

Russia's Capability of Managing Transnational Issues: The Use of the Imperial Legacy

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Abstract

Many problems and disputes of today's world agenda are of complex character which exceeds capabilities of national states and even those of international organisations. It has been observed today on many occasions that settling today's complex regional or global problems requires a comprehensive and problem solving capability. 'Managing transnational issues' can be a proper name for the needed capability. Through the use of this name, it is aimed at finding out a relationship between the task of managing transnational issues and result-producing function of modern management. In doing so, it is highlighted that the efficiency of the capability of managing transnational issues can arise from its reliance on the result-producing techniques of management practices. Russia's involvement in the 2008 South Ossetia Crisis sets, in this sense, a striking example of a capability of managing transnational issues. Russia's strategic gains in the 2008 South Ossetia Crisis were achieved through the use of the legacy of practices of managing transnational issues inherited from its imperial past. Today's transnational issues cannot be resolved only by the use of hard power, but they also necessitate an expertise of management of transnational issues or problem areas. The possession of this expertise can be identified as a soft power. Russia's involvement in the 2008 South Ossetia Crisis and its way of managing the issue can be read in this respect.

Keywords: *Russia, managing transnational issues, Russia's capability of managing transnational issues, imperial past as a legacy.*

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Rusya'nın Sınıraşan Sorunları Yönetme Kabiliyeti: Emperyal Mirasın Kullanımı

Öz

Bugünün dünyasında bölgesel ya da küresel sorunların, çoğu durumda ulus devletlerin tekil yeteneklerini fazlasıyla zorlayan karmaşıklıkta olduğu görülmektedir. Bu sorunların aşılması için ulus devletlerin yeteneklerinin ötesinde daha kuşatıcı bir sorun çözme kabiliyetine ihtiyaç duyulduğu, birçok bölgesel ya da küresel krizde gözlemlendiği üzere aşikârdır. 'Sınıraşan sorunların yönetimi' gibi bir isimlendirme, ihtiyaç duyulan bu kabiliyet için uygun bir tanımlama girişimi olacaktır. Bu suretle, modern yönetim pratiğinin sonuç odaklı kabiliyeti ile ulusal sınırları aşan sorunların yönetimi görevi arasında bir ilgililik kurulması amaçlanmaktadır. Bu izah çerçevesinde, Rusya'nın ulusal sınırları aşan sorunları yönetme kabiliyetinin irdelenmesi, bahsi geçen ilgililik noktasında uygun bir tercih olacaktır. Buna bağlı olarak Rusya'nın 2008 Güney Osetya Krizi'nde sergilediği sınır ötesi operasyon yeteneği, örnek vak'a değerindedir. 2008 Güney Osetya Krizi'nin tetkiki, Rusya'nın ulusal sınırları aşan sorunları yönetme kabiliyetine büyük oranda bu ülkenin imparatorluk mirasının kaynaklık ettiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bugünün sınıraşan sorunlarının yalnızca askeri güç kullanımı ile çözümü mümkün görünmemektedir. Bu görev, aynı zamanda sınıraşan sorunlara ya da sorunlu bölgelere dair yönetsel bir bilgi sermayesine de sahip olunmasını gerektirmektedir. Bu bilgi sermayesi, bir tür 'yumuşak güç' olarak nitelendirilebilir. Rusya'nın 2008'deki Güney Osetya Krizi'ne müdahalesine ve onu yönetme biçimine bu zaviyeden bakmak mümkündür.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Rusya, sınıraşan sorunların yönetimi, Rusya'nın sınıraşan sorunları yönetim kabiliyeti, bir miras olarak imparatorluk geçmişi.*

1. Introduction: Raison d'Etre and Methodology of the Article

This article is an attempt to read and analyse the 'new' Russia, which has gone through tremendous changes after the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). It suggests that Russia and Russian affairs deserve a privilege to be continuously read and analysed with regard to its unique capability and determination to adapt itself to the conditions of the ever-changing world. And this capability is, this article stresses, the very characteristic of Russia as a potential world state. This article also points out that making a continuous reading² of Russia and Russian affairs is a challenging and an on-going task of international relations and international journalism. The contribution or the novelty of this article doesn't lie in its use of first-hand sources of references or field study. This article rather tries to employ an unconventional approach to produce an accurate and pragmatic reading of Russia's practices of managing transnational issues. It refers to the result-producing function of modern management and Russia's use of the imperial legacy of practices of managing transnational issues for the purpose of sketching a proper reading of Russia's strategic practices after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is thus aimed at finding out a relationship between the result-producing function of modern management and Russian capability of managing transnational issues. This article concludes that Russia's capability of managing transnational issues is mainly based on its past experiences gained during its imperial and Soviet times.

