

A stylized world map composed of a grid of grey dots, with several dots highlighted in red to represent specific countries or regions.

Russia as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council

ALEXANDER NIKITIN

November 2012

- Russia in recent years has invested significant efforts in restoring and strengthening its role as a global power, and Russia's permanent membership of the Security Council is actively being used by Moscow to maintain such a global role.
- Moscow takes an independent and often quite active stand in shaping UN Security Council policy regarding most of the international crises that required the intervention of the international community (former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria), but plays only a limited part in providing personnel and financing for UN peace operations, while investing more effort in regional peace operations in post-Soviet space during the past two decades.
- Russia promotes a number of regional interstate organisations and initiatives (Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and, prospectively, a Eurasian Union) doing their share of ensuring regional security in Eurasia, in line with the UN's own strategy of relying more upon regional international organisations.
- Russia moderately supports UN Security Council reform and backs extending Security Council membership to countries of the G4 and BRICS groups, but insists on preservation of the veto right for the P5.



Contents

- 1. Moscow’s Role in the Formation of the UN Security Council 2**
- 2. Development of the International Role and »Mission« of the Soviet Union /
Russia as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council 2**
 - 2.1 Peacekeeping and Crises Intervention with and without
UN Security Council Mandate 2
 - 2.2 Ideology and Pragmatism in Moscow’s Approach to the
Balance of Interests in the Security Council 6
 - 2.3 Vetoes, Sanctions and Moscow’s Policy in the Cases of Libya and Syria 7
 - 2.4 Distributing Security, Arms Control and Disarmament Tasks Between the UN,
Regional Organisations and Bilateral Arrangements. 9
- 3. The Current Russian Approach to Security Council Reform 11**
 - 3.1 Cautious Security Council Enlargement and BRICS Solidarity 11
 - 3.2 Reform of Security Council Working Methods 13
- 4. Conclusion 14**

1. Moscow's Role in the Formation of the UN Security Council

As a great power (number one by territorial size and among the top ten global powers by size of economy and reserves/exports of key natural resources) Russia in the second decade of the twenty-first century perceives itself as a state with global responsibilities and has a record of global involvements. The UN Security Council is obviously considered by Moscow one of the leading mechanisms for collective global governance and coordination of interests between major powers.

Russia's official *National Security Strategy until 2020* postulates that »the United Nations and the Security Council are considered by Russia to be a central element of the stable system of international relations, based upon respect, equal rights and mutually beneficial cooperation between states, upon the foundations of civilised political instruments for resolving global and regional crises«.¹

The latest edition of the *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, which is a major guiding document for implementing Moscow's foreign policy, also stresses the »central and coordinating role of the United Nations which is a major organization regulating international relations and possessing a unique legitimacy«.²

Moscow played a direct role in the formation of the United Nations, its principles, Charter and Security Council. At the Moscow Conference of allied states on 30 October 1943 the declaration by the four states on the Issue of Comprehensive Security was adopted, in which the Soviet Union and the Western allies for the first time declared the possibility of collective regulation of peace and security in a future post-war world. Point 4 of that Declaration postulated the »need to shape as soon as possible a comprehensive international organization aimed at maintaining international peace and security«. The Declaration established such principles for the future organisation as the sovereign equality of all peaceful states, large and small, the principle of the specific responsibility of great powers for the preservation and strengthening of peace, the need to coordinate their ac-

tions and cooperate in fighting against aggression not only in time of war, but also in a post-war world.

These principles were developed further during the Teheran Conference of the leaders of the USSR, the USA and the UK. The formation of the Security Council of the future international organisation was negotiated at Dumbarton-Oaks (USA) in August–November 1944.³ All the basic principles of the UN Security Council were formulated in those prolonged negotiations, and later developed at the Yalta conference (USSR, February 1945). It was at Yalta that most important issues – procedures for developing and adopting decisions of the Security Council (including consensus and veto principles) – were agreed between the leaders of the USSR, the USA and the UK.

Finally, decisions on the formal creation of the United Nations, its Security Council and the adoption of the UN Charter took place at the San Francisco Conference in April–June 1945 with the participation of 850 delegates from 50 countries.

2. Development of the International Role of the Soviet Union/Russia as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council

2.1 Peacekeeping and Crises Intervention with and without UN Security Council Mandate

Although the Soviet Union was one of the founders of the UN and from the very beginning held a permanent seat on the Security Council, under Stalin the Soviet leadership kept its distance from the new inter-state organisation. Stalin recognised growing pressure from the Western powers and believed that the great powers should resolve crises by direct diplomacy and/or use of force, and that public debates in the UN General Assembly were too amorphous a decision-making mechanism for strong powers. Superpowers in his view should create and impose, not follow, international rules. Table 1 demonstrates the shaping of the »Cold War mentality«, depicting the Soviet Union's voting on collective operations in conflict areas during the first decade after the start of the first UN Security Council-mandated collective operations.

1. Decree 537 of the President of the Russian Federation, 12 May 2009, p. 5.

2. Preamble, Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. Adopted by Presidential Decree on 15 July 2008.

3. Negotiations started as trilateral between the USA, the UK and the USSR, but at Moscow's insistence China joined the negotiations on 29 September 1944. It was also decided that France would get a seat on the future Security Council »in due course«.



Table 1: USSR Voting in the Security Council and Participation in UN Operations, 1947–1958

UN Operation	USSR vote	Providing Peacekeepers	Providing Finances
Greece/Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia, 1947	Veto	No	No
UNCI, 1947, Indonesia	Abstained	No	No
UNTSO, Since 1948, Middle East	Abstained	Observers since 1973	No
UNMOGIP, 1949, India/Pakistan	Abstained	No	No
UNEF I, 1956–1967, Middle East	Abstained	No	No
UNOGIL, 1958, Lebanon	Abstained	No	No

It is notable that the Soviet Union either abstained or exercised its veto in votes on UN collective operations during the first decade. Moreover, no financial support was provided by Moscow for such operations and no personnel were assigned. The absence of personnel was consistent with an emerging norm that none of the permanent members of the Security Council should contribute troops to peacekeeping operations because, as powers with global interests, they could not be disinterested neutral peacekeepers.

