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## Cultures of solidarity and national interest: Russia's conflict management policies

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Russia's involvement in post-Cold War regional conflicts in neighbouring states and, occasionally, in other regions, has been most commonly explained as a result of Russia's geostrategic thinking and policy driven by Russia's national interests as they are understood, interpreted and formulated by its leadership. As geostrategy is commonly defined as designing foreign policy around the idea of the national interest, nation-states are by definition more inclined to stick to geostrategic approaches than are international organizations whose very existence is a result of international cooperation and where geostrategic interests of the leading member-states have to be mutually reconciled, are present in a more moderate form and may be reinforced and supplemented by shared values, cultures and so on.

In the early years following the end of the Cold War, the geostrategic paradigm seemed to give way to more idealistic, normative and value-based approaches. International organizations and multilateral policy-making gained increased prominence at the expense of certain traditional prerogatives of nation-states. At the same time, international affairs remained primarily driven by state interests that may, although do not necessarily have to, reflect the imprint of unilateralism that may lead to more tension, instability and confrontation. One of the most vivid and high-profile examples of this approach at the global level was and remains the US unilateralism further reinforced at the outset of a new century by the new focus on the fight against terrorism. In a post-11 September environment, the United States, driven primarily by its own strategic

concerns, went to extremes in its unilateralist approach, as it undertook its unconstrained 2003 intervention in Iraq that served as a peak of the US “unipolar moment”.

In contrast to the national interest paradigm, the international solidarity approach is based on a strong belief that norms and values can reconstitute state behaviour. According to this theory, a genuine solidarity culture stems, first and foremost, from values (norms, beliefs etc.) that are shared and that create a moral commitment to the welfare of others. International solidarity manifests itself at both regional and global levels and, as viewed in this chapter, at both state and broader public level. As far as regional models of security cooperation are concerned, the clearest expression of international solidarity has been a security community where war between members is unthinkable (such as NATO in the Euro-Atlantic region or the EU in Europe). It is, however, solidarity at the global level on issues, largely overlooked, if not completely ignored during the Cold War, due to preoccupation with security and strategic considerations, that was most vividly stimulated by the economic, social, technological and political developments of the late twentieth century, such as the end of the East–West confrontation, in particular. The ever-growing prominence of human rights, the moral dimension of humanitarian interventions in the 1990s, the increasingly widespread view of state sovereignty as a responsibility and the world-wide humanitarian response to such catastrophic natural disasters as the December 2004 tsunami that badly hurt countries of South and South-east Asia are all clear expressions of an emerging global solidarity culture.

Even within this briefly defined, morally based international solidarity framework, a number of questions remain about the nature of the “shared values” that are supposed to form the basis for the post–Cold War solidarity culture. This leads us to distinguish between at least two general types of solidarity culture. The so-called “traditional human solidarity” is based on a limited, but more or less universally accepted set of values, reflecting the most basic human principles – that is, those embedded in the human rights provisions of the UN Charter – and stressing commonality and conformity rather than the ideological nature of the values. In contrast, the Western<sup>1</sup> “liberal democratic solidarity” concept implies that a genuine culture of international solidarity can emerge only as an intrinsic part of cooperation between fully developed democracies. While, in this case, a set of values to be shared is more extensive, the claim about their more inclusive nature, made by proponents of the concept, is hardly acceptable for many in the non-Western world. This is especially evident when the so-called “modern democratic values”, emphasizing Western-type democratic development and interpretation of human rights, are compromised by attempts to impose them by violent

means, as demonstrated by NATO's 1999 war against Yugoslavia. The world is too complex and too culturally diverse to be dominated by only one type of solidarity – a uniform Western “liberal democratic solidarity”. The proponents of this concept emphasize, among other things, seeing the “other” as part of “we”, as well as a sense of “international responsibility”, as characteristics unique and specific to this concept. But similar characteristics bearing a different cultural and value substance can arguably be applied to non-Western parts of the world as well (for instance, to the Muslim solidarity and “sense of responsibility”).<sup>2</sup>

Another important distinction (that is not always easily made) is between moral solidarity, which may be based on either “modern democratic” or more traditionally understood shared values but is still driven by the solidarity logic, and various strategic, economic, political and other incentives to cooperate that may lead to the so-called functional cooperation that stems from national interest logic and does not imply value-based solidarity logic. In other words, the national interest logic does not have to be confrontational or unilateralist and may lead to cooperative behaviour (“functional cooperation”), when it is realized that the long-term national interest is in cooperation with the other.<sup>3</sup>

With “pure” moral incentive remaining a fragile motivation indeed, most real-world cooperative behavioural patterns and scenarios in fact fall short of the morally defined solidarity pattern described above, normally presenting a common denominator of partners' self-interests. While the approach does not imply “solidarity” as such, it is not amoral by definition. It might even be argued that the strong advantage of this approach, in contrast to the morally defined solidarity paradigm, is sensitivity to, understanding of and ability to consider and even partly reconcile cultural and normative differences between actors belonging to radically or significantly different cultural and value systems (or culturally defined “civilizations”), such as the West and various parts of the Muslim world.

For the “developed” world, the increasing prevalence of behavioural patterns motivated by a combination of moral considerations and self-interest of some kind brings the issue of complementarity and/or competitiveness between the geostrategic and solidarity paradigms to the forefront. For instance, while there is no question that the world's most developed democratic states are frequently guided by solidarity culture in shaping their behaviour toward one another, and demonstrate elements of international solidarity culture in addressing selected issues of global concern, in their relations with states that do not share some or most Western values national interests and geo-strategic considerations and concerns often prevail.

In the first post-Cold War decade, Russian foreign policy has undergone several shifts: from infatuation with the “democratic solidarity”

discourse of the early 1990s, at the expense of the country's national strategic interests; to disillusionment with Western policies, fuelled by the NATO enlargement process; to a resurgence of geostrategic thinking by the mid-1990s; and, finally, to the more balanced approach of the early 2000s, generally formulated in line with the "functional cooperation" paradigm but including some elements of the "global solidarity culture".

### Russia's involvement in conflicts within the CIS

Throughout the 1990s, Moscow's frequent disagreements with the United States and other Western states over regional conflicts was most commonly interpreted in the West as a manifestation of a "post-imperial syndrome" and an attempt to recover once lost geostrategic positions, seen as the main imperatives driving Russia's external behaviour. At the same time, less attention was paid to the fact that no other major country in the post-Cold War world had undergone changes as deep and profound as Russia had. Although this adaptation was a rather painful process, it may have created incentives for Russia to be better disposed to adjust to the current international realities than many of its former Western counterparts (especially the United States) that were not subject to internal or external changes of the same scale and intensity. Russia entered the twenty-first century as a regional Eurasian power, relatively weak as compared to its former Cold War Western adversaries and relatively strong as compared to most of its immediate neighbours in the post-Soviet space. It was preoccupied with its own domestic, primarily social and economic problems and confronted with remnants of local and regional instability along its periphery, particularly to the south of its borders. With a nuclear arms potential still second only to that of the United States, Russia itself could no longer politically and economically afford direct military intervention in a regional conflict outside its own territory – either unilaterally, within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), or, as some would argue, even as part of a multilateral military coalition outside the CIS.

In their analyses of Russian interventions in the post-Soviet space as manifestations of Russian geostrategic thinking, most Russian and foreign authors refer to the early 1990s as the earliest and most difficult stage of the post-Soviet "transitional" period.<sup>4</sup> However, less attention has been paid to the fact that Russia was going through an initial stage of post-Soviet state-building, and what was interpreted as Russian "interventionism" was often a euphemism for non-controlled developments immediately following the collapse of the old Soviet system (the rapid fragmentation of the existing state and security institutions, the eruption

of violent conflicts in various republics of the former USSR etc.). As demonstrated by two coup attempts (December 1991 and August 1993), the remnants of this system made themselves visible in Russia itself as much as in other post-Soviet states. One of the key remnants of the old system was the ex-Soviet armed forces, which were stationed all over the former USSR. The political command and control of these forces was not always clear; they often found themselves caught in the middle of hostilities and had to act on their own initiative.

Against this background, Russia's involvement in conflicts within and between the former Soviet republics in the early 1990s is viewed in this chapter as a largely inevitable side-effect of the earliest, most critical stage of the complex and radical transformation of the former Soviet space (and of related state-building processes in all of the "new independent states", including Russia). Overall, this transformation was relatively peaceful, as compared both to Russia's own history and to the collapse of another large multinational socialist state, Yugoslavia. The transformation processes also involved the search for Russia's new, not just post-Soviet, but also "post-imperial" national and state identity. Russia never existed in its post-Soviet borders before and, historically, Russians always thought of themselves as part of something larger than Russia itself.

