Forum

Russia and the World: 2018 IMEMO Forecast & Update to the Forecast – 'The Autumn of Our Discontent'

EDITOR'S NOTE

BENJAMIN TALLIS

In Issue 3 of volume 26 of *New Perspectives* (2018), we published the English language version of the Russian Academy of Sciences IMEMO Institute's annual 'Russia and the World' Forecast. Due to the delayed publication of that year's forecast we also published a special update – 'The Autumn of Our Discontent'. Now, as in previous years we have invited leading European scholars to reflect on and respond to the Forecast – and to engage in a little predictive work of their own. They generally note the frozen and fairly grim state of relations between a realist Russia and a liberal West, neither monolithic nor equally to blame, but both blind to their own shortcomings and hypocrisies. However, if we take the original meaning of the Shakespeare line that Irina Kobrinskaya played on in titling the Update, it is the winter *of our* discontent, not the winter of discontent. It is a hopeful sentiment that troubles may soon be coming to an end, rather than a woeful, melancholic lament. I will leave it to our readers to discern any signs of spring in this year's forum, but it should be a matter of urgency for all those concerned with relations between Russia and the West to do what they can to hasten a thaw and a brightening of prospects, lest we all catch cold.

CONTRIBUTIONS:

WINTER IS COMING

MARK GALEOTTI
Institute of International Relations Prague &
European University Institute, Florence

The Update to the IMEMO report was entitled "The Autumn of Our Discontent." It's a cute title, it really is – but what follows autumn? The latest Russia and the World assessment from IMEMO at once looks for grounds for optimism in some of the more unusual places – not least, Austria – but at the same time accurately reflects a realistic acceptance, widely held in Russia, that the best case scenario for the immediate future is more of the same, and that a true geopolitical winter, a further chilling of relations between Russia and the West, is entirely plausible.

RUSSIA AS OBJECT

What is most striking is that Russia is presented throughout this report as object, not actor. It may be a victim or a beneficiary, but the initiative is always elsewhere. The US-Chinese trade wars, changes in Turkish foreign policy, European exasperation with Trump, transatlantic tensions over Iran – all of these are presented as important and yet also at a remove; they are the autumnal winds blowing Russia hither and yon.

On the one hand, the IMEMO report expresses the continued assumption that Russia somehow represents a rival pole to the US in a Manichean bilateral world in which any losses to one are necessarily a gain for the other. When German Foreign

Minister Heiko Maas articulates a belief that Europe and the US are drifting apart and the EU must step up with a more robust foreign and security role, this process – what the assessment calls "Europe's return to pragmatism" – is automatically presumed to be a good thing for Russia. Yet this is not such a certainty. A distinctly Russia-averse Poland, for example, is positioning itself to be a lynchpin of Central European security, with or without 'Fort Trump'. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warns of "unprecedented" Russophobia in Europe (Kommersant, 2018). Glib assumptions that Moscow will gain from any "transition to pragmatism" need to be explained and argued for and not simply asserted.

In any case on the other hand, there is this clear sense of Russian powerlessness. Western sanctions can only be responded to by a "profound adaptation" of Russian strategy. Western policy towards Moscow is driven by domestic political imperatives, and there is nothing, seemingly, that Moscow can do about this. Even where there is hope, such as in the tensions between Europe and the USA, this is purely because of forces and factors outside Russia's borders. IMEMO's 2017 forecast presented Russia as "open and ready for strategic negotiations on the entire spectrum of world issues" but finding "itself alone at the negotiating table" (Dynkin et al., 2017). Then, the message was that Russia would be able to act, were it not being ignored. Now, there appears not even to be any notion of a potential engagement and Russian capacity to affect the world.

This even extends to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, which is, interestingly enough, placed within the section on trade and energy, as if it could be confined to a spat over gas tariffs or a dispute over coal exports, as if there were not daily skirmishes along the line of contact. The report rightly highlights the fragility of Ukraine's current political and economic circumstances, but is, for some reason, quite agnostic in its overall tone, falling back on the "widespread opinion" that it will drift further towards the West, and "other Western expert assessments" that there might be a backwash towards a normalisation of relations with Russia. IMEMO itself appears reluctant to express an opinion or make a prediction of its own as to how and whether Moscow is able to influence matters one way or the other.

RUSSIA AS VICTIM

Nowhere is the sense of Russia being marginalised and maligned more evident than in the section on the Skripal case – or the "so-called Skripal case", as the report puts it. China gets only a couple of mentions, but this affair and perfidious Albion's Machiavellian machinations get a whole section. There is no doubt expressed here that Moscow is being maligned, and the fact that the OPCW failed directly to confirm its guilt – when in reality it has neither the mandate nor the capacity to do that in any case (Hart, 2018) – is treated as proof of this. Charmingly enough, from the point of view of this British scholar, the result is another expression of the traditional Russian

belief in the UK's extraordinary capacity to manipulate the world. London is presented as using the case not only to distract from the ongoing Brexit debacle (which is undoubtedly and depressingly true) but also for "consolidating the European Union," especially against Russia.

Quite why Theresa May would be interested in consolidating a Union from which she was busily trying to extract Britain, especially as many of her increasingly desperate hopes appear to have been based on trying to exploit divisions on the Continent, is left unclear. More striking, though, is what is missing: everything else. The report seemingly does not allow for the possibility that Moscow could conceivably have been behind the attempted assassination. Presumably Putin's warning that "traitors will kick the bucket... These people betrayed their friends, their brothers in arms. Whatever they got in exchange for it, those thirty pieces silver they were given, they will choke on them" (BBC, 2018) was just empty talk? It also appears not to be aware or not willing to admit that other factors may also have been at work in determining the international response: the Mueller Inquiry and the assertions of the United States government – if not so much the White House – about interference with the 2016 elections; the infamous 2016 'Lisa Case' in Germany; the ardent defence of the Syrian government in the wake of chemical weapons attacks; the continued interference in the Donbas; the steady stream of cyberattacks and intelligence intrusions; the list goes on.

But somehow that is all overlooked. Unless one is determined to believe in a massive international conspiracy of unparalleled scope, one has to accept that most Western governments share a belief – right or wrong – in Russia's extensive 'malign activities.' To so fiercely ignore the backstory that made the Skripal case so catalytic again demonstrates a determination to paint Russia as the geopolitical victim, which is in itself a form of passivity, a sense of a country as lacking the capacity to influence, let alone master its fate.

RUSSIA AS REALIST

On the one hand, the report is suffused with a sense of determined optimism. It scrabbles around for positive data points, however sad they may sometimes look, such as that Slovakia, Malta and Luxemburg did not join the wave of expulsions that followed the Skripal case. Much is also made of Russia's constructive relations with Austria, although this was written before the unmasking of a Russian spy who had worked within the Austrian defence apparatus for almost three decades, and which Chancellor Sebastian Kurz described as "unacceptable and to be condemned" (RFERL, 2018).

More generally, though, it is probably accurate in its perception of the coming winter, and the extent to which Moscow is at the mercy of forces beyond its control, something that has since been illustrated by Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal

from the INF treaty. While suggesting that Russia's relations with the West are largely worsening because of "diverging narratives and approaches to the key ongoing issues in geopolitics and the world economy" and rather overlooking such issues as Russia's annexation of Crimea, intervention into the Donbas, and similar adventures, the forecast does properly reflect a degree of hopelessness and helplessness. In contrast with IMEMO's 2017 predictions, BRICS is now no longer a great new coalition full of promise, Le Pen did not win France, and even if Russia is now "psychologically ready to assume the stately role of a junior partner in bilateral relations" with Beijing, China seems to have pivoted away (Dynkin et al., 2017).

The essential passivity conveyed by the report may seem at odds with Putin's apparent belief that the will to act is one of Russia's strengths. However, this macho persona is more than a little a caricature fostered both by artful Russian efforts to project an image of confidence, and by lazy Western stereotypes. In practice Kremlin policy-making tends to be cautious, even in its aggressions. In other words, it too is informed by a keen sense of the strategic disparity between Russia and the West in general and the USA in particular. The very adoption of the asymmetrical, 'political war' tactics often described (regrettably inaccurately) as 'hybrid war' is itself a reflection of this awareness. They are a product of the dynamic and often creative tension between ambition and realism. The desire to assert Russia's claim to being a great power in the face of the imbalance of power, and to resist what is seen as a concerted effort to constrain and diminish it, requires Moscow to find alternative approaches that capitalise on its own perceived strengths and the West's weaknesses.

Despite the report's efforts to find silver linings in the gathering autumnal clouds, it is unlikely that 2019 will see much change in the fundamentals of this relationship. While there are those in Europe who are unhappy with the current confrontation, conscious of the costs of sanctions to their own economies, or simply consumed with other issues, there is little prospect of any substantive change on the other side of the Atlantic. The midterm elections saw the House of Representatives taken over by a Democrat Party that has chosen to blame Moscow for its defeat in the presidential elections and that sees playing the Russophobe card also as a way to batter Trump. The Nordstream 2 pipeline issue, as well as the sanctions on Iran, may well generate serious tensions between Europe and the USA. However, the thought that this will somehow lead to greater sympathy for Russia is misplaced.