On several occasions Western powers tried to circumvent Moscow’s veto by moving votes on operations to the General Assembly, where, together with current and former colonies they had a majority, rather than in the Security Council. That was done, for example, in the decision on UN operations in Korea (UN involvement stopped the offensive by Kim Il Sung’s troops and thus maintained non-Communist South Korea, leading to the emergence of two rival Korean states on the Korean peninsula), when Moscow was strongly supporting, for ideological and geopolitical reasons, the spread of Communist rule on the Korean peninsula and objected to the UN intervention. Such a shift to the General Assembly of decisions on the coercive use of collective force from the Security Council, which concentrated in its hands war and peace issues and where the P5 had the right of veto, contradicted, in Moscow’s views, the initial division of responsibilities between the main UN structures.

After Stalin’s death, the Soviet Union under Khrushchev changed its approach to UN collective security efforts

and became more accommodating. The Soviet Union began to offer political support to most operations, although still not providing finances or sending Russian military or civilian personnel.

During the Brezhnev era in the 1970s and early 1980s, the USSR followed the same policy, with Moscow and the West generally appearing on opposite sides of conflicts through their respective proxies. But Moscow provided air support for delivering peacekeepers to ONUC in Congo and provided a modest amount of financial support for UN peacekeeping operations in the Middle East (see Table 3).

In the mid-1980s, Moscow’s attitude towards UN Security Council-mandated operations changed once again. The reformist leader Gorbachev withdrew Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989 and removed the Russian veto for an international operation there. He also stopped military assistance to Angola and allowed international involvement in resolving its civil war.

On the brink of the collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1990–91, Moscow started to support almost every UN peace operation not only politically, but also financially. It provided 6.5 million US dollars to UN operations in Central America, 6.3 million US dollars to the UN operation in El Salvador (ONUSAL), 16 million US dollars to the operation in Iraq/Kuwait (UNIKOM), and 17 million US dollars to MINURSO in Western Sahara. Moscow also contributed military observers to eight UN operations during this period.



Table 2: USSR Voting in the Security Council and Participation in UN Operations, 1960–1970

UN Operation	USSR vote	Providing Peacekeepers	Providing Finances
ONUC, 1960, Congo	Support	Airlift food supply	No
UNSF, 1962, New Guinea	Support	No	No
UNIOM, 1963, Yemen	Abstained	No	No
UNFICYP, 1964, Cyprus	Support	No	No
DOMREP, 1965, Dominican Republic	Support	No	No
UNIPOM, 1965–1966, India/Pakistan	Support	No	No

Table 3: USSR Voting in the Security Council and Participation in UN Operations, 1970–1980

UN Operation	USSR vote	Providing Peacekeepers	Providing Finances (in million US dollars)
UNEF II, 1973–1979, Middle East	Support	Airlift (1973) to Finnish Peacekeepers	10 (for two operations)
UNDOF, 1974, Middle East	Support	No	
UNIFIL, 1978, Lebanon	Abstained in 1978, Support since 1986	No	in 1993

Table 4: USSR Voting in the Security Council and Participation in UN Operations, 1988–1990

UN Operation	USSR vote	Providing Peacekeepers	Providing Finances (in million US dollars)
UNIIMOG, 1988–1991, Iran-Iraq	Support	Airlift to Canadian Peacekeepers	No
UNGOMAP, 1988–1990, Afghanistan-Pakistan	Veto in 1988, Support since late 1988	No	No
UNAVEM I, 1989–1991, Angola		No	15

Table 5: USSR Voting in the Security Council and Participation in UN Operations, 1990–1991

UN Operation	USSR vote	Providing Peacekeepers	Providing Finances (in million US dollars)
1989–1990, Namibia	Support	Military observers	
1989–1992, Central America	Support	No	6.5
1991–1995, El Salvador	Support	No	6.3
1991, Iraq/Kuwait	Support	Military observers	16
1991, Western Sahara	Support	Military observers	17
1991–1992, Kampuchea	Support	Military mediators	

During the post-Soviet period, Russian participation in UN operations remained at quite a low level considering the country's great power status and permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Russia's most significant contribution to UN and UN mandated peacekeeping was its provision of troops to the various peace operations in the former Yugoslavia, beginning in 1992. Russia participated together with Western peacekeepers in operations in the former Yugoslavia, which gradually advanced from relatively traditional peacekeeping to peace enforcement mandates. The Russian presence in the Balkans grew from 900 soldiers in 1992 to 1,500 in 1994 during the UNPROFOR operation in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Russia also contributed around 1,340 peacekeepers to the NATO-led IFOR/SFOR operations from 1996. The Russian brigade in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which consisted of airborne troops, had an area of responsibility of 1,750 square kilometres, including 75 kilometres of the inter-entity boundary line. Russia also contributed 1,500 troops to the NATO-led KFOR operation in Kosovo from 1999.

After withdrawal from Yugoslavia, Russia's contributions declined. During this period Russian participation in UN operations was geographically spread and comprised a series of small contributions. Russian peacekeepers participated in the missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Western Sahara, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti, East Timor, Kosovo and in the Middle East.

Between 2000 and 2012, Russian contributions to UN-led peacekeeping operations fluctuated between 220 and 370 uniformed (military plus police) peacekeepers, remaining basically unchanged after the withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping contingents from the former Yugoslavia.

There is a widespread belief in UN circles that participation in international UN peacekeeping and conflict resolution is one of the decisive factors in the selection of new Security Council members in the course of Security Council reform. It is supposed that if the biggest providers of peacekeepers, such as India, and emerging providers of peacekeepers, such as Brazil, get onto the Security Council, the ability of the UN to make decisions on collective missions and immediately man them with military and civilian personnel would increase. That is questionable, but the real problem is that one group of countries decides on UN missions, while another group mans in these missions.