It should also be stressed that, prior to the events of 11 September 2001 and the following "war on terrorism", for the world's leading powers there was hardly any direct risk to national security in ignoring unfolding post-Cold War conflicts, most of which were of relatively low intensity and of an internal character. Thus, for much of the 1990s, for both the United States and its Western partners, getting involved in most regional conflicts and crises was largely a matter of choice. In contrast, Russia could hardly afford to ignore actual or potential conflicts unfolding along its own borders, in the so-called "near abroad", even if it wanted to. The rapid decline of Russia's international capabilities and ambitions was perhaps most vividly reflected by Russia's involvement in local and regional conflicts. For post-Soviet Russia, this involvement was largely limited either to conflicts on Russia's own soil (Chechnya) or to cross-border spillover disturbances and conflicts in neighbouring or nearby CIS states (Moldova/Transdnistria, Georgia/Abkhazia, Tajikistan and so on). While Russia was still to some extent involved in conflict management efforts in more distant regions (for example, in the Balkans), such involvement increasingly became an exception, rather than the rule.

From our perspective, the cases that best illustrate Russia's involvement in and management of the CIS conflicts throughout the 1990s are the ones between Moldova and Transdnistria and between Georgia and

Abkhazia. Both conflicts go back to the early 1990s, when in the process of the disintegration of the USSR both self-proclaimed statelets (Transnistria and Abkhazia) declared themselves sovereign republics, independent from their respective post-Soviet states (Moldova and Georgia).

An inconclusive 1992 war between Moldova and its breakaway Transnistrian region was quelled by the intervention of Russian troops stationed in the region since Soviet times. The violent stage of the conflict ended with a Russia-mediated settlement, short of any final agreement on the region's political status. While in the following years the chances for a new breakout of hostilities were slim, little progress was achieved, despite a series of agreements negotiated under tripartite international mediation by Russia, Ukraine and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) or the more recent mediation initiatives, such as the "five plus two" format introduced in October 2005 (Moldova, Transnistria, the OSCE, Russia and Ukraine, with the United States and the European Union as observers).

After fierce fighting between the forces of the Republic of Georgia and of the breakaway Abkhazia in 1992/93 and several ceasefire violations, on 14 May 1994, as a result of several rounds of difficult negotiations, the Georgian and Abkhaz sides signed the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces in Moscow, under the auspices of the United Nations. The parties agreed to the deployment of a CIS peacekeeping force to monitor compliance with the Agreement, while the United Nations agreed to monitor implementation of the agreement and to observe the operation of the CIS force. As in the case of Moldova, Russia emerged as the main facilitator of the negotiating process, as well as the only CIS state involved in the peacekeeping mission (no other CIS state had sufficient resources or intent to sustain a peacekeeping contingent). With support from the United Nations and the OSCE, efforts to stabilize the situation and to achieve a comprehensive political settlement, including an agreement on the future political status of Abkhazia and the return of Georgian internally displaced persons, continued throughout the 1990s and early 2000s with little success.

Despite the lack of any visible progress in solving the two conflicts, they have remained effectively "frozen" throughout the decade. In contrast to the early 1990s, for the rest of the decade, the main trend in Russia's behaviour toward these (and other) conflicts on the post-Soviet space has been its slowly, but steadily increasing rationalization, coupled with its gradual, if unfinished, military withdrawal from these and most other CIS regions. Among the general factors that contributed to this process, Russia's domestic economic and security considerations played a most critical role. Since 1994, when the conflict in Chechnya came to a

head on Russia's own territory, Moscow reaffirmed its support for territorial integrity of the new independent post-Soviet states. Similarly, at the 1999 OSCE Istanbul summit, Russia agreed to cut its military presence in Georgia and Moldova in exchange for the OSCE approval of more favourable flank limits in the North Caucasus, where Moscow had deployed a significant joint group of forces for an indefinite period due to the conflict in Chechnya and general instability in the region.

In contrast to Russia's domestic political, economic and security considerations, its participation in limited multilateral decision-making efforts and interaction with an even more limited OSCE presence in Moldova<sup>5</sup> and the United Nations<sup>6</sup> and OSCE missions in Georgia<sup>7</sup> did not appear to have played a major role in gradual rationalization and moderation of Moscow's policies in either of the "frozen" conflict zones. It often seemed that international actors were much more preoccupied with the task of speeding the withdrawal of the remnants of post-Soviet Russia's military presence from, and limiting the Russian influence in, both regions than with the root causes of violence and long-term conflict resolution efforts. This approach can be partly explained by both geostrategically and culturally motivated distrust of Russia's intentions in its "near abroad" and by a widespread view of the Russian military presence as one of the key factors exacerbating tensions rather than having a stabilizing influence throughout the CIS.

Whilst heavily criticizing Russian efforts to create some level of stability along its borders by trying to prevent large-scale internal violence in the CIS, the non-CIS international actors were consistently unwilling to take up any major responsibility in this area. During the first post-Cold War decade, major Western states and international organizations were very reluctant to commit significant resources to field operations in conflict areas. When, for instance, at the end of 2001, the withdrawal of Russia's peacekeepers from the zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict seemed quite plausible, given Tbilisi's reluctance to extend their mandate, neither the OSCE nor the UN showed any enthusiasm to establish the badly needed security presence in the conflict zone to replace Russian peacekeepers.

Overall, whilst some international presence within the OSCE and/or the UN framework had been in place in both of these cases, its positive impact was limited. Rather, it was both the conflicts' internal Chisinau-Tiraspol and Tbilisi-Sukhumi dynamics and the logic of Russia's bilateral relations with Moldova and Georgia that determined the course of events in both frozen conflict zones and has so far prevented a new escalation of violence. These factors explain a somewhat different course that the developments in the two conflict zones took in the early 2000s.

In the case of the Moldova–Transnistria dispute, there were indications of a stabilization, if not a breakthrough, in the peace process. The situation continued to stabilize and slowly improve up until the rejection by the Moldovan government in November 2003 of the Russian peace plan for this troubled region (the “Kozak” plan). Under heavy pressure from the OSCE and Western states, Moldova turned down Russia’s proposal for a demilitarized “asymmetrical federation” arrangement for Moldova and its autonomous Gagauz and breakaway Transnistria regions, despite this previously being approved by both Moldovan and Transnistrian leaderships.<sup>8</sup>

By contrast, tensions between Georgia and Abkhazia never ceased. Furthermore, since the November 2003 coup in Georgia (the “revolution of roses”) that forced president Eduard Shevardnadze out of office and brought to power a nationalist pro-Western leader Mikhail Saakashvili, who repeatedly threatened to use force against Georgia’s breakaway regions – Abkhazia and South Ossetiya – the possibility of a renewal of full-scale hostilities became more realistic than at any time since the early 1990s.

In terms of internal political dynamics, the relatively more stable situation in the Moldova–Transnistrian case can be explained by the fact that, as compared to the ethnic Georgian–Abkhaz conflict, there was no insuperable ethnic antagonism between the protagonists in Moldova, where multifarious social and economic contacts with the Transnistrian region were retained throughout the 1990s. The key external explanation, however, can be found in the general context of both states’ bilateral relations with Russia. Among other things, the Moldovan–Transnistrian conflict, while important, did not appear to be directly connected to Russia’s national interests, in contrast to the situation in and around Abkhazia.

Moscow’s official position on Moldova’s dispute with its Transnistrian region had been ambiguous since the conflict erupted, reflecting the complex balance of forces in Russian politics and conflicting foreign policy interests. On the one hand, having prevented a full-scale massacre and further regional destabilization by directly intervening in the midst of conflict (on the Transnistrian side, as claimed by some political forces in Moldova), Moscow had a rational interest in keeping Moldova as a sovereign and neutral state and as a CIS member and partner and tried to induce separatists in Tiraspol to make greater concessions to Chisinau. On the other hand, the Russian government for some time could not completely ignore sectors of its own public and elite opinion, calling for support to the “Russian-speaking compatriots” in Transnistria who did not want to rejoin Moldova just to find themselves one day as part



of “Greater Romania”. Peace negotiations were also complicated by the linkage between a political solution to the conflict and withdrawal of the former Soviet 14th Army. The Moldovan constitution of July 1994 established the “permanent neutrality” of Moldova and prohibited the stationing of foreign troops on Moldovan territory, and Chisinau insisted that withdrawal was a precondition for a settlement. In October 1994, Russia and Moldova signed an initial agreement on withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova within three years, but the process remained stalled for much longer by a number of factors. These factors included the intransigence of Tiraspol’s regime; blocking shipments of arms and ammunition; Russia’s and Ukraine’s concerns about the geopolitical stability of the region, particularly in view of the pro-Romanian sympathies of parts of Moldova’s elite; the inability of the Moldovan state to assure the Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking Transdnistriean minority of the central government’s ability to accommodate their economic, cultural and political interests; and the lack of funding in Russia for withdrawal and/or utilization of arms, among others. In the early 2000s, the withdrawal continued, depending on the general political climate and the progress in peace talks (as of early 2007, the last removal of some of Russia’s estimated 21 metric tons of munitions from Transdnistria occurred in March 2004).<sup>9</sup>

Against this background, it seems that it was the growing economic imperatives on both sides, as well as the “elite politics” factor in Chisinau and in Moscow, rather than international influence or pressure, that played a positive role in Moldova’s peace process. The process remained blocked until the 2000 change of administration in Russia, which brought to power an increasingly pragmatic generation of leaders. This was complemented by the significant changes in Moldova’s foreign and domestic policies, which occurred as a result of the Communists’ victory at the February 2001 parliamentary elections (after ten years in opposition) over the pro-Western and pro-Romanian nationalist parties. Domestic political changes in Moldova, dictated, among other things, by clear economic interests (gas and electricity are delivered to Moldova by Russia and 70 per cent of the Moldavian exports go to CIS countries, especially to Russia and Ukraine), helped create a more favourable political climate for building a truly multiethnic state and engaging Transdnistria, even if not coupled by similar elite changes in Tiraspol. In April 2001, the Moldovan parliament finally ratified an intergovernmental agreement on military cooperation with Russia, signed in Moscow in July 1997. These political changes allowed Russia to begin the final stage of the complete withdrawal of its arms and military equipment from Transdnistria on 17 July 2001, in accordance with the obligations taken at the 1999 Istanbul

OSCE summit and as specified by the June 2001 trilateral agreement between the Russian Ministry of Defence, the Transdniestrian administration and the OSCE Mission.