RUSSIA AS CATCH-22

The USA, after all, has already essentially frozen the new cold war. The recent sanctions, as well as the new wave of 'crushing' ones deferred until 2019, are based not so much on specific, reversible actions as on presumed past misdeeds. While, for example, those linked to the annexation of Crimea are intended to be lifted if – as

though this would ever happen – Russia withdrew from the peninsula, the ones based on irreversible acts, whether Skripal or election meddling, have no 'off ramps' and are likely to remain until Congress feels like lifting them, which is unlikely to be any time soon (Ashford, 2017).

The choices facing the Kremlin are unenviable ones. On the one hand, it can take the initiative to de-escalate the confrontation, abandoning its claims to be more than, as Barack Obama put it, a "regional power." The Russians can agree to be good boys and girls, to accept the terms of an international order that, in their (not entirely unjustified) view, the West and above all the USA ignore when it is in their convenience. They can abandon their claims to Ukraine's fealty, abandon their support of the Assad regime, and in the process abandon every hope of being a serious global player. They might, perhaps, be able to hold on to Crimea, but essentially this would feel and look like capitulation – because that it exactly what it would be. It is hard to see how the Kremlin could survive such a humiliation psychologically even if it managed to hold on to power by force of arms and administrative machinery. When Putin said to the world, "Nobody listened to us before, now you have to listen to us!", his words rang true with many Russians (Kolesnikov and Volkov, 2018).

Besides, all that seems on offer at present is – perhaps, some day – the lifting of sanctions and a dialling down of hostile rhetoric. The sanctions regime is difficult but bearable, with the Kremlin having made serious strides to adapt to the wintry new conditions (Foy, 2018). If retreat is inconceivable, then the only option it can meaningfully consider is to go on. The hope is that its assertive and disruptive tactics will convince the West to find more positive and imaginative ways of engaging Russia, or else that the West will simply be too divided and distracted to continue to contain it. The very helplessness conveyed not just in the IMEMO report but also in the statements of many other actors and observers in Russia is ironically grounds not for passivity, but for continued disruption.

Kobrinskaya appositely quotes Shakespeare's Richard III in her opening; conversely, I cannot help return to a point I've made elsewhere (Galeotti, 2018): that Putin appears to consider himself, like Macbeth, "in blood stepped in so far that should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er." The path is set, the seasons are turning, and there is nothing anyone can do. Winter is coming, but then again, the Russians have a long experience of it, and are stacking up the firewood and stoking up the stove in anticipation of a long, hard frost.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ashford, Emma (2017), 'Why New Russia Sanctions Won't Change Moscow's Behavior', *Foreign Affairs*, 22/11/2017.
- BBC (2018), *Newsnight*, 05/03/2018. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-cJu-6QFC8.
- Dynkin, Alexander et al. (2017), 'Russia and the World: 2017 IMEMO Forecast', *New Perspectives*, 25(1).

- Foy, Henry (2018), 'Russian Sanctions: Why "Isolation Is Impossible"', *Financial Times*, 12/11/2018. Available at https://www.ft.com/content/c51ecf88-e125-11e8-a6e5-792428919cee.
- Galeotti, Mark (2018), 'Kremlin Calculus Seems Driven by Dreams of War', *Raam op Rusland*, 12/10/2018. Available at https://www.raamoprusland.nl/dossiers/kremlin/1104-kremlin-calculus-driven-by-dreams-of-war.
- Hart, John (2018), 'Confrontation at the OPCW: How Will the International Community Handle Syria and Skripal?', *War On The Rocks*, 18/06/2018. Available at https://warontherocks.com/2018/06/confrontation-at-the-opcw-how-will-the-international-community-handle-syria-and-skripal/ .
- Kolesnikov, Andrei and Denis Volkov (2018), 'Craving Respect: The Russian Public's Wish List in Helsinki', *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 11/07/2018. Available at https://carnegie.ru/commentary/76787.
- Kommersant (2018), 'Zaryazhennost' na rusofobiyu bespretsedentna', *Kommersant*, 22/01/2018. Available at https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3526872.
- RFERL (2018), 'Retired Austrian Officer Suspected of Spying for Russia', *RFERL*, 09/11/2018. Available at https://www.rferl.org/a/retired-austrian-officer-suspected-of-spying-for-russia/29591348.html.

MUTUAL LACK OF INTROSPECTION AND THE 'RUSSIA FACTOR' IN THE LIBERAL WEST

MINDA HOLM

Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Oslo

In the first edition of this Forum, Egbert Jahn (2015) raised the question of the extent to which IMEMO's analysis was independent of Russia's 'official line'. Jahn's conclusion was that whilst the 2015 report at times adapted to official foreign policy stances, it also included sober and realistic analyses. The same question struck me when I was reading the recently published 2018 report. IMEMO has a strong reputation as a leading International Relations (IR) research institution in Russia. Their analyses in this report of trends in the world, particularly in US and Chinese domestic and foreign policy, are strong. The predominant focus in the 2018 forecast is on the US, Europe and China, with briefer discussions of both the Middle East and the post-Soviet sphere. As in the earlier forecasts, Latin America, Asia (outside China) and Africa are not prioritized in their analysis. Climate change and migration, two of the most fundamental contemporary transnational policy issues, are not discussed in the abridged version. Whereas the US is seen as increasingly going bilateral or even going solo, Russia is presented as increasingly integrated in regional structures such as the EEU, SCO, and ASEAN. Overall, the report thus reflects well the priorities of Russia's foreign policy.

In 2015, Jahn noted that the report was less nuanced when it came to Ukraine. This year, that lack of nuance is most visible in the analysis of what the report terms

as the 'Russia factor' in European and US politics. Whilst I to a large extent agree with the authors that there is one-sided criticism of Russia in the self-defined liberal West, the lack of reflection around Russia's own role in the negative dynamic is similarly problematic. In the update to the 2018 forecast, written in October of that year, the emphasis is on the crisis of Russia-West Relations, anti-Russian positions and the Skripal case. Whilst Russia is often given the exclusive negative agency in the liberal story, here the tables are turned, and the blame for the negative dynamic is ascribed to a liberal West in need of an external enemy. Where is Russia's own agency in this story? If we are to believe this version, the Russian state merely reacts to an antagonistic partner defined by 'anti-Russian hysteria', and nothing is said of where that sentiment, however exaggerated or unfair, emanates from. Whilst the roots of the 'Russia factor' lie in both past stereotypes and strategic needs, Russia's own actions are also clearly part of the cause.

It is by no means unique to Russia that an institute with close ties to official policy circles also adapts central elements of the dominant, official world view. The same is palpable in both US and European IR policy circles, where the threat to the liberal world order is more often than not analysed from the 'inside' of the dominant, liberal narrative. Still, this form of one-sidedness is an impediment to any hope for an improved relationship. That caveat aside, the report also offers sound insight into and reflections on the world as seen from Russia. But the increasingly antagonistic dynamic and lack of introspection on both sides of the divide doesn't bode well for the future of Russia-West relations.

THE 'RUSSIA FACTOR' IN THE LIBERAL WEST

A central theme in the 2018 IMEMO forecast and its later update is the 'Russia factor'. To the extent that the 'Russia factor' is about the simplified enemy image of Russia constructed in US and European politics, I sympathize with IMEMO's account. Neither fully outside Europe, nor fully inside either, Russia has long been treated as standing somewhere in between the civilized and the barbarian and this 'monstrous' view still holds today (cf. Morozov and Rumelli, 2015). Thus, liberal Western states tend to treat Russia differently – more harshly – than they treat, for example, authoritarian non-Western states such as China and Saudi Arabia (strategic interests here also clearly play a role). Given that liberal states often have not lived up to their own ideals either, it is both understandable and to be expected that Russia reacts to their strong moralizing critique.

The Western Self is largely viewed as liberal by default, irrespective of the extensive illiberal actions – seen in, for example, the post-9/11 era. Whereas politics is messy and full of contradictions, Western liberal morality is often presented as somehow standing monolithically above those contradictory actions: despite torture, a secret extraordinary rendition and detention program and wide-ranging breaches of

international law, the US Self under Bush Jr. remained decidedly 'good'. Whilst the Self's identity as liberal persists despite violating those liberal principles, states such as Russia are stigmatized for the same types of violations. That this creates frustration with those defined as standing on the outside or, better, denied access to the true inside, should not come as a surprise (cf. Holm and Sending 2018).

The current desire, and/or reflex, to cast Russia as an external enemy is strong in liberal Western epistemic circles. Unwanted domestic political developments are often connected to Russia based on circumstantial evidence, and/or a reduction of the agency of others. There is a slippery slope, now often taken in the public imagination, between asserting that an action or phenomenon may hypothetically be in Russia's strategic interest, and a claim that the Russian state is in fact behind it. At the far end of this logic, there are events that are ascribed to Russian malicious intent based on speculation alone. One such example in my own country (Norway) was when the migration crisis was at its height in Europe, and it was claimed by commentators on scant and dubious evidence that Russia was intentionally orchestrating a flow of migrants over the Northern borders in Norway as a form of hybrid warfare (cf. Rowe and Moe, 2016). Similarly, the arrest of a Norwegian pensioner in Moscow in December 2017 was first cast by experts in the media as Russian harassment and propaganda. Months later it was revealed that the pensioner was in fact operating on a mission as a courier for the Norwegian Foreign Intelligence Service (cf. Standish, 2018).

