The purpose of this essay review is to explore the foreign policy discourse in contemporary Russia. The argument is made that Russian foreign policy is still open to the influence of ideas across the political spectrum and that examining the discourse extant in the society is useful in revealing the country’s competing schools of thought. Four schools of thought are identified that have different definitions of security and different policy goals. After defining the four schools’ security assumptions, attention is directed toward analyzing the images each has of Russia as an international actor and about Russia’s international environment. The essay concludes with a consideration of the grand strategies that follow from each school’s proposals and offers a preliminary assessment of the possible evolution of Russian foreign policy drawing on the relative status of each school.

The word “Russia” has become soiled and tattered…. it is involved freely in all sorts of inappropriate contexts. Thus when the monster-like USSR was lunging for chunks of Asia and Africa, the reaction the world over was: “Russia, the Russians”…. What exactly is Russia? Today, now? And—more importantly—tomorrow? Who, today, considers himself part of the future Russia? And where do Russians themselves see the boundaries of their land? (Solzhenitsyn 1990:11)

With the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev’s policy of glasnost (or new thinking), Russians began to debate foreign policy issues. A striking characteristic of these, ongoing debates is the degree of their depth and scope. Their focus in not only current foreign policy interests but also the very historical and cultural foundations upon which those interests were built during the Soviet era. Gorbachev questioned these foundations in a fundamental way, thereby triggering the process of reformulating Russia’s cultural identity.

Recent events—the end of the Cold War, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and the breakup of the USSR—have reinforced the
necessity to rethink the historical and cultural bases of Russian foreign policy. As James Richter (1996:69) has observed, given that Russia is a new state with new borders and neighbors, it “has no authoritative history of foreign relations upon which to define its international role.” As a result, a number of questions have surfaced regarding the direction its foreign policy should take. What kind of Russia has been born in the aftermath of the dramatic changes of the 1990s? What sort of interactions should Russia pursue in the international arena? What are the odds that Russia can succeed in establishing new relationships with the outside world without any experience with democratic rule? These questions center around issues of national identity more than national interests. As Eugene Rumer (1994: viii) has noted, no military doctrine or national security strategy will endure until and unless the question concerning “what Russia is without the Soviet Union and without the Russian Empire” is answered. It is not surprising, therefore, that in their treatments of national security issues, most Russian foreign policy analysts examine military and economic capabilities in a broader cultural context and include in their discussions such topics as Russian geopolitical priorities, its imperial tradition, and its national character (see, for example, Tsygankov and Tsygankov 1992; Kliamkin 1994:107; Teague 1994:82–85; Volkov 1994:201).

Russia’s identity crisis has made it difficult to formulate and pursue a clear and consistent policy toward the outside world. In the words of Bruce Porter (1996: 121), “by every possible measure Russian foreign policy from 1991 until at least the fall of 1993 was sorely lacking in coherence, design, and a sense of strategy.” During the last several years, however, Russian foreign policy has become more assertive as the government has (1) pursued a hegemonic role in the former Soviet region and (2) displayed a decreased willingness to give concessions to the West (see, for example, Crow 1994; Richter 1996). But the process of reformulating Russia’s identity is still far from complete. Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that Russia’s domestic and international environments have become highly fluid in the “era of global uncertainty” that has replaced the bipolar era (Pitzl 1997). “Nowhere is there a defining issue or priority, something that pulls us all together, focuses our thinking, clarifies the present and the future, provides consensus on where the world goes from here. Confusion prevails. There is no new order, only disorder” (Pitzl 1997:3).

The fact that Russian foreign policy is still open to the influence of ideas across the political spectrum poses a dilemma for those studying contemporary Russia. The type of identity that will eventually be chosen remains an open question. As a result, some analytic tools may prove less appropriate than others for studying current Russian foreign policy. Focusing on the belief systems of the ruling elites may be less reliable during the present period of rapid change than an analysis of the whole spectrum of existing foreign policy views. Examining the discourse extant in the society is useful in revealing the country’s competing identities or schools of thought.

The purpose of this essay is to explore the foreign policy discourse in contemporary Russia. Discourse analysis assumes that:

> theoretical inquiry into international relations is . . . philosophical in character. It does not lead to cumulative knowledge after the manner of natural science. Confronted by a controversy . . . we may identify the assumptions that are made in each camp, probe them, juxtapose them, relate them to circumstances, but we cannot expect to settle the controversy except provisionally, on the basis of assumptions of our own that are themselves open to debate. (Bull 1992:xxi)

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2Such an approach was particularly common in studies of Soviet foreign policy (see, for example, Leites 1953; Adomeit 1982; Katz 1982; Breslauer and Tetlock 1991).
Therefore, while not offering an explanatory model or generating new hypotheses, this review is intended to provide insights into the nature of current Russian foreign policy debates and their policy implications. It may also serve as a point of departure for those interested in building explanatory models of the role of culture and ideas in foreign policy.

The essay has the following organization. It begins by identifying the four schools of thought on foreign policy currently extant in Russia, focusing on their definitions of security, the policy implications of these definitions, and the relative status of each school in the ongoing policy debates. After defining the four schools’ security assumptions, attention is directed toward analyzing the images each school has of Russia as an international actor and about Russia’s external environment. The final section is devoted to the grand strategies that follow from each school’s proposals. A preliminary assessment of the possible evolution of Russian foreign policy drawing on the relative status of each school is offered in the conclusion.

Identifying Russian Schools of Thought

Martin Wight (1992:7–8) observed that there were three theoretical traditions among scholars studying international relations: those who emphasized international anarchy, the realists; those who concentrated on international interactions, the rationalists; and those who focused on international society, the revolutionists. Wight saw rationalism as the civilizing force in international politics, revolutionism as providing revitalization to the international system, and realism as focused on control. These three Rs of international relations show a striking parallel to the schools of thought on foreign policy found in Russia today.

An examination of what scholars, foreign policy analysts, bureaucrats, and the media are writing about national security issues in contemporary Russia yields three schools of thought: the international institutionalists or “mutual security” school, the realists or “balance of power” school, and the revolutionary expansionists or the “security through expansion” school.\(^3\) Before describing each of these schools in more detail, a caveat is in order. While the typology offered here serves an important analytic purpose, the schools represent “ideal types.” The materials that were studied indicated these clusters of ideas even though no one writer was a perfect fit to what is described below. Following Wight’s (1992:xiii) observation that even Machiavelli was not in the strictest sense a Machiavellian, the persons linked to the various schools expressed ideas more in line with that school than with the others.