The Transdniestrian separatist leadership repeatedly violated the terms of an agreement and expressed its fierce opposition to Russian arms and troop withdrawal, and even tried to physically stop the process, and in the early 2000s, Tiraspol faced increasing isolation not just from the international community, but also from within the CIS, including from Russia.<sup>10</sup> It may also be suggested that, as the Transdniestrian leadership had no alternative to finding some form of compromise with Moldova, it simply tried to get the most out of the arms and troop withdrawal process, both politically and financially.<sup>11</sup> The Transdniestrian leadership remained in the position of the main spoiler of the peace process up until November 2003, when it actually joined the Moldovan leadership in its initial approval of a Russia-sponsored “asymmetrical federation” peace plan before the latter had to withdraw its initial support under heavy political pressure from the OSCE and the West in a move that effectively – and indefinitely – blocked further progress in a peace process.

In contrast to the dispute between Moldova and Transnistria, which did not directly affect Russia’s own security and thus left Moscow more room for political maneuvering, its approach to the conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia has been dominated by geostrategic concerns. The situation in Georgia was and remained complicated by a number of factors. While Russian peacekeepers were deployed on the confrontation line between the conflicting sides to ensure that the armistice was respected, Russia, which borders both Abkhazia and Georgia was interested in both securing the border and keeping close economic, cultural and security ties to both entities. While heavily criticized by Tbilisi for providing political and economic support to Abkhazia, Russia was viewed in Abkhazia as the main and sole guarantor of its physical survival as a nation. To complicate matters further, with the lower-scale confrontation in Chechnya still underway and particularly as the Chechen rebels experienced greater financial, logistic and political difficulties and had to resort to increasingly asymmetrical forms of warfare, a potential for cross-border spillover of violence from Chechnya to the neighbouring Chechen-populated Pankisi Gorge in Georgia, as well as in the reverse direction, remained. This spillover effect was particularly destabilizing as long as Georgia remained a semi-failed state that had for several years served as a hospitable refuge and a supply route for the Chechen militants.

The gradual withdrawal of Russian arms, military equipment and bases from Georgia, so strongly insisted on by both Tbilisi and the West, neither guaranteed progress in peace talks with Abkhazia nor prevented

the central authorities in Tbilisi from engaging in paramilitary operations in conflict zones. By the end of 2000, Russia met the deadline that had been agreed to in Istanbul for the elimination of equipment in Georgia in excess of one basic temporary deployment under the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. In 2001, Russia finally withdrew two of its four bases in Georgia – Vaziani, near Tbilisi (handed over on 29 June 2001), and Gudauta (Abkhazia), evacuated in late October and early November 2001.<sup>12</sup> In that case, Russia's international obligations were fully in concurrence with its own military and economic imperatives. While, economically, it was no longer feasible to sustain the bases anyway, from the military/geostrategic point of view Russia could literally afford the withdrawal, as it concentrated on maintaining a more strategically important base in Giumri (Armenia), with the Armenian government's consent.

The scaling back of Russia's military presence in Georgia could not and did not prevent new crises between Georgia and Abkhazia. One of these broke out in October/November 2001 as a result of Tbilisi's support for an attempted invasion of Abkhazia by Chechen rebels, joined by Georgian paramilitaries; in August 2004, tensions were simmering again, as a result of saber rattling by Georgia's new president Saakashvili, threatening a new outbreak of interethnic conflict. The lack of any progress in the peace settlement in either of Georgia's breakaway regions, despite the significant reduction of the Russian military presence, suggested that the link between that residual military presence and Georgia's internal conflicts was not as straightforward and clear as it was often presented by the Georgian government or by Western observers. The remnants of Russia's military presence in Georgia (where, as of early 2007, about 3,000 remaining personnel were in the process of leaving two bases, Batumi and Ahalkalaki)<sup>13</sup> turned out to be largely irrelevant to the dynamics of Georgia's internal conflicts. Rather, it was the dramatic interplay between two of the region's conflicts (in Chechnya and in Abkhazia), coupled with the ineptitude of Georgian authorities, the political and economic crisis in Georgia and the deteriorating state of Georgian–Russian relations, that led to escalations of violence in the Georgian–Abkhaz conflict in the early 2000s. According to Georgian sources, Russia, claiming that Georgia had become a hospitable refuge for retreating Chechen militants, attacked Chechen armed groups from the air on both sides of the Russian–Georgian border. Moscow's official position on the new round of the Georgian–Abkhaz conflict remained restrained, with Russian President Vladimir Putin repeatedly declaring his support for the territorial integrity of Georgia and expressing Moscow's readiness to withdraw its peacekeepers from Abkhazia – a proposal immediately rejected by Shevardnadze. The situation rapidly deteriorated as a result of a combination of impulsive nationalist policies and brinkmanship on

the part of Georgia's new leader Saakashvili, who became president in January 2004. His attempts to mobilize foreign support, particularly US military support, for his aggressive plans toward Abkhazia and South Ossetiya contributed to destabilization of the situation even though they appeared inconclusive and were not met with particular enthusiasm in the West.

In terms of external involvement, the situation in Georgia presented contrasts with the case of Moldova. In Moldova, most of the non-CIS external involvement was performed by an international organization (the OSCE) and even the process of further demilitarization of Transdnistria has been thoroughly internationalized (with the OSCE and the European Union providing solid financial support for the withdrawal and utilization of the formerly Soviet weapons and other military equipment by Russia). In Georgia, the international/multilateral efforts appeared to become increasingly marginalized by the direct military involvement of the United States. In the context of rapidly deteriorating relations with Abkhazia and Russia at the end of 2001, the Georgian authorities issued a formal request to the United States for military, technical and other support under the pretext of "the need to destroy the hotbed of terrorists in the Pankisi Gorge" – a threat previously consistently denied by Tbilisi. By deploying its military personnel in Georgia as part of the "train and equip" programme, the United States effectively reconciled its newly declared priority to fight terrorism all over the world with its strategic interests in the Caucasus – in close proximity to Russia's own borders and especially to Chechnya. The US military presence, no matter how limited, became increasingly important for Tbilisi as a lever of political and direct military pressure both on Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and indirect pressure on Russia. Georgia used helicopters, provided by the United States as part of the "train and equip" programme to "fight terrorists" for flights over Abkhazia, causing new political tensions. Since the deployment of US military personnel, the Georgian side extended its traditional demands<sup>14</sup> and toughened its negotiating position, insisting on creating the UN interim administration in the Gali region of Abkhazia – an idea unacceptable to the Abkhaz side and not technically feasible, due to numerous security constraints. More generally, the US involvement in Georgia had a dual impact on internal conflict and conflict resolution dynamics: while it allowed Tbilisi to toughen its negotiating position, thus making it more difficult for the parties to agree to a compromise solution, it was not openly supportive of some of Saakashvili's most ambitious and belligerent rhetoric and may have played a certain role in constraining his government's behaviour.

The main paradox in applying the solidarity-versus-national interest paradigm to Russia's involvement in conflicts within CIS states is that its

most “interventionist” stage – the early 1990s – coincided with the period when Russia’s foreign policy elites were mired in pro-Western romanticism and sincerely believed that, as Russia was no longer an ideological rival of the West, it would be very soon admitted to the “Western club” on the basis of shared ideals of democracy and an ethically-based solidarity. By contrast, it seems that Russia’s move away from interventionism, its increasingly rational behaviour in parts of the former Soviet Union and general evolution of its foreign policy toward, for instance, putting a greater emphasis on economic interests, was primarily dictated by domestic imperatives of political stabilization and economic mobilization. Achieving this ultimately depended on the very ability to finally formulate and pursue its national interests, rather than to overlook them for the sake of some abstract morally defined values, as, by the rare, almost unanimous consensus among Russian experts on foreign policy, was the case in the early 1990s.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the emerging understanding of Russia’s national interests stemmed from the primacy of geo-economics over geopolitics and from pragmatic concerns of creating favorable conditions for its economic modernization and social development, overcoming the country’s current relative weakness, avoiding unnecessary military overstretch and so on. While Russia’s participation in multilateral decision-making on many issues, including resolution of conflicts over the CIS space, was generally cooperative or, at least, non-confrontational, this “functional cooperation” approach was dictated primarily by the growing pragmatism of the Russian leadership and the gradual realization of the country’s real capabilities and long-term legitimate national interests, rather than by any value-based solidarity logic. Among other things, one of Russia’s strongest national interests is to build and preserve a stable and peaceful political, economic and security environment along its own borders.

