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RUSSIA AND THE USE OF FORCE: THEORY AND PRACTICE

LANGSHOLDT Morten

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Espen Skjelland
Director of Research

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AND PRACTICE**

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FORSVARETS FORSKNINGSINSTITUTT
Norwegian Defence Research Establishment
P O Box 25, NO-2027 Kjeller, Norway

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8) ABSTRACT Under what circumstances does Russia resort to the use of military force? This report examines key aspects of Russia's use of force since the fall of the Soviet empire. It outlines the relationship between the official Russian thought with regard to the use of force and Russia's <i>de facto</i> use of force in relation to other states. Since 1991, Moscow has tried to find a balance between the cooperation required to support economic growth and the assertiveness needed to uphold a great power status in the post-Soviet space. In the post-9.11 era, Russia remains focused on the near abroad. An important question is thus if and when Russia's pain tolerance level for losing influence in the near abroad is reached. This study points towards future limited utility and use of Russia's military power and declining political influence in the near abroad. However, developments at the regional level could force Moscow to default a Cold War mentality and employ force in order to regain influence. Much will depend on Russia's military capabilities. The appearance of a non-unitary and less transparent decision-making with regard to the use of force may also lead to a more ambiguous and less predictable security policy. To the Western security community, this represents an undesirable scenario.		
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PREFACE

This report is being published as part of the research literature from the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment's three-year (2005–2007) project, "The New Russia's Use of Military Force". The author was employed as a summer student at the institute from July 4 to August 19, 2005.

The report gives an insight into important aspects of Russia's use of force in the post-Soviet period and constitutes a good starting point for further analyses. Many of the issues that are touched upon in the report, such as Russia's use of force in the struggle against international terrorism and Russia's security policy in the High North, will be dealt with in greater detail in later publications from the project.

Kristian Åtland
Project coordinator

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RUSSIA AND THE USE OF FORCE: THEORY AND PRACTICE

1 INTRODUCTION

Under what circumstances does Russia resort to the use of force? Russian president Vladimir Putin, seeking to rebuild a strong Russia, has regularly pointed out that influence in international politics is determined by economic rather than military power. Emphasis is therefore placed on improving the economy and on integration in Western-dominated structures of cooperation. Actual policy, especially after 9.11, is thus characterised by what seems to be a *de facto* acceptance of Russia's post-Cold War decline in status. On the other hand, Russia strives towards maintaining her inherited great power status. This means pushing for more influence within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)¹ with a corresponding emphasis on military means and geopolitical zero-sum thinking.

The dilemma of these two partly contrasting directions can make Russia's foreign and security policy seem somewhat ambiguous. The first approach aims at reviving Russia's great power status, but could lead to an increasing dependency on the West, narrowing Moscow's freedom to act. The second approach could eventually lead to isolation, hampered economic growth induced by Western reactions discouraging expansionist moves, and a diminished international status.

Today, Russian use of force against great powers, and especially against the Western security community, seems highly unlikely in view of the divergence in relative strength. However, one must bear in mind that *ex vi termini* the use of force remains an option in the foreign policy arsenal of any power. The recent pragmatic and constructive attitude towards the West might be related to the importance Putin attaches to improving the economy, but in the long run Putin desires to strengthen Russia's international position, and he does not exclude military means to achieve this². Therefore, a more proactive pursuit of interests in the near abroad³ and in relations with smaller neighbouring countries cannot be ruled out.

The objective of this report is to outline the relationship between Russian thought on the use of military force and Russia's *de facto* use of force in relation to other states after the fall of the Soviet empire. Moscow has at various occasions been faced with the realpolitik and normative constraints relating to use of force outside the Russian Federation (RF). These cases

¹ The CIS was created in December 1991 and originally included Azerbaijan (its parliament, however, rejected ratifying its membership until 1993), Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine. Georgia joined in 1993.

² de Haas, Marcel (2003): "The Development of Russia's Security Policy, 1992-2002" in Aldis, Anne C. and McDermott, Roger N. (2003): "Russian Military Reform 1992-2002", Frank Cass, London: 18

³ The term 'near abroad' refers to the territory of the former Soviet Union excluding the Russian Federation.

will be examined in view of Russian thinking with regard to the use of force. Finally, the implications for Russia's relations with the West will be discussed.

2 RUSSIAN THINKING WITH REGARD TO THE USE OF FORCE

Following the fall of the USSR, Russian decision-making in foreign and security policy was marked by a fragmented and far from consolidated group of stakeholders as well as mere disobedience from local actors vis-à-vis Moscow. A series of events followed where the Russian use of military force hardly can be thoroughly analysed solely considering the interests of the institutionalised decision-makers. It would consequently be useful to understand 'Russian use of military force' as 'mere use of force, or explicit threats of use of force, by actors directly or indirectly linked to the Russian military establishment in order to achieve political objectives'.

It has been argued that a distinct view on the use of force exists in Russian strategic thinking. Russian decision-makers are allegedly less hesitant to resort to force than their Western counterparts. What in the West is deemed a very last resort⁴ is said to be a more viable option in Russia. This hints at a less constraining normative climate in Russia than in the West. It can also be seen as a consequence of a Russian expansive notion of security that has made military intervention seem an acceptable, if not necessary desirable, response to even remote threats to national security⁵. Furthermore, a disproportional relationship supposedly exists between the ends sought and the level of violence employed, resulting in large-scale military operations and bloodshed when confronted with small-scale threats:

Western just war theory, for all its problems, does in the doctrines of proportionality and discrimination lay down some general principles about how much force is justified and against whom it may be used. These considerations seem never to enter into Russian discussions on the use of force. This represents a major blank spot, which perhaps partially explains the lack of proportionality and discrimination often seen in Russian war-fighting methods⁶.

Cyril Black has argued in favour of four 'eternal motives' existing in Russian foreign policy (Black 1962):

- Stabilisation of frontiers
- Assurance of favourable conditions for economic growth
- Unification of Russian territories
- Participation in alliance systems and international institutions.

⁴ See Edward Luttwak's article "The Challenges to Global Security" for a concise analysis of this part of Western Security Policy: http://www.janes.com/defence/news/2010/991222_f_luttwak.shtml

⁵ Azrael, Jeremy R., Lambeth, Benjamin S., Payin, Emil A. and Popov, Arkady A. (1996): "Russian and American Intervention Policy in Comparative Perspective" in Azrael, Jeremy R. and Payin, Emil A. (Eds.) (1996): "US and Russian Policymaking with respect to the use of force", RAND, Santa Monica, California, 1996 Conference Report: <http://www.rand.org/publications/CF/CF129/>

⁶ Robinson, Paul (2003): "On resistance to Evil by Force: Ivan II'in and the Necessity of War", Journal of Military Ethics, June 2003, vol. 2, no. 2: 158

In the present debate on Russian security thinking, one can argue that Black's four motives have been transformed into a set of current Russian national interests⁷. In such a perspective, Russian security policy can be regarded as a way of defending these interests.

2.1 The official line

Russian security thinking in the post-Cold War era has found its concrete expression in three central documents formulating Russia's foreign and domestic policies: the National Security Concept (NSC), the Foreign Policy Concept (FPC) and the Military Doctrine (MD)⁸. One can argue that the conceptions of security policy in the three documents correspond with a mixture of Black's four 'eternal motives' of Russian foreign policy.

Major points of view in the three documents are a seemingly assertive attitude towards the West, a strengthening of Russia's position both within the CIS and on a global level, and an emphasis on military means as an instrument of security policy. Both the 1997 and 2000 version of the NSC state that "military factors and power politics" (1997) and "military force and violence" (2000) are important elements in international politics, hinting at an expansive notion of security. Furthermore, how Russia relates to the challenge posed by other great powers seems fundamentally different from how she perceives the threat represented by low-level conflicts, especially from the area she defines as her natural sphere of influence. In short, Russian use of force seems to remain an explicit option in the near abroad, but far less realistic in the far abroad⁹.