Another consequential example of an unfounded leap from possible intention to accusation is found in Timothy Snyder's popular and influential *The Road to Unfreedom* (2018). Snyder claims that Russia's bombing of Syria in 2015 was a ploy to impact German politics: "The German government announced that it planned to take half a million refugees per year. By no coincidence, Russia began bombing Syria three weeks later... Russia would bomb Syria to generate refugees, then encourage Europeans to panic. This would help the AfD, and thus make Europe more like Russia" (2018: 198). Lacking evidence but full of certainty and moral fervour, Snyder makes a sweeping accusation that looks more like a conspiracy than a factual account. In the temporal lag between forceful accusation and contra-evidence, the image of a Russia determinedly undermining the West is strengthened. This is the logic of coalescing negative stereotypes: that evidence which fits the preconceived image confirms the stereotype, that which does not is discarded. The biggest challenge for Russia-West relations, of course, is that in a context of increased polarization, all of this 'sticks', no matter how well-informed the rebuttals of other academics might be (e.g., Laruelle, 2018; Pinkham, 2018).

RUSSIA AND THE NATIONAL RIGHT

A related aspect that the IMEMO forecast touches upon is the broader anti-systemic political developments in Europe and the US, which are, at times, heavily

ascribed to Russian agency. Though it has been compellingly established that a Russian information campaign directed at the US 2016 Presidential Campaign took place, the tropes mobilized were mostly existing grievances that the Trump campaign could capitalize upon. I don't mean that one shouldn't focus on external influence campaigns; obviously, though, that problematique does reach far and more systematically beyond Russian actions (cf. Levin, 2016). But it's too easy to give Russia the blame for these political developments, just as it's too easy to put the blame on the US or George Soros for the Colour Revolutions in Russia's neighbourhood. In a similar vein, the finger is pointed toward Russian interference in explaining the upsurge of the populist and national Right in Europe (cf. Snyder, 2018). In other popular representations it is Putin himself that is striving to break the European Union apart. Within these stories, complex socio-political processes, mutual interests and human agency are at times reduced to being de facto strategic pawns of Russian statecraft. Evidence is cherry-picked, as the media point to, e.g., a Russian bank loan to Marine Le Pen's Front National in 2014 as evidence of the Kremlin's support for her run for presidency in 2017, but say nothing of the party's inability to get a new bank loan in 2016 (Sonne, 2018; on the loans, see Shekhovtsov, 2017: 196–202). Most of the connections between Russia and the far right have happened on the outside of the Kremlin, and often on the initiative of the European Right – a point usually left out in stories of Putin breaking up Europe.

As such, the IMEMO forecast does well in placing the internal political developments in both the US and the EU at the forefront of their analysis of political trends. After all, the increasingly staunch anti-liberal postures taken by the national Right in countries such as the US, Hungary, France, Italy, and Austria are rooted in long-standing frustrations, both in the electorate and in the political elite. Whilst many of these movements, such as Lega in Italy, FPÖ in Austria and Rassemblement National (previously Front National) in France, both admire and seek cooperation with the Kremlin, that is a far cry from seeing them as products of Russian influence. Nor is it peculiar to Russia for a government to cooperate with like-minded politicians elsewhere, or for states to want to extend their value community beyond their own borders. And whilst liberal-minded scholars and politicians might not like the values that the new Right and Russia represent, tolerance and compromise is also central to the liberal ideology that they want to defend.

LACK OF CRITICAL INTROSPECTION

But, then again, the Kremlin is not making life easy for itself. When facts are continuously blurred, the reasons for others to speculate also increase. After all, the Russian state does plenty of things which it implausibly denies. The incident of the 'little green men' in Crimea ahead of the annexation in March 2014 is only one

blatant example of this. Another example, which also happens to be related to this forecast, is the Skripal case. It is puzzling that the IMEMO 2018 update itself so easily falls in line with this same form of denialism. Could they not at least have left some room for speculation? As discussed earlier, I am sympathetic to their critique of the tendency in self-defined liberal states to cast Russia as the enemy with little critical introspection. Saudi Arabia has at the time of writing just killed one of its own citizens on NATO soil, yet without receiving any diplomatic sanctions against it like those that were imposed on Russia. That is indeed a double standard.

Yet, as is so often the case with Russian official rhetoric itself, the IMEMO authors here fall into the same trap of one-sidedness that they criticize the West for. Contrary to their claims in the 2018 update, the evidence in the Skripal case doesn't seem unconvincing. What was unconvincing was the mock interview with RT (2018) where the two men accused of the poisoning claimed to be on a holiday to visit the Salisbury Cathedral. We don't know what intelligence was shared by the British to their allies, but we do know that it convinced them enough to carry out massive expulsions of Russian diplomats. Bellingcat's (2018) investigation has later confirmed what many suspected: that the accused men were GRU operatives. As such, given this denialism and the frustration it creates, it also seems implausible that the Russian state will succeed in "neutralising [the 'Russia factor's'] negative impact", which is defined as "one of the important and difficult tasks of the Russian foreign policy in the foreseeable future" (Dynkin et al., 2018a: 1). By reducing the Skripal case to a "tool for consolidating the European Union and the West as a whole", and a "pretext for the latest and [...] toughest sanctions" (Kobrinskaya, 2018), the authors simply disregard all that which Russia has done to contribute to the negative relational dynamic.

EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

At this stage, Russia-West relations seem locked in a mutual negative dynamic where nuances are increasingly left out of representations of the Other. How does one get out of this? For a start, academics working on these questions have a particular responsibility not to fall into the traps of unproblematically reproducing simplified enemy images. But it seems difficult, in part because these questions are for many so inherently *emotional*. Speaking from the Norwegian context, where our neighbourly good relations with Russia have traditionally been balanced with our transatlantic alliance, the academic and political debate on Russia is so heated now that it has soured relations between long-term friends and colleagues.

Why are there so many emotions involved? My suspicion is that it is in part related to the very high hopes many Sovietologists and Russia scholars had for post-

Soviet Russia. Many of my colleagues who worked with Russia during the 1990s seem deeply disappointed with Russia, akin to the disappointment one may have when a family member or friend does not live up to your high hopes for them. Precisely because Russia was seen as *so close* to being 'one of us', the disappointment with its authoritarian streak and anti-Western assertiveness is also so high. Born in 1989, I am of an academic and political generation where those expectations simply did not exist. Yet, the memory of those expectations also means that Russia is held up to different standards than states such as China, which in turn understandably contributes to the frustration for those on the receiving end of the resulting stigma. At the same time, and as the editor of this journal rightly pointed out in a comment, Russia has always claimed to be exceptional; perhaps it is unfair of them to expect non-exceptionalism in return.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS IN STORE…

The IMEMO forecast notes that Ukraine remains the "main obstacle to the normalisation of the dialogue of Russia with its partners in the world" (Dynkin et al., 2018: 21). At the time of writing, it was only weeks ago that the conflict between the two plumbed further negative depths in the Kerch Strait. Whereas the forecast notes a European fatigue over the conflict, there is also a lack of political will to concede on both the Ukrainian and the Russian side. More broadly, the conflict illustrates the tension that the IMEMO authors spell out, yet do not reflect upon: increased Russian influence in the world, yet also increasing anti-Russian moods. At what cost should Russia continue asserting itself? Here, the IMEMO authors treat the European and US mistrust as arising out of nowhere, or at least as lacking a legitimate basis. Unwilling to critically examine Russia's own role in the dynamics with the liberal West, they also fail to reflect upon how the dynamics of increased influence and increased anti-Russian moods are connected. Nevertheless, the IMEMO authors are sceptical of the chance for improvement in the Russia-West relationship, stating that they expect the military-political tensions to increase (Dynkin et al., 2008: 5). They also note that the Russian economy suffers as a result of Russia's geopolitical activities. This points to the broader tensions in Russia's current strategy: the Kremlin seeks great power recognition on its own terms, yet is unable to handle the costs. For 2019, it is unlikely that this tension in Russia's own desires will be resolved.