At the same time it has to be recognized that, with some cooperation between Russia and its Western partners on conflict management within the CIS well underway, this cooperation was generally of limited effectiveness in that it neither led to any major breakthroughs in peace processes nor significantly contributed to encouraging Russia to develop elements of a solidarity culture. Moreover, in some cases external influences, both unilaterally and multilaterally exercised, could have even made the situation worse. For example, in the early 2000s, the positions of all key external mediators on the Moldova/Transdnistria dispute appeared to be almost fully concurrent. The OSCE’s rejection in November 2003 of Russia’s “Kozak peace plan” (that could help resolve the Dnestr problem within the framework of a single state) led to a new impasse in the peace process. The political pressure applied on Moldovan President

Vladimir Voronin to secure rejection of a Russia-sponsored plan demonstrated that the United States and other Western states, acting through the OSCE as the Western-dominated organization, were interested only in overcoming more than a decade-long impasse in the Moldovan–Transnistrian peace process as long as this was secured on terms dictated by the West. Otherwise, the United States and the EU states were prepared to sacrifice the peace process to the more important goal of preventing a settlement on Russia’s terms, even if an agreement was initially accepted by both parties.

In the same manner, the American one-sided and unconditional support for Saakashvili’s regime despite its aggressive statements on South Ossetiya and Abkhazia has proved to be counterproductive to the goal of achieving peace settlements with both statelets. It has forced the Abkhazian authorities to step up security cooperation with their South Ossetian counterparts and put their security forces on alert, and pushed both statelets closer to Russia as their only meaningful benefactor. At the same time, attempts to depict Russia’s position on both conflicts as driven exclusively by anti-Western logic are hardly supported by Russia’s practical behaviour vis-à-vis Moldova and particularly Georgia. It is worth remembering in this context that Moscow still does not officially recognize the breakaway regions, guided by its vital interest in safeguarding the principle of non-violation of territorial integrity of post-Soviet republics, in view of its own problems in the North Caucasus. Moscow officially sticks to this line even despite the repeated calls from both Abkhazia and South Ossetiya for a formal association with the Russian Federation and despite the fact that most of the residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetiya hold Russian citizenship. Moreover, in terms of Georgia’s domestic political developments, Russia has demonstrated a relatively pragmatic approach stemming from its interpretation of Russia’s national interests in that region. One of the most important interests for Russia has been to avoid further destabilization and a new civil war in that troubled country that remains on the verge of economic break-up, despite all hopes for a massive inflow of Western economic assistance in response to Tbilisi’s political loyalty to the United States and NATO. In the name of that goal, Russia played a key mediating role at two critical junctures. At the peak of the November 2003 “revolution of roses” in Georgia, it was Russia’s mediation that ultimately forced Shevardnadze to resign (in the form of an “honourable departure”) and prevented the use of force by the former regime. Later, in May 2004, Russia refused to offer troops or arms to the leader of a fiefdom (officially, Georgia’s autonomous region) of Abkhazia, to resist the extension of the central government’s control to that region, and facilitated a non-violent resolution of that crisis by offering Abashidze an exile in Russia.

While commonly explained by the competing geostrategic interests of Russia and Western states in the post-Soviet space, the impasse in peace processes in both regions can also at least partly be explained by an inability and/or unwillingness to consider cultural differences in approaches to conflict management demonstrated by both Russia and the West and formulated within the logic of respective “national interest cultures”. While Russia often tended to view international organizations’ involvement in the CIS conflict zones as nothing more than a projection of Western power and influence in general, as well as of geostrategic interests of Western powers (especially the United States), the latter have often demonstrated the lack of understanding for Russia’s extremely difficult transformation process. Among other things, this approach led to overestimation of Russia’s interest in keeping its military presence in both Moldova and Georgia; a suspicious or even hostile attitude to any political groups and forces within the CIS states that were not perceived as pro-Western (such as communists or post-communist socialists); overestimation of administrative capacities of central governments in both Chisinau and Tbilisi; a lack of attention to local factors driving the conflict dynamics; and the fact that even modest progress toward peaceful resolution of any of the CIS conflicts (such as in the Moldovan–Transdnestrrian case in the early 2000s) has been dependent on improved bilateral relations between Russia and the respective republics’ central authorities.

In sum, in the course of the 1990s, as Russia was slowly adjusting to its radically new post-Soviet and post–Cold War role and acquiring the ability to formulate and, with varying degree of effectiveness, pursue its national interests, Russia’s conflict management policies in the CIS gradually became driven by “national interest” logic. It was precisely that logic that dictated Russia’s increasing drive toward greater pragmatism and more rational behavioural patterns, including multilateral negotiations and mediation, involving both CIS and non-CIS states and regional and broader international organizations (the OSCE, the United Nations) in areas such as Abkhazia/Georgia and Transdnestrria/Moldova. Thus, Russia’s approach to conflict management efforts in those and other regions in the first years of the new century can be best described as “functional cooperation”. Precisely because this approach was more clearly formulated within the “national interest” logic by the early 2000s, as compared to the early 1990s, it has led Russia to play a constructive mediating role at some critical junctures (for instance, in securing non-violent transition of power in Georgia in 2003 as a way to prevent further chaos and perhaps even its potential break-up), as it was based on a realization that stabilization of the internal political situation and prevention of re-escalation of internal conflicts in Russia’s neighbouring states and other

CIS states are in Russia's own vital national interest. As long as and to the extent that other individual external players, such as the United States and other Western states, as well as broader multilateral arrangements to settle these conflicts were pursuing the same goal, Russia engaged in functional cooperation with these actors on conflict management efforts within the CIS.

### Russia's involvement in conflict management outside the CIS

In contrast to Russia's role in the conflicts within or between the CIS states, the few cases of Russia's involvement in conflict management outside the CIS have largely been dependent on and, ultimately, a function of multilateral decision-making efforts. The conflict (and the search for balance) between incentives to cooperate with the international community, especially with Russia's G8 partners, on the one hand, and Russia's national interests, on the other hand, became a constant political dilemma for Moscow in any such involvement.

Russia has been the most outspoken and persistent critic of the use of force in resolving international conflicts, especially since the mid-1990s. In the post-Cold War world, military force was used or threatened mainly against anti-Western regimes – labeled as rogue states. The fact that Russia enjoyed traditionally close ties with some of these states put Moscow in a natural position of intermediary and facilitator. Sometimes it even seemed that a certain division of labour (whether deliberate or unintentional), arose when the United States (or NATO in Europe) threatened military force while Moscow was touting prospects for peace. Russia's general reluctance to sanction the unconstrained use of force in settling international conflicts was reinforced by its ability to talk to and to cooperate with the West and its most harsh opponents, reflecting a high degree of cultural relativism and flexibility, natural for a Eurasian power. This unique ability, stemming from Russia's centuries-long search for its own cultural identity, was strongly stimulated by post-Soviet de-ideologization of Russian foreign policy. A combination of the above-mentioned factors gave Russia some role in "cooperative peacemaking" in areas such as the Balkans and the Middle East, while at the same time politically tying it closer to the West.

The cases that deserve special attention in this context are those involving Russia's participation in multilateral decision-making regarding the conflicts in regions still of some, although far from critical, importance to Russia – the Balkans, the Middle East and South-west Asia. For the period of the late 1990s to the early 2000s, when Russia's policy



was already mature enough not to be carried away by either the pro-Western romanticism of the early 90s (guided by what was perceived as an ethic of solidarity), or nostalgia for foreign policy Soviet-style, the cases in focus will be organized in three sub-sections: first, Russia's conflict management efforts in the late 1990s on Kosovo and Iraq, second, its support for the US-led anti-Taliban campaign in Afghanistan following the events of 11 September 2001 and, finally, Russia's position on the US-led 2003 intervention and occupation of Iraq.

### Russia's policy on Kosovo and Iraq in the 1990s

During the Kosovo crisis, Russia assumed a role as one of the chief mediators because it was the only of the major European powers that was not directly involved in NATO's intervention against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and that enjoyed normal relations with the West and close ties to Belgrade. From the beginning of the crisis, Russia had consistently presented itself as a voice of reason, advocating a peaceful multilateral UN-based solution to the Kosovo conflict, as opposed to NATO's violent response in the form of limited, US-dominated multilateralism.<sup>15</sup> It was Russia's "cooperative initiative" that was required to end the quagmire for both NATO and Belgrade and to bring the peace process, at least formally, back into the UN framework (during NATO's bombing campaign, Russia, as the only major European power not drawn into the conflict directly and enjoying some leverage with Serbia, was a natural candidate to play a mediating role – primarily through Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's shuttle diplomacy).<sup>16</sup>

The key to understanding Russia's policy on the Kosovo crisis – a very harsh political reaction toward NATO intervention followed by the ultimate decision to find a cooperative solution within the G8 and the United Nations and to temporarily cooperate with NATO on the ground – is to realize that this policy was only remotely related to the Kosovo problem itself. The motives behind Russia's policy on Kosovo can be understood only through the prism of Moscow's complicated relations with NATO, which have become the main irritant in Russia's relations with the West, at least since the debate over the Alliance's enlargement.