In the different versions of the NSC, the West is perceived as a destabilising factor when striving for international dominance under US authority, thus weakening Russia's international position and ignoring Russian national interests. The West represents a threat when linked with the strengthening of military-political blocs and alliances, above all NATO, and the possible emergence of foreign military bases and major military presence in the immediate proximity of Russia's borders. Russia thus seems to emphasise the importance of a strategic balance also in the post-Cold War era, and appears to be particularly sensitive about the near abroad.

According to the 2000 version of the Foreign Policy Concept, Russia proceeds from the premise that the use of force in violation of the U.N. Charter is unlawful, and that "attempts to introduce into the international parlance such concepts as 'humanitarian intervention' and 'limited sovereignty' in order to justify unilateral power actions bypassing the U.N. Security Council are not acceptable". This view on the lawful use of force seems to contrast with how Russia sees her military role in the near abroad.

The official documents signal a more assertive attitude with regard to the near abroad and small-scale conflicts. The outbreak and escalation of conflicts near the state border of the RF and the external borders of CIS member states is perceived as a destabilising factor in the 2000

⁷ Godzimirski, Jakub M. (1998): "Russian Security Policy Objectives in the Baltic Sea and the Barents Area": <http://www.atlanterhavskomiteen.no/publikasjoner/sp/98/12-98.htm>

⁸ NSC 1997, 2000. FPC 1993, 2000. MD 1992, 2000. The NSC, pointed at safeguarding national interests against external and internal threats, should be seen as the most important set of guidelines for the Russian political leadership in pursuing the country's strategic goals.

⁹ The term 'far abroad' refers to the wider world outside the post-Soviet space.

NSC. According to the 1997 National Security Concept, Russia should therefore have the ability to be present in areas defined as important for the country's security by establishing military bases and deploy forces. Indeed, this seems to point in the direction of Black's eternal motive of stabilizing the frontiers. The CIS is defined as the top-priority area for RF in both the 1997 and 2000 version of the NSC. The slowdown of economic, political and military cooperation and integration processes in the CIS may weaken Russia's security situation. The importance of the CIS is strengthened by the emphasis placed on protecting the rights and interests of Russian citizens in the near abroad through the use of political, economic and other measures.

Black defines 'unification of Russian territories' as an eternal motive in Russian foreign policy. It has been argued that Russian leaders simply do not consider the former Soviet republics foreign in terms of cases of intervention¹⁰. Accordingly, one can imagine integration within the CIS as a post-Cold War version of Black's motive, and thus see Russia's effort to assume a great power role in the CIS as a carry-over of traditional Russian national interest.

This may also shed light on why so much emphasis is placed on the Russian minorities. The violation of the rights of Russian citizens abroad is mentioned as threats in both the 1993 and 2000 version of the MD. The 1993 version subsequently grants Russia the right to protect Russian minorities in other CIS states, making use of force if necessary.

Furthermore, active participation in peacekeeping operations, particularly in the CIS area, is recognised as one of the best military measures serving Russia's national interest in the international sphere¹¹. Russia already adopted the mission of conflict resolution within the CIS in the MD of 1993, hence claiming a leading role in the region and in the joint military efforts.

The 2000 NSC opens up for the use of military force inside the RF in the event of threats to citizens' lives or attempts to violently change the constitutional system of the RF. This aspect may seem interesting in the eyes of the outside world: the use of military force in Chechnya illustrates what is often deemed, from a Western point of view, an illegitimate Russian military action against parts of her own population and a disproportionate relationship between the threat confronted and the level of force employed. Indeed, the 1997 version of the NSC prohibited the use of armed forces against civilians or for domestic political reasons. However, it should be noted that the development towards legitimising the use of military force domestically has come a long way also in the West in the post-9.11 era.

2.2 The post- 9.11 era

The three leading security documents have had their origin in the Russian security establishment, a circle with exclusively Soviet roots¹². Their view on which strategy and

¹⁰ English, Robert (2002): "Book Review of Bennett, Andrew 'Condemned to repetition? The Rise, Fall and Reprise of Soviet-Russian Military Interventionism'" in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Summer 2002, Vol. 4, No. 3: 150. Andrew Bennett terms intervention "the use of military force in an intrastate or interstate conflict of a foreign country": 14 in Bennett, Andrew (1999): "Condemned to Repetition? The Rise, Fall and Reprise of Soviet-Russian Military Interventionism, 1973-1996", Cambridge, MA, MIT Press

¹¹ Godzimirski, Jakub M. (2000): "Russian Security Concepts 1997-2000. A Comparative Study": <http://www.atlanterhavskomiteen.no/publikasjoner/sp/2000/8-2000.html>

¹² Godzimirski 1998

means to adopt in order to achieve the objective of building a strong Russia seems to have changed little as a result of 9.11, Dubrovka or Beslan¹³. For this reason it is not remarkable that we so far have seen few signs that Putin intends to adjust these documents to exhibit a more positive stance towards the West¹⁴. Yet, it appears to be clear that Black's 1962-focus on economic growth in the Cold War-era translates into safeguarding Western support for economic reforms and growth in Russia.

Naturally, none of the official documents could foresee the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. We have not seen a comprehensive revision of the documents in order to provide a tailored definition of Russia's view on the rapidly evolving international relations in the post-9.11 era. True, one of the major destabilising factors defined in the NSC is the danger of terrorism. However, due to the crosscutting and deterritorialised nature of terrorism, many states, including Russia, have found it difficult to adopt an effective approach based on international law to using force in response to terrorism.

Pre-emptive military action, a notion that has gained considerable ground in the post-9.11 era, is absent in both Russia's NSC and MD. We have seen Moscow struggle to clarify its stance on pre-emptive force. Following the outbreak of the Iraqi war, that Russia opposed, president Putin declared that Moscow "retains the right to launch a pre-emptive strike, if this practice continues to be used around the world"¹⁵, and Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov reiterated that "Russia does not rule out a pre-emptive military strike anywhere in the world if the national interest demands it"¹⁶. However, in a NATO meeting a few days later, Ivanov sought to allay concerns that Russia might use a pre-emptive nuclear strike to ward off a potential threat¹⁷.

Ivanov further developed the seemingly new additions to the NSC right after the Beslan hostage crisis, declaring that Russia has the right to direct pre-emptive strikes against terrorists at home and abroad¹⁸. Interestingly, this followed the conviction in remote Qatar of two Russian agents for the murder of former Chechen leader Zelimkhan Yanderbiyev¹⁹. Certainly, this can hardly be seen as a pre-emptive strike, but it signals how Moscow is prepared to hunt down what it defines as terrorists outside the territory of RF.

Russian use of pre-emptive force appears to be focussed on the threat represented by terrorism. It is far less likely to be used in inter-state relations with great powers. It should be noted that the very notion of pre-emptive strike is based on use of force against potential threats. It remains difficult to find an encompassing definition of such a threat that can be used

¹³ de Haas: 18

¹⁴ In the wake of the October 2002 Moscow theatre hostage drama, President Putin demanded a refashion of the military to make it more relevant in the struggle against international terrorism. However, it soon became obvious that the Kremlin did not want to challenge the Russian security establishment. See Trenin, Dmitri V. (2004): "Gold Eagle, Red Star" in Miller, Steven E. and Trenin Dmitri V. (Eds.) (2004): "The Russian Military. Power and Policy", MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts

¹⁵ RFE/RL (14.10.03): "Russia: Moscow Struggles To Clarify Stance On Pre-emptive Force": <http://www.rferl.org/features/2003/10/14102003171155.asp>

¹⁶ BBC News (02.10.03): "Russia bares its military teeth": <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3159044.stm>

¹⁷ RFE/RL 14.10.03

¹⁸ RFE/RL (10.09.04): "UN: Russian Statement On Pre-emption Revives Focus On UN Role":

<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/9/797086A7-DCFA-41BB-8244-C527C0D1DD7C.html>

¹⁹ Izvestija (30.12.04): "Likvidatsija Zelimkhana Jandarbieva", No.244: 5

objectively on a global scale. Certainly, this creates a potential space for subjectivity and underlying interests that state actors can choose to take advantage of.

