science, Moscow, 2007; A.V. Skiperskikh, “Legitimsia vlasti v teoreticheskikh postroeniakh rossiiskogo i zarubeznogo politicheskogo diskursa,” *Nauchnye vedomosti Belgorodskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, No. 8 (4), 2007; T. van Leeuwen, “Legitimation in Discourse and Communication,” *Discourse and Communication*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007.

¹⁰ See: G.G. Pocheptsov, *Propaganda i kontrpropaganda*, Tsentr Publishers, Moscow, 2004; E.Yu. Kanaeva, “Institut vlasti v sovremennom obshchestve: problemy legitimatsii i delegitimatitsii (‘krizisa legitimnosti’) vlasti,” *Vestnik Universiteta (Gosudarstvennyi universitet upravleniia)*, No. 4, 2012; M.Yu. Milovanova, “Sotsialnye resursy grazhdanskogo protesta v sovremennoi Rossii,” *Obshchestvo: politika, ekonomika, pravo*, No. 3, 2012; I. Mkrumova, I. Karabulatova, A. Zinchenko, “Political Extremism of the Youth as an Ethnosocial Deviation in the Post-Soviet Electronic Information Society,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 4, 2016, pp. 79-87; W.L. Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologia: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies*, State University of N.Y. Press, Albany, 1995; J.B. Thompson, *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 2000.

¹¹ See: V. Egorov, “Postsovietskoe prostranstvo kak predmet nauchnogo osmyslenia,” *Obozrevatel*, No. 9, 2011, p. 55.

¹² See: T.A. Alekseeva, A.A. Kazantsev, *Vneshnepoliticheskii protsess. Sravnitelnyi analiz*, Aspekt Press, Moscow, 2012, p. 16.

¹³ See: G. Osipov, I. Karabulatova, G. Shafranov-Kutsev, L. Kononova, B. Akhmetova, E. Loskutova, G. Niyazova, “Ethnic Trauma and its Echo in Today’s Mental Picture of the World among the Peoples of the Post-Soviet States: An Interethnic Conflicting Discourse Unfolding in Russia’s Ethnolinguistic Information Region,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 2, 2016, pp. 87-94.

the chosen sphere of interaction. The pronounced heterogeneity of the post-Soviet states requires Russia to create an individual policy for each and every one of them. Among Russian interests in the foreign policy planning there are: a clause for providing security in order to prevent any military and political confrontation; the dynamic stability of development of the international political and economic situation; as well as the intensification of communication channels with the post-Soviet states and the growth of economic presence in the non-energy areas of the countries of the region.

The analysis of the content of foreign policy planning in the context of globalization made it possible to determine the role of foreign policy planning as a tool for the retention of political power and providing the environment for stimulating the effectiveness of the mechanism for ensuring national security.
