

# STATECRAFT IN U.S.-RUSSIA RELATIONS

## *MEANING, DILEMMAS, AND SIGNIFICANCE*

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### **Abstract**

The article introduces the special issue of *International Trends* dedicated to the current tendencies in the evolution of statecraft. It sets the analytical agenda for other special issue contributions by discussing the meaning of the term “statecraft” and illustrating the concept through several dilemmas that policymakers commonly face when choosing foreign policy toolkits. The authors posit that, at base, a meaningful definition of statecraft subsumes the ends, means, and ways embraced by a government in its attempt to exert influence over another state short of the resort to brute military force, either directly or via pressures on key non-state stakeholders. The article goes on to highlight how a clear-cut formulation of a country’s “national interests” may, on one hand, serve as a lodestar for the national bureaucracy and draw “red lines” for the country’s adversaries, but on the other hand, entail a difficult and politically costly choice between mutually exclusive priorities for the country’s foreign policy goals. The authors also discuss the impact of technological innovation on the evolution of great power statecraft. They describe a variant of the security dilemma arising from the choice between immediate weaponization of new technology, on one hand, and refraining from such move with the aim of avoiding an arms race or escalation of existing conflicts, on the other. In its turn, developing a strong identity as a means of statecraft for an international player may increase that player’s power of commitment, but at the same time, foreclose attractive policy options that cannot be implemented because they could compromise the chosen identity. Pioneering the use of big data in the study of statecraft, the authors find that, notwithstanding very different power positions, traditions, and interests, U.S. and Russian discourse surrounding great power competition resemble each other more than commonly acknowledged.

### **Keywords:**

Statecraft; Foreign Policy; Security; Russia; United States of America; Discourse; Negotiation

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This article is a result of a collaborative research project on the modern trends in the evolution of statecraft by the MGIMO School of Government and International Affairs and the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at the Georgia Institute of Technology. A Russian version of this article is published in the second part of this special issue of *International Trends*. The Russian and English versions are not identical. The key term statecraft cannot be translated directly into Russian, that is why the Russian articles in this special issue use a variety of longer definitions of statecraft depending on the context.

Manuscript received: 30.09.2020

Manuscript accepted: 25.03.2021

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Amid the dislocation caused by the global pandemic and expectations of change surrounding the 2020 U.S. presidential elections, there are palpable signs of continuity in great power politics. Despite calls for rethinking strategic relationships and related domestic political pressures stoking divergent worldviews, the leaderships in Washington and Moscow are bracing for competition over the long-haul. Although the Biden Administration has been quick to castigate former President Trump's idiosyncratic and transactional approach to international relations, early statements align closely with the 2018 National Defense Strategy and preceding National Security Strategy that are moored in waging long-term competition with near-peer rivals from a position of strength. These strategy documents highlight that the central challenge to America's prosperity and security stems from emboldened revisionist-authoritarian leaderships that necessitate not only the need to deter and defeat them in war, but also the need to contest for influence across a broad and complex mix of policy domains. Similarly, there is little illusion in Moscow that political change in Washington will alter America's pursuit of "global primacy" or otherwise dampen strategic rivalry in the "polycentric" international system. Notwithstanding a detected rhetorical emphasis on "diplomacy first" or "strategic stability," the Kremlin is inclined to read the Biden administration's message as a commitment to "double-down on waging non-military campaigns against its designated adversaries, including Russia" [Trenin, 2020]. The prevailing view is that Western sanctions and hostile intervention to foment "color revolutions" both within Russia and its sphere of influence will persist, if not intensify, thus presenting an existential threat to the Kremlin and a competitive edge to relations with the Euro-Atlantic community. Accordingly, the Russian national security establishment actively strives to broaden its strategic options, including bolstering alignment with China and other non-Western powers as well as leveraging informal actors and information. This is part of an inclusive approach to strategic deterrence and rivalry to offset asymmetries while playing to Moscow's strengths at exerting international influence across multiple domains.

The mutual gravitation to competitive forms of statecraft raises more questions than answers regarding the state of great power politics. What are the preferred ends, means, and ways associated with respective U.S. and Russian efforts to exert international influence? How effective are they at shaping the behavior of respective targets and attaining desired outcomes, and under which conditions are they more likely to succeed? How similar or different are the basic conceptions and approaches pursued by the U.S. and Russia? Moreover, how accurate are Moscow's and Washington's perceptions, accusations, and suspicions about key rivals that inform respective competitive influence strategies? What are the risks of inadvertent escalation and the attendant policy dilemmas? In particular, can Washington or Moscow realize competitive objectives in one policy sphere without undermining national priorities or mutual security interests in another [Charap, Shapiro 2015, 2016; Pifer 2015]? Can such problems be mitigated or otherwise transcended to limit the damage of long-term competition or to otherwise advance cooperative U.S.-Russian engagement? These questions lie at the crux of a series of forthcoming articles in these pages that compare U.S. and Russian approaches to statecraft across various policy domains.

# 1

Statecraft is a much used and abused notion in the study of international relations. On the one hand, there are sweeping conceptions that render it almost meaningless for explicating great power politics. For example, classic definitions center around the "art of conducting state affairs" that span the gamut of efforts aimed at marshalling diverse policies across foreign and domestic dimensions. This includes elements related to a country's policymaking processes, as well as the selection of means in support of generic national policy goals. On the other hand, there are parochial applications that confine the term to the pursuit of an instrumental foreign policy objective (e.g., the "de-annexation" of Crimea), the formation of a particular strategy (e.g., compellence), or the use of a specific policy instrument (e.g., foreign military assistance). While the broad definition

has been abandoned by scholars of domestic public policy because it often conflates power with techniques of policy, the parochial ways of defining statecraft often overlook the multiple dimensions that inform strategic choices by one state to influence another [Baldwin 2020].