In the pressing debate on Russia's role on the post-9.11 international scene, Moscow also chose to bring up the country's relations with the near abroad. Defence Minister Ivanov declared that Russia reserves the right to intervene militarily within the CIS in order to settle disputes that cannot be solved through negotiation²⁰. Minister Ivanov added a key detail, saying that military force can be used if there is an attempt to limit Russia's access to regions that are essential to its survival, or regions that are important from an economic or financial point of view²¹.

This perception of pre-emptive use of force should be of interest not only to the former Soviet republics. An unresolved dispute exists between Moscow and Oslo over a portion of the Barents Sea, assumed to contain large amounts of oil and gas. Indeed, Russia has been increasingly concerned over Western approaches to Arctic shelf issues. There is a genuine fear that Western economic expansion coupled with military-political pressure could weaken the country's position as Arctic power²². Accordingly, one cannot rule out the possibility of Russian use of force in the High North.

It appears thus that a *de facto* addition to the doctrines is being developed, seeking to reinforce Russia's energy dominance, political influence and economic penetration in the near abroad, and to some extent also in the interest area of neighbouring states. This is being done through a more or less implicit military threat, and through an expansion of the range of circumstances under which the use of force might be considered legitimate²³.

3 DRIVING FORCES AND CONSTRAINTS

In Soviet times, while rhetorically supporting international law and the United Nations, communist rulers considered ideological justifications for the use of 'revolutionary' or 'socialist' force as a legitimate excuse for violating certain principles of international law. The 'Brezhnev doctrine'²⁴ put this policy in words. Following the end of the Cold War, the structure of international politics has been significantly altered. The new Russia, obviously a weaker power than the Soviet Union, tends to place more emphasis on norms of international law and procedures of democratic decision-making in the international community.

However, since 1991 the principle of sovereignty has been further softened internationally, and intervention in other states' affairs has been gradually more legitimised. Russia has on her part

²⁰ RFE/RL (27.10.03): "The Putin Doctrine", Volume 7 Number 204: <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2003/10/5-not/not-271003.asp>

²¹ RFERL 14.10.03

²² Trenin, Dmitri (2002): "The End of Eurasia. Russia on the broder between Geopolitics and Globalization", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., and Moscow: 140

²³ Bugajski, Janusz (2004): "Cold Peace – Russia's New Imperialism", Praeger Publishers, Westport: 36

²⁴ In a speech at the Fifth Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party on November 13, 1968, Brezhnev stated: "When forces that are hostile to socialism try to turn the development of some socialist country towards capitalism, it becomes not only a problem of the country concerned, but a common problem and concern of all socialist countries."

engaged in military operations in the CIS without U.N. Security Council mandates, and exerted a major military and political influence on conflicts in what she defines as her natural sphere of influence. One could imagine a Russian ‘Monroe doctrine’, legitimising intervention in the near abroad and the neighbouring states, as a logical post-Cold War offspring of the Brezhnev doctrine. Great powers traditionally seem to have a larger impact on the interpretation of the term ‘legitimate use of force’ than small powers. Russia’s use of force is, however, not driven by superpower nostalgia alone. It is driven by the presence of real and perceived threats to Russia’s security, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

3.1 The theoretical framework

Ole Wæver has conceptualised the process of legitimising the use of force through the mechanism of securitization. ‘Securitization’ of an issue or issue area takes place when a ‘securitizing actor’ claims that the issue constitutes an existential threat and thereby justifies the use of force in its defence: “by uttering ‘security’, a state representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it”²⁵. When and why are issues and developments then securitized? Securitization does not necessarily function globally according to the same logic: what one state labels a security matter may not be seen as a security problem elsewhere. Consequently, states may differ in their views on when the use of force is necessary and legitimate. This may in some instances lead to international antagonism.

Under the overarching structure of securitization lie the triggering factors for the use of force. They stem from the realpolitik or normative realms. It appears that in the post-Cold War era, a state chooses to intervene with military force outside its borders as a resort to solving a conflict that relates to its national security interests or because of ideological motives. A realpolitik cost-benefit analysis is central when a rational actor resorts to force²⁶. When the cost of not employing force outweighs the cost of action, a state sees a necessity for resorting to force. The cost of not intervening with force in such a zero-sum approach lies mainly in losing influence in and/or access to an area. Other states’ potential reactions by economic, political or military means are constraining elements that increase the cost of action. Different issues hold different values, defining the potential cost of not employing force, according to a state’s hierarchy of values. Certainly, a hierarchy of values is bound to change over time, and it may not be similar for all the political actors within a state. The latter case might lead to incoherent and ambiguous policy.

It thus remains essential to take a closer look at the *actor* when trying to analyse a decision to resort to force. Are we dealing with a rational, unitary actor or not? Indeed, the role of sub-national actors in Russian security policy decision-making should not be underestimated. They set precedence by unilateral action, and thus blur the image of a rational actor and narrow down the institutionalised decision-makers’ freedom to act.

²⁵ Wæver, Ole (1995): “Securitization and Desecuritization” in Lipschutz, Ronnie D. (Ed.) (1995): “On Security”, Columbia University Press, New York: 55

²⁶ Obviously, not all actors are rational according to this definition. The cost-benefit analysis is therefore far from considered universally nor by all actors.

Realpolitik is often said to be the pre-dominant approach to international politics in Russia²⁷. Still, the use of force can be approached from two angles. When considering Russian use of force in the post-Cold War era, normative constraints on the use of force seem to play an important complementary role to realpolitik reactions from other states. Even if it is deemed necessary to employ force, the perception of the use of force as legitimate remains essential for an actor to engage in action. The opinion of other states and of the international and domestic public may discourage the use of force. Needless to say, there is a certain interplay between the two factors: other actors' view on motives being normative or realpolitik may decrease or add to the cost of engaging in war, and actors may thus seek to legitimise the use of force by defining their goals under the humanitarian umbrella:

With the end of the Cold War [...] countries now need to be more sensitive to foreign perceptions of and likely reactions to their interventions. Anticipation of international responses to intervention has accordingly become more important²⁸.

3.2 Cooperation vs. assertiveness

The U.N. Charter attempts to lay down rules governing when states should have the right to employ force, and it constitutes a constraining force also for Russia. In reality, Russia often tries to reach through using the legitimising and de-legitimising mechanism of U.N. Security Council resolutions, the right of veto, and the requirement of strict observance of international legal procedures.

In an accountable political system, domestic public opinion also plays a role. The very same mechanism of securitization can both counter and create constraints from public opinion. The 'securitizing actor' addresses an 'audience', and the latter might or might not agree on the securitization of the issue. In the first case, public opinion legitimises the use of force. In the latter case it raises the stakes of employing force. The first and second Chechen War are good examples of how Russian public opinion, following securitization of the Chechnya question, acted as respectively an impetus and a constraint to the use of force.