In recent years, there has been a tendency that an increasing number of authors have written articles focusing on the idea of the return of old empires.³ The emphasis on the return or rise of the old empires by the prominent international writers can be perceived as evidence of a concern or quest for a model to be employed for the settlement of complex regional or global issues. It is fair to point out that today's nation-states or even international organizations face a set of challenging regional or global issues which far exceeds their in-

² On the term of reading of Russia and the role of this reading in understanding Russian politics, see Dmitri Trenin, "Reading Russia Right", *Policy Brief*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Special Edition, No. 42, October 2005, p. 1, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/pb42.trenin.FINAL.pdf>. Accessed: 5.11.2012.

³ For a number of authors who have written on the topic of the return or rise of the old empires, see Niall Ferguson, "The Mideast's Next Dilemma", *Newsweek*, 19 June 2011, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/06/19/turkey-the-mideast-s-next-dilemma.html>. Accessed: 5.11.2012; Fred Halliday, "The empires strike back? Russia, Iran and the new republics", *The World Today*, Vol. 51, No. 11, November 1995, pp. 220-222; Dow Zakheim, "Old Empires Rise Again", *The National Interest*, 18 June 2012, <http://nationalinterest.org/print/commentary/old-empires-rise-again-7074>. Accessed: 5.11.2012.

dividual capacities. The inefficiency of the United Nations in some international problems has brought about concerns regarding a need for reform the United Nations (UN) system.⁴ The highlighted need for a reform in the United Nations makes the study of the practices of managing transnational issues a significant endeavour. There have been, however, some cases of today's states which have managed to overcome some of today's regional or global issues. Their methods strikingly resemble those of the mighty old empires. Russia, in this regard, demonstrated a case of capable state by performing transnational political and even military practices after the dissolution of the USSR. It thus invalidated the widespread assumption that Russia was collapsed with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russia's intervention in the 2008 South Ossetia Crisis demonstrated a good example of its capability of managing transnational issues. The term "transnational" has been employed here to denote a capability or competency to manage affairs beyond national borders, for instance those of neighbouring nations. The 2008 South Ossetia Crisis was also known as five-day war. The quick ending of this crisis cannot be necessarily perceived as a result of Russia's use of military power. There were also other factors involved in this crisis, including Russia's expertise of managing transnational issues and South Ossetia's option for Russia's position. In brief, today's transnational issues cannot be resolved only by use of hard power, but they also necessitate an expertise of management of transnational issues or problem areas. This expertise can be identified as a sort of 'soft power', which in fact forms the very foundation for establishing order and administrating post-crisis or post-invasion affairs. Lack of this expertise might lead to a huge and never-ending chaos, as seen in the post-Saddam Iraq.⁵ The inefficiency of reliance only on hard power has already been observed in the destructive incidents after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 that establishing an order from outside is very hard and usually even impossible.⁶ Russian involvement in the 2008 South Ossetia Crisis and its way of managing the issue can be reviewed in this respect. On the other hand, this article does not imply any justification of Russian politics.

⁴ For a discussion of a need for a reform in the UN system, see "UN reform process mired by lack of consensus", *Deutsche Welle*, 05 January 2010, <http://www.dw.de/un-reform-process-mired-by-lack-of-consensus/a-5087253>. Accessed: 02.05.2013.

⁵ For a brief account of the some of the destructive consequences of the lack of expertise in managing political issues and administrative affairs in Iraq after the Fall of Saddam's regime, see, Kersten Knipp, "Ortadoğu'yu bekleyen büyük tehlike", [The great danger awaiting the Middle East], *Deutsche Welle*, 28 September 2012, <http://www.dw.de/ortado%C4%9Fuyu-bekleyen-b%C3%BCy%C3%BCk-tehlike/a-16270794>. Accessed: 03.05.2013.

⁶ Wolfgang Günter Lerch, "Dışarıdan düzen kurmak zor" [It is a hard task to establish order from the outside], *Radikal*, 10 March 2007, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=84631>. Accessed: 03.05.2013.

