The 'Eurasian' Axis: Civilizational Identity Constructions in Contemporary Russian Foreign Policy

Barbara Roggeveen
Lincoln College
University of Oxford

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DPhil in Area Studies (Russia and East Europe) in the School of Global and Area Studies at the University of Oxford

June 2023
90,241 words

Abstract

Thesis title: The 'Eurasian' Axis: Civilizational Identity Constructions in Contemporary Russian Foreign Policy
Candidate: Barbara Roggeveen
College: Lincoln College
Degree program: DPhil in Area Studies (Russia and East Europe)
Date of submission: June 2023

Vladimir Putin first voiced the idea of forming a single 'Eurasian' civilizational space in the early 2000s. Today, this idea still resonates in Russian foreign policy discourse. Presenting both European and Asian political models as inappropriate for Russia's 'zone of influence', the civilizational rhetoric found in contemporary Russian foreign policy builds on the prominent concept of a 'Russian third way'. The notion of Eurasia used in this rhetoric supports the idea of 'third pole' that lies between East and West and serves to frame the Russian state as an actor of 'civilizational proportions' that supposedly has the unique ability to unite the languages, traditions, customs and cultures of the so-called 'peoples of Eurasia'. This thesis examines how policy-discursive structures related to a Eurasian civilizational identity have functioned in Russian foreign policy discourse between 2000 and 2020, coupling (i) a longitudinal analysis of foreign policy language to (ii) three contextualizing case studies. Where the longitudinal analysis explores the broad narrative themes surrounding a Eurasian civilizational identity in contemporary Russian foreign policy, the case studies examine how these discourses operate in bilateral relations with those countries Russia considers to be its key 'Eurasian' partners: Kazakhstan, China, and Belarus. The study focuses specifically on the spatial, temporal and ethical dimensions of identity construction. In doing so, the thesis unpacks a 'radicalizing' trend in Russian foreign policy language under the Putin regime. Whilst the primary research focus is on foreign policy texts published until 2020, the broader analysis ultimately reveals how civilizational identity discourses have offered an ideological basis for Russia's irredentist foreign policy, which – the thesis argues – has culminated in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Contents

List of tables and figures **7**

Acknowledgements **8**

Notes on transliteration and primary sources **10**

Abbreviations **11**

Chapter 1. Introduction **12**

1.1 Introducing the research topic and research design 12
1.1.1. A longitudinal analysis of policy-discursive structures under the Putin regime *17*
1.1.2. Three contextualized case studies *17*

1.2 Mapping the scholarly field 22

1.3 The notion of 'Eurasia' in Russian political thinking 22

1.4 Conceptual discussion 28
1.4.1. Performativity *31*
1.4.2. Meaning through differentiation *33*
1.4.3. Discourse and narrative *35*
1.4.4. Structure and agency *37*

1.5 Sources 39

1.6 Methods 42
1.5.1. Qualitative analysis *43*
1.5.2. Computational analysis *46*

1.7 Structure of the thesis 48

Chapter 2. Civilizational Leitmotifs: Space, Time, and Ethics in Discourses on Civilization **50**

2.1 Introduction 50

2.2 A brief history: modernity's most influential 'Civilizational Projects' 52

2.3 Spatial leitmotifs: boundary markers, frontiers, and the notion of spatial entitlement 54

2.4 Temporal leitmotifs: a civilizational Sonderweg, teleological readings of history, and civilizations in the plural vs. civilization in the singular 57

2.5 Ethical leitmotifs: normative otherness, moral superiority, and the 'proselytizing crusade' 62

2.6 Conclusion 66

Chapter 3. Constructing 'Eurasian' Space: Political Landscapes and Meta-Geographies in Russian Foreign Policy **68**

3.1 Introduction 68

3.2 The nexus between space and identity in international relations theory 69
3.2.1 Space as a site of power relations *70*

3.2.2 Meta-geographies, imagined communities, and sites of memory *71*
3.3 Constitutive loci of a 'Eurasian' identity: the steppe, the Urals, and the Volga region 72
3.4 Imperial tropes: Russia's spatial mission and the 'compatriots living abroad' 76
3.5 'Russkiy Mir': the construction of non-Westphalian space in Russian foreign policy 80
3.6 The notion of connectivity: 'networked' and 'fluid' spatialities in Russian foreign policy ... 85
3.7 Discursive audiences and objectives 89
3.8 Conclusion 94

Chapter 4. Temporal Identity Constructions in Russian Foreign Policy: Narrating Eurasia's Past, Present, and Future 96
4.1 Introduction 96
4.2 Temporality & identity in international relations (part I): constructing a temporal Self 97
4.3 Temporality & identity in international relations (part II): constructing a temporal Other. 98
4.4 Temporal kinship narratives in Russian foreign policy 101
4.5 'Crisis,' 'ruin,' and 'renewal' in Russian foreign policy discourse 103
4.6 The notion of 'destiny' in Russian-Eurasian discourses 108
4.7 Opposing temporalities: 'modern' Russia and the 'postmodern' West 111
4.8 An identity of otherness: Eurasia as the West's positive Other 115
4.9 Discursive audiences and objectives 118
4.10 Conclusion 122

Chapter 5. Constructing an Ethical Self: Normative Vocabularies in Russian Foreign Policy 124
5.1 Introduction 124
5.2 Norms, morals, and ethics in foreign policy 125
5.3 Antagonism, individualism, and the liberal idea, or 'what the West is doing wrong' 126
5.3.1 Victimization or self-exclusion? *128*
5.3.2 The language of western liberalism *130*
5.3.3 'Traditional Russian values' *132*
5.3.4 Ideological syncretism in Russian politics *136*
5.4 Non-interventionism, messianism, and multipolarity, or 'what Russia is doing right' 137
5.4.1 Russia as the 'mediator' of world affairs *138*
5.4.2 Messianic narratives in Russian foreign policy: Russia as a katechontic power *140*
5.4.3 'A more just world order' and the notion of multipolarity *144*
5.4.4 'New Asia': Russia's pivot to the East *147*
5.4.5 Ethico-temporal narratives: the imperial trope of rise and decline *148*
5.4.6 Ethico-spatial imaginings: Carl Schmitt's theory of Grossraum and 'Greater Eurasia' *149*
5.5 Discursive audiences and political objectives 152
5.6 Conclusion 158

Chapter 6. 'An All-Russian Civilization': The Russian Discourse of Liminality vis-à-vis Belarus 160

6.1 Introduction 160

6.2 Spatial liminality: the near abroad, the Union State, and buffer zones 162
6.2.1 The 'near abroad' *163*
6.2.2 The Union State of Russia and Belarus *166*
6.2.3 Buffer zones: Belarus as Russia's 'most Western limit' *168*
6.2.4 The Belarusian response: instrumentalization and contestation *169*

6.3 Temporal liminality: kinship, the 'Great Patriotic War', and the Belarusian 'savage' 171
6.3.1 The Kinship narrative *171*
6.3.2 The Belarusian response: 'brothers' but with boundaries *175*
6.3.3 Belarus as a 'primitive' or 'savage' version of the Russian Self *176*

6.4 Ethical liminality: a community of Eastern Slavs, the triune nation, and the katechon 178
6.4.1 A Russian-led 'community of Eastern Slavs' and the 'triune nation' *179*
6.4.2 The katechon: the Russo-Belarusian axis as a 'stabilizing force' in world affairs *182*

6.5 Negative counternarratives: parasitism and the 'economization' of Russian foreign policy 185

6.6 Discursive audiences and objectives 187

6.7 Conclusion 191

Chapter 7. 'A Regional Civilization': The Russian Discourse of (De)securitization vis-à-vis Kazakhstan 194

7.1 Introduction 194

7.2 Spatio-ethical securitization: territory, ethnicity, and political authority (part I) 196

7.3 Spatio-ethical desecuritization: territory, ethnicity, and political authority 201

(part II) 201

7.4 Ethical securitization: a 'Muslim threat', a Central Asian 'buffer zone', and Russia as the katechontic stabilizer 205

7.5 Ethical desecuritization: 'cross-confessional spirituality' and the 'congruence' between state authority and hegemonic religion 211

7.6 Discursive audiences and political objectives 217

7.7 Conclusion 222

Chapter 8. 'A Unique but Compatible Civilization': The Russian Discourse of Stability vis-à-vis China 224

8.1 Introduction 224

8.2 Russo-Chinese conceptions of spatio-demographic uniqueness 227

8.3 Russia and China as 'civilization-states' 229

8.4 A Russo-Chinese path to modernity 234

8.5 BRICS and the Russo-Chinese 'rising nations' discourse 239

8.6 Russia and China as 'peace brokers' 244
8.6.1 The spatio-ethical SCO narrative *247*
8.6.2 The spatio-ethical and temporal UNSC narrative *250*

8.7 Discursive audiences and political objectives 253

8.8 Conclusion 256

Chapter 9. Conclusion 259

9.1 Main arguments 259

9.2 Findings 263

9.2.1. Audiences in Russia's civilizational discourse 263

9.2.2. A longitudinal analysis of policy-discursive structures: space, time, and ethics 266

9.2.3. Three contextualized case studies 275

9.2.4. Wider contributions to the field of Eurasian studies 280

9.3 Implications: the future of Russia's 'civilizing' project? 283

Appendix 1. Overview of online Russian government archives 285

Bibliography 285

Primary sources 286

Secondary sources 303

List of tables and figures

Chapter 1. Introduction
Figure 1.1 Word frequency analysis of country names....20
Figure 1.2 A schematic overview of the scholarly field....25
Figure 1.3. A preliminary representation of the discursive field....36
Figure 1.4 An overview of the government bodies represented in the corpus 41
Figure 1.5 Order of text analysis operations for data preparation and analysis....47

Chapter 3. Constructing 'Eurasian' Space: Political Landscapes and Meta-Geographies in Russian Foreign Policy
Figure 3.1. Word co-occurrence between key localities and the term 'heart of Eurasia'....75
Figure 3.2 A visualization of the Russian understanding of 'Russkii Mir'....82
Figure 3.3. A visualization of the Russian discourse of connectivity....87
Figure 3.4 Word co-occurrence between different spatialities and key terms expressing 'connectivity'....88
Figure 3.5 An overview of target audiences....90

Chapter 4. Temporal Identity Constructions in Russian Foreign Policy: Narrating Eurasia's Past, Present, and Future
Figure 4.1 Word frequency analysis of the corpus demonstrating the use of Russian terms signifying 'crisis'....107
Figure 4.2 Word frequency analysis of the corpus demonstrating the use of Russian terms signifying the notion of 'destiny'....110
Figure 4.3 Data visualization of the percentage share of Russian government actors pursuing the (post)modernity discourse....113
Figure 4.4 An overview of target audiences....119

Chapter 5. Constructing an Ethical Self: Normative Vocabularies in Russian Foreign Policy
Figure 5.1 Word frequency analysis of the corpus demonstrating the use of Russian terms signifying a '(rules-based) order'....128
Figure 5.2 Data visualization of the percentage share of terms signifying 'traditional values'....133
Figure 5.3 Word frequency analysis of the corpus demonstrating the use of Russian terms signifying 'multipolarity' and 'unipolarity'....146
Figure 5.4 An overview of target audiences....153

Chapter 6. 'An All-Russian Civilization': The Russian Discourse of Liminality vis-à-vis Belarus
Figure 6.1 Quantitative analysis of the corpus demonstrating word co-occurrence between the term 'Belarus' and terms signifying WWII....174
Figure 6.2 An overview of target audiences....190
Figure 6.3 A visualization of the Russian discourse of liminality vis-à-vis Belarus....192

Chapter 7. 'A Regional Civilization': The Russian Discourse of (De)securitization vis-à-vis Kazakhstan

Figure 7.1 Data visualization of the percentage share of Russian state actors employing the securitization narrative surrounding a 'Muslim threat'.....205
Figure 7.2 Word frequency analysis of the corpus exhibiting the use of the notion of 'spirituality' 211
Figure 7.3 An overview of target audience.....218
Figure 7.4 Target audiences mapped onto two axes found in Russian foreign policy discourse.....222
Figure 7.5 Kazakhstan as Eurasia's Central Asian flank: an overview of the discursive field.....223

Chapter 8. 'A Unique but Compatible Civilization': The Russian Discourse of Stability vis-à-vis China

Figure 8.1 The civilizational hierarchy in Russian foreign policy discourse.....233
Figure 8.2 Key elements of the Russo-Chinese narrative of 'postmodernity'.....236
Figure 8.3 An overview of target audiences.....256
Figure 8.4 An overview of the Russo-Chinese discourse of stability.....257

Chapter 9. Conclusion

Figure 9.1 Overview of the narratives explored in the longitudinal analysis.....261
Figure 9.2 Overview of the narratives explored in the country case studies.....262
Figure 9.3 Overview of the main audiences in Russia's civilizational discourse.....264
Figure 9.4. Discursive hierarchies in Russia's civilizational discourse.....268
Figure 9.5 Russian conceptions of a civilizational identity mapped along irredentist/non-irredentist and civic/essentialist lines.....270
Figure 9.6 The civilizational hierarchy in Russian foreign policy discourse.....275
Figure 9.7 Three modes of inter-state relations.....277

Acknowledgements

The research towards this doctoral thesis submission was financially supported by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Scatcherd European Scholarship. Additionally, I am thankful for the Fulbright scholarship which enabled me to conduct part of my research at Harvard University's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. I am also grateful for the support of my friends and colleagues at Oxford University – our lively conversations inspired me to push my research further. I thank Roy Allison and Nicolette Makovicky for their supervision and guidance, and I am grateful to my family for their support. Most of all, I am thankful to my partner who – with constant enthusiasm – has acted as my intellectual sounding board over the past years.

