Working Paper No.1995/7

RUSSIAN POLICY TOWARDS THE 'NEAR ABROAD': THE DISCOURSE OF HIERARCHY

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Canberra
August 1995

National Library of Australia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Entry

Russell, Wynne.
Russian policy towards the 'near abroad':
the discourse of hierarchy.

ISBN 0 7315 2177 3.

1. Former Soviet republics – Foreign relations – Russia.
2. Russia – Foreign relations – Former Soviet republics.
I. Australian National University. Department of International Relations. II. Title. (Series: Working paper (Australian National University. Dept. of International Relations); 1995/7.)

327.47

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to demonstrate that classical definitions of 'imperialism' do not in fact establish a particularly productive framework for analysis of current Russian policy toward the 'near abroad', as some Russian leaders continue to call the fourteen other former republics of the Soviet Union. It argues that developments on the territory of the former Union neither conclusively support nor conclusively refute the use of such a term. Indeed, the confusion that reigns on the territory of the former Union—confusion that stems in part from the unique circumstances accompanying the decolonisation of the former Union—obscures the key motivational factors on which at least some definitions of the term 'imperialism' depend. The paper instead suggests that the vagaries of Russian policy toward the near abroad can be better understood as stemming from a fundamental tension in the thinking of even moderate Russian leaders between assumptions about the Russian Federation's dominant position in the hierarchy of the former Union, on the one hand, and subordinate position in the hierarchy of the international community, on the other. Through an examination of the discourses of Russian moderate policy-makers in relation to conceptions of hierarchy, international law, and human rights, the paper attempts to identify the socially and linguistically constructed assumptions that underlie Russian decision-makers' approaches and shape the possible directions of Russian policy toward the near abroad. Although it starts out asking how Russian policy toward the near abroad is made possible, the paper thus ultimately addresses the question of why Russian policy toward the near abroad looks the way it does as well.

RUSSIAN POLICY TOWARDS THE 'NEAR ABROAD": THE DISCOURSE OF HIERARCHY

*Wynne Russell**

Introduction

Since early 1992, a steadily increasing number of Western scholars, diplomats, and journalists have come to refer to Russian 'imperialism', 'neo-imperialism', or 'proto-imperialism' on the territory of the former Soviet Union. These commentators range from area specialists to students of geopolitics; the vehicles for their analyses range from governmental policy papers to journals such as *Foreign Affairs*, as well as to popular publications such as *Newsweek*. These commentators argue that the current Russian leadership is intent on establishing Russian political, economic, and military dominance on the territory of the former Union to a degree that warrants the use of the term 'imperialism'—a term that nevertheless is rarely defined in such commentary. Some commentators point to events in Chechnya as confirmation of Russian imperial ambitions stretching outside the Russian Federation's borders.[1]

I will begin by arguing that classical definitions of 'imperialism' do not in fact establish a particularly productive framework for analysis of current Russian policy toward the 'near abroad', as some Russian leaders continue to call the fourteen other former republics of the Soviet Union. I will argue that developments on the territory of the former Union neither conclusively support nor conclusively refute the use of such a term, and that the confusion that reigns on the territory of the former Union—confusion that stems in part from the unique circumstances accompanying the decolonisation of the former Union—obscures the key motivational factors on which at least some definitions of the term 'imperialism' depend.

I will rather suggest that the vagaries of Russian policy toward the near abroad can be better understood as stemming from a fundamental tension in the thinking of even moderate Russian leaders, between assumptions about the Russian Federation's dominant position in the hierarchy of the former Union, on the one

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* I am grateful to Amanda Brett, Graeme Gill, Jim George, Leslie Holmes, Michael Jacobsen, Tony Phillips, Mike Roosevelt, Michael Thomas and David Wall for their rigorous criticisms and comments, which have saved me from many errors of fact and logic; for those remaining, I blame myself. The Department of International Relations of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, graciously provided material and intellectual support for this project.

1 See, for example, Charles Krauthammer, 'It's Time to World Out a New Relationship With Russia', *International Herald Tribune*, 17–18 December 1994, p. 6.

hand, and subordinate position in the hierarchy of the international community, on the other. This tension, which I identify through an examination of moderate Russian leaders' discursive practices, is likely to continue to affect Russian policy toward the near abroad at least until the presidential elections scheduled for 1996. An understanding of these underlying Russian conceptions of hierarchy, and the ways in which they both expand and constrain Russian policy-makers' range of options in dealing with the near abroad, provides Western scholars and policy-makers with a better basis, I will argue, for analysis and prediction of Russian behaviour toward the near abroad, and hence a better basis for policy formulation, than the concept of 'imperialism.'

I should note that throughout this paper, I generally use 'Russian', in phrases such as 'the Russian leadership', as a shorthand for 'the central government of the Russian Federation'—most of whose members are also ethnic Russians. Of course, the diplomatic practices of a government make up only a small part of that government's foreign policy. In addition, it is clear that a central government's foreign policy in fact makes up only a small part of the interactions between the citizens, institutions, commercial enterprises, and so on of that country and those of other countries. The major focus of this paper, however, remains diplomatic practices.

Are they imperial?

Discussion in the West of Russian policy toward the near abroad since the Union's breakup in December 1991 has tended to focus on different aspects of a single question: do Russian leaders harbour imperial intentions toward the former territory of the Soviet Union, or indeed of the Russian Empire? Does Russian policy toward the near abroad have as its objective the gradual erosion of those republics' sovereignty? Will Russian leaders use the status of ethnic Russians scattered across the territory of the former Union as a pretext to meddle in the internal affairs of their neighbours? Is the Russian leadership nursing irredentist ambitions toward territories such as Crimea, or indeed toward the entire territory of the former Union? To all of these questions, many commentators, ranging from respected Sovietologists such as Zbigniew Brzezinski to reporters for *Newsweek* magazine, have answered a resounding 'yes'. These commentators point as evidence to the continuing or restored presence of former Soviet forces, now under Russian jurisdiction, on the territories of former Soviet republics, and to the involvement of some of these forces in local conflicts; they point to Russian leaders' calls for greater integration of the 'near abroad' under the rubric of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and to some Russian leaders' visible nostalgia for the Soviet Union; they point to pledges by the Russian leadership to defend the rights of

'compatriots',[2] 28 million or so of whom are scattered across the territory of the near abroad; they point to Russian indignation at the idea of the western former Soviet republics being granted North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) membership. These authors cite Russian history to bolster their claims of the inevitability of Russian imperial expansion; Russian policy is described as 'a reassertion of classical imperial ambition from czarist times, a Great Russia from the Baltic Sea to Central Asia'. Failure to recognise the imperial quality of Russian policy toward the near abroad is described as 'historical amnesia'.[3] While the bulk of the academic community of Russian specialists may not be quite so sure, the impact of this viewpoint on Western policy toward Russia has been substantial.

Members of the Russian government are well aware of this line of reasoning. A joint statement by the Russian Foreign and Defence Ministries issued in April 1994 opened:

> Of late, statements by certain politicians in foreign countries, items in the foreign mass media, and debates at international forums have sometimes voiced the idea of the 'ambiguity' of Russia's peacekeeping mission on the territory of a number of CIS countries. Talk of Russia's 'neoimperial' ambitions is becoming increasingly current.[4]

Russian commentators have identified a number of factors that complicate any analysis of the putative imperial qualities of Russian policy toward the near abroad. Some of these I would agree with, and to them I would add some of my own.

First, the collapse of the Soviet Union has left, by any historical standard, an exceptionally complex set of economic and political interdependencies. Beyond classic post-colonial problems of establishing sovereignty and developing a coherent sense of nation, the republics of the former Union face problems of division of assets and of extricating themselves from a production system that was heavily dependent on single-facility production. The massive interdependence of the economies of the newly independent republics has left all the republics vulnerable, not only to active political and economic pressure, but also to side-effects stemming from economic developments in other republics. This vulnerability is by no means limited to the smaller republics, although they are for the most part vulnerable to the largest

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2 The Russian government is now using 'compatriots' as a catchall term to refer to Russian citizens, ethnic Russians, Russian-speakers, and members of minority ethnic groups in other republics who have co-ethnics on Russian Federation soil, such as Ossetians. There are 25 million-plus ethnic Russians living outside the territory of the Russian Federation; the addition of the other groups detailed above brings the total number of 'compatriots' to around 28 million.

3 Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'The Premature Partnership' *Foreign Affairs*, 73, March/April 1994, p. 78.

4 Joint Statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry and Defense Ministry, *Rossiyskie Vesti*, 5 April 1994, p. 3, FBIS SOV-94-065, 5 April 1994, p. 1.

degree. The ethnic jigsaw puzzle, resulting in part from official Soviet nationality policy, that exists on the territory of the former Union further complicates the situation by saddling many of the new governments with co-ethnic constituencies outside their borders.

Second, the period of time since the collapse of the Soviet Union is a short one. Michael Doyle, a pre-eminent student of imperial history, points out that the early stages of empire-building are often difficult to identify: how does one tell the difference between a stickup and slavery?[5] The question of time is particularly important because what is under examination is not imperial expansion, but rather the speed of Russian disengagement from a colonial system. What some commentators have referred to as expansionist tendencies represent instead, I would argue, evidence that the former system of linkages, particularly economic links, did not in fact die a clean death on 8 and 11 December 1991, and that expectations of such a clean death were unrealistic.

Third, the Russian post-colonial pullout is from a colonial system put in place by a completely different political system, to which the leadership of the Russian republic was as opposed as all but the most radical non-Russian republic leaderships. The leadership of Russia, the republic usually assumed to be the imperial metropole of the Soviet empire, did not enjoy the usual advantages of a metropolitan leadership engaged in imperial pull-out, such as the ability to define national borders and to withdraw critical military equipment. As a consequence, Russian leaders are faced with a loss of territories as crucial to the Russian historical experience as Crimea, which was transferred to Ukrainian jurisdiction only in 1954, as the result of quixotic act by Khrushchev, and with three potentially nuclear-armed neighbours. The technical differences between imperialism and irredentism become blurred, as do the gradations of motivation between desire for domination and concern over new security threats.

Fourth, the very presumption of Russian metropole status during the period of Soviet rule has in fact come under substantial criticism from both Russian and Western scholars. There can be no question that the Soviet system encouraged Russians, in John Dunlop's phrase, to substitute imperial pride for economic well-being. Dunlop cites Yuriy Arutyunyan, a Soviet nationalities specialist: '...[the] concepts of "union" and "Russia" in the minds of Russians are one and the same'.[6] Milovan Djilas writes that 'almost every Russian, lowly or elevated, embraces with enthusiasm the idea of Russian aggrandizement'.[7] The status of the Russian

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5 Michael Doyle, *Empires*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986, p. xx.

