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## **EVOLUTION OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF RUSSIAN STANCE TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS**

### **Introduction**

Conflict is usually considered both a basis of interaction and an evil that must be eradicated. One way or another its existence educes a need of rules to cooperate and solutions to overcome. Nowadays there is a pronounced tendency of internationalization of civil and domestic conflicts and reduce of classic interstate conflicts number. Global interdependence makes local problems and crisis influence regional and international security, as well as other states, international institutes and non-governmental actors interfere in them.

The problem of international conflict directly includes its settlement and peace-keeping aspects as well as general issues of local, regional and international security, international legal regulation and its effectiveness, international world order, mechanisms of decision-making, because they affect both conflict and international community. This is why conceptual framework of Russian stance towards international conflicts must be investigated within a context of its approaches to the full range of issues connected to the phenomenon.

International security is a condition that the global community strives to, and conflicts resolution is one of the elements on this way. World order is considered because it defines who resolves conflicts, and the position Russia has in it determines its role in resolution. Decision-making process is a direct mechanism of the way conflict settlement and resolution are implemented and conflict parties and

concerned parties involvement. International law provides rules and order of certain processes. Most of international law fundamental principles (such as non-interference, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, non-use of force, international disputes settlement by peaceful means) explicitly affect conflicts and their management. The ways Russia interprets and launches its approaches to these key elements, documents them in its Concepts of its foreign policy make the stance towards international conflicts.

Moreover, guidelines of Russian foreign policy are maintained from a point of its national interests, means it has and a role it plays in the world. First, Russia forges its stance towards international conflicts as a response to challenges from outside and to promote its national security as there are numerous conflicts close or relatively close to its borders. Second, being the UN Security Council permanent member Russia cannot abstain from conflict settlement and management due to the process of this institution functioning. Third, peace-keeping promotes Russia's integration to the global community and increase of its prestige, that is why it is one of Russia's most significant directions of the foreign policy.

The paper notes key features of Russian Foreign Policy Concepts evolution from a point of its stance towards international conflicts. First, the evolution is revealed through a historic review of Russian the Federation's foreign policy and significant conceptional decisions and principles marked by Russian authorities. A content analysis of Concepts dated on 2000, 2008 and 2013 is used. Issues of peacekeeping, aspects of international security, international legal regulation processes, world order formation peculiarities, collective decision-making.

### **Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy Conceptual Framework**

Each state foreign policy conceptual foundation defines its general line in international relations, its actions and principles concerning certain issues. Ever since Russia has become a legal successor to the USSR its foreign policy was being shaped according to conditions of Russian statehood development, political

reformation, new political elite generation, range of internal problems, shifting system of international relations and geopolitical status changing. Russia had a list of certain gained advantages due to the fact that it stepped into the world arena already having centuries-long foreign policy making experience, a network of sustainable multilateral and bilateral contacts, traditions of Russian and Soviet diplomacy<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, after the Cold War ending and the USSR collapse Russia also faced huge losses such as sphere of geopolitical influence decrease whilst the very country became potentially vulnerable because of ethnic conflicts at its territory and close to its borders. Among the most significant losses are more than 5 million km<sup>2</sup> of the territory, outlets to the warm seas, direct ground outlets to Central and Eastern Europe, incomplete borders, millions of Russian speakers beyond them<sup>2</sup>. Many political and territorial entities within the federation imperiled Russian geopolitical integrity. After the USSR collapse the ideological vacuum was filled with ethnic nationalism<sup>3</sup>. Besides, in spite of the fact that Russia had preserved the nuclear power status, the UN Security Council permanent membership and certain influence on some political processes Russia's international perspective was still unclear.

At the very first stages of its statehood and nation building Russian authorities had to define national interests and foreign policy goals that could promote its inner needs implementation and development. Hereinafter the term “national

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<sup>1</sup> Иванов И.С. Новая российская дипломатия. Десять лет внешней политики страны. – М. 2001. С.10 [Ivanov I. A Decade of Russian Foreign Policy] (In Russian)

<sup>2</sup> Маруев А.Ю. Геополитический статус и геостратегия России в современных условиях // Вестник Академии военных наук. 2009. №1. С.27 [Maruyev A. Geopolitical Status and Geostrategy of Russia in Contemporary World] (In Russian)

<sup>3</sup> Menon R. After Empire: Russia and the Southern «Near Abroad» / The New Russian Foreign Policy. – New York. 1998. P.108.

interests” means a complex of inner and external needs of state in promoting its security and sustainable development of individual, society and state.