In the update to the forecast, Kobrinskaya mentions Putin's appearance at the Austrian Foreign Minister Kneissl's wedding, and the uproar that it created among the Austrian and wider European public. She questions whether this "strengthen[s] Russia's position in Europe and its relations with the Alpine Republic", but leaves the question hanging. When preparing the 2019 forecast, I hope they spend some time and space reflecting on both the potential and pitfalls of an ideological and

strategic alliance between Russia and the national Right in Europe, the US and elsewhere. Though the update to the forecast discusses some of these trends under the heading "Divergence in the West", it would be interesting to hear more of their reflections on the Russia-Right connection. After all, it is not only Trump's US that is an inspiration to nationalists around the world, as they note in the forecast; the Russian state itself is also heralded as a model for movements wanting 'traditional values' and conservatism to play a central role. With the Right gathering forces ahead of the European Parliament elections in May 2019, it will be interesting to see whether Russia decides to build more actively on those connections.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bellingcat (2018), 'Skripal Suspect Boshirov Identified as GRU Colonel Anatoliy Chepiga', 26/09/2018. Available at https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2018/09/26/skripal-suspect-boshirov-identified-gru-colonel-anatoliy-chepiga/.
- Dynkin, Alexander et al. (2018), 'Russia and the World: 2018 IMEMO Forecast', *New Perspectives*, 26(3): 1–24.
- Holm, Minda and Ole Jacob Sending (2018), 'States before relations: On Misrecognition and the Bifurcated Regime of Sovereignty', *Review of International Studies,* 44(5): 829–847.
- Jahn, Egbert (2015), 'IMEMO, Russia and the Interdependent World: Hope Between Rocks and Hard Places?', *New Perspectives*, 23(1): 169–175.
- Kobrinskaya, Irina (2018), 'Update – Russia and the World, October 2018: The Autumn of Our Discontent?', *New Perspectives*, 26(3): 1–8.
- Laruelle, Marlene (2018), 'Is Russia Really "Fascist"? A Comment on Timothy Snyder', *Ponars Eurasia,* Policy Memo number 539.
- Levin, Dov H. (2016), 'When the Great Power Gets a Vote: The Effects of Great Power Electoral Interventions on Election Results', *International Studies Quarterly*, 60(2): 189–202.
- Moe, Arild and Lars Rowe (2016), 'Asylstrømmen fra Russland til Norge i 2015: Bevisst russisk politikk?', *Nordisk Jstforum,* 30(2): 80–97.
- Morozov, Viatcheslav and Bahar Rumelili (2012), 'The External Constitution of European Identity: Russia and Turkey as Europe-Makers', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 47(1): 28–48.
- Pinkham, Sophie (2018), 'Zombie History', *The Nation,* 03/05/2018. Available at https://www.thenation.com/article/timothy-snyder-zombie-history/.
- RT (2018), 'Full Skripal Case Interview with the UK's Suspects (EXCLUSIVE)', 13/09/2018. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ku8OQNyI2i0.
- Shekhovtsov, Anton (2017), *Russia and the Western Far Right: Tango Noir*, New York: Routledge.
- Snyder, Timothy (2017), *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America*, New York: Tim Duggan Books.
- Standish, Reid (2018), 'How a Norwegian Retiree Got Caught Up in a Spy Scandal', *The Atlantic,* 29/05/2018. Available at https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/05/how-a-norwegian-retiree-got-caught-up-in-a-spy-scandal/560657/.

• Sonne, Paul (2018), 'A Russian Bank Gave Marine Le Pen's Party a Loan. Then weird things began happening.', *Washington Post,* 27/12/2018. Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/a-russian-bank-gave-marine-le-pens-party-a-loan-then-weird-things-began-happening/2018/12/27/960c7906-d320-11e8-a275-81c671a50422_story.html?utm_term=.46c9687b6438.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FORECASTING: OF FOXES, HEDGEHOGS AND A BEAR

TUOMAS FORSBERG
Collegium for Advanced Studies, University of Helsinki & Tampere University

IMEMO's forecast for the year 2018 predicted more stability than change. This is, of course, understandable since in the short run stability or continuation of present trends is a safer bet than any prediction of major changes. For the long run, we do, however, need scenarios of what can change and how, if we want to plan our politics for the future (Patomäki, 2008: 1).

We all know that forecasting the future is tricky, but there is robust empirical evidence that some forecasters are better than others. Philip Tetlock and Dan Gardner (2015) have identified a group of "superforecasters" that constantly perform better than on average when predicting future events. Although all human beings are influenced by diverse biases in their assessments, Tetlock (2005) claims that cognitive styles affect the capabilities of forecasting. The best forecasters are those who are "foxes", those who know many small things, rely on diverse sources of information, think probabilistically, and are self-critical and skeptical of grand schemes. By contrast "hedgehogs", who know one big thing and expand that knowledge to new areas, more often fail in their predictions. Similarly, Richard Herrmann and Jong Kun Choi (2007) claim that three factors make forecasting difficult in security studies. First, we lack means to assess the intentions of other actors; second, we have the inclination to believe that power provides a parsimonious explanation, and third, we have difficulty in grasping the interactive effect of multiple factors. Avoiding these fallacies leads to better forecasts.

In the following, I will discuss a few biases that typically affect predictions in international affairs. They are availability heuristics, normalcy bias, confirmation bias, overconfidence, attribution error, and groupthink. I will discuss how they are potentially manifest or not in the IMEMO report as well as in the wider Russian policy debate. I am not claiming here that any of the biases would be unique to or typical of Russia; on the contrary, they are all very human (Jervis, 1976: 3;

Pohl, 2005; for the U.S. see, e.g., Yetiv, 2013). Moreover, I am not able to firmly state where an objective worldview ends and a potential bias starts, since I cannot claim to know it. Yet, these biases are worth pointing out and discussing as they may explain why not only IMEMO but most of the rest of us are predicting stability.

AVAILABILITY HEURISTICS, NORMALCY BIAS AND CONFIRMATION BIAS

The tendency to forecast stability can be based roughly on at least three common biases that are often inter-connected: availability heuristics, normalcy bias and confirmation bias. Availability heuristics is a psychological bias that causes people to focus on examples and analogies that quickly come to mind and neglect those that are more unfamiliar. Normalcy bias is the belief that basic things will remain the same as before. Confirmation bias, in turn, is the psychological tendency to search for, interpret, and recall information that confirms one's preexisting beliefs. Often the tendency to see what one expects is turned into wishful thinking, in other words into the tendency to expect and thereby see what we desire. The more pessimistic counterpart of this tendency is to expect the worst and then see and believe in information that confirms our fears.

In the IMEMO report, a largely realist worldview is confirmed: the experts expect "military political tensions to increase" and the role and impact of international organizations to decrease. If the experts believe in the prevalence of an anti-Russian sentiment, it is easy to find evidence that confirms that belief and discard alternative evidence and interpretations. The IMEMO experts thus assume that the confrontation between Russia and the West is likely to continue, although there is some scope for improved relations with regard to Ukraine. There are no prospects for an intensified dialogue about arms control, and in the Middle East too, the prospects of stabilization are deemed as limited. On the other hand, there are some more optimistic visions; for example, the IMEMO experts think that the likelihood of a successful tension reduction on the Korean Peninsula is noteworthy. The report sees that "there are no basic contradictions among the leading world powers with regard to the situation in North Korea."

The prevalence of realism as the basic worldview can be related to availability heuristics: Russian and Soviet history has been plagued by wars and conflicts, and the Cold War is the analogy that most quickly comes to mind when analyzing the present era. Normalcy bias can be seen as supporting the view that living in an environment that is seen as hostile and strategically precarious is normal and thus likely to be long-lasting rather than exceptional. However, when "Europe's transition to pragmatism, and its improved consideration of its own interests in its relations with the United States" (Kobrinskaya, 2018) are seen as benefitting Russia, one may sus-

pect traces of wishful thinking. It can also explain why in IMEMO's view there is widespread skepticism towards international organizations in general, but not in the Eurasian space.

OVERCONFIDENCE AND THE ILLUSION OF IMPORTANCE

One typical error in forecasting is overconfidence. Overconfidence here would mean inflated beliefs in the success of the larger self, in other words Russia (rather than IMEMO), in terms of performing better than others and achieving the desired goals. Overconfidence is often closely connected to two other biases: illusion of control and illusion of importance. Yet, IMEMO does not present strong views that would reflect overconfidence. While Russian state representatives typically show a lot of self-confidence when speaking in public, for example, Vladimir Putin in his annual addresses to the Federal Assembly and presentations at the Valdai meetings, this tendency is not as clear in IMEMO's report. The IMEMO experts see Russia's role in world politics with some confidence: "The significant role of Russia in world politics and international institutions, and its presence – including military presence – and influence in various regions are increasingly recognized by international actors" and "Russia will no longer appear as an outsider". They also believe in the progress of the Eurasian Economic Union integration and the Greater European Partnership megaproject as well as in Russia's growing importance in the resolution of several crises.

However, otherwise IMEMO is rather careful when assessing Russia's role in world politics and warns of many challenges. Moreover, the report admits that the Russian economy "is not in the best shape". IMEMO's economic forecast in regard to the growth of Russia's GDP – predicting a growth of 2.0% - is rather moderate when compared to most official visions, and is indeed lower than the official (but contested) figure 2.3% provided by the state statistic agency Rosstat in February 2019. Nevertheless, this IMEMO report is less concerned about Russia's future prospects than its forecast for 2016, which opined that Russia "risks permanently falling behind in its development as a modern power" (Dynkin et al., 2015: 100).

ATTRIBUTION ERROR

The attribution bias is at work when a person or group tends to understand the behaviour of the other predominantly in terms of its perceived negative intentions, and not as a reaction to its own behavior or to other external constraints. Tom Casier (2016) has suggested that this bias (on both sides) led to the deterioration of relations between Russia and the EU. In the IMEMO report too, this bias is most visible in the characterizing of the perceptions of Russia in the West. "The Russia factor" in the West is regarded as a "tool of political technology" that

is "effective due to its primitiveness and the appeal to hardy stereotypes". "Europe's negative perception is habitual" and has led to "anti-Russian hysteria". This indeed conveys the image that the criticism of Russia in Europe is mainly an outcome of malevolent intentions and not related to Russia's own behavior. Russia, in turn, is just reacting to what it perceives "as a series of confrontational steps" according to the IMEMO experts. However, somewhat contradicting this logic of attribution, the experts also hold that a settlement of the Ukraine crisis could help normalize Russia's relations with its partners and "overcome the anti-Russian sentiments".