6 John Dunlop, 'Russia: Confronting A Loss of Empire,' in *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 45.

7 Milovan Djilas, 'Djilas on Gorbachev', *Encounter*, XXXX, October 1988, p. 7.

language as the ‘language of international communication’ of the Union brought automatic advantages to any native Russian speaker, as well as cementing Russian feelings of cultural superiority over many of the non-Russian Soviet peoples.

Nevertheless, as Alain Besancon has argued, the Russian people received advantages, not rights, and privilege within the system was assigned on the basis of party loyalty, not on the basis of ethnicity.[8] While Besancon’s contention that ‘to have an empire, one must have privileged people…[and] the Russian people has no privileges’ may be overstated, nevertheless the position of a Russian in the non-Russian areas of the Soviet Union bore only occasional resemblances to the position of, say, a Frenchman in French Algeria or an Englishman in British India, and the discrepancy between the welfare of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and that of the other republics was slight. With the exception of the Central Asian republics, residents of the RSFSR did not live better than other Soviet citizens, and in some cases lived worse. A number of Russian scholars currently favour the interpretation that the true ‘metropole’ of the Soviet Union was the military–industrial complex, which lived well at the expense of all the citizens of the Union.[9] Many Western commentators would argue that it is in fact the military–industrial complex that is acting to revive economic and military links on the territory of the former Union.

The question of motives

Recent developments on the territory of the former Union do not, in my opinion, conclusively support the judgement that the Russian government is pursuing imperial ambitions, if one uses classical definitions of imperialism. Doyle, for instance, defines imperialism as ‘a system of interaction between two (or more) political entities, one of which, the dominant metropole, extends political control over the internal and external policy—the effective sovereignty—of the others, the subordinate peripheries’.[10] Recent integrationist trends in the CIS, Russian support notwithstanding, by and large appear to stem from an acceptance or, in the case of Central Asian leaders, advocacy by non-Russian leaders of the urgency of coordinating, in particular, economic policy and of cooperation in the maintenance or dismantling of existing economic and military links. With the partial exception of Tajikistan, all the governments of the non-Russian republics enjoy popular legitimacy, and no credible allegations have been raised of Russian interference, even in such critical contests as the Ukrainian presidential campaign earlier this

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8 Alain Besancon, ‘Nationalism and Bolshevism in the USSR’, in *The Last Empire,* Robert Conquest (ed.), Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986, pp. 10–11.

9 See, for example, Alexei Kiva, ‘A superpower which ruined itself’, *International Affairs*, 2, 1992, pp. 13–22.

10 Doyle, *Empires*, p. xx.

year. Russian troops have now been withdrawn from three of the four states requesting their withdrawal, and a withdrawal agreement has been signed with Moldova; the Baltic withdrawals occurred on a faster timetable than that originally proposed by Russian negotiators. All other republics with Russian troops on their soil have formally agreed to their presence, and indeed several—Armenia and Tajikistan in particular—have volunteered basing rights. Russian peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia received United Nations Security Council approval in July 1994.[11] The Russian government, extreme statements by the legislature notwithstanding, has consistently upheld the principle of territorial integrity. In their demands for observation of the rights of compatriots living in the near abroad, the Russian government has not requested any privileges beyond those extended by the Russian constitution to non-Russian minorities in the Russian Federation. When the Russian government objected to NATO membership for the western former Soviet republics, it directed its objections first and foremost to NATO, rather than attempting to talk or force the western states out of considering the option.

Nevertheless, there can be no question that the majority of Russian policy-makers unequivocally support a substantial reintegration, at least economic, of the territory of the former Soviet Union. Nor do they in any way envisage a retreat to within Russian Federation borders. Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said in January 1994 that it was necessary for Russia to maintain a military presence, not just peacekeeping forces, in the former Soviet republics to prevent forces hostile to Russia from filling a 'security vacuum'.[12] President Boris Yeltsin signed a directive in April 1994 ordering the Russian Foreign and Defence Ministries to continue work on the establishment through bilateral agreements of military bases or military facilities on the territory of other CIS states. The Russian government has requested that the United Nations (UN) extend the status of UN peacekeeping forces to Russian military units stationed in South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Georgia), Trans-Dniestria (Moldova), and Tajikistan, a status that would both legitimise an indefinite presence and would defray costs of continued deployments.[13] Although Russian leaders continue to stress the desirability of United Nations or Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) involvement in peacekeeping operations on the territory of the near abroad in order to prove Russian impartiality, they also now stress that Russian peacekeeping troops are operating well within the relevant provisions of the UN Charter and do not require additional

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11 Moscow Ostankino Television First Channel Network, 2 July 1994, FBIS SOV-94-128, 5 July 1994, p. 17.

12 ITAR-TASS, 18 January 1994, in FBIS SOV-94-011, 18 January 1994, p. 1.

13 *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 7 April 1994, pp. 1, 2.

international approval.[14] The Russian government has drafted a program aimed at safeguarding the interests of Russians in the near abroad; it includes economic support measures, the establishment of a powerful broadcasting network, and the granting by Russia of priority treatment to companies based outside Russia run by ethnic Russians.[15]

Observers are faced with a challenge in trying to characterise such a situation, especially since characterisation almost inevitably leads to the conscious or unconscious introduction of normative or moral content. Many observers who are prepared to accept the Russian leadership as not inherently more expansionist than, say, American leaders have described Russian behaviour in one of two terms, dependent for the most part on their personal political leanings: either as consistent with the behaviour one would expect of any normal, self-interested, great-power leadership, or as neo-imperialist, with comparisons made to American policy toward Grenada, Panama, and Haiti.

Both of these characterisations of Russian policy are problematic. The first, that of normal great-power behaviour, makes the unconscious assumption that there is such a thing as 'normal' behaviour, and that there is nothing problematic about the acknowledgement of the right of dominant powers to throw their weight around. Such an approach does not do justice to the non-Russian republics, whose populations suffered under Russian and Soviet imperial rule and who have ample reasons to resent the culturally domineering attitudes of Russians. The second, that of neo-imperialism, has the effect of dividing the post-Soviet space into two categories: the oppressor and the oppressed. Such an approach does not do credit to the many efforts of the Russian leadership to distance themselves from an imperial legacy. Nor does it take adequate account of the fact that conflicts in the near abroad not only threaten the lives of Russian compatriots there but also have spilled over into the territory of the Russian Federation itself, that policies of some non-Russian republics put Russian compatriots living there at a severe disadvantage, and that the Russian Federation remains, at substantial cost to an already struggling economy, by far the largest single or corporate supplier of economic aid to the near abroad.

In addition, 'neo-imperialism' can be difficult to identify. The term 'neo-imperialism' is generally used in a fashion corresponding roughly to Doyle's conception of informal empire—a relationship between a legally independent, but

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[14] Andrei Kozyrev, *New Times*, No.4, 1994, cited in RFE-RL *Daily Report*, electronic version, 24 February 1994; Joint Statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry and Defense Ministry, *Rossiyskie Vesti*, 5 April 1994, p. 3, FBIS SOV-94-065, 5 April 1994, p. 1; Andrei Kozyrev, Moscow Ostankino Television First Channel Network, 2 July 1994, FBIS SOV-94-128, 5 July 1994, p. 17.

[15] Vice Premier Sergei Shakhray, *Trud*, 9 July 1994, pp. 1–2.

actually subordinate peripheral government and a metropole.[16] It is, however, virtually impossible to specify in the abstract precisely what degree of control is necessary to establish the existence of imperialism. Relationships are too dependent on individual historical circumstances, and will differ not only over time but also between regions of the periphery. A definition that relies exclusively on power differentials loses, it seems to me, explanatory precision: by such a definition, any situation in which disparities of power exist may be seen as imperialism. Such an argument may have moral weight, but lacks analytic subtlety. In the post-Soviet context, definitions that rest on power differentials are particularly risky in light of the short period of time since the collapse of the Union; as Doyle would say, what looks like slavery today may turn out tomorrow to have been just a stickup.

Doyle posits that a situation of informal empire can be distinguished from other situations of disparity of power through two defining conditions, which rely on an analysis of motives: design (on the part of the metropole) and resistance (on the part of the periphery).[17] Such a definition is of course controversial. Doyle's ability to rely on such a definition stems in part from the historical nature of the majority of his research; the imperial governments whose policies he analyses, from Athens to the Great Britain of the nineteenth century, did not, for the most part, mince words about their ambitions. In the post-colonial late twentieth century, few governments are willing to face international criticism that might accompany the explicit statement of imperial designs. Nevertheless, ferreting out design is one of the few approaches that may enable scholars to get around the stickup-vs-slavery problem.

The search for design on the part of Russian policy-makers is part of an interpretative or hermeneutic approach to questions of foreign policy, a search for deep, true meaning. A hermeneutic approach searches for the understanding that historical actors had of their situations; it assumes that through sensitive research, a scholar can at least come close to recovering actors' original meanings.[18] It is what we may call a 'why' question—why is the Russian leadership doing what it is doing? In many instances, insights gained from such an approach can be extraordinarily useful not only in interpretation, but also in prediction of foreign policy.

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16 Doyle, *Empires*, p. xx.

17 ibid., p. xx. I recognise that a definition of imperialism that relies on motivation is controversial. Nevertheless, a definition that relies exclusively on power differentials loses, it seems to me, explanatory precision: by such a definition, any situation in which disparities of power exist may be seen as imperialism. Such an argument may have moral weight, but lacks analytic subtlety.

18 Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations,* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994, p. 147.

I would argue, however, that the interpretative approach encounters serious problems in identifying both design and resistance on the territory of the former Soviet Union, as Russian design frequently is obscure and non-Russian resistance frequently is nebulous. To focus, for the purposes of this paper, on the Russian side of the equation: many Russian initiatives in the near abroad can be interpreted in sharply different ways, according to one's perceptions of Russian motives. Are Russian leaders pursuing economic reintegration as a way of slowing the catastrophic economic decline on the whole territory of the former Union, or to establish economic mechanisms of control? Are Russian peacekeeping forces intended to save lives or to intimidate? Are efforts to regain elements of military integration intended to save an all-Union defence structure that offered security to all the republics through early-warning systems and a powerful deterrent force, or designed to create a Russian-dominated Union version of the Warsaw Pact?[19] There are a number of reasons, on the purely Russia-specific level, why Russian motivations are difficult to interpret. Firstly, there are the special circumstances mentioned above: the complexity of post-Soviet interdependencies, the short timescale involved, and the logistical problems faced by Russian policy-makers in confronting Russia's new, nebulous role as a post-imperial metropole. These factors have led even Western commentators, not necessarily anxious to see the imposition of a Russian empire on the territory of the former Union, to argue for closer economic and military links between the former Soviet republics in order to cushion the shock of economic collapse and to preserve security structures.