International Institutionalism

International institutionalism is closely associated with Gorbachev’s New Thinking, which was particularly influential in Soviet Russia from 1987 to 1990. In accordance with this worldview, captured in such phrases as “values common to all mankind,” “global problems,” and “interdependence,” a new conceptualization of national security arose that gave first priority to international cooperation. Security, Gorbachev argued, must be mutual, especially in the context of U.S.-Soviet

\(^3\)Applying Western concepts, such as realism and rationalism, in a non-Western context, of course, has its costs. Such an application should be treated as an analytical exercise for the purpose of classifying Russian foreign policy schools of thought in a way that will communicate across cultures. This process will not be able to capture what is culturally specific or unique to Russia. The author is grateful to John Odell for drawing attention to this point.
relations, because if one side was insecure the other side would be too. The presence of large nuclear arsenals and the threat of mutual destruction also contributed to this view but were not the only reasons for pursuing the notion of “mutual security.” Increased economic interdependence demanded such a focus (see, for example, Holloway 1988/89; Gorbachev 1991; Checkel 1993). In practice, New Thinking generated a pro-Western policy. The expectation of the Gorbachev regime was that through cooperation with the West, Russia would become an active participant in international economic and political organizations, thereby providing itself with a new basis for security.

Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the leaders of Russia generally also accepted the premises of New Thinking. Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Russia’s new foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, stated that with the end of the Cold War Russia was no longer threatened from abroad. They announced that Russia would engage in a partnership with the West based on such shared values as democracy, human rights, and a free market. The Western countries, it was claimed, were “natural allies of Russia” (Kozyrev 1992a, 1992b). The underlying logic of these proposals was that since Russia was no longer threatened from abroad, the main challenges to its security were located inside its borders (Gaidar 1993; Izbiratelnoye Ob’edineniye 1993:17; Kozyrev 1993; Furman 1995; Gaidar 1995). More specifically, to cope with domestic challenges Russia must build a modern economy and democratic political system, and these necessitated a partnership with the West. As Kozyrev (1995:48) put it, “foreign policy is a tool for advancing Russia’s reforms.” (For similar thoughts, see Bazhanov 1991; Zagorskii et al. 1992; Dashichev 1993; Kliamkin 1994:107; Kliamkin and Kutkovets 1996).

As a school of thought, international institutionalism is in its infancy. It has almost no precedents in the history of Russian foreign policy. Indeed, it is primarily based on the ideas of disarmament, global ecology, and international economic interdependence that were formulated in the West during the Cold War. In the Soviet Union, these ideas were articulated by individual academic specialists in research institutions such as the Academy of Sciences’ Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) (Checkel 1993). In their most radical form, these ideas were expressed by Andrei Sakharov in his book Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom (1968). In a certain sense, international institutionalism serves as a continuation of Nikita Khrushchev’s—and to a lesser extent Leonid Brezhnev’s—attempts to improve relations between the United States and the Soviet Union (Shevardnadze 1989).

International institutionalism was an important breakthrough in Russian foreign policy (Proriv 1988), yet it did not last long as an official philosophy. In 1993–1994 as a result of certain international events and growing domestic criticism, this philosophy was abandoned as official foreign policy (Crow 1994; Simes 1994; Tsygankov 1995). Its demise was signaled by the sharply changed rhetoric of Kozyrev at the end of 1994 and his eventual resignation as foreign minister (Tsygankov 1995; Abarinov 1996). Faced with such new challenges as military conflicts in the Russian periphery and within Russia (Chechnya), the semihostile attitudes of some of the former Soviet republics toward Russia, NATO expansion, and the flare-up in the Balkans, those advocating international institutionalism were unable to offer a conceptual perspective on how the country should meet them. Their grand strategy involving the development of a deep, multisided partnership with the West had turned out to be flawed (Brzezinski 1994; Pushkov 1995). As a result, international institutionalism has been challenged by other foreign policy schools of thought.
Realism: Aggressive and Defensive

Realism with its focus on the balance of power has been a traditionally strong school of thought in Russia since pre-Soviet times. In a certain sense, Russia has always been engaged in balancing as well as expansion in its foreign policy behavior. During the Soviet era, the balance of power school argued that the country did not have sufficient military and economic capabilities for undertaking far-reaching geopolitical expansion and, therefore, should limit itself to balancing activities. Joseph Stalin’s doctrine of “socialism in one country” was in some ways a recognition of this fact; under his leadership there was an increased focus on developing military and economic capabilities rather than sacrificing them for world revolution or world socialism. Lenin’s pragmatic course at Brest-Litovsk and Stalin’s deal with Adolph Hitler can also be interpreted as acknowledgement of the need to increase or, at the least, maintain domestic power capabilities (Malia 1994:44). The Soviet doctrine of “correlation of forces” was a continuation of this policy and focused on balancing and containment as much as external expansion.

The balance of power definition of security is radically different from the definition proposed by the international institutionalists. To a large extent, the balance of power definition is close to the one pursued by Western realists. Just like Western realists, Russian realists emphasize the importance of power in the form of control, domination, and conflict and deemphasize the elements of cooperation and regeneration that are also aspects of international relations (Tickner 1995). In accordance with realist assumptions, individual states work hard to increase their military and economic capabilities in order to gain the capacity to deter potential aggressors and to provide themselves with security. Security results from balancing rather than international cooperation; it is based on a state’s individual strength rather than on collective efforts; and its major goals are the maintenance of the existing balance of power and geopolitical stability rather than upsetting these for the purpose of transformation (Sultanov 1992a, 1992b; Abalkin 1994; Akopov 1994; Pozdniakov 1994a, 1994b; Zyuganov 1995b:27, 65–72). “One power’s security is another power’s insecurity.... Security is . . . a relational concept: security against whom?” (Wight 1992:114).

Russian realists, or supporters of balance of power thinking, can be divided into two groups: aggressive and defensive realists. Both accept that security is normally the strongest motivation of states existing in international anarchy but they have opposing views about the most effective way to achieve it. Aggressive realists assert that offensive action can contribute to security, whereas defensive realists contend that it cannot. Indeed, the differences between aggressive and defensive realists suggest that these are two distinctive schools of thought rather than one. Let us examine each group in more detail.

**Aggressive Realists.** Aggressive realists are those who opposed Gorbachev’s New Thinking policy from the time of its appearance. They generally viewed the doctrine of deterrence as the most appropriate way of dealing with the United States and Western countries and of protecting Russian security interests. Gorbachev and his team were vehemently criticized as servants of the West and as traitors to Russian national interests (Krasnov and Nikolaiev 1991; Sultanov 1992a; Strategicheskaia izmena 1993; Ovinnikov 1994; Zyuganov 1994; Tille 1995). Aggressive

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4 For Western realists, power is “defined in terms of distribution of capabilities” (Waltz 1979:192), specifically “military, economic, and technological capabilities” (Gilpin 1981:13).