GROUPTHINK

Groupthink prevails when the unity and conformity of the group become more salient than the open-minded and self-critical search for information for analysis and action. As group norms prevent contradictory information and opinions from being raised, it can be seen as a meta-bias that strengthens existing biases. For example, in the run-up to the Ukrainian conflict groupthink may have increased the propensity for risk-taking (Pursiainen and Forsberg, 2017).

It is not possible to know the group dynamics of the IMEMO experts purely on the basis of the outcome – the report. The IMEMO experts could be seen as a group potentially conducive to groupthink as they mostly share a similar background and professional identity. It nevertheless seems that it has been possible to discuss alternative interpretations, and some of these slightly differing interpretations are traceable in the report. Contrary to the view often expressed by Russian political leaders that the EU weak and divided, the IMEMO report believes that the EU is emerging from its crises, although Brexit, the growth of populism and protests, and the financial crises in many member states have led to cleavages both domestically and internationally. In economic issues too, it seems that there is more room for alternative opinions and deliberation concerning the present as well as the future. By contrast, it is more likely that groupthink can affect how views on the key issues of foreign and security policy are formed and expressed in Russia.

CONCLUSIONS

With the year 2018 already passed, it is tempting to review IMEMO's forecasts with the benefit of hindsight – as the examined report was written much earlier. We have seen the beginnings of a peace process in Yemen, and the US questioning its support to Saudi Arabia. We have seen the Skripal affair causing new tensions in EU-Russia relations (as noted in Irina Kobrinskaya's update), despite the hope for their gradual improvement. We have witnessed the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko criticizing Russia for its aims to incorporate his country. None of these most recent events and statements, however, directly refute

IMEMO's analysis, and largely it has been rather correct when it comes to the key tendencies.

On the basis of one relatively brief report, it would be too bold to claim that there truly are certain biases that affect the content of the forecast: the material is too limited and ambivalent for that. Notionally and suggestively, however, while there are some elements of bias that can be pointed out in the forecast, overall the analysis avoids the worst mistakes of this kind. As it relies on a variety of sources this also means that at some points there are somewhat contradictory claims and pieces of evidence in the analysis. Although IMEMO's report can be seen as representing the elite view and being not too different from the one prevailing in the Kremlin, it nevertheless contains some self-critical elements that hopefully help to reduce psychological biases, including groupthink. As Isaiah Berlin (1953) pointed out in his seminal essay, Russian thinkers have been both hedgehogs and foxes. While the Russian 'Bear' is inclined to be a hedgehog when focusing on the national interest and power along the realist doctrine, the IMEMO report shows that also foxes live in Russia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berlin, Isaiah (1997 [1953]), 'The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History', in Henry Jardu and Roger Hausheer (eds) *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, London: Chatto & Windus, pp. 436–498.
- Casier, Tom (2016), 'From Logic of Competition to Conflict: Understanding the Dynamics of EU–Russia Relations', *Contemporary Politics*, 22(3): 376–394.
- Dynkin, A. et al. (2015), 'Russia and the World: 2016 IMEMO Forecast', *New Perspectives*, 23(2): 93–122.
- Herrmann, Richard K. and Jong Kun Choi (2007), 'From Prediction to Learning: Opening Experts' Minds to Unfolding History', *International Security*, 31(4): 132–161.
- Jervis, Robert (1976), *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kobrinsakaya, Irina (2018), 'Update – Russia and the World, October 2018: The Autumn of Our Discontent', *New Perspectives*, online.
- Patomäki, Heikki (2008), *The Political Economy of Global Security: War, Future Crises and Changes in Global Governance*, London: Routledge.
- Pursiainen, Christer and Tuomas Forsberg (2017), 'The Psychological Dimension of Russian Foreign Policy: Putin and the Annexation of Crimea', *Global Society*, 31(2): 220–244.
- Pohl, Rüdiger F. (ed.) (2004), *Cognitive Illusions: A Handbook on Fallacies and Biases in Thinking, Judgement and Memory*, New York: Psychology Press.
- Tetlock, Philip E. (2005), *Expert Political Judgment: How Good Is It? How Can We Know?*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tetlock, Philip E. and Dan Gardner (2015), *Superforecasting: The Art and Science of Prediction*, New York: Crown Publishing.

• Yetiv, Steve (2013), *National Security through a Cockeyed Lens: How Cognitive Bias Impacts U.S. Foreign Policy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING: RUSSIA'S REALIST WORLD

RUTH DEYERMOND
Kings College London

In *Man, the State and War*, one of the foundational texts of modern, Anglophone International Relations theory, Kenneth Waltz identified three 'images', more commonly termed 'levels of analysis', for the study of international relations: the system, the state, and the individual (Waltz, 2001). The 2018 IMEMO forecast avoids an explicit theoretical frame for its analysis of Russian foreign policy and its challenges but the changing importance of actions at different levels (international, regional, state, individual) and the interaction between them, shape much of the analysis it presents.

Russia emerges in the forecast as an actor of significance at international and, in particular, regional levels. At the same time, it finds itself constrained by its own state-level economic challenges and by the particular character of the US as a foreign-policy making actor. Russia is also forced to contend with the impact of the individuals leading the US and China on global stability and its own relative power. (Despite the importance attached to Trump and Xi as individuals, however, the impact of President Putin – an issue of overwhelming concern in most popular, and many academic, Western analyses of Russian foreign policy – is not considered here.) At each level, relations and motivations are understood as a product of power or its lack, and policies both result from and are designed to achieve success in zero sum competitions with peers. The world of the 2018 forecast, then, is a classically realist one, where Western claims about Russian rule breaking are seen as no more than a tool of 'political technology' to advance Western interests and weaken Russia. Russia's world thus offers little prospect for cooperation beyond a cautious, limited accommodation of growing Chinese influence in the post-Soviet region. In many respects, it continues the themes and concerns of the 2017 forecast but with a greater insecurity regarding Russia's status, and a more evident sense of grievance about the actions and hypocrisies of the West.

GREAT POWERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM AND REGIONS

At the international level, the 2018 forecast broadly follows its predecessor. The 2017 forecast characterised Russia as a powerful international actor waiting for other pow-

erful states to recognise the need for constructive engagement. Although the 2018 forecast reiterates this broad position, the analysis indicates that the problems of engagement with the US, in particular, have grown while the scope of Russia's power appears, partly in consequence, to have diminished.

The forecast's views of international order reflect the Russian governmental view, evident since at least Putin's 2007 Munich Security Conference speech (Putin, 2007), of a decaying post-World War II order undermined by US unilateralism. The first international factor affecting Russian foreign policy in 2018 is identified as the decline of the UN and other international organisations, "the general degradation of the system of international law" (p. 145). The weakening arms control and trade regimes are also areas of particular focus. They are seen as victims of assertiveness by one or both of the other two states that dominate the creation and management of international rules, the US and China. The competition between them and their competition with Russia are understood as the principal sources of global and regional instability. The weakening of arms control is identified as a particularly dangerous issue that is driven by "interest groups in US military and political circles" (p. 155) and creates an environment in which "military incidents and a rapid escalation of the conflict up to its full scale" become a risk to international security (p. 147). In this case, as with the other identified threats to international order, Russian governmental activity is not considered as a significant contributory factor. In IMEMO's analysis the responsibility rests with the US and, elsewhere, with China. Given the evidence for Russian INF treaty violations and the attack on international law represented by the annexation of Crimea, to take just two examples, this assessment is deeply problematic.

The regional level emerges as central to Russia's status as a powerful and effective foreign policy actor, and to its attempt to maintain a carefully managed relationship with China. Although the forecast repeatedly emphasises Russia's global influence, it is only in the Middle East and, to a lesser extent, in the post-Soviet space that it makes any significant claims to specific successes in this regard. Russia appears in the forecast as the dominant external presence in the Middle East, acting as a conflict mediator and developing cooperative relationships with the major regional actors. The forecast identifies a formidable range of challenges confronting Russia in the region in the near term – maintaining relations with the most powerful states in the region despite their conflicting agendas, protecting Russian military facilities, brokering a settlement in Syria – but these are challenges that come with significant influence. The risks to Russia here, it seems, are risks arising from success rather than failure.

Significant Russian influence is also identified in the post-Soviet space, where integration through regional institutions appears to contradict the broader global trend of decreasing influence for international organisations identified by the fore-

cast. Here, however, Russia's success is more mixed. The forecast acknowledges the problems of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) integration (p. 158) but even so, it identifies its development as a central feature of Russian policy for the future in terms that many Western analysts might regard as optimistic. In contrast to the Russia-led EEU, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is viewed as a regional tool for managing relations with an increasingly powerful China: "maintaining the political and military-political balance in Russia's relations with China" (p. 158) is represented as one of the organisation's primary functions. The two organisations thus perform complementary roles in a region where the historic Russian hegemony has declined but where there appears to be a strong desire to prevent its complete erosion.

