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Russia in the Changing International System

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CHAPTER 1

Russia and the Changing International System: An Introduction

Emel Parlar Dal and Emre Erşen

Introduction

What kind of an actor is Russia in the current international system, which has recently been marked by substantive structural and normative changes as a result of the ongoing power shift from the Global North to the Global South? Should Russia be conceived as a great power or a rising power in world politics? Or should it rather be categorized as a "near" great power? How can Russia's perceptions about the changing international order be critically assessed? What are Russia's motives, roles and strategies with regard to key regional and global issues? Does the Russian leadership have an alternative interpretation of the international order that significantly differs from the "liberal" understanding of the Western states? This volume seeks to address these questions and attempts at scrutinizing Russia as a unique actor, which plays the dual role of a traditional great power and a rising power in the international system. The implications of this duality in

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Russia's actorness are important in terms of not only understanding the Russian elites' response to the emerging post-hegemonic international order but also evaluating the development of Moscow's policies in the sphere of global governance.

There is a growing literature on Russia's vision of the changing international system (e.g. Sakwa 2017; Radin and Reach 2017; Miskimmon and O'Loughlin 2017; Tsereteli 2018). However, the existing literature still lacks a comprehensive study that evaluates Russia's interactions with the international system in the light of its policies with regard to multiple regions and various state and non-state actors. On the other hand, the Russian foreign policy literature is dominated with country-specific, geography-oriented and issue-based studies. This volume, in contrast, aims to provide a broader and more integrative approach to understand the evolution of Russian responses to key regional and global issues and Russia's engagements with a number of international institutions including the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and BRICS.

This volume also seeks to diversify the conceptual and empirical accounts regarding Russia's evolving role in the international system. In doing so, it tries to provide answers to the following research questions:

- How do the Russian leaders view the international order and perceive their country's role as an international actor?
- How does Russia perceive the concept of "rising powers"? What are the contradictions between Russia's roles as a great power and a rising power?
- What are the main determinants of Russia's claim to be a great power? Which global and regional aspirations determine the perceptions of the Russian leadership regarding their country's great power status?
- How are the discourses of "anti-Westernism" and "post-Westernism" employed in the redefinition of Russia's relations with other actors of the international system?
- What is the significance of the "East" or "Asia" in Russia's views about the international system? What is the relevance of organizations such as the EAEU, BRICS, CSTO and SCO in the evolution of this perception?
- How do the issues of Ukraine, Crimea and Syria influence or legitimize Russia's claims about the international order? How does Russia perceive the concept of "regional hegemony" particularly in the former Soviet Union and the Middle East?

The duality in Russia's actorness in the international system creates certain confusion in the IR literature and thus must be exposed with a specific focus on Moscow's recent foreign policy actions. It is important to approach this subject from different angles using various case studies and focus on the "realist-idealist", "regional-global" and "political-economic" implications of Russia's activism in the international system. What separates this volume from the previous studies on Russian foreign policy is that it elaborates on Russia's global governance policies—particularly in the regional institutions—and adopts an encompassing perspective to the strategies pursued by Moscow in key issue areas like energy, security, regional conflicts, international political economy and international organizations. The chapters of the volume also shed a light on Russia's perceptions about the transformation in the world order and the responses developed by Russian policymakers to the ongoing security challenges and economic issues at both the material and normative levels. Structured around various topics like post-Westernism, multipolarity and regional hegemony, the chapters offer a comprehensive understanding of Russian foreign policy in the face of regional and global challenges.

In this introductory chapter, we argue that Russia's role in the changing international system as well as its main motives and instruments in its regional and global engagements should be evaluated in accordance with its multiple actorness in the international system, its distinct interpretation of the international order and its mixed approach to multilateralism. It is clear that Russia's reading of the present world order differs significantly from the interpretation of its Western counterparts. In fact, the Russian vision of world politics is far from being "Western" at the normative level, since it does not act as a "norm taker" in the current international structure and rather tends to impose its own norms by challenging the norm diffusion strategies initiated by the Western powers. Against this background, it is important to grasp how Russia's "illiberal" approach to the international order shapes its foreign policy outcomes as well as its problematic relations with the West.