The outlined points provide a sufficient basis to study Russia in-depth. Through studying Russia's performance in managing transnational political and military issues, it can be more probable to sketch a comprehensive and result-producing model of capability, which might be employed for settlement of regional or global issues. Sketching such a model capability might serve as a guide, which is needed today by nation-states and international organizations to develop satisfying solutions to citizens' demands and needs regarding economic prosperity or stable political order. And the fulfilment of these demands will determine the fate of nation-states and international organizations in terms of longevity or end of their existence.⁷ Russia's employment of the function of management has originated from its vision to be a great power or world state again. Dmitri Trenin explained the background of Russia's employment of the result-producing function of management as follows:

*"A great power in the twenty-first century should be able to function as a self-standing unit in a world where there are several major poles of attraction."*⁸

The new Russia has a more economic orientation⁹ rather than an imperial overstretch. Russia's this new orientation provides some background explanation of its use of the function of modern management. Russia's orientation towards the usage of its economic resources to fuel its new state apparatus has already necessitated the employment of the techniques of the modern management as a result-producing tool.

2. A Key Competency in Today's World: Managing Transnational Issues

Today's world states are generally confronted with a task of handling transnational issues since many problems and disputes of today's world agenda are of complex character. "The United Nations recognise approximately 500 nationalities, of which some 140 live on the territory of a state governed by a different nationality."¹⁰ Nevertheless managing transnation-

⁷ On the relationship between the quality of management and the fate of governments, see William H. Newman, *Yönetim. İşletmelerde ve Kamu Yönetiminde Sevki ve İdaresi* [Original title in English: Administrative Action – The Techniques of Organization and Management], (çev./trans. Dr. Kenan Sürgit), Türkiye Orta Doğu ve Amme İdaresi Enstitüsü Yay., No: 186, 1979, pp. 1-4.

⁸ Trenin, op. cit., p. 6.

⁹ Trenin, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁰ Noaber Foundation, *Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World. Renewing Transatlantic Partnership*, Lunteren, 2007, p. 52.

al issues adequately far exceeds the capability of the national state apparatus.¹¹ This phenomenon has been most recently observed in the events of Arab Spring in 2011 and 2012. During the course of events triggered by the Arab Spring, for instance, many Syrian refugees¹² have sought asylum in Turkey while creating a sort of problem which needs to be dealt with an approach beyond national perspective.¹³ It has been seen today on many occasions that settling transnational issues requires a comprehensive problem solving capability resembling the practices of the mighty empires in the history. The identified need for a comprehensive capability of managing regional and global issues has urged the authors of International Relations to publish numerous books and articles on the topic of managing global issues.¹⁴ This new task of management directly reminds the role and the function of the empires which were generally known for their capability to govern a huge and ethnically diverse territory, as observed, for instance, in the practices of the Russian, the Ottoman Empire and even that of the USSR. The nature of the capability of old empires to manage transnational issues strikingly overlaps with the features outlined in the definition of management made by Peter F. Drucker, the founder of modern management thought. Drucker defined management as the ‘new social technology of the West’.¹⁵ Drucker broadened the scope of the definition of management to include societal, political and even ethical aspects.¹⁶ The new management has thus become the art of handling almost all human affairs in the widest sense. Drucker offered a new conception of management as summarized in the following excerpt:

¹¹ Noaber Foundation, *ibid.*, pp. 37-38 and 66.

¹² The severity of the Syrian refugee issue was reported by an institution of international media with the following description: “ (...) the number of Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war in their country exceeded 100,000 on Monday (15.10.2012) putting a severe strain on Turkey’s capacity to cope”. See, “Politics hinder aid to Syrian refugees”, *Deutsche Welle*, 16 October 2012, <http://www.dw.de/politics-hinder-aid-to-syrian-refugees/a-16308831>. Accessed: 02.12.2012.

¹³ For a review of the need for a novel and comprehensive approach beyond national perspective in the Middle Eastern affairs, see Muammer Öztürk, “Osmanlı Modelini Düşünmenin Zarureti” [On the Necessity of Thinking the Ottoman Model], *Turquie Diplomatique*, No. 33, 15 October – 15 November 2011, pp. 3-4.

¹⁴ An interesting title worth citing here is *Managing the Global Chaos*. It is a comprehensive study containing articles on the diverse aspects and importance of the managing global issues. Full title of the book is Chester A. Crocker & Fen Oster Hampson & Pamela Aall (Ed.), *Managing the Global Chaos, Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, United States Institute of Peace, USIP Press Books, Washington, D.C., 1996.

¹⁵ For Drucker’s use of the term of ‘management as a social technology’, see Peter F. Drucker, “Management and the World’s Work”, *Harvard Business Review*, 66, September–October 1988, p. 70; see also William H. Newman, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-4.

¹⁶ For Peter F. Drucker’s definition of and thoughts on management, see Drucker, *The New Realities*, Heinemann Professional Publishing Ltd., Oxford, 1989, pp. 213-223; Drucker, 1988, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-76.