National security provision and making of supportive external environment are the most significant parts of national interests system<sup>4</sup>. According to the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020 the term “national security” means a condition of protection from any internal or external threats of individual, society and the state that can promote constitutional rights and freedoms, dignified conditions for life, sovereignty, territorial integrity and sustainable development of the Russian Federation, its defense and safety<sup>5</sup>. Globally speaking, national security includes national survival, prosperity, welfare and development<sup>6</sup>.

On the threshold of the new post-Cold War era Russia also had to choose the direction to follow, to choose the main vectors of its foreign policy. In spite of the variety of these directions most of them rely on the search of Russian identity and its position in contemporary world order. Their common denominator is Russian attitude to the West.

Practically, Russia took several paths in its foreign policy. For instance, its first minister of foreign affairs Andrey Kozyrev started its external political history from choosing atlanticism as the main direction. According to his plan Russia was to abandon anything sovietic and communistic, leaving political competition and

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<sup>4</sup> Арбатова Н.К. Национальные интересы и внешняя политика России: европейское направление (1991-1999). Диссертация на соискание ученой степени доктора политических наук. – М. 2003. С.17 [Arbatova N. National Interests and Foreign Policy of Russia: the European Vector 1991-1999] (In Russian)

<sup>5</sup> Стратегия национальной безопасности Российской Федерации до 2020 года. Утверждена Указом Президента Российской Федерации от 12 мая 2009 года №537 [The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020] (In Russian). Available at: <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2009/05/216229.shtml>. (accessed 10.04.2016)

<sup>6</sup> Радиков И.В. Национальная безопасность как главный национальный проект России: типичные проблемы реализации // ПОЛИТЭК. 2007. №1 URL: <http://www.politex.info/content/view/327/30/>. [Radikov I. National Security as the Main Russian Project: typical problems of implementation] (In Russian)

rivalry in the past and integration to the western community. Moscow started to focus on NATO and other transatlantic structures accession. In this manner Russian president Boris Eltsin called the USA and other western states not just partners but allies at the session of the UN Security Council in 1992<sup>7</sup>. From this moment Russian authorities started to work out a legal platform of its foreign policy. As a result a new document named “Conceptual Issues of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation” was represented and approved in April 1993. This first Russian foreign policy concept was focused on implementation of exclusively internal needs, national interests were targeted on territorial integrity, stability of the state and did not address to the world<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, it was well balanced and thought-out from a point of the state that was just starting its new political chapter of history and facing lots of inner problems<sup>9</sup>. However the Concept did not impede the foreign minister to concentrate Russian foreign policy in his hands and to implement the ideas of atlanticism due to the fact that the machine of the government was still immature and the level of coordination in foreign affairs was low.

Soon, the chosen path turned out to be not proving its value (at least at that moment). Kozyrev had counted that the USA and the West would accept Russia as an equal partner, but they didn't as considered it weak and perceived it just as a minor partner. Moscow felt no one wants to consider its opinion on key international problems, and it was inadmissible for the state with more than

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<sup>7</sup> Security Council. Provisional Verbatim Record of 3046 Meeting 31 January 1992. S/PV.3046 Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N92/601/98/PDF/N9260198.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed 14.04.2016)

<sup>8</sup> Aron L. The Foreign Policy Doctrine of Post-Communist Russia and its Domestic Context / The New Russian Foreign Policy. – New York. 1998. P.26.

<sup>9</sup> Пляйс Я. Теория и практика внешней политики современной России // Обозреватель. 1997. №10 [Plyays Y. Theory and Practice of Russian Foreign Policy] (In Russian)

millennial history. However the West itself welcomed this Russian choice and its initial Euro-Atlantic orientation<sup>10</sup>.

President Boris Eltsin declared a new approach in his address to the Federal Assembly in February 1994. According to this approach the CIS states were proclaimed the focal area of Russian foreign policy. Besides, the president considered the importance of the UN fortification and formally announced that Russia disputed NATO enlargement without it. He also noted that Russia was set to continue playing one of the key roles in a process of crisis resolution in Former Yugoslavia using exclusively diplomatic means such as pushing the parties to peace through a special role of the UN Security Council<sup>11</sup>. Thus, Moscow started to make political stances differing from acceptable for the West ones.

Eugene Primakov became the next foreign minister in 1996. He was famous for his tough and pragmatic approach to Russian foreign policy. It was obvious, that Primakov's methods were made within a framework of the "multipolar alternativeness" concept. It was him who made the first steps to coordinate different political directions of the state in the sphere of its national security<sup>12</sup>. During the period Primakov was a head of the ministry of foreign affairs Russian policy was becoming multidimensional, its involvement to the processes of international conflict settlement as a mediator was extending, they counted on balance of power regional systems, and finally, Russia started the search of its position in the world order as a power. Primakov chose some middle path that differed both from radical atlanticism and nationalist isolationism against the West.