Russia's Multiple Actorness in the Changing International System

Russia is traditionally regarded as a great power in the IR literature due to its large geographical size, rich energy resources, advanced nuclear capabilities and permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council

(UNSC). These capabilities enable Russia to project significant geopolitical influence in various regions including Eastern Europe, Asia-Pacific, Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia. Yet, it should be recalled that Russia has been struggling with major economic and social problems. Its population has been in decline since the collapse of the Soviet Union, while its economic indicators have been deteriorating due to the fluctuating energy prices as well as the ongoing Western economic sanctions. This has urged Russia to associate itself in a more visible way with groupings such as BRICS and SCO, through which it has successfully developed stronger political and economic links with rising powers such as China and India.

At the same time, however, Russia itself can be viewed as a rising power, since it has some significant similarities with other rising powers in terms of its positional, behavioural and functional power. More importantly, it shares a strong ideological affinity with other rising powers in terms of challenging the Western supremacy in international relations and strives to create an alternative to the Western-dominated world order (Oğuzlu and Parlar Dal 2013). Moscow also tries to use its strategic realignment with the rising powers to advance its influence in global and regional politics.

In short, Russia can be defined as a "multifaceted actor" that is capable of playing different roles depending on the context as well as the changing global and regional circumstances. Yet, it should be noted that Russia's adaptation to post-bipolar world order has not been without tensions, as it has pursued different status policies at two different fronts. On the one hand, it has sought to maintain its great power status despite the domestic political, economic and social difficulties it has encountered since the early 1990s. Its military involvement in the disputes in Georgia and Ukraine, in particular, proves that Russia pursues policies that aim to challenge the existing rules and norms of the international order. On the other hand, Moscow has striven to upgrade its status in the hierarchy of states and chosen to act as a rising power in the multipolar international system—in a very similar way with other rising powers like China, India and Brazil.

It can be claimed that this duality of roles in the international system gives significant leverage to Russia in global governance as it is able to pursue different policies depending on the type of its actorness. For instance, in the field of security governance, Russia prefers to act more like a great power, while in economic governance or in other global governance issue areas, it acts as a rising power that holds limited power capacity in both material and ideational terms compared with other great powers—particularly the US.

Russia's evolving relationship with China is especially important in terms of understanding the contradictions between its roles as a great power and a rising power (Charap et al. 2017). Compared with China, Russia has limited capacity to expand its influence outside its borders mainly due to its relatively weak trading state posture as well as the lack of adequate resources in financing and infrastructure investments in extra regional geographies. For instance, China's influence in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and the Persian Gulf is much more prominent than the Russian influence. Partly due to this factor, Russia seems to have been following a two-layered policy towards China that is simultaneously based on cooperation and rivalry (Kaczmarski 2015). Moscow and Beijing pursue similar status-seeking strategies in international institutions like BRICS, G20 and SCO, while Central Asia, for instance, is perceived as a theatre of great power competition by the Russian leaders where China is treated more like a rival than a partner. Still, it should be noted that the Russian strategy towards China is not in the form of direct confrontation, and Moscow seeks more advantageous terms of cooperation with China in regional and global politics. In short, it can be argued that Moscow follows a highly pragmatic and multi-approach policy towards China.

Encountering the Liberal International Order: The Russian Way

A second question that needs to be addressed is what kind of an international order Russia hopes to preserve in the post–Cold War period. Answers to this question, however, vary depending on the four key features of Russia's interpretation of the existing international order.

(a) Normativeness: The normative dimension of Russia's understanding of the international order can be regarded as a reaction to the Western rules and norms about international law. Yet, it should be mentioned that Russia does not propose a concrete alternative to the West in this sphere. It rather prefers to advocate a flux model of normative order which it claims to be more comprehensive and fairer than the Western model (Romanova 2018). For instance, Moscow rejects the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and views this doctrine against the principles of state sovereignty and non-intervention (Averre and Davies 2015). In a similar

way, it does not view the norms that are related with human rights and liberal democracy as supreme. Thus, Russia's normativeness is actually quite thin, communitarian and limited.

(b) Emphasis on sovereignty: State sovereignty is a key principle in Russia's understanding of the international order which means that no state is permitted to intervene in the internal affairs of another state with the claim that basic human rights are violated by national governments. In this sense, Russia views the R2P doctrine as a pretext of the Western powers to achieve regime change in other countries by the use of military force. It should also be noted that Russia's dedication to the principle of sovereignty and non-intervention in this regard is quite similar with the approach of other rising powers.

(c) Revisionism: Russia constantly demands the revision of the international order in accordance with the principles of justice, fairness and equality. In Georgia and Ukraine, this has even resulted in direct military intervention which has been defended by President Putin on the grounds of challenging the US-led international order. Revisionism in this regard is a key element of the Russian leadership's populist discourse regarding international relations (Allison 2017). However, it should be emphasized that Russia's revisionism is not full-fledged, but partial (Clunan 2018). This means that Moscow does not seek to re-establish a brand new international order on the ruins of the existing order and rather aims to preserve some of the traditional principles (e.g. balance of power and sphere of influences) of the existing order that serve the Russian interests.