Notes on transliteration and primary sources

The transliteration of Russian-language text in this thesis follows the Library of Congress ALA–LC transliteration scheme.[1] Exceptions are made when a different English transliteration is standardized (e.g. Cyrillic names of authors whose work is published in English-language sources). All translations from the Russian-language sources are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

The primary sources used in the discursive analysis are referenced through identification numbers (e.g. id0001, id0002, and so on). The corpus of primary sources includes 5,937 unique policy texts published between 2000 and 2020 by the Russian federal government, its ministries, relevant agencies, and the State Duma. Due to the size of the corpus, the individual documents that support the findings of this study have not been added to the manuscript. The data are, however, available from the author upon request. Additionally, the subsection of primary sources that are directly cited in the empirical chapters are referenced in the bibliography.

[1] The Library of Congress transliteration table can be accessed here: https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/roman.html

Abbreviations

BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South-Africa
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EU	European Union
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOD	Ministry of Defense
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction

Chapter 1.

Introduction

1.1 Introducing the research topic and research design

Vladimir Putin first voiced the idea of forming a single 'Eurasian' civilizational space in the early 2000s. Today, this idea still resonates in Russian political language – with Duma member Sergey Naryshkin, for example, who poses that the 'harmonious development of Eurasian space […] is essential for an adequate response to the processes of globalization' (id2608, 2013). Presenting both European and Asian political models as inappropriate for Russia's so-called 'zone of influence', the civilizational rhetoric that these and other political figures adopt builds on the prominent idea of a 'Russian third way' (Laruelle, 2004a, p. 117). The notion of Eurasia used in this rhetoric supports the idea of 'a third continent between East and West' and presupposes the existence of 'an organic unity of cultures born in [a] zone of symbiosis between Russian, Turkic, Muslim, and Chinese worlds' (Ibid., p. 115).

To examine the ways in which policy-discursive structures related to a Eurasian civilizational identity function in Russian foreign policy discourse, this study couples a longitudinal analysis of foreign policy language under the Putin regime to a contextualized case study of Russian official discourse vis-à-vis three key 'Eurasian' partners: Kazakhstan, China, and Belarus. With shifts in Russia's foreign policy positioning roughly following the presidential cycles, the thesis looks at the period beginning from Putin's first presidential term in 2000 until the first years of his fourth presidential term in 2020. Whilst the primary research focus remains on foreign policy texts published until 2020, the wider analysis presented in the thesis – and particularly the concluding chapter – unpacks how the various civilizational narratives have offered an ideological basis to Russia's irredentist foreign policy, which – the thesis argues – has ultimately culminated in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Building on David Lewis' study of Russian authoritarianism (2020, p. 173), the thesis ultimately explores how the vague and polysemous notion of 'Eurasia' has become a central trope in official foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime, whilst unpacking the ways in which the Eurasian concept has been used to devise a wide variety of geopolitical imaginaries (see also Lewis, 2018). Based on Lene Hansen's (2006) framework for discourse analysis, the study focuses specifically on the spatial, temporal and ethical dimensions of identity construction. In doing so, the thesis explores how the notion of a Eurasian civilization has increasingly been used in Russian foreign policy discourse to shift the contours of Russia's zone of influence eastward to incorporate countries beyond the former USSR. Through extensive close readings of official foreign policy documents coupled with a computation-based analysis of foreign policy texts, the dissertation seeks to answer the following research question: *How – with what purpose and for whom – has a Eurasian civilizational identity been spatially, temporally, and ethically constructed in Russian foreign policy discourse between 2000 and 2020?*

The longitudinal component of the study aims to trace the evolution of Eurasian identity narratives in Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime. Therefore, this section of the thesis focuses on the following sub-questions: (i) *What are the constitutive narratives surrounding a Eurasian civilizational identity in Russian foreign policy discourse between 2000 and 2020? And (ii) what are the political objectives underlying these narratives?* The case studies – in turn – aim to uncover two additional sub-questions: *(i) how – and for what purpose – has the notion of a Eurasian civilizational identity been employed in bilateral relations between Russia, on the one hand, and what Russia considers to be its key 'Eurasian' partners, on the other? And (ii) how – and for what political cause – have Russian foreign policy actors adjusted and refined the flexible ideological concept of a 'Eurasian civilization' to fit and advance bilateral relations with these countries?*

The thesis traces and contextualizes developments in contemporary Russian foreign policy starting with Putin's ascent to power in the early 2000s, a period in Russian politics which was characterized by an expressed interest in democratization, Europeanisation, and CIS independence. The research project explains how – since then – Russian foreign policy actors have undergone a

decidedly authoritarian and irredentist turn. Tracing and analyzing the evolution of Russian government actors' ideational and ideological worldviews, the thesis provides important new insights into Russia's political and discursive milieu, which has – most recently – culminated in Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Notably, the thesis offers a novel conceptual framework to understand and contextualize this radicalizing trend in foreign policy under the Putin regime.

The thesis establishes that contemporary Russian foreign policy has been driven by *three core assumptions*, which – the empirical analysis demonstrates – closely mirror the spatial, temporal, and ethical triad: Firstly, in the spatial analysis, the thesis reveals how Russian foreign policy actors under the Putin regime have developed an ever-stronger sense of *non-Westphalianism* between 2000 and 2020, which has enabled a projection of Russian political authority *beyond* the administrative boundaries of the Russian state. Secondly, in the temporal analysis, the thesis unveils that Russian government actors have consistently relied upon an idiosyncratic notion of *historicity* to promote their irredentist and exceptionalist foreign policy; an ideological assumption which has offered Russian government actors a discursive tool to portray the process of Eurasian integration – and Russia's leading role therein – as the necessary outcome of various constitutive periods in history. Lastly, in the ethical analysis, the thesis uncovers that the third key premise relied upon by Russian government actors to promote an irredentist and exceptionalist foreign policy has been the notion of *messianism*, which has served to propagate the idea of Russia as a 'chosen nation', thereby legitimizing Russia's so-called natural position as a 'civilizational leader' in and beyond the 'Eurasian' sphere.

Ultimately, by unpacking these three ideational assumptions underlying contemporary Russian foreign policy, the triad framework presented in this thesis offers a new prism through which to understand foreign policy choices and trajectories in Putin's Russia. Importantly, the narratives explored throughout the thesis give insight into the ideological 'substratum' of Putinism, thus enabling a better understanding of the underlying conceptions and ideational worldviews that

have driven, for example, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine in 2022.

To ensure a solid analysis of the ethical, spatial, and temporal identity constructions that shape Russian civilizational discourse, this project integrates rich but, to date, fragmented bodies of literature. For a versatile understanding of the conceptual underpinnings of civilizational thought, the thesis, and particularly the theoretical literature review in chapter 2, draws on the works of traditional 18th century civilizationists (e.g. Mirabeau, 1761, 1768), early 20th century theorists (e.g. Durkheim & Mauss, 1971 [1913]; Febvre, 1973 [1930]; Spengler, 1932), contemporary civilizational scholars (e.g. Fukuyama, 1989; Huntington, 1993), as well as their post-essentialists critics (e.g. Hansen, 2000; O'Hagan, 2007). For a maximally informed theorizing of the historical and political idiosyncrasies of the region at stake, I build on area studies (Bassin, 1991; Laruelle, 2004a; I. B. Neumann, 1995; Prozorov, 2006). To gain a full understanding of the socio-political processes that inform identity construction and, specifically, the formation of civilizational identities, I draw on insights from political theory (Campbell, 1992; Hansen, 2006; I. B. Neumann, 1996; O'Hagan, 2007; Weber, 1998). And to unpack the discursive processes that underpin the construction of meaning, I rely, apart from discourse studies (Hansen, 2006; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Wæver, 2002a; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; C. Epstein, 2008), on cultural semiotics and critical theory (Butler, 1999; Derrida, 1978; Wittig, 1981).

My reliance on discourse studies and critical theory means that I conceptualize collective identity as being inextricably linked to and performed through discourse (Campbell, 1992, p. 8; Weber, 1998, p. 79) (also see the conceptual discussion in section 1.4 of this chapter). The research aim is to critically reflect on processes of identity building in Russian political discourse through performative enactments of a Eurasian civilizational identity. I situate the markedly conservative discourses surrounding a civilizational identity in Russia within the global context of neoconservative responses to modernity and globalization (e.g. Peters, 2018; Wertheim, 2019). In questioning the supposed naturalness and historicity of Eurasian and other identity discourses, this

project explores the discursive processes through which identity regimes are presented as 'naturalized ontologies' (Butler, 1999, p. 42). The value of this project therefore lies partly in the deconstruction of essentialist approaches to identity politics.

Ultimately, the various narratives under study in this thesis all frame the notion of a 'Eurasian' identity in civilizational terms (see chapter 2 for a theoretical analysis of the concept of 'civilization'). With the publication of the new Foreign Policy Concept in 2008, the Russian authorities explicitly introduced a 'conceptual framework centered on the notion of a plurality of coexisting civilizations' (Linde, 2016, p. 614). One of its passages reads that 'it is for the first time in contemporary history that global competition is acquiring a *civilizational* dimension' (*Foreign Policy Concept*, 2008). It was through this influential publication that the notion of a 'Eurasian civilization' first found its way into official strategy documents published by the Kremlin (Roggeveen, 2020). This project contributes to the literature on Eurasian identity constructions by further substantiating the idea of a 'civilizational turn' in Russian political discourse. The analysis focuses on the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors have conceptualized a Eurasian civilizational model in spatial, temporal and ethical terms throughout the Putin era.

Jacinta O'Hagan (2007, p. 21) explores how discourses surrounding a civilizational identity provide 'cognitive scripts' that reify contemporary political identities transcending the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. Following O'Hagan, Russian foreign policy actors present 'Eurasia' as a transnational and trans-temporal cultural community, suggesting a normative hierarchy between themselves and what they present as opposing cultural communities such as the 'Euro-American world' and 'the West'.

Making use of various Eurasian identity narratives, foreign policy actors emphasize Russia's subjectivity as an autonomous decision-maker, particularly in its relation to the European Union and its hierarchical inclusion into EU programs (Roggeveen, 2021). Sergei Prozorov (2006, pp. 51–55) illustrates that these identity narratives do not necessarily constitute a 'zero-sum antagonistic relation to EU policies' but a demand for 'strategic intersubjectivity' in which Russia and the

European Union are treated as equal actors within the international community. Between 2000 and 2020, a feeling of asymmetry in Russia's relation to the EU has been increasingly problematized in Eurasian discourses. Political actors have thus expressed increasingly negative attitudes towards EU mechanisms such as the Neighborhood policy and the Eastern Partnership, emphasizing Russia's need to become a 'leading actor and guarantor of order' in the 'Eurasian' space instead (Prozorov, 2006, p. 55).

Russian foreign policy actors employ these narratives when discussing such schemes as the Belt and Road Initiative and economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, pointing towards a growing effort to shift the contours of the Eurasian space eastward to not only include countries that once made up the former USSR but also China, India, and the Korean peninsula. In the chapters that follow, the thesis demonstrates how Eurasian civilizational identity narratives have moved from the reactionary fringe of the discursive field to mainstream discourses on national identity and state-building in contemporary Russian foreign policy. Where the longitudinal analysis broadly maps the use of spatial, temporal, and ethical modes of identity construction in foreign policy language under the Putin regime, the case-study component explores the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors have adjusted and refined these three modes of identity construction to advance bilateral relations with Russia's key 'Eurasian' partners: Belarus, Kazakhstan, and China.

1.1.1. A longitudinal analysis of policy-discursive structures under the Putin regime

The longitudinal component of the thesis systematically follows the three-dimensional framework proposed by Lene Hansen (2006). Analysing presidential and ministerial policy documents, speeches, and State Duma records, each chapter explores one of the dimensions of identity construction: space in chapter 3, time in chapter 4, and ethics in chapter 5. Additionally, the longitudinal chapters seek to unpack the political objectives underlying Russia's civilizational discourse through an analysis of target audiences. In the spatial analysis, the thesis focuses on narratives surrounding the territorial demarcation of the Russian-Eurasian sphere. To articulate a

powerful regional identity, chapter 3 argues, the first step is to construct the territorial boundaries that demarcate that particular region (Hansen, 2006, p. 47). The spatial analysis examines what neo-Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre (1991) calls the 'production of space', that is, the processes through which geographies such as 'Eurasia' are imbued with meaning. Space, Lefebvre (1991, p. 26) illustrates, is a 'tool of thought and of action […] a means of control, and hence of domination'. Following Henri Lefebvre, as well as the Saidian and Foucauldian tradition, this study thus approaches the notion of space as a site of power relations.

Additionally, Anne Norton (1988, p. 4) demonstrates that 'political boundaries are drawn not only on the earth, in the demarcation of territory, but in history, culture, and ideology'. In chapter 4, the thesis therefore explores how a Eurasian civilizational identity is temporally constructed. In the temporal analysis, this study focuses particularly on discursive themes related to development, change, continuity, and repetition (Hansen, 2006, pp. 46–51). Civilizational identity narratives, Hansen (2006, pp. 46–51) illustrates, envision the contemporary Self as the outcome of a 'continuous process of refinement'. In the Russian-Eurasian case, civilizational discourses are therefore used to frame the Self as temporally superior to its radical Other, 'the West'. However, contrary to conventional civilizational-identity discourses, which typify the Other by its 'backwardness' or 'primitiveness', Eurasian discourses construct the Other through a paradigm of undesirable development; in this temporal narrative, 'the West' is ranked as a victim of postmodernity, whilst Russia is framed as the messianic alternative.

Chapter 5 of the thesis explores the ethical construction of a Eurasian civilizational identity. This ethical analysis demonstrates the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors articulate a normative framework regarding appropriate international and domestic order. Additionally, the ethical analysis explores the ways in which 'the West' functions as Russia's moral Other in Eurasian civilizational discourses. Inherent to the 'dynamic of identity', William Connolly (1991, p. xiv) establishes, is the inclination to articulate difference through a vocabulary of 'moral failing' or 'abnormality'. The ethical analysis therefore illustrates the ways in which Russian foreign policy

actors rely on invocations of a 'Eurasian' normative community – with Russia at its spiritual core – that counterbalances a morally depraved 'West'.