Secondly, an enormously wide-ranging debate exists in Russia, expressed by various Russian policy-makers, military figures, and commentators, about the correct direction for Russian policy toward the near abroad. As a consequence, the reader can find competing Russian sources laying out any number of motives for any particular policy. In some situations, different actors may have supported identical policies for entirely different reasons, as in the decision to announce a halting of the military pullout from the Baltic states in late 1992.

Thirdly, Russian governmental decision-making processes, while crystalline compared to the Soviet period, are still relatively opaque. The multiplicity of individual and corporate actors involved in policy formulation and implementation at one level or another makes it relatively difficult to measure the impact of bureaucratic competition, political competition, and conceptual competition on policy formulation. It is difficult to identify conclusively who speaks with any kind of authority on any subject, and it is similarly difficult to identify 'who won', and

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[19] These questions are not framed in order to privilege a Western liberal ideal of 'benign' behaviour, but rather reflect the priorities of the majority of the non-Russian leaderships who view a slowing of the economic collapse, a cessation of interethnic conflict on their territories, and modicum of security cooperation as highly desirable.

whose motives might be said to have won, in a case where the policy outcome was subject to debate. The seeming dysfunctionality of formal decision-making hierarchies only adds to the confusion.

As a consequence of these complicating factors, the range of possible explanations for any policy is enormous. Faced with so many possible explanations, the scholar finally has to fall back heavily on her or his own preconceptions: assumptions about the importance of history in determining the courses of the present and the future, about the truthfulness of Russians, individually or collectively, and about the nature and coherence of the policy-making process. In the final analysis, any scholarship rests on such preconceptions, bolstered or modified by interpretative analysis. But to an even larger degree than normally, because of the intellectual legacy of the Cold War, an analysis of Russian motives reflects the mind of the beholder.

At this point, I should reveal my preconceptions in these areas. I am not by nature sympathetic to historical determinism, although I recognise the degree to which others' assumptions of historical determinism can influence the course of current events; I see no reason to assume that most current Russian policy-makers lie more than most politicians; and I believe that policy-makers are buffeted by so many competing concerns—their own personalities, their life histories, their intellectual histories, their bureaucratic interests, their personal political interests, their conceptions of national interests, their positions in history and culture—as to make an examination of their motives a potential quicksand. These predilections have led me toward an approach to the study of foreign policy informed by post-structural scholarship, in the hopes of identifying some footholds that, although they are far from stable themselves, may at least shift a little more slowly.

A post-structural approach

Post-structuralist scholarship emphasises the productive power of language—the way in which written and spoken speech creates 'reality', sometimes in ways that escape the control of the author or speaker.[20] From a post-structuralist perspective, reality is under constant sociolinguistic construction, fashioned and refashioned by people in different times and places. People create and recreate their worlds

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[20] Throughout this section, I draw heavily on the ideas and language of Roxanne Lynn Doty, 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction', *International Studies Quarterly*, 37, 1993; David Campbell, 'Global Inscription: How Foreign Policy Constitutes the United States', *Alternatives,* 15, 1990; George, *Discourses of Global Politics*; Tony Phillips, 'Russian Political Culture In Transition? The Reform Discourses of the First Russian Republic', paper presented to the conference 'Integration/Disintegration', Sydney, 11–12 November, 1994; Cynthia Weber, 'Writing Sovereign Identities: Wilson Administration Intervention in the Mexican Revolution', *Alternatives*, 17, 1992.

through 'particular ways of framing questions and answers'[21] as well as through assumptions and preconceptions.

Drawing on this approach, this article poses not the question: 'Why do Russian policymakers do what they do?' but rather 'What socially and linguistically constructed assumptions underlie Russian decisionmakers' approaches to policy and shape the possible directions of policy?' Such an approach—which might be called a how-possible' approach—reveals the necessary, although not sufficient, conditions for various policies to evolve. Post-structural scholars find the how-possible approach useful because it permits a closer examination of the way in which background meanings, kinds of social actors, and social relationships are put in place. In the context of foreign policy analysis, how-possible questions lead to inquiries into the practices that enable social actors to act, to frame policy as they do, and to wield the capabilities that they do. Policy-makers may find asking how-possible questions especially useful in situations where motives are effectively unknowable: by examining the background assumptions of foreign leaders, policy-makers may gain an idea of the parameters within which those leaders will conduct foreign policy.

I propose to examine how Russian policy-makers have both opened out and constrained their policy options in the near abroad through their participation in discourses of hierarchy on the territory of the former Union and in the international community. In particular, I hope to address two questions: not only 'How is it possible that Russian policy toward the near abroad can be as interventionist as it is?' but also 'How is it possible that Russian policy toward the near abroad is not more interventionist?' and to examine the interplay between these two questions. By focusing on an ongoing process, I hope to avoid a problem that plagues many historical post-structuralist studies, namely the inevitable pressure to select evidence that supports the known historical outcome. By focusing only on evidence that supports the known historical outcome, the authors inadvertently create the impression of historical inevitability—the very impression that post-structural scholarship, with its emphasis on possibilities and contingencies, seeks to avoid. Without examining a range of possibilities inherent in any situation, their scholarship fails to address the possibility for alternate outcomes, and hence for change.

In examining the statements of Russian leaders for their conceptualisations of hierarchy, I am examining the way in which they have participated in *discourses* surrounding certain topics. Discourses can be thought of as interplays of statements with common premises, themes, and orientations. These 'clusters of vocabulary and

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21 George, *Discourses of Global Politics,* p. 156.

propositions'[22] generate the categories of meaning—concepts, metaphors, models, analogies—by which reality can be understood and explained.[23] They impose meaning on the world of those who use them, and thereby shape the users' conceptions of reality. Discourses surround virtually every aspect of life, and people participate in them unconsciously as well as consciously. Elements of many discourses may be contained in the statements of any individual or group, even in a single statement.[24] Discourses are not necessarily logically consistent or rigidly rational, although these qualities can be expected to be present to some degree.[25] They generally flow from the dialogues of like-minded individuals or groups, but there is no reason to assume that contributors to a discourse will agree on all details. Rather, discourses may be identified by the presence of common questions, and by common themes in answer.

Discourses both are shaped by and shape the individuals and groups which participate in them. Indeed, it is this blurring of the lines of the traditional agent-structure dichotomy that makes them such a useful analytic concept. No longer is it necessary to divide the world along the axes described by Simon During:

> The…psychological axis (of knowledge in the humanities) underpinned analyses which used terms like 'ideas', 'influences', 'meanings', 'intentions', and was based on a model of a unified and discrete individual mind reflecting the external world more or less transparently. The…sociological axis underpinned analyses which used terms like 'social context', 'world picture', and was based on a model of a unified and discrete society (or culture) able to be mirrored in the minds of autonomous individuals.[26]

Rather, we may conceive of Russian leaders as both contributing to various discourses through their statements and having their attitudes shaped by the discourses in which they participate.

Because a discourse makes 'real' that which *it* describes and prescribes as meaningful, the process of discursive representation is inextricably related to questions of power.[27] In particular, discourses create the conditions for the exercise of power. For example, the dominance in the United States, until relatively recently, of a discourse of race that presupposed, on pseudoscientific grounds, the intellectual inferiority of blacks, contributed to creating the conditions in which the denial of

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22 Simon During, 'Discourse', *Arena Magazine,* February 1995, p. 43.

23 George, *Discourses of Global Politics*, p. 30.

24 Doty, 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction'; Phillips, 'Russian Political Culture In Transition?'.

25 Doty, 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction.'; Phillips, 'Russian Political Culture In Transition?'.

26 During, 'Discourse', p. 43.

27 George, *Discourses of Global Politics*, p. 30.

voting rights for blacks was viewed as unproblematic. The (qualified) success of the civil rights movement can be seen as linked to a shift in the dominant discourse of race to a (qualified) acceptance and hence legitimation of the concept of equal intellectual abilities of all races. On the international scale, most of the discourses of international relations have taken the concept of hierarchy as a background condition from which analyses proceed, rather than something which is itself in need of examination, hence creating the conditions for perpetuation of hierarchies in the international system.[28]

Certain discourses sometimes influence the terms of reference of a discussion to the point of limiting interpretive possibilities; such discourses may be called dominant discourses. There is no reason to assume, however, that a dominant discourse exists in any particular area. On the contrary, on Russian soil at the moment competing discourses of hierarchy, and competing intellectual and political actors, contend. Most world attention understandably has been drawn to strains of thought, expounded by former Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi and Liberal Democratic Party leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, that range from qualification to negation of the concept of independence for the non-Russian republics.

For the purposes of this paper, however, I will focus on another strain of thought, that exemplified by one group of Russian foreign policy-makers. These include President Boris Yeltsin, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, and members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as presidential advisers such as Gennadiy Burbulis and Galina Starovoitova and prominent figures such as Marshal of Aviation Yevgeniy Shaposhnikov. Members of this group, identified by some Western and Russian specialists as ‘Atlanticists’, have for the most part favoured close relations with the West and a renunciation by Russia of armed conflict. While these individuals by no means share identical views on the directions that Russian policy should take, I will argue that they participate in the same basic discourse of hierarchy on the territory of the former Union and in the international world that serves as the necessary but not sufficient condition for policy. I will refer to this group from here on as the Russian moderate leadership, and to the discourses in which they are major participants as Russian moderate discourses.

I have chosen the Russian moderate community for study because, barring extraordinary political changes, these are the people who have been and will be primarily responsible for the formulation of diplomatic policy toward the near abroad until the presidential elections scheduled for 1996. Nevertheless, their policies, and the discourses that underlie them, are likely to remain under attack by

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[28] For example, classical realism tacitly accepted the right of Great Powers to special privileges within the international community. Neorealism sees states linked to one another hierarchically based upon power differentials. Doty, ‘Foreign Policy as Social Construction’, p. 302.

members of the legislature and of the military. It is worth bearing in mind that the discourse in which the Russian moderate community participates represents the liberal end of the spectrum of Russian discourses of relations with the near abroad. Only a very few individuals, and none currently in positions of significant influence, publicly articulate more liberal attitudes than those encompassed by the Russian moderate discourse of relations with the near abroad. In other words, the Russian moderate discourse of hierarchy can be seen, in the Russian context, as the liberal bottom line.

Discourses can shape each other by providing underlying layers of meaning for the concept under discussion. It is often helpful to think of them as boxes within boxes, with each layer adding new subtleties.[29] In the case of the Russian moderate discourse of hierarchy, I suggest that (at least) two sub-discourses are at work in shaping its terms, that surrounding the relationship between Russians and non-Russians (and hence between the Russian and non-Russian states) and that surrounding the concept of an international law-based community. Each of these areas is of course a legitimate area of inquiry in itself.