(d) Multilateralism: Russian discourse about the international order strongly advocates multi-purposed and multi-regional cooperation within the framework of international institutions in specific issue areas such as climate change, international trade, conflict management and economic governance. On the other hand, its permanent membership in the UNSC gives Russia significant leverage in the field of international security and conflict management. It should also be remembered that Moscow has underlined in various occasions that it rejects the unilateral actions of the Western powers.

An important dimension of Russia's understanding of the international order is related with how the Russian leadership perceives its relations with the US. Especially in the Caucasus and Middle East, Russia has gradually expanded its influence vis-à-vis the West in the past decade and become

much more engaged in the reshaping of the international order in line with its own national interests. It can even be argued in this regard that Russia seeks to benefit from the lack of a clear US strategy in the Trump era and exploit the tensions among NATO members over issues like defence spending and nuclear disarmament. Russia sees the liberal values promoted by the Western countries as functional instruments of interventionism that have been frequently employed in the name of democracy against other countries (Clunan 2018; Holm and Tjalve 2018).

In this sense, the Russian leaders argue that the international order does not necessarily need to be liberal. Yet, this is not very surprising when one considers the evolution of the Russian regime in the 2000s as well as the identity, ideology and foreign policy preferences that have defined Putin's Russia (Pieper 2019; Götz and Merlen 2019; Clunan 2018). The rise of "competitive authoritarianism" which is used by scholars to define the populist and nationalist governments around the world also makes it easy for Russia to challenge the liberal values of the West and advocate illiberal strategies in both the domestic and international spheres (Levitsky and Way 2010). The illiberal turn in some of the countries of Eastern Europe in particular seems to have strengthened Moscow's claim that the international order does not need to be exclusively liberal.

It is also not surprising to view that the Russian leadership has been long advocating the continuity of a "multipolar world order" in which Russia holds a "special" role as a great power—a perception that is inherited from the Cold War period. It can be argued that the existence of multiple power poles in the international system provides additional leverage to the Kremlin which places Russia higher than the other rising powers in the hierarchy of states in the international system. This leverage has been positively welcomed and actively used by the Russian leaders in their diplomatic dealings with other countries and institutions around the world.

There is still no consensus among the Western analysts whether Russia maintains its status as a great power and a counterbalance to the US in the international order. Despite its serious economic weaknesses, its impressive military potential and diplomatic influence nevertheless enable Moscow to play the role of a hegemon in specific regions. Russia actively uses its deepening political and economic partnership with China to protect this image. Yet, it should be underlined that the Russian perceptions about a rising China are somewhat unpredictable (Parlar Dal 2019). The gradual decline in the US hegemony and growth of China's material and soft power at the global level may currently seem to be working to Russia's

favour in terms of challenging the West in global politics. However, the Russian leaders must seriously take into consideration the rise of China while reshaping their policies, as Russia can easily be perceived as China's "junior partner" in the longer term considering the significant asymmetry of economic power between the two states.

Russia's In-Between Role in Multilateralism

In the current age of multilateralism, Russia seems to have been pursuing a balanced and pragmatic strategy vis-a-vis the other rising powers as well as the West (Macfarlane 2006). Its prudent approach towards China's expansion of power on the global scale and its emphasis on cooperation rather than competition in its relations with China also justify its strong attachment to multilateralism at both the policy level and institutional level (Charap et al. 2017). Russia's institutionalism is also diverse and multidimensional. Its membership in both major global governance institutions and regional and/or informal institutions is a clear evidence of its twofold global governance strategy between the Global North and the Global South. This also illustrates that Russia tries to establish a delicate balance between its rising power status and great power status. Here, it should be underlined that this duality of roles strengthens Russia's hand in many issue areas including security and climate change. In short, remaining in this grey area enables Russia to preserve its distinct and in-between approach regarding multilateralism.

Russia is also a champion of socialization in the international institutions where it has a membership. The Russian leaders frequently express their interest in active cooperation with other actors in the international institutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018). In Russia's view, the current international order is not based on multilateralism, but a nuanced unilateralism. In this regard, Moscow believes the US dominance in major international organizations and the unilateral US actions in the international system must be balanced by the increasing contribution of other states in the global governance structures.

