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Russia and the Contestation of Global Cyberspace Governance: Norm Entrepreneurship and Contested Multilateralism

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Abstract

This paper examines the Russian Federation's strategic vision of global cyberspace governance placing it within a broader contestation over the normative foundations of the digital order. The central argument posits that Russia acts as a contesting norm entrepreneur that leads the sovereigntist bloc and promotes a conception of cyberspace based on state sovereignty, "information security" and non-interference. The analysis shows that domestic imperatives are constitutive to understanding Russia's international position. The securitized perception of the informational space constructed as a vector of political vulnerability, external influence and geopolitical confrontation are directly projected in Moscow's activity within multilateral arenas. To promote its vision, Russia deploys a strategy of contested multilateralism, which is manifested through the hierarchization and selective choice of the forums in which it acts as a norm entrepreneur. Thus, Russia prioritizes the United Nations at the global level and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation at the regional level, while systematically seeking to reduce the centrality of frameworks associated with the Western liberal order, such as the Council of Europe or multistakeholder organizations. The chapter concludes that Russia contributes to the creation of international norms, as evidenced by its role in promoting the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime. However, it does so from a state-centric perspective that reinforces the fragmentation of the global digital order and deepens the tension between the liberal and sovereigntist models.

Keywords: Contested Multilateralism; Cyberspace; Global Digital Order; Information Security; Russia;