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<sup>10</sup> Blacker C.D. Russia and the West / The New Russian Foreign Policy. – New York. 1998. P.191.

<sup>11</sup> Послание Президента Российской Федерации Федеральному Собранию. Об укреплении российского государства (Основные направления внутренней и внешней политики) 24 февраля 1994 года [President's Eltsin Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation 24 February 1994] (In Russian) Available at: URL: <http://base.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc;base=EXP;n=417720;fld=134;dst=4294967295;rnd=0.8088934997732244> (accessed 14.04.2016)

<sup>12</sup> Арбатов А. Безопасность: российский выбор. – М. 1999. С. 96. [Arbatov A. Security: Russian Choice] (In Russian)

Frankly speaking, such a policy of alternatives was quite difficult to implement as the body-politic was guided by radical anti-Americanism that period<sup>13</sup>. By the way the chosen strategy was bearing its fruits as Russia was gradually turning to a center of attraction for countries that hadn't got along with the USA, from Bosnian Serbs to Iranians<sup>14</sup>. Thus, impact on situation in conflict areas could promote Russia's activation in the global order.

The next significant statement was made by president Eltsin in his address to the Federal Assembly in 1997. He stated about unacceptability of unipolar world order. Thus, the stance of Russia regarding it was officially declared for the first time and it also detected the key difference in the approaches of Washington and Moscow. However, it was asserted that Russia must advocate its national interests without confrontation fortifying stability and cooperation in international relations, and the universal community should lean on military force less instead of this preferring power of law<sup>15</sup>.

After a new foreign minister Igor Ivanov entered the cabinet in 1998 and a new president Vladimir Putin replaced Boris Yeltsin in 2000 a Concept of foreign policy was to be brought up to date due to serious changes in Russia and in the world in general.

A new document was created within a principle of continuity to the previous one accepted in 1993 as it summarized the political experience of the past years, but it had a list of key innovations as well. First of all, the Concept was focused on

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<sup>13</sup> Fawn R. Realignment in Russian Foreign Policy. – London. 2003. P.15-16.

<sup>14</sup> Пушков А. От «доктрины Козырева» - к «доктрине Примакова» // Независимая газета. 24 октября. 1997 [Poushkov A. From Kozyrev's Doctrine to Primakov's Doctrine] (In Russian).

<sup>15</sup> К активной внешней политике и эффективной военной реформе / Послание Президента Российской Федерации Федеральному Собранию. Порядок во власти - порядок в стране (о положении в стране и основных направлениях политики Российской Федерации) 6 марта 1997 года [Moving to Active Foreign Policy and Effective Military Reform. President's Address to the Federal Assembly 6 March 1997] (In Russian) Available at: <http://zakonprost.ru/content/base/27025/pdf> (accessed 15.04.2016).

external policy for internal needs<sup>16</sup>. Henceforth the interests of individual, society and the state were the top priority of Russian foreign policy. Besides, Russia's adherence to multipolar world order was documented. It was stated that multipolar international system correlated to Russian national interests, reflected the diversity of contemporary world, promoted mutual consideration of interests and elaboration of fair mechanism of collective decision-making, assisted international security consolidation, coincided with global community concerns. It was underlined, that Russian policy must be balanced, predictable, consistent and targeted on consolidation of its position on the world arena. Meanwhile, it was also stated that Moscow's count on making equitable relations with the surrounding community had not been justified<sup>17</sup>. It is obvious that this assertion meant unsuccessful attempts of Russia's integration into the western world as an equal partner and further NATO's refusal to take Kremlin's stance on international affairs and Russian national interests into account.

The following negative trends that Russia would confront were specially documented in the text of the Concept-2000:

- efforts to diminish the role of the UN Security Council;
- strategy of unilateral actions of the western institutes to resolve key issues of international security;
- usage of power methods passing by existing international law mechanisms and without the UN Security Council resolutions;

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<sup>16</sup> Клепацкий Л. Ориентиры внешней политики России // Обозреватель. 2001. №9 URL: [http://www.rau.su/observer/N9\\_01/9\\_08.htm](http://www.rau.su/observer/N9_01/9_08.htm) [Klepatsky L. Russian Foreign Policy Guidelines] (In Russian).

<sup>17</sup> Foreign Policy Concept of The Russian Federation. Approved by the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin June 28, 2000 Available at: <http://archive.mid.ru/Bl.nsf/arh/1EC8DC08180306614325699C003B5FF0?OpenDocument> (accessed 12.04.2016).