Whilst much of Russia's opposition to earlier stages of NATO enlargement could be explained by a fear of the "old NATO", inherited from the Soviet era, the Alliance's military intervention against Yugoslavia made Russia deeply concerned about the "new NATO", emerging in post-Cold War Europe. This new NATO was seen as a military bloc that has lost its Cold War rationale, but re-affirmed its offensive interventionist nature by attacking a sovereign European state in the process of

the Alliance's re-orientation toward "intrusive" crisis management. The parallel controversial expansion of the new NATO to areas closer to Russia's borders, potentially including the CIS countries, at a time when Russia's economy and military were in shambles, also explained the ferocity of Moscow's opposition to military action against Yugoslavia. While largely irrelevant to the real security threats faced by the West in general and the United States in particular, as ultimately demonstrated in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks, NATO enlargement retained the potential to radicalize the internal situation in politically unstable Western CIS states, such as Ukraine and Moldova, or even spark further internal splits in those countries, that would most likely drag in Russia. This was a role that Moscow did not want and could hardly afford to play. Last but not least, Moscow, facing major problems in the separatist republic of Chechnya, was highly concerned about the precedent of a military involvement by a hostile alliance on the side of separatists in the case of Kosovo.

At the same time, Russia, due to its relative political, economic and military weakness, coupled with a feeling of growing politico-military isolation in a NATO/EU-dominated Europe, could neither sacrifice relations with the West over the 1999 Kosovo crisis nor allow further marginalization of the United Nations. As a result, Moscow tried to minimize consequences of the crisis in order to escape a long-term confrontation with the West in general and with NATO in particular. So, in contrast to the general mood of the Russian people expressing broad solidarity with the Serbian people as the victims of an aggression and united in condemnation of NATO intervention in Yugoslavia, official Moscow's response to the crisis turned out to be moderate and restrained. Ultimately, the Russian state had to engage in some form of "functional cooperation" with the West and NATO over Kosovo for both tactical and strategic reasons, no matter how much domestic public opinion opposed this political choice at that time.

Was there any place for a solidarity culture, apart from these "national interest" calculations, and what kind of solidarity was it? Clearly, in Russia there was no lack of public solidarity with the people of Serbia (if not necessarily with the Serbian government). This people-to-people solidarity movement was in many ways unprecedented: apart from the countrywide mass peaceful protests and humanitarian initiatives, there was also a public campaign to send volunteers "to help defend Yugoslavia from the NATO forces".<sup>17</sup> Contrary to what is generally believed in the West, this solidarity did not seem to be primarily based on the former Russian empire's historical commitment to stand by the Serbs. While ethnic and religious closeness (both Russians and Serbs are Slavic peo-

ples and Eastern Orthodox Christians) did play some role, the broad solidarity movement in Russia with the Serbian people manifested in the late 1990s had more recent roots and stemmed from a compassion for a nation facing foreign aggression by Russia's own former Cold War adversaries and by an alliance broadly perceived in Russia as presenting the main military threat to its security. Also, in the public discourse, some clear, if hardly justified, parallels with and allusions to the World War II experience were made.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, public solidarity with parties to the Kosovo conflict was expressed both by Russia and by its Western counterparts, but it was selective and "asymmetrical": while the Russian public's solidarity was largely with the Serbs as "victims" of the aggressive policies and pressure by the "neo-imperial" United States and its NATO allies, the Western public solidarity was limited to the plight of the Kosovo Albanians as "victims" of Serbian oppression and based on Western liberal "democratic" solidarity's emphasis on human and minority rights (while, for instance, the plight of over 500 thousand Serbian refugees in Serbia was almost completely ignored at the time). But while in the West, the public solidarity with the Kosovo Albanians (partly created by a one-sided media coverage of the crisis) was increasingly in line with the official policies of the NATO states, the impact of the broad Russian public solidarity movement with the "victims of NATO aggression" on Russia's official policy over Kosovo was very limited. This policy was driven primarily by the long-term rational concerns over the "new NATO" threat and by realization of Russia's limited capability to respond to this threat dictating the need to adapt to it. In sum, Russian political elites were too rational to sincerely share the broader public solidarity attitudes let alone to use them as a basis for strategic decision-making. This rationalism finally made the Russian government cooperate with the West on Kosovo up to sending a military contingent to participate in the NATO Kosovo Force.

Such a pragmatic, non-ideological approach on the part of the Russian government prevented any direct military involvement and dictated the need to adjust to the NATO handling of the crisis with minimal political losses. This approach came in sharp contrast with the much more explicit role of ideological and value-based considerations in the United States and NATO decision-making on Kosovo that, combined with some strategic considerations (such as the need to sustain the NATO Alliance in the absence of its main former rationale – the Soviet threat), led the Alliance to wage war on Yugoslavia. Among other things, the value-based approach, claimed to be pursued by NATO states, implied that a "decision taken by a serious organization by consensus among serious coun-

tries with democratic governments”<sup>19</sup> alone conferred sufficient legitimacy on the contemplated action and could be used as an excuse for a military intervention not authorized by the UN Security Council.

With regard to the Iraq problem in the 1990s, Russia tried to reconcile its own economic and political interests with its UN obligations, while remaining a persistent critic of US unilateralism. Whilst prior to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks the US could not rely for support on any allies (except the United Kingdom) for its unilateralist military strikes against Iraq, few governments, in view of the track record and semi-isolation of Baghdad’s regime, openly objected to US air strikes against the Baghdad government. Of those that did, Moscow has been the most vociferous. In the 1990s, the peak of Russian criticism followed the most intensive of the US attacks against Iraq (the December 1998 Operation Desert Fox).<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to the Kosovo crisis and other post-Yugoslav conflicts, where Russia’s primary concerns were dictated by wider security interests, particularly by the “NATO factor”, the main pragmatic imperative behind Russia’s policy on Iraq was economic. Prior to the US-led 2003 intervention to and occupation of Iraq, Russian companies controlled about one-third of Iraq’s multibillion-dollar oil export market.<sup>21</sup> Trade volume between the two countries reached US\$4 billion in 2001 and could grow up to 10 times that if sanctions were lifted. Russia had a US\$3.5 billion, 23-year deal with Iraq to rehabilitate Iraqi oilfields, particularly the West Qurna field – one of the world’s largest oil deposits.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the Russian government was trying to recover around \$7 billion in loans made to Iraq in the 1980s mainly to pay for Soviet arms deliveries. These clear economic interests became one of the key factors that dictated Russia’s consistent opposition to US strategy on Iraq that, throughout the 1990s, has been generally aimed at overthrowing Saddam Hussein. Russia feared that if Saddam were overthrown, it would have put in serious doubt the prospects of repayment of Iraq’s multibillion-dollar debt to Russia and lucrative oil projects with Iraq that Moscow was keen to safeguard (this is basically what happened as a result of the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003).<sup>23</sup>

Russia’s cooperation with the United Nations on Iraq and persistent opposition to US unilateral military actions against Iraq throughout the 1990s reflected not just pure economic interests related to Iraq per se, but also broader political concerns over the negative effect that the US policy had on the role and image of the United Nations in general and of the UN Security Council in particular. Russia was fully aware of its own limited leverage at the United Nations (under no circumstance could Russia push its own initiative through the Security Council, if opposed by the United States). At the same time, Moscow was still determined to use

whatever leverage it had to work within the UN framework, even if at the partial expense of its economic interests (Moscow, for instance, chose not to unilaterally withdraw from the UN sanctions regime against Iraq). For Russia, working within the UN framework had its clear advantages: among other things, Moscow could still block unfavourable US-sponsored UN Security Council decisions on Iraq, particularly in the case of a serious disagreement among the Council's other members.

Russia's direct economic interests in Iraq and broader political concerns about US unilateralism in general, and its effects on the credibility of the United Nations in particular, were so important that Moscow was reluctant to change its opposition to any new sanctions or a new major US attack even in the aftermath of the attacks on 11 September. Russia expressed scepticism about the direction the United States took in its war against terrorism by singling out Iraq first as part of the "axis of evil", along with North Korea and Iran. The "axis of evil" rhetoric was seen in Russia as strategically misleading, ideologically and emotionally driven, used largely for domestic consumption and a clear manifestation of American political culture, with its missionary exceptionalism and unilateralism. In contrast, throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s up until the US occupation of Iraq, Russia's non-ideological, non-emotionally-driven, primarily economic interests in Iraq dictated the need to lift or, at least, further relieve UN sanctions against Baghdad, which in turn made cooperation with the UN on getting weapons inspectors back to Iraq and, more generally, a strongly multilateral approach to Iraqi problems an imperative for Moscow. Acting in cooperation with the UN Secretary General, the Security Council and the UN sanctions committee, Russia tried to make the best use of Iraq's readiness to resume dialogue with the United Nations and succeeded in exerting stronger pressure on Baghdad to invite UN weapons inspectors back after a three-year absence.