*“After World War II we began slowly to see that management is not business management. It pertains to every human effort that brings together in one organization people of diverse knowledge and skills. And it can be powerfully applied in hospitals, universities, churches, arts organizations, and social service agencies of all kinds. (...) Management world-wide has become the new social function.”*¹⁷

Many lessons might be learned from the practice of management with regard to accomplishment of the tasks facing governments and organizations¹⁸ Management is the function of a real sector producing real results, real gains and real outputs for a real world. The result-producing capability of management is visible in its products and services since they are directly designed for the sake of customer satisfaction. To quote Drucker:

*“Management (...) deals with action and application; and its test is its results. This makes it a technology. But management also deals with people, their values, their growth and developmet – and this makes it a humanity.”*¹⁹

In a similar way, the the administrative authorities or governmental units are charged with the task of delivering satisfying services and solutions for the needs of citizens. What needed today in international relations is a capability to tackle issues as seen in the practice of modern management. In this regard, demands and issues can be handled through concrete solutions and this rule also applies to international issues.²⁰ And managing transnational issues additionally requires know-how of the features such as ethnic structures of the regions concerned. Dealing with the affairs of different nations adequately appears to be an efficient, reasonable and practical foreign policy instrument, namely a sort of public diplomacy especially for the world powers.²¹ It is a fact that imperial management capability in the past was not solely based on military power as seen in the examples of the

¹⁷ Peter F. Drucker, 1989, op. cit., p. 218.

¹⁸ A standard definition of the management illustrates the executive and result-oriented function of this discipline: “Management means getting things done effectively through people to achieve the desired results”. See Luke C. Ng, “Best Management Practices”, *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2011, p. 9.

¹⁹ Drucker, 1989, op.cit., p. 223.

²⁰ For more on the result-producing function of the modern management, see Peter F. Drucker, 1988, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

²¹ For an account of Russia’s use of the public diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument, see Robert W. Orttung, “Russia’s Use of PR as a Foreign Policy Tool”, *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 81, 16 June 2010, pp. 7-10.

Ottoman Empire or British Empire. The imperial management capability in terms of dealing with transnational issues had overwhelmingly based on an established area expertise. The crucial role of know-how of managing transnational affairs and area expertise for imperial rules in the past was, in this sense, summed up by Peter F. Drucker as follows:

*“The British ran the Indian subcontinent for 200 years, from the middle of the eighteenth century through World War II, without making any fundamental changes in organization structure or administrative policy. The Indian civil service never had more than 1000 members to administer the vast and densely populated subcontinent – a tiny fraction (at most 1%) of the legions of Confucian mandarins and palace eunuchs employed next door to administer a not-much-more populous China.”*²²

3. Russia’s Capability of Managing Transnational Issues

The dissolution of the USSR had been evidently one of the remarkable events in the world affairs. That event has accordingly sparked the concerns of the future shape of Russia.²³ It should be noted here that Vladimir Putin said in an address in 2005 that the biggest geopolitical disaster of the 20th century was the dissolution of the USSR.²⁴ The reason which urged Putin, as a politician adhered to the legacy of the Russian mentality,²⁵ to make this statement might have been to highlight the need for a ‘guard of the order’ (*Ordnungshüter* in German) in the post-Soviet territory as it was formulated by Samuel P. Huntington in his famous book entitled *The Clash of Civilizations*.²⁶ The non-existence of a ‘guard of the order’ or representative authority in post-Soviet geography might pave way to an order of chaos, in which any attempt trying to change balances to the ad-

²² Peter F. Drucker, “The Coming of the New Organization”, *Harvard Business Review*, January–February 1998, p. 6. Reprint, <http://home.base.be/vt6195217/neworganization.pdf>. Accessed: 5.11.2012.

²³ Halliday, 1995, op. cit., p. 220.

²⁴ This annual address was made by Vladimir Putin on 25 April, 2005 in the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. For the whole text of Putin’s address, see http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/04/25/2031_type70029type82912_87086.shtml. Accessed: 10.12.2011.

²⁵ For more on Putin’s imperial mentality, see Owen Matthews and Anna Nemtsowa, “The New Putin Profile”, *Newsweek*, 12 June 2010, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2010/06/12/the-new-putin-profile.html>. Accessed: 10.11.2012; Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, “Putin and the Uses of History”, *The National Interest*, January 4, 2012, <http://nationalinterest.org/article/putin-the-uses-history-6276?page=show>. Accessed: 10.12.2012.