- attempts to distort essence of state sovereignty in order to interfere in domestic affairs and practical usage of force on the ground of “humanitarian intervention” and “limited sovereignty” concepts;
- unsolved and frozen regional and local conflicts;
- divergence of political and military NATO’s goals with Russian national security interests including its expansion to the East and military operations out of Washington Treaty effect framework<sup>18</sup>.

According to the existence of these trends and threats the fundamental principles and goals of Russian foreign policy were documented as the following:

- consolidation of Russian position in the world;
- making equitable partnership relations with the world;
- steadfast implementation of the international law fundamental principles;
- rational reforming of the UN in order to develop its mechanisms of immediate reaction to crisis;
- increase of the UN Security Council effectiveness and universal recognition of its exclusive right to authorize use of force;
- preserving the UN role of international relations central regulator;
- force factor impact reduction;
- international peace-keeping legal platform consolidation;
- active involvement of Russia into peace-keeping operations;
- getting over the difficulties in Russian-American relations within mutual respect of national interests and in order to consolidate international security<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Foreign Policy Concept of The Russian Federation. Approved by the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin June 28, 2000 Available at: <http://archive.mid.ru/Bl.nsf/arh/1EC8DC08180306614325699C003B5FF0?OpenDocument> (accessed 12.04.2016).

It is important to note, that these principles were documented in the Concept-2000 for the first time and it was not accidental. Most of them became responses to the armed NATO intervention in Kosovo conflict in 1999. It is obvious, that it had become a milestone for Russian authorities for starting reconsideration of the fundamental principles of Russian foreign policy. Moscow's diplomacy had shown tendency to protect international law pillars before, but it had gained its full extent by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and had become a notable counterbalance to the attempts of making unilateral decisions of global importance<sup>20</sup>.

At the beginning of Putin's presidency his foreign policy was usually characterized as more pragmatic and less emotional than the policy of his predecessor. It was determined and conditioned by not always substantiate aspiration to restore the status of a global scale power without considering the realities inside the state<sup>21</sup>. Nevertheless, the quality of Russian diplomatic activity was improving, and the economic upturn explained by price increase for energy supplies had built up the home front of Russian diplomacy<sup>22</sup>.

Sometimes Putin's foreign policy general line was called "a doctrine of Russian international influence adjustment in accordance with its economic power"<sup>23</sup>. It

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<sup>19</sup> Foreign Policy Concept of The Russian Federation. Approved by the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin June 28, 2000 Available at: <http://archive.mid.ru/Bl.nsf/arh/1EC8DC08180306614325699C003B5FF0?OpenDocument> (accessed 12.04.2016).

<sup>20</sup> Громыко Анат.А. Мировой порядок или правопорядок // Международная жизнь. 2012. №3 URL: <http://interaffairs.ru/author.php?n=arpg&pg=627> [Gromyko Anat. World Order or Law] (In Russian).

<sup>21</sup> Пархалина Т.Г. Внешняя политика России при Путине. Отношения Россия — Западная Европа // Актуальные проблемы Европы. 2002. №1. С.90 [Parkhalina T. Putin's Russian Foreign Policy. Russia and the Western Europe Relations] (In Russian)

<sup>22</sup> Конопатов С. Россия в современной системе международных отношений // Обозреватель-Observer. 2007. №2. С.17 [Konopatov S. Russian in Contemporary System of International Relations] (In Russian).

<sup>23</sup> Богатуров А. Три поколения внешнеполитических доктрин России // Международные процессы. 2007. №1(13) [Bogatourov A. The Generations of Russian Foreign Policy Doctrines] (In Russian) Available at: <http://www.intertrends.ru/thirteen/005.htm> (accessed: 12.04.2016).

is also interesting, that former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt called Russia a great power equal to China and the USA and he expected that Moscow would keep this status for decades<sup>24</sup>. It is obvious, that such an approach can be explained by setting certain expectations and its legendary historic past, but not the realities of contemporary world.

The main issue that Vladimir Putin faced and was trying to solve was how to develop partnership and cooperation with the West and simultaneously to escape obeying its hegemony<sup>25</sup>. The very difficulty of combining both of these imperatives contributed fluctuations and lurches in Russian foreign policy during that period. For a moment it seemed that Russia had left its geopolitical ambitions<sup>26</sup> when it supported American military operation in Afghanistan, agreed with American military bases deployment in Central Asia, accepted US withdrawal from AMB treaty, joined global anti-terrorism coalition<sup>27</sup>. But actually it was not like that and Moscow returned to protection of its own stances in international affairs soon. For instance, president Putin held a speech at Munich Security Conference in 2007, where he stated that the USA were spreading the system of their domestic law over the rest of the world and promoting unacceptable unipolar world order without consideration interests of the international community<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Шмидт Х. Россия должна сама найти свой путь // Актуальные проблемы Европы. 2002. №1. С.94 [Schmidt H. Russia Must Find Its Way] (In Russian).