Since 1991, Russia has tried to find the elusive balance between cooperation required to maintain a benign economic and political environment and the assertiveness needed to ensure the kind of security, influence and self-respect expected by a state with superpower memories and great power ambitions. The desire to be accepted as playing a major role in world affairs through rather than against the international community both encourages and restricts Russian foreign policy assertiveness:

Moscow thinks that a degree of assertiveness helps it to earn the respect of the West. At the same time, Moscow remains anxious to avoid assertiveness leading to conflict and international marginalisation. Russian assertiveness therefore has self-limiting qualities. Moscow seeks to

²⁷ The Russian seizure of Pristina airport in 1999 to obtain a sector of responsibility within the UN-led operation in Kosovo illustrated how Russia still at occasions perceive a sphere of influence according to zero-sum game theory: one side's gains are the other side's losses. See BBC News (02.08.99): "Generals 'clashed over Kosovo raid": <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/409576.stm>

²⁸ Azrael, Lambeth, Payin and Popov: 1

adjust its policies to maximize respect while minimising loss of international acceptability and influence²⁹.

The post-Cold War versions of Black's four motives may thus seem conflicting: Russian influence in the former Soviet area can run counter to Moscow's efforts to safeguard Western support for economic growth. The cost of using force to secure national interests in the near abroad may increase significantly if economic growth is hampered and/or Russia's role in international organisations is damaged. There also seems to be a valid link between international legitimacy and Black's motive of securing participation in international institutions.

Clearly, the cost of intervening is likely to be high if all of Black's four motives suffer. However, it seems harder to draw any clear-cut conclusions when loss of Western support and international position is balanced against loss of territorial integrity and Russian influence in the near abroad. It appears in other words that the hierarchy of issues related to national interest changes over time, and so the decision of employing force also seems to depend on the 'securitizing actor' and the political context.

4 RUSSIAN USE OF FORCE: PRACTICE

History teaches that no empire has been built without the use of an organized military force. In the post-Cold War era, Russia's intervention possibilities are primarily limited to the near abroad. There is also reason to doubt Russia's ability to intervene and dominate these countries, lacking significant power projection capability. The military, after all, is in disarray, and restoring Russian military power is a long-term project³⁰. Since 1991, Russia has nevertheless employed military force in the near abroad³¹, communicated explicit and implicit threats of use of force at several occasions and participated in international operations.

4.1 Use of military force

Indeed, each of the conflicts in which Russia has employed force features a unique combination of historic causes and political determinants. However, certain commonalities in character and Russian underlying interest can be found.

First, the main reason why Russia became involved in conflicts in the post-Soviet space seems to have been the presence of Russian military forces in the CIS. This was the case in Tajikistan, Trans-Dniestria and Abkhasia, whereas in Nagorno-Karabakh the Russian CIS-forces pulled out in March 1992, four months after the outbreak of war. However, the

²⁹ Pravda, Alex (2001): "Foreign Policy" in Gitelman, Zvi, Pravda, Alex and White, Stephen (Ed.): "Developments in Russian politics 5", Basingstoke, Palgrave: 227

³⁰ Herspring, Dale R. (10.09.02): "Putin and military reform: some first hesitant steps", CDI Russia Weekly, Russia and Eurasia Review, Vol. 1, No. 7: <http://www.cdi.org/russia/222-6.cfm>

³¹ Russia has had recourse to force in the conflicts in Tajikistan (1992-2000), Trans-Dniestria (1992), Abkhasia (started 1994), Nagorno-Karabakh (1992) and Georgia (2002).

Armenian militias unofficially recovered a significant number of Russian equipment and forces following the pullout³².

Second, although Russia clearly has strategic, political and economic interests in the post-Soviet space, these interests appear to have been less of a decisive factor for Russia's initial interventions in the near abroad. Rather, one could argue that Moscow did not control the units in the regions, but that the units *per se* amended Moscow's political initiative. In this perspective, the local armies were not so much the objects as the subjects of politics, acting as a sub-national securitizing actor. Once use of force had been employed, Moscow was left with little marginal freedom to desecuritize the issue: "Personal ties between bureaucrats and generals with key local leaders not only determined decisions on the ground but overall military and security policy in the region"³³. Indeed, the military expediency essentially determined the contours of Russian interventions in Tajikistan, Trans-Dniestria and Abkhasia, and was a major factor in framing policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict³⁴. At first, the interventions were spontaneous, but over time involvement became increasingly directed by Moscow.

Finally, the cost of employing force in the near abroad was reduced. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the West gave Russia a relatively free hand to stabilize the region³⁵. Thus, securing Russian influence in the CIS ran to a lesser extent counter to safeguarding Western support for economic growth. One can see the Western approach as a means of keeping the Western-orientated Yeltsin, who faced a strong nationalist-patriotic opposition, in power. More likely, the West initially saw influence in the post-Soviet area as less of a realpolitik zero-sum game.

To Russia, the former Soviet space constitutes a security zone that can protect the country from external aggression, and external involvement in CIS-affairs is thus often seen as a threat to the Russian national interest. As already mentioned, it can be argued that Russian decision-makers simply did not consider the former Soviet republics foreign in terms of cases of intervention. In such a perspective, stabilisation of frontiers and unification of Russian territories became a matter of stabilizing the region and securing Russian influence. The widespread securitization of Russian minority issues in all the conflicts illustrates this relationship.

The conflict in Tajikistan, depicted as a Muslim rivalling force threatening Russia's 'soft underbelly', shows how the motive of stabilisation of frontiers led to a securitization of the Russian population in the country. In Moldova, the Trans-Dniestrian conflict can be seen as an example of how unification of Russian territories triggered a securitization of the same group. General Lebed, commander of the 14th Army stationed in Trans-Dniestria, accordingly

³² Goldenberg, Suzann (1994): "Pride of Small Nations. The Caucasus and Post-Soviet Disorder", London and New Jersey, Zed Books Ltd.: 65

³³ Azrael, Lambeth, Payin and Popov: 9

³⁴ Baev, Pavel K. (1998): "Russia's Policies in Secessionist Conflicts in Europe in the 1990s": <http://www.atlanterhavskomiteen.no/publikasjoner/sp/98/11-98.htm>

³⁵ Azrael, Lambeth, Payin and Popov: 1

described the “Dniester Republic” as a “small part of Russia” entitled to join the RF in the future³⁶.

As a consequence of the Western approach to the CIS, there was sometimes silent, sometimes formalized ‘blessing’ from the U.N., and later even small groups of U.N. or OSCE observers were stationed in the areas to supervise Russian operations³⁷. In Abkhazia in February 1994, Western powers were very reluctant to launch a U.N. peacekeeping intervention, and were opposed to participating in such a force. What is more, in July 1994 they made the United Nations suddenly endorse the Russian intervention as a U.N. peacekeeping operation, whereas the Russian forces were to be replaced by CIS-forces according to a CIS-agreement from May 1994³⁸. The international community thus approved of the all-Russian operation. In so doing, they provided Russia with the formal aspects of international legitimacy for the use of force.

Interestingly, Russia also insisted formally that all operations were undertaken with the consent of the legitimate government of the state on whose territory the conflict occurred, either on the legal basis of bilateral inter-state agreements (Trans-Dniestria) or of mandates by CIS (Abkhazia, Tajikistan). Legally this was important as it evicted the necessity of requiring a U.N. Security Council resolution under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter for the use and limits of force. The normative aspect of the interventions thus added little cost to the use of force in the CIS.

This aspect also points to Black’s fourth and possibly second eternal motive, ‘participation in alliance systems and international institutions’ and ‘assurance of favourable conditions for economic growth’. Russian foreign policy in the early 1990s was marked by a willingness to collaborate with the West in the hope that this would lead to integration with the international community, but with more active efforts to ensure that the former Soviet space remained a Russian sphere of influence from 1993 on³⁹. A less constraining normative climate both domestically and internationally materialized through the already undertaken interventions. Thus, the cost of using force in order to offset a counterbalance in the near abroad and bring the former Soviet republics under its influence⁴⁰ was considered marginal compared to the cost of not using force.