1.1.2. Three contextualized case studies

In addition to the longitudinal analysis, which sets out the broad narrative themes surrounding a Eurasian civilizational identity in Russian foreign policy discourse, the thesis further explores the notion of a civilizational identity through a series of case studies. Analyzing political speeches, interviews, and statements, as well as treaties, joint declarations, and other bilateral documents published between 2000 and 2020, the case studies explore how Russian foreign policy actors employ the notion of a Eurasian civilizational identity in bilateral relations with three key 'Eurasian' partners: Belarus in chapter 6, Kazakhstan in chapter 7, and China in chapter 8. In order to further thicken the three-dimensional framework set out in the longitudinal analysis, each case study chapter systematically unpacks the spatial, temporal, and ethical modes of identity construction found in Russian foreign policy discourse vis-à-vis Belarus, Kazakhstan, and China, respectively. Similar to the empirical chapters in the thesis' longitudinal analysis, the country case studies seek to explore the political objectives underlying Russia's civilizational discourse vis-à-vis the three case study countries, as well as the intended audiences that Russian government actors seek to target through their various spatial, temporal, and ethical narratives.

The case selection of countries is based on a quantitative analysis of the corpus, which demonstrates that Belarus, Kazakhstan, and China are among the most frequently mentioned 'Eurasian' partners in Russian foreign policy discourse (see figure 1 below).[2] The analysis reveals that when Russian foreign policy actors refer to a Eurasian partner country in the corpus, 17 per cent of those mentions are in reference to Belarus (a total of 6,384 out of 37,575 times), 14 per cent are in reference to Kazakhstan (a total of 5,066 times), and 10 per cent are in reference to China (a total of 3,826 times).

[2] Also see section 1.4 of this chapter for further information on the corpus used in the discursive analysis.

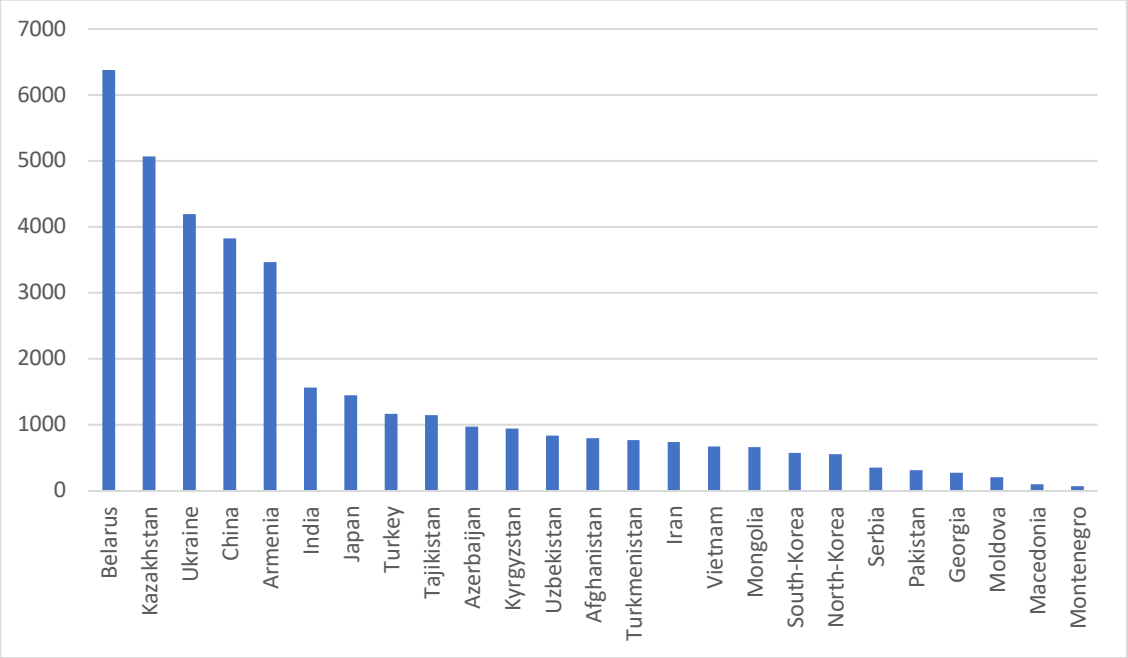


Figure 1.1 Word frequency analysis of country names

Importantly, whilst figure 1.1 above demonstrates that Ukraine ranks higher than China in the word frequency analysis, the country has not been selected for a case study, because the case study component of the thesis seeks to predominantly explore '*positive*' articulations of a Eurasian identity. Whereas the longitudinal analysis mostly unpacks 'negative' utterances of a Eurasian identity (that is, narratives that define a 'Eurasian' Self almost exclusively in opposition to a 'Western' Other), the case study chapters seek to examine whether Russian foreign policy actors can move beyond these 'negative' narratives that define 'Eurasia' by what it is *not*. In other words, the case studies seek to explore whether it is possible to find 'positive' assertions of a Eurasian civilizational identity.

Whilst Ukraine may rank amongst the most frequently referenced 'Eurasian' countries in Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime, representations of Ukraine – especially since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and even more so since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 – have been rather ambiguous. Since then, Russian government actors have increasingly sought to impose an artificial normative distinction between the Ukrainian people ('good') and the Ukrainian state ('bad') (see also chapter 3 on Belarus). This particular attitude towards Kyiv would

complicate the case studies' aim to disentangle 'positive' expressions of a Eurasian identity. Instead, the thesis offers an in-depth analysis of Russia's civilizational language towards Kyiv in parts of the longitudinal analysis, as well as in the concluding chapter. The case study chapter on Belarus also unpacks some elements of Russia's civilizational discourse vis-à-vis Ukraine.

In exploring Russia's civilizational discourse vis-à-vis Belarus, Kazakhstan, and China, respectively, the case study chapters provide a wide-ranging overview of the different 'tentacles' of Russia's civilizational rhetoric. Where chapter 6 demonstrates how Russian foreign policy actors frame Belarus as constituting 'the most Western limit' of an *'all-Russian'* civilizational community, chapter 8 demonstrates how Russian government actors portray China as Eurasia's Eastern flank, with its own unique but compatible civilizational culture. Chapter 7, in turn, explores how Russian actors envision Kazakhstan as 'reaching both East *and* West', thereby framing the country as the Eurasian 'core' in Russian foreign policy discourse. The three case study chapters thus flesh out a significant trichotomy in Russian official language surrounding a (Eurasian) civilizational identity.

In line with this trichotomy found in civilizational discourses under the Putin regime, the three case studies seek to uncover the different civilizational *scales* in Russian foreign policy thinking. Chapter 6 on Belarus demonstrates how Russian foreign policy actors allude mostly to an 'all-Russian civilization' in which Belarus – alongside Ukraine – is framed as a subordinate element of the Russian nation. Chapter 7 on Kazakhstan illustrates how Russian actors refer mostly to a civilization of 'regional' scale in which Russia takes on a leading role, but the constitutive parts – including Kazakhstan – are nonetheless respected as independent actors. Finally, chapter 8 on Russian discourses vis-à-vis China demonstrates how Russian foreign policy actors refer to a civilization of *global scale* in which Russia and China supposedly co-function as *equal* guarantors of peace and stability.

More broadly, the case study chapters are representative of what could be considered as Russia's three main foreign policy outlooks: the Belarus case study representing Russia's Western outlook and its position in relation to countries in the so-called EU-Russian 'shared neighborhood',

such as Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova; the Kazakhstan case study representing Russia's Central Asian outlook and Russia's relationship with states such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; and the China case study illustrating Russia's Eastern outlook and the country's turn to Asian powers such as China and India.

Finally, the three case studies are illustrative of the different kinds of bilateral relationships that Russia pursues in the Eurasian region. The China case study illustrates a two-level relationship in which normative alignment at a *global level*, expressed through a shared anti-unipolar rhetoric, is coupled with both contestation and cooperation at a *regional level* (e.g. Kim & Blank, 2013; Korolev, 2016). The Kazakhstan case study explores a bilateral relationship in which the partner country pursues a so-called 'multivectoral' foreign policy, thereby pushing for relations with multiple partners both in the East and West, while granting Russia a 'privileged interest' in its domestic and international affairs (Ambrosio & Lange, 2014; Anceschi, 2016, p. 167). And the Belarus case study represents a bilateral relationship in which the partner country pursues a 'univectoral' foreign policy in which Russia enjoys an explicitly preferential status (Minasyan, 2012). With this tripartite distinction in mind, the goal of the case study chapters is to explore the difference between alignment (China), integration (Kazakhstan), and incorporation (Belarus) in Russian foreign policy.

1.2 Mapping the scholarly field

In recent years, a substantial body of research has examined and historically contextualized Eurasian identity constructions in Russian political discourse (e.g. M. G. Suslov & Bassin, 2016; Tsygankov, 2007), as well as its reliance on spatial and temporal metaphors (e.g. Clowes, 2011). A systematic exploration of the three conceptual dimensions of identity construction in Eurasian discourses – space, time, and ethics – is still outstanding, however. In particular, the notion of conflicting temporalities in Eurasian civilizational discourses – with a Russian-Eurasian 'modern' temporality counterposing a Western 'postmodern' temporality – remains unexplored in existing

literature.[3] Additionally, the ethical element in the construction of a Eurasian identity, and especially the conflicting synthesis between a multi-confessional civilizational concept and Russian orthodoxy, remains underexposed in current Eurasian scholarship; how political actors navigate the discursive field and reconcile two essentially contradictory notions is scarcely discussed.[4]

Studies that do address the inherent contradictions of a 'Eurasianism of values' argue that a multi-ethnic and multi-religious reality has prompted Eurasianists to abandon the wish to combine Orthodox universalism with the 'pragmatism of organizing the common Eurasian political space' (e.g. Morozova, 2009). The data collected in the framework of my MPhil thesis at St Antony's College – data on which I relied in developing this study's hypotheses – however, point in a different direction. They prove that, despite their inherent contradictions, discourses promoting a Eurasian civilizational concept with Russian Orthodoxy at its core are very much part of the discursive mainstream in Russian foreign policy (Roggeveen, 2020). To fully understand the pressing political implications of the spatial, temporal, and ethical dimensions of Eurasian identity construction under the Putin regime, chapters 3 through 5 set out the broad discursive mechanism at play. Chapters 6 through 8, in turn, illustrate how these discursive patterns translate into Russian foreign policy language vis-à-vis three key 'Eurasian' partner countries.

Importantly, the study of Eurasia consists of multiple – at times conflicting – scholarly paradigms. On the one hand, there is a strand of literature that explores the Eurasian concept as an ideological schema, focusing on doctrinal expressions of (neo-)Eurasianism in contemporary Russian politics. Hollwerth and Umland (2007), for example, provide a comprehensive account of right-wing extremist discourses in Russia, assigning great importance to the idiosyncratic views of prominent neo-Eurasianist Aleksandr Dugin. Elsewhere, Bassin et al. (2015) and Laruelle (2004a,

[3] Chapter 4 on temporal identity constructions further explores how Russian foreign policy actors frame 'the West' as existing in a postmodern temporality, whilst portraying the 'Russian-Eurasian' sphere as existing in a 'modern' temporality.

[4] Both chapter 5 on ethical identity constructions and chapter 7 on Russian civilizational discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan explore how Russian foreign policy actors relate to the multi-confessional reality of the so-called 'Eurasian' region, whilst simultaneously propagating the centrality of Russian Orthodoxy.

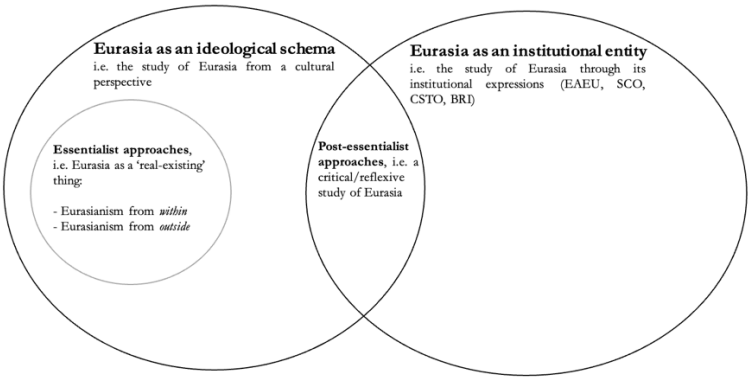
2012) explore expressions of a Eurasian identity in contemporary Russian politics through the ideological paradigm of 1920s émigré Eurasianists such as Trubetzkoy and Savitsky.

These ideology-based studies, which focus on the intellectual impact of the (neo-)Eurasianist movement, are contrasted by what I call an institutional approach. Studies that adhere to the institutional approach largely avoid the notion of Eurasian*ism* and reduce the Eurasian concept to its various institutional forms, thereby offering a scholarly perspective which is erroneously void of any cultural analysis. This legalistic approach focuses on the formal structures that shape the so-called 'Eurasian' space – that is, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI). Dragneva and Wolczuk (2013), for example, provide an extensive analysis of Russian-led regional integration projects, focusing on the 'institutional architecture' of the Eurasian Customs Union. Similarly, Vinokurov and Libman (2012) explore the institutional linkages that exist across the Eurasian common market.