<sup>25</sup> Дилигенский Г. Хочет ли Россия дружить с Западом? // Мировая экономика и международные отношения. 2002. №4. С.30 [Diligensky G. Does Russia Want to Be Friends with the West?] (In Russian).

<sup>26</sup> Lo B. The Securitization of Russian Foreign Policy under Putin / Russia between East and West: Russia Foreign Policy on the Treshold of Twenty-First Century. Ed. by G.Gorodetsky. – London. 2003. P.30

<sup>27</sup> Крылов А. Новые перспективы России на международной арене // Мировая экономика и международные отношения. 2006. №7. С.91 [Krylov A. the New Perspectives of Russian at the World Arena] (In Russian).

<sup>28</sup> Putin's Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html> (accessed 12.05.2016)

Meanwhile, the world itself was becoming more and more uncontrollable, unstable and divided. A list of new dichotomies finally came to substitute the global bipolar confrontation, and Russia vs. the West was among them. Their contradictions are heavy. First, they have polar opposite understanding of the essence of the contemporary world key elements such as democracy, human rights, international law. Second, Russia usually faces ignorance from the West that tries to sideline it when key decisions on international security are made. Third, the competition for the influence in the post-Soviet area is still going on. Forth, almost every issue of international security divides Russia and the West by their approaches opposite to each other. This complicated atmosphere reduced inability of the existing international security mechanisms and made the necessity of making new ones explicit. In what connection Moscow's initiatives in this direction could seriously promote Russia's growth as one of the power poles in the world order.

Such a perspective could be seen in a plan of the new president Dmitry Medvedev proposed in 2008. The main idea was about commonality and impartiality of the international security space. It was about inadmissibility of someone's national security promotion at the expense of someone else's one and necessity to elaborate common rules in this sphere<sup>29</sup>. The president proposed a draft of a Treaty of European Security as an option. European states were initially much interested in it and even made an effort to implement it within the OSCE, but gradually lost their concern soon changing it for suspiciousness. But the very idea of impartial and equal security for every state stays in Russian policy since then.

Broadly, the main distinction between the approaches to Russian foreign policy of the two presidents was in their understanding of the reasons of tensions with

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<sup>29</sup> Мизин В.И. «План Медведева» и приоритеты российской политики в Европе // Обозреватель-Observer. 2009. №12. С.16-24 [Mizin V. "Medvedev's Plan" and Russians Political Priorities in Europe] (In Russian).

the West. Putin saw them in the unwillingness of the USA and their allies to accept Russian geopolitical ambitions to be a global power. Medvedev, in his turn, asserted, that the West just didn't understand which direction Russia was going<sup>30</sup>. That is why open and clear explanation of Russian stances became the main feature of his foreign policy as a president in 2008-2012.

No wonder, Medvedev held a new initiative to elaborate the third Concept of Russian foreign policy that came into life in 2008. As a previous related document it was written in the principle of continuity framework and was adapted to the new realities. Generally, Russian approaches to key global political problems stayed the same but considering Moscow's increased political heft and consolidated stances they became more motivated and essential.

Among the innovations concerning the issues of international conflicts and covered by the text of the Concept-2008 were the following:

- the UN bears a unique legitimacy in international relations and it must play a fundamental role in setting an effective inter-civilizational dialogue;
- the global competition has gained civilizational dimension demonstrated in a confrontation of different value orientations and patterns of development;
- Russia will persist to consolidate multilateralism in international affairs based on impartibility of international security principle;
- fundamental principles of international law must be purely universal from a point of their understanding and use, their revision and case interpretation are inadmissible, their violation must be antagonized;
- rule of international law in international relations must be maintained;

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<sup>30</sup> Арбатова Н.К. Россия после президентских выборов: внешнеполитические ориентиры // Мировая экономика и международные отношения. 2008. №12. С.28 [Arbatova N. Russia after the Presidential Elections: Foreign Policy Guidelines] (In Russian).

- Russia will aspire to promote exclusively political and diplomatic settlement on regional conflicts on the ground of collective actions of the global community;
- Russia maintains an approach which means that contemporary conflicts have no solutions by force that is why their settlement must be implemented through universal involvement of parties without isolation of any of them<sup>31</sup>.

In order to consolidate the efforts targeted on the Concept-2008 implementation president Medvedev also specially emphasized five key principles defining his foreign policy line. They are:

- superiority and respect of international law fundamental principles in international relations;
- affiliation to multipolar world order;
- absence of any intention to confront or to isolate and commitment to amicable relations;
- protection of life and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they are;
- implementation of Russian interests in its amicable regions<sup>32</sup>.