A recent international study »Peacekeeping providers«,⁴ confirms that there is the same manifest tendency among the Security Council's »old« permanent members to provide less and less peacekeepers to UN missions (if we exclude from consideration American troops in Afghanistan, which is not a typical case). Russia provided only 320 peacekeepers to UN operations in 2010 and 250 in 2011 (taking 51st place among peacekeeping providers), while India and Pakistan provide 10,000 and 9,000, respectively. Both France and the UK have been steadily reducing their peacekeepers over the past decade.

Another important numerical finding is that practically all European nations are providing more troops and peacekeepers to NATO operations in conflict areas, then, in second place, to the 13 European Union missions, and only in last place to United Nations operations.

Russia has undergone its own redistribution of efforts and resources in favour of regional crisis response. While only two or three hundred peacekeepers are provided by Moscow for UN operations, at the same time during the 1990s about 10,000 soldiers were sent by Moscow to regional non-UN operations in Tajikistan (~7,000), Abkhazia/Georgia (~1,500), South Ossetia/Georgia (~500), Moldova/Transnistria (initially 1,500, later ~500 and still maintained).

Since the early 1990s, Russia and the Western powers have created two different branches of peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations which are mutually criticised and not recognised. The Western nations do not recognise Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) operations of the 1990s in Tajikistan and Abkhazia, and two more operations by Russia in South Ossetia and Transnistria to be true peacekeeping. But Moscow in turn (being supported in most cases by China and India) strongly criticised the NATO operation with no UN Security Council authorisation in the former Yugoslavia in 1999 (bombings of Serbia), the coalition operation with (initially) no UN Security Council authorisation in Iraq (in 2003) and in 2012 strongly criticised misuse of the UN mandate in Libya to overthrow the regime there instead of »protecting civilians«. It is now blocking a potential operation to support opposition forces in Syria and is

4. Study undertaken jointly by the Elliot School of George Washington University (USA) and Griffith University (Australia) under the leadership of P. Williams and A. Bellamy. A collective monograph presenting the results of the study is forthcoming in 2012.

limiting UN sanctions against Iran. In 2008 the UN was unable to pass any resolution at all on the Russian–Georgian war, whether drafted by Russia or France.

In fact, the system of UN *joint* crisis response is almost absent or relatively weak now. The only operations that have a chance of being jointly agreed and implemented are operations in areas where major Security Council members do not have diverging interests (sub-Saharan Africa, Haiti and so on). But the more China is economically active in Africa, the closer the UN involves Latin American countries in UN mandated activities, the more Arab and other Islamic countries are involved in the club of decision-makers – the less the probability that future operations have a chance of finding agreement.

2.2 Ideology and Pragmatism in Moscow's Approach to the Security Council

The balance of interests between the five permanent members of the Security Council remains subject to constant evolution and the influence of numerous internal and external factors. At the same time, Moscow's approach to this balance of interests in the Security Council has maintained a certain consistency since the early post-War years and during the Cold War, followed by *détente* and the «second Cold War» and then the foreign policy of the post-Soviet Russian Federation.

Soviet Ideology

Soviet foreign policy was highly ideological. Relations between states and nations were interpreted through the prism of class relations and irreconcilable contradictions between the communist and capitalist socio-economic systems. The world was presented not as the intersection of the policies of 200 separate sovereign states, but rather as an interaction between two main systems headed by the USA/Western Europe and the Soviet Union. It was this vision which manifested itself in structural contradictions within the UN Security Council from the 1950s until the late 1980s between the Western P3 (USA, UK, France) and Communist P2 (Soviet Union and China).

All in all, despite the ideological cover, Soviet policy was in good proportion motivated not only by the logic of Soviet ideology, but by a pragmatically interpreted »bur-

den of a superpower«. In the theory of international relations there is a whole series of theoretical approaches according to which large nations/powers, such as the USA and the Soviet Union/Russia, as global neighbours, are locked in rivalry and a *zero-sum game* irrespective of ideological contradictions, just by the logic of geopolitics. It is true that some, if not many, foreign policy moves and voting in the UN Security Council in the time of Stalin or Brezhnev can be explained not so much by the internal logic of Communist ideology, but rather by geopolitical rivalries and pragmatic balance of power calculations.

Pragmatism

As a modern independent state the Russian Federation has more than once declared *pragmatism* to be the leading principle of its foreign policy. Such definitions are present in the recent edition of the Russian Foreign Policy Concept and in the doctrinal document *National Security up to 2020*. In fact, pragmatism in this respect is interpreted not only as freedom to make ad hoc decisions, but, more importantly, as freedom from old Soviet-motivated ideological orientations, international friendships and rivalries.

»Peaceful coexistence« was an important ideological formula for late Soviet foreign policy. It meant not only the parallel existence of two global socio-political systems (socialism and capitalism) without getting into military conflict, but positive interaction between them. This formula allowed blocking and alignment on certain issues within the Security Council with Western counterparts. The formula of the »peaceful coexistence« of capitalism and socialism was interfaced with another formula of »*détente* with regard to international tensions« (in the sense of reducing former Cold War tensions). The first historical period of *détente* (though without the use of this Franco-phone term) occurred in the 1960s under Khrushchev, followed by the classical period of *détente* in the 1970s under Brezhnev, when a group of important treaties on nuclear disarmament were signed between the USA and the USSR.

Both »*détente*« and »peaceful coexistence« were obviously progressive formulas compared to the previous (under Stalin) formula of »irreconcilable struggle between two systems«. Nevertheless, it should be realised that both softer formulas, while stressing the need to avoid war, de facto proceeded from the understanding that

the world will remain split into two systems. It was supposed that in a long-term perspective the victory of one system (socialism) over the other (capitalism) was still inevitable, and thus the rivalry between systems was to be continued, only in a more peaceful form. Using modern terminology, one may say that these formulas suggested proceeding from rivalry/competition in the «hard power» dimension towards competition in terms of «soft power».