5 This differentiation is adopted from Jack Snyder (1991).
realists are on the right side of the political spectrum and are conservative. They have formed the hard-line opposition to both Gorbachev’s and Yeltsin’s reforms.

Aggressive realists favor Russia’s moderate expansion beyond its current borders. They build on the Brezhnev doctrine’s principle of limited sovereignty that provided the rationale for Soviet intervention into Eastern Europe. The emphasis among post-Soviet aggressive realists is on expansion beyond Russia’s current territory. They want the Soviet Union to be restored because that is the only way to maintain the world balance of power, or equilibrium. Today, the most active promoters of aggressive realism are those politically and intellectually close to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF). Gennadi Zyuganov, the leader of the CPRF, is one of the more prominent spokespersons for this view (Zyuganov 1993a, 1993b, 1995a, 1995b).

**Defensive Realists.** This second group of realists formed as a reaction to the foreign policy of the post-Soviet regime that, during 1991–1992, was in many respects similar to Gorbachev’s New Thinking. While conceptually like aggressive realism in terms of how security is defined, there are several major distinctions between the two groups. The most important difference is that defensive realists came of age after the Cold War was over and the Soviet Union had collapsed. Unlike aggressive realists, this group is much more critical of Soviet foreign policy. Rather than putting all the blame on the West as aggressive realists tend to do, they argue that there was equal and mutual responsibility for the unfolding of the Cold War (Kovalev 1996). In fact, a number of the defensive realists supported Gorbachev’s New Thinking as it was emerging in 1986–1987.

Politically, this group is neoconservative, both because they generally defend conservative principles in the post-Soviet period and because they at times apply this label to themselves (see, for example, Panarin 1993b:68, 1995a:68, 1995b:13; Kara-Murza, Panarin, and Pantin 1995:17). While sharing with the aggressive realists an interest in the reintegration of the former Soviet territory, defensive realists disagree that such a reintegration should be implemented by the use of force. The idea of reestablishing and consolidating Russia’s exclusive sphere of influence throughout the former Soviet Union without military intervention has supplanted the recognition of the independence and sovereignty of the former Soviet republics. This policy has been called the “Yeltsin doctrine” by some observers (Rumer 1994:34). Since 1994, defensive realists have dominated the intellectual debates over foreign policy in Russia and have played a major role in shaping policy.

**Revolutionary Expansionism**

The fourth school of thought considers external expansion as the best way to ensure Russian security. Much like aggressive realism, this school is intellectually and politically rooted in the Soviet and pre-Soviet periods. Unlike the realists, however, expansionists are influenced by the most radical doctrines of foreign policy expansion. This influence can be traced back to the Lenin-Trotsky call for world revolution. Politically, expansionists are on the extreme right side of the political spectrum. Unlike supporters of “balance of power” who portray themselves as adherents of conservative beliefs such as the call for cultural, religious, and social stability (Kurginian 1991; Panarin 1995a), expansionists advocate the notion of a “conservative revolution” (Dugin 1992a, 1992b; Shtepa 1992a, 1992b). They argue that to be conservative is not enough.

Conservative revolutionaries support in principle the ideal and “positive” side of the Right—that is, the ideas of tradition, hierarchy, statism, nationalism, the intimate
This school takes its theoretical inspiration from geopolitical theories, both Western and domestic (Dugin 1994, 1996a). Unlike balance of power supporters, expansionists are not concerned with the maintenance of stability; they perceive Russian interests as being secured only by expansion beyond Russia’s western and eastern borders (Rossiia i prostranstvo 1993). And unlike international institutionalists, expansionists have no respect for institutionally based cooperation as a way of achieving security goals. The need to expand is explained by the geopolitical vacuum that was created by the end of the Cold War. It has to be filled by Russia before it is filled by a hostile power (Rossiia i prostranstvo 1993:33–34).

The influence of this school of thought is marginal at present. Having emerged at the end of the 1980s, it has not managed to attract much political attention to its major ideas. The only exception to this marginality is Vladimir Zhirinovsky (1993), the high-profile extreme nationalist, who has expressed an interest in widespread territorial expansion. He, however, did not gain his popularity as a result of his adherence to these ideas but rather because of his promises to fight organized crime and economic corruption and the Russian voters’ disappointment with Yeltsin’s policies (Savin and Smagin 1993; Tsygankov 1994; Yanov 1994). Recently the language of the expansionists has been gaining influence, particularly the notions of Eurasia, geopolitics, the Eurasianists, and the Atlanticists that they introduced into Russian political discourse at the end of the 1980s in their weekly Den’ (The Day).

**Images of Russia**

Each school of thought has its own image of what a stable and secure Russia should look like, and each school is doing its best to promote these images through its writings. Table 1 summarizes these images across the four foreign policy schools of thought.

**International Institutionalism**

For international institutionalists, Russia is culturally and historically part of Western civilization. The fact that in the 1920s Russia rejected Western values in favor of socialism and rapid modernization is considered the country’s tragedy, catastrophe, or, at best, its deviation from the “true” way of development. Gorbachev’s and Yeltsin’s reforms signify Russia’s return to European civilization. Russia’s belated return is either not explained by the international institutionalists or considered the result of peculiar historical circumstances and not the result of the characteristics of Russia itself (Batkin 1990:287–296; Kozyrev 1992c). The important question, therefore, is not whether Western values of democracy and a market economy are applicable to Russia, but how they should be applied to achieve the fastest and best outcomes (Zagorskii et al. 1992:14–15; Kozyrev 1995:24).

As far as Russia’s political status in world politics is concerned, this school posits that it should be treated as a great power because of its unique geopolitical location, the size of its population, its quantity of economic resources, and its large arsenal of nuclear weapons. As a consequence of these characteristics, some (Kozyrev 1995:39, 51, 266) argue Russia will undoubtedly remain a great power despite the temporary difficulties that have resulted from the end of communist rule.
Others (Bazhanov 1991; Dashichev 1993; Furman 1994, 1995; Gaidar 1995) stress that Russia could lose this status and advocate economic prosperity and political democracy as foreign policy goals. But all agree that Russia is no longer the superpower it was during the Cold War and that it will not be able to return to that position. With the rise of such competitors as Japan, China, and the European Union and the multipolarization of international relations, the world has become a different place and demands new strategies and policies.

To international institutionalists, Russia is viewed as a confederation composed of full-fledged nation-states—the former Soviet republics (with the possible exception of the Baltic states)—that form a federation on a purely voluntary basis as a result of shared histories, economies, and security interests. The internal stability of the confederation is maintained through the mutual respect members have for each other’s independence and sovereignty. This mutual respect is based on democratic norms and members’ market-oriented economic systems (Adamishyn 1994; Kozyrev 1995:175–180).