Where the institutional approach too often results in formulaic accounts of Eurasian economic integration, the ideological approach often appears to be rooted in pseudo-scientific theories of Eurasianism. On their own, therefore, both strands of literature provide only limited insight into the Russian-Eurasian project. This study seeks to thicken existing research on Eurasian identity constructions by combining insights from both institutional and ideological strands of Eurasian scholarship. Working with a unique corpus of Russian policy documents, this thesis demonstrates that both institutional and cultural-ideological conceptions of Eurasia converge in one and the same policy discourse in Russia. Notably, the distinction between Eurasia as an ideological schema, on the one hand, and Eurasia as an institutional entity, on the other, partly overlaps with another important dichotomy in Eurasian scholarship. This dichotomy consists of essentialist studies that present the Eurasian concept as a 'real-existing' thing, on the one hand, and post-essentialist studies that are 'sceptical of essentialist claims about civilizations […] but sensitive

to the power that such claims exercise in social and political practice' (Hall & Jackson, 2007, pp. 3–4).

Within the scholarly tradition that presents Eurasia as a 'real-existing' thing, there are two dominant strands of literature. On the one hand, there is what I call the study of Eurasianism from *within*, consisting of Russian pseudo-scientific writings by such individuals as Nikolai Trubetzkoy, Lev Gumilev, and Aleksandr Dugin, who together constitute the broad '(neo-) Eurasianist' oeuvre. On the other hand, there is the study of Eurasianism from *outside*, which consists of mostly Western scholarship by contemporary academics such as Mark Bassin (Bassin et al., 2015; Bassin & Pozo, 2017) and Marlene Laruelle (2004a, 2012), who *comment* on the (neo-)Eurasianist oeuvre from a largely *essentialist* perspective. See figure 1.2 below for an overview of the various research paradigms – ideological versus institutional, and essentialist versus post-essentialist – in existing Eurasian scholarship.



1.2 A schematic overview of the scholarly field

This study explicitly locates itself in the post-essentialist paradigm. It therefore rejects the notion that a Eurasian civilization is 'real' and – instead – takes a critical or reflexive approach to the study of Eurasia, focusing on the specific *purpose* various claims to a Eurasian civilization serve in the political and social realm. In line with studies such as the one conducted by David Lewis (2020), this project investigates the 'ideational world-views' of Russian government actors, exploring how so-called 'cognitive maps' condition potential policy responses. 'These cognitive maps', Lewis explains (2020, pp. 4, 6), 'emerge through a complex interaction of direct and indirect

ideological influences, constant daily encounters with social and political reality, long-standing historical and cultural tropes, and the impact of individual personalities and experiences […] To talk about the ideational aspects of "Putinism" is therefore to identify not a clearly articulated belief system, but a set of shared understandings of contested concepts among a group of political actors.'

The thesis thus rejects the essentialist strand of the Eurasia-as-an-ideology paradigm, whilst remaining sensitive to the ways in which motifs and narratives from the Eurasianism-from-within literature can reappear in contemporary foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime. At the same time, the thesis relies on insights from the institutionalist paradigm, providing a critical analysis of Eurasian identity constructs that is located at the *intersection* of ideology and institutions. Treating the various strands of Eurasian literature as complementary rather than contradictory, the thesis thus bridges a gap in Eurasian scholarship, providing a new intersectional approach to the study of Eurasia.

1.3 The notion of 'Eurasia' in Russian political thinking

Importantly, contemporary iterations of a 'Eurasian' identity in Russian political discourse have their philosophical roots in nineteenth century thought. 'Starting with the Slavophiles,' Laruelle (2012, p. 2) explains, 'many Russian intellectuals saw Europeanness as the main problem of Russia's nationhood. The fact that Russia's identity was developed under, through, and for Western eyes provoked profound resentment and prompted many to turn toward regions where Russia would be recognized as the dominant power' (see also Shlapentokh, 2007; Tsygankov, 2007). It was thus, Dmitry Shlapentokh (2007, p. 193) explains, that 'Russia indissociably [bound] its imaginary onto the Orient in order to constitute a geopolitics that could legitimate the Empire'.

Nineteenth century Slavophile figures, such as Alexei Khomyakov and Ivan Kireevsky in particular, laid the intellectual foundations of this 'Eurasian' outlook by emphasizing Russia's cultural and spiritual distinctiveness from 'the West'. Khomyakov (1928, p. 568) argued, for example, that 'all Western systems and institutions contain the seeds of some Western problem.'

'The transplanting of such systems to the national soil of Russia,' he wrote, 'often involves danger and is selfdom harmless'. Khomyakov thus argued that Russia's emulation of the West was a mistake: 'not only because the spirit of Russia is foreign to the West, but because Russia has been built on the principles that suited her individuality and made her own particular path clear' (Ibid.).

Eurasianism as a distinct ideological movement emerged in the early twentieth century, through the work of influential thinkers such as Nikolai Trubetzkoy, Pyotr Savitsky, and Lev Gumilev. Building on the Slavophile movement, these thinkers contended that Russia should embrace its 'unique' role as a civilizational hegemon in the so-called 'Eurasian' space. The 'Eurasian' idea articulated by these thinkers, Marlene Laruelle (2012, p. 1) demonstrates, 'suggest[ed] that Russia and its "margins" occupy a dual or median position between Europe and Asia, that their specific traits have to do with their culture being a "mix" born of the fusion of Slavic and Turko-Muslim peoples, and that Russia should specifically highlight its Asian features'. Importantly, embedded in this 'Eurasian' idea was the power implication that Russia lies *not* on the Eastern periphery of the European continent but forms the very center, or 'heartland', of a Eurasian region instead.

Following the Soviet collapse, Eurasianist thought experienced a significant revival. Particularly from 1991 onwards, Laruelle (Ibid.) and others argue (e.g. Morozova, 2009; Tsygankov, 2007; Shlapentokh, 2007), the notion steadily grew in popularity amongst conservative Russian intellectuals, offering an ideological frame to 'formulate an explanation for the collapse of the Soviet Union and to restore a sense of [...] continuity from [Russia's] troubled history by recasting it in spatial rather than temporal terms'. David Lewis (2018, p. 1612) explains how the 'Eurasian' concept offered a key ideological device 'to address fundamental challenges in post-Soviet Russia's international identity, stemming primarily from a dual sense of loss: an imperial retreat from territories controlled by the Tsarist Empire and the Soviet Union; and a decline in status from a global superpower to a regional power on the European periphery' (see also Laruelle, 2004, p. 115).

Undoubtedly, the most infamous representative of this neo-Eurasianist oeuvre is Alexander Dugin. 'Simultaneously on the fringe and at the center of the Russian nationalist phenomenon', writes Laruelle (2006), 'several intellectual tendencies [have] manifest[ed] themselves in his thought: a political theory inspired by Traditionalism, Orthodox religious philosophy, Aryanist and occultist theories, and geopolitical and Eurasianist conceptions'. Building on these various elements, Dugin has insistently propagated an aggressive and irredentist Russian foreign policy, advocating for Russia's hegemonic position in the so-called 'Eurasian' sphere, whilst rejecting 'Western' liberal values (Dugin, 1997, 2009, 2012).

As the following chapters will demonstrate, from the early 2000s onwards, the notion of 'Eurasia' has steadily moved from the reactionary fringe of the discursive field (e.g. the writings of Alexander Dugin) to official foreign policy discourse promoted by central political actors, such as Vladimir Putin, Sergei Lavrov, and Dmitry Medvedev – thus, growing 'beyond the purely intellectual circles to which it had been confined for about a decade, entering a larger public space [in which the concept has been used to promote] the idea of a Eurasian entity encompassing the center of the Old Continent, in which Russia would be "at home"' (Laruelle, 2012, pp. 1–2). Importantly, as Laruelle argues (2004, p. 115), this 'Eurasian' orientation in contemporary Russian foreign policy should *not* be understood as a structured movement with a coherent political agenda but – much rather – as a *Weltanschauung* that various political actors and groupings within contemporary Russia have drawn upon to articulate a variety of geopolitical constructs.

1.4 Conceptual discussion

The research is based on a constructivist approach for exploring discourses of identity within the discipline of International Relations and embraces analytical concepts, such as performativity (Butler, 1999) and différance (Derrida, 1976, 1978), that traditionally fall within the postpositivist paradigm (see also Mitzen, 2006; Steele, 2005). Making use of a postpositivist approach in the exploration of collective identity has several distinct ontological and

epistemological consequences. The constructivist paradigm presupposes that the relationship between representations of identity and foreign policies are mutually constitutive. The ontological position is thus that there is no extra- or non-discursive field of exploration or as Lene Hansen (2006, pp. 25–26) explains 'there is no identity existing prior to or independently of foreign policy'. This research project conceptualizes identity and foreign policy as being inextricably linked and performed through discourse. Contrary to a causal epistemology that characterizes rationalist approaches in IR theory, this project thus questions the possibility of observing causal effects of identity on foreign policy. Instead, this study adopts a discursive epistemology with an analytical focus on the mutually constitutive and performative relationship between identity and foreign policy.

The constructivist paradigm – with its particular focus on *language* – encourages a critical gaze that is essential when analyzing identity constructs (see also Adler, 2013, p. 117). This paradigm forces the researcher to take into account the idiosyncrasies of the individual case. In the constructivist paradigm, the researcher aims to explore how power is attained through the *manipulation of discourse*. Rather than aiming to *prove* certain hypotheses, this inductive approach enables the researcher to uncover the political objectives underlying a discourse in an unbiased manner. One of the main tools through which the thesis aims to understand the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors seek to 'manipulate' the discourse is through *audience analysis*. Both the longitudinal analysis chapters and the case study chapters unpack the audiences that Russian government actors seek to target in their various discursive strands, thereby enabling a deeper understanding of the political objectives underlying Russia's civilizational discourse.

Importantly, the empirical chapters reveal that Russian government actors under the Putin regime distinguish between two broad audience categories: i.e., an internal or domestic audience, on the one hand, and an external audience, on the other. Insofar as Russian government actors speak to an *internal* audience, the empirical analysis demonstrates that Russian government actors consistently differentiate between a so-called ethnic 'Russkiy' audience and a civic 'Rossiyskiy'

audience. In the Russian language, the term 'Russkiy' (*Русский*) is used to denote 'Russianness' in the sense of a Russian 'ethnicity', whereas the term 'Rossiyskiy' (*Российский*) denotes a civic conception of Russian identity based on the current borders of the Russian state. Thus, when Russian government actors target an ethnic 'Russkiy' audience, they rely on a narrow and exclusionary conception of Russianness which is defined by 'blood' and ancestry, whereas – when they target a civic 'Rossiyskiy' audience – they adopt an inclusionary and heterogenous conception of Russianness.

Whilst in English both the term 'Russkiy' and 'Rossiyskiy' translate into 'Russian', the 'Russkiy' concept implies a non-Westphalian – and thus highly contested – understanding of the Russian nation as a community that supposedly lives beyond the current borders of the Russian state in, for example, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Northern regions of Kazakhstan, whilst excluding non-Russian peoples living within the Russian Federation.[5] The 'Rossiyskiy' concept, on the other hand, defines Russianness in civic terms as an identity category that exclusively encompasses the citizens of the Russian Federation, therefore being inclusionary towards the non-Russian peoples living within the Russian state whilst also steering clear of the expansionist implications that define the 'Russkiy' concept. The various empirical chapters reveal how Russian government actors manipulate the discourse to appeal to these two audience categories in order to promote two – highly conflicting – conceptions of Russian nationhood.

With regards to the *external* audience category, the discursive analysis demonstrates how Russian foreign policy actors distinguish between two sub-categories: that is, (1) a 'positive' external audience which mostly consists of a regional 'Eurasian' audience or the broader 'non-West' and (2) a 'negative' external audience which consists of the so-called 'collective West' or the 'estranged' Slavic countries (i.e. countries that once made up the former USSR but have since – at least in Russia's perception – steered a 'Western' course). Throughout the empirical chapters, the thesis

[5] See chapter 3 on the spatial construction of a 'Eurasian' identity, and chapters 6 and 7 on Russian discourses vis-à-vis Belarus and Kazakhstan in particular for a further analysis of the 'Russkiy'/'Rossiyskiy' distinction, as well as the expansionist and non-Westphalian implications underlying the 'Russkiy' concept.

demonstrates how Russian government actors employ a variety of narratives to speak to these two 'external' audience categories, thereby advancing a wide range of geopolitical objectives.

Central to my analysis of contemporary discourses on Eurasia in Russian foreign policy are the concepts of performativity (Butler, 1999; Weber, 1998; Wittig, 1981), différance (Derrida, 1976, 1978), the Self/Other nexus (Campbell, 1992; Connolly, 1991; Neumann, 1996; Norton, 1988), and agency versus structure (Thrift, 1983; A. E. Wendt, 1987; Suganami, 1999). These analytical concepts find their foundational background in critical theory, cultural semiotics, and IR theory.

1.4.1. Performativity

Judith Butler (1999, p. 24) explores how identity is 'an *effect* of discursive practices'. Focusing on the politics of sexuality, Butler (1999, p. 33) argues that 'there is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; the identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results'. Performativity thus refers to the discursive processes through which articulations of identity constitute that which they purport to be. Similarly, Monique Wittig (1981) argues that the human female *is* a woman because s/he is *seen* as a woman, but 'before being *seen* that way, [s/he] first had to be *made* that way'. Language, both in Butler's and in Wittig's argument, is thus seen as a tool to (re)produce identities.

Although the idea of performativity traditionally focuses on sex and the gendered body, Campbell (1992) and others (e.g. Weber, 1998) apply the notion to processes of collective identity formation on a state-level. In this thesis, the notion of performativity is taken to yet another level of abstraction, moving from the individual (Butler, 1999; Wittig, 1981) to the nation-state (Campbell, 1992; Weber, 1998) to the level of 'regionness' (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000; I. Neumann, 2003; Söderbaum, 2015). Regional identities, just as individual and nation-state identities, are 'discursively produced structural/structuring effects that rely on constant acts of performativity to call it into being' (Dunn, 2010).