A document named “The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020” was accepted in 2009. According to it existence and potential aggravation of conflicts around Russian borders are among the main threats to Russian national security<sup>33</sup>. Besides, it was documented that making

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<sup>31</sup>The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. Approved by Dmitry A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, on 12 July 2008. Available at: [http://www.russianmission.eu/userfiles/file/foreign\\_policy\\_concept\\_english.pdf](http://www.russianmission.eu/userfiles/file/foreign_policy_concept_english.pdf) (accessed 10.05.2016)

<sup>32</sup> Пять принципов президента Медведева. // Российская газета. 01.09.2008 [Five Principles of the President Medvedev] (In Russian) Available at: <http://www.rg.ru/2008/09/01/principyi.html> (accessed 13.04.2016).

<sup>33</sup> Стратегия национальной безопасности Российской Федерации до 2020 года. Утверждена Указом Президента Российской Федерации от 12 мая 2009 года №537 [The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020] (In Russian). Available at: <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2009/05/216229.shtml>. (accessed 10.04.2016)

Russia one of the global powers within multipolar world order is among its national interests.

American researcher Jeffrey Mankoff called Medvedev's foreign policy line a search of autonomy at the global level, which meant an ability to make independent decisions according to the principles of Russian foreign policy and international law without looking at the West. He gave an example of Russian military assistance it made for South Ossetia in 2008, after which no one could permit itself to ignore Russian interests and stance<sup>34</sup>.

Signs of crisis, turbulence at both local and global levels, tensions in the Middle East and in North Africa, closeness to global conflict etc. met Vladimir Putin when he returned to the presidential cabinet in 2012. The world was fatally driving from balance of power to disbalance. As a result, accumulation of crisis phenomena motivates Russia to seek and to elaborate some effective mechanism of collective decision-making in order to promote security.

As the world had seriously changed since 2008 the president gave an order to the Ministry of foreign affairs to elaborate yet another Concept that would correlate the realities of the contemporary world.

Thus the newest by this moment documented Russian approaches are in the Concept-2013. Its innovations concerning conflict issues are the following:

- current events are not mere evolution of international relations, but rapid acceleration of global processes and profound changes in the geopolitical landscape that reveal a transition from the world order to polycentric international system;
- Russia is already a competitive center of contemporary world order having significant experience of various nations and confessions harmonious

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<sup>34</sup> Mankoff J. Russian Foreign Policy" the Return of Great Power Politics. – Lanham. Maryland. – P.6.

coexistence and playing a multidirectional role of balancing factor in international affairs;

- the new goals of foreign policy efforts are inter-civilizational dialogue, wide and equal-opportunity international cooperation based on non-aligned network alliances;
- there is a strong necessity to maintain a set of common values as a foundation for joint action including pursuit of peace and justice, responsibility, honesty, compassion, etc.;
- it is impossible to build individual systems of peace and security in the contemporary world, that is why the idea of the security impartiality principle implementation needs further maintenance;
- collective decision-making is becoming more and more valuable;
- inadmissibility of any sort of external interference in sovereign states domestic affairs is underlined<sup>35</sup>.

Results of a content analysis of the Concepts-2000, -2008 and -2013 show their evolution and highlighted key points. Firstly, a significant increase of frequency of appellations to such words as “stability” and “security” highlights an appropriate response a Russia, growth its of concern and anxiousness, realistic and regularly elaborated approach to global shift in the contemporary world. The proposed principle of impartiality of international security documented in 2008 continues to be developed in the Concept-2013 where it is easily used equally with the fundamental principles of international law. Besides, the documents of 2000 and 2008 show that Russia is intended to promote to establishing multipolar world order, whilst it is stated in the text under the date of 2013 that polycentric system making is already a reality.

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<sup>35</sup> Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. Approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February 2013. Available at: [http://www.mid.ru/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186?p\\_p\\_id=101\\_INSTANCE\\_CptICkB6BZ29&\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_CptICkB6BZ29\\_languageId=en\\_GB](http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186?p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_CptICkB6BZ29&_101_INSTANCE_CptICkB6BZ29_languageId=en_GB) (accessed 12.04.2016)



Secondly, almost double increase of frequency of appellations to the name of the UN and emergence of “the unique legitimacy” notion demonstrates the growth of Russian principled stance concerning powers of the organization and its Security Council in the sphere of regional and international security issues.