### Cooperation with the West after 11 September

Russia's cooperation with the United States after 11 September has centred on a common interest in combating terrorism. To what extent was Russia's post-11 September cooperation with the United States driven by national interest logic? Did any genuine global solidarity with the United States play a role in improving mutual relations and facilitating Russia's cooperation with the United States on Afghanistan?

After a remarkable freezing at the end of the 1990s, US-Russian relations have clearly been on the rise since 11 September. US-Russian bilateral cooperation on combating terrorism was particularly successful, if

not unprecedented. This cooperation has proved highly valuable to Russia, as perhaps for the first time since the end of the Cold War, it stemmed from the need to counter a common security threat from a radically new, truly post-Cold War type. Russia's active participation in the US-led global anti-terrorist campaign fully served Russia's national interests (as they were interpreted by the Russian government), by creating a more favourable international climate for Russia's own anti-terrorist operations in its troubled North Caucasus region and, more broadly, by allowing Moscow to avoid further marginalization, which seemed almost imminent by the end of the 1990s, and to directly associate itself with the leading world power, while surpassing cumbersome Western institutional bureaucracies such as NATO and the European Union.

The most vivid manifestation of the new favourable climate in US-Russian post-11 September relations has been Russia's cooperation with the United States during its operation in Afghanistan. Russia's main interest in Afghanistan has been the goal of rooting out terrorism there and of preventing that country from serving as a primary source of instability in a wider region that includes Central Asian states. It was these regional security concerns, coupled with the above-mentioned more general foreign policy considerations, that dictated Moscow's support for the US-led military operation launched in October 2001, as well as Russia's reserved reaction to the growth of the US military presence in Central Asia.<sup>24</sup> As for the many speculations about intensified US-Russian strategic rivalry in Central Asia as a result of the increased US military presence, for the Russian leadership, diminishing the United States's growing profile in the area did not appear to be a goal in itself. Rather, the US presence has been judged upon its impact on the overall security and stability of the region, which suffers more from a disturbing internal security vacuum than from any "excessive" external involvement, be it unilateral or multilateral.

It could be argued, however, that Russia's support for the US-led campaign in Afghanistan in the immediate aftermath of the 11 September attacks on the United States was also at least partly driven by "global solidarity" attitudes at the state level supported by broader public solidarity. While the need to "defend common values of the civilized world against international terrorism" was often cited as the basis of this solidarity, it could hardly be viewed as an expression of a "Western democratic solidarity culture" – rather, it stemmed from an understanding of the changing nature of security threats in an era of globalization and the common need to confront the threat of international terrorism. It is true that at that point Russia and the United States may have been primarily threatened by different types of terrorism (gradually Islamicized nationalist separatist terrorism in the case of Russia and global superterrorism in

the case of the United States). At the same time, in the post–Cold War world, the distinctions between domestic and international terrorist groups do become increasingly blurred (as even groups with a localized political agenda tend to internationalize their logistical, financial and other activities), and superterrorist networks such as Al Qaeda or its successors do have a strong demonstrative impact on and may provide financial assistance to the more localized groups employing terrorist means.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the increasingly disturbing interrelationship between different types of terrorism *does* present a global threat. The need to respond to this and other global threats can stimulate the growth of the “global solidarity culture”, even if this culture does not amount to or fit the notion of liberal democratic solidarity.

### Russia and the war in Iraq

The endurance of the positive momentum created by Russia’s cooperation with the United States on Afghanistan soon came under question, with sharp disagreements over the US war in Iraq. It is in Russia’s position on the US-led war in Iraq that the complex mix of narrow national interests and broader normative and ideational concerns in Russian foreign policy became most evident. The Iraq crisis served for Russia, first and foremost, as a focal point for the contest between UN-centred multilateralism and US unilateralism. Russia’s strong preference for multilateralism in general, and for multilateralist solutions to regional conflicts, was an integral part of its own newly acquired identity as a large regional power, strong enough to defend its sovereignty but not enough to push forward its interests if challenged by the United States and its NATO allies (as noted before, changing conceptions of Russian identity have logically altered its conception of its interests). Consequently, the United Nations, and particularly the UN Security Council, remained Russia’s natural framework of choice for dealing with crises such as Iraq. It has to be noted, though, that this emphasis on UN-centred multilateralism as a general, underlying framework dominating Russia’s foreign policy discourse has to be put in the context of at least two more pragmatic trends increasingly shaping Russia’s policy on Iraq.

The first trend has been the growing role of geo-economics in Russia’s foreign policy. In terms of the latter, Russia’s direct economic losses in Iraq, as a result of the US intervention and occupation, and the limits placed by insecurity on the remaining Russian business presence, were partly compensated by Russia’s financial gains from high oil prices, which were both favourable for Russian oil exporters and remained the main basis for the Putin government’s economic stabilization strategy. The

economic interest logic also led Russia to agree to sell part of its strategic asset Lukoil to an affiliate of the fourth-largest US oil company, Conoco-Phillips, in order to regain access to at least some of its previous contracts in Iraq.

The second pragmatic trend was dictated by Russia's new security agenda, with its focus shifting from the West to the South as the main source of potential security threats, and with its new emphasis on anti-terrorism. From Russia's perspective, not only did the Iraq war and the subsequent occupation of Iraq run against international law and serve as an extreme manifestation of US unilateralism, it also proved to be counterproductive to anti-terrorist priorities. This was because by creating more terrorism rather than less, the occupation has damaged the integrity of the "coalition against terror" and destroyed the momentum created by the rise of "global solidarity" with the United States in the immediate aftermath of the 11 September attacks (supported by and combined with self-interest security considerations on the part of most of the world's states). Even prior to the US war in Iraq, Russia had problems with the Bush administration's emphasis on the so-called "rogue states" as the primary sponsors of new forms of international terrorism and particularly on linking the Baath regime directly to Al Qaeda (Russia did not see a straightforward connection between Iraq's alleged, but never confirmed, weapons of mass destruction capability and the US charges against Baghdad as one of the major sponsors of "international terrorism"). Rather, Russia tried to draw international attention to dysfunctional and failed states and areas where the power vacuum and the lack of state control provided opportunities for transnational terrorist networks for relocation and sanctuary and where localized and transnational terrorism most easily intersect and the line between them may become increasingly blurred. This is precisely what has been happening in post-war Iraq, where the United States turned a rogue authoritarian regime into a semi-failed proxy state that became completely dependent on foreign security support, a state that invites and stimulates, rather than suppresses and prevents terrorism. Anti-terrorism concerns generated by the situation in a post-war (not pre-war) Iraq provided an additional powerful argument for Russia to support efforts to build a functional and legitimate Iraqi state as the most effective anti-terrorist strategy for a failed state. The same concerns have also made Moscow more willing or less reluctant to accept the reality of the US-dominated security presence in Iraq.<sup>26</sup>

Ultimately, a certain gap between Russia's UN-centred multilateralism approach (at least partly based on ideational concerns and expressed in normative categories) and the more practical dimension of its policy on Iraq dominated by economic interest and anti-terrorism considerations resulted in a compromise policy on the part of Russia, allowing accom-



modation of some of its economic and security interests (in the form of “functional cooperation”), while keeping political distance from the coalition.

### Russia and international solidarity in the face of global challenges

Since the Soviet collapse, Russia suffered a painful erosion of its international might and prestige. It certainly took the Russian political elite some time to adapt to the loss of an empire and the sense of a “global mission” in the world, as well as to realize that Soviet-era global ambitions had led to an obvious overstretch of the country’s resources. For a brief period in the early 1990s, those of Russia’s post-Soviet political elites that took up the challenge of starting democratic reforms appeared to be carried away with an idealistic vision of the post–Cold War world as being guided by “democratic solidarity culture” and with ungrounded expectations of solidarity-driven behaviour on the part of its former Western adversaries. By the mid-1990s, as these false hopes did not materialize and domestic democratic reforms seemed to be mired in economic crisis, the geo-strategic political discourse was back in place. By the late 1990s–early 2000s, however, Russia was able to both overcome the idealistic vision of the “post–Cold War world” as one based on moral commitments and to realize the counterproductive nature of the narrow and “non-cooperative” geostrategic thinking contradicting Russia’s own long-term national interests. In its foreign policy, the Russian state has increasingly demonstrated the “functional” approach to international cooperation.