Judith Butler's performance theory suggests that 'the subjective experience of identity as an internal, authentic and coherent core is not the source but rather the product of repetitive performances of a set of practices that match that identity' (Lavi, 2013, p. 698). Thus, what is perceived as a natural given, 'being part of' a certain regional group, e.g. 'being European' or 'being Eurasian', is in fact a discursive construction or what Monique Wittig (1981) calls an 'imaginary formation'. Identity regimes, such as that of a Eurasian civilizational identity, gain power through repetition – it is through a process of reification that identity constructions are turned into 'naturalized ontologies' (Butler, 1999, p. 42; Peoples, 2010, p. 56). Chapter 2 unpacks the discursive toolbox used in the construction of a civilizational identity and demonstrates that – regardless of geographical, cultural, and historical positionality – civilizational theorists have consistently relied upon the same spatial, temporal, and ethical leitmotifs to frame their civilizational concepts as 'naturalized ontologies'.

In particular, the thesis explores how Russian foreign policy actors have employed 'space-controlling' structures to frame a 'Eurasian' civilization as a naturalized ontology (also see Häkli, 2008). To this end, the thesis relies on Henri Lefebvre's distinction between 'connotative' and 'denotative' discourses. Whilst connotative discourses imbue space with shared meaning by invoking socio-cultural or emotional associations and imageries, denotative discourses consist of 'juridical-administrative' narratives that serve to materialize the symbolic bonds created by connotative discourses (Lefebvre, 1991). Thus, throughout the empirical chapters, the thesis explores how connotative discourses are used to visualize the 'Eurasian' population as a fraternal entity, thereby enforcing cultural and political cohesion across the 'Eurasian' sphere, whilst denotative discourses are employed as a means to formalize the imagined spatial unity of 'Eurasia' by imposing institutionalized frameworks such as the Eurasian Economic Union upon the region.

Ultimately, if we accept that identities of regionness, such as a 'Eurasian' identity, are the *effect* of performative practices, then the analysis of such an identity necessarily moves to the discursive realm. Understanding the constitutive and performative role of Eurasian identity regimes

thus requires the deconstruction of that particular discourse and its representations of identity. With this goal in mind and inspired by both Butler's (1999) and Wittig's (1981) work in the field of critical theory, the concept of performativity fulfils a central role in my analysis.

1.4.2. Meaning through differentiation

In line with the poststructuralist paradigm, this study also assumes that meaning is created through difference. It is only through the constitution of a boundary which helps to distinguish between an 'inside' and an 'outside' that collective identities gain meaning (Campbell, 1992, p. 8). The inside, or the Self, is always articulated in reference to an outside; the Other. This is a highly ambiguous process. Introducing the concept of différance, Derrida (1976, 1978) argues that meaning is both constituted in opposition to other terms (e.g. the Self is defined in opposition to the Other) and through a process of deferral. Derrida's différance thus expresses the idea that a concept can never be defined *sui generis*, but only through contextual and intertextual references. This follows semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure's argument that words – or *signs*, in Saussure's terms – do not possess an 'innate' meaning but rather that meaning is created through a relational difference to *other* terms.

Translating Saussure's and Derrida's seminal contributions in the field of semiotics to the constructivist study of identity in IR, identity concepts can only exist within a 'discursive web' of Self and Other. Both in the longitudinal component (chapters 3-5) and in the case study component (chapters 6-8), the thesis deconstructs how – and for what purpose – Russian foreign policy actors have articulated various representations of Self and Other in their civilizational discourse. Inspired by William Connolly's (1991) work on identity and difference, this research project conceptualizes identity as relational and collective. Connolly argues that collective identities are always articulated in opposition to a series of differences that define the Self:

> 'a powerful identity will strive to constitute a range of differences as intrinsically evil, irrational, abnormal, mad, sick, primitive, monstrous, dangerous, or anarchical – as Other. It does so in order to secure itself as intrinsically good, coherent, complete or rational and in order to protect itself from the Other that would unravel its self-certainty' (Connolly, 1991, p. 61).

Although differences delimit one identity from another, Anne Norton (1988, p. 7) also illustrates that 'there is ambiguity in the *interior*. The province of meaning that the definition demarks is not empty or uniform. Within the word, the name, the idea, the identity is ambiguity, ambivalence, [and] contradiction.' Thus, identities are not created through a simple binary difference between Self and Other. Rather, they are constituted within a complex discursive web of 'complementary identities, contending identities, negative identities, [and] non-identities' (Connolly, 1991, pp. 64–65).

In a Russian-Eurasian context, this discursive web consists of an amalgamation of various complementary identities (for example, a Russian-Eurasian identity based on Russia's imperial past, an identity based on notions of a Slavic brotherhood, an identity based on Eastern Orthodoxy, and so on). At the same time, the discursive web consists of several contending or negative identities – most importantly, a European or 'Western' identity but also the ethnic identities of the various minorities that live within the borders of the Russian state. Minority subjectivities – especially Muslim minorities – are consistently framed as constituting a threat to the unity of a 'Russian-Eurasian' civilization (see chapter 7 on Russian discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan). Both in the longitudinal analysis and in the case study chapters, I further explore the vast web of complementary, contending, and negative identities employed in Russian civilizational discourses. Chapter 6, for example, explores how Russian foreign policy actors have employed a discourse of *liminality* in order to conflate the Russian and Belarusian Self, thereby presenting Belarus as a *sub-element* of a 'Russian civilization' rather than a sovereign state in its own right. Chapter 8, in turn,

examines how Russian government actors have portrayed China as a 'unique but compatible' civilizational entity that strives towards a similar goal of global stability through a shared opposition against 'Western hegemony'.

Finally, collective identities are constituted in those ambiguous moments in which one is other to oneself or the Other is recognized as being similar to the Self (Norton, 1988, p. 7). This becomes clear, for example, in the chapter on temporal identity constructions (chapter 4), where I demonstrate that the starting point for articulating a Eurasian identity is often not a positive conception of the Self but rather a negation of the 'European' Other. In the narratives studied in this chapter, Eurasia is portrayed as Europe's spatio-temporal counterimage. I argue that this practice of 'othering the self' adds to existing scholarship on the Self/Other nexus.

1.4.3. Discourse and narrative

Given the discursive focus of this study, it is furthermore necessary to reflect on the concept of *discourse* itself. In the field of constructivist IR, writes Charlotte Epstein (2008, p. 5), 'discourses interest us not for their own sake but only insofar as they comprise sites for the making of meaning'. According to Epstein (2008, p. 4), discourses consist of 'sense-making practices' through which the social world can be understood. Similarly, David Howarth (2000, p. 5) argues that discourses 'constitute symbolic systems and social orders, and the task of discourse analysis is to examine their historical and political construction and functioning'.

These studies are in line with the poststructuralist conception of discourse articulated by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985, p. 112), who argue that discourses are 'the fixation of meaning around certain nodal points'. Nodal points are the principal reference points around which other 'signs' are ordered (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26). In a Eurasian context, the principal nodal point is the notion of a 'Eurasian civilization', which is further worked out into three primary domains – space, time, and ethics. These three domains of identity construction – in turn – are expanded into various secondary 'signs' or concepts that together constitute the discursive field

through which a Eurasian civilizational identity is articulated (see figure 1.3 below for a preliminary map of the discursive field). The chapters on space (chapter 3), time (chapter 4), and ethics (chapter 5) further explore the various nodal points, 'signs', and networks that together constitute a Eurasian civilizational identity in Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime. The case study chapters, accordingly, demonstrate how these spatial, temporal, and ethical modes of identity construction are adjusted and refined to promote bilateral relations with Russia's key 'Eurasian' partners.

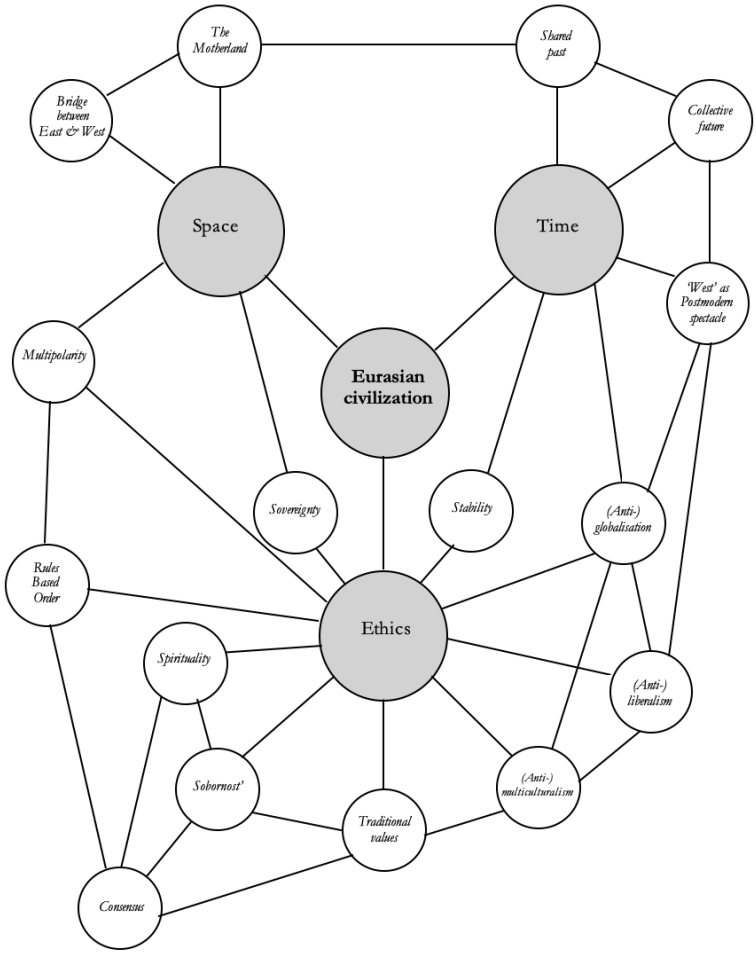


Figure 1.3 A preliminary representation of the discursive field

Following Hinchman and Hinchman (1997, p. xvi), *narratives* form a particular subset of discourses, which consist of 'a *clear sequential order* that connect[s] events in a meaningful way [and] *for a definite audience* and thus offer[s] insight about the world and/or people's experiences of it'. In a foreign policy context, narrativity functions as a tool to shape past events in a chronological order,

thereby setting the parameters of future policy trajectories (also see Elliott, 2005; Browning, 2008; Jones & Mcbeth, 2010; Krebs, 2015; Hagström & Gustafsson, 2019). This study has the particular aim to (i) flesh out the various constitutive narratives that together shape a Eurasian civilizational identity under the Putin regime, and (ii) to unpack the underlying political objectives that drive these narratives, most importantly through an analysis of target audiences.

Tracing the narrative construction of a Eurasian civilizational identity, this thesis pays particular attention to what Ole Wæver (2002b, pp. 30–31) calls the 'multi-layeredness' of discourses. Rather than conceptualizing the discursive field as a one-dimensional plain, Wæver illustrates that various narratives can function at different *depths*. Browning (2008, p. 61) explains that 'some discourses will be much more sedimented in a particular social environment than others, and will therefore be less open to transformation or replacement. Moreover, these "deeper" discursive structures will tend to be foundations for those discourses nearer the surface.' Building on the idea of multi- layeredness, this study not only maps the various narratives that are constitutive of a Eurasian civilizational identity but also explores a hierarchy that exists among them. The concluding chapter in particular offers some reflections on the 'base-level' narratives, and discursive hierarchies, that define Russia's civilizational identity discourse.

1.4.4. Structure and agency

Given the discursive focus of the thesis, it is moreover necessary to reflect on the interrelation between structure and agency, or – in the context of this study – the interrelation between discourse and foreign policy actors. Where structural-determinist approaches argue that language fully determines human subjectivity (e.g. Althusser, 1977), voluntarist approaches take an antithetical stance, emphasizing the role of human agency. In line with Anthony Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, this study aims to find a middle ground between these two opposing hypotheses, conceptualizing structure and agency as co-determined and therefore of equal importance (also see Thrift, 1983; A. E. Wendt, 1987; Suganami, 1999). Alexander Wendt (1987,

p. 339) demonstrates that structuration theory 'gives agents and structures equal ontological status [which] permits us to use agents and structures to explain some of the key properties of each as effects of the other, to see agents and structures as "co-determined" or "mutually constituted" entities.'

If we accept that agents and structures are co-determined, the question arises how much agential freedom we can assign to individual actors that operate within the discursive field. This thesis maintains that discourses set the parameters within which individual actors can operate by enabling some associations whilst excluding others. Thus, the discursive field functions as a structure that both constrains and enables agency. The parameters set within the discursive field are both normative and pragmatic in nature; normative because a discourse reflects a society's norms and morals, and thereby defines the benchmark of acceptable (discursive) behavior, pragmatic because – to be able to understand one another – individual actors must 'speak the same language' on a technical and topical level and operate within the same discursive paradigm (also see C. Epstein, 2008, p. 13).

Importantly, the thesis seeks to avoid falling into the analytical trap of presenting individual actors as 'masterminds' who consciously transform discursive structures. Nigel Thrift (1983, p. 31) demonstrates that 'there is no reason to believe that when an actress does rationalize an act it will necessarily be the real reason that she is doing it'. 'People in their conscious activity', Roy Bhaskar (1979, p. 38) similarly writes, 'for the most part unconsciously reproduce (and occasionally transform) the structures governing their substantive activities of reproduction […] When social forms change, the explanation will not normally lie in the desires of agents to change them that way, though as a very important theoretical and political limit it *may* do so.' On a discursive level, for instance, Bhaskar (1979, p. 39) demonstrates that 'the rules of grammar impose *limits* on the speech acts we can perform, but they do not *determine* our performance. This conception thus preserves the status of human agency, while doing away with the myth of creation (logical or historical), which depends upon the possibility of an individualist reduction.'