However, it should be emphasized that Russia seems to prefer a loose multilateral system rather than a stronger one. It also tends to strike a delicate balance between multilateralism and bilateralism in its foreign policy. In addition, the Russian view of multilateralism is pluralist rather than solidarist. Its reticence in supporting the demands of rising powers like Brazil and India for reform in the UNSC is a clear illustration of its nuanced

approach to multilateralism, which seems to be favouring status quo rather than genuine change in the international system. On the other hand, Russia is not among the countries with the highest financial contribution to UN and its agencies, while its military and ideational contribution to the UN is also remarkably weak—particularly when one considers Moscow's strong rhetorical support to multilateral institutions. Against this background, it can actually be argued that Russia is still a fragile actor in multilateralism due to the large gap between its motivations and its de facto contribution to global governance.

Outline of the Chapters

The chapters of this volume seek to examine Russia's role, position and policies in the changing international order and global governance architecture. In his chapter (Chap. 2), Richard Sakwa argues that after a quarter century of stasis, the pattern of world order is changing and the inter-cold war period of the cold peace is giving way not to a thaw, but to the re-entrenchment of bipolar confrontation between the expansive liberal international order and the resistance of a group of states including Russia. In his view, like the First Cold War, the second is also about the conflicting views of world order as the US-led liberal international order is challenged by the emergence of a putative anti-hegemonic alignment between Russia, China and their allies in the emerging alternative architecture of world affairs. Therefore, the clash between Russia and the West is only an early version of the challenges against the long-term stasis in international affairs. Sakwa concludes that although the sinews of a post-Western world are emerging, it remains to be seen whether bodies like the SCO or BRICS will be able to sustain the multilateralism of the last seven decades in the absence of the hegemon that had provided the security and support for such multilateralism to thrive.

Andrey Makarychev elaborates on Russia's European policies and argues that despite the current conflicts between Russia and the EU, the latter remains a key reference point in a plethora of Russian discourses that are Europe-centric in the sense of playing with different arguments aimed at vindicating Russia's belonging to Europe through loosely defined history, geography and culture, but also through accentuating Russia's military presence and ability to interfere in European domestic processes. The chapter traces the trajectory of Russia's EU policies since the beginning of the 1990s until the present, compares Russian and European approaches

to international relations and discusses Russia's rhetorical manoeuvring under the conditions of drastic deterioration of relations with the West after 2014. Makarychev additionally focuses on Russia's policies towards the EU from the viewpoint of broader debates on post-liberal international order and shares some critical insights on the state of communication between Russia and Europe.

In Chap. 4, Jeanne L. Wilson discusses the goals and motivations of Russia as a regional actor and argues that under the presidency of Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s, Russia neither possessed the will nor the capability to assume a dominant role in its relations with its neighbours, while Vladimir Putin came to office with the goal of reversing the decline in Russia's presence in the post-Soviet space. Putin's new foreign policy has included various efforts to project Russian influence in the post-Soviet space through the establishment or strengthening of regional structures: CSTO, SCO and EAEU. The chapter argues that Putin's efforts simultaneously serve as a means of redesigning the role of Russia as the hegemonic leader of a regional bloc which is a role that validates Moscow's claim to be a great power. These efforts, however, have been challenged by a number of factors which include the regional and global implications of Russia's annexation of Crimea as well as the Russian leadership's increasing tendency to conceive of Eurasian integration as a civilizational project.

In his chapter that focuses on the EAEU, Alexander Libman argues that this organization has become a major topic for discussions about Russia's attempts to resurge as a regional and even a global power as well as the subject of major controversy. However, in the political and scholarly discourse about the EAEU, there exist multiple and partly overlapping images of this organization. The chapter reviews the perceptions of the EAEU in Eurasia and beyond, arguing that both the Russian and international observers share an important common feature in their view of the EAEU: the focus on the geopolitical role of the organization and in particular its alleged ability to enhance Russia's influence in the global arena. Libman indicates, however, that the research on the EAEU faces an important problem: the institutional design of this regional organization does not seem to be particularly suitable to promote the Russian hegemony.

Marcin Kaczmarski elaborates on Russia's relations with China and argues that there is some kind of an informal division of labour between these two countries in the current global governance architecture. Russia remains active in the realm of international security governance, whereas China has increased the level of its participation in areas of economic,

financial and environmental governance. These differences are ascribed to the different potential of both states as well as their related varied scope of interests in a well-functioning global governance system. However, Kaczmarski argues that this division of labour has evolved in the last couple of years. Beijing has increased its engagement with international security governance, while Moscow has lost some of its (already limited) interest in such areas as environmental or economic governance. The chapter aims at exploring this shift and its implications. Rather than analysing Sino-Russian relations in distinct areas of global governance, it proposes a different approach and identifies three patterns of interactions between the two countries: direct cooperation, parallel activities and contradictory/divergent activities.