At base, a meaningful definition of statecraft subsumes the ends, means, and ways embraced by a government in its attempt to exert influence over another state short of the resort to brute military force, either directly or via pressures on key non-state stakeholders. This places at the center of analysis not only the techniques, logics, and goals adopted by one state, but the conditions that directly affect the scope, domains, costs, and weight of such foreign influence strategies. In this conception, statecraft involves more than the formulation of a specific foreign policy, which is a more static concept; rather, statecraft captures the underlying rationale for employing different instruments. As such, it widens the aperture in the study of strategy, as it draws attention to contending logics and tradeoffs among alternative “ways” that different states seek to influence other foreign actors. In this regard, it constitutes a political act intended to alter the value of a policy that extends beyond the market price, technical specification, or kinetic features that are intrinsic to a specific instrument.

The tools of the trade for statecraft span economic sanctions, malign financing, diplomatic pressure, security assistance, energy supply disruptions, and instrumental diffusion of religious beliefs or information of different sorts that are employed by a state to get rivals to do more of what it wants. This also can cover the political or limited use of force short of all-out warfare to coerce rather than to physically defeat an adversary. Accordingly, statecraft encompasses the information, instruments, and strategies that one state uses to shape the choices and behavior of another rather than to impose an outcome. Statecraft is a concept focused on states’ patterns of behavior as they pursue their goals in external affairs. Thinking in terms of statecraft is not so different from examining the patterns of behavior of people or social groups in life. It is a relational concept, not a property or element of power,

where international consequences are determined by the interaction of strategies and conditions on respective choices, notwithstanding initial preferences of the specific parties.

This understanding of statecraft lends itself to strategic and comparative analysis. Analysis of the components of statecraft allows for assessment of how specific states not only perceive their own interests and threats, but those of a rival; together, these outlooks inform how they assess tradeoffs among policy tools in the formulation of alternative strategies of foreign influence. This is crucial not only for understanding diverse inputs into respective strategies, but for distinguishing alternative preferences and conceptions among common strategies adopted by different states. While states may pursue shared ends, their approaches to related strategies can differ significantly in terms of the combination of policy instruments marshalled, as well as the character of threats, promises, and inflection points of escalation. Coercive measures practiced by one state, for example, may be perceived differently or go unnoticed by the target that is steeped in its own competitive frame of reference. Thus, default to mirror imaging, assumptions of reciprocity, and failure to comprehend differences can obfuscate preferences, as well as confuse strategic signaling, leading to inadvertent escalation, if not dangerous outcomes.

## 2

As described above, statecraft is where structure and agency interact in international relations. The techniques of statecraft derive neither strictly from the composition of power and aggregate capabilities of a state, nor from the intentions behind foreign influence attempts. Rather, the focus on statecraft examines how different state actors wield fixed “property” concepts of power based on alternative mechanisms or logics to influence foreign state and non-state actors under the prevailing conditions. Distinguishing between these fixed, variable, and relational dimensions to international competition put in play the dynamic dimensions to the contemporary period of statecraft that present challenges to extant assumptions and precepts.

While the basic elements of statecraft are time honored, the conditions for its practice today are much different than during the Cold War. First, asymmetry rather than parity defines the strategic context for long-term great power competition. Influence attempts at the global and regional levels pit differences in raw material power, stakes, resolve, and values among contending states. Such asymmetries can alter the perceptions, choices, and demands on parties with different dispositions that confound bargaining based on bipolarity or uniform calculations of costs, benefits, and risk associated with classic models of coercion and persuasion. Second, there are both old and new instruments available for states to combine differently in respective influence strategies. Accordingly, the current epoch of statecraft is not dominated by a specific instrument wielded by great powers, such as was the focus with the nuclear revolution. The challenges presented by emerging technologies, such as AI and drones, relate to empowering multiple and non-state actors, as well as to adding new dimensions to nuclear diplomacy, demonstrations of and ambiguous use of conventional military power, economic sanctions, information operations, or energy cut-offs that take place in the “gray zone”, above peaceful engagement and below the line of war. This can accentuate, complicate, or attenuate the potency of certain instruments across domains under different circumstances.

Furthermore, the character of contemporary great power statecraft is marked by curious puzzles in national discourse. The GDELT<sup>1</sup> dataset of millions of events from the mid-1990s, for