Finally, Hidemi Suganami (1999, pp. 381–397) writes that agential freedom is largely context-dependent, arguing that 'some social structures empower agents more than do others, or do so in different ways from others'. Interestingly, studies such as Suganami's largely discuss the notion of agency in *emancipatory* terms. These studies conceptualize agential freedom as a tool to speak truth to power – the implicit assumption being that discursive agency only exists when an actor makes use of a *dissenting* discourse. In a (semi-)authoritarian context, however, political actors – at least those who operate within *institutionalized* politics – often exercise their agency precisely by following the dominant discourse. In line with this pattern, the longitudinal analysis demonstrates that there is little contestation within official Russian state discourses surrounding a civilizational identity. After all, to move ahead in Russian politics, government actors must either follow – or better yet, overexaggerate – the official line of discourse. Thus, in a Russian context, agential freedom is exercised precisely by following or overextending institutionalized narratives. However, discursive diversification *can* be found in terms of the intensity with which certain narratives are employed at particular moments in time. The data visualizations presented in the longitudinal analysis (chapters 3-5) demonstrate, for example, how certain narratives are pursued by particular ministries and government agencies around significant political events.

1.5 Sources

The dataset that underlies the findings of this study consists of 5,937 unique policy texts published between 2000 and 2020 by the Russian federal government, its ministries and relevant agencies (e.g. Rossotrudnichestvo, MFA, MOD), as well as the State Duma. The individual data points consist of (i) presidential and ministerial policy documents, (ii) State Duma records, and (iii) speeches, interviews, and statements from Russian government officials. Whilst some of the sources from the dataset can be assigned to specific individuals, such as Duma deputies or high-ranking officials within the Russian federal government, the dataset largely consists of formal – 'de-personalized' – documents published by the Russian federal bureaucracy. These sources exhibit

a *consensual* language that has likely been developed through the input of many individuals working within different levels of Russia's government apparatus and have been published by the Russian government with the aim of promoting a consolidated narrative.[6] Following David Lewis (2020, p. 6), these documents offer a window into the 'collective narrative' and 'shared interpretation of external reality' pursued by Russian political elites, reflecting 'the essential conceptual framework within which leaders function'.

The dataset has been collected making use of text mining tools in the open-source programming environment R. Automated data collection tools in RStudio allowed me to significantly expand my corpus while lowering the risks of inaccuracies that come with manual data input.[7] Using a targeted text mining model, which I describe in more detail below, the policy documents were gathered on the basis of two criteria: (i) the primary text had to be published between 2000 and 2020; and (ii) the text had to contain linguistic markers referring to a 'Eurasian' or 'civilizational' identity.

The research that I conducted in the context of my MPhil thesis at St Antony's College constituted the initial phase of data collection. During this initial phase, I extracted those policy documents that contained grammatical forms of the Russian term 'Eurasia' (*Евразия*) or words containing its grammatical root *-evraz-* (*евраз*), which resulted in an initial corpus of 1,709 unique

[6] The documents used in the discursive analysis are published by a wide variety of Russian government institutions and contain both the 'consensual' language perpetuated by these formal institutions, thereby making the institutions *themselves* the actors behind the discourse, as well as statements made by individuals who are formally affiliated to these government institutions, such as high-ranking officials (e.g. Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Medvedev), Duma Deputies (e.g. Sergei Naryshkin, Leonid Slutsky, Tatyana Moskalkova), Ministers (e.g. Sergei Lavrov), and government spokespersons. Notably, the following Russian government institutions have been included in the discursive analysis: the Office of the President of the Russian Federation; the Government of the Russian Federation; the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation; the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation; the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation; the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation; the Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic of the Russian Federation; the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo); the State Duma of the Russian Federation; the Committee of the State Duma for Affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eurasian Integration and Relations with Compatriots; the State Duma Nationality Committee; the State Duma Culture Committee; the State Duma Foreign Affairs Committee; the State Duma Defence Committee; the State Duma Committee on Regional Policy and Problems of the North and the Far East; the State Duma Committee on Economic Policy, Industry, Innovative Development and Entrepreneurship; and the State Duma Energy Committee. Importantly, these particular institutions were selected through a targeted text mining model which is further explained below.

[7] All datapoints were reviewed manually, however, to confirm their relevance to the research topic.

policy documents. The outcome of this initial study prompted me to pursue further data collection to include additional markers of a Eurasian identity in Russian foreign policy. Most importantly, my MPhil project confirmed the importance of a 'civilizational' axis in Eurasian identity construction (Roggeveen, 2020, 2021). Where the first phase of data collection thus revolved around the key term 'Eurasia', the second phase of data collection focused on an additional key marker of Eurasian identity, that is the notion of a 'civilization'. During the second phase of data collection, I thus mined Russian government website for those documents that contained the Russian term for 'civilization' (*цивилизация*)[8], resulting in an additional 4,228 unique policy documents which were added to the corpus. See figure 1.4 below for an overview of the various government bodies that are represented in the corpus.

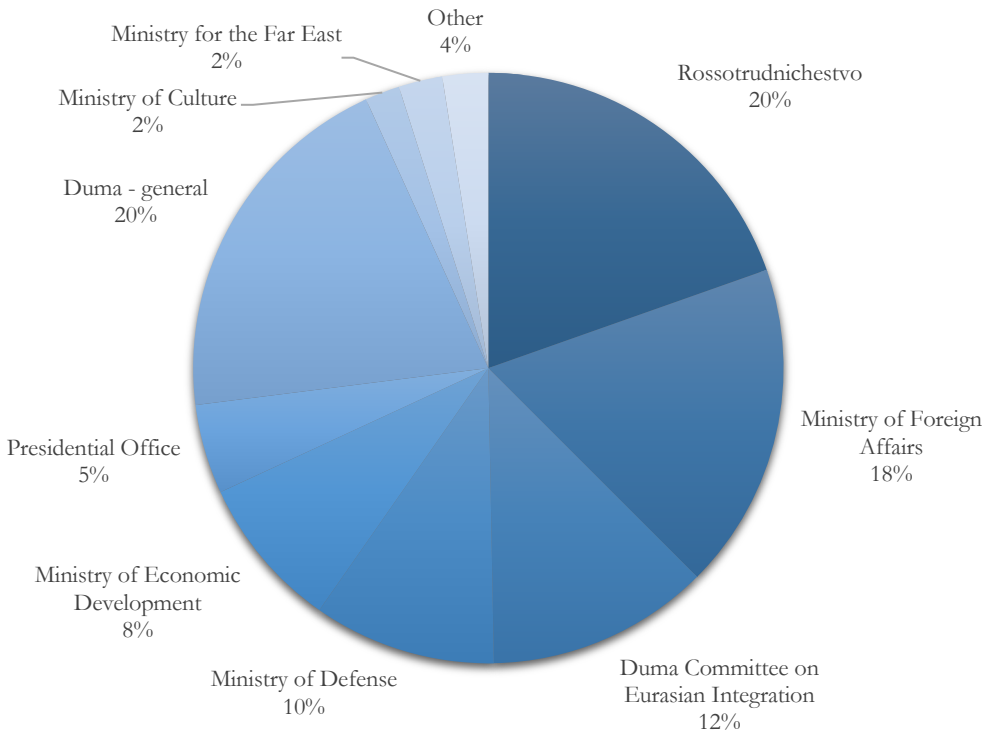


Figure 1.4 An overview of the government bodies represented in the corpus

[8] Here, too, the various websites and online archives were mined for documents containing the Russian word for 'civilization' (*цивилизация*) in all its grammatical forms.

Using Google advanced search operators and Boolean search terms, the targeted text mining model that I built extracted policy documents from *all* official websites published by the Russian federal government that met the minimum value threshold (see below). The corpus thus includes – amongst others – official documents published on the online Kremlin archives, Duma committee websites, and ministerial websites. In total, I mined eighteen online Russian government archives and websites (see appendix 1 for an overview). Notably, government websites that contained *less* than fifty unique policy documents including the relevant search terms were excluded from the data mining model. For example, the online archive of the Ministry of North Caucasus Affairs was excluded from the text mining model as it did not meet the minimum value threshold; this particular ministry published less than fifty unique policy documents containing the key terms 'Eurasia' or 'civilization'.

Importantly, when you mine a website for textual data, the targeted text mining model automatically downloads every *single* document that contains the relevant key terms. Thus, one key term easily generates thousands of documents. Given the predominantly qualitative character of this study, which required the manual coding and reading of sources, I was thus forced to be somewhat reserved in the number of key terms used in the targeted text mining model. However, even though I only focused on two key terms in the process of data collection, the documents that resulted from this search provided a wide view of the various narratives found in Russian foreign policy discourses surrounding a Eurasian civilizational identity (see figure 1.3 above for an overview of the discursive field).

1.6 Methods

The thesis relied on a mixed methods approach. Both in the longitudinal and case-study component, the thesis combined discourse analysis, narrative analysis, close reading, and grounded theory. I used NVivo qualitative analysis software to manage and structure the source material. These methods have been supplemented by computational and – at times – quantitative text

analysis tools using the Quanteda package in RStudio. The computational analysis fulfilled a supportive and secondary role in the research design, providing confirmatory and overlapping conclusions that reinforce the overall persuasiveness of the arguments made throughout the thesis.

1.6.1. Qualitative analysis

Both for the longitudinal component and the case-study component, the main method has been to read through the source material to map semantically linked concepts used in the construction of a Eurasian civilizational identity. To this end, I employed Lene Hansen's (2006, p. 30) framework for 'politically contextualized discourse analysis'. Relying on Hansen's work in the field of foreign policy analysis, I focused particularly on the spatial, temporal, and ethical dimensions of identity construction. Importantly, the thesis has deliberately *not* aimed to employ a rigidly demarcated methodological framework for discourse analysis, such as Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach (Fairclough, 1980, 2001, 2013). Rather, the thesis has built on a variety of works by scholars who can broadly be categorized as falling within the field of poststructuralist discourse studies (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Howarth, 1998; Howarth, 2000; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Epstein, 2008).

Following 1.4.3 of this chapter, the thesis understood a discourse as 'a cohesive ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations about a specific object that frame that object in a certain way and, therefore, delimit the possibilities for action in relation to it' (C. Epstein, 2008, p. 2). In order to analyze the discourse, the thesis applied methods from linguistics and literary theory, including deconstructive reading (Derrida, 1976, 1978, 2001; see also Angermuller et al., 2014; Angermuller, 2020). Notably, in his 'Letter to a Japanese friend', Jacques Derrida wrote that 'deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one', for attempting such may lead to a 'domestication' of deconstruction resulting in a 'set of rules and transposable procedures' (Mazzei, 2007, p. 13). Richard Beardsworth (1996, p. 4) explains that 'Derrida is careful to avoid this term ["method"] because it carries connotations of a procedural form of judgment. A thinker

with a method has already decided *how* to proceed, is unable to give him or herself up to the matter of thought in hand, is a functionary of the criteria which structure his or her conceptual gestures'.

Whilst being mindful of Derrida's criticism, various scholars have nonetheless adopted a 'deconstructive' methodology, especially in discourse-based research (e.g. Wittig, 1981; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Beardsworth, 1996; D. Howarth, 1998; Weber, 1998; Butler, 1999; D. R. Howarth, 2000; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Mazzei, 2007; C. Epstein, 2008). In line with these studies and inspired by Derrida's deconstruction theory, the thesis has adopted a similar 'deconstructive' approach, conducting discourse analytical research that 'considers not what the text tends to say, but engages a deconstructive openness to expect, even encourage, another interpretation of the text, a competing interpretation of the text, an attention to the "echoing" voices in the layers beneath the surface' (Mazzei, 2007, pp. 15–16) (see section 1.4 of this chapter for a discussion of the analytical concepts underlying this deconstructive methodology).

Throughout the process of deconstructive reading, I relied on NVivo software to code, categorize, and annotate the corpus (also see Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Notably, the 1,709 policy documents collected in the framework of my MPhil thesis have all been subjected to close readings, resulting in an initial 'map' of the discursive field. Relying on the method of data saturation, this initial research phase served to establish the main discursive patterns and themes, offering an analytical roadmap to then explore the extended corpus (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 61). Thus, the extended subset of 4,228 policy documents added to the corpus in the second phase of data collection was sampled *thematically* based on the patterns that emerged from the first phase of discourse analysis. From the documents added in the second phase of data collection, a subset of texts was chosen for close readings based on their specific use of key terms.[9] The documents that were not selected for close readings were, however, incorporated into the computational and quantitative text analysis.

[9] These key terms have been determined based on a comprehensive analysis of the initial dataset collected in the framework of my MPhil thesis.

Making use of an inductive approach, I borrowed elements from constructivist grounded theory to code the various constitutive texts related to a Eurasian civilizational identity in Russian foreign policy (Charmaz, 2006, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Oktay, 2012). Nicky Charmaz (2006, pp. 42–46) demonstrates that grounded theory coding consists of multiple phases. As outlined in the paragraph above, the initial phase consisted of extensive close readings, which served to structure the data in preliminary coding categories. During this phase, I relied primarily on *in vivo* coding (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 82; Saldaña, 2013, p. 91). *In vivo* codes are 'insider shorthand terms specific to a particular group that reflect their perspective' (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). Rather than structuring the data to fit *a priori* coding categories, I thus categorized the corpus making use of concepts indigenous to the language used by Russian government actors. In the subsequent phase, I relied on what Strauss and Corbin (1990) call 'axial coding'. At this stage, I returned to the dataset to divide the various symbolic markers of a Eurasian civilizational identity, which emerged during the initial *in vivo* coding process, in conceptual 'containers'. Structuring the data along the thematic axes of space, time, and ethics, this step allowed me to 'bring the data back to a coherent whole' (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60; Saldaña, 2013, p. 218). Throughout the coding process, I consistently relied on memo-writing to further define and understand the various coding categories.