4.2 Peacekeeping

Where Russia used force, she unilaterally decided at which juncture to intercede as a mediator or a crisis manager, and for how long Russian troops should remain on the disputed territory⁴¹. Such a policy certainly exerts pressure on a targeted government. Its choices become limited between domestic war and territorial disintegration, or military foreign presence. In the CIS, the latter has as a rule been presented as peacekeeping.

³⁶ Socor, Vladimir (1992): “Russia’s Fourteenth Army and the Insurgency in Eastern Moldova” in *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 36, pp 41-48

³⁷ Nikitin, Alexander I. (2003): “Preemptive military action and the legitimate use of force: A Russian View” (Prepared for the CEPS/IISS European Security Forum, Brussels, 13.01.03): <http://www.eusec.org/nikitin.htm>

³⁸ Kozhokin, Evgeny M. (1996): “Georgia-Abkhazia” in Azrael and Payin

³⁹ Pravda: 217

⁴⁰ Following the Russian interventions in Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia and Azerbaijan fully joined the CIS in 1993.

⁴¹ Bugajski: 36

In February 1993, Yeltsin stated that “Russia continues to have a vital interest in the cessation of all armed conflicts on the territory of the former USSR”, adding that “the moment has come when responsible international organisations, including the United Nations, should grant Russia special powers as a guarantor of peace and stability in the region of the former Union”⁴². One can accordingly argue that Moscow’s interest in conflict resolution is instrumental, and adds to the means of securing influence in the near abroad.

Moscow often had a vested interest in the continuation of a ‘controlled’ level of violence: neither so great as to be seriously destabilizing, nor so minor as to obviate the need for a semi-permanent Russian force presence in the conflict zone⁴³.

The main objective of peacekeeping operations is from Moscow’s point of view to secure Russia’s national interests. The Russian forces have in every conflict consequently been employed as a policy tool and thus failed to act as a neutral party⁴⁴. In practice, Russia provides economic and military support for separatist regimes in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Trans-Dniestria. This support can be seen as a means to weaken the respective governments. It allows the regional leaders to adopt more radical positions and limits the geopolitical choices of Georgia and Moldova⁴⁵. In addition, an apparent lack of progress on demilitarisation in the conflict zones signals that a new military confrontation cannot be ruled out in the foreseeable future.

Moreover, Moscow has been reluctant to fulfil its obligations where Russia’s role as present guarantor of peace seems less desired and withdrawal of Russian forces has been agreed⁴⁶. Accordingly, Defence Minister Ivanov stated that the forces in Trans-Dniestria are not going to withdraw as long as Russian depots with weapons and ammunition remain in the region⁴⁷. This seems to be a clear violation of Moscow’s pledge at the 1999 OSCE summit in Istanbul to withdraw its troops and military equipment from Trans-Dniestria by 2002.

Russia has participated in international operations under a U.N. Mandate in Bosnia, Kosovo, Croatia and Sierra Leone. This corresponds with Blacks’ motive ‘participation in international organisations’. It also assures a favourable Western view of Russia for continued economic cooperation. Russia clearly emphasises that use of force is unlawful when in violation of the U.N. Charter. Indeed, use of force against the Slavic Yugoslavia was highly controversial in Russia, and Moscow long opposed use of military force by NATO. Nevertheless, Moscow only opposed military action against Yugoslavia during the eleven weeks when a United

⁴² Adomeit, Hannes and Reisinger, Heidi (2002): “Russia’s role in Post-Soviet Territory. Decline of Military Power and Political Influence”, Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, Oslo, Norway: 5

⁴³ Lo, Bobo (2003) “Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy”, Royal Institute of Foreign Affairs, Chatham House Papers, London, Blackwell: 92

⁴⁴ Totalforsvarets forskningsinstitut (2005): “Rysk militär formåga i ett tioårsperspektiv- problem och trender 2005”: 166: <http://www.foi.se/upload/rapporter/foi-ry-mil-formaga-r1622.pdf>

⁴⁵ Welt, Cory (2004): “Realism, Russia, and Conflict Resolution”, PONARS Policy Memo 348, Center for Strategic and International Studies: 1: http://www.csis.org/ruseura/ponars/policymemos/pm_0348.pdf

⁴⁶ Larsson, Robert L. (2004): “The Enemy Within: Russia’s Military Withdrawal from Georgia”, Journal of Slavic Military Studies, Vol. 17, No. 3

⁴⁷ RFE/RL Newsline (03.08.05): “Chisinau disapproves of Russian Minister’s remarks on troops in Transdnier”, Vol. 9, No. 145, Part II

Nations Security Council mandate was absent: “after such mandate was coordinated and adopted, the Russian military hurried ‘to jump’ into the already ongoing NATO-led operation that had become a U.N. operation”⁴⁸.

Russia also played a significant role in the 2001-2002 international military campaign against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, providing military support to the Northern Alliance and granting the US military air corridors and reconnaissance data in the framework of the anti-terrorist coalition. Certainly, this in turn created significant goodwill amongst other great powers, and can thus be seen as a way of ameliorating Russia’s image on the international scene. It should be added, however, that Moscow also had its own geo-strategic pragmatic reasons for supporting the US-led operation. Russia had serious concerns over insurgence of armed groupings, arms and drugs from Afghanistan to Central Asia. Overthrowing the Taliban hence also contributed to assuring stabilisation of CIS-frontiers⁴⁹. Furthermore, the international focus on fighting terrorism somewhat turned the spotlight away from Russia’s military action in Chechnya.

4.3 Defending national interests

Russia has a vast military presence throughout the former USSR and beyond. Since 2002, Russian peacekeeping forces have operated in Georgia and Moldova. Military bases are located in Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, Kyrgystan and Tajikistan. Border patrols are deployed in Kazakhstan and Kyrgystan, and infrastructure for testing in Kazakhstan and Kyrgystan. Warning systems are located in Belarus, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan⁵⁰. Bilateral agreements with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on military cooperation add to this picture. Needless to say, the military presence in the CIS is a source of visible power projection and of great strategic and psychological value to Russia.

Whereas military presence can be interpreted as an implicit threat of use of force, more explicit threats have also been uttered. In response to NATO expansion, military threats and warnings of provocations leading to a new arms race have periodically been issued. Russian policymakers have claimed that NATO aims at supplanting Russian influence in all former Communist states and that the Alliance actively distorts the strategic balance that Russia seeks with other great powers. Russian military threats are thus justified as a defence of national interest, even though Moscow clearly does not possess the capabilities to stage a massive rearmament against a depicted NATO threat.

Moscow also offered security guarantees to states in order to discourage them from joining NATO. These offers have been viewed in the Baltic capitals as attempts to entrap them in an unwelcome permanent alliance⁵¹. Indeed, this use of force seems to have had far from the intended effect.

⁴⁸ Nikitin

⁴⁹ Trenin, Dmitri (2001): “Less is More” in *Washington Quarterly* 24, no 3 (Summer 2001): 143: <http://www.twq.com/01summer/trenin.pdf>

⁵⁰ The article “Vsja Rossijskaja Armija” published in *Vlast’* on February 21 2005 includes an inclusive list of today’s Russian army, its units and formations, where they are deployed, and who commands them. See http://www.kommersant.ru/k-vlast/get_page.asp?page_id=2005769-22.htm

⁵¹ Bugajski: 35

In fact, the frequent allusions in Moscow to possible political and military ‘countermeasures’ which Russia might adopt if the Baltic States were to join NATO appear to have had the opposite effect. They may have reinforced security concerns and supported the argument among both Baltic and NATO governments that only the full integration of the Baltic countries in Western political and military organizations could safeguard these countries’ independence and their membership in NATO, as that of Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary previously, would enhance rather than diminish European security⁵².