### Defensive Realism

Defensive realists see Russia as an independent civilization, different from the West in its values and geopolitical mission. Russia’s role is as a great Eurasianist power that stabilizes and organizes the “heartland” of the continent, serving as a buffer between European and non-European civilizations (Stankevich 1992; Goncharov 1993; Panarin 1993a; Samuilov 1994). Defensive realists do not see Russia as necessarily anti-Western. For them, Russia has the geopolitical mission of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>International Institutionalism</th>
<th>Defensive Realism</th>
<th>Aggressive Realism</th>
<th>Revolutionary Expansionism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture</strong></td>
<td>Russia is a Western country.</td>
<td>Russia is a mixture of East and West; a Slav-Turk community.</td>
<td>Russia is a Eurasian, anti-Western country.</td>
<td>Russia is a Eurasian, anti-American country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Status</strong></td>
<td>Normal great power, one of many</td>
<td>Great power, temporarily in crisis</td>
<td>Superpower, one of two</td>
<td>Superpower, one of two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of State</strong></td>
<td>Confederation of nation-states</td>
<td>“Postimperial” state</td>
<td>Stable empire with fixed borders</td>
<td>Constantly expanding empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method of Maintaining Internal Stability</strong></td>
<td>International cooperation on economic and security issues; domestic political democracy and market economy</td>
<td>Leadership in organizing and integrating the CIS; economic and military modernization</td>
<td>High degree of centralization; economic and military modernization; prudent leadership</td>
<td>Permanent geopolitical expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geopolitical Borders</strong></td>
<td>Russian Federation—national borders; former Soviet Union—confederation with possible exception of the Baltic states</td>
<td>Russia—borders with Near Abroad; former Soviet Union—borders with Far Abroad</td>
<td>Former Soviet Union</td>
<td>Much beyond the former Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
maintaining equilibrium between East and West. Russia’s geopolitical mission is to unite “three world faiths, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism” (Kortunov and Kortunov 1994:270). Defensive realists argue that Russia has historically interacted with the West and this interaction has not threatened either its sovereignty or its cultural uniqueness.

The end of the Cold War, and especially the breakup of the Soviet Union, have made it hard for Russia to continue the mission of maintaining world equilibrium. The international system is no longer bipolar; new centers of power—Germany, Turkey, Iran, China, and Japan—are emerging. With the end of bipolarity, the world is becoming an even more dangerous place in which to live. “A multipolar peace is very difficult to keep stable for a long time” (Rogov 1992:4). The collapse of the Soviet Union means that one of the superpowers ceased to exist, thereby undermining the basis for strategic stability (Rogov 1992:4; Bogaturov 1993a). As a result, Russia must remain a great power in order to fulfill its geopolitical responsibility of organizing and stabilizing the Eurasian region (Bogaturov, Kozhokin, and Pleshakov 1992; Stankevich 1992; Chernov 1993; Pliais 1993b).

Because of Russia’s Eurasian mission, defensive realists believe that the former Soviet republics represent vital interests. In fact, Russia “is something more than the Russian Federation” (Ambartsumov as cited in Rumer 1994:33; see also Lukin 1992; Stankevich 1992; Migranian 1994). It has a dual set of borders. The first set connects Russia with the ex-Soviet Republics and comprises what is called the “Near Abroad.” These countries directly influence Russia’s internal political stability. The second set coincides with the former Soviet borders; these borders connect Russia to the “Far Abroad.”

The first borders are not exactly international in the view of the defensive realists because Russia is linked with these newly independent states culturally and economically and is responsible for maintaining order and stability in this area, preferably without the use of force. To carry out this responsibility two conditions must be met: (1) Russia must maintain a strong military with nuclear arsenals, modernized conventional forces, and rapid-reaction forces for crisis situations on its periphery (Borgaturov, Kozhokin, and Pleshakov 1992:39), and (2) the borders must remain transparent (Stankevich 1992). Ideally the states located in the Near Abroad will reintegrate with Russia and it will reacquire its historical borders. Defensive realists know that such a process will take time and urge that Russia abstain from using military force to facilitate its happening (Arbatov 1992; Vozroditia li Soiuz 1996). Until the reintegration occurs, defensive realists advocate that Russia maintain peace and stability by directing a combination of deterrent and cooperative policies toward the Near Abroad and Far Abroad countries and by retaining the status of a postimperial state (Gushchin 1993a, 1993b; Tretiakov 1994; Kovalev 1996:16–17).

Aggressive Realism

Taking a different posture from both the international institutionalists and the defensive realists, the aggressive realists see Russia as culturally an anti-Western state that has almost nothing in common with European culture (Kurginian 1991; Sultanov and Prokhanov 1991; Podberiozkin 1995:21–22). Russia is a Eurasian state, an independent civilization that is autarchic, has a self-sufficient economy, and is generally isolated from the outside world. During its history, imperial Russia managed to achieve a unique sense of culture. Aggressive realists believe that it would be a shame to lose this cultural uniqueness in the name of international cooperation or world civilization. Aggressive realists claim that there is no such
thing as a world civilization or common human values; such concepts merely mask Western global imperial ambitions. The more Russia tries to become a European country, the more it is doomed to lose its independence and uniqueness (Sultanov 1992b; Gumilev 1993; Pozdniakov 1994b:66; Shishkin 1994; Kurginian 1995; Prokhanov 1995; Zyuganov 1995b:56, 57, 94).

Aggressive realists argue that Russia should do everything possible to remain a superpower given that its major task is the maintenance of military and geopolitical balance with the United States, the superpower that represents very different values and is the most threatening to Russia’s interests (Pozdniakov 1992; Zyuganov 1995b:64, 79). Military capabilities are seen as the most important component of national security; Russia cannot afford to sacrifice military capabilities for the sake of other interests. Although significant, economic and technological modernization should be subordinated to military modernization. The Russian government must not attempt to modernize economically and technologically at the risk of weakening, albeit temporarily, the country’s military capability (Sultanov and Prokhanov 1991).

According to aggressive realists, Russia should recover its empire. Imperial organization fits Russian geography and culture (Baburin 1995:174; Kurginian 1995; Prokhanov 1995). The borders of the empire were established in the middle of the twentieth century. Its current configuration, the Russian Federation, is not “historic Russia.” It is, at best, an inferior “little Russia” that is doomed to disintegrate within those unnatural borders. Only a large, historic Russia stands a chance to survive and prosper in this hostile world. Therefore, for the sake of unity and stability, aggressive realists advocate that Russia restore its historic borders—by force if necessary. Imperial stability should be secured by a strong state that has a strict and prudent authoritarian leadership, follows a strategy of deterrence in foreign policy, and is capable of initiating and sponsoring military and economic modernization when necessary (Sultanov and Prokhanov 1991; Sultanov 1992a; Zyuganov 1995a:58, 64).