Beyond this, the forecast gives limited attention to the states of the post-Soviet space. Given the importance attached by the Russian government in this century to maintaining Russian interests in the region (or its sub-regions), often in response to perceptions of Western expansionism, and the longstanding involvement of Russia in the domestic politics of many of these states, the limited attention paid here is surprising. With the exception of Ukraine, the states discussed are considered largely in the context of relations with third party states and institutions, or as part of a wider struggle for influence between Russia and the West. Thus, the focus in the discussion of Belarus is mainly on the prospect of improved relations with the European Union (EU) (p. 161); the analysis of Moldova considers its government's relationship to Western states and what the forecast characterises as its "traditional use of anti-Russian rhetoric" and anti-Russian "provocations" (p. 162); and Central Asia, which is discussed in only four sentences, is considered in relation to the role of Russian and Chinese regional integration efforts. Perhaps most surprising of all is that the forecast suggests that the primary focus of the Russian engagement in the South Caucasus will be on a joint cooperation with Iran. Even the analysis of Ukraine is significantly reduced when compared with the 2017 forecast. For the authors of the 2018 forecast, the post-Soviet space appears to have diminished as an area of significance for Russian foreign policy. Instead, it is presented as little more than a sphere in which the interests of more powerful states are at stake.

STATES AND PRESIDENTS: RUSSIA AND THE US

While generally locating the responsibility for growing global instability as well as possible threats to Russia's influence in the actions of others, the forecast does identify one important home grown, state-level problem: Russia's economic weakness. Its limited growth, resulting from domestic obstacles, is understood as both a cause and an effect of foreign policy challenges, and the forecast suggests that the Russian economy is "made to bear the additional burden of expenses and risks from Russia's geopolitical activities" (p. 150). The impact of the sanctions – which is discussed

more forcefully in the update by Irina Kobrinskaya (2018) – is also considered in the forecast, though not in a context which suggests Russian governmental responsibility for their introduction. (In a clearer departure from the main forecast, Kobrinskaya [2018: 170] also makes an explicit link between domestic economic problems and the decline in Putin's approval ratings.)

More generally, while the main forecast is willing to consider Russian economic difficulties as a factor in the wider issue of Russia's place in the world, it avoids any discussion of Russian governmental responsibility for the extent to which Russia remains, as the title suggests, "misunderstood." Instead, anti-Russian stereotyping and "hysteria" are seen as tools of "political technology" used by European states and the US (p. 144). The forecast identifies the need to overcome this problem as one of the main tasks for Russian foreign policy. Nevertheless, given the IMEMO authors' reluctance to acknowledge any basis in fact for Western concerns about election interference, for example, or any legitimate grounds for the sanctions against Russia, it is hard to see how this will do more than reinforce pre-existing assumptions about, and resentment of, Western hypocrisy and Russophobia.

US foreign policy continues to preoccupy the authors of the 2018 forecast as it did those writing in 2017. Given the widespread discussion in Western analysis about the relative decline in influence of the US, and the perception of accelerated decline under the presidency of Donald Trump, the extent to which the international system and international security are still understood as contingent on the policies of the US is a striking feature of the forecast. Other features of the analysis of the US are also notable to a Western reader, particularly the discussions of the US's foreign policy and its internal political dynamics. US foreign policy is seen in largely zero-sum terms, intended to counter or undermine both China and Russia on economic and security issues while promoting US security and economic interests. In this reading, the US's policy in Asia is focused on excluding Russia from technology deals with India in order to consolidate its own position, while attempting to restrict the expansion of Chinese political, military, and economic influence in the region, enacting a "limited form of deterrence" (p. 153).

The IMEMO view of US policy on Europe is much the same. The US is understood to be concerned above all with advancing its economic interests in the region while restricting Europe's economic relationship with China; meanwhile the US's sanctions against Russia are understood as a means of damaging a competitor in the European energy market (p. 154). IMEMO paints a similar picture of US-Europe security relations, suggesting that a desire to advance its plans for missile defence (often understood in Russian analyses as a programme targeted principally at Russia) is seen as one of the main motivations for US military policy in Europe (p. 154).

At the domestic level, the forecast presents US political struggles as a contest between the Washington establishment and the rest of the country, between the President and Congress, and between liberals and conservatives. While this last oppositional pairing is incontestably central to the current American dysfunction, the forecast's views of the other two suggest a curious set of understandings about the functioning of US politics. It expresses surprise at the fact that the Washington elite has failed to produce "a united bipartisan front to fight against the President" but notes that "parallel power structures" have emerged around the presidency and Congress (p. 152). Both observations, which respectively disregard the profoundly partisan character of contemporary US party politics and the longstanding (constitutionally mandated) separation of powers between different branches of the federal government, suggest a view of US politics that owes more to Russian governmental expectations than to the experience of the US itself.

Finally, but importantly, the forecast places significant weight on the roles of two individuals occupying presidencies: Trump and Xi. The actions of both, though in entirely different ways, are presented as central to recent and future changes to international relations. Xi's concentration of power is understood as significant not only for Chinese domestic politics but also for the growing scope and assertiveness of Chinese foreign policy (pp. 159–160). In contrast, the forecast suggests that the effect of Donald Trump's tenure as president has been to increase "unpredictability and uncertainty" (p. 145). Both Trump's unilateralist tendencies and what the forecast tactfully describes as his "pronounced personality type" (p. 151) are seen as destabilising factors with which Russia and other states struggle to contend. Despite the very limited and carefully worded consideration of the still-evolving Trump-Russia scandal, the discussion of Trump's impact on US foreign policy coherence and on international stability is perhaps the area of the forecast most closely aligned with mainstream Western analysis of contemporary international politics.

2019: THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME

If the 2018 forecast presents a more pessimistic outlook, both for Russia and for international stability, than the 2017 forecast, and the update represents a further decline in expectations compared with the 2018 forecast, it is likely that the 2019 forecast will provide an even more negative assessment than these texts. In the absence of unexpected shocks in other areas, the 2019 forecast is likely to focus on the same concerns as its predecessors, but with the additional problems created by a further year of friction between Russia and Western states and by the build up to the 2020 US presidential election.

The continued domestic economic challenges facing Russia and the impact of Western sanctions are likely to remain a significant explanatory factor in IMEMO's

analysis of Russian foreign policy. They are also likely to continue to affect the domestic political climate, notably the popularity of President Putin. If dissatisfaction grows in relation to other aspects of government policy, such as the introduction of internet restrictions (Reuters, 2019), Russia's domestic economic and political problems will further inform thinking about Russia's capacity to act in the world.

As this suggests, friction between Russia and Western states may play an even more significant role in the future analysis of Russian foreign policy. Despite the uncertainties created by Trump's scepticism about NATO, by the reduced trust in the relationship between the UK and the EU states caused by Brexit (whatever form it takes, or even if it does not occur), and by the closer relationship of some member states to Russia (for example, Hungary), NATO is likely to continue to strengthen both its military presence in sensitive areas of Europe and its diplomatic position in relation to Russia. Particularly in the context of the weakening or collapse of the arms control regime, the Russia-NATO relationship may become more adversarial and be at greater risk of escalation to more significant hostilities.

As in the previous years, the 2019 forecast is likely to view Russia's relationship with the West, to a significant extent, through a prism of grievance. The increase in NATO's activity, the continued application of sanctions against Russia, and the highly charged rhetoric of the US presidential campaign are all likely to attract criticism in 2019. The US presidential election campaign, the early phases of which will be well advanced by the end of the year, is likely to prove particularly poisonous to the US-Russia relationship, which will in turn affect attitudes towards a range of issues, including European security, arms control, Ukraine, and the Middle East. The rhetoric on Russia from prospective Democratic candidates and from any Republican primary challengers to Trump will be hostile and accusatory; Congressional and media discussions of Russian governmental attempts to interfere in the elections are also likely to contribute to a strengthened perception amongst Russian analysts and politicians that the US political establishment is irredeemably Russophobic. Of course, a similarly suspicious view of the Western establishment is also likely to endure in the Russian capital.

The 2018 forecast presented the world viewed through a realist prism; nothing in the likely developments of the next year suggests that IMEMO's future analysis will move away from a view of international politics defined by zero sum competition, balances of power and the further deterioration of relations between Russia and Western states.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

• Putin, Vladimir (2007), 'Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy', 10/02/2007. Available at http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034 (Accessed 14/03/2019).

• Reuters (2019), 'Thousands of Russians Protest Against Internet Restrictions', *Reuters*, 10/03/2019. Available at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-internet-protests/thousands-of-russians-protest-against-internet-restrictions-idUSKBN1QR0HI (Accessed 12/03/2019).
• Waltz, Kenneth (2001), *Man, the State and War*, New York: Columbia University Press.

BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE: RUSSIA'S WORLD TODAY

IRINA KOBRINSKAYA
IMEMO – Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

Now in its fourth edition, this forum is becoming a tradition, which is especially useful in the context of limited overall dialogue between Russia and the West. This edition of the forum in particular is interesting in many respects. First of all, since the discussion of the forecast takes place nearly a year and a half after it was first written in Russian, in the format of a *fait accompli*, this gives the experts a full possibility to assess how accurate the forecast was, although the time lag inevitably creates a certain ambiguity of perception and assessments. It can only be noted with satisfaction that the main trends flagged as most likely in the forecast, have indeed developed in reality, which was confirmed by the contributors to the forum. Tuomas Forsberg stresses that "none of these recent events and statements, however, directly refutes the analysis of IMEMO, and in many ways it was quite correct as far as the key trends are concerned." Minda Holm believes that the report "reflects the priorities of Russia's foreign policy." The forecast indeed represents how much of the Russian foreign policy establishment sees the world – and our realist worldview is increasingly vindicated.