In teasing out the elements of these discourses, and hence the discourse of hierarchy, I have looked for examples of mechanisms of presupposition and predication and the positioning of subjects that results from these mechanisms.[30] Rather than discussing first terminology and then evidence, I will present my evidence in the context of a discussion of terms. Needless to say, the identification of examples of both presupposition and predication requires interpretation on the part of the reader; in that sense, this section of the paper draws on hermeneutic techniques, even as it attempts to move beyond a standard 'why-question' analysis. I have examined public statements, public interviews, and personal interviews, as well as journal articles by these individuals, over the period from January 1990 to August 1994. It is worth noting at the outset that Russian moderate discourses appear to have varied only slightly between domestic and foreign forums.

The mechanism of presupposition involves the creation of background knowledge that is taken to be true and that in the process constructs a particular kind of world in which certain things are recognised as true. Roxanne Doty provides an excellent exemplar of presupposition: the statement 'The logic of *realpolitik*...best captures the essential nature of the international political system' contains the presuppositions that there is something called *realpolitik,* it has a logic, and there exists an international political system that has an essential nature. In the absence of these 'truths', the statement would make no sense.[31]

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[29] I am indebted to Katherine Foord for this concept.

[30] Doty, 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction', p. 302.

[31] ibid., 302.

Russia', the constant refrain runs, 'is a great power'.[32] They appear to share the assumption that in 'practical' terms, the 'real weight' of countries differ.[33] They appear to accept the notion of 'geopolitical realities' that permit powerful countries to affect events in smaller countries.[34] They appear to share the assumption that a country's status in an assumed international hierarchy is based not only on political, economic and military power, but also on 'evolutionary' principles, such as observance of international legal standards of the quantity known as human rights, as well as on spiritual qualities.[35]

The last leads us to our next mechanism: predication. The mechanism of predication is the attribution of innate differences, qualities, or properties to a subject—a person, thing, or idea. Such attributes construct identities for subjects and tell us what they can do. A statement such as 'Russia has great spiritual wealth'[36] is a simple example of predication.

It is important to note that for the most part moderate Russian policy-makers have been scrupulous in their avoidance of predication in discussion of the republics of the near abroad. Their caution probably stemmed from a recognition of the sensitivity of non-Russian republic leaderships and populations to any signs of Russian chauvinism.[37] Their silence extends to positive attributes, as well as negative ones, a fact that may reflect a reluctance to be seen as rehashing Soviet-style fulsome praises of international cooperation but that may also reflect a decision to follow the rule of 'if you can't say anything nice…'. Nevertheless, a few key descriptions of both the countries of the near abroad and of Russia itself crop up just enough to make themselves noticeable.

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32 Andrei Kozyrev, *Izvestiya*, 1 April 1992, p. 6.

33 Andrei Kozyrev, Interfax, 16 September 1992, FBIS SOV-92-181, 17 September 1992, p. 11.

34 President Boris Yeltsin, ITAR-TASS, 24 June 1993, FBIS SOV-93-122, 28 June 1993, p. 9.

35 Andrei Kozyrev, *Izvestiya*, 2 January 1992, p. 3.

36 Andrei Kozyrev, Moscow Russian Television Network, 4 July 1992, FBIS SOV-92-129, 6 July 1992, p. 37.

37 Andrei Kozyrev, for instance, warned against decisions that might lead 'our neighbors to believe that we do not treat them as they deserve'. Moscow Russian Television Network, 2 August 1992, FBIS SOV-92-149, 3 August 1992, p. 13.

The non-Russian republics have been collectively described as inconsistent, emotional, and immature in their handling of relations with Russia.[38] The non-Russian leaderships have been described as 'naive' for thinking that they can go it alone without Russia, as these republics 'can't get by' without Russia.[39] The non-Russian leaderships are described as resorting to violent pressure tactics against Russians on their territory if they fail to achieve goals in negotiations with the Russian government.[40]

These are collective predications, treating the near abroad as something approaching a coherent whole. In fact, the moderate Russian discourse of Russian–non-Russian relations also appears to have held differentiated views of the attributes of individual republics or of regions. While Ukrainian politicians came under particular fire through the middle of 1994, the Ukrainian republic as territory and the Ukrainian people are characterised as intimately bound to the Russian republic and people—a characterisation, incidentally, that appears to be shared by the overwhelming majority of Russians. 'What is the good', wrote one liberal commentator in 1992, 'of breaking up with Ukraine, who is, quite seriously, the other half of our heart?'[41] The 'unnatural' quality of frictions between the Russian and Ukrainian people is a frequent theme.[42] In congratulatory cables both to new Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma and the new president of Belarus Alyaksandr Lukashenka, Yeltsin used characterisations of centuries-old association and the closeness of cultural and spiritual tradition.[43]

The Kravchuk government in Ukraine, on the other hand, was one of the few republic governments that received extensive characterisation, probably in conjunction with its intransigence over issues of division of military property. The Kravchuk government was described as needing a foreign enemy to get around domestic problems and to 'prove' their independence,[44] as well as being prone to break agreements and as having old, 'Soviet' ways of thinking.[45] These negative

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38 Andrei Kozyrev, Moscow Central Television First Program and Orbita Network, 19 January 1993, FBIS SOV-93-013, 22 January 1993, p. 31.

39 Gennadiy Burbulis, Russian Television Network, 12 January 1992, FBIS SOV-92-008, 13 January 1992, p. 29; Boris Yeltsin, Moscow Russian Television Network, 15 July 1992, FBIS SOV-92-137, 16 July 1992, p. 21.

40 First Deputy Foreign Minister Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 July 1992, pp. 1, 5.

41 Konstantin Pleshakov, *Moscow News*, No. 22, 1992, p. 3.

42 Yuriy Dubinin, head of Russian delegation to talks with Ukraine, Interfax, 8 August 1994, FBIS SOV-94-153, 9 August 1994, p. 9.

43 Boris Yeltsin, ITAR-TASS, 12 July 1994, FBIS SOV-94-134, 13 July 1994, p. 8.

44 Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev, 30 July 1992.

45 Andrei Kozyrev, Interfax, 2 January 1992, FBIS SOV-92-002, 3 January 1992, p. 48; State Secretary Gennadiy Burbulis, Russian Television Network, 12 January 1992,

characterisations have effectively vanished since Kuchma's election to the presidency in July 1994. Governments of the Baltic states have been described in similarly unfavourable terms. The Baltic governments, particularly those of Estonia and Latvia, have been described as ungrateful, as human rights abusers, and as prone to break agreements.[46] The Latvian citizenship act of 1994, for instance, was described as 'inhuman'.[47]

The republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia have received similar negative characterisation, on a broad cultural as well as a narrow political scale. These republics have been described as not yet having been accepted by the 'civilized world'.[48] These republics are characterised as having needed the Russian empire to bring them civilisation,[49] although attempts now to transfer Western models of democracy to republics such as Tajikistan are described as 'doomed to failure'.[50] Harkening back to condemnation through association with the discredited Soviet regime, these republics have also been accused of having 'old', Soviet ways of thinking, and non-Russian nationalism there is described as representing in many cases 'CPSU-style' lawlessness.[51]

It is important to note that during at least 1992, the Russian Foreign Ministry, and by extension the Russian government, were under intense pressure from the Russian Supreme Soviet to come up with a 'unified' foreign policy concept and in particular with a unified plan for dealing with the near abroad. Collective predication may have reflected to some degree this pressure to lump the former republics together. The extent of differences in Russian moderate perceptions of the different republics of the near abroad, coupled with the growing realisation of the necessarily different tacks in policy toward the different republics and regions, has led to a backing away from collective identification. Deputy Foreign Minister Vitaliy

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FBIS SOV-92-008, 13 January 1992, p. 29; Andrei Kozyrev, *Trud*, 28 February 1992, p. 3.

46 Boris Yeltsin, letter to UN Secretary General, ITAR-TASS, 30 April 1993, FBIS SOV-93-082, 30 April 1993, p. 12; anonymous Foreign Ministry official, Interfax, 30 May 1994, FBIS SOV-94-104, 31 May 1994, p. 16.

47 Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Krylov, Interfax, 22 June 1994, FBIS SOV-94-121, 23 June 1994, p. 9.

48 Andrei Kozyrev, *Izvestiya*, 2 January 1992, p. 3.

49 First Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoliy Adamishin, *Kommersant-Daily*, 4 November 1993, p. 4.

50 Mayor of St. Petersburg Anatoliy Sobchak,TASS International Service, 8 October 1991, FBIS SOV-91-196, 9 October 1991, p. 31. This comment does not, in the author's view, represent a culturally relativist approach.

51 Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Andrei Kozyrev, Interfax, 2 January 1992, FBIS SOV-92-002, 3 January 1992, p. 48; State Secretary Gennadiy Burbulis, Russian Television Network, 12 January 1992, FBIS SOV-92-008, 13 January 1992, p. 29; Andrei Kozyrev, *Trud*, 28 February 1992, p. 3.

Churkin said in early 1994 that it may not be expedient to use the term near abroad in official statements and documents, as this term causes misunderstanding and negative reactions. In particular, Churkin said, the Baltic republics cannot be considered to be part of the near abroad, as those republics left the Soviet Union before its disintegration and are not likely to seek CIS membership.[52]

It cannot be pointed out strongly enough how careful Russian moderates have been, for the most part, about indulging in any public characterisation of the non-Russian republics. They are not so shy, however, about characterising Russia. In the context of foreign policy statements, and statements about policy toward the near abroad in particular, Russian moderate policy-makers have stressed over and over, from 1990 on, that Russia does not seek an imperial or even dominant role on the territory of the Union. Yeltsin expressed this position eloquently in November 1990:

> I reject accusations that Russia today has pretensions to any special role. That is not so. It does not wish to become the center of any new empire and receive advantages over other republics. Russia, more than others, understands all the ruination that such a role would cause precisely because, over a long time, it was she that fulfilled that role. And what did it give her? Did the people of Russia become—on account of this—free, rich, and happy? You yourselves know how the case stands. History has taught us that a people who hold sway over other peoples cannot be happy. This leads not to prosperity, but to decline.[53]

Russia is described as making no claim to a leading role on the territory of the former Union and having given up a ‘big brother’ role.[54] It is described as ‘breaking from the Soviet past’, even if ‘customary accusations’ of being an empire will be its ‘curse’ for a long time.[55] It is described as ‘resolutely discarding the logic of domination’.[56] The RSFSR Declaration of Sovereignty of 11 June 1990 emphasised Russia’s adherence to international law and its determination to avoid confrontation.[57]

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52 Deputy Foreign Minister Vitaliy Churkin, Radio Tallin Network, 28 January 1994, FBIS SOV-94-019, 28 January 1994, p. 11.