It can hence be argued that the Western security community saw the Baltic region as more of a zero-sum game than the CIS. Russian threats were expressed and some incidents occurred⁵³, but Moscow was careful not to escalate the tensions, probably because it knew it could face serious political and economic reprisals from the West⁵⁴.

As we have seen, Russia has been acting differently in the CIS. In the post-9.11 era, Georgia is the most striking example. Russia has been accused of using the fight against terrorism for political purposes in the country⁵⁵. It has been reported that Russian military aircraft bombed villages in the Pankisi Gorge in northern Georgia in 2002, an area that was said to be a refuge for Islamic extremists fighting in Chechnya. The same year, Moscow explicitly threatened to make strikes into the same area if Georgia failed to act against Chechen guerrillas allegedly taking shelter there⁵⁶. Although Russia denied that its air force mounted the attacks, the government of Georgia and monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe confirmed them. The US also issued a strongly worded statement condemning the reported attacks by Russian aircrafts.

Russia’s self-proclaimed right to conduct pre-emptive strikes against terrorists at home and abroad therefore also implies a more direct threat of use of force against Georgia⁵⁷. In view of the recent US-interest and engagement in Georgia⁵⁸, this may hint at Russian securitization of the strategic balance and the country’s sphere of influence in the CIS: “Clearly, the US military presence, small as it may be at present, does present a challenge to Russian influence in Georgia and beyond in the Southern Caucasus”⁵⁹.

In such a perspective, it appears that the cost of losing influence in the country, and in a broader perspective in the CIS, may be higher than the cost of increasingly strained relations with the West. However, as Moscow denied that they had used force in Georgia one should steer clear of unambiguous conclusions on such a hierarchy of values. Also, the question of a

⁵² Adomeit and Reisinger: 27

⁵³ In the fall of 1998, Russian troops stationed close to the Estonian border undertook the exercise “Operation Return” in which they conquered a small country. In January 2001 a deployment of tactical nuclear missiles to Kaliningrad was reported. Needless to say, these incidents alarmed the Baltic capitals.

⁵⁴ Bugajski: 117

⁵⁵ Adomeit and Reisinger: 37

⁵⁶ RFE/RL 10.09.04

⁵⁷ Totalforsvarets forskningsinstitutt: 87

⁵⁸ US instituted a ‘Train and Equip Program’ in Georgia (GTEP) in 2002 with a budget of US\$64 million. Green Berets coordinate the program, and 150-200 American military instructors are to train units of the Georgian army, border troops, and security services in anti-terrorism tactics.

⁵⁹ Adomeit and Reisinger: 41

Russian uniform ‘securitizing actor’ remains unanswered with regard to the bombings in Georgia. Nevertheless, the incident points to a high cost related to external involvement in the CIS from a Russian point of view.

4.4 The post- 9.11 era

It should be noted that Russia has refrained from using force on several occasions where the above-mentioned interests have been at stake. Russia never intervened in the Baltic states. It may seem that both the obvious realpolitik cost Russia would have been facing in case of military action, and the cost of losing support from the West for economic growth, were higher than the cost of losing influence over the Baltic countries. Clearly, the absent international legitimacy of use of force against the Baltic states also added to the cost of intervening.

Consequently, the invitation of the Baltic countries to join NATO in November 2002 was criticized in Moscow for fostering disunity, mistrust and destabilization, but no threatening countermeasures were indicated. Securitization of the issue did not occur. However, Russia demanded NATO guarantees that Alliance troops and weapons would not be deployed in any Baltic republic. That way, Russia attempted to limit the NATO enlargement to the institutional aspect and avoid a change of local military balance of power⁶⁰.

More recently, Moscow has also refrained from using force in the CIS even though Russia’s position in the area has been challenged and Russian forces were present on the ground. Moscow seemed deeply unsettled about the ‘colour revolutions’ in Georgia (November 2003), Ukraine (December 2004) and Kyrgyzstan (March 2005)⁶¹. The predominant view in RF was that the West orchestrated a change of regime in the neighbouring states in order to weaken Russia’s influence in the CIS. The zero-sum assumption of Russia and the West’s interests was strengthened in Russia by the proliferation of the popular revolutions. This prompted calls for a tougher and more pro-active policy towards neighbouring states.

Particularly the Orange Revolution in Ukraine presented a hitherto unprecedented challenge to Russia’s great power role in the near abroad. The regime change shifted Ukraine’s geo-strategic orientation towards closer ties with the West. Zbigniew Brzezinski has argued that Ukraine plays the role of a geo-strategic pivot, functioning as a potential catalyst for change in the post-Soviet area⁶². Moldova’s strive for European integration regained strength following the Orange Revolution, and in Kyrgyzstan a regime change followed by a presidential poll that showed tangible progress in democratic standards took place in the following spring⁶³. One

⁶⁰ Godzimirski 1998: 10. However, NATO could not grant such guarantees, but said it does not intend to deploy military forces and strategic weapons on the territory of the new members.

⁶¹ Moscow has on various occasions reiterated her opposition to regime changes in the CIS. CIS Deputy Foreign Minister Grigorij Karasin wrote in ‘Rossijskaja Gazeta’ on 16 August 2005 that “Russia cannot agree to the forcible democratisation of the post-Soviet space” and considers “colour revolutions” as falling within that category of democratisation. See RFE/RL Newline (17.08.05): “Foreign Ministry: Russia against ‘forcible democratization’ of CIS”, Vol.9, No. 155, Part I.

⁶² Brzezinski, Zbigniew (1997), “The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geo-Strategic Imperatives”, New York, NY, Basic Books: 40-41, 47, 92-93, 147

⁶³ International Election Observation Mission (IEOM), Presidential Elections, Kyrgyz Republic, 10 July 2005 (11.07.05): “Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions”: <http://www.osce.org/documents/html/pdf/html/15625-en.pdf.html>

can argue that these cases support Brzezinski's theory. When looking at Moscow's actions in the Ukrainian Orange Revolution, one should therefore bear in mind that Moscow, from a Russian perspective, was facing a potential weakening of the Russian hegemony in the whole CIS⁶⁴.

Moscow's inability to influence the outcome of the Ukrainian presidential elections can be perceived as a major political defeat in the region, and signalled Moscow's weakening influence in neighbouring states where it claims special interest. Faced with the potentially high cost of not intervening, rumours about Russia backing the use of force against demonstrators emerged⁶⁵. Nevertheless, force was not employed. Compared with Russian use of force in the near abroad in the 1990s, this can be seen as a consequence of two significant differing factors.

First, Russian security policy-making appears less fragmented in 2005 than in the early 1990s. In security policy, the Kremlin now takes all important cadre decisions and forestalls the emergence of any significant political opposition⁶⁶. Local military leaders therefore had reduced opportunities to act as 'securitizing actors' and set precedence by using force. As a result, Moscow was deprived of the potential opportunity to blame local units if force was employed.

Second, the Western security community had a vast interest in the Orange Revolution, and Russia thus faced a potential significant cost of intervention both in terms of Western reactions and Russia's role on the world scene. There was a clear absence of international legitimacy for Russian use of force, and with the world's eyes on Ukraine, Russian intervention would come at a potential high cost for her role in the international system. Compared to other CIS-states, Ukraine is also on her own a relatively strong actor with substantial resources. Use of force would hence come at a potential higher cost faced with possible reactions from a divided Ukrainian security service and military⁶⁷.

Again, the tension between Black's eternal motives of Russian foreign policy seems striking. Enjoying equal capabilities on the ground as in the 1990s, and presented with at least the same cost of not intervening, Russia renounced from employing force faced with a higher realpolitikal cost and an unprecedented constraining normative framework on the international scene. Russia refraining from use of force in the Georgian Rose Revolution, and to a lesser extent in the Kyrgyz Tulip Revolution adds to this picture.