During the post-Soviet presidencies of Boris Yeltsin (1991–2000) the dominant attitude was that Russia, in contrast to the Soviet Union, should limit its role to a leading regional power (in a reconfigured post-Soviet region). That led to a relative Russian passivity in the United Nations during the 1990s. Simplifying somewhat, we can say that Russia during the first post-Soviet decade was busy with the resolution of internal conflicts and the restoration of the economy, and that the UN global agenda was perceived by Russian elites and public as something far distant and for the time being unimportant. But after 2000 and until the present, the dominant trend – under the Putin/Medvedev/Putin administrations – seems to be to seek the reassertion of Russia's role as a great power. Some even insist on the term «superpower», or at least a great power with global responsibilities and possibilities.

Multipolarity and competition of civilizations

The past two decades have witnessed the assertion of «pragmatism» as a key formula of current Russian foreign policy. In the early Putin years (first half of the 2000s) the quest for pragmatism was combined with strong criticism of the «unipolarity» of international relations (meaning the domination of the United States as «the only remaining superpower»). Appeals for the «restoration of multipolarity» sounded academic and neutral, but in fact they expressed a semi-ideological willingness to recover a bigger role for Russia in international relations, returning it to the status of one of the key «poles» of international relations, together with the United States, Western Europe and rising China. The semi-ideological character of this formula of the «restoration of multi-polarity» was motivated by the fact that the correlation of economic and military might in the world (apart from the nuclear balance), not to mention lost political and cultural influence, did not provide Russia during that period with a «super» role in the global balance of power. At the same time, Russia sought to re-establish its role at the level of the former Soviet

Union and even to go beyond it. In that period it was recognised that Russia's status as Permanent Member of the Security Council is one of the few remaining characteristics of «superpower» status which is to be exploited to the full.

Current Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov in his programme article «Russia and the World in the Twenty-First Century»⁵ introduced a new formula, «*competition on a global scale in the dimension of civilisations*», meaning that Russia might and should present itself as a leader of a certain type of civilisation (sometimes called «Eurasian»), equally important alongside American, European or Islamic civilisation, for the «concert of civilizations». This was another reincarnation of the slogan of multi-polarity, but with the emphasis on soft power. Lavrov stressed that in the modern world «the subject of competition includes, among other parameters, value orientations and models for development».

In the second decade of the twenty-first century the Russian Federation fully restored its willingness and ability to act within the Security Council as a global power with significant political, military, economic and human resources.

2.3 Vetoes, Sanctions and Moscow's Policy in the Cases of Libya and Syria

During the six and a half decades of the United Nations all five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council have more or less actively used the right of veto, halting decisions or resolutions which, in their view, contradicted their interests or their understanding of international realities. The available statistics on the veto cover only open sessions of the Security Council, while additional – and relatively often – the exercise of the veto took place at closed sessions. As for open sessions, the United Kingdom and France last used their veto in 1989, while China, in contrast, has been more active in its Security Council role and, after not using it at all between 1972 and 1997, exercised its veto six times between 1997 and 2012.

During the past two decades, the USA has exercised its veto 15 times in open sessions. As for the Russian Federation, it has voted negatively on the drafts of eight resolutions (Table 6).

5. Lavrov, S.V.: «Russia and the World in the Twenty-First Century», in: *Russia in Global Politics*, No. 4 (2008): 7.



Table 6: Draft resolutions not adopted as a result of negative voting (veto) by Russia (alone) or by Russia and other Permanent Members (open sessions)

Date	Draft Resolution	Session number	Agenda item	Security Council Permanent Members that voted negatively
February 4, 2012	S/2012/77	6711	Situation in the Middle East	Russian Federation, China
October 4, 2011	S/2011/612	6627	Situation in the Middle East	Russian Federation, China
June 15, 2009	S/2009/310	6143	Situation in Georgia	Russian Federation
July 11, 2008	S/2008/447	5933	Peace and Security in Africa (Zimbabwe)	Russian Federation, China
January 12, 2007	S/2007/14	5619	Situation in Myanmar	Russian Federation, China
April 21, 2004	S/2004/313	4947	Situation on Cyprus	Russian Federation
December 2, 1994	S/1994/1358	3475	Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Russian Federation
May 11, 1993	S/25693	3211	Situation in Cyprus	Russian Federation

The latest negative voting by Russia was on the draft resolution on Syria in February 2012 (although compromise was reached later and the joint resolution on Syria was finally adopted three months later, after the mediatory mission of Kofi Annan to Syria). It was in keeping with Russia’s stand on a series of recent crises over Iran, Libya and Syria. Moscow’s approach incorporates several requirements:

- to avoid unjustified and uncoordinated international interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states in the absence of clear »responsibility to protect« criteria;
- to avoid the imposition of international sanctions that would harm the general population of the country rather than the targeted regime;
- to keep UN-mandated operations constantly within the rigid framework of the voted mandate, avoiding »loose« interpretations of the mandate as a kind of carte-blanche for various ad hoc actions;
- to maintain neutrality, an equal distance and the unbiased character of international interference, avoiding »taking sides« in regional conflicts.

Application of such principles does not mean that Moscow approves of dictatorial regimes or protects aggressors or violators of the non-proliferation regime. But Moscow is against unilateral decisions (on multilateral issues), unproved conclusions and premature actions.

Moscow was against the international coalition entering Iraq (and was supported in this by Germany, France and some other countries) until the IAEA commission finished collecting proof of whether or not the Iraqi regime was actually trying to produce WMDs. Later on, Moscow voted in the Security Council in favour of continuing international enforcement operations against Slobodan Milosevic’s regime in 1999 and Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003. When Moscow abstained from the vote on Resolution 1973 (Libya) in 2011, the situation was not at all of the »Cold War type«, with a clear juxtaposition of Russia and the West. Out of 15 members of the Security Council 10 supported the draft resolution, while five countries abstained, including Russia, China and Germany. Moscow was not against the attempt of the international community to apply pressure to the two sides in the civil war in Libya with the aim of protecting the population from violence. But it did criticise – and continues to do so – the violation of the essence and text of the UN Security Council mandate, that ended exactly in the violation of above listed principles: the Western coalition took sides, blurred its neutrality, engaged in badly targeted bombing, did not provide »online« monitoring and command of the operation by the UN, and ignored the criticism and warnings of dissenting P5 members. From Moscow’s standpoint, the results of implementing Security Council Resolution 1973 could hardly be called a success: although the former harsh regime was toppled, the stability and democratic character of the new regime in Libya are not at all guaranteed, not to mention its territorial integrity.