**Revolutionary Expansionism**

Very much like the aggressive realists, the expansionists see Russia as culturally an anti-Western state. According to this school of thought, maintaining cultural uniqueness is a geopolitical imperative—“the only alternative to Russia’s geopolitical suicide” (Dugin 1996b:6). Unlike aggressive realists, however, the expansionists are particularly hostile toward the American culture. In search of geopolitical allies, expansionists try to pit Europe against the United States. Europe is treated as a part of Eurasia and as a possible ally in the geopolitical struggle between continents. Here Russian expansionists are similar in their views to European philosophers of the right such as Alan Benua, Robert Stoykers, and Jan Tiriar (see Ievraziiskoie soprotivlenie 1992).

Like the aggressive realists, the expansionists defend the notion of a Russian empire. But, whereas the realists interpret empires as involving generally self-sufficient and geopolitically stable territories, the expansionists argue in favor of constant expansion as the only way to survive. They view the logic of world history as the result of a struggle for geopolitical domination between two competing forces. In geopolitical terms, expansionists identify two major transnational actors—the Eurasianists and the Atlanticists (Glivakovskii 1993). Accordingly, the Eurasianist orientation is the one expressed by Russia and Germany, the two strong continental powers whose geopolitical and economic interests and world outlook are in competition with the interests of Great Britain and the United States (Glivakovskii 1993).
As a result of these views, the expansionists advocate further imperial expansion of Russia much beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union. They claim that a future Eurasian empire should include all those who live between Dublin and Vladivostok. As Tiriar (1992a:4, 1992b:5) articulated in Den’, such “European nationalism”—the forming of an “imperial republic united by a political necessity”—would help block the pressure of U.S. imperialism and resolve European and world problems. Russia can no longer be a great power while isolated from European powers. Unlike the aggressive realists, expansionists are prepared to do whatever it takes to expand beyond Russia’s Western and Eastern borders and to resist the United States, considered to be the embodiment of all possible evils (Rossia i prostranstvo 1993).

**Images of the International Environment**

Each of the four schools of thought also has its own image of the contemporary international environment in which Russia finds itself and the extent to which this environment encourages or inhibits Russian national security. Very much like the images of Russia, the images of the international environment differ significantly among the schools. Table 2 summarizes the various images.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>International Institutionalism</th>
<th>Defensive Realism</th>
<th>Aggressive Realism</th>
<th>Revolutionary Expansionism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Hostility</td>
<td>Mostly friendly</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Sources of Hostility</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Conflicts on Russian periphery</td>
<td>Differences in culture and values between Russia and the West</td>
<td>U.S. geopolitical plot against Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause of Soviet Decline</td>
<td>Domestic causes, economic decline</td>
<td>Both domestic and external causes</td>
<td>External causes</td>
<td>External causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Toward Former Soviet Republics</td>
<td>Not threatening</td>
<td>Some are threatening because of internal military and ethnic conflicts</td>
<td>Threatening because are becoming influenced by alien geopolitical powers</td>
<td>Threatening until they are reintegrated into the Russian empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Toward West</td>
<td>Friendly, in favor of cooperation with West</td>
<td>Neutral, or implicitly hostile; can cooperate on some issues</td>
<td>Openly hostile; West is alien culture</td>
<td>Openly hostile toward U.S. but not toward Europe as it may become an ally in Russian-U.S. geopolitical struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Toward East and South</td>
<td>Generally friendly but cool; Russia’s interests are in the West</td>
<td>Neutral; Russia has special interests in East and South</td>
<td>Generally suspicious and hostile, especially toward China</td>
<td>Generally hostile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
International institutionalists perceive the international environment to be generally friendly and not threatening to Russian security. They believe that the Russian government should take advantage of this relative calm and try to integrate itself into what this school of thought calls the “world civilization.” Their argument is that Russia’s isolation from the world is actually becoming a major threat to its security. In this mutually dependent world, all purely national efforts at providing state security are doomed to be insufficient. International cooperation is the only guarantee of national security. With the end of the Cold War and the changing international system, Russia finds itself in a unique set of historical circumstances and must act for its own benefit in the long run (Proriv 1988; Shevardnadze 1989; Gorbachev 1991).

The collapse of the Soviet Union placed these ideas in a new context but did not change them dramatically. In fact, the Soviet breakup is viewed as having the potential to improve Russian security as Russia finally becomes independent from the “evil empire” and is no longer responsible for investing resources into maintaining Soviet totalitarian power (Dashichev 1993). This separation, international institutionalists (Kozyrev 1992c; Zagorskii et al. 1992:23) argue, could facilitate Russia’s partnership with the West, particularly with the United States. With the passing of time, however, the proponents of this school of thought have become disappointed with the prospects for cooperation with the West since Western support has not been as timely or as generous as they had hoped. Their frustration, however, has not changed the international institutionalists’ conclusion that Russia’s main interests are in the West. History has generally demonstrated that cooperation with the West on economic and security issues is necessary to Russian well-being. Such cooperation may be more problematic and take longer, but it remains the best chance Russia has for long-term security. Therefore, participation in NATO’s security program as well as in Western European financial and trade organizations is a good idea. Russia must become actively involved with international institutions in order to reduce internal threats to security (Furman 1995; Gaidar 1995; Kozyrev 1995; Abarinov 1996). This school also perceives that Japan could become an extremely valuable partner once its territorial problem with Russia over the ownership of the Kurile Islands is resolved (Zagorskii et al. 1992:23; Gaidar 1995).

Defensive Realism

Unlike international institutionalists, defensive realists emphasize competition and possible conflict with Western countries. They agree that the West is not interested in keeping Russia a strong competitor in the international arena (Panarin 1995a:69; Pushkov 1995; Lebed’ 1996). The defensive realists are normally highly critical of the views of the international institutionalists, perceiving them as naive in their expectations that the West will embrace Russia based on its pledge to democratize and to become its ally. In fact, the defensive realists argue that the West has demonstrated just the opposite: Western financial support of Russian reforms has turned out to be far different from what was expected; the West has chosen instead to discourage reintegration of the post-Soviet republics and to go ahead with the expansion of NATO (Pushkov 1995).