As demonstrated by a brief outline of Russia’s post-Soviet involvement in international conflict management efforts in the “far abroad”, Russia was eager to play a useful instrumental role on behalf of the US-led international community in various local and regional conflicts, when strongly motivated to do so by its own national interests. While Russia’s legitimate foreign policy concerns have not necessarily been in conflict with morally-defined international justice, for much of its post-Soviet history Russia simply could not afford to pursue international causes not directly serving its national interests or to be involved in managing regional crises that did not affect its own security. Up until the early 2000s, the extent to which the Russian state could play a meaningful role in addressing global challenges largely depended on and was clearly limited by its reduced economic and political potential. The disparity between Russia’s real political and economic agenda and the leading international powers’ global concerns was most vividly demonstrated by Russia’s participation in the

G8, the group of the world's wealthiest and most powerful nations. With the exception of selected security issues, such as non-proliferation of weapons and materials of mass destruction and, since 11 September, anti-terrorism, Russia did not have much to say or offer on such "classic" global solidarity issues discussed at the G8 annual summits as, for instance, the Africa Action Plan at the 2002 Kananaskis summit, and could hardly afford to commit significant resources to these purposes. In this context, it would have been naive for the "international community" to expect the high degree of "moral awareness and solidarity" going beyond the level of rhetoric on the part of Russia in addressing issues of global concern.

As far as the role of external state actors in shaping Russia's behaviour is concerned, for the world's most developed nations, as well as the Western-dominated international organizations and financial institutions, cooperation with the Russian state seemed to work out best when guided by the same "functional cooperation" approach as the one that increasingly dominated Russia's own foreign policy. In line with this approach, the G8 partners, for instance, had repeatedly made it clear to Russia that the key to its continued economic integration (such as its quest to join the World Trade Organization) and engagement in the concert of developed and democratic states depended on the extent of its commitment to such global initiatives as the international anti-terrorism campaign.

That hardly means, though, that present Russia has not been affected by the global "solidarity culture" at all. While it was not often that post-Soviet Russia became involved in a major international undertaking, having nothing or little to do with its own national interests, some examples can be found and, interestingly, their number seems to be growing from year to year. Most of these cases fall into the category of humanitarian, economic or emergency assistance. In 2000, for instance, Russia agreed to send a small contingent to assist the UN mission in Sierra Leone where it did not have a direct interest at stake. In 2001, Russia, by many parameters a developing economy itself, in bad need of development aid and foreign economic investment and with a multibillion-dollar foreign debt, provided \$472 million in assistance to the poorest developing countries and wrote off \$415 million of their debts.<sup>27</sup> Russia had been increasingly active in providing civil emergency assistance to foreign countries, but the most significant expression of "global solidarity" on the part of the Russian government came in early 2005 as part of the global "tsunami solidarity" campaign. In addition to the Russian government's decision to allocate over US\$30 million to tsunami victims, Emergencies Ministry and Defence Ministry planes have delivered dozens of tons of humanitarian aid, including medicines, food and medical and other equipment, to

areas affected by the disaster, and rescuers and doctors from both ministries were sent by the government to work at the site. It should be noted that neither Russia nor the ex-USSR had ever provided such an amount of international humanitarian aid before (an amount that surpassed the contributions of some developed states).

In these and other cases, Russia's decision to provide good offices on its own or on behalf of the international community may have been at least partly guided by demonstrative ("status") purposes. Goals such as improving Russia's international image and demonstrating that it still belongs to a community of developed industrialized states and has some global role to play have, in turn, been dictated by the way the Russian leadership interpreted the country's national interests and thus have been driven by national interest logic. But this logic did not necessarily prevail on the humanitarian, economic and emergency aid issues mentioned above and was certainly supplemented by genuine "global solidarity" concerns that played no less a critical role in shaping Russia's position on these issues.

More broadly, apart from issues where the impact of "international solidarity" logic on the decision-making process is undeniable (particularly on humanitarian emergency assistance), the national interest logic and the solidarity logic do not have to be mutually exclusive, even in those policy areas where Russia has important national interests at stake. Not only can these two logics co-exist, as in the case of Russia's reaction to the US-led intervention in Iraq (motivated both by Russia's economic self-interest and its genuine concerns about the weakening of the United Nations, the violation of international norms, the increasingly "unjust" nature of the new world order and the sympathy toward the Iraqi population under foreign occupation), but they can even complement and supplement one another.

This could be further exemplified by Russia's position on international humanitarian assistance to its own troubled North Caucasus region. Russia allowed large-scale international humanitarian presence in this region, with the UN agencies playing a leading role by administering over 80 per cent of all foreign humanitarian aid, with the help of a number of foreign and local non-governmental organizations. With the combined volume of international humanitarian assistance to the region at least comparable to the humanitarian efforts undertaken by the Russian state itself,<sup>28</sup> and in some cases even exceeding them,<sup>29</sup> Moscow's decision to allow international humanitarian involvement of that scale was partly motivated by pragmatic realist considerations, such as financial reasons. At the same time, it also demonstrated that Russia increasingly realized the growing importance of humanitarian issues on both national and international agenda and was trying to address at least the most basic

humanitarian needs by providing and allowing international organizations and foreign donors to provide food, shelter, education and the right to return to thousands of internally displaced people in the North Caucasus. Thus, even if not fully shared or unconditionally accepted by Russia, issues of global concern (such as changing international perceptions of states' obligations to provide humanitarian support and basic human rights of its citizens) do affect its behaviour, directly or indirectly.

While all of the above-mentioned "global solidarity initiatives" were carried out at the state/intergovernmental level, international solidarity is not necessarily limited to that level and does not necessarily have to be connected to the state's official policy. In the Russian case in particular, the "international solidarity" attitudes, perceptions and even actions can be more closely associated with the society at large rather than the state and practiced more actively by non-governmental organizations and various public associations and groups through public contacts and public diplomacy, for instance. Moreover, in contrast to highly selective and carefully measured "state solidarity" (which is usually combined with or supplemented by national interest logic), international public solidarity is usually reciprocal and may manifest itself even on issues that remain politically controversial in terms of intergovernmental relations.

In the post-11 September world, anti-terrorism became one of the main areas where "public solidarity culture at work" has been evident, both globally (in the case of the public outrage around the world over the human costs of the 11 September terrorist attacks in the United States, the March 2004 Atocha bombings in Madrid and so on) and in a specific case of Russia. Genuine solidarity has manifested itself both in the form of the Russian public response to events abroad (such as 11 September) and in the form of public reaction in many Western states (whose governments had serious reservations and expressed concern about Russia's policy in the North Caucasus) to a series of deadly large-scale terrorist attacks in Russia, such as the October 2002 Dubrovka (Nord-Ost) hostage crisis in Moscow or the September 2004 tragedy in Beslan (North Ossetiya). These and other horrific terrorist attacks in Russia were followed not just by a wave of criticism of the policies and methods employed by the Russian state, but also by an outpouring of international public support and solidarity with the Russian people and society. International mobilization in support of the Beslan hostages and their families has been particularly extraordinary, with many Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and ordinary citizens around the world launching fund raising campaigns on their behalf. The moral solidarity with the victims of terrorism was jointly expressed by a coalition of Russian and international non-governmental organizations (from Human Rights Watch to Moscow Helsinki Group)<sup>30</sup> that are known for their crit-

icism of the Russian authorities on human rights grounds. In most of these cases, international public solidarity was also supplemented by some manifestations of solidarity on the part of the world's leading international organizations, such as the UN Security Council.

This brings us back to the need to differentiate between the limited Western-style "liberal democratic solidarity culture" and a broader and more traditional understanding of human solidarity (based on shared views on very basic humanitarian concerns and human rights, such as the right to live, get shelter and so on). Clearly, most of the above-mentioned expressions of international solidarity to and from the Russian people were based on the latter rather than the former type of solidarity. Such solidarity goes beyond the "ideal world of Western liberal values" and assumes a truly global nature, as it is formed in response to the truly global challenges.

## Conclusion and recommendations

One of the main questions put forward by this volume is whether there is some role for external actors to play apart from the national interest paradigm and how the world's powers, international organizations and non-governmental organizations can help create elements of solidarity culture in the external behaviour of key regional powers, such as Russia. This task is made all the more difficult by the ambiguous policies of the world's leading Western states, which actively pursue their own national interests, often of a pure geostrategic nature, such as power projection or energy supply, while at the same time trying to satisfy the growing "international solidarity" constituency, both internationally and at home. This makes the prominence of moral considerations in the Western approach to international affairs in general and to conflict management in particular not that evident for the rest of the world. An impression of international democratic solidarity discourse being used as a cover for advancing the geostrategic interests of the Western states would not be easy to dispel.

In this context, it seems that the most effective way for external actors, such as foreign governments and intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations, to encourage the development of "solidarity culture" as a basis for cooperation with Russia is:

1. To concentrate on the common need to address global challenges, such as the global environmental crisis, humanitarian emergencies (particularly in the form of human-made and natural-disaster response) and common security challenges, such as international terrorism. Needless to say that "solidarity in response to global challenges"

would have the broadest impact if it boils down to the more traditional “solidarity culture” based on the most basic and the more traditional understanding of international solidarity encoded in the UN Charter and other key international documents and shared by most states throughout the world, rather than pushed forward by a group of like-minded Western states. In contrast to a common interest in confronting global challenges, which is a natural area for the international solidarity culture to develop in the West’s relations with Russia, as well as a host of other major regional powers around the world, it is the national interest logic rather than the “solidarity culture” that will clearly dominate mutual relations on issues of strategic importance to both sides (such as international conflict management efforts in Russia’s immediate CIS neighbourhood).