In the case of the crisis in Syria, Russia pursued several interconnected paths: debates in the United Nations, bilateral negotiations with the Assad regime, contacts within the G8 with other leading powers,⁶ the role of observer in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and dialogue with the League of Arab States. Among other channels, the Russian Foreign Ministry activated an Agreement dating back to 2009 on establishing a mechanism known as »Dialogue Russia – League of Arab States« and coordinated its moves towards the League with China, as another important P5 member. Russia suggested organising a monitoring mission to Syria that could represent either the UN or the League of Arab States or both and coordinated a five-point settlement plan on which the League and Russia agreed. Russia strongly supported the mediatory mission of Kofi Annan to Damascus, and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov met Mr Annan in Moscow and Cairo, and constantly kept telephone contact with him in the course of his Middle East mission to coordinate approaches. Moscow supported Kofi Annan's six-point settlement plan in the UN Security Council.

The Security Council approved Kofi Annan's plan and suggested the establishment of a mechanism to monitor implementation of the cease-fire. Russia immediately agreed to send observers from the contingent on the Golan Heights to join the international monitoring mission in Syria. The Foreign Minister of Syria visited Moscow more than once to coordinate implementation of the cease-fire and its monitoring.

All this clearly shows that although it vetoed the first draft resolution on sanctions against Syria at the beginning of the year, Moscow was not trying to block international efforts: on the contrary, considering a repetition of the Libyan scenario in Syria inappropriate, Russia has activated numerous mechanisms and channels to find a stabilising settlement of the civil war. Moscow continues to believe that the Security Council, its mediatory representatives and the United Nations as a whole remain valid and potent resources for halting hostilities in various conflicts without unnecessary and complicating external military interference.

As postulated in Russia's Foreign Policy Concept, »implementing coercive measures with the application of military force in circumventing the UN Charter and its Security Council is not able to remove deep social-economic, inter-ethnic and other contradictions underlying conflicts, undermines the foundations of the international law and leads to the broadening of conflict space, including the direct neighbourhood of Russia«.⁷

2.4 Distributing Security, Arms Control and Disarmament Tasks Between the UN, Regional Organisations and Bilateral Arrangements

In the modern world in which the formation of a system of global governance is far from being finalised, there is a clear tendency towards strengthening the regional and sub-regional levels of inter-state coordination and cooperation. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in his article »Russian Diplomacy in a Changing World« stresses the multi-dimensional character of decision-making formats in the modern international community. He writes: »Russia plays a most active part in the work of various multilateral formats (...) The new multi-polar world order should be based upon the collective leadership of the leading states, representative both geographically and civilisationally. We mean, first of all, the Security Council of the UN, but also the G20, the G8 and other international and regional structures«.⁸

Russia's current Foreign Policy Concept, while reaffirming the »central and coordinating role of the United Nations«, insists on the necessity of parallel tracks to fully employ such formats as the G8 and its dialogue with traditional partners, the »Troika« (Russia, India, China), and the so-called BRIC group (Brazil, Russia, India and China), as well as other informal structures and dialogue venues«.⁹

This shows that Moscow has never intended to put all its eggs in one basket. The majority of nuclear arms control and nuclear disarmament negotiations, treaties and agreements (SALT, ABM Treaty of 1972, INF of 1987, SORT, START-I, II and III) were reached on a bilateral

6. S. V. Lavrov presented Russian proposals on Syria when the G8 foreign ministers met in Washington on 11 April 2012.

7. Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, p. 4.

8. Lavrov, S. V. (2011): »Russian Diplomacy in a Changing World«, in: *Russian Federal Reference Book*, Volume 23.

9. Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, p. 12.

US–Soviet/Russian basis. The Conference/Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE/OSCE), not the United Nations Conference on Disarmament became the real focus of the elaboration and negotiation of the CFE Treaty on conventional armaments and armed forces in Europe, as well as the Open Skies Treaty. OSCE summits (1999 in Istanbul, 2011 in Kazakhstan) as summits of the largest Eurasian inter-state organisation with universal representation proved to be an important supplement to Security Council sessions for discussing current security priorities.

More than once, especially in situations of crisis such as Iraq (in 2003), Libya and Syria, when the adoption and implementation of Security Council resolutions was fully or partially blocked, Russia continued negotiations with other major states through the G8 and other formats, and used NATO-Russia Council sessions, OIC and LAS meetings, ASEAN and APEC summits for multilateral diplomacy.

Some security issues were resolved within the framework of multilateral inter-state agreements (for example, agreements on establishing regional nuclear-weapon-free zones, like the one established in Central Asia in the mid-2000s).

Like the three Western Permanent Members of the Security Council (USA, UK, France), Russia tends to view Security Council resolutions and collective actions as only one among several possible crisis management tools contributing to UN operations, balanced against its other international commitments. In Russia, it is typically assumed by both elites and the public that UN-led peacekeeping operations and UN-mandated peace enforcement operations performed by international coalitions, including Russian troops, are components of the same species of operations understood as »UN-mandated operations« or »international operations in conflict areas«. The same notion of »international peace operations in conflict areas« was applied by Russian politicians, public and media to operations that did not have a Security Council mandate in Post-Soviet space, namely in Tajikistan, South Ossetia/Georgia, Abkhazia/Georgia and Transnistria/Moldova. It is important to understand that all the above-mentioned conflicts exploded into violence in 1991–1992, under the late Soviet Union or only a few months after its formal dissolution. Psychologically, they were still perceived by CIS politicians and public as »internal« or »internally-rooted«

conflicts, while external UN-centred mechanisms designed for inter-state conflict resolution were considered to be »from another basket«. Only by the mid-1990s did post-Soviet elites start to perceive these conflict resolution efforts in the context of the presence or absence of Security Council mandates, comparing them with operations in the former Yugoslavia. Russia thus increased its attention to regular UN reporting and to interaction with small parallel missions of UN observers.