Unlike the aggressive realists, however, defensive realists do not believe that Western intentions toward Russia are inherently hostile. Rather than being predisposed toward hostile relations with Russia, Western countries are neither malevolent nor benevolent. Furthermore, in the post–Cold War era, these countries are
far from being as united as they used to be; new centers of power, such as Japan and Germany, are emerging—states that are likely to be guided by their own geopolitical interests in the world. Russia’s international environment, then, is neither friendly nor hostile but offers the opportunity for pragmatic cooperation with Western countries based on Russian interests (Lukin 1994). This conclusion is also true when it comes to Russia’s interactions with non-Western states and regions. Neither China nor other countries in the Asian-Pacific region—or, for that matter, the Muslim states—are inherently hostile toward Russia. Indeed, Russia can have balanced relations with all of them (Goncharov 1993; Gusev and Ledenev 1993).

The real threat according to the defensive realists comes not so much from China or the Western states but from the Russian periphery, the former Soviet republics that have emerged as a result of the breakup of the USSR. These republics are not seen as capable of organizing or stabilizing central Eurasia without Russia’s leadership. The inevitable result of their attempts to play such roles will be the escalation of instability in these territories (Bogaturov, Kozhokin, and Pleshakov 1992:32; Karaganov 1992:44). “Russia will have to play an active post-imperial role; if we refuse to play it, it will be imposed on us by history: by waves of refugees, by explosions at chemical plants, etc.” (Karaganov as cited in Kovalev 1996:17). The defensive realists agree with the aggressive realists that the Soviet collapse was not historically inevitable, but, in contrast, are more inclined to blame Russian leaders for what happened rather than invoking a Western conspiracy as the cause of the end of communism. The way to correct the breakup of the Soviet Union, this school argues, is not to appeal to the use of force; it is to seek a gradual reintegration of the countries that formed the USSR. Such a reintegration is the only way to cope with threats to Russia in a post–Cold War world.

**Aggressive Realism**

Aggressive realists see Russia’s external environment as generally hostile to the country’s interests. Unlike the international institutionalists, they believe that the breakup of the Soviet Union and the weakening of Russia were the result of the purposive activity of the West. The Western world, especially the United States, is always looking for opportunities to weaken Russia and to take advantage of its weakness.

> It is not in [the United State’s] interest to have a powerful Eurasian giant, who has kept its unique spiritual capacities, its unique ideal of the Good, its formula of social justice. . . . It is not the first time in history when we need to rely upon ourselves, upon our historical experience, and our physical and moral capacities. (Sultanov and Prokhanov 1991:3; see also Khatsankov 1992; Pozdniakov 1992; Kurginian 1995)

In accordance with this view, just about any Western behavior since the end of the Cold War—from the efforts to expand NATO to the pressure toward START II ratification—can be seen as threatening to Russia and should be rejected. Some collaboration on security issues is possible but only on a strictly equal basis and for the sake of preserving financial resources.

According to this school, the Soviet empire did not break up because of domestic weaknesses as the international institutionalists claim. The real reasons were (1) the inability of the Soviet leadership to think strategically in order to cope with external threats to the stability of the Soviet Union and (2) the actions of the Western countries (Sultanov 1992b). Since the Soviet collapse, the former Soviet republics have been gradually assimilated into the orbit of the Western (Baltics, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova) and Turkish (Caucasus and Central Asian republics) worlds, thereby threatening Russian interests. The only way to
stop this process is to integrate the former republics into a new form of union (Shirgazyn 1994).

Aggressive realists are also suspicious of Russia’s Southern and Eastern international milieus. China, with which Russia has the longest geographic border, is perceived to be especially threatening to Russia’s long-term interests. Thinking in the crude, zero-sum terms of classical geopolitics, aggressive realists are worried about China’s material resources—its territory, the size of its economy, its growing nuclear arsenal, and the rapid growth of its population (Baburin 1995:173–174; Lysenko 1996). The other threatening state is Iran as it, too, possesses large material resources (Shirgazyn 1994; Baburin 1995).

### Revolutionary Expansionism

More than any other Russian foreign policy school of thought the expansionists are guided by traditional geopolitical theories. They divide Russia’s external environment into potential geopolitical enemies and allies. Russia is a continental power and thus should seek allies among other continental powers. Germany is referred to more often than any other state as a possible ally of Russia. Being a continental power, Russia faces sea powers, particularly the United States and Great Britain, that are viewed as enemies. Classical geopolitics is the only way to explain change in the modern world and, according to the expansionists, geopolitics teaches that the Atlantic states are still geographically powerful enough to control most of the world. Unlike the aggressive realists, who predict future disintegration of the world as a result of the decline of the superpowers (Pozdniakov 1992, 1993; Abalkin 1994:12–14; Sultanov 1995), expansionists continue to see a future world as essentially bipolar, divided by the conflict between the major geopolitical rivals—Eurasianists and Atlanticists (Ievraziiiskoie soprotivleniie 1992).

To resist the influence of the sea powers, particularly the United States, Russia must first and foremost restore its strength as the Eurasian power. Expansionists believe that the former Soviet republics are incapable of providing security for what is referred to as the Eurasianist continent—that is, the Eurasianist empire. Russia must organize not only this territory but absorb the area for the sake of its security.

From a purely strategic point of view Russia is equal to Eurasia itself. To prove this, it is enough to say that Russian lands, the Russian population, and Russian industrial-technological development are potentially strong enough to form the basis for continental independence, autarky, and to serve as the foundation for complete continental integration . . . Russia is the “Pivot of History.” . . . Only continental integration of Eurasia with Russia as the center can guarantee to all its peoples and states genuine sovereignty as well as full-scale political and economic autarky. (Rossiia i prostranstvo 1993:31–32)

### Russia’s Alternative Strategies for the Post-Cold War World

#### International Institutionalism

International institutionalists advocate that Russia should stop worrying about external threats to its security and concentrate on resolving a number of domestic problems, such as creating a healthy economy and a democratic political system. Concern over its status as a great power, international institutionalists contend, is essentially a symptom of a deeply rooted inferiority complex that results from Soviet isolation and its obsession with military superiority (Furman 1994, 1995;
Instead of proclaiming its “greatness,” Russia should be preparing for a relative decrease in its status in the world as the confrontational system of international relations yields way to a more nonconfrontational international setting. In such a system, cooperation will become the major tool for resolving international disputes and conflicts; the focus will be on achieving mutually beneficial solutions. Therefore, Russia should be establishing the institutions that are going to be demanded by such a system and stop worrying about its great power status (Zagorskii et al. 1992:12; Furman 1995:9–13).