²⁶ See Samuel P. Huntington, *Der Kampf der Kulturen, The Clash of Civilizations. Die Neugestaltung der Weltpolitik im 21. Jahrhundert*, (Aus dem Amerikan. Holger Fliessbach), Europa Verlag, München-Wien, 1996, pp. 246-250.

vantage of any ethnic group whilst at the same time to the disadvantage of many others will cause domino effects.²⁷ Country analyses of the post-Soviet republics indicate that each new independent state has several ethnic groups other than the overwhelming national majority. This demographic diversity requires a good administrative capability to manage the varying demands and needs of the diverse ethnic groups of people in these republics.²⁸ Within this frame of reference, it appears crucial to have a capability of managing transnational affairs to maintain stability and moreover to survive in the post-Soviet territory, which faces various challenging transnational issues. Most of the Central Asian states are relatively new states having only a poor experience of statehood. The lack of experience of managing transnational issues – or affairs – appears to be a matter of weakness for the post-Soviet republics, which leads to dependency on Russia²⁹ for maintaining their domestic order, border security and an intermediating function in inter-state conflicts. The dependency on Russia can be termed as a ‘crisis of statehood’.³⁰ The events in Kyrgyzstan in April 2010, for instance, brought to the fore the importance of the capability of managing transnational issues in post-Soviet Central Asia. In Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz people attacked the Uzbek ethnic minority in this country and killed a dozen of them in June 2010. Upon these bloody events in Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz government had no option other than to ask for help from Russia in order to settle down the tension in the Kyrgyz streets.³¹ Apparently, the incentive behind the attitude of Kyrgyz government for asking for help from Russia was the Kyrgyz conviction that Russia as a ‘former’ regional power possesses a significant experience of managing transnational issues. Russia has managed to maintain, in a certain degree, its image as a pivotal state on the global political stage even after the demise of the USSR. Russia has

²⁷ Sergey Markedonov, “Caucasus Conflict Breaks Old Rules of the Game”, *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 45, 4 September 2008, p. 4.

²⁸ Alexander J. Motyl, “Why Empires Reemerge: Imperial Collapse and Imperial Revival in Comparative Perspective”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 2, January 1999, pp. 139; Maciej Falkowski, “Tajikistan faces crisis of statehood”, *CES Commentary*, No: 22, 06 March 2009, Centre for Eastern Studies, http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/Commentary_22.pdf. Accessed: 10.01.2011.

²⁹ Stefan Meister, “Russland als Ordnungsmacht im postsowjetischen Raum. Regionalorganisationen als Instrumente für Friedeneinsatz”, *Russland-Analysen*, No. 216, 11 March 2011, p. 6.

³⁰ See Falkowski, op. cit.

³¹ For an account of the events and unrest in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, see Gabriel Borrud and Nicole Goebel, “Kyrgyzstan looks to Russia for help in quelling violence”, *DW World*, 12 June 2010, <http://www.dw.de/kyrgyzstan-looks-to-russia-for-help-in-quelling-violence/a-5678762-1>. Accessed: 6.11.2012; for more on the turmoils in June 2010 in Kyrgyzstan, see Nick Amies, “Kyrgyzstan unrest adds new edge to global powers’ regional rivalry”, *DW World*, 14 June 2010, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5682657,00.html>. Accessed: 04.09.2011.

inherited functioning institutions and know-how of practices of managing transnational issues. Most efficient institution of Russian capability is the Russian state. The Russian state is of the utmost value in Russian mentality. This phenomenon was highlighted in Putin's following words:

*“For us, the state and its institutions and structures have always played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and the people. For Russians, a strong state is not an anomaly to fight against. Quite the contrary, it is the source and guarantor of order, the initiator and the main driving force of any change... Society desires the restoration of the guiding and regulating role of the state.”*³²

Russia's image as a functioning state or a regional power is one of its fundamental sources of capability, namely, soft power. It is named as a BRIC country, which is an acronym of big four emerging markets consisting of Brazil, Russia, India and China. It is also a member country of World Trade Organization (WTO) since July 2012. Russia also possesses credibility as a potential world state owing to its language advantage³³ as *lingua franca*, and above all, its rich energy resources.³⁴ Moreover, Russia is one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. This membership provides Russia an important instrument to exert influence on the world politics. After the demise of the USSR, Russia has demonstrated its capability of managing transnational issues on many occasions. It has participated in the peace-keeping operations and in the efforts to design and strengthen regional cooperation organizations in the post-Soviet territory.³⁵ It can be anticipated from Russia's political and even military manoeuvres that it is back on the international stage as observed in its strategic success in the crisis in South Ossetia in 2008.³⁶ Russia's strategic and political manoeuvres in Latin America in 2008 initiated by Dmitry Medvedev, the Russian President from 2008 to 2012, also revealed Russia's world state perspective and capability of managing transnational issues.³⁷ Stefan

³² Hill and Gaddy, op. cit.