Although Russia made only a modest contribution of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping before the Yugoslavian operations, it has made several significant international deployments in post-Soviet space, comprising around 10,000 troops in total, to missions it generally sees as peace operations (Tajikistan, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Moldova/Transnistria), but which are neither led nor mandated by the UN. These operations evoked quite critical or sceptical attitudes from Western critics, who often accused Russia of attempting the »post-imperial« projection of Moscow's power and to remain influential in »lost« regions. But inside Russia these regional efforts were mostly positively accepted by elites and the public. They were considered in terms of what later came to be known in UN circles as the »responsibility to protect« approach. During the active phase of post-Soviet military operations (early and mid-1990s) the former republics were still perceived by Moscow as a kind of »near abroad«, with many ethnic Russians caught up in local non-Russian civil wars. Operations were sincerely aimed at stopping violence and bloodshed, pursuing Russia's responsibility to protect former Soviet populations (still very much connected to Russia) from sinking into endless civil wars, with no clear political plan with regard to where to go next. It is worth mentioning that these operations evolved against the background of UN/NATO actions in the former Yugoslavia and thus surrounded by internal debates and uncertainty among Western nations on how to stop the violence. Nobody – neither the Western nations nor Russia – had clear and »innocent« solutions to hand: both sides experimented with methods and means. It was already ten years later that Russian elites (though not the public) started to think over the legal modalities of military involvement in conflicts that over the years became truly »foreign«.

Currently, Russia is concentrating its efforts on creating a regional system of conflict resolution and peacekeeping based on the *Collective Security Treaty Organiza-*

tion (CSTO), including the formation of regional CSTO Peacekeeping Forces (4,000 troops) and Collective Operational Reaction Forces (15,000 troops). Moscow constantly perceives NATO and, in a lesser proportion, the European Union as rivals to its own integrative efforts, and the expansion of NATO- and EU-based peacekeeping efforts serves as an additional motivation for the rapid creation of CSTO peacekeeping capabilities. Russia clearly understands that while its resistance to external involvement in conflict resolution in Post-Soviet space has generally decreased over the years, increasing UN input into conflict resolution in Post-Soviet space (in conflicts such as Karabakh, Georgia/South Ossetia, Georgia/Abkhazia, Moldova/Transnistria, and the «colour revolutions» of the Kirgiz type) is currently less likely, while emphasis on regional peacekeeping instruments is more realistic.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is another regional format through which Russia may realise security cooperation. Although for the time being the SCO has distanced itself from many direct security functions, it still maintains the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure and border-guard coordination, and conducts army counter-terrorist exercises and promotes efforts in the areas of information and cyber security.

Prospectively, Russia plans to invest significant diplomatic efforts in creating a new regional organisation, the *Eurasian Union*, based upon the common economic, trade/customs space of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan (Kirgizstan has already asked to join). Inevitably, the creation of such a new regional structure (which is a «signature-project» of Russian President Putin) would involve transferring some security functions into this «basket» because of the need to rearrange and unify border/export control, financial and information security, fight against organised crime and many other security-related functions in a unified economic space.

As a result of all these trends, Russia's current perception of the Security Council agenda means that it is unlikely to approve its further widening. In contrast, part of the Security Council's functions in maintaining global and regional peace and security could and should be implemented through complementary regional and bilateral/multilateral structures and networks.

3. The Current Russian Approach to Security Council Reform

3.1 Cautious Security Council Enlargement and BRICS Solidarity

Then Russian President Medvedev at the UN General Assembly session called reform of the Security Council «one of the most important and complex issues on the United Nations agenda». It was not so crucial that he called it «important», but rather he called it «most complex», thus expressing caution.

The Russian Deputy Foreign Minister clarified that Russia was in favour of granting permanent membership to the G4 (Japan, Germany, India and Brazil) and to South Africa and Egypt. But the veto power should remain in the hands of original P5 members. This veto power should neither be expanded nor taken away. Russia insists on «minimalist expansion»: the size of the enlarged Council should remain in the «low twenties», preferably at 20 countries.

But note Russia's clarification that it would support a reform which is likely to get the support of «the biggest majority» of UN member states (elsewhere he declared «even more than two-thirds» of members). This is like saying: «the problem is not the absence of agreement and blessing from me – the problem lies in disagreement and the absence of consensus among you!»

Written support for the G4 position remains at the level of 80 countries, among them many insignificant small states, whose arms were reportedly «twisted», while important and influential states are absent from this list. There are also estimates that firm support is even lower, at about 60 countries, which is far from «above two-thirds» of the international community.

As the Ambassador of Pakistan complained while presenting the «United for Consensus» group's position, extending the Security Council and its credentials «will drain the oxygen from the General Assembly». He suggested a decisive procedural step: to proceed from an understanding that G4 has been «tried and failed» – in other words, that the G4 proposal should no longer be the focus of debate because it has already proved itself unable to get support from more than about one-third of countries and now the time has come to seek alternative approaches.

Russia agrees that there is a general necessity for reform, but, like other P5 members, it is very concerned about the ability of an extended Security Council to deal effectively with peace and security and especially conflict resolution and crisis response matters. It should be remembered that the right of veto has often been used in 60 years of Security Council work, in approximately equal proportion by Western states (USA, France, UK) and Communist or post-Communist Russia and China. That ideological divide or divergence of interests has already prevented the UN – for good or bad – from acting in many circumstances. Granting veto rights to *new types of powers* would block decisions in even more *types of circumstances*. For example, the UN may witness the emergence of an »Islamic veto power« look at the joint statement on UN Security Council reform by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) which insists on the »need for representation of the Islamic Ummah in any category among the permanent and non-permanent Security Council members«.