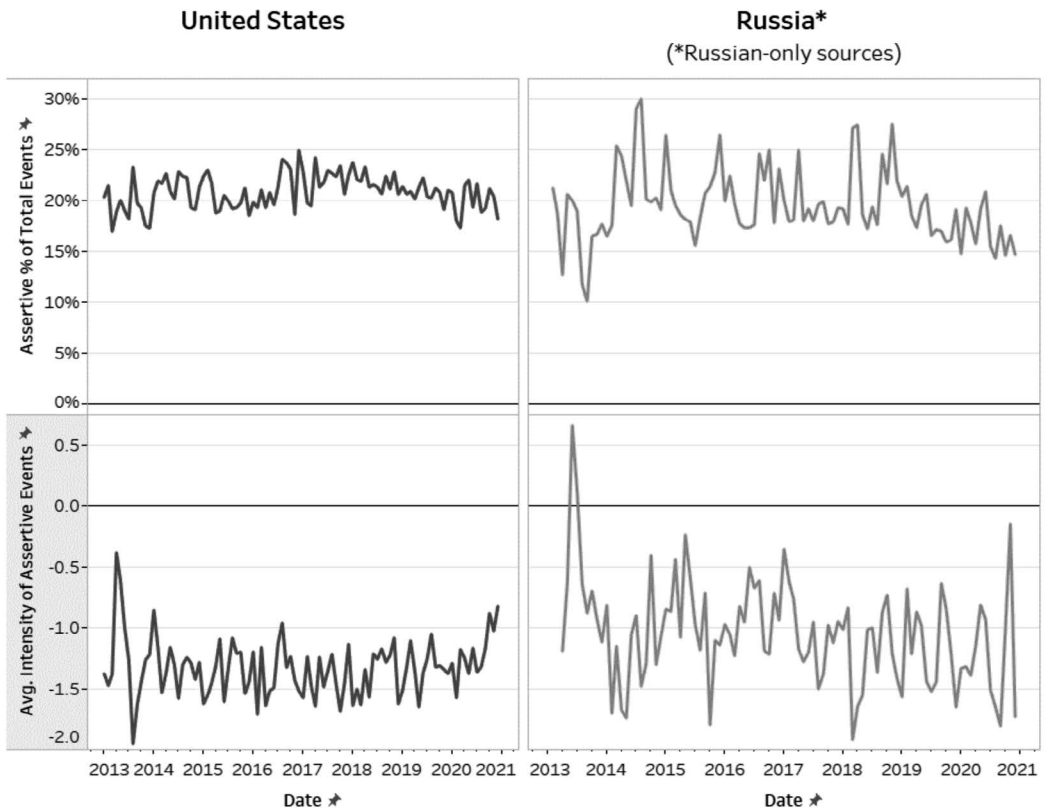
example, makes it possible to illuminate broad trends in the content of strategic discourse surrounding U.S. and Russian international assertiveness that is automatically culled from popular media sources. Using the CAMEO taxonomy of assertive-related codes – which can be disaggregated by source, intensity, policy domain, and tone – reveals several distinct trends of convergence and divergence in the description of U.S. and Russian postures since 2013.

Notwithstanding very different power positions, traditions, and interests, U.S. and Russian discourse surrounding great power competition resemble each other more than commonly acknowledged. As depicted in Figure 1, the patterns in the frequency and intensity of U.S. and Russian international assertiveness are roughly on par at the macro level, as reflected by the popular characterization of their respective postures since 2013 as a percentage of each one’s overall international activity. The discourse captured by Russian sources describes patterns in the frequency of Russia’s overall assertive international posture in terms that track closely (but with higher episodic peaks in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2019) with those reflected by the global discourse regarding the analogous American posture (upper figures). Moreover, American and Russian international assertive postures are characterized as moderately aggressive among both Western and Russian sources in the dataset (lower figures), ranging from issuing formal warnings to promising material support<sup>2</sup>. Although on balance the international discussion around U.S. posture tends to reflect a more aggressive strategy, Russia’s assertiveness has

<sup>1</sup> GDELT (Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone) is an open-source, machine-coded dataset that seeks to capture and characterize the international behavior and interactions of states. It is generated through an automated method of extracting events from discourse in newspapers, magazines, blogs, and other online resources in over 65 languages from 1979 onwards; similarly, it utilizes the CAMEO event schema to characterize events into nearly 300 sub-classes of 20 categories with weights for intensity. Among other events datasets, GDELT is distinguished as the largest, most expansive in terms of non-Western sources used, and the most extensive with regards to the scraping and cleaning algorithms that they employ. Scholars have used events datasets to describe broad and real-time trends in the characterization of state interactions because they can distinguish actors, targets, and a variety of international behavior and tone culled from millions of reported events that are updated every 15 minutes. That said, there is an active debate within international academic and policy communities about the relative strengths and weaknesses of respective events databases, as well as about the merits of using them to identify and validate causal relationships.

<sup>2</sup> “Intensity” is measured on a Goldstein scale of +10 (extend military assistance) to -10 (military attack).

Figure 1  
Aggregate Assertiveness in U.S. and Russian<sup>3</sup> Discourse (GDELT)



Source: authors.

been characterized as more belligerent in the national media during select periods of 2016, 2018, and 2020. This suggests that both great powers not only take long-term strategies for assertive influence seriously, but do so in ways that are widely acknowledged as seeking to avoid direct confrontation, notwithstanding flagrant outbursts of hostility.