I furthermore relied on elements of narrative analysis to interpret the various constitutive stories surrounding a Eurasian civilization in Russian foreign policy. Mapping the construction of a Eurasian civilizational identity, I employed three narrative forms of analysis. First, to determine the political objectives underlying the various constitutive narratives, I made use of what Mike Allen (2017) calls 'functional narrative analysis'. Here, I focused on *externally oriented questions* such as 'what does a story *do* as a result of its telling? [And] what is the significance of how and when the story was told for the narrator?' (Allen, 2017, p. 1069). In line with this externally oriented analysis, the various empirical chapters systematically end with an examination of target audiences, through which the thesis seeks to uncover the political objectives underlying the various discursive strands.

Additionally, the empirical chapters aim to unpack the *internal dynamics* of Russia's civilizational discourse, exploring the ways in which certain events are '*constituted* in light of the overall narrative – [or] in Propp's terms, to be made "functions" of the story' (Bruner, 1991, p. 8; Propp, 1968). To do so, I relied on 'thematic narrative analysis' (Allen, 2017, p. 1069), through which I explored the various motifs and thematic patterns present *inside* the discourse (also see Riessman, 1993). Finally, I relied on what Catherine Riessman (1993, p. 3) calls 'structural narrative analysis', paying attention to transitions and turning points (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 82), as well as inconsistencies, repetitions, and silences in the constitutive stories surrounding a Eurasian civilization (Poirier & Ayres, 1997).

1.6.2. Computational analysis

For the computational text analysis, I relied on the open-source programming platform RStudio. Making use of the readtext package[10], I first imported the data into a 'raw text corpus' in RStudio (Welbers et al., 2017, p. 246). Using computational tools, I extracted metadata elements from the texts (e.g. publication date, document type, author). I then preprocessed the data into tokens – singular units of text, such as word stems – using the quanteda package in R, effectively 'cleaning' the corpus by removing linguistic fillers and irrelevant discourse markers. After cleaning the corpus, I created a document-term matrix (DTM).[11] Figure 1.5 below – which is borrowed from Welbers et al. (2017, p. 247) – offers an overview of the various steps taken to prepare the data for the computational analysis.

[10] R packages are collections of open-access code. To prepare the dataset for my computational analysis, I used the *plyr*, *tidyverse*, *lubridate*, *stringr*, *readtext,* and *pdftools* packages in RStudio.
[11] A DTM is a 'representation of the corpus that allows the data to be analyzed with vector and matrix algebra, moving from text to numbers' (Welbers et al., 2017, p. 252)

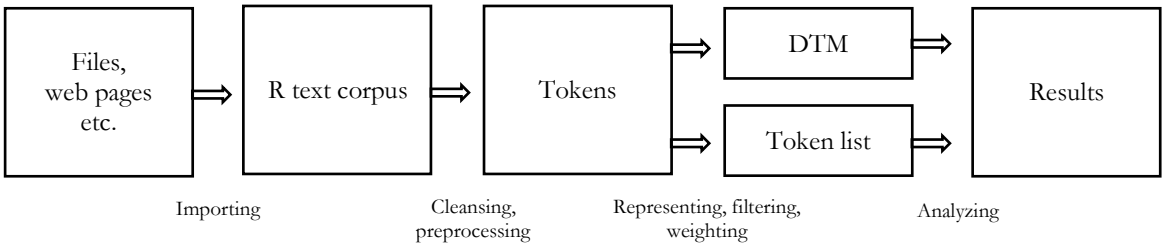


Figure 1.5 Order of text analysis operations for data preparation and analysis

The DTM format simplifies the corpus by providing an orderless representation of the textual data. This so-called 'bag-of-words' representation, Sivic and Zisserman (2009, p. 14) explain, discards all spatial information between words, such as word order and proximity. It represents the corpus as a multiset of its words without taking into account grammar and word positioning. Although a bag-of-words representation of the corpus allows for interesting data visualizations, such as word frequency schemata, it drastically simplifies the textual content. In addition to creating a DTM, I therefore relied on more advanced natural language processing (NLP) techniques to take into account word positioning and syntactical properties.

For example, working with the DTM format, I compiled a list of the 100 most frequently mentioned keywords within the corpus. I then built a key-word-in-context (KWIC) tool within the programming environment RStudio to further analyze these specific terms. KWIC tools allow you to take into account the syntactical properties of specific keywords. I developed a KWIC tool that extracted unique terms within a window of fifty words before and after the most frequently mentioned keywords. Ultimately, these computational methods allowed me to extract two main features from the corpus: (i) word frequency data; and (ii) word association data. Chapters 3-8 contain the findings from the computational analysis.

The computational tools in question I used to produce data inaccessible to the naked eye (e.g. longitudinal patterns of word usage and word frequency data). I employed these methods in the full awareness that digital instruments can only provide limited insight into textual data (e.g. Karpf, 2011). Therefore, digital tools, although helpful, never functioned as a stand-alone

instrument in this project, performing – instead – a supportive role in the research design by demonstrating the longitudinal development of the discursive themes explored in the qualitative analysis.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

The next chapter offers an extensive literature review on civilizational identity-building. This theoretical chapter draws on 'universalistic' civilizational doctrines such as colonialism, Nazism, and Communism, as well as 'localized' civilizational theories such as the concept of 'civilization-stateness' in Russian or Chinese foreign policy. In this conceptual chapter, the thesis argues that there are certain spatial, temporal, and ethical leitmotifs that civilizational theorists have consistently relied upon regardless of their geographical, cultural, and historical positionality. The arguments presented in this chapter offer a conceptual foundation for the empirical chapters that follow, in which the thesis explores how these various civilizational leitmotifs have been employed in a *contemporary Russian context*.

As discussed above, the empirical analysis is divided in two main parts. Part I covers the longitudinal analysis. Here, the thesis expands on the spatial (chapter 3), temporal (chapter 4), and ethical (chapter 5) construction of a Eurasian civilizational identity in contemporary Russian foreign policy. Each longitudinal analysis chapter follows the same structure. First, the chapters offer a critical review of the existing literature surrounding the spatial, temporal, and ethical dimensions of identity construction, respectively. Then, the chapters provide an extensive analysis of the various narratives found in the primary source material. The chapters end with a discussion of discursive audiences. In this final section, the spatial, temporal, and ethical chapters unpack the political objectives underlying the various narratives found in Russian-Eurasian discourses between 2000 and 2020.

Part II of the empirical analysis consists of the three country case studies. The case study chapters are structured in much the same way as the longitudinal analysis chapters. First, the case

study chapters offer a systematic analysis of the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors have employed the spatial, temporal, and ethical modes of identity construction to articulate a 'Eurasian' civilizational identity vis-à-vis the three key 'Eurasian' partners: that is, Belarus chapter 6, Kazakhstan in chapter 7, and China in chapter 8. Alongside an analysis of contemporary Russian foreign policy discourses vis-à-vis the case study countries, the chapters explore the extent to which the 'partner' countries have reciprocated Russia's assertions to a 'shared' civilizational identity. The case study chapters end with a discussion of discursive audiences. Here, the analysis focuses on the political objectives underlying the specific discursive strands found in Russian foreign policy discourse vis-à-vis Belarus, Kazakhstan, and China, respectively.

Chapter 9 concludes with a presentation of the main findings from the longitudinal and case study analyses. Here, the thesis argues that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 constitutes a 'material' effect, if not a culmination, of the Russian-Eurasian discourse that has developed over the past two decades. At the same time, the concluding chapter argues that Russia's war against Ukraine may very well constitute a political *turning point* in Russia's civilizational discourse. After all, Putin's brazen aggression against Ukraine has likely undermined any discursive currency the Russian-Eurasian discourse – anchored in notions of a Slavic, Soviet, and Eurasian brotherhood – may have had in the countries that once made up the former USSR. The concluding chapter therefore explores the possibility of a *new direction* in Russia's civilizational discourse as a result of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Chapter 2

Civilizational Leitmotifs:

Space, Time, and Ethics in Discourses on Civilization

'When we are talking about the progress, failures, greatness and weakness of civilization, we […] have a value judgment in mind. We have the idea that the civilization we are talking about – ours – is in itself something great and beautiful; something too which is nobler, more comfortable and better, both morally and materially speaking, than anything outside it […] We are confident that such civilization, in which we participate, which we propagate, benefit from and popularize, bestows on us all a certain value, prestige, and dignity. For it is a collective asset enjoyed by all civilized societies.'

– Lucien Febvre, Civilisation: Evolution of a word and a group of ideas, 1930[12]

2.1 Introduction

The notion of 'civilization' has been at the center of some of the most influential political movements in modern history. Drawing on the most impactful 'Civilizational Projects,' this chapter unpacks the discursive toolbox used in the construction of a civilizational identity and argues that there are certain spatial, temporal, and ethical leitmotifs that civilizational theorists have consistently relied upon regardless of their geographical, cultural, and historical positionality. Importantly, whilst the *elasticity* of the civilizational concept certainly allows for the various iterations of a civilizational identity to differ in scale and focus, the chapter nonetheless maintains that there are certain spatial, temporal, and ethical leitmotifs that form the *discursive foundation* of almost all civilizational constructs. This chapter thus offers a conceptual analysis of the spatial, temporal, and ethical building-blocks of civilizational identity, drawing on 'universalistic'

[12] Translation borrowed from Peter Burke and Keith Folca, 'A new kind of history: from the writings of Febvre' (1973, p. 220).

civilizational doctrines such as colonialism, Nazism, and Communism, as well as 'localized' civilizational theories such as the concept of 'civilization-stateness' in Russian or Chinese foreign policy. The arguments presented in this chapter offer a conceptual foundation for the chapters that follow, in which the thesis explores how these various civilizational leitmotifs are employed in a *contemporary Russian context*.

Importantly, the chapter does *not* present a chronological Begriffsgeschichte or etymological study of the term 'civilization,' since many such comprehensive studies exist already (e.g Febvre, 1973 [1930]; Pagden, 1988; Bowden, 2004b). Rather, the following sections present a thematically ordered argument around the existence of civilizational leitmotifs in a non-chronological order, drawing on the works of traditional 18th century civilizationists (e.g. Mirabeau, 1761, 1768), early 20th century theorists (e.g. Durkheim & Mauss, 1971 [1913]; Febvre, 1973 [1930]; Spengler, 1932), contemporary civilizational scholars (e.g. Fukuyama, 1989; Huntington, 1993), as well as their post-essentialists critics (e.g. Hansen, 2000; O'Hagan, 2007).

Ultimately, the chapter aims to 'merge' these various civilizational theories, arguing that – at the core – the civilizationalists' discursive toolbox has remained largely consistent over time and across different localities. First, however, the chapter briefly sets out the five most influential 'Civilizational Projects' that have shaped the course of modern history – which, the chapter argues, consist of (i) the colonial project, (ii) the nation-state project, (iii) the totalitarian projects of Nazism and Communism, (iv) the post-war democratization project, and (v) the anti-liberal or 'particularist' project. Importantly, the aim of this first section is not to provide a detailed historical overview of the ways in which the concept of 'civilization' has been applied throughout modernity, but – much rather – to briefly touch upon these various 'Civilizational Projects', which will be drawn upon throughout the chapter in order to provide examples of the civilizational leitmotifs.

2.2 A brief history: modernity's most influential 'Civilizational Projects'

The term 'civilization' – a neologism that first appeared in 18th century France – was originally 'connected with jurisprudence, to the extent that a criminal trial was turned into a civil proceeding' (Betts, 2020). Towards the end of the 18th century, the term became associated with 'civility, politeness, courtesy, manners and the emergence of a law-based state and civil society' (Betts, 2020; Elias, 2000). With the rise of colonialism, the first of modern history's five most influential 'Civilizational Projects' commenced. In this earliest iteration of 'civilization,' the civilizing mission consisted of an *externalized* 'project that […] justified colonialism as a means of redeeming the backward, aberrant, violent, oppressed, [and] undeveloped people of the non-European world by incorporating them into the universal civilization of Europe' (Anghie, 2008, p. 3). More or less concurrent with the rise of European colonialism, the 'Western' nation-state concept crystallized, which came to constitute modern history's second 'Civilizational Project'. Notably, in this second iteration of 'civilization,' the civilizing mission was turned *inwards*, consisting of an *internal* effort to 'refine' and 'advance' the nation-state community through enlightenment ideals.

The process of racialization and the hierarchical categorization of humanity inherent to colonialism and the European nation-state concept respectively then laid the foundations for modern history's third 'Civilizational Project,' totalitarianism (Arendt, 1966). The two main totalitarian strands – Nazism and Communism – both presented their own versions of a 'civilizing mission'. In the context of Nazi Germany, the civilizing mission was rooted in an *ethnocentric* civilizational concept built around the supposed need to 'purify' the Third Reich and exterminate all 'non-German' peoples in German society, whereas – in the Communist sense – the 'civilizing mission' consisted of a *civic-minded* civilizational concept in which society was to be raised to a higher level through the principles of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Whilst building on different ideological foundations, both Nazism and Communism relied heavily on similar civilizational leitmotifs such as normative superiority and spatial entitlement to promote their ideological doctrines.

With the rise of post-colonialism and 'democratization,' the fourth 'Civilizational Project' materialized, offering a countermovement in response to the earlier 'Civilizational Projects' of colonialism and totalitarianism. In a European context, this fourth 'Civilizational Project' combined an internalized 'civilizing' mission – that is, a reconciliation with the 'uncivilized' civilizing missions of the past (i.e., colonialism, Nazism, and Communism) – with an externalized 'civilizing' mission based on the dissemination of a 'Western' liberal-democratic model for governance and (economic) development. In a non-European context, on the other hand, this fourth 'Civilizational Project' consisted of emancipatory efforts to build up 'non-Western' cultural entities as 'civilizations' in their own right by framing them as standing on an equal hierarchical footing with 'the West'.