It is characteristic that the Organisation of the Islamic Conference's position was presented by the Ambassador of Syria and that OIC consultations took place in Dakar and Damascus. If Russia and China vetoed the operation in Iraq under the UN flag in 2003 and Russia abstained from – in fact, it did not support – the resolution on Libya, it is easy to guess that an »Islamic veto« may be imposed by Egypt (acting on behalf of the OIC) on involvement in many future crisis situations which touch upon UN actions regarding Middle East, Northern Africa and Iran. It is worth mentioning in this respect that, as a result of the Arab Spring, the strengthening of political Islamic elements and their coming to power like in Egypt and Tunisia might also be probable in other OIC countries. That changes the initial conditions of support on the part of the P5 for the tentative list of nominees for an enlarged Security Council and may lead to a re-consideration of such support.

Another »ideological divide« and change of the correlation of forces in the Security Council may happen as a result of playing a »BRICS« unity card.

If the current G4 and African Group proposals were realised, the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) would all be represented in the Security Council, and may turn out to be a much greater counter-balance to the Western group (USA, France, UK). It is notable that

the very existence of the BRICS grouping is often explained in BRICS countries by a willingness »to ensure multipolarity«, juxtaposing their weight to the »domination of one Western superpower« and to »present a counterbalance to old alliances«. In fact, in contrast to the EU, for example, BRICS is not based upon any serious economic, security or political agenda (BRICS countries belong to different geographic areas and have diverging agendas). BRICS badly need »cement«, a unifying agenda, and a collective position within an enlarged Security Council may provide just that. Russia's hands are somewhat tied by the notion of BRICS unity and this is another extra reason for Moscow to express support for inviting India, Brazil and South Africa onto the Security Council.

One alternative »logic« – in contrast to the G4 proposal – could be a *united representation of the European Union* in the Security Council. Such an approach would decrease the importance of separate representation for France and the UK, but make other EU members – such as the active Italy – more tolerant of bringing in Germany or arranging representation of the EU through different EU nations by rotation. But such a »block approach« would have repercussions in increasing the role of the collective representation of the African Union (perhaps also by rotation), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation or the League of Arab States, and of the BRICS. If we wouldn't go as far as to *organise the Security Council on the basis of representation of regional organisations* – although the whole logic of bringing in South Africa, Egypt and Brazil already revolves around the need for representation of underrepresented regions! – then reform of the functions of the Security Council would inevitably involve the need for a redistribution of functions and credentials between the UN Security Council and regional organisations, which more and more often – for example, the EU and the AU – are taking the lead in regional conflict resolution and crisis response.

Despite the existence of nominal support for the general idea of Security Council enlargement among the P5 countries, including Russia, the probability remains high that the Security Council's composition would remain unchanged not because of the negative position of the P5, but because of the absence of consensus among the others. If the Security Council is to be enlarged, it would probably only be possible without extending or removing the veto power from the existing members.

Any Security Council enlargement would bring in new »ideological divides« and »regional divides« and thus decrease the ability of the Security Council to make timely joint crisis responses to many types of situations. It may also divert great powers from acting through the UN at all.

A new regionalism (African Union, League of Arab States, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Collective Security Treaty Organization) or functional groupings (BRICS, Organization of the Islamic Conference) may become a serious obstacle to an effective reformed Security Council. At the same time, it is such regional and functional groupings that may provide serious motivation for reform.

3.2 Reform of Security Council Working Methods

Reform of the functions and credentials of the Security Council will inevitably go in the direction of a new distribution of responsibilities on the part of the UN, with a growing number of strong regional organisations. Many of them (EU, NATO, OSCE, CIS, CSTO, AU) have already created regional crisis response and peacekeeping forces and structures and actively use them. Unified UN-based peacekeeping is no longer the only form of collective intervention on the part of the international community in regional and local conflicts. While there are currently only 16 crisis response operations on in the world under the auspices of the UN DPKO, all in all there are almost 60 collective international actions and missions in various countries and regions, if we count the efforts of NATO, EU, AU, OSCE, CSTO, LAS and so on as collective crisis responses.

Thus, reducing the effectiveness and probability of consensus on UN-mandated operations may be an acceptable »price« to pay for the increase in democratisation in decision-making through an enlarged Security Council. This decrease in the effectiveness of what are in any case not particularly »joint« UN crisis responses will be compensated by the increase in crisis management and crisis response activities of a broader variety of international organisations, state, inter-state and non-state actors.

Among other Security Council instruments and working methods a discussion on revitalising the *Military Staff Committee* is worth mentioning. Russia advocates its

possible restoration¹⁰ as a mechanism for command and control of collective UN crisis response actions with a military component. This Russian proposal is based upon the following motives. The trend of the past two decades is that in the absence of the UN's own collective military forces, all Chapter VII mandates for coercive action on behalf of the world community are delegated to international coalitions under the leadership of one or two nations with strong military machinery (for example, coalitions under US and UK leadership for Afghanistan and Iraq, or the UK-French led coalition for operations in Libya), or to military components of regional organisations (NATO, EU). Once a Chapter VII mandate is issued, the control of the international community over the actual course of operations decreases or even evaporates. Restoration of the UN-based mechanism (with full representation of all P5 or even P5+ members) for command and control over coercive UN missions would allow for the online accountability of such operations. Recent proof of the need for such a change of command and control over UN-mandated coercive operations, in Moscow's view, was the course of international operations over Libya, when the initially blessed mandate for a »no fly zone« was invisibly converted by the leaders of the implementing coalition into a »political regime change« operation.

For all Russia's scepticism regarding the powers and credentials of the International Criminal Court (ICC) Moscow suggested involving the ICC mechanism to investigate any civilian deaths in Libya caused by NATO air strikes in case of the »misapplication« of UN Security Council Resolution 1973. Russian Foreign Ministry human rights spokesman Dolgov placed a statement on the MFA website demanding that the ICC consider all cases of NATO bombing that caused civilian casualties. There were 9,700 strike sorties by NATO aircraft in the course of that operation, dropping over 7,700 precision bombs. It is notable, however, that comparable investigations of alleged British abuses in Iraq (2006) and alleged civilian deaths during the 1999 Kosovo air campaign got nowhere because of the absence of recognised proof and the ICC files were closed. Nevertheless,

10. A Military Staff Committee (MSC) was supposed to be created under the principles of the UN Charter by P5 countries for the joint command and control of UN collective military contingents which may potentially be used under UN Charter Chapter VII provisions. The actual employment of the MSC was blocked at the beginning of the Cold War in the late 1940s when P5 members refused to allocate troops to the UN for joint operations.