The Western experts also note another valuable feature of the IMEMO forecast – it gives an idea of the spectrum of Russian expert opinion. Forsberg writes, "it seems that it has been possible to discuss alternative interpretations and some of these slightly differing interpretations are traceable in the report. [...] Sometimes [they are] even contrary to the views often expressed by Russian political leaders (regarding [the] EU)". This concerns economic issues, among others – "it seems that there is more room for alternative opinions and deliberation concerning the present as well as the future. By contrast, it is more likely that groupthink can affect how views on the key issues of foreign and security policy are formed and expressed in Russia". And this is true, because regarding the sphere of security the Russian expert community is dominated by serious concern about the processes of the collapse of the arms control system.

The second feature of the current discussion is the emergence of new approaches to the analysis of IMEMO's work by the Western contributors. Forsberg presented his analysis of the IMEMO Forecast from the point of view of 'Psychology of Forecasting'. Holm writes about emotionality, that is, a subjective, perceptive factor as an essential element of research of Russia in the West. The focus on the psychology of forecasting proposed by Forsberg not only explains the specifics of the work, but, moreover, enriches it, and allows experts to better understand the logic of Russian scholars. Moreover, it allows one, as we say in Russia, to 'read between the lines', especially since the English version of the forecast, as published exclusively in *New Perspectives*, is an abridged version of the original 150-page, Russian language report. According to Forsberg, the IMEMO forecast shows not just the contraposition, but the synergy of analysis of "the best forecasters – [...] 'foxes', [...] who know many small things, rely on diverse sources of information, think probabilistically, [and] are self-critical and skeptical of grand schemes" – and "'hedgehogs', who know one big thing and expand that knowledge to new areas."

The third traditional feature of the forums is the presentation of a fairly wide palette of expert opinion in the West, which is especially interesting for researchers in Russia. However, for perhaps the first time in the history of the forum, the general similarity of the assessments is striking. In the opinion of Forsberg, not only IMEMO but 'most of us' are predicting stability. It seems, however, that stability – that is, the absence of abrupt changes – is only partly a fair definition of the world's current processes. Against a stable overall background, we increasingly see elements of stagnation and degradation of the system. Ratings and wording vary depending on the authors' positions, but their general assessments of the dynamics of world affairs do not differ significantly. As Ruth Deyermond has it: "The Song Remains the Same."

Perhaps the only issue that causes serious confusion among the colleagues, and thus requires an explanation, is the so-called 'Skripal case'. It should be noted, however, that in the IMEMO forecast there was nothing about it just because it all occurred in March 2018, but the case was touched upon in the update, written by the author of this text. This case can be attributed to the category of the 'black swans', the increased likelihood of which is stated in the 2018 forecast and also considered in the autumn update. Despite the available evidence, the case itself remains in the same category – '*highly likely*' – and will highly likely remain there. Mark Galeotti and the other contributors agree that Russophobia is recognized by the Russian authorities as a serious problem for Russian foreign policy, and Russia's actions are calculated not to create additional precedents for accusations of Moscow's interference in the affairs of the West. Apparently, it should be noted that in the framework of the Mueller Inquiry, Paul Manafort was accused of financial fraud during his period of

activity in Ukraine, but not of participating in the 'Russian interference' in the American elections.

RUSSIA: NEITHER OBJECT NOR VICTIM, BUT PART OF THE FUTURE WORLD SYSTEM

Galeotti writes: "What is most striking is that Russia is presented throughout this report as object, not actor. It may be a victim or a victor, but the initiative is always elsewhere. US-Chinese trade wars, changes in Turkish foreign policy, European exasperation with Trump, transatlantic tensions over Iran: all of these are presented as important and yet also at a remove, they are the autumnal winds blowing Russia hither and yon."

It's worth recalling that the purpose of the annual IMEMO 'exercise' is to predict trends and events in world politics (and the economy) which will affect Russia and that will need to be taken into account in the policy-formation and decision-making. In its forecast, IMEMO does not make recommendations, but notes the expediency of certain steps on the part of Russia. Complex, sometimes hardly predictable processes beyond Russia's borders, have a significant impact on it, but do not lend themselves to direct counter-action by Moscow. This also applies to all the factors listed above by Mark Galeotti.

While external factors certainly act on Russia, Russia also acts. An example of this was the initiative to create the Greater Eurasian Space. Russia's policy in the Middle East, where its position has been significantly strengthened, is associated, as rightly noted by Ruth Deyermond, with serious risks and challenges. In an effort to maintain cooperative and balanced relations with all players in the region, Russia has to take into account all the nuances of the contradictions between them. And on the whole, it succeeds – as is discussed in the 2019 Forecast, which will be published later this year in *New Perspectives*.

The most difficult problem in relations with the West, but above all the US, is the issue of arms control. Russia – one of the leading forces in the security domain – is faced with the unilateral approach of the United States, the passivity of Europe and the detachment of China. Any proper 'conference table', i.e. a forum for the powers of the world to seriously discuss and debate international affairs, as IMEMO called for in the 2017 Forecast, remains lacking.

Relations between Russia and the West in the next ten to twenty years, at global level as well as in the Euro-Asian region, will be primarily driven by China's development into an assertive or even offensive player; America's rethinking of its global role; and the degradation and disintegration of the post-Second World War system of international relations, its trade and its military-political institutions and rules. From a trade-economic and geopolitical point of view, the centre of world development is increasingly shifting to the East – to the Asia-Pacific region. China has become the engine of global development and, at the same time, the main challenge for the

'West', or indeed for 'Western Civilization', whether that means the civilization of the US, Europe or Russia.

This situation will not change in the coming years and instead poses ever-greater challenges for the West. Europe is cautious, seemingly trying to resist undue Chinese influence and maintain its own posture, but the newer EU Member States, one after another, fall victim to the temptation of Chinese investment, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The EU's deep institutional crisis impedes its efforts to prevent this from happening again in, e.g., Hungary or Latvia. Russia too is put in a difficult situation by this dynamic: its economy cannot compete with China's, and it cannot compete for influence in this way in the post-Soviet space.

A more positive development, however, is that Moscow is no longer afraid, as in the late 90's, of the secession of its Far East. With its strengthened international positions, it is trying to keep in its orbit the former post-Soviet countries and to establish its Greater Eurasian Space (GES), theoretically in conjunction with the BRI. While Russia sees the Western states' difficulty in aligning themselves fully with or against China because of their civilizational differences, it is, itself, in a different position because of its unique history and composition. Russia's strong Eastern components as well as its strong Western components make it uniquely capable in this regard.

FORECASTING THE FORECAST

The timing of this forum lent itself to also looking forward to the IMEMO 2019 forecast, as well as reflecting on and responding to the 2018 edition. As readers will soon see, the contributors to the forum managed to accurately foresee some of the general features of the 2019 Forecast, which, with regard to relations between Russia and the West, is rather pessimistic, echoing the comments of the contributors: As Mark Galeotti writes,

> The Nordstream 2 pipeline issue, as well as the sanctions on Iran, may well generate serious tensions between Europe and the USA. However, the thought that this will somehow lead to greater sympathy for Russia is misplaced.

Minda Holm concurs that "the increasingly antagonistic dynamic and lack of introspection on both sides of the divide doesn't bode well for the future of Russia-West relations." And Ruth Deyermond adds that "it is likely that the 2019 forecast will provide an even more negative assessment than [the previous forecasts]."

Please, be patient – *New Perspectives* will publish the IMEMO Forecast 2019 soon – but there is plenty more to address in the contributions in this forum first!

THE RUSSIA FACTOR

Minda Holm goes deeply into the analysis of the roots of what we termed 'the Russia factor':

> To the extent that the 'Russia factor' is about the simplified enemy image of Russia constructed in US and European politics, I sympathise with IMEMO's account. Not fully on the outside of Europe, yet not on the inside either, Russia has historically and now been treated as standing somewhere in between the civilised and the barbarian [...]. Thus, liberal Western states tend to treat Russia differently – more harshly – than they treat for example authoritarian non-Western states such as China and Saudi-Arabia. [...] Given that liberal states often have not lived up to their own ideals either, it is both understandable and to be expected that Russia reacts to the strong moralising critique. [...] Whilst the [Western] Self's identity as liberal persists despite violating those liberal principles, states such as Russia are stigmatized for the same type of violations. That this creates frustration with those defined as standing on the outside, should not come as a surprise.

It's hard to disagree with Holm. Her arguments make us think about two problems underlying all the contradictions and difficulties in relations between modern Russia and the West. The first problem is the 'search for the Other'. The second is the problem of 'civilizational commonality' and related questions of values. These are not only interrelated issues, but also issues of our common survival and development, and they appear in the contributions of the Western experts too – as when Holm analyses the problem of right-wing movements in Europe and their widely discussed links to Russia in the context of the Russia Factor, an analysis we largely concur with. It is thus appropriate to ask two well-known questions once again.

Question 1: Is Russia Part of Europe?