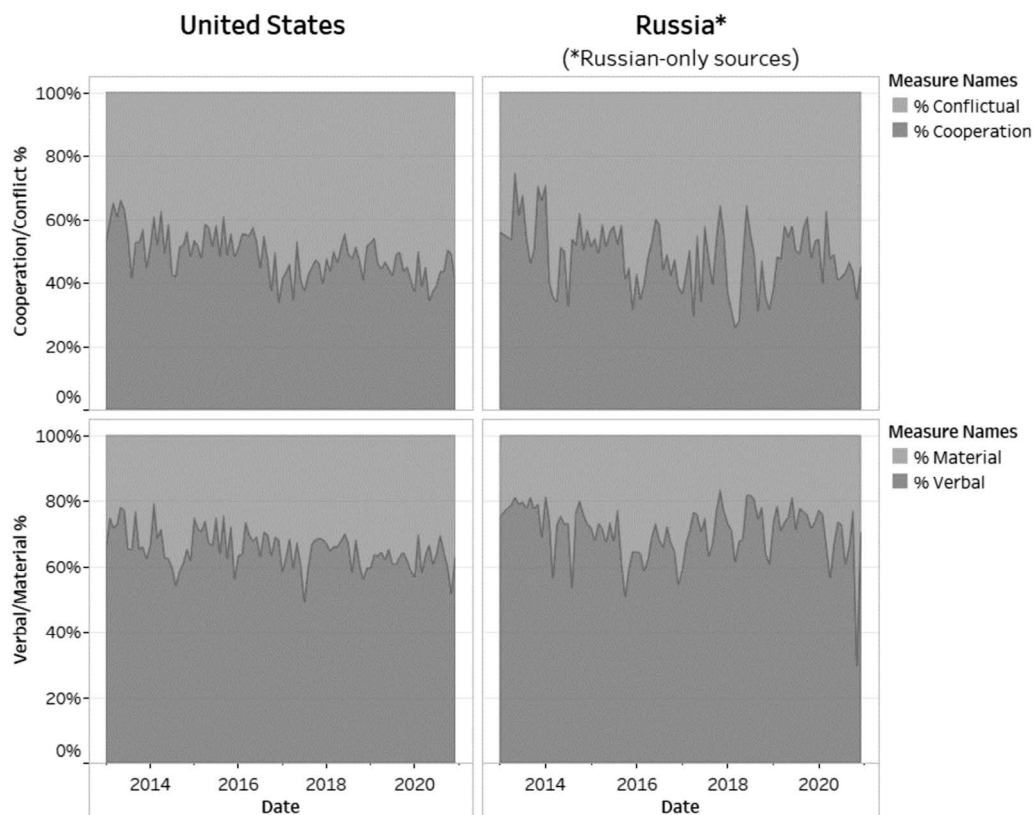
These trends are outlined by Figure 2, which underscores that Russian and American strategies of international assertiveness are comprised of more than simply static belligerent postures. Rather, the discourse surrounding assertiveness in both states centers on extending cooperative gestures as much, if not more, than wielding competitive policies in pursuit of international

influence (upper figures). Furthermore, the lion's share of respective Western and Russian discussions about assertiveness rest with issuing threats and promises, more than with undertaking concrete steps of military, economic, or political action (lower figures). Again, this reveals the prominence of diverse forms of statecraft rather than a preoccupation with specific strategies of coercion or kinetic action in both U.S. and Russian international postures.

That said, there are distinct differences. Specifically, U.S. and Russian assertive postures vary in terms of their cross-domain character. As Figure 3 highlights, U.S. international assertiveness has been characterized by Western sources as marked by a conspicuous reliance on

<sup>3</sup> Russian-only sources.

Figure 2

Aggregate Assertiveness/Conflictual vs. Cooperative & Materials vs. Rhetorical in U.S. and Russian<sup>4</sup> Discourse (GDELT)

Source: authors.

diplomacy, as well as on economic and, to a lesser extent, military tools. Although Russia, too, has been heavily invested in assertive diplomacy, there has been a greater proclivity since 2014 to hold up the military as an instrument of statecraft while relying less on economic sanctions or inducements. That said, the latter may be gaining prominence among the Russian strategic community just as the discourse on U.S. strategy is reviving the salience of international legal instruments. Irrespective of popular commentary, neither information nor security assistance constitute the mainstays in the overall assertive postures for either the U.S. or Russia. While these patterns do not reflect postures in specific cases or speak to causal dynam-

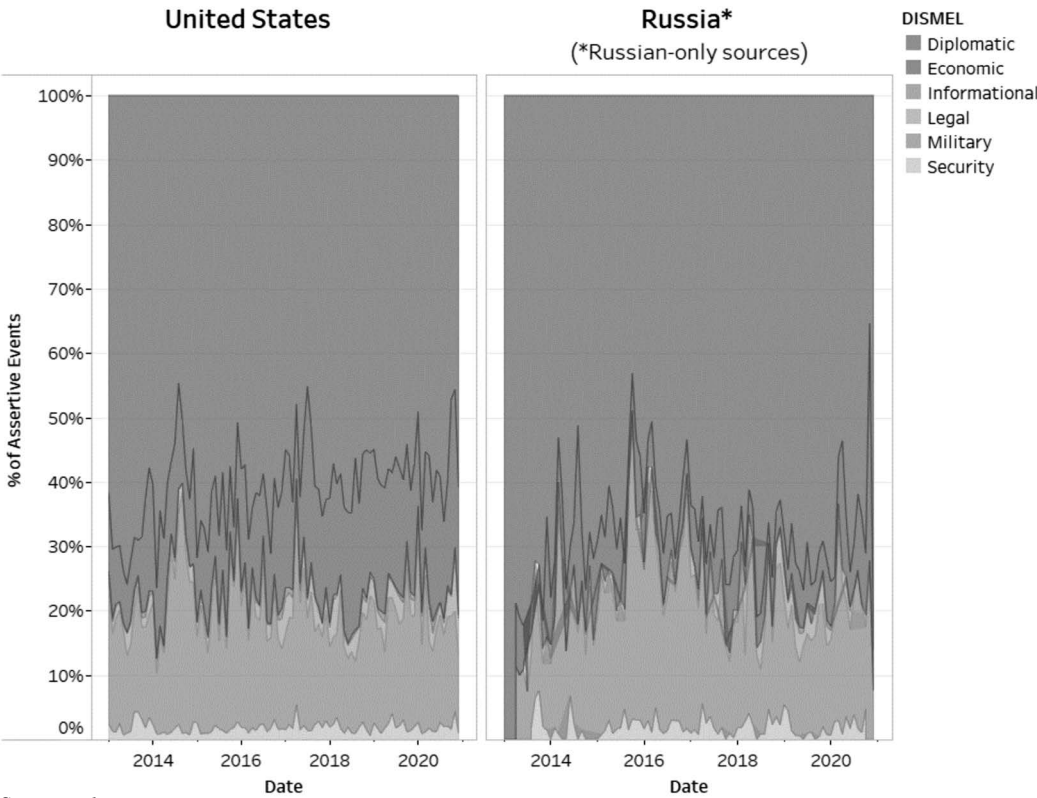
ics, they do reflect prevailing preferences and the variety of dimensions associated with contemporary statecraft captured in Western and Russian discourse. Accordingly, they raise poignant questions about the risks of escalation, success, and conditions under which both states select different policy instruments to advance respective international influence.