53 Boris Yeltsin, speech to RSFSR Supreme Soviet, Moscow Domestic Service, 20 November 1990, FBIS SOV-90-225, 21 November 1990, p. 72.

54 Andrei Kozyrev, ITAR-TASS, 17 March 1993, FBIS SOV-93-050, 17 March 1993, p. 7; Presidential Adviser on Nationality Affairs Galina Starovoitova, *Kuranty*, 28 January 1992, p. 5.

55 Deputy Foreign Minister Yuriy Deryabin, Prague *Respekt*, No. 6, 10–16 February 1992, p. 11, FBIS SOV-92-034, 20 February 1992, p. 39; Gennadiy Burbulis, *Trud*, 7 February 1992, pp. 1–2.

56 Boris Yeltsin, ITAR-TASS, 22 May 1992, FBIS SOV-92-100, 22 May 1992, p. 6.

57 Moscow Television, 11 June 1990, FBIS SOV-90-113, 12 June 1990, p. 90.

Nevertheless, Russia is described, as mentioned before, as being inevitably destined to be a great power,[58] the only such power on the territory of the former Union. Russia is described as a 'shaper' of the CIS, and as having 'special responsibilities' to see that the CIS works out.[59] This last theme, that of 'special responsibilities', is the single most frequently articulated theme in the Russian moderate discourse of Russian–non-Russian relations. Russia is described as an 'impartial middleman' which seeks to establish trust between warring sides in conflicts on the territory of the former Union.[60] In particular, Russia is described as having responsibility for the establishment of the civilised principles of the UN and the CSCE on the territory of the former Union.[61] Russia is characterised as an important factor in European culture—the force, as some Russian moderates point out, that brought civilisation to the non-Russian world.[62]

This last example leads us to the question of positioning of subjects. Presupposition and predication, taken together, not only create and define subjects, but also establish relationships between them, which in turn serve to further define those same subjects. A statement such as 'the smaller republics are sensitive to Russia taking them seriously', for example, suggests a disparity in relative power, with the smaller republics dependent on Russia for approval.[63] The examples of presupposition and predication that I have cited suggest that the Russian policy-makers studied assume a hierarchical arrangement on the territory of the former Union, with Russia occupying a higher position in the hierarchy than the countries of the near abroad. In the discourse of hierarchy in which these policy-makers participate, Russia is characterised as a great power, a status clearly not extended to the non-Russian republics.[64] This position is of course ascribed in a large part to economic, political and military might. Russia is characterised as being able to operate on its own—'Russia will not go out of its way to fit in with other economic reform timetables', said Yeltsin in October 1991—while the non-Russian republics are characterised as economically, and to a lesser degree politically, dependent on

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58 Andrei Kozyrev, *Izvestiya*, 3 October 1991, p. 3.

59 Andrei Kozyrev, *Izvestiya*, 2 January 1992, p. 3; Gennadiy Burbulis, TASS, 13 January 1992, FBIS SOV-92-008, 13 January 1992.

60 Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Pastukhov, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 8 June 1993, p. 3.

61 Andrei Kozyrev, Address to the United Nations General Assembly, ITAR-TASS, 22 September 1992, FBIS SOV-92-185, 23 September 1992, p. 8.

62 Andrei Kozyrev, Prague *Rude Pravo*, 29 November 1993, pp. 1, 12, FBIS SOV-93-230, 2 December 1993, p. 6; Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoliy Adamishin, *Kommersant-Daily*, 4 November 1993, p. 4.

63 Andrei Kozyrev, Moscow Russian Television Network, 2 August 1992, FBIS SOV-92-149, 3 August 1992, p. 13.

64 Most Russian moderates appear to use 'great power' and 'superpower,' at least in the context of characterisations of Russia, with no particular distinction.

Russia, to which at least the Baltic republics 'owe' their freedom.[65] Russia's status as a nuclear power is also frequently mentioned (Kozyrev, explaining Russia's claim to a special role in NATO's Partnership For Peace program, pointed out, 'No other participant in the partnership is a nuclear power. This may be a mere trifle, but a pleasant one, I must say').[66] Nevertheless, as mentioned above, hierarchy is also ascribed to differences in culture, political or otherwise, and values between Russia and the non-Russian republics. The Russian state is described as the 'locomotive' of reform on the territory of the CIS.[67] The non-Russian republics are, as one diplomat pointed out, several steps lower than Russia in political evolution.[68] In particular, Russia is characterised as an enforcer of human rights on the territory of the former Union and as the only force advancing the cause of peace in the territory of the former Union.[69]

To Russian moderates, the international community has both confirmed and enhanced Russia's superior position in the hierarchy of the territory of the former Union through the Russian Federation's international recognition as the successor state to the USSR.[70] Russia did not proclaim itself as the continuer-state of the USSR, argued one diplomat: the world recognised it as such.[71] The international community's recognition of Russia as inheritor of the USSR's seat—and veto power—in the UN Security Council and of the USSR s nuclear-power status under the Non-Proliferation Treaty have been particularly important in confirming to Russian moderates Russia's position in the hierarchy of the former Union. Russia's nuclear-power status is assumed, as mentioned before, to confer on Russia automatic super-power status. Perceived refusal by the non-Russian leaderships to acknowledge Russia's superior position has been met with irritation by Russian

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65 Boris Yeltsin, Moscow Russian Television Network, 28 October 1991, FBIS SOV-91-209, 29 October 1991, p. 46; ITAR-TASS, 6 November 1992, FBIS SOV-92-217, 9 November 1992, p. 10; Andrei Kozyrev, *Trud*, 28 February 1992, p. 3.

66 Andrei Kozyrev, Moscow Russian Television Network, 26 May 1994, FBIS SOV-94-103, 27 May 1994, p. 16.

67 Andrei Kozyrev, ITAR-TASS, 16 June 1994, FBIS SOV-94-117, 17 June 1994, p. 8.

68 Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoliy Adamishin, *Kommersant-Daily*, 4 November 1993, p. 4.

69 Boris Yeltsin, Radio Rossii, 14 January 1991, FBIS SOV-91-011, 16 January 1991, p. 92; Moscow Central Television First Program Network, 3 September 1991, FBIS SOV-91-171, 4 September 1991, p. 10; Andrei Kozyrev, Interfax, 2 October 1992, FBIS SOV-92-193, 5 October 1992, p. 2; *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 November 1992, pp. 1–2; Andrei Kozyrev, ITAR-TASS, 22 September 1993, FBIS SOV-92-185, 23 September 1993, p. 8.

70 Gennadiy Burbulis, cited in TASS, 2 October 1991, FBIS SOV-91-192, 3 October 1991, p. 45; Andrei Kozyrev, *Izvestiya*, 2 January 1992, p. 3.

71 Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev, Interfax, 13 February 1992, FBIS SOV-92-033, 19 February 1992, p. 28.

moderates. 'The former Union republics are beginning to say: No, you are not a great power now, you are simply Russia', complained Kozyrev in late 1993. 'However, the whole world knows and recognises Russia's true worth. Both economically and militarily we are a superpower. There is no point in fretting over how neighbouring countries see us: Life will put everything in its proper place, and is already doing so…You do not recognise us as a great power and as a result you are undermining our prestige. So why do you ask for help?' [72]

It is possible to locate these statements in a historical progression of the Russian moderate discourse of Russian–non-Russian relations, with clear links to the Soviet era. References to non-Russian 'ingratitude' hark back to the Soviet era discourse, when the Russian people were routinely described as having made enormous sacrifices for the benefit of the non-Russian areas of the Union. The RSFSR and the Russian people were also described as taking a 'leading role' in the progress of the Union toward perfected socialism.

It is interesting to note that the terms of the Russian moderate discourse of Russian–non-Russian relations have shifted back and forth over the past five years, illustrating the point that discourses shift in response to events in the world, which are themselves influenced by discourses. In the first eight months of 1990, when Boris Yeltsin began to push for bilateral relations with the non-Russian republics of the Union as a way of circumventing central power and cementing RSFSR sovereignty, the (admittedly relatively few) examples of presupposition and predication to be found in texts from the period without exception focused on the need for equality of relations and cooperation on equal terms between the republics.[73] Russian sovereignty, Yeltsin argued, should not mean carrying over Union privileges.[74] If anything, the RSFSR was described as being behind the non-Russian republics in terms of effective sovereignty.[75] The Baltic states received particularly positive characterisation: 'Latvia possesses a powerful spiritual culture', Yeltsin noted in mid-1990, 'which is dearer than gold in our age'.[76] In October 1990, however, Kozyrev, then the newly appointed RSFSR Foreign Minister, publicly introduced the concepts of 'geopolitical interests' and 'human

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[72] Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, 8 December 1993, p. 6.

[73] A.V. Vlasov, Chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet Council of Ministers, *Pravda*, 12 May 1990, pp. 1–2; Boris Yeltsin, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 8 August 1990, pp. 1–2; Russo–Lithuanian cooperation communique, TASS, 16 August 1990, FBIS SOV-90-160, 17 August 1990, p. 47.

[74] Boris Yeltsin, Moscow Television, 22 May 1990, FBIS SOV-90-100, 23 May 1990, p. 95.

[75] A.V. Vlasov, *Pravda*, 12 May 1990, pp. 1–2; Boris Yeltsin, Moscow Television, 22 May 1990, FBIS SOV-90-100, 23 May 1990, p. 95.

[76] Boris Yeltsin, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 8 August 1990, pp. 1–2.

rights' into the discourse of RSFSR relations with the rest of the Union,[77] and by the end of 1990 most Russian policy-makers were discussing relations with the non-Russian republics in business-like, adjective-less terms.[78] Although the negative characterisations of the non-Russian republics had already begun to emerge—in January 1991, for instance, Yeltsin stressed that the RSFSR could use bilateral treaties 'to influence developments in the republics' and to 'respond to illegal actions against Russians'.[79] It was not until late 1991 that the hierarchical moderate discourse of Russian–non-Russian relations that we see today began to emerge clearly. This discourse has for the most part remained fairly stable over the period from 1992 to mid-1994.

While cause-and-effect terminology is not entirely appropriate for describing the shifting terms of discourse, it is worth noting two developments in the course of 1990: the lodging of what could be described as statements of intent to make territorial claims against the RSFSR by Estonia and Latvia, and increasing evidence that many Russians on non-Russian territory of the Union were likely to face substantial discrimination in the future. The latter issue in particular had begun to attract the attention of the RSFSR legislature, which at that time was still solidly behind Yeltsin in his drive for greater RSFSR autonomy. In December 1990, the RSFSR Supreme Soviet issued an appeal to the non-Russian republic leaderships on the status of ethnic Russians living outside RSFSR territory. The appeal stressed that interference in the internal affairs of other republics was 'inadmissable' but spoke of the need to defend 'human rights', and called on the non-Russian republic leaderships to take a strong stance in defence of Russians.[80] These issues, it should be noted, posed (and pose) threats primarily to the domestic credibility of the Russian government, not to the fundamental security of the

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77 Andrei Kozyrev, Moscow World Service, 16 October 1990, FBIS SOV-90-201, 17 October 1990, p. 60.