For centuries, the answer to this question has of course been *Yes! And no!* Iver B. Neumann, a brilliant and subtle connoisseur of East-Central Europe, had it right when 'locating' the 'new Russia' in Europe (more than twenty years ago) but also when 'identifying' Russia as Europe's 'Other' (Neumann, 1996b).

Holm also notes this ambivalence or tension in her contribution: "Precisely because Russia was seen as *so close* to being 'one of us', the disappointment with its increasingly authoritarian streak and anti-Western assertiveness is also so high. Yet, it also means that Russia is held to 'other' [higher] standards than, e.g., China." Holm rightly notes that this contributes to the frustration on the part of those being stigmatized – us, Russians.

As Neumann notes, human collectives forge identities for themselves partly by the way they represent other human collectives – their 'others'. And from the point of view of European identity formation Russia has consistently been seen as an irregularity. Based on 500 years of writings about Muscovy, Russia and the Soviet Union, Neumann writes that Russia has quite consistently been represented as just

having become tamed, civil, and civilized; as just having begun to participate in European politics; and as just having become part of Europe. Since the Enlightenment it has, furthermore, been seen as a pupil and a learner, be that a successful one, or one who should learn but refuses to do so, a truant, or a gifted but somewhat pigheaded one (in the present). The question of where Russia fits in is a central component of contemporary discussions of the European security order, and frequently their focus (Neumann, 1996a).

Can you imagine today's Russia, and especially President Putin, as a pupil?! However, in fact, the attitude of the 'old' Europe to Russia has changed slightly – the level of fear and demonization has increased. This makes relations between Russia and the West even more complicated than they have been in the 1990s and makes it yet harder to change centuries-old ways of thinking. However, changing the scope and context can provide a way to common understanding: in this case that comes through asking and answering a different question.

Question 2: Is Russia a Part of Western Judeo-Christian Civilization?

Absolutely, *yes*. And without understanding this immutable truth, it is almost impossible to move beyond the current state of 'stalled transition' and away from the system built after the Second World War – for good or bad – to the creation of a sustainable new world order. All of us, both Russia and the West, are rapidly moving towards a global political disorder. And the reasons for this extremely dangerous drift, should be sought in the field of political psychology, and value shifts, and along the civilizational paradigm.

Facing existential challenges – demographic, cultural, and security – from the South and the East, the Western civilization fails to oppose them with a value-strong strategy and perspective. Instead, we see the destructive internal processes eroding the West – the growth of radicalism and populism; the destruction of the social contract and liberal values under the pressure of globalization; the 4th technological revolution; and the disruption of the usual social mobility mechanisms, which increases the layer of precariousness. It should be noted that the social discontent and protests in Western democracies, in Russia and in the West do not differ significantly. Opinion polls in Russia differ only slightly from those of Western sociology in terms of the crisis of the vision of the future, especially for the middle class – and their children. The authorities in the countries of the Western civilization face generally identical social challenges – and Russia is no exception. The notorious lack of democracy in Russia does not prevent either protests (though Russian protests are not so large-scale) or freedom in Internet discussions, in which tens of millions are involved. Yet nobody has a solution – neither Macron, nor Trump, nor Putin.

Rather often this discontent on the civilization scale is amplified into rawness, and the psychiatric vocabulary enters the political analysis texts. On the eve of the elections in his country, Ukrainian philosopher and political analyst Andrei Yermolaev writes about a "[d]issociative identity disorder" (Yermolaev, 2019). He anticipates his text with an epigraph from the famous Russian (Soviet dissident) philosopher Alexander Zinoviev: "we are entering an era of total turbidity of minds and obscurantism emanating from the achievements of scientific and technological progress" (Zinoviev, 2006). The same problem is raised by the German Marshall Fund: "From AI to 5G, the innovations that pose unprecedented opportunities also pose a risk to democracy – and there is no consensus yet on how to solve this puzzle" (GMF, 2019).

Still, among the basic reasons for this state of wide-scale and deep social disorder is a weakening civilizational tissue, a disorientation in values. Practically a century ago in a Russia devastated by revolution the famous Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov made his personage Professor Preobrazhensky formulate the diagnosis that "[the] devastation is in our heads" (Bulgakov, 2015 [1925]). Now the disease needs healing on the scale of the whole Western civilization.

The events of the last year show the formation of the habit of living apart in Russia and Europe. At the same time, the fatigue from this state of affairs is quite obvious, including in Europe. It is unrealistic to expect radical changes in the near future. But without a return to the values of the Western civilization in the world, which Wolfgang Ischinger rightly characterizes as 'post-truth' and 'post-American', for both Russia and the West a way out of the current crisis is hardly possible (Munich Security Report, 2017).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bulgakov, Mikhail (2015 [1925]), *A Heart of a Dog*, Moscow: Nigma.
- Munich Security Report (2017), 'Post-Truth, Post-West, Post-Order', Munich: Munich Security Conference.
- Neumann, Iver B. (1996a), *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, London: Routledge.
- Neumann, Iver B. (1996b), 'Russia as Europe's Other', *EUI-RSCAS Working Paper 34*.
- GMF (2019), 'Silent Revolution: the Transatlantic Debate Over AI', *Out of Order Podcast*, 15/03/2019.
- Yermolaev, Andrey (2019), 'Заметки о нашем времени [Notes about Our Time]'. Available at http://newukraineinstitute.org/new/959 (Assessed 21/03/2019).
- Zinoviev, Alexander (2006), 'Русская трагедия [Russian Tragedy]', Moscow: Eksmo.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

RUTH DEYERMOND is senior lecturer in post-Soviet security in the Department of War Studies, King's College London and co-convenor of the Department of War Studies Russian and Eurasian Security Research Group. After a BA in English (University of Oxford) and an MA in Renaissance Drama (University of Warwick), she worked in the UK Treasury before completing an MA in International Relations and a PhD, both at the University of Essex. Her research interests include the post-Cold War US-Russia relationship, international security, the security and normative aspects of Russia-Europe relations, the role of ideas about sovereignty in Russian foreign policy, and Russia's relationship to the other states of the post-Soviet space. Her most recent publication is a chapter on the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and Russian foreign policy in *The Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy* (2018).

Correspondence email: ruth.deyermond@kcl.ac.uk

TUOMAS FORSBERG is Director of the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies at the University of Helsinki and Professor of International Relations at Tampere University (on a leave of absence from 2018–2023). His publications include *The European Union and Russia* (co-authored with Hiski Haukkala, Palgrave 2016) and articles in journals such as *International Affairs*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *International Studies Review*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Security Dialogue* and *Journal of Common Market Studies*.

Correspondence email: tuomas.forsberg@helsinki.fi

Dr **MARK GALEOTTI** is an Honorary Professor at UCL SSEES, Senior Associate Fellow at RUSI, and a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at the Institute of International Relations Prague. He also runs his own consultancy, Mayak Intelligence. He read history at Robinson College Cambridge and took his doctorate in government at the LSE, and has since been Head of History at Keele University, a Senior Research Fellow with the Foreign Office, Professor of Global Affairs at New York University, and a visiting professor at Rutgers-Newark (Newark, NJ), Charles University (Prague) and MGIMO (Moscow). A specialist in Russian security and international politics, he is also a prolific author, and his most recent books are *We Need To Talk About Putin* (Ebury, 2019), *Russian Political War* (Routledge, 2019), Kulikovo 1380 (Osprey, 2019) and *The Vory: Russia's Super Mafia* (Yale, 2018), the last of which has now been licensed for translation into 13 languages.

Correspondence email: galeotti@iir.cz

MINDA HOLM is a Research Fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). She also works at the Danish Institute of International Studies and is a PhD Fellow in Political Science at the University of Copenhagen. In Oslo, she leads a three-year research project on the national right's visions of world order in Europe, Russia and the US. Her research interests include liberal international ideology and its conservative critics, political realism, sovereignty, global governance and security politics. She has published on Russian, US, European and Norwegian foreign and security policy, including a forthcoming book chapter on Russia's conservative turn (McGill-Queens University Press, edited by Vibeke Schou Tjalve) and another forthcoming book chapter on Russia, its diasporas and the Duty of Care (Routledge, edited by Halvard Leira and Nina Græger). Her more theoretical work has appeared, inter alia, in *Review of International Studies* and *International Studies Review*.
Correspondence email: Minda.Holm@nupi.no

Dr **IRINA KOBRINSKAYA** is the Head of the Center for Situation Analysis at the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO RAS) and the executive director of the Foundation for Prospective Studies and Initiatives (a Russian NGO). A graduate of Moscow State University, she began her academic career in the US and Canada Studies Institute in Moscow. In 1988–1992 Kobrinskaya worked for the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy in Warsaw. From 1994–1997 she coordinated the program "Russia and Its Neighbors" in the Moscow Carnegie Center and in 1998 Dr Kobrinskaya started the Moscow Center of the New York East-West Institute as its director. Irina Kobrinskaya is the author of 4 and the co-author of about 30 monographs, and the author or co-author of about 200 articles in periodicals on domestic and foreign policy, and international security published in, inter alia, Russia, the USA, Sweden, Poland, Norway, France, Finland, Germany, Italy and Bulgaria. She has also edited more than 30 books.
Correspondence email: psifoundation@imemo.ru