### 3

The previous two sections examined statecraft as a concept and presented a comparative assessment of aggregate differences in the understanding of statecraft and in the use of different tools of statecraft from Western and Russian perspectives. This section will high-

<sup>4</sup> Russian-only sources.

Figure 3  
Aggregate Assertiveness/Cross-Domain in U.S. and Russian<sup>5</sup> Discourse (GDELT)



Source: authors.

light three illustrative dilemmas in the practice of statecraft. These dilemmas underscore the challenges in identifying how states define and conduct foreign policy; how they formulate clear national interests; how policy makers choose among the wide array of tools available to conduct statecraft; and how those choices are received by domestic and international audiences. The dilemmas also help with understanding decisions to modernize technologically and show how a state’s identity can convey both resolve and commitment to specific interests.

The first dilemma relates to *defining an overall purpose, or a mission for a country’s foreign policy*. Policymakers and their domestic audiences usually need to decide whether and

how to define the mission and scope of their country’s foreign policy. For example, there is always the basic choice of guns vs. butter, or economic advancement vs. national security. Once the policymakers have decided to define the mission, they will then need to determine whether *national interests* should be formulated in a clear-cut way, and why. This creates a dilemma, because defining a national interest substantively requires making a difficult choice: many goals are contradictory and some even mutually exclusive, while a state usually has limited resources in order to advance its national interests. As a result, policymakers will have to accept that pursuing chosen interests and goals will make them less capable of achieving other important goals that are, from

<sup>5</sup> Russian-only sources.

the policymakers' perspective, still secondary to those chosen. For example, often policymakers are not able to achieve both economic growth and maximum national security, understood as sufficient extent of insularity from the outside world, because in many situations one goal clearly undermines the other—witness North Korea, Venezuela, or Myanmar.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both a clear and a vague definition of the foreign policy mission and national interests. Once national interests are clearly identified, red lines are drawn for the rivals and lodestars are put up for the country's own foreign policy establishment and its allies. These choices may be divisive, triggering a partisan domestic debate. Sometimes policymakers are faced with a transparency vs. partisanship tradeoff and choose to de-emphasize choices in order to avoid domestic controversy and partisanship. As a result, many policymakers seek to bypass such debate, even at the cost of poor public scrutiny of foreign policy goals and moves.

The second dilemma pertains to the tradeoffs surrounding *innovative means of statecraft*. How should policymakers weigh the decision to weaponize new technology despite the potentially destabilizing effects? Emerging technologies can present significant design and strategic effects, which increase capability and efficiency, while creating conditions that can undermine the stability of deterrence. Dual use technologies, for example, allow for open experimentation and refinement, while creating significant security risks given the uncertainty about states' intentions and the possibility of military application. It would be imprudent for a state leader not to consider any new technology from the perspective of its potential use in foreign policy, but should such leader go all in weaponizing the new technology, or try to find the right balance between military and civilian uses and then, if necessary, only gradually escalate the military use?

Upon weaponizing the cyber domain, social networks, artificial intelligence, or space technology, states face what may be called the dilemma of technology in statecraft. Policymakers become concerned (if not scared) if their opponents appear to gain a surprise edge in

statecraft because they have mastered a new technology or a combination of technologies. For example, cyber tools pose a number of unique challenges. If one's cyber capabilities are revealed, others get the opportunity to build sufficient defenses, rendering those offensive tools ineffective. However, concealing capabilities may undermine stable deterrence, as is the case in the nuclear domain where a credible demonstration of capabilities in the form of bomb and missile tests can be effectively used to impress an adversary. This "conceal-reveal" dilemma is likely to complicate the practice of statecraft as states continue to pursue the development of emerging technologies. Looking at other domains can also highlight the dilemma of states gaining a surprise advantage; a state may use social networks to delegitimize an adversary's political regime while amassing medium-range missiles or unmanned aerial vehicles for a surprise quick decapitating strike. States also become increasingly concerned with the potential use of vulnerabilities in its electoral process to sway close votes in polarized societies.

This statecraft dilemma is particularly difficult to resolve for policymakers in technologically advanced nations. It is clear that, at the very least, it is important for policymakers to show to other states that a) their country is not weaponizing new technology for offense, but only has defensive purposes in mind, and that b) their nation is only reacting to its opponent's first move. Many actors would still suspect the country of offensive intentions, and while reassuring them, the policymaker's country would need to avoid strategic missteps, overlooking the possibility that an adversary is weaponizing new technology. For that purpose, testing innovative responses may become necessary, which in turn may be considered as an offensive act. Overall, there is no definitive solution in sight because both technological progress and policy entrepreneurship are unstoppable, and it is their mix that can trigger "statecraft scares." This dilemma also highlights the challenge of discerning intentions in an anarchic international environment, and the difficulty distinguishing between offensive and defensive technologies, particularly within the context of dual use technologies.