Russia considers that it balances its own non-imposition of a veto on the operation in Libya – Russia abstained – with its criticism of the misinterpretation and misuse of the mandate.

When on 4 April 2012 the S5 Group – Jordan, Liechtenstein, Costa Rica, Singapore, Switzerland – introduced a draft resolution on improving the working methods of the Security Council, Russia, in line with the reaction of other P5 members, expressed support for principles of transparency, effectiveness and accountability with regard to the Security Council, but objected to the proposal to ban or limit the use of veto power.

The debates on restraining the veto power of the P5 states have continued for more than a decade. In the ground-breaking 2001 report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) it was openly stated that »capricious use of the veto, or threat of its use, (is) likely to be the principal obstacle to effective international action in cases where quick and decisive action is needed to stop or avert a significant humanitarian crisis«.¹¹ The international NGO Citizens for Global Solutions, a member of the International Coalition for Responsibility to Protect, even coined for P5 states the principle of »Responsibility Not to Veto« (RN2V). The issue was actively debated at the World Summit in 2005, although it did not appear in its final recommendations. In the UN Secretary General's 2009 report *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect*, Ban Ki-Moon stated: »I would urge to refrain from employing or threatening to employ the veto in situations of manifest failure to meet obligations relating to the responsibility to protect.«¹² The proposal was formalised in the S5 draft resolution, but after 17 states, including Russia, expressed opposition to the basic Security Council principle of consensus/veto at the GA session, the draft resolution was withdrawn on 16 May 2012 by Switzerland on behalf of S5 (obviously under the P5's persistent pressure) on the legal ground that a draft resolution on such basic issues must have the support of no less than two-thirds of UN states.

Recent use of the veto power involved Russia and China on 4 October 2011 and 4 February 2012 to block sanctions in the Libyan and Syrian crises. At the same time,

the Russian representative at the UN has stressed more than once that Russia, while opposing restrictions on the veto power, did support other procedural innovations in the work of the UN Security Council, and that activities of the Security Council in recent years have already been made more transparent and effective.


A set of Russian proposals on the operational methods of the Security Council and the UN in general includes concrete suggestions on increasing the speed of elaboration and discussion of Security Council decisions, widening prospective monitoring functions of the Security Council and its Secretariat, mastering the complex of UN »special procedures« (41 UN mandated Rapporteurs or groups of independent experts investigating »hot« security and human rights issues).

4. Conclusions

- The Security Council more than six and a half decades after its creation remains one of the main forums for the coordination of leading power interests in the world community, with strong potential influence on the state of the world.
- The Soviet Union/Russian Federation has gone through an uneasy evolution with regard to its role within the UN Security Council, highlighting ideological divides and contradictions with the West in the Cold War years, promoting a pragmatic approach, compromises and cooperation in the détente period, downgrading its own role from global to regional power in the first post-Soviet years and returning to active global responsibilities and a global role now.
- Moscow actively uses both its positive influence and negative votes in the Security Council to promote its interests and build coalitions and it takes an active stand on most collective security issues under consideration at the Security Council. At the same time, it promotes new regional arrangements and organisations (CSTO, SCO, prospectively the Eurasian Union) as important supplements to the UN-based security mechanisms.
- Russia contributes to UN conflict resolution and peacekeeping first of all politically through mediation and collective decision-making in the Security Council rather than by donating substantial amounts of per-

11. www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/publications.

12. www.un.org/documents/secretariat.html – Document A/64/1.



sonnel or funding, but in the two post-Soviet decades Moscow has created a semi-alternative system of regional peacekeeping in the CIS area.

- Russia has a strong and clear critical stance on the issues of sanctions, overuse of force and misinterpreting of mandates by UN-mandated coalitions (former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya). Moscow used all instruments within the Security Council and elsewhere to ensure that the Syrian crisis does not follow the »Libyan scenario« of armed international interference.
- Russia cautiously supports the potential reform and enlargement of the Security Council, backs the demands of the G4 and BRICS groups, but insists on keeping a potentially enlarged Security Council in the »low twenties« and on the preservation of P5 veto rights.
- Moscow possesses and promotes a »basket« of suggestions on reforming Security Council working methods, aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the UN and its structures.



About the author

Prof. Alexander Nikitin is Director of the Center for Euro-Atlantic Security and Professor of the Department of Political Science of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. President Emeritus of the Russian Political Science Association. Member of the Academy of Military Sciences and of the Scientific-Expert Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

Imprint

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung | Global Policy and Development
Hiroshimastr. 28 | 10785 Berlin | Germany

Responsible:
Marius Müller-Hennig, Global Peace and Security Policy
Reinhard Krumm, Head, Dept. for Central and Eastern Europe

Phone: ++49-30-269-25-7476 | Fax: ++49-30-269-35-9246
<http://www.fes.de/GPol/en>

To order publications:
Sandra.Richter@fes.de

Global Policy and Development

The department Global Policy and Development of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung fosters dialogue between North and South and promotes public and political debate on international issues in Germany and Europe. In providing a platform for discussions and consultation we aim at raising awareness of global interdependencies, developing scenarios for future trends and formulating policy recommendations. This publication is part of the working line »Global Peace and Security Policy«, in charge: Marius Müller-Hennig, Marius.Mueller-Hennig@fes.de.

UN Security Council in Focus

This publication is part of the series »UN Security Council in Focus«, which analyses issues on the agenda of the Security Council as well as its reform and position in the system of the United Nations.



The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

This publication is printed on paper from sustainable forestry.



ISBN 978-3-86498-363-4