Having identified domestic problems as the major threat to Russian security, international institutionalists acknowledge the existence of some external threats. Even these threats—most of which are located in the Third World—however, can be dealt with successfully through international institutions and cooperation (Furman 1995:14–15; Gaidar 1995). The maintenance and gradual strengthening of international law as well as cooperation on economic and security issues with the United States and the European states will lead to reliable and legitimate ways of handling these external threats (Furman 1995; Kozyrev 1995). Such countries are not always helpful in providing security on Russia’s periphery, but Russia has, and will continue to have, enough authority to negotiate its security without using military force or economic blackmail. Russia, therefore, does not need ultrapowerful military arsenals to protect itself and should, instead, invest its resources in resolving its domestic problems. In the contemporary interdependent world, the creation of a modern economic and political system for the purpose of gaining full-scale membership in international organizations, not military power and geopolitics, is crucial to providing security for a state like Russia.

**Defensive Realism**

Defensive realists argue that Russia is and must remain a great power. They see Russia as motivated exclusively by its own interests and not by the demands of international institutions. Moreover, defensive realists warn against international activities that may keep Russia from having enough resources to modernize economically and technologically (Bogaturov 1993b; Strategiia dlia Rossii 1994). Russia should pursue power accumulation and the maintenance of its global geopolitical role. Defensive realists urge strongly against any form of isolation.

Today the main threat is that we will go to the other extreme, having once embraced traditional domestic authoritarianism and a policy of confrontation in relations with the outside world. What are we going to do after we shut all the doors? Russia’s neo-isolationism is the road to becoming the “besieged fortress,” with all the negative consequences that implies. (Rogov 1994:3; see also Lukin 1994; Nikonov 1994; Pushkov 1995)

Defensive realists assume that there is the possibility of cooperation, and even partnership, between Russia and the West, especially the United States. This cooperation is, of course, viewed in a very different way from that envisioned by the international institutionalists. The terms of cooperation divide these two schools. There can be a variety of economic and security reasons for engaging in cooperation (Kovalev 1996:20), the defensive realists claim, but in each instance absolute equality must exist between the parties involved in the cooperative acts. Gorbachev’s and Kozyrev’s early foreign policies are harshly criticized because these policies made too many concessions to the West, shifting from the traditional Soviet confrontational approach to becoming more accommodative (Arbatov 1994; Rogov 1994). Rather than being based on common values, Russia’s cooperation with the West must be motivated by common interests (Kovalev 1996).
Because of Russia’s responsibility for maintaining world equilibrium and the balance of power, its cooperation with Western states cannot be as deep and far-reaching as the international institutionalists have proposed. To prevent a coalition from forming against Russia, the government must use balancing tactics when relating to all its foreign partners—Western, Eastern, and Southern—and it must capitalize on the potential conflicts that already exist in world politics, for example, those between the Western and Muslim countries (Lukin 1992; Stankevich 1992; Goncharov 1993; Gusev and Ledenev 1993; Kortunov and Kortunov 1994:271; Nikonov 1994; Samuilov 1994; Panarin 1995c:21–22).

Defensive realists, while generally favoring post-Soviet reintegration of the former Soviet states, resist any attempt to achieve this goal by using force. In addition, rather than trying to resurrect the Soviet Union, they argue in favor of a new form of integration. While they disagree about the form such integration should take—some favor empire (Gushchin 1993a, 1993b) and others confederation (Panarin 1993b:68; Kovalev 1996:15)—they all agree that pushing for any kind of integration by force, would at the moment, be extremely dangerous and destabilizing (Kovalev 1996:15–17).

Aggressive Realism

Unlike the international institutionalists and defensive realists, aggressive realists take external threats to Russian security very seriously and advocate that a restoration of the Soviet empire is the only way to handle these threats. This process, however, can only be gradual because of Russia’s temporary domestic decline and the increasing level of political instability in the world. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union was not predetermined domestically, Russia is potentially strong and can become even stronger if it concentrates on mobilizing its internal resources and abstains from involvement in global military conflicts. The only international activity the Russian government can afford at present is the restoration of the empire. They base these policy recommendations on the following rationale.

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to Russia’s current status as a weak great power. Lacking strong charismatic leadership, the Soviet empire was doomed to collapse. For this reason the United States managed to impose its own rules of the game on the Soviet Union and to win the Cold War (Sultanov 1992b; Kurginian 1995).

The paradox is that the post–Cold War world has led to the economic and geopolitical decline of both previously strong superpowers; indeed, in the near future the United States is doomed to see its power weaken as well. Without an enemy, American civilization cannot exist. The United States was able to cement its domination over the Western alliance because there was a common enemy to confront. Now that the enemy is gone, there is less need for such an alliance and Washington is desperately searching for a new enemy.

The decline of the United States is inevitable given the cyclical nature of world politics. According to aggressive realists, world politics is currently going through its sixth cycle and soon the United States will face the effects of the arousal of the imperial ambitions of China, Japan, Germany, India, Iran, and Turkey. As a consequence, the United States will lose control of its former spheres of influence. Huntington’s (1993) discussion of the potential clash of civilizations is an indicator of what will happen then (Karagodin 1994). The weakening of the previous balance of power is leading to the accelerated establishment of the “Eurasian arch,” the geopolitical space between the Russian Far East and the Balkans. The Balkans conflicts, what is happening in Kurdistan, and the civil war in Afghanistan

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are only a few of the danger spots in this area that might lead to a new allocation of power and status in the world (Pozdniakov 1992; Sultanov 1995).

A reallocation of power in the world can only come as a result of World War III. Such changes in power and status usually occur following world wars; in essence, this process is seen as quite deterministic—all previous reassessments were accompanied by regional or world wars. Consider, for example, the Napoleonic wars, which were the predecessors of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and World Wars I and II which also ended with the formation of new geopolitical structures. The aggressive realists claim that World War III has already begun (Ievraziiskoie soprotileniie 1992; Sultanov 1995). This war is developing slowly and will have to proceed through a number of stages before it engenders a possible nuclear clash. There are several signs that it has begun: (1) the acceleration of the struggle for control over the former Soviet states, (2) Germany’s active redefinition of its sphere of influence, (3) the rise in terrorism, and (4) the appearance of new regional conflicts that cannot be resolved by traditional military means.

To ensure that Russia retains its great power status, it cannot afford to become involved in global military conflicts at this point in time. Since Russia is temporarily weak, it is in Western interests to get Russia involved in military confrontations with the Muslim world or China, forming a new world order at Russia’s expense (Sultanov 1995). Instead, Russia should concentrate its resources on economic and technological breakthroughs (Novii izoliatsionism 1991; Sultanov and Prokhanov 1991; Kurginian 1995) and on the restoration of its empire.