Taking a geopolitical economic perspective, Emre İşeri and Volkan Özdemir argue that at a time of critical geopolitical economic changes (i.e. power shifts and volatile energy prices), Russia has been pursuing different foreign policy lines on the two sides of the Eurasian landmass. On the one hand, it has been intensifying its economic ties with Asia-Pacific, particularly with China. On the other hand, it has been pursuing an assertive policy against the interests of the Western powers (e.g. in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria). How do these geopolitical changes interact with Russia's different foreign policy orientations as an aspiring great power and an energy giant? To answer this question, the chapter adopts a neoclassical realist approach to argue that at a time of profound global changes, the geopolitical economic perceptions of the Russian elites regarding their resource-rent based country's role in the Eurasian landmass have created such a duality in its foreign policy. The authors conclude that the Russian elites' sense of geopolitical exposure and economic policy preferences have not only prompted this discrepancy in Russian foreign policy but also undermined Russia's great power prospects in the twenty-first century.

In his chapter that focuses on Russia's policies towards BRICS, Alexander Sergunin argues that Russia's approach about this grouping represents a combination of ideational and material motives. On the one hand, BRICS is important for Moscow in terms of enhancing its status in international relations. On the other hand, the Kremlin prioritizes its economic and strategic partnership with the BRICS countries, since they are important for Russia's wellbeing and sustainable development as well as its efforts for counter-balancing the West in the global geoeconomic and geopolitical arena. For Sergunin, Russia's active participation in BRICS indicates that Moscow prefers to redesign its foreign policy in a way to support and fur-

ther develop international norms, rules and institutions as well as non-coercive and soft power methods. The BRICS framework in this regard provides Moscow with not only additional authority in the world community but also legitimacy to its international activities. All these factors explain why the Kremlin attaches great importance to the BRICS and why strengthening BRICS and its role in global politics is viewed in Moscow as a basis for solidifying Russia's political and economic position in the international arena.

The chapter by Sergii V. Glebov (Chap. 9) aims to evaluate the regional and global impacts of the conflict in Ukraine in relation with the challenges posed by Russia to the security of the Euro-Atlantic community. Relations between Russia and the Western countries are currently going through a period of a clash of principles and interests at all the systemic levels, which has turned into an asymmetric conflict since 2014. Some analysts even claim that a "New Cold War" has emerged between Russia and the West. Yet, for Glebov, the risk of such a new Cold War directly affects the sustainability of the Trans-Atlantic security architecture especially in light of Moscow's efforts to preserve the post-Soviet space as an area of geopolitical turmoil and a target of its aggression and domination. The author argues that by punishing Ukraine for its Western aspirations, Moscow openly expressed its geopolitical will to become a global—although an isolated and hybrid—superpower. In this respect, it should be indicated that Russia continues to portray the West as a "wicked scarecrow" in order to hide its own imperial designs.

Regina Heller argues that the hard power policy of Russia towards Ukraine since 2014 is not only about projecting its regional power but also about reclaiming a principal rank in the social order of the international community in the twenty-first century. This assumption is based on two main observations: (a) Russia has actually been losing its influence over Ukraine as well as the former Soviet space due to its coercive policies to maintain its control over Ukraine, and (b) while Russia has discursively placed the Ukraine issue in the context of global power shifts and renegotiation of the world order and defended traditional international relations principles such as state sovereignty and non-intervention, it has actually neglected the same principles in Ukraine. The chapter argues in this regard that the Russian policy towards Ukraine is closely related with the efforts of the Russian elites in order to deal with their unresolved anger over earlier negative experiences of status deprivation in their relations with the West.

In their chapter (Chap. 11), Victor Jeifets and Nikolay Dobronravin highlight the main dynamics that shape Russia's policy towards aspiring political movements and unrecognized states. Moscow's attitude towards these actors has been traditionally determined by its foreign policy paradigm which favours establishing official links only with sovereign and recognized states. This attitude was quite noticeable even during the Soviet era when Moscow supported the idea of a world revolution and Soviet foreign policy was officially coordinated with the activities of the Communist International all around the world. Between 1991 and 2008, the leadership of the Russian Federation also continued this policy. Yet, Russia's attitude started to change when Kosovo's independence was recognized by many Western states, which has also been one of the main reasons prompting Moscow to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia following the Russian-Georgian war. The authors argue in this regard that since 2008, Russia's policy has gradually drifted towards a wider recognition of the de facto states and aspiring political movements around the world.