⁶⁴ Supporting this argument, we have later seen Ukraine's president Yushchenko consistently stating that Ukraine's western turn is not an anti-Russian policy, seemingly acknowledging and accordingly trying to respond to the Russian zero-sum approach to the Orange Revolution. See RIA Novosti (22.07.05), "Yushchenko: rvenie vstupit' v ES – ne politika protiv kogo-to": <http://rian.ru/politics/cis/20050722/40951663.html>

⁶⁵ The Sunday Times (28.11.04), "Russia 'will back force' by Ukraine president": <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-1379054,00.html>

⁶⁶ Bugajski: 230

⁶⁷ Karatnycky, Adrian (2005): "Ukraine's Orange Revolution", in *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2005, Vol. 84, No. 2: 45: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/media/fa0305.pdf>

5 RUSSIA AND THE WEST

What does this mean for Russia's relations with the West?

5.1 Partners?

Both Western countries and Russia have faced an incompatibility between the new global security environment and the traditional role of the military. Russian military appears to have been more tolerant to casualties than its Western counterparts, as illustrated by the Chechen campaigns. This points in the direction of a less restrictive Russian normative climate for the use of force. Securitization of an issue seems to be more of a multifaceted process in a Western context. Here, the fear of suffering heavy casualties may cause an erosion of popular support for peacekeeping commitments. This adds significantly to the political costs of using military force⁶⁸. However, Western decision-makers in the post-9.11 era seem relatively less restrained by public opinion⁶⁹.

Russian interventions in the CIS in the 1990s show a non-uniform 'securitizing actor'. One can argue that the less-developed, fragmented and underinstitutionalised nature of Russia's policy making process compared to Western practice paved the way for sub-national actors to dictate the course of early Russian security and foreign policy. By their spontaneous actions, the respective Russian military units narrowed down Moscow's marginal freedom to act in the near abroad. This can be seen as a way of defending another hierarchy of values related to national interest. Moscow seemed to rate 'participation in international organisations' and 'assurance of favourable conditions for economic growth' higher than 'unification of Russian territories' and 'stabilisation of frontiers'. The military expediency, on the other hand, attached more value to the latter two. Hence, given the possibility to act as a 'securitizing actor', they determined the interventions largely on their own.

Certainly, an opaque Russian decision-making process with several sub-national 'securitizing actors' is more prone to producing unpredictable outcomes than the highly institutionalised political systems of the West. This limits the prospects for close cooperation. The Western security community hence made it clear that it had little interest in being involved in any peacekeeping operations in Russia's so-called near abroad. Russia, on her part, has played the role of a loyal partner in implementation of U.N.S.C. resolutions.

However, the country has consistently opposed the use of force by the international community in absence of a U.N. mandate. Russia insists that there is a principal difference between the use of force by Russia in Georgia, Tajikistan and Moldova and the use of force by the Western community in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq. The opposition of the leaders of the three latter states against international involvement meant that a strict coordination by the U.N. Security Council of international use of force was required. This was, seen from Moscow, not the case in the conflicts in the near abroad, where she claims a special role as guarantor of peace and stability. Russia wants other great powers to abstain from any military

⁶⁸ Azrael, Lambeth, Payin and Popov: 3

⁶⁹ by August 8 2005, US Department of Defence has identified 1,821 American service members who have died since the start of the Iraq war. See New York Times (08.08.05), "Names of the Dead": <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/08/national/08list.html>

intervention without first consulting the SC and obtaining its (i.e. Russia's) approval, hence highlighting the "brightest badge of Russia's international status": Moscow's permanent membership on the U.N.S.C.⁷⁰

The cost of employing Russian force is naturally higher when it might trigger strong reactions from more powerful states than when only smaller states are affected. This hints at a more proactive pursuit of interests towards smaller states not backed by great powers. One could argue that this scenario would be even more valid if the reactions come from the West, into whose economic system the RF is seeking to integrate. After 9.11, cooperation between the Western security community and Russia has increased. One could therefore imagine Moscow theoretically having relatively less difficulty avoiding potential sanctions from its partners in the encompassing War on Terror. Indeed, Western criticism of Russia's warfare in Chechnya seems to have decreased compared to before 9.11.

However, the Western security community currently seems to place much interest in former authoritarian or semi-authoritarian states moving in direction of a more democratic political system and a more liberalised economy. One could disregard the mechanisms of geopolitics and argue that Russian use of force against states aspiring to the so-called Western values is likely to cause stronger reactions, and thus imply higher costs, than military action against authoritarian and unstable states.

Moreover, it points to the possible lower cost of employing Russian force in areas not yet aspiring to such values. Russia could consequently seek to assure authoritarian status quo in order to secure future access and influence. In the future, Russia may therefore encourage governments in the near abroad to take more drastic measures in order to prevent popular protests, and the use of force to support the preservation of current regimes in power cannot be ruled out⁷¹. It may appear as somewhat of a paradox that Russia strives to prevent the CIS from 'going west', while she herself seeks to integrate into the Western-dominated economic system. Indeed, this seems in itself to be a consequence of the tension between the post-Cold War versions of Black's eternal motives in Russian foreign policy.

It has been claimed that Moscow initially after 9.11 believed that Washington would recognise Russia as the regional great power and peacekeeper in the near abroad⁷². Instead, the US seems to have chosen the path of direct military involvement in the post-Soviet space. Nevertheless, Russia has not undertaken any countermeasures. Bugajski has argued that this was the product of a cost-benefit analysis:

Putin calculated that this could also benefit Russia if the presence was short-termed, helped to provide economic assistance to unstable regions, and spared Moscow any substantial costs.

⁷⁰ Trenin 2001

⁷¹ Following clashes between protesters and security forces in the Uzbek city of Andijon in May 2005, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov initially said the events were "Uzbekistan's internal affair", and later ministry spokesman Aleksandr Yakovenko condemned what he called "the attack by extremists". See RFE/RL (13.05.05): "Several Dead After Violent Day In Uzbek City": <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/05/883dbaf0-985c-4ded-b40e-2c40747d4166.html>

⁷² Trenin 2001, Gvosdev, Nikolas (2002): "Moscow Nights, Eurasian Dreams" in *National Interest*, Summer 2002: 157: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2751/is_2002_Summer/ai_87720949

Meanwhile, Russia would maintain its military presence and its political influence while acting as a US partner [...] Russia would opportunistically benefit from US strength by gaining concessions in other arenas. Such a policy could be abandoned if the Kremlin envisaged greater advantages from noncooperation with Washington⁷³.

In this perspective, Black's motive of 'ensuring economic growth', 'participation in alliances and international organisations' and 'stabilisation of frontiers' outweighed the 'unification of Russian territories' in a short-term perspective.

5.2 What next?

The new situation seems to have further complicated the cost-benefit analysis. In the campaign against terror, Russia's role in the CIS-region has been put under pressure, and other great powers now signal long-term interest in the post-Soviet space⁷⁴. The issue is thus if and when Russia's pain tolerance level for losing influence in the near abroad is reached: when does the cost of not intervening outweigh the cost of using force?

The recent developments indicate a less proactive Russian military actor in the near abroad. One can also see this as a possible consequence of a gradual fulfilment of Black's theory regarding economic growth and participation in international institutions. The more integrated Russia becomes in the Western economic system, the more vulnerable she might be to Western economic sanctions. This may raise the cost of using force and modifying the balance between Black's eternal motives.

However, as Russia regains economic strength and self-confidence, the hierarchy of values may well shift, and the desire for a more assertive role in the near abroad may increase. U.S. and European economic dependence on Russia is likely to increase, particularly in the field of energy. This could lead to a situation where the West hesitates to challenge Russia in the near abroad, since a more confrontational policy vis-à-vis Russia might be considered contrary to long-term Western economic interests.