78 Yeltsin in fact went against the dispassionate trend, continuing to refer throughout 1991 to the need for 'equal' relations with the other republics. Nevertheless, he quite openly conducted his ongoing political battles with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev almost entirely one-on-one; his negotiating style treated the non-Russian republics almost entirely incidental to the process of gaining maximum autonomy for the RSFSR from the central government, except to the extent that republic solidarity weakened the central government's position. It is interesting to note that Yeltsin's memoirs barely mention the non-Russian leaders' roles in the negotiating process. Boris Yeltsin, TASS, 19 November 1990, FBIS SOV-90-224, 20 November 1990, p. 70; Radio Rossii, 29 August 1991, FBIS SOV-91-169, 30 August 1991, p. 94; Moscow Central Television First Program Network, 3 September 1991, FBIS SOV-91-171, 4 September 1991, p. 10; Moscow Russian Television Network, 28 October 1991, FBIS SOV-91-209, 29 October 1991, p. 46.

79 Boris Yeltsin, Radio Rossii, 15 January 1991, FIBS SOV-91-011, 16 January 1991, p. 92; Radio Rossii, 21 January 1991, FBIS SOV-91-014, 22 January 1991, p. 108.

80 RSFSR Supreme Soviet, *Pravda*, 5 December 1990, p. 1.

Russian state. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought new pressures to bear on the new Russian Federation government, including the traditional security issue of the future of the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons based outside the Russian Federation after the Union's collapse, the legal battles and the escalation of violence that accompanied the collapse of the Union, and the evident failure of the CIS to resolve bilateral issues.

Just as importantly, the moderate Russian leadership, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, faced a dramatic change in its international and domestic role. These individuals, up to the collapse of the Union, identified themselves as opposed to centralised Soviet power and in favour of 'maximum' devolution of power to the republics.[81] As the Union began to collapse after the attempted coup of August 1991, however, Russian moderate leaders, alarmed by the practical implications of the Union's demise, assumed willy-nilly the role of an alternate centre through their advocacy of continued association, even if they publicly rejected such a description. After the formation of the CIS in December 1991, this role became more obvious. For example, the Russian government announced almost immediately that, until such time as the republics could decide on their shares of the USSR's foreign debt, the Russian Federation would assume responsibility for the debt in order to prevent international alarm—a move not opposed by the non-Russian leaderships at the time. The Russian leadership's willingness to assume the international role of the Soviet Union in such instances was indeed greeted warmly by leaders of the international community, who had expressed fears that the collapse of the Union could lead to uncontrolled proliferation of nuclear weapons and a reneging on Soviet international financial and treaty commitments. As noted above, the international community required no prompting to recognise the Russian Federation as the successor state to the USSR in the UN, the CSCE, and other international forums. As the Russian moderate leadership shifted, or found itself shifting, from role to role—from 'opponent of Soviet power' to 'heir to Soviet responsibilities and prestige' it seems reasonable that Russian moderate discourses might shift as well, in this case toward a discourse presumed by Russian moderates to be appropriate to a 'great power'.[82]

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81 Most Russian moderates denied a desire to see the Union collapse, and encouraged the non-Russian republics to join them in attempting to form a qualititatively new Union rather than seceding. Nevertheless, Yeltsin's implacable opposition to Gorbachev's proposals for a Union Treaty almost certainly served to further undermine the validity, in the minds of many non-Russian leaders, of continued association.

82 The role of discourse in the construction of subjectivity has been examined in the psychological literature; see, for example, Liz Short, 'Gendered Subjectivity: Marriage, Motherhood, and Desire', in *Studies In Gender: Essays in Honour of Norma Grieve,* Melbourne: Committee for Gender Studies, University of Melbourne, 1992. The relationship between changes in social roles and changes in discourse does not appear to have been as well researched.

Given this acceptance of a discourse of hierarchy by even those Russian leaders who might be considered to be among the most liberal in the Russian spectrum in their views toward the near abroad, it is not surprising that these leaders are not prepared to accept an isolationist conception of Russian policy toward the near abroad. Even the most moderate of the group surveyed have consistently supported the Russian government's right to assume the role of guarantor of rights for Russians living in the near abroad and to pursue basing rights in the near abroad for the Russian military.

Nevertheless, judging from their conceptions of hierarchy, it *is* surprising that these policy-makers were not more supportive of Russian intervention in the states of the near abroad. For the most part, these policy-makers were opposed to policies of intervention in the near abroad, either economic or military. There can be no question that this reluctance was to a large degree due to practical concerns, ranging from the economic impact on Russian communities in the near abroad of possible economic sanctions, to questions of military capability. Nevertheless, these policy-makers have also engaged in substantial debate with proponents of increased intervention on the territory of the near abroad over the fundamental principles of intervention. 'We have no right to forget that the CIS unites peoples who for many centuries have been the Russians' brothers and sisters. Arrogance and malice make poor counsellors. In particular there is no room for them in politics within the CIS framework', argued Kozyrev in early 1992.[83] Such arguments were not popular with proponents of intervention such as Vice-President Rutskoi and head of the parliamentary international relations committee Yevgeniy Ambartsumov. In fact, the removal of Kozyrev and of his first deputy minister responsible for CIS affairs, Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev, became one of the chief demands of the legislative opposition in 1992.

I suggest that these policy-makers' reticence toward intervention stemmed at least in part from their conceptualisation of another hierarchical position for Russia: that of an entity subject to international law. The policy-makers in question appear to accept uncritically the existence of international law and Russia's subordination to it, under the principle that all countries are equal under international law.[84] They describe UN and CSCE documents as holding 'primacy' in determining international legality.[85] They appear to share an assumption that these organisations are representative not only of an international community, but of a

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[83] Andrei Kozyrev, *Trud*, 28 February 1992, p. 3.

[84] Andrei Kozyrev, Interfax, 16 September 1992, FBIS SOV-92-181, 17 September 1992, p. 11.

[85] *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, reported by TASS, 20 February 1992, FBIS SOV-92-023, 20, February 1992, p. 41; Russian Federation Supreme Soviet Statement on Moldova, *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, 6 April 1992, p. 1

sub-community called 'the civilized world', adherence to the rules of this subcommunity is characterised as a precondition for entry into the community of law-abiding states. Andrei Kozyrev, addressing the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet in April 1992, argued:

> If we ourselves want to build a democratic state and live there according to the highest standard, we must use the same highest standards in our relations with our neighbors in the CIS, without any excuses and attempts to justify ourselves by believing that we are not yet mature enough for democratic standards. This does not mean, however, that we must not use sufficiently tough measures, including those of force, for the defense of Russia's interests and human rights. On the contrary, what is meant is the development of those levers, but in strict accordance with the contemporary norms and concepts of international law.[86]

It is again possible to trace this discourse of adherence to internationally determined moral values to the Soviet period and to Gorbachev's 'new thinking', when, as Glenn Chaftez has written, 'By de-emphasizing the role of class, Gorbachev could and did contend that Western states interacted according to a set of rules and norms that the Soviet Union was itself prepared to embrace. He suggested that the failure to act according to moral values that constrained other states had contributed to the Soviet Union's political and economic crises'.[87] It is probably not a coincidence that Kozyrev, the most vigorous current defender of these principles, spent his years in the Soviet Foreign Ministry almost entirely in the International Organisations Department; his has been a particularly articulate and influential voice in the Russian moderate discourse of international legitimacy.

By taking account of the broader discourse of international hierarchy in which these policy-makers participate, scholars can begin to understand the underlying conditions that have laid out the parameters for the course of Russian policy toward the near abroad and that have shaped various decisions. For instance, the call by Yeltsin for the UN to extend 'special powers' to Russia as a guarantor of peace and stability on the territory of the near abroad becomes more understandable when one

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86 It is worth noting that although Kozyrev used the term 'force' to describe possible Russian policy options, he went on to discuss exclusively diplomatic and economic levers. It was in this session that he made his frequently-quoted plea against the use of military intervention in the near abroad: '...megaphone diplomacy and heroic poses...lead nowhere, absolutely nowhere. We cannot send in a military helicopter for every Russian-speaking boy or girl in a school in Moldova...', Andrei Kozyrev, Radio Rossii, 18 April 1992, FBIS SOV-92-078-S, 22 April 1992, p. 14

87 Glenn Chafetz, 'Contending Theories of International Relations in Post-Soviet Russia: The Struggle for a National Identity', *Political Science Quarterly*, forthcoming.

considers Yeltsin's positioning of Russia as simultaneously hierarchically superior to the non-Russian republics and subordinate to international legality.[88]

The issue of human rights is an important factor in these Russian policy-makers' discourse on international hierarchy, one that cannot be neglected. These policy-makers describe the near abroad as subordinate to Russia, and Russia as subordinate to international law; most importantly, however, they appear to assign absolute primacy, even over international law, to the admittedly poorly defined principle of human rights.[89] In fact, international law is described as having as its primary purpose the protection of human rights. All other principles of international law, including state sovereignty, are described as subordinate to the protection of human rights; human rights are described as knowing no borders.[90] The principle of 'consensus-minus-one' intervention, which legitimises intervention by the international community in the domestic affairs of a human-rights-abusing state, is described as not only legitimate but necessary.[91]

The creed of observance of international law and human rights is postulated in the Russian moderate discourse of human rights to hold answers to practical issues of interstate relations, particularly with the near abroad. The 'primacy' of human rights, said Kozyrev in October 1990, 'helps to answer the question: what does the notion of "our security" mean today?'[92] Basing relationships between Russia and the other republics on universal norms of international law, especially the norms of human rights, 'is the key to solving many inter-republic, inter-ethnic problems in a civilised way instead of by the means traditional for the totalitarian regime—*spetznaz*, OMON, and '*cheremukha*'—which only aggravate the situation: while they may freeze the confrontation temporarily, it will flare up later anyway'.[93]

Herein lies one of the great paradoxes of Russian relations with the near abroad: despite the fact that even the moderate Russian discourse of Russian–non-Russian relations assigns hierarchical superiority to the Russian Federation, in fact the non-Russian republics enjoy substantial influence over Russian policy through

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88 Boris Yeltsin, Moscow Russian Television, 28 February 1993, FBIS SOV-93-038, 1 March 1993, p. 21.

89 *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 20 February 1992.