Thirdly, a similar situation is developing in regard to international law fundamental principles. Russia puts more and more stress on inadmissibility of their violation and arbitrary interpretation. Examples of referring to certain principles such as territorial integrity and nation’s self-determination do not reflect any noticeable dynamic whilst non-interference in domestic affairs was mentioned in the Concept-2013 for the first time. This fact demonstrates a certain transformation of Russian stance, its growing concern and anxiousness caused by going worse situation of invasive state sovereignty erosion.

Frequency of notions “conflict” and “settlement” use in each of three documents does not indicate any shift and demonstrates equable concern retained.

The table below gives us amounts of the key notions from a point of international conflict stance used in the Concepts:

<b>Notion</b>	<b>Concept-2000</b>	<b>Concept-2008</b>	<b>Concept-2013</b>
<b>security</b>	27	45	69
<b>impartibility and equality of security</b>	-	5	9
<b>stability</b>	12	16	24
<b>multipolarity/polycentricity</b>	1	1	2
<b>the UN</b>	20	30	37

Notion	Concept-2000	Concept-2008	Concept-2013
<b>international law principles</b>	5	9	14
<b>non-interference</b>	-	-	7
<b>territorial integrity</b>	3	3	5
<b>self-determination</b>	-	1	1
<b>conflict</b>	12	13	14
<b>settlement</b>	8	10	13
<b>peace-keeping</b>	2	4	5

The next table shows how the key elements of Russian stance toward the issue of international conflicts shift through the Concepts. It demonstrates them upheld or specified:

Element of the stance	Concept-2000	Concept-2008	Concept-2013
<b>world order</b>	Russia must promote <u>launching</u> stable, just and democratic world order, increasing its controllability		Russia must facilitate just and democratic international system that is already <u>in the making</u>
	world order must be a multipolar system of international relations	world order must be polycentric and its system must be self-regulating	
<b>decision-making</b>	it must be <u>collective</u> and implemented under international law priority		it must be <u>multilateral</u> and maintained both on regional and global levels
		multilateral diplomacy must be its key instrument	

	Concept-2000	Concept-2008	Concept-2013
international law	precedence of international law; it must be strictly followed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>rule</u> of international law;</li><li>• its norms must be universal from a point of their understanding and use;</li><li>• all the efforts to revise them must be resisted and prevented</li></ul>	
			inadmissibility of interference in domestic affairs
use of force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• force influence on international relations must be reduced;</li><li>• force can be used only by the UN Security Council permission</li></ul>		
		force can be used only by the UN Security Council permission <u>or for purpose of self-defense</u>	
the UN and its Security Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the UN is the main center of international relations regulation;</li><li>• the Security Council is the only institute that bears legal capacity to approve use of force</li></ul>		
	Russia must resist any attempts to downgrade the role that the UN and its Security Council play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the UN plays a pivotal role in making inter-civilizational dialogue;</li><li>• the UN has no alternatives and has unique legitimacy</li></ul>	
			the UN needs adaptation to new realities of contemporary world
international security	regional security must be consolidated	international security must be impartible and equal for every member of the global community;  a strong need to resist new global challenges and threats including regional conflicts	

	Concept-2000	Concept-2008	Concept-2013
conflict settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Russia intends to participate in international peacemaking activities under the UN auspices and within the framework of collaboration with regional and international organizations;</li> <li>Russia will actively contribute to improving the UN preventive anti-crisis capacities</li> </ul>		
	Russia regards international peacemaking as an effective instrument for settling armed conflicts		Russia regards international peacemaking as an effective instrument for settling armed conflicts and <u>fulfilling post-crisis nation-building tasks</u>
	Russia <u>endorses</u> improving the UN preventive anti-crisis capacities	Russia will <u>actively contribute</u> to improving the UN preventive anti-crisis capacities	
	the UN Security Council is the only institute that bears legal capacity to approve peace-enforcement and use of force		Russia supports elaboration of peacekeeping mandates allowing for no arbitrary interpretation, particularly those implying the use of force, and strict control over their implementation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Russia will seek political and diplomatic solutions to regional conflicts through collective actions of the international community</li> <li>modern conflicts cannot be resolved through use of force</li> <li>isolation of some parties from settlement process is inadmissible</li> </ul>	

	<b>Concept-2000</b>	<b>Concept-2008</b>	<b>Concept-2013</b>
<b>non-interference in domestic affairs</b>	inadmissibility of the “limited sovereignty” concept practical implementation	there is a dangerous tendency of the principle of state sovereignty respect revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unacceptability of military interventions carrying out on the pretext of implementing the concept of "responsibility to protect";</li> <li>• Russia sustains the world order based on international law principles, including non-interference in domestic affairs</li> </ul>
<b>cooperation with the USA towards conflicts</b>	Russian-American cooperation in such spheres as regional conflicts settlement is required for international climate improvement	Russia supports achievement of new arrangements with the USA in the sphere of regional conflicts settlement	-

The content-analysis of the Concepts reveals an explicit continuity as well as gradual detailization and specification of the stances, hardening of the approaches to general issues, introduction of the new elements such as “unique legitimacy of the UN”, “impartible security” etc. By the way, dialogue among civilizations is considered some kind of a basis for amicable coexistence. In general, the approaches to international conflicts are based on the UN uniqueness, international law rule and force impact reduction – these elements are specified and hardened through the Concepts, but they do not transform.