The third example of a statecraft dilemma concerns the *role of national identity as a purpose and source of commitment* in statecraft. Identity is a useful instrument for a nation to demonstrate general resolve and commitment to specific goals in its foreign policy. State leaders may try demonstrating commitment to a certain goal because it is “in their nation’s DNA” as part of the nation’s identity, which is by definition almost non-negotiable and must be accepted as a given by other players.

Authoritative experts note that identity is playing a more central role in domestic and world politics alike, and it is becoming increasingly legitimate to cite identity as a source of commitment in foreign policy [Fukuyama 2018]. However, when doing so, a country takes the risk of harming its own interests by foreclosing important policy options. Developing and asserting a clear-cut identity may entail giving up important economic opportunities or civility of domestic political discourse for the sake of leveraging identity for foreign policy purposes.

A final dilemma is related to the choice between *horizontal and vertical escalation*. Vertical escalation refers to the employment of new weapons and technology that were not previously used or the shift to new types of targets, while horizontal escalation refers to the expansion of the geographic and functional scope of a conflict [Kahn 1965]. The practice of statecraft across domains – specifically through the development and potential use of emerging technologies, information, and foreign economic tools – may inadvertently trigger a response by other states, thus precipitating vertical escalation. Alternatively, cross-domain statecraft may play to competitive strengths, thus defusing pressures for vertical escalation, and lessening the risks of instability and accidental escalation.

#### 4

Statecraft as a concept is an important lens through which to understand states’ aspirations and the strategic choices that they are likely to make in order to achieve their goals. In an era of increasing uncertainty and protracted competition, compounded by the development of new technologies and cross domain concerns

that threaten to undermine strategic stability, it is important to examine which tools of statecraft actors are likely to choose in the conduct of foreign policy, how those choices vary cross nationally, and the impact of those choices on international conflict or cooperation.

Writing during the Cold War, Morton Kaplan recognized that the practice of statecraft is critical to the future of great power politics, international stability, and the likelihood of conflict. He described statecraft as something more forceful than diplomacy, and that as a concept, “it includes the construction of strategies for securing the national interest in the international arena, as well as the execution of these strategies by diplomats. In a day when the world is being divided between two great power blocs, when neutrality is becoming increasingly more difficult to maintain, when statecraft is invading the economic and cultural aspects of social existence, as well as the political and military, when most great problems of domestic life must be reconsidered with regard to their bearing on the international situation, few, if any, can doubt its importance. The successful or unsuccessful conduct of statecraft may settle the fate of our way of life; and, given the possibilities of modern war, it may, in a deeper sense, settle the question of whether any type of civilized life, ours or the Soviets’, can survive” [Kaplan 1952].

Kaplan’s notion of statecraft captures the importance of understanding how states attempt to secure their national interests, and the strategies they employ for doing so. Even further, the manner in which states practice statecraft can shape the likelihood of cooperation or conflict in the international system. While we are no longer in the bipolar great power competition of the Cold War, during which Kaplan was writing, the concept of statecraft remains critical and is perhaps even more so, given the ever-expanding toolkit from which states have to draw when developing competitive strategies and determining how to behave in the international system.

There are a number of factors that can influence the national of choice that states make in determining how to conduct statecraft. In addition to the factors identified above, includ-

ing national interests, identity, and balancing concerns, statecraft is also driven by a number of asymmetries between states. These asymmetries highlight disparities in power, stakes, and resolve across both countries and domains, and raise a number of important questions regarding advantages to more powerful or weaker states, the importance of political institutions, the role of stakeholders in the public and private sectors, and perhaps most fundamentally the force of structure in the international system. The remainder of this section will examine six specific conditions that can shape the decisions made by states.

1) *History – path dependence – tradition.* It may seem that policymakers are strongly influenced by history when making their decisions. But in reality, as Frank Gavin notes, they usually have a distorted understanding of history; so often they use history simply to justify their premeditated choices [Gavin 2019]. Gavin suggests that history can and should only teach us to be wise in terms of understanding that each moment and period is unique. There may be some historical patterns, but sweeping generalizations are often misleading and are therefore a poor basis or foil for policymaking. For example, a state may believe that its experience is exceptional and should therefore be implemented in other states. Such views may have prompted the United States and other major powers to embark on costly nation-building projects as a favored means of statecraft.

Alternatively, states may believe that their country – for example, the Middle Kingdom as the precursor of modern-day China – has always been at the center of the international system, thus it is entitled to behaving as such now, bullying neighbors. In response, those neighbors may challenge that notion and put up a strong resistance, leading to a conflictual pattern of relationships on a regional and – potentially – global scale. Another state may come to believe that powerful nations have always been uncomfortable with its existence and independent foreign policy course and determined to bring about its demise. This type of belief may result in a siege mentality leading to foregone opportunities for collective economic advancement.

2) *Perceptions of changes in the strategic environment.* For example, a state may come to believe that great power rivalry is on the rise, resulting in a decline in globalization. This may trigger a move to more coercive endeavors in trade relations, an emphasis on nuclear deterrence, or a competitive strategy that hinges on asymmetries in power relations and capabilities. Another state may instead proceed from the assumption of an unstoppable progress of globalization, liberalizing its trade, opening up to foreign investment, increasing connectivity to the outside world, and reducing its defense budgets.