2. To encourage the development of solidarity culture at the non-governmental, public level, in the form of “citizen diplomacy” and the like.
3. To realize that, at the level of state policy, national interest and solidarity logic do not have to be mutually exclusive and can co-exist, as demonstrated, above all, by an uneasy combination of national interests and international solidarity in an international campaign against terrorism.

## Notes

1. While frequent policy differences between Western states, particularly between the United States and European powers such as France, on issues of global and regional concern have to be kept in mind, for our purposes, the “Western community of nations” will be commonly referred to as “the West” in both political and cultural (value-based) terms.
2. For instance, up to one third of all humanitarian assistance to the victims of the conflict in Muslim-dominated Chechnya (Russia) has come from Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries, despite the almost non-existent prospects for effectively advancing any strategic or ideological interests these states might have had in that conflict.
3. The notion of “functional cooperation” used in this chapter is a broader and more flexible term than the notion of “common”, or “shared” security. “Functional cooperation” not only goes beyond more traditional security issues (and may, for instance, apply to economic cooperation) but also presents a more flexible way to distinguish between different types of “national interest culture”, that is, between more unilateralist and non-cooperative approaches and “functional cooperation” approaches. While neither implies value-based “solidarity” logic, they are driven by different understandings of national interests. In practice, however, the line between them may not always be very clear and some sort of a dialectic combination of both may guide the country’s foreign policy.
4. See, for instance, Roy Allison (1994) *Peacekeeping in the Soviet Successor States*, Chailot Paper 18, Paris: Institute for Security Studies, Western European Union; Hans-Georg Ehrhart, Anna Kreikemeyer and Andrei V. Zagorski, eds (1995) *Crisis Management in the CIS: Whither Russia?*, Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft;

- Elaine Holoboff (1994) "Russian Views on Military Intervention: Benevolent Peacekeeping, Monroe Doctrine, or Neo-Imperialism?" in Lawrence Freedman, ed., *Military Intervention in European Conflicts*, Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 154–174.
5. The OSCE mission in Moldova monitors the human rights situation in both Moldova and the Transdniestrian republic and assists the parties in the difficult negotiations by facilitating the dialogue, gathering information, supplying expertise and advice in relation to legislation and constitutional aspects, making visible the presence of the OSCE in the area and establishing contacts with all the parties to the conflict.
  6. The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia was established by Security Council resolution 858 of 24 August 1993 to verify compliance with the ceasefire agreement between the government of Georgia and the Abkhaz authorities in Georgia. The Mission's mandate was expanded following the signing by the parties of the 1994 Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces.
  7. The OSCE Mission to Georgia was established in December 1992 to promote negotiations aimed at the peaceful political settlement of the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Mission also supports the UN peacemaking efforts in Abkhazia. On 15 December 1999, at the request of the government of Georgia, the Mission's mandate was expanded to include monitoring the border between Georgia and the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation.
  8. See, for instance, "Russia Unhappy with OSCE Scrapping Moldova Peace Plan", *Russia Journal*, 2 December 2003; "The Perils of Transdniestria", *Romanian Digest* 9(11), November 2004, available from <http://www.hr.ro/digest/200411/digest.htm>, accessed 30 May 2006. For a critique of Kozak's "federalization" peace plan, see Michael Shafir (2003) "Russia's Self-Serving Plan for Moldova's Federalization", *Radio Free Europe*, 24 November, available from <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2003/11/5-NOT/not-241103.asp>, accessed 30 May 2006.
  9. For more detail, see "Russia, West Still Split Over Georgia, Moldova", *Arms Control Today*, January/February 2007, available from [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2007\\_01\\_02/RussiaWest.asp](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2007_01_02/RussiaWest.asp).
  10. The separatist leader Igor Smirnov's victory in the December 2001 presidential elections in the breakaway region was not recognized by any government within or outside the CIS.
  11. In November 2001, Moscow, for instance, agreed to a US\$100 million compensation to Tiraspol for utilized arms and equipment in the form of partial gas debt relief.
  12. Georgia resisted Moscow's proposal that its base in Gudauta be transformed into a support centre for the CIS peacekeeping troops deployed in Abkhazia. Bilateral negotiations continued on the withdrawal of Russia's two remaining military bases in Georgia – the one in Batumi (Ajaria) and the other at Akhalkalaki, on the border with Armenia. The main point of contention is the time framework for withdrawal: in 2004, Russia was demanding 11 years for completing the process, as it needed to build an adequate infrastructure at home to relocate the bases, while Georgia insists that the process should take three years maximum.
  13. These remnants of Russia's military presence in Georgia should not be mixed with Russia's peacekeeping presence under the CIS auspices.
  14. Georgia has long demanded to extend the 24 km "security zone" along the Inguri river to include the entire Gali region of Abkhazia in its pre-war borders, to redeploy all the heavy equipment of peacekeeping contingent further on Abkhazian territory and to secure the safety of Georgian internally displaced persons' return.
  15. For a discussion on this, see Ekaterina Stepanova (2002) "The Unilateral and Multilateral Use of Force by the United States: A View from Russia", in David Malone and

- Yuen-Foong Khong, eds, *International Perspectives on U.S. Unilateralism and Multilateralism*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishing.
16. See Ekaterina Stepanova (2000) "Russia's Policy on the Kosovo Crisis: The Limits of 'Cooperative Peacemaking'", in Kurt R. Spillman and Joachim Krause, eds, *Kosovo: Lessons Learned for International Cooperative Security*, Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 205–230; and Ekaterina Stepanova (1999) *Explaining Russia's Dissention on Kosovo*, Program on New Approaches to Russian Security (PONARS) Policy Memo No. 57, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Davis Center for Russian Studies.
  17. For more detail, see Stepanova, "Russia's Policy on the Kosovo Crisis", pp. 219–222, particularly note 21 on p. 221.
  18. The former Yugoslavia was perceived in Russia as the only group of nations that were able to mount a real resistance movement in Europe and to liberate their country from the Nazis largely on their own, without direct and large-scale foreign involvement.
  19. Xavier Solana quoted in Alexander Nicoll (1998) "Cracks Still Appear in NATO's Collective Will for Air Strikes", *Financial Times*, 9 October, p. 2.
  20. Russia had recalled its ambassadors from the United States and the United Kingdom for the first time since the Cold War.
  21. In 2001, Russia received the largest share of Iraq's contracts (worth up to US\$1.3 billion) under the UN oil-for-food programme, which allowed Iraq to sell oil to buy supplies to help Iraqi civilians.
  22. In December 2002, Iraq announced that it was breaking the deal with Russia's Lukoil company to rehabilitate and develop the West Curna-2 oilfield under the pretext of "non-fulfillment by Lukoil of its obligations". The real reason for breaking the contract with Lukoil might have been leaks about Lukoil's secret contacts with the United States about accommodating some of its interests in post-Saddam Iraq.
  23. For more detail, see Ekaterina Stepanova (2006) "Iraq and World Order: A Russian Perspective", in Ramesh Thakur and Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu, eds, *The Iraq Crisis and World Order: Structural, Institutional and Normative Challenges*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, pp. 249–264.
  24. On recent US–Russian cooperation on Afghanistan and counter-terrorism, see Ekaterina Stepanova (2001) "U.S.–Russia Cooperation in Afghanistan and Its Implications", *East European Constitutional Review* 10(10), Fall: 92–95; Ekaterina Stepanova (2002) "Separately Together: The U.S. and Russia's Approaches to Post-Conflict Settlement in Afghanistan", *PONARS Policy Memo No. 230*, PONARS Policy Conference, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, January, pp. 117–122; and Ekaterina Stepanova (2002) "Partners in Need: U.S.–Russia Cooperation on and Approaches to Antiterrorism", *PONARS Policy Memo No. 279*, PONARS Policy Conference, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 6 December, pp. 187–192.
  25. See, for instance, Ekaterina Stepanova (2004) "War and Peace Building", *Washington Quarterly* 27(4), Autumn: 127–136.
  26. For more detail, see Stepanova, "Iraq and World Order".
  27. Alexei Kudrin, the first Vice-Premier and Minister of Finance in the Russian Government, quoted by Prime-Tass News Agency, 25 June 2002.
  28. By June 2000, approximately 50 per cent of all humanitarian aid to Chechnya and the neighbouring regions was provided by the international community. See Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fact Sheet, 24 June 2000, available at <http://www.mid.ru/mid/eurochec/ec3.htm>.
  29. Between August 1999 and June 2000 the Russian federal and regional state structures provided 7,740 tons of food aid to Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan. In the same



period, the UNHCR provided 6,750 tons, the World Food Program 6,785 tons, the International Committee of the Red Cross 3,610 tons and the three leading foreign non-governmental organizations 3,095 tons (overall, 2.5 times as much as the Russian state). “UN Consolidated Humanitarian Appeal for the North Caucasus (Russian Federation), Dec. 1999–Dec. 2000”, Moscow: UNOCHA, July 2000, p. 20 (Russian version).

30. “Joint NGO Statement on the Beslan Hostage Tragedy”, Amnesty International Press Release, 9 September 2004.