In his chapter (Chap. 12), Philipp Casula investigates Russia's foreign policy along with three key types of power that modernity has produced—sovereignty, reason of state and biopolitics—highlighting how their respective instruments are fielded by Russia's current regime. In this sense, his analysis is different from many Western observers who have been quick to declare "a new Cold War" with Russia or to point at the inherently autocratic character of the Russian regime in order to explain the motivations behind Moscow's annexation of Crimea and its military intervention in Syria. The chapter does not simply seek to explain the reasons underlying Russia's foreign policy conduct, but rather aims to analyse its formal mechanisms, which often resemble those of other modern great powers. Casula argues that Russia's military interventions in Crimea and Syria do not represent a break with the previously professed principles of Russian foreign policy. Rather, Russia has adopted the entire repertoire of devices, means or mechanisms available to modern states: all the tools of sovereignty, reason of state and biopolitics remain present both in domestic and foreign policy.

In the final chapter of the volume (Chap. 13), Alexey Khlebnikov focuses on the Middle East and claims that the region has never been a priority area for Russian foreign policy, although in the last few years Moscow visibly boosted its ambitions and enhanced its influence there. The chapter argues that the current Russian leadership is guided by two

major factors in the Middle East: (a) security concerns (terrorist threats and destabilization of fragile states) and, (b) economic opportunities (energy, arms sales, etc.) which accompany the improvement of political ties. Furthermore, Moscow's more ambitious policy towards the Middle East can be explained not only by its overall strategy to increase its regional influence, but also by the foreign policy opportunities that are created by the gradual retreat of the US from the region. Thus, for Khlebnikov, Moscow's Middle East policy is basically shaped by the US actions and decisions with regard to this region. As Russia lacks the resources to constantly support its presence in the Middle East and the Russian leaders are well aware of such limitations, the Kremlin pursues a policy which seeks to limit the risks and loss of investments in this region.

In Lieu of Conclusion

Whether Russia should be regarded as a great power or a rising power depends on the perspective through which one looks at the Russian foreign policy. The main motives and policies of Russia as well as the degree of its activism show a striking change depending on the issue Moscow deals with. In various global governance issue areas such as environment, climate change, health and development, Russia engages with the international system in a similar way with the other rising powers. On the other hand, its permanent membership at UNSC and its actorness in the security sphere, which has largely been constructed during the Cold War era, make Russia an indispensable actor for global security governance. In this sense, as also discussed in many chapters of this volume, Russia can be defined as a "hybrid actor" in terms of its identity and role as well as its material and ideational power. At the same time, however, the pursuit of different types of relations with multiple state and non-state actors makes Russia a "complex actor" that needs to be further analysed at the domestic, regional and global levels.

As the chapters of the volume suggest, the gap between motivation and action is very significant in the Russian case and this gap has a large impact on Russia's policies in the global governance architecture. Its economic weaknesses as well as its illiberal policies both at home and abroad turn Russia into a fragile state at the international level (Johnson and Köstem 2016). This also prompts the Russian leaders to pursue status-seeking policies in multiple international organizations and forums. On the other hand, its quest for a higher status in the international system makes Russia

a revisionist power in its immediate neighbourhood. Russia's annexation of Crimea and military involvement in Syria clearly demonstrate the pursuit of a "grandeur policy" in this regard.

Yet, as indicated by the developments in the Middle East, despite its bold ambitions, Russia possesses a limited military and diplomatic power capacity to decisively shape the course of events in the Syrian crisis. In fact, the Syrian issue has demonstrated Russia's limitations in regional security governance and put the Russian efforts into test regarding the new order that is taking shape in the Middle East. On the other hand, whether its involvement in the Syrian civil war has really enabled Russia to upgrade its status in the international system still remains an open question (Pieper 2019).

In short, its nuanced understanding of the liberal world order and multilateralism showcase the dual nature of Russia's role in world politics. Russian foreign policy in this sense is often in contradiction with the liberal principles of the Western foreign policy at the normative level. In this era of post-hegemonic world order, which has been marked by continuous power shifts from the Global North to the Global South, Russian efforts to create "safe and peaceful" regional orders clearly show the extent to which Moscow has been pursuing revisionist foreign policy ambitions.

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