3) *New technology* can also provide new opportunities for statecraft. This is one of the most intriguing challenges discussed in this special issue. Does new technology have mainly destabilizing effects when used in statecraft? Alternatively, can emerging technologies improve stability by providing a basis for defense dominance? How fast do major global and regional players develop defenses against weaponized cutting-edge technology? Can failure to deploy such defenses result in the demise of a major international player?

4) *Leadership worldviews* also matter, including the track record of making difficult decisions and the readiness to absorb the ensuing risks and costs. This is an important way in which states can communicate resolve, although in practice resolve is difficult to measure until an actual escalation begins and concrete actions are taken – for example, missiles are launched or a marching order is issued. Ultimately, resolve reflects the willingness to prevail in a conflict estimated on a particular stage of escalation. Assumed worldviews espoused by rival leaders are important factors in estimating resolve, but they should not be taken at face value until they are backed up by action.

5) *Actor identities* also play a non-trivial role in the practice of statecraft – in accordance with the logic of appropriateness: actors behave in a manner that they think is fit for their identity. In turn, collective identities of states are shaped through a complicated process involving the impact of preferences and worldviews of the leaders, public, elites, interest groups,

and others, as well as by how states are perceived by their counterparts. For example, since the end of World War II, Germany has developed a widely-recognized identity as a pacifist nation, while Japan positions itself and is broadly perceived by the international community as a major global donor. In its turn, Russia is widely known in Mandarin as a “fighting nation,” or a “nation in the mood for combat,” which illustrates an influential perception of Russia by one of its closest international partners. Aware of such an “imposed identity,” Moscow is then left to decide how much it is willing to oblige China by catering to these popular perceptions.

6) Generally, *impulses* strong enough to affect a country from within or externally can prompt choices of statecraft, at least in the short term. For example, migration flows into European countries from the Middle East and North Africa prompted the EU to be more resolute in conflict mediation on its periphery, or at least to discuss actively the need for such action. The EU also began to employ serious economic sanctions in its conflict with Russia around Ukraine.

All of these factors shaping statecraft are discussed in this bi-lingual special issue of *International Trends*. Igor Istomin examines how a great power can instrumentalize alliance-building to rally smaller states – mostly, its neighbors – around its diplomatic initiatives, to limit the options of potential rival powers, and to ensure domestic stability in its geographic neighborhood. He shows that these soft goals typical of Russia’s post-Cold War alliance-building strategy are different from the traditional purposes that US-led alliances were designed to serve – mainly, assured common defense against external threats and incorporation of alliance partners into the US-led international order. His article points to high utility of soft asymmetrical alliances to their leaders who, like Russia in post-Soviet Eurasia, have been able to ensure sufficient loyalty by most of the smaller alliance members while retaining freedom of maneuver and decisions on intervening into conflicts on behalf of the smaller “soft client” members [Istomin 2021a; 2021b].

Discussing access to oil and natural gas as both a purpose and a source of leverage in world politics, Sergei Golunov suggests that radical statecraft instruments such as invading and seizing control over producer countries or their regions have rarely been used and have almost never been effective. Even the powerful United States successfully resisted the temptation to intervene militarily in 1938 and in 1973 when, respectively, Mexican and Saudi Arab authorities moved to take over the US oil businesses in their countries. Washington used “softer” means of statecraft and eventually co-opted Mexico and the Gulf states into the sphere of US influence, deriving much greater benefits than could have been obtained from direct control over oil rigs. This suggests, *inter alia*, that the fears of an invasion and/or a hostile takeover that resource-endowed countries may have these days are largely overstated – resource consumers are not focused on physical control, and instead seek to ensure unhindered functioning of the resource markets in which supply and reasonable prices are guaranteed by the presence of multiple independent competing producers.

In the meantime, pipeline geopolitics, as described by Golunov, have been perceived by stakeholders as a potent tool of statecraft that has generated pushback on the part of its target states stalemating some of the politically-motivated projects, such as Russia’s South Stream, Blue Stream, or Nordstream-2 [Golunov 2021a; 2021b].

Adam N. Stulberg and Jonathan Darsey empirically dissect American and Russian approaches to sanctions. Notwithstanding limited direct evidence of their success, both the U.S. and Russia are escalating sanctions on the other. Moreover, there is mutual complacency about the perpetuation of ineffective “reciprocal sanctions,” if not confidence that the surrounding acrimony can be contained and other strategic areas of the relationship can be insulated from the fallout. Applying both text-mining and events data analytical techniques to illuminate trends in Russian discourse and posture on sanctions, the authors unpack heroic assumptions embedded in the prevailing “strategic bargaining model” that undergird

Western thinking about sanctions as a “low-cost” instrument of statecraft. Rather than pursuing “reciprocal sanctions” or simply being satisfied with domestic efforts to mitigate the impact of Western trade restrictions, Moscow is prone to respond to Western economic sanctions by escalating broader forms of coercion across different policy areas. Furthermore, both sides appear to be “worlds apart” in their understandings of the meaning, objectives, and legitimacy of sanctions-related behavior. There also are fundamental differences that pertain to the distinction between sanctions as a substitute versus an instrument of warfare. Together, Russia’s orthogonal posture (meaning a cross-domain rather than reciprocal response) and different worldview present challenges to strategic signaling and core assumptions about the strategic application of sanctions, suggestive of new directions for theory and policy [Stulberg, Darsi 2021a; 2021b].