³³ Joseph P. Nye, “Soft Power”, *Foreign Policy*, No. 80, Autumn 1990, p. 167.

³⁴ See Motyl, op.cit., p. 139.

³⁵ See Meister, op.cit, p. 5-7.

³⁶ Andrei P. Tsygankov, “Russia and Global Governance in the Post-Western World”, *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 114, 4 June 2012, pp. 2.

³⁷ ‘Venezuela and Russia Sign Accords’, *The New York Times*, 28 November 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/28/world/americas/28venez.html>. Accessed: 12.03.2012.

Hedlund³⁸ provided a brief illustration of Russian superpower ambitions and its use of energy as a fuel of these ambitions. The point here is that Russia inherited a valuable and eligible background of know-how from its imperial or Soviet past to be used for designing its political or military operations. Russian perspective and aspiration to be a world state again arises from the perception that today's complex transnational affairs, particularly those in the post-Soviet territory, can only be managed by a comprehensive capability.

The 'new' Russia's aspirations to restore its former role as a world state on the global political scene were termed as the reappearance of Russia.³⁹ The reappearance of Russia to be a potential world power again can also be clearly read in the five principles which were laid down by Dmitry Medvedev in the aftermath of the South Ossetia conflict in August 2008.⁴⁰ Two of these principles obviously reflect the Russian determination to be an active player in world affairs. Russia's reflexes towards political turmoil on the territory of the former USSR, in other words, the Russian "back yard" provides hints in this regard. Russia's political attitude regarding the conflict in Syria⁴¹ during the widespread events of Arab Spring in 2011 and 2012 also deserves an in-depth study. In this respect, Russia's initial option for Syria and Syrian President *Beshar al-Assad* has been evidently a step towards taking active role in shaping the world affairs, particularly in neighbouring geography and near abroad. Russia, together with China, also managed to prevent a military operation to Syria through voting the resolution in the UN Security Council

³⁸ Stefan Hedlund, "Russia as a Neighbourhood Energy Bully", *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 100, 26 July 2011, p. 2.

³⁹ Noaber Foundation, op. cit., p. 62-65. There have been published a dozen of articles and analyses on the reappearance or revival of Russia as a 'new' energy empire. On the reappearance of Russia on the global political scene, see Friedrich Pflüger, "Eine neue Ära des Energieimperialismus. Für Europa gilt: Von China lernen heißt siegen lernen", *Internationale Politik*, Mai/Juni 2010, pp. 76-83; Fiona Hill, *Energy Empire: Oil, Gas and Russia's Revival*, The Foreign Policy Centre, September 2004, <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/307.pdf>. Accessed: 2.03.2011, pp. 2-6; Alexander Rahr, "Die Sicherung der Energietransportwege. Eine strategische Aufgabe für Rußland", *Internationale Politik*, Vol. 52, No. 1, Januar, 1997, pp. 25-30; Andrej Kurtunow, "Zwischen Imperium und Weltharmonie. Rußland und das Nahe Ausland", *Internationale Politik*, Vol. 52, No. 1, Januar 1997, pp. 9-16.

⁴⁰ See Paul Reynolds, "New Russian world order: the five principles", *BBC News Service*, 1 September 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7591610.stm>. Accessed: 10.01.2011.

⁴¹ For a review of Russian position towards Arab Spring, see Roland Dannreuther, "Russia and the Arab Revolution", *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 98, 6 July 2011, pp. 2-3; Mark N. Katz, "Russia's Security Council Diplomacy and the Middle East", *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 114, 4 June 2012, pp. 5-7; Roman Goncharenko, "For Russia, it's about more than just Syria", *Deutsche Welle*, <http://www.dw.de/for-russia-its-about-more-than-just-syria/a-16087238-1>. Accessed: 15.11.2012.

in February 2012. All these attempts have also provided an expression of Russia's ambitions and capability of designing world affairs.⁴²