90 Evgeniy Kozhokin, Moscow Russian Television Network, 28 January 199, (FBIS SOV-92-022, 3 February 1992, p. 50; Foreign Ministry Department for International Humanitarian and Cultural Cooperation head Vyacheslav Bakhmin, Interfax, 30 May 1994, FBIS SOV-94-104, 31 May 1994, p. 16.

91 Deputy Foreign Minister Yuriy Deryabin, Prague *Respekt*, No. 6, 10–16 February 1992, p. 11, FBIS SOV-92-034, 20 February 1992, p. 39.

92 Andrei Kozyrev, *New Times*, No. 43, 23–29 October 1990, pp. 6–8.

93 Andrei Kozyrev, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 26 December 1990, p. 3. '*Spetznaz*' and 'OMON' are abbreviations for military and internal ministry special forces; '*cheremukha*' is riot-control gas.

their control over the human rights of the 28 million or so Russian compatriots living outside the territory of the Federation. This disparity between one aspect of the discourse of Russian–non-Russian relations, that of Russian superiority, and the Russian government's reactive position in relation to the defence of Russians in the near abroad, I would argue, has led to discursive conflict in the minds of moderate Russian policy-makers. One discourse characterises Russia as a state bound by the tenets of international law. Another discourse characterises Russia as having the right to intervene on the territory of the former Union, particularly when the cause—in this case, defence of the rights of compatriots—is, at least in principle, internationally recognised as a just one.

It might be useful at this stage to discuss the question of who counts as a compatriot. As mentioned earlier, the Russian government is now using 'compatriots' to refer to Russian citizens, and/or ethnic Russians, and/or Russian-speakers, and/or members of ethnic groups who have co-ethnics on Russian Federation soil, such as Ossetians. Since 1990, when the fate of compatriots was first raised as an issue for the RSFSR government in the context of signing bilateral agreements with other republics, it has become evident to Russian policy-makers that popular sentiment has left the Russian government no choice but to consider these people to be, in effect, Russian citizens. Popular sentiment was spurred mostly by the explosion of ethno-nationalism in the other republics, frequently with an anti-Russian cast, which created a powerful psychological imperative for the extension of similar ethno-national citizenship identity to ethnic Russians. The Soviet principle of 'internationalism', or the primacy of class or ideological interests over ethnic/national interests, also is generally credited with having taken deepest root among Russians, who were the most likely among Soviet citizens to accept the concept of 'Soviet man' and the primacy of Soviet citizenship over ethnic identity.[94] These two factors were influential in the formulation of the Russian Federation citizenship law, which gives any person resident on the territory of the former Soviet Union the right to take out Russian citizenship through 1996.

The question of a nation-state's responsibility to co-ethnics who have not applied for citizenship[95] and who live outside its borders, is one that has not received public discussion by moderates—possibly due to the strength of popular sentiment, but also possibly due to the fact that these moderates themselves have not theorised beyond an unproblematic equation of 'ethnicity', 'potentiality for citizenship', and 'citizenship'. Yeltsin, in his election platform of February 1990 for the post of RSFSR Supreme Soviet chairman, promised 'to work out a policy for a

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94 Similarly, Russians probably were more likely to carry unproblematic assumptions, if not of ethnic superiority, at least of their right to equal treatment.

95 Only a small percentage of 'compatriots' have applied for Russian citizenship as of the end of 1994.

voluntary, organized return to Russia of the Russian population currently residing in the ethnic areas of the USSR'.[96] It is not clear whether he believed that a whole-scale transfer of population was desirable or feasible; it is possible that he believed that Russian populations in the periphery would divide cleanly into those who were willing to accept a new cultural order and those who would want to leave.[97] He came under substantial criticism for this formulation, and in June 1990 he acknowledged that the Russian government would have to address the problem of minority rights in its bilateral treaties with the other republics; he told an interviewer that treaties would cover 'all kinds of relations...as well as the protection of the (Russian) republic's citizens' interests and welfare'.[98] Moderate discussion of the subject since then has used 'Russians', 'Russian-speakers', and 'Russian citizens' almost interchangeably; the phrase 'compatriots' appears to have come into extensive use to facilitate reference to Ossetians and Abkhazians under the same rubric.

This catch-all approach to citizenship, and to the extension of benefits of citizenship to groups that fall outside conventional definitions of citizenship, may be sloppy theorising, but it accurately reflects political realities and Russian government security concerns. Conflicts between 'compatriots' abroad and new governments have led to the involvement of troops under Russian jurisdiction, as well as paramilitary formations of Russian Federation citizens, in fighting on the territory of the near abroad. In addition, the liberal Russian citizenship law makes Russia the likely refuge for any compatriots fleeing bad conditions in the near abroad. Not only would a massive influx of refugees strain the Russian economy to breaking point, but such refugees, if they felt that the Russian government had failed them, would also have the right to vote it out. This explains, in part, the powerful interest of most Russian policy-makers in the guaranteeing of civil and human rights for compatriot populations in the territory of the former Union.

Russian moderates initially argued, in 1990–92, that bilateral treaties were the best way to protect Russian compatriots under the rubric of adherence to international law.[99] By mid-1992, however, the increasing incidence of violence involving Russian compatriots in the near abroad and the failure of Estonia and Latvia to extend citizenship to ethnic minorities had turned the issue of how best to protect compatriots' rights into a Russian domestic political football. Faced with the

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96 *Sovetskaya Estoniya*, 20 February 1990, p. 4, FBIS SOV-90-050, 14 March 1990, p. 77.

97 In September 1990 he in fact clarified his position, saying that, rather than sounding a call for Russians to return to Russia, '...I was saying that if compatriots living abroad in any country or in the Union republics wanted for some reason or other...to return to Russian soil, Russians would accept them...We will enact such laws.' *Moldova Suverana*, 29 September 1990, p. 4, FBIS SOV-90-206, 24 October 1990, p. 96.

98 *Moscow News*, No. 23, 17-24 June 1990, p. 7.

99 Andrei Kozyrev, Moscow Russian Television Network, 17 January 1992, FBIS SOV-92-013, 21 January 1992, p. 62; Andrei Kozyrev, *Izvestiya*, 15 February 1992, p. 5.

collapse of utility of bilateral agreements, Russian moderates turned increasingly to the international community, in the hope of bringing international pressure to bear on those offending non-Russian states whom Kozyrev described as 'exceeding the patience of the civilized world'.[100] The Russian government approached the international community on the bilateral and multilateral level, and attempted to enlist the support of multinational institutions and processes such as the UN and the CSCE. Yeltsin, for instance, addressed UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali directly in November 1992, claiming that Baltic states were violating UN standards of human rights.[101] Russian moderates called repeatedly for multilateral international peacekeeping forces to protect minorities and maintain stability on the territory of the near abroad.[102]

In conjunction with their internalisation of human rights problems on the territory of the former Union, Russian moderates have repeatedly called for a strengthening of UN and CSCE human rights enforcement capabilities, saying that it was time to move the emphasis in human rights defence from recognition of the problem to the creation of mechanisms for protection.[103] It is worth noting that Russian moderates have called for relatively robust rules of engagement for multilateral peacekeeping forces, as well as for Russian peacekeepers. Addressing the UN in 1992, Kozyrev said: 'If political means fail, force can and must be used to disengage the warring parties, to defend human rights and humanitarian missions, and to restore peace in strict compliance with the UN charter…We have no doubt that the calling of the United Nations is to oppose violence with law-based force, its potential of a "coercion" to peace. "Blue Helmets" should also respond when they are shot at'.[104]

Russian moderates have drawn, consciously or unconsciously, on broader international discourses of human rights and of hierarchy to mobilise international support for their demands and to justify their actions. For example, Yeltsin and Kozyrev have chosen the terms 'apartheid' to describe Estonian and Latvian citizenship laws that discriminate against ethnic Russians and 'ethnic cleansing in

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100 Andrei Kozyrev, Moscow Telekompaniya Ostankino Television First Program Network, 3 October 1992, FBIS SOV-92-193, 5 October 1992, p. 9.

101 Boris Yeltsin, ITAR-TASS, 6 November 1992, FBIS SOV-92-217, 9 November 1992, p. 10.

102 Galina Starovoitova, *Kuranty*, 28 January 1992, p. 5; Kozyrev, Radio Moscow, 3 November 1993, FBIS SOV-93-212, 4 November 1993, p. 3.

103 Andrei Kozyrev, *Diario de Noticias*, 19 January 1992, p. 12-13, FBIS SOV-92-016, 24 January 1992, p. 28; *Izvestiya*, 15 February 1992, p. 5; Galina Starovoitova, *Kuranty*, 28 January 1992, p. 5; Andrei Kozyrev, ITAR-TASS, 8 July 1994, FBIS SOV-94-131, 8 July 1994, p. 10.

104 Andrei Kozyrev, ITAR-TASS, 22 September 1992.

white kid gloves' to describe violence in Abkhazia.[105] Russian moderates publicly acknowledged the importance of justifying Russian actions in terms that would gain Western understanding. As an influential Russian academic commented, Russia needed in 1992 to sign bilateral treaties with the non-Russian republics so that 'Russia's actions in defense of its sons, if they become outcasts in another state, may be considered an unconvincing pretext (for establishing imperial control over a republic)'.[106] Kozyrev commented that 'this new avenue of diplomacy at times requires even greater adherence to international law than relations with traditional partners abroad'.[107] Kozyrev's first deputy responsible for relations with the near abroad argued against military actions in the near abroad on the grounds that they would be protracted (due to the large numbers of civilians) and would be soon considered an occupation by world 'public' opinion, which might forgive a short, Grenada- or Panama-style operation.[108]

In tapping into broader discourses of human rights and of international legality, Russian policy-makers have attempted, consciously or unconsciously, to tap into a perceived larger social order. To paraphrase somewhat Cynthia Weber, when policy-makers decide on intervention into the affairs of an 'aberrant' state—in this case, a state whose human rights practices do not fit into understandings of what state practices 'should' be—they offer justifications to a supposed international community, and in so doing,

> simultaneously assume the existence of norms regulating state practices and an interpretive community that will judge intervention practices in accordance with these norms...Implicit in [a government's] offering of a justification of its practices is the assumption that a community of sovereign states that abides by similar norms of conduct already exists.[109]

By virtue of this performance they are involved in a ritual reproduction (or repudiation) of that perceived social order.

But what if policy-makers misinterpret the social order? I would argue that the discourse of Russian moderates presupposed the existence of an international

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105 It is worth noting that Kozyrev made a point of stressing to a Russian Supreme Soviet session that the Foreign Ministry was the first to use the term 'apartheid' in conjunction with developments in the Baltics, showing that tough language can serve domestic political purposes as well. Andrei Kozyrev, Radio Rossii, 18 April 1992, FBIS SOV-92-078-S, 22 April 1992, p. 14, at UN Human Rights Commission, *Izvestiya*, 17 June 1993, p. 3; Boris Yeltsin, ITAR-TASS, 25 June 1993, FBIS SOV-93-122, 28 June 1993, p. 8; Andrei Kozyrev, Radio Tbilisi, 15 October 1993, FBIS SOV-93-199, 18 October 1993, p. 12.