It is tempting, for the purposes of statecraft, to leverage some of the global trends, such as migration, explains Camilla Pagani in her article. At the same time, as a transnational phenomenon, migration contravenes the very nature and definition of statecraft understood as patterns of purpose-oriented activity by state governments. That said, migration governance, such as simple decisions to close or open a state border to migrants, can become powerful tools of policy vis-à-vis other states, as the case with the massive flight of Syrian refugees into Turkey and Europe demonstrated during the decade-long civil war in Syria. The United States and Russia also have been able to leverage their attractiveness to migrants in relations with their neighboring states. While the Trump administration used the migrant factor to improve the terms of trade with Mexico, Moscow’s economic integration and political coordination projects in post-Soviet Eurasia hinged in no small measure on a relatively easy access to the Russian labor market for the migrants from the neighboring states in Central Asia and the South Caucasus [Pagani 2021a; 2021b].

Drawing on the rich tradition of identity studies, Anne Crowley-Vigneau and Francoise Le Saux examine the opportunities for using language as a means of statecraft. The power of

language can only be assessed by looking at relatively long periods of time. However, there are ways to establish not just correlation, but also causality between, for example, the choice of a global language as official by a certain country, on one hand, and that country’s subsequent political alignment with the major power which is the source of the chosen language. The authors show that many of the language-training arms of major national cultural diplomacy institutions, such as the British Council, Alliance Française, or Confucius Institutes, were created with expectations of leveraging the power that global languages can wield upon those who learn and use them [Crowley-Vigneau, Le Saux 2021a; 2021b].

Last, but not least, an illuminating discussion of the role of tradition and self-identity in the choice of statecraft is provided by Maria Shibkova, who uses the case of Italy to show how international structural factors and domestic political patterns become intertwined with the national style of conducting negotiations to form a unique tradition of statecraft for a mid-size power. As a country with a global imprint, Italy is small enough not to provoke adversarial balancing behavior by other states in Europe and beyond. Since World War II, its multi-party and often messy politics have prevented broad public mobilization in support of expansionist goals in Italy’s external relations. Nonetheless, Italy has been powerful enough as a global actor to maintain freedom of maneuver and to make sure that its views are taken seriously by its international counterparts. While firmly anchored in the European Union, Italy has for decades remained one of the most pro-US members of the EU, while reserving the right to develop preferential economic relations with Russia and most recently with China.

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The aim of this special issue is to probe a number of key phenomena and trends in contemporary international politics from the perspective of their actual or potential use as foreign policy instruments, and to consider patterns of action by states seeking to instrumentalize these phenomena. Our authors generally

find that instrumentalization of a single trend, such as trade in hydrocarbons or migration, or an institutional arrangement, such as a defensive alliance, has never been easy for those states seeking to wield power. Effective statecraft is usually based on a multi-instrument cross-domain approach that “follows in the footsteps of history,” leveraging the structural factors and powerful trends currently at play.

Unlike operations aimed at achieving quick or narrow foreign policy goals, statecraft as a set of tools and patterns of action is employed to ensure security, prosperity, and other core objectives of state governments in the long-term. The choice of statecraft is based on a sufficiently long experience of trial and error, and to an extent embodies a national tradition of conducting external relations.

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# ВНЕШНЕПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ РЕСУРСЫ И ИНСТРУМЕНТЫ В РОССИЙСКО-АМЕРИКАНСКИХ ОТНОШЕНИЯХ

## ОПРЕДЕЛЕНИЯ, ЗНАЧЕНИЕ И ДИЛЕММЫ

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### Резюме

Авторы статьи вводят читателя в проблематику специального выпуска журнала «Международные процессы», посвященного ресурсному обеспечению и формам реализации внешней политики в современном мире. В статье проводится анализ существующих определений понятия *statecraft*, которое также иллюстрируется посредством описания нескольких проблем, с которыми сталкиваются лица, принимающие решения, при выборе внешнеполитического инструментария и курса. Авторы полагают, что в основе определения понятия *statecraft* находятся типичные цели, инструменты и методы действий государства, пытающегося повлиять на другое государство без использования военно-силового принуждения. В качестве примера дилеммы, возникающей при выборе внешнеполитических ресурсов, авторы рассматривают целесообразность четкого публичного определения государством на официальном уровне своих «национальных интересов». Ясно сформулированные национальные интересы служат важным ориентиром и позволяют координировать действия внешнеполитической бюрократии, а также указывают государствам-соперникам на «красные линии». Вместе с тем, процесс определения и объяснения национальных интересов общественности приводит лиц, принимающих решения, к необходимости сложного выбора между зачастую взаимоисключающими альтернативами. Такой выбор может иметь серьезную политическую цену внутри страны. Авторы рассматривают влияние технологических инноваций на ресурсное обеспечение внешней политики крупных стран. В статье описывается разновидность «дилеммы безопасности», возникающей при выборе между немедленным использованием вновь изобретенной технологии в военных целях, с одной стороны, и воздержанием от гонки вооружений и эскалации существующих конфликтов, с другой. Авторы также анализируют преимущества и недостатки политики укрепления национальной идентичности как внешнеполитического ресурса. С одной стороны, сильная идентичность позволяет демонстрировать твердую приверженность занятым переговорным позициям. С другой же стороны, фиксированная негибкая идентичность сужает свободу манёвра государства на международной арене и часто не позволяет использовать перспективные формы и способы действий, поскольку они могут противоречить выбранной идентичности. При помощи анализа «больших данных» авторы также показывают, что российский и американский дискурсы, описывающие конкуренцию крупных держав в современном мире, имеют больше общего, чем можно было бы ожидать, имея в виду различия позиций, традиций и заявленных интересов двух стран.

### Ключевые слова:

Внешняя политика; ресурсы; безопасность; Россия; Соединённые Штаты Америки; дискурс; переговоры.