Medvedev's second principle of foreign policy was of multi-polar world. It was a declaration of a need for a multipolar world and the denial of the domination of one country in the world affairs. Medvedev's fourth principle of foreign policy had strikingly a purpose of administering the rights of Russian citizens all over the world. It should be noted here that the number of Russian living outside Russia is about 25 million.⁴³ This amount of Russian population constitutes also a significant soft power tool for the 'new' Russia. Russia still governs today a large ethnic diversity on its soils. Russia today has 100 different ethnic groups in Russian territory, which encompasses about 6.5 Million square miles.⁴⁴ In sum, the wording of Medvedev's five principles of foreign policy was an outcome of Russia's self-confidence of Russia. Russia's self-confidence stems from the belief that it has practical solutions to offer to the world for the settlement of global and regional issues. The background philosophy, which made the conception of these principles possible, has originated mainly from the Russian legacy of imperial past. Russia's imperial and Soviet past provides it a valuable and rich pool of practices of managing administrative and transnational issues. What is striking here is the mentality and skill to benefit from the past experiences of management for producing solutions for today's nearly similar issues.

4. A Case of Performance for Managing Transnational Issues: The 2008 South Ossetia Crisis

Georgia is a small Caucasian country with a population of 4.585.874⁴⁵ and the homeland of more than six ethnic groups. Apart from the main national group of Georgians, Georgia is the country of South Ossetians and Abkhazians, Russians, Armenians, Azeris, and other small ethnic groups. In addition to its ethnically diverse identity, Georgia has joint frontiers with Turkey, Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Georgia is also a corridor

⁴² "Russia and China veto resolution on Syria at UN", *BBC News World*, 04 February 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-16890107>. Accessed 05.02.2012.

⁴³ Anthony Hyman, "Russians Outside Russia", *The World Today*, Vol. 49, No. 11, November 1993, pp. 205-208; Kurtunow, op.cit., p. 12.

⁴⁴ Milan N. Vego, "Russia and the Return of Geopolitics", *JFQ Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 45, 2nd Quarter, 2007, p. 12, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GefTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA520412>. Accessed: 16.11.2011.

⁴⁵ July 2011 estimation. See <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>. Accessed: 28.12.2011.

country for a number of energy pipelines, of which the most important is Baku-Ceyhan-Tbilisi pipeline. The crisis, which began after Georgia's operation on 7-8 August 2008 against the breakaway republic of South Ossetia and was escalated by Russia's intervention in the problem, draw once again world's attention to the complex and challenging characteristic of the Caucasus. The Caucasus has always managed to occupy the world agenda due to its geopolitical position. The critical importance of the Caucasus region derives mainly from its geopolitical location to serve as a corridor to transfer the energy resources which whet the appetites of the major international actors. The Caucasus is an ethnically diverse region inhabited by diverse nations and ethnic groups of people. The Caucasus region has been also known as 'powder keg'. It has been almost a brand name, which denotes that it is a highly challenging task for the governments to create a peaceful coexistence for various ethnic groups and nations in this region. And in the Caucasus, such a crisis might arise at any time. In the light of this fact, it will be easier to grasp the reason of the concern caused by Georgia's attempt to invade the break-away republic of South Ossetia in early August 2008.

Surviving in the Caucasus means to be competent in handling needs and demands of this multinational region. One of the causes of the South Ossetia Conflict in August 2008 was therefore attributed to the Georgia's weak political institutions, in other words, weak satisfying capability of managing interior affairs.⁴⁶ Russia's intervention in the events triggered by Georgia's attempt to invade South Ossetia must therefore be seen as a reflex of a former regional power to manage the situation in the former Soviet territory. In a region of ethnic diversity, a capability of managing transnational issues appears to be an efficient way of discouraging attempts aiming at changing the political balances in the post-Soviet territory. It is a fact that the results of the South Ossetia Conflict in 2008 might have been more destructive. The intervention of Russia in the five-day war in 2008 saved the total destruction of the military and political infrastructure of South Ossetia.⁴⁷ On the other hand, it has contributed to the image of Russia as a 'still' mighty regional power. Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's option to rely on the 'former' regional power Russia in the South Ossetia crisis of August 2008 in order to overcome their disadvantage might serve as an evidence of the impact and the credibility of Russia's capability of managing transnational issues

⁴⁶ Ivlian Haindrava, "Eyes Wide Open", *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 45, 4 September 2008, pp. 6-8.