106 Stanislav Kondrashov, *Izvestiya*, 29 February 1992, p. 6.

107 Andrei Kozyrev, *Izvestiya*, 1 April 1992, p. 6.

108 Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 July 1992, pp. 1, 5.

109 Weber, 'Writing Sovereign Identities', pp. 315–16.

community that was prepared to unequivocally defend human rights, including on the territory of the former Union.[110] Kozyrev, for example, said in 1992 that

> we are making sure that our Russian interests are observed in this space, and generally…I think that they are first and foremost that our compatriots, human rights, and the rights of ethnic minorities should be defended…I think that in this we will also rely on the help of civilized countries of the West, which share these principles of human rights.[111]

He also told legislators that 'Russia's policy arsenal…includes international mechanisms, which the republics are going to be forced to consider not only out of political considerations, but also in the hope of receiving economic aid, which the West traditionally ties to the observance of human rights and all CSCE standards'.[112] Russian moderate presuppositions may have had their roots in Western linkage of relations with the former Soviet Union to the Soviet government's human rights record. The extreme esteem in which Western countries were held by Russian reformers also doubtless played a role in shaping pre-suppositions of an attuned and compassionate community. As Kozyrev told callers on a Moscow television talkback program in July 1992, 'If Russia becomes democratic…then we have a chance of entering the circle of highly developed states in the world, democratic countries, and the best representatives of mankind'.[113]

This explains, I would argue, much of the disillusionment that these policy-makers have expressed over the attitudes of Western governments to Russian peacekeeping actions on the territory of the near abroad and to Russian negotiations with the governments of the newly independent republics. Russian moderate disappointment with UN and CSCE refusals to fund or sanction peacekeeping missions on the territory of the former Union has been evident.[114] Similarly, they have expressed irritation with Western unwillingness to press Latvia and Estonia on the issue of citizenship. This disillusionment runs parallel with increasing expressions of humiliation, sparked by unheeded disagreements with the West over policy toward the former Yugoslavia and toward Iraq. The West, said Yeltsin in October 1992, sees Russia as a country that only says yes. The Russian Federation is afraid to defend its national interests, he complained, for fear

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110 Andrei Kozyrev, ITAR-TASS, 26 January 1993, FBIS SOV-93-016, 27 January 1993, p. 15.

111 Andrei Kozyrev, Moscow Russian Television Network, 3 March 1992, FBIS SOV-92-043, 4 March 1992, p. 30.

112 Andrei Kozyrev, Radio Rossii, 18 April 1992, FBIS SOV-92-078-S, 22 April 1992, p. 14.

113 Andrei Kozyrev, call-in program on Moscow Russian Television Network, 4 July 1992, FBIS SOV-92-129, 6 July 1992, p. 35.

114 See, for example, Andrei Kozyrev, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 22 September 1993, p. 1.

of being described as 'imperialist'.[115] The revised Russian Foreign Policy Concept circulated in November 1992 stipulated that Russia would not agree to unilateral concessions in its relations with the West, as the West will continue to act out of self-interest first and foremost.[116] In this charged climate, a sense of persecution has permeated the discussion of foreign relations; the Latvian attitude toward negotiations over troop withdrawals, for example, was described in 1993 as 'humiliating'.[117] The rhetoric of humiliation had domestic overtones: the parliamentary opposition during 1992 and 1993 attempted to use examples of perceived humiliation at the hands of the West and of the other republics to suggest how Russia had fallen under Yeltsin. The Yeltsin government's perceived failure to defend the rights of Russians in the near abroad was 'weak' and 'unworthy'.[118] Such accusations were often associated with calls to restore the Soviet Union or the Russian empire. Russian moderate rhetoric of humiliation almost certainly was intended at least in part for the domestic audience, as it was usually accompanied by 'and-we're-not-going-to-take-it-any-more' statements.

Discursive shifts have accompanied this process of disillusion that may have long-term significance. It is neither surprising nor alarming that, as Kozyrev put it, 'the romantic period in Russian Federation relations with the West is over'.[119] Increasingly, however, the international organisations in which Russian moderate policy-makers put such stock, such as the UN and the CSCE, are described as at best impotent, and at worst duplicitous. These bodies' perceived acceptance of a human rights double standard, which condemns human rights abuses in the former Yugoslavia but not on the territory of the former Union, is described as unacceptable.[120] Refusal to hold the Baltic states, for example, to strict human rights standards is described as lowering the standards of international civilisation.[121] The often-repeated statement that Russian peacekeeping operations do not require further UN or CSCE approval because they already meet UN Charter standards carries with it the suggestion that either UN and CSCE officials do not understand their own guidelines, or these same officials are discriminating against Russia by holding Russian operations to standards higher than those

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115 Boris Yeltsin, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 October 1992, p. 1.

116 *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, reported by Interfax, 2 November 1992, FBIS SOV-92-212, 2 November 1992, p. 11.

117 Russian Federation Ambassador to Latvia Sergei Zotov, ITAR-TASS, 14 October 1992, FBIS SOV-92-200, 15 October 1992, p. 12; Boris Yeltsin, ITAR-TASS, 4 August 1994, FBIS SOV-94-151, 5 August 1994, p. 9.

118 Sergei Stankevich, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 28 March 1992, p. 4.

119 Andrei Kozyrev, *Moscow News*, No. 43, 25 October 1992, p. 5.

120 Boris Yeltsin, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 October 1992, p. 1; Andrei Kozyrev, *Izvestiya*, 17 June 1993, p. 3.

121 Andrei Kozyrev, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 16 April 1992, p. 3.

required by international law.[122] As the moral credibility of international organisations comes under question, so their position in the Russian moderate discourse of international hierarchy drops.

The drop in moral credibility of international organisations appears to have been accompanied by a drop in practical credibility as well. One of the claims leveled at international organisations is that they are ineffectual, because they have not learned from 'real life' as Russian policy-makers have had to do. Kozyrev pointedly notes that Russian approaches to peacekeeping in Moldova and South Ossetia—approaches that are allegedly at odds with UN practice—have at least been successful. The UN, he points out, should assimilate this experience.[123]

A more subtle point is the possible re-introduction into the discourse of hierarchy of the rubric of exceptional circumstances, through which the Soviet government justified many of its practices. Initially, Russian moderates denounced the mentality of exceptional circumstances as reminiscent of the Soviet era.[124] Kozyrev told listeners of a Moscow radio call-in show in July 1992 that 'It is extremely difficult to do business (in relations with the near abroad)...Still I am confident that there are only two avenues—either to say that this is an unusual sphere and therefore we are free from any legal norms, or to say the following: yes, this is an unusual area, but we, like Baron Munchausen, must pull ourselves up by the hair to the highest international standards'.[125] By September of 1993, however, Kozyrev described the CIS as a 'unique' geopolitical space, in which no one but Russia will advance the cause of peace.[126]

Conclusion

An examination of Russian moderate discourses of hierarchy, of relations with the non-Russian nations of the former Union, and of international law provide the scholar with some understanding of the parameters in which Russian moderate policy-makers are operating when formulating policy toward the near abroad. Such

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[122] Russian leaders have in fact complained bitterly about the fact that the Council of Europe set special conditions for Russia's admission, including guarantees of human rights, while the Baltic states were admitted with no conditions. Andrei Kozyrev, *New Times*, No. 4, 1994, cited in RFE-RL *Daily Report*, electronic version, 24 February 1994; Joint Statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry and Defense Ministry, *Rossiyskie Vesti*, 5 April 1994, p. 3, FBIS SOV-94-065, 5 April 1994, p. 1; Andrei Kozyrev, Moscow Ostankino Television First Channel Network, 2 July 1994, FBIS SOV-94-128, 5 July 1994, p. 17.

[123] Andrei Kozyrev, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 22 September 1993, p. 1.

[124] Andrei Kozyrev, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 16 April 1992, p. 3.

[125] Andrei Kozyrev, call-in program on Moscow Russian Television Network, 4 July 1992, FBIS SOV-92-129, 6 July 1992, p. 35.

[126] Andrei Kozyrev, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 22 September 1993, p. 1.

an examination reveals a significant continuity since late 1991 in Russian moderate assumptions about Russia's dominance in the hierarchy of the territory of the former Union that frequently contradicts claims by these policy-makers to be seeking a fully equal relationship with the near abroad. Russian moderate policy-makers do appear to accept as largely unproblematic a characterisation of policy that this work criticised earlier—that is, policy consistent with the behaviour one would expect of any normal, self-interested, great-power leadership. Russian moderates appear to view as unproblematic the right of the Russian government, in the interest of self-defined security, human rights, and domestic political considerations, to extend its influence on the territory of the former Union to whatever degree is necessary to achieve its aims—in the case of security concerns, through basing rights and the de-nuclearisation of neighbours; in the case of humanitarian and domestic political concerns, through the imposition of international legal standards of human rights.

At the same time, the Russian moderate discourse that assumes the validity and power of international law and the desirability of participating in an assumed law-abiding international community, has acted in competition with the discourse of hierarchy in the near abroad. I do not believe that it is possible, on the basis of available evidence, to identify which discourse holds the other in check: whether Russian moderate assumptions of the rights of great powers to disproportionate influence are restrained by the desire to adhere to the requirements of international law, or whether a mildly inegalitarian but basically benign vision of relations with new neighbours has been eroded by developments.[127] Nevertheless, the tension between the discourses of Russia's leading role in the territory of the former Union and of international legality is likely to continue to affect Russian policy toward the near abroad at least until the presidential elections in 1996.

An examination of Russian moderate discourses of relations with the near abroad thus casts a broader net than one might initially assume. In asking how Russian policy toward the near abroad is made possible, I have ended up addressing the question of why Russian policy toward the near abroad looks the way it does as well. An examination of Russian discourses of relations with the non-Russian peoples of the Russian Federation and of Russian and Western discourses of the

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127 Some might argue that there should be no reason that the two discourses cannot exist in a system of mutual checks and balances. While such an approach seems intuitively sensible, some work in the field of psychology suggests that in situations where an individual is torn between two discourses, one discourse will dominate. Of course, different individuals participating in the Russian moderate discourse of Russian-non-Russian relations will have different dominant discourses. Short, 'Gendered Subjectivity', p. 179.

territorial state has the potential to offer similar insight into the Russian government's decision to intervene in Chechnya.[128]

[128] Wynne Russell, 'Internal/External: Russian Constitutions of Chechnya', work in progress.

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