The documents of 2000 and 2008 contain collective principle of decision-making whilst in the newest Concept they propose multilateral one that

highlights all concerned parties involvement but not any kind of imposing from the outside.

The third table shows the conflicts and conflict abundant regions documented in the Concepts. These conflicts mentioned in the texts were included into the system of Russian political concerns, while some of them went out of it (such as the Balkans) or appeared later as new challenges, or approaches to them were detailed.

<b>Region/conflict</b>	<b>Concept 2000</b>	<b>Concept 2008</b>	<b>Concept 2013</b>
<b>regions adjacent to the Russian Federation</b>	overcome existing and prevent potential tensions and conflicts		
<b>the CIS space</b>	active promotion of peaceful settlement		
<b>Moldova, Transdnistria</b>	-	-	Russia will participate in the settlement of the problem on the basis of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutral status of the Republic of Moldova while providing a special status for Transdnistria
<b>South Ossetia and Abkhazia</b>	-	-	Assistance to the formation of the republics as modern democratic states, strengthening of their international positions, ensuring sustainable security and their social and economic recovery

<b>Region/conflict</b>	<b>Concept 2000</b>	<b>Concept 2008</b>	<b>Concept 2013</b>
<b>Nagorny Karabakh</b>	-	-	Russia will contribute to the settlement of the conflict in collaboration with other OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs
<b>the Balkans</b>	Russia will make consistent efforts to find a just and lasting political solution; preserving of Yugoslavian integrity	-	-
<b>Afghanistan</b>	the situation directly threatens Russian security; needs just and lasting political solution		
		Afghanistan needs post-conflict recovery to become a peace-loving sovereign neutral state	
			need of comprehensive measures to reduce terrorist and drugs threat
<b>Indo-Pakistani conflict</b>	Russia supports denuclearized zone maintenance	-	-
<b>Korean peninsula</b>	keeping balanced relations with both Koreas		
	Russia's equal right to participate in the settlement	Russia encourages inter-Korean political dialogue	
			Russia favors non-nuclear status of the peninsula

Region/conflict	Concept 2000	Concept 2008	Concept 2013
Iranian nuclear problem	-	Russia favors a comprehensive political and diplomatic settlement of the situation through dialogue based on a step-by-step and mutual interest approach and in strict compliance with nuclear non-proliferation requirements	
African continent	Russia will contribute to settling and preventing regional conflicts and crises		
Middle East	Russia will be making a meaningful contribution to the stabilization of the situation		
	Russia is going to consolidate its positions in the region including economic ones	Russia will promote establishment of an independent Palestinian State living in peace and security side by side with Israel	
			Russia will promote the establishment of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction
Iraq	-	Russia promotes political settlement, violence use reduction and statehood restoration	-

## Conclusions

Therefore, evolution of Russian stance towards international conflicts is initially determined by changing environment and system of international relations and Russia's growing abilities whilst its national interests do not go through any transformation. Such moments as the new NATO Strategy, NATO expansion to the East, efforts to consolidate unipolar world order, humanitarian interventions without the UN Security Council resolutions find response in general Russian approaches to key issues of international security.



Besides, the evolution also reflects the searching process of Russia's position in the world order. It is obvious that Moscow proceeds from the premise that becoming one of poles in the multipolar world order is one of its national interests. Thus, conflict as a challenge to national, regional and international security is seen, firstly, from a point of certain stance and general principles of settlement elaboration, secondly, from a point of the phenomenon use for solving problems of key international institutes authority enhancement, maintaining efficiency of the international law basis, preserving order in international relations.

As a general result, Russia's position is elaborated within a special formula that means the higher is its international status the more effective it can affect processes of international conflicts regulation and settlement. Besides, the approaches are based upon unique UN and its Security Council legitimacy, international law supremacy, violence usage reduction. In the addition, Russian stance leans on the idea of multipolar world order that can provide fair collective decision-making and equal involvement for conflict parties. On the whole, the study tested that Russian position towards international conflicts is eventually polished up and becomes tougher but it doesn't go through any transformation.

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