⁴⁷ Markedonov, op. cit., p. 4.

in this region. Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's inclination towards Russia during the August 2008 Crisis was definitely a gain of Russia's capability of managing transnational issues. And this capability, as stressed earlier, has been derived from Russia's know-how of managing transnational issues and its world state image, which it had developed through its imperial and the USSR times. What the world public witnessed in the South Ossetia Crisis of August 2008 has been, on the other hand, total inefficiency of manoeuvres of the NATO or the US warships⁴⁸ and the rhetoric of respect for territorial integrity.⁴⁹ This result has been again achieved through the mechanism of Russia's capability of managing transnational issues.⁵⁰ Russian then President Dmitri Medvedev's statement, who said, on September 1, 2008 in a meeting in Moscow, "one-polar world cannot be accepted any longer", might be interpreted a declaration of the thought that Russia can no longer afford the manoeuvres or free acts of foreign powers just in front of its back yard or near abroad.⁵¹ The lesson that might be learned from the South Ossetia Crisis in 2008 is the fact that the West and particularly the US couldn't develop any novel solution, which could be marketed and exported to the Russian or the Caucasian market of power politics in terms of minority rights and respecting national borders.⁵²

The 2008 Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict also revealed a significant case, because Russia took military action beyond its borders for the first time after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russian intervention in the five-day conflict in 2008 could be definitely realised through its capability to conduct operations beyond its national borders. The significance of the 2008 Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict lies in the fact that the Russian army

⁴⁸ It should be remembered that NATO and US warships demonstrated a naval exercise in the Black Sea almost at the same time with Russian intervention in the South Ossetia Conflict in 2008. For the Russian tension triggered by NATO naval exercise in the Black Sea, see Andrew E. Kramer, "NATO Ships in Black Sea Raise Alarms in Russia", August 27, 2008, www.nytimes.com/2008/08/28/world/europe/28russia.html. Accessed: 30.09.2012.

⁴⁹ For more on the U.S.A.'s call for respect for Georgia's territorial integrity, see "Rice Says Russian Forces Must Leave Georgia Immediately", *Fox News*, 15 August 2008, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,404301,00.html>. Accessed: 5.12.2012.

⁵⁰ On Russia's response to NATO naval exercises in the Black Sea in 2008, see "Putin vows 'an answer' to NATO ships near Georgia", *Usa Today*, 2 September 2008, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-09-01-3534143527_x.html. Accessed: 10.10.2012. See also "Russia Retains Control Over Georgian Port as Tensions Increase", *Deutsche Welle*, 23 August 2008, <http://www.dw.de/russia-retains-control-over-georgian-port-as-tensions-increase/a-3588875> Accessed: 5.12.2012.

⁵¹ "Russia's 2008 war with Georgia prevented NATO growth – Medvedev", *Ria Novosti*, 21 November 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20111121/168901195.html>. Accessed: 10.03.2012.

⁵² Tsygankov, op. cit., p. 3.

participated directly in it in contrast to the previous ones. Markedonov⁵³ provided a brief review of the significance and uniqueness of the 2008 Georgia-South Ossetia conflict. Russian intervention in the five-day conflict was never conducted with the intention of the imperial overstretch contrary to its past experiences during its imperial or Soviet times. The main goal of Russia to intervene in this conflict was apparently to protect stability in the Caucasus.⁵⁴ In supporting this phenomenon, it must be remembered that Russia named its military operation 'Forcing Georgia to Peace'. What lies behind the conception of such an expression is apparently Russia's world state capacity to conduct operations beyond its borders to maintain stability and order.

5. Conclusion

The starting point of this article was a concern for sketching a comprehensive capability to tackle today's complex regional or global issues. In search for a comprehensive capability, this article focused on post-Soviet Russia's political and military practices. Russia has demonstrated its determination or inclination to be a world state again through its remarkable political and military practices on international arena. This determination has been strikingly conceded with the rise in the number of articles which have dealt with the topic of the return of the old empires. Russia, as a successor state of imperial tsarist Russia and the USSR, inherited a legacy of imperial management practices. Through the use of know-how gained from the legacy of imperial management practices, Russia has equipped itself with a capability for managing transnational issues. The know-how of managing imperial affairs has also supplied Russia a valuable tool to be employed for settling transnational issues. Russia's performance in managing various transnational issues such as the 2008 South Ossetia Crisis has proved Russia's capability after the dissolution of the USSR. Russia's capability of managing transnational issues has, on the other hand, resemblance with the result-producing practices of modern management. Russia's approach in benefiting from the know-how of its practices for settling transnational issues in its imperial past provides sufficient ground to study them at length in a time, in which almost every nation-state or even international organisations are in search for a comprehensive, more competent capability to handle regional or global problems. This article proposed an uncon-

⁵³ Markedonov, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 4-5.

ventional approach to the task of reading and analysing Russia's political and military practices. The purpose was to sketch a more comprehensive model to be applied to the settlement of transnational issues. Russia, as a country with rich history, abundant natural resources and its international stance, deserves this novel reading and analysis.

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