**Revolutionary Expansionism**

Expansionists offer yet another foreign policy strategy, the most extreme and ambitious of all. Unlike the two groups of realists, the expansionists are in favor of Russia’s immediate geopolitical expansion, in particular expansion into China and the Muslim world (Rossiia i prostranstvo 1993:33). They are not worried about Russia’s social and technological weaknesses. Today Russia is weak, but by creating a geopolitical empire, it will restore its status as a great power (Tiriar 1992a; Rossiia i prostranstvo 1993:31–32).

The expansionists view the world in even more pessimistic and gloomy terms than the aggressive realists. While the latter tend to see world politics as cyclical with a regular repetition of stages and an inherent craving for stability (Sultanov 1995), the expansionists see the possibility of getting through these cycles to a radically new world beyond the present one (Dugin 1993). They argue in favor of revolutionary change and view themselves as the successors to communism and fascism. Unlike these proletarian revolutions, however, the Eurasianist revolution will be a “conservative” one—a revolution against progress and liberal ideals, a revolution against modernity (Dugin 1993).

Some among the expansionists propose the geopolitical strategy “Pax eurasiatica” which is a focus on the strategic unity of Eurasian geopolitics and geoeconomics, the formation of a community that is neo-totalitarian (Ievraziiskoie soprotileniie 1992). Others advocate the need to absorb France, Germany, China, India, and the Muslim world within the borders of such an empire (Rossiia i prostranstvo 1993:33). This new empire is seen as the only way to save Russia as an independent state. The argument is that the geopolitical vacuum left by the Cold War has to be filled by Russia before it is filled by a hostile power.

If Russia chooses any other way but the “way of gathering an empire,” continental responsibility for the Heartland will be taken over by other powers and alliances. . . .

Only power, territory, and strategic advantage act in the sphere of geopolitics. Any
hesitation in the “gathering of empire” can be considered a justification for invasion of Russia’s territories by alternative great powers. . . . The absence of action is an action in itself, and the price for slowing down with the “gathering of empire” will inevitably lead to Eurasian bloodshed. The Balkan event gives us a fearful example of what may happen to Russia. (Rossiia i prostranstvo 1993:33–34)

Conclusions

This essay review began with the premise that the foreign policy of contemporary Russia is in flux. Its final form is difficult to predict at this time. Instead of trying to explain and predict, this review has offered an interpretation of Russia’s contending identities as reflected in its foreign policy discourse. Such analysis has indicated four foreign policy perspectives and, hence, four possible ways of considering the further evolution of Russian relations with the outside world. The four schools of thought appear to form a continuum with each pattern of thought merging into the next. Thus, international institutionalists and defensive realists share the view that Russia should seek cooperative relations with Western countries, although they disagree over the scale and terms of such cooperation. And while the two schools of realism and the expansionists disagree over how to make Russia secure in the post–Cold War world, all three view the world as involving competition for power. The four schools shade into one another; in the words of Hedley Bull “infra-red becomes ultraviolet” (as cited in Wight 1992:xiii).

Keeping the caveat in mind that Russian foreign policy is fluid, what would appear to be the near-term directions of policy based on this discourse analysis? Such an assessment is necessarily based on each school’s relative influence on the current government. The observation was made earlier that for a period of five to six years after Gorbachev’s New Thinking awakened discussion and debate on foreign policy, international institutionalism was the dominant school of thought. But around 1993, some Western observers noted a change in foreign policy and a movement toward more conservative values (Crow 1994; Lepingwell 1994). Such an assessment seems only partially true, however, as the post-Gorbachev conservatism (neoconservatism) has very little to do with the pre-Gorbachev type of conservatism. The major achievement of Gorbachev’s revolution was the marginalization, both politically and ideologically, of the views of the revolutionary expansionists. It is safe to say that in today’s Russia, none of the mainstream politicians—from democrats to communists—takes the policy recommendations of the expansionists seriously. Even the most ardent political supporter of expansionist ideas, Vladimir Zhirinovsky—while generally being willing to make outrageous political statements—tends now to avoid discussing Russian foreign policy in public. Thus, when compared to the Soviet era, contemporary foreign policy debates have shifted focus. Today, in postcommunist Russia, the ongoing struggle is not between the aggressive realists and the revolutionary expansionists as it was during the Soviet period, but within the realist school of thought between the defensive and aggressive realists.

As this essay has suggested, the major difference between the defensive and aggressive realists is their relative emphasis on how Russia should interact with the outside world. Although both schools favor keeping great power status and maintaining Russia’s global responsibilities through balancing behavior, aggressive realists are more inclined to emphasize Russia’s autarchy and isolation from a hostile and culturally alien external environment while defensive realists argue strongly against isolation from the international arena. The two schools also differ in their views of how to deal with Russia’s periphery. While aggressive realists are ready to use all available methods including military force to reintegrate the former Soviet
space, their defensive counterparts view attempts at restoration of the empire by force as extremely dangerous and destabilizing.

As the above analysis suggests, despite all the difficulties with formulating a sustained mode of external behavior, Russian foreign policy does exhibit some definite change across time. Since the establishment of the Soviet regime, Russian foreign policy has evolved from debates between revolutionary expansionists and realists to debates between the different schools within realism. This change in focus in foreign policy does not mean that Russia has resolved its major foreign policy dilemmas. Nor does it mean that current debates are any closer to producing clear and mutually consistent policy recommendations. What seems more likely is that for a while Russia will hang between the two poles of realism. Yet the assertion that Russia does not really know what its foreign policy should be because it does not know what Russia is (Legvold 1992:150; Pliais 1993a) and that Russia is still only debating foreign policy without having a policy itself (Kremeniuk 1993) is no longer accurate. Russia has abandoned its revolutionary ambitions and accepted the importance of pragmatic international cooperation in accord with its national interests. The longer-term shape that cooperation will take remains to be seen.

Increasingly Russian politicians are coming to accept that, in today’s increasingly interdependent world, cooperation is a prima facie of international politics. One can hope that this acceptance will lead eventually to recognizing the importance of deepening and strengthening Russian integration into the world community. If global trends toward peace and cooperation prevail, it is possible that the limitations of the realist balance of power thinking will be acknowledged and that the ongoing foreign policy debates will produce a better elaborated version of Gorbachev’s New Thinking for Russian foreign policy to take. If, however, there is a clash of civilizations (Huntington 1993) leading to a continuous search for new enemies, Russia can still become susceptible to the rhetoric of the extreme nationalists and adopt an expansionist or isolationist foreign policy. International trends and conditions can play a pivotal role in making the ideas of one of the schools more credible. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on one’s point of view and the nature of the times, Russian foreign policy remains fluid enough that ideas that were less influential today can become dominant tomorrow and a policy that had only marginal status yesterday can become dominant today.

References


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