The prospects for cooperation on security matters between Russia and the Western security community seem brighter today than in the early 1990s. The more developed Russian decision-making process probably contributes to facilitating cooperation. Yet, Defence Minister Ivanov assessed the unification of military capabilities as unrealistic: "We cooperated in Kosovo in the 1990s, but I don't see any region of the world where we could repeat that cooperation today"⁷⁵. The recent request for the United States to set a time frame for its withdrawal from bases in Central Asia by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization⁷⁶ sends a

⁷³ Bugajski: 225

⁷⁴ In response to calls for a date for the withdrawal of US forces from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, General Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the United States could help bring security and stability to Central Asia and should be welcome in the region. See RFE/RL (15.07.05): "U.S. Says Russia, China 'Bullying' Central Asia": <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/7/E78761FE-9C79-4B44-AE1A-258D9962282B.html>

⁷⁵ El País (10.07.05): "Hay que ser mas duro con el extremismo religioso": http://www.elpais.es/articulo/elpepiint/20050710elpepiint_12/Tes/Hay%20que%20ser%20m%20E1s%20duro%20con%20el%20extremismo%20religioso

⁷⁶ RFE/RL Newline (29.07.05), "Defense Minister says Russia has set no time limit for U.S. bases in Central Asia...", Vol. 9, No. 142, Part I

message of resolve both to Russia's closest neighbours and to the United States. It might well be a sign that Russia is attempting to re-establish pre-eminence in the post-Soviet space.

Increased meddling in affairs perceived as 'internal' may also provoke Russian use of force⁷⁷. Russia does not recognise the concepts 'humanitarian intervention' and 'limited sovereignty'. If the Western security community were to intervene on humanitarian grounds on the immediate borders of or even inside the RF, Russia's pain tolerance level may well be reached.

In the near and medium term, Russian use of force against the Western security community seems highly unrealistic in view of the divergence in relative strength. The cost of using force would most likely be too high in any future scenario. Probably, the states forming the Western security community will occasionally be Russia's partners. At other times they will be perceived as competitors and rivals.

A substantial weakening of the institutionalised decision-makers may again pave the way for sub-national actors with another hierarchy of values: "If Putin's foreign policy strategy does not bring Russia concrete gains then the security establishment may increasingly question his approach"⁷⁸. This could again lead to an increase in the relative weight of individuals in Russian security policy, increased unpredictability and in due course the emergence of sub-national 'securitizing actors' determining security policy in certain regions. In such a scenario one cannot rule out the use of force against any region that in Sergei Ivanov's words are "essential to [Russia's] survival, or those that are important from an economic or financial point of view". In the future, even a more uniform 'securitizing actor' may value access to vital natural resources so strongly that a securitization of the issue triggers Russian use of force. If anything, a proactive pursuit of interests towards smaller states without strong enough a security guarantee from great powers, not leaving out the option of recourse to force, seems like a more likely scenario than use of force against great powers.

6 CONCLUSION

This report has examined key aspects of Russia's use of force. It is worth repeating that the use of force remains an option in the foreign policy arsenal of any power. It has been argued that a more expansive notion of security and a less restraining normative climate has resulted in this being even more the case with Russia than with the Western security community. After the end of the Cold War, Russia seems to be in a position where she can use force more selectively and with less risk, steering clear of the danger of escalation to apocalyptic levels that marked the Cold War. Indeed, the relative low number of examples of Russian use of military force thus becomes an interesting observation in its own right.

The post-Soviet space has been the main arena for Russia's use of force since the end of the Cold War. In the early 1990s, Russia's primary concern was to avoid that the former Soviet republics came under Western control, thus altering the post-Cold War strategic balance. After

⁷⁷ In his address to the nation in April 2005, President Putin reiterated that Russia will choose its own path of democracy, without outside interference. See Putin, Vladimir (25.04.05): "Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniju Rossijskoj Federatsii": http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2005/04/25/1223_type63372type82634_87049.shtml

⁷⁸ Bugajski: 230

the September 11 terrorist attacks, the focus shifted towards international terrorism. Russia's military and political leadership made it clear that pre-emptive use of force had now become a part of Russia's security strategy, and this was reflected in practice with the August 2002 air strike against the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia.

When assessing the overall nature of Russian security policy since 1991, one should be careful to avoid bombastic judgements. It cannot be concluded from the precedent study on Russia's use of force that Moscow has a grandiose imperial ambition. Moscow has neither pursued a policy of aggressive neo-imperialism nor one of liberal cooperation, although the post-9.11 experience hints more towards the latter. Rather, Russia has been relatively cautious in her attempts to use force in order to sustain influence in the near abroad: "Its hegemonic actions have been curbed by awareness of resource limitations and caution about the costs of power projection"⁷⁹.

Russia's use of force in the near abroad mainly defends interests that correspond with two of what Black has termed eternal foreign policy motives, namely 'unification of Russian territories' and 'stabilisation of frontiers'. It appears that these motives are closely linked with Russia's view on the use of force, hence providing a rationale for the vital role that the CIS is granted in the NSC. Indeed, the same two motives also threaten to involve Russia in external civil and regional conflicts and to bind it to repressive traditionalist regimes and inefficient economic structures in the near abroad. To that extent, they contradict the two other motives, aiming at reassurance of great power status through rapid modernization of the Russian economy, and the strategic decision to ally Russia with the West in the post-9.11 era. Since 1991, Russia has therefore tried to find a balance between cooperation required to support economic growth and the assertiveness needed to uphold a great power status in the post-Soviet space.

This study points towards future limited utility and use of Russian military power, and declining political influence, in the near abroad in the post-9.11 era. However, long-term Russian policy cannot be understood solely in light of short-term developments. In the post-Cold War period, Russia has sought to combine her limited capabilities with emerging opportunities while not forsaking long-term aspirations. Russia maintains a long-term foreign policy objective to regain its great power status. Such a focus was dissipated during the Yeltsin years, but has been sharpened under the Putin regime. As we have seen, the post-9.11 notion of pre-emptive use of force seems to be primarily directed towards the near abroad when discussed in a Russian context, illustrating how Russia remains focussed on the near abroad in an era marked by the need for united international action against a common adversary⁸⁰.

As the case of the Baltic states has illustrated, one can imagine future perspectives of Russian use of force against neighbouring states present a Western security umbrella in a more attractive light for the latter. Faced with potential Western reactions, the costs of Russian use

⁷⁹ Pravda: 218

⁸⁰ Russia has withdrawn its peacekeepers from the Balkans, and its role in international mediation remained notional in the Middle East and clearly limited in the case of Iraq and the 'rogue states' Iran, Libya and North Korea. It has therefore been argued that Russia narrowed its foreign policy focus to the former Soviet space in 2003, see Miller and Trenin: 231.

of force in the near abroad may increase. On the other hand, use of force in order to avert terrorist actions or stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction is likely to be supported by the West. All things considered, a unitary decision-maker may opt to use other means than force to secure Russian influence outside the RF. In this perspective, Western military power and engagement is an important factor to reduce the possibility of Russia's future use of force.

However, political developments in Russia's border regions could force Moscow to default a Cold War mentality. It is worth noticing that this analysis depends on the presumption of a unitary 'securitizing actor'. Non-unitary decision-making may lead to an increasingly ambiguous security policy and a more unpredictable use of force, since numerous securitization mechanisms then take place at different levels. To the Western security community, this most certainly represents an undesirable scenario. Yet, an aggressive pursuit of increased Western influence in Russia's backyard coupled with strategies that play on tensions between Russia and the West may lead to an internal weakening of the Russian institutionalised decision-making process. It thus remains an open question whether more conciliatory ways should be sought to more gently dismantle Cold War legacies in Russia's near abroad.

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