Finally, it appears a fifth 'Civilizational Project' might now be underway in response to the Western 'democratization' impulse. This fifth 'Civilizational Project' can be termed *particularist* and agitates against the universalistic pretenses of liberal democracy through such concepts as 'civilization-stateness,' positing that 'anti-liberal' entities can constitute a civilization in their own right and with their own belief system separate from the liberal-democratic world order. This fifth 'Civilizational Project' builds on the post-colonial movement but separates itself through the application of a markedly Huntingtonian paradigm of 'inter-civilizational strife'. Moreover, whilst relying on certain post-colonial, anti-universalistic concepts (for example, through the deconstruction of a 'hegemonic West'), this 'particularist' Civilizational Project distinguishes itself from the post-colonial paradigm, as it does not offer a truly emancipatory framework. Much rather, it pursues an equally hegemonic – albeit 'anti-Western' (e.g., Putin's Russia) or 'anti-liberal' (e.g., Orbán's Hungary) – civilizational model. Drawing on what this thesis conceptualizes as modernity's five 'Civilizational Projects,' the following sections unpack the spatial, temporal, and ethical leitmotifs underlying the construction of a civilizational identity.

2.3 Spatial leitmotifs: boundary markers, frontiers, and the notion of spatial entitlement

One of the key building blocks in the construction of a civilizational identity is the *spatial delineation* of the civilizational entity in question. Almost all civilizational identity constructs use *space* as a discursive category to distinguish an *inside* from an *outside*. The term 'civilization,' Jacinta O'Hagan (2007, p. 15) explains, 'has always been used as a boundary marker, often to delineate European communities from others.' It is through the use of spatial narratives that discourses of civilizational identity have been able to 'theorize the contours of order,' thereby 'demarcat[ing] similitude from alterity' (Durkheim & Mauss, 1971 [1913], p. 811; O'Hagan, 2007, p. 24). Importantly, whilst boundary markers are a necessary discursive tool to distinguish between *self* and *other*, 'civilizations' often lack well-defined geographic borders and the symbolic frontiers of one and the same civilizational entity can differentiate throughout time and across discursive agents and contexts (Durkheim & Mauss, 1971 [1913]). Thus, as Said Arjomand and Edward Tiryakian (2004, p. 4) explain, 'civilizational complexes [can be both] highly differentiated [*and*] culturally and historically integrated.' 'Institutions or ideas that constitute these complexes,' they argue, 'can be transplanted singly or selectively [but] the integrated whole is [...] capable of assuming an identity, of being reified, hence having boundaries.'

Inherently tied to the spatial delineation of civilizational constructs is the notion of a *frontier*. Whilst the normative content of civilizational constructs varies according to the ideological ambitions of the agents promoting the discourse, almost all discourses of civilizational identity envision a 'frontier' as the outer edge of the civilizational entity. This frontier constitutes the spatial meeting-point between the 'civilized' and the 'uncivilized'.[13] Embedded in the notion of a 'frontier' is the spatio-normative assumption – ubiquitous in civilizational discourses – that 'civilization has the *absolute right* to expand [and] impose itself' (Wight, 1991, p. 55). The frontier concept and the

[13] The *normative* dimension to this 'civilized'/'uncivilized' dichotomy is discussed in more detail in the section on ethical leitmotifs.

accompanying principle of expansionism have functioned as spatial leitmotifs in various iterations of civilizational identity. The frontier theme can, for example, be found in civilizational discourses in imperial Europe but equally in the concept of American frontierism or expansionist discourses in Nazi Germany, as well as civilizational discourse in imperial and contemporary Russia.

Nazi ideology, Wight (1991, p. 56) explains, 'defined civilization as German-European and attributed thereto the absolute right of aggressive expansion. The Nazis denied rights to all [non-Germans] as barbarians and […] enslaved, segregated and exterminated them.' Similarly, European imperialists employed the notion of a frontier to signify the outer edge of the 'civilized world,' dividing the 'uncivilized' outside into various degrees of sub-humanity. Another example of the frontier concept in civilizational identity discourses is the notion of American frontierism, set out most famously by Frederick Jackson Turner (1894). Turner described the American frontier as the 'temporary boundary of an expanding society at the edge of substantially free land' (Ibid.). In a Russian context, the notion of the frontier has equally played a central role in the construction of a civilizational identity – not only in imperial times, when Russia's civilizational frontier was placed Eastward in Central Asia (Pandey, 2007), but also in contemporary civilizational discourses which – alternatively – place Russia's frontier Westward (see chapter 7 on Russian discourses surrounding Kazakhstan for a discussion of imperial frontier narratives and chapter 3 on spatial identity constructions for a discussion of frontierism in contemporary Russian foreign policy). Their differences aside, these civilizational doctrines have in common the centrality of the frontier concept used to demarcate a particular kind of boundary marker inherent to the notion of civilization.

Closely related to the frontier concept is another spatial leitmotif underlying civilizational identity discourses, that is the notion of *spatial entitlement*. The idea of spatial entitlement has been most explicitly captured in the Nazi concept of Lebensraum ('living space'), which implied that the German people of the Third Reich had a 'divine right' to expand into the territories of Central and Eastern Europe to facilitate the growth of the German population. In this context, Nazi ideologues

used the notion of 'Blut-und-Boden' ('blood and soil') to argue that the German people – understood as an ethnically defined 'civilizational' community ('blood') – had the 'right' to certain geographical spaces ('soil'). However, a sense of spatial entitlement can also be found in 19th century American discourses surrounding the concept of 'manifest destiny,' which suggested that American settlers were preordained to expand across North America, or colonial discourses in Western Europe, which maintained that the colonizers were 'entitled' to extract resources from the colonized lands. A similar sense of spatial entitlement can be found in contemporary Russian civilizational discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan, which portray Russia's Eastern neighbor as a 'land of opportunity' due to its resource potential (see chapter 7). A central theme in these various iterations of civilizational identity is the discursive (and material) appropriation of external geographies with the goal of expanding the 'civilizational entity' in question.

Tied to the idea of spatial entitlement is another spatial leitmotif, that is the framing of 'civilizational space' as *non-Westphalian* or – in other words – as transcending the nation-state level. This non-Westphalian framing of civilizational space has been neatly captured by Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss (1971 [1913]), who describe civilizations as 'social phenomena that are not strictly attached to a determinate social organism.' Instead, they argue, civilizations 'extend into areas that reach beyond the national territory or they develop over periods of time that exceed the history of a single society. They have a life which is in some ways *supranational*.' Arjomand and Tiryakian (2004, p. 4) equally write that civilizations 'transcend units such as "society" and "nation-state" in terms of social space.' And – adopting a similarly non-Westphalian framing of 'civilizational space' – Randall Collins (2001) describes civilizations as 'zones of prestige,' arguing that 'civilizations are more than societies or states; that is to say, more than social structures with boundaries. Civilizations can be located within states […] but a civilization as a zone of prestige radiates outward with stronger and weaker degrees of attraction for people at varying distances.'

These theorists emphasize one of the key spatial leitmotifs found in various civilizational identity discourses – that is, (i) an understanding of 'social space' as a scalable concept ranging from

'nation-state' to 'civilization-state' and (ii) a portrayal of 'civilization' as an entity exceeding the nation-state but short of forming one single global totality. This non-Westphalian notion of 'civilization-stateness' can be found in a variety of civilizational discourses. It is present, for example, in contemporary Russian discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan through which Moscow aims to establish political authority over Russian ethnic minorities living outside the territory of the Russian state (see chapter 7); It is also present in the shared Russo-Chinese discourse that criticizes the 'Euro-American' model for world order, which – both in Beijing's and Moscow's eyes – has unfairly advantaged nation-states to the detriment of actors of *civilizational scale*, such as Russia and China (see chapter 8). Notably, in its most aggressive form, this non-Westphalian conception of 'civilizational space' combined with a sense of spatial entitlement can result in a discourse that entitles the 'civilizational actor' to expand into the sovereign territory of another nation-state. A recent example of this discursive strategy can be found in official Russian state discourses that aim to legitimize the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

2.4 Temporal leitmotifs: a civilizational Sonderweg, teleological readings of history, and civilizations in the plural vs. civilization in the singular

Once the civilizational entity is *spatially* delineated, the need arises to root the civilizational construct in a *temporal* narrative that connects, past, present, and future. The second building-block in the construction of a civilizational identity is thus the temporal dimension. One of the key leitmotifs through which the temporal construction of a civilizational identity is effectuated is the notion of a *Sonderweg*: that is, a belief – found in various iterations of civilizational identity – that the 'civilization' in question has followed a special path which has necessarily led it to a particular end-state. This Sonderweg theme can, for instance, be found in 'civilizational' discourses in post-war Germany in which the notion was used to come to terms with the Nazi past, but also in conservative discourses in contemporary Russia which present the country as a 'civilization-state' that has followed a unique path through history (see chapters 4 and 5). Whilst the first example

relates to the fourth 'Civilizational Project,' that is an internalized 'civilizing' mission that aims to come to terms with the 'uncivilized' civilizing missions of the past (in this case, the rise of Nazism), the latter example relates to the fifth 'Civilizational Project,' or the particularist civilizational paradigm, that posits that 'anti-liberal' entities can constitute a civilization in their own right and with their own belief system separate from the liberal-democratic world order. Both discourses, as different as they are in terms of their normative content, employ the temporal leitmotif of a Sonderweg to rationalize a certain end-state as the necessary outcome of various formative periods in history.

Closely related to this Sonderweg theme is the more general temporal leitmotif found in civilizational identity discourses that consists of a teleological, or ends-driven, reading of history. Bret Bowden (2009, p. 2) explains how civilizational identity discourses consist of 'a concerted effort [...] to impose a particular ideological rationale [...] and "directionality" on the passage of history.' Lene Hansen (2000, pp. 347–348) similarly writes that 'civilizational discourse [...] is built upon claims about the importance and permanence of history, culture and religion [...] through which the people of a civilization tie together past, present and future, thereby producing, and reproducing, a sense of belonging.'

Here, highlighting the difference between the term 'civilization' and 'civility' may be useful. As Anthony Pagden (1988, p. 35) explains, 'Emile Benveniste pointed out [that] "civilization" differs crucially from "civility" in that its *-ation* ending indicates the presence of an agent, and of an agent who is purely human [...] It was, therefore, far better suited than "civility" had been to describe the outcome of a continuous process – that of "civilizing" (1954, p. 307). How exactly this understanding of civilization as an ongoing temporal process is framed depends on the civilizational doctrine in question. Chapter 4 demonstrates, for example, how Russian foreign policy actors frame various periods in Russian history as constitutive of a 'Russian-Eurasian' civilization.

Overall, however, the various iterations of a civilizational identity can be divided into two temporal paradigms. While both paradigms offer a teleological reading of history and employ an ends-driven logic, they differ in their specific models of temporality. The first paradigm consists of those civilizational theories that recognize the existence of multiple, distinct – sometimes conflicting, other times complementary – civilizations (e.g. Huntington's thesis of civilizational clash), whereas the second paradigm consists of civilizational theories around the existence of a singular civilization and the universal progression of humankind (e.g. Fukuyama's thesis on the end of history). Where the first category could be called 'civilizations in the plural,' the latter category can be referred to as 'civilization in the singular'. Both paradigms offer vastly different models of temporal progression – that is, a *cyclical* understanding of time in the case of the 'civilizations in the plural' paradigm vs. a temporal model of *linear* progression in the case of the 'civilization in the singular' paradigm.

Adhering to a temporal model of linear progression, the 'civilization in the singular' paradigm argues in favor of the notion of a 'world civilization' and the progress of humanity as a whole. Whilst acknowledging that there is such a thing as varying cultural identities, the 'singularist' paradigm presents these diverging identities as 'streams whose destiny [is] to flow irresistibly into the great ocean of universal humanity' (Gray, 1995). This linear logic can be found in vastly divergent, and even antithetical, civilizational doctrines – for example, in the third 'Civilizational Project,' that is the 'civilizing mission' of Communism, but equally in what has earlier been referred to as the fourth 'Civilizational Project,' that is the post-war 'civilizing' mission of disseminating a 'Western' liberal-democratic model for governance and socio-economic development.

In the case of the Communist 'civilizing' mission, the temporal model of linear progression is captured in the Marxist belief in a fixed trajectory of historical development from primitive Communism, slave society, feudalism, mercantilism, and capitalism, to – ultimately – Communism. In the case of the 'Western' liberal-democratic 'civilizing' mission, on the other hand, the linear model is 'informed by a belief in the Enlightenment ideal of progress and humankind's universal

linear march toward modernity – a modernity that is both liberal, globalized, and cosmopolitan in appearance' (Bowden, 2004a, p. 43; Febvre, 1973 [1930], p. 232). Thus, whilst the normative content of both civilizational projects vastly differs, both rely on a similar temporal leitmotif of linear progression through which the passage of time is framed as a single, coherent path that necessarily leads to a predetermined end-state in human development.

The 'civilizations in the plural' paradigm, on the other hand, adheres to a temporal model of *cyclicality*. This second model emphasizes the existence of *multiple* civilizations rather than a single universal one. Implied in this model is the rise and decline, or ruin and renewal, of civilizations. This 'pluralist' paradigm presents the civilizing process as a 'natural circle from barbary to decadence by way of civilization and wealth' (Starobinski, 1993, p. 5). In this pluralist conception, history is understood as consisting of cycles in which 'civilization' necessarily gives way to decadence, which – ultimately – causes the moral decline and downfall of a civilization (Mirabeau, 1761, p. 99; Starobinski, 1993, p. 6). It is thus that – in this conception of civilization – the civilizing process consists of a repeating cyclical pattern of rise, decline, ruin, and renewal. This 'pluralist' model has been most famously adopted by Oswald Spengler (1932), who presents civilizations as 'more or less closed entities, resting on homogenous cultural bases and interacting with one another only incidentally' (Hall & Jackson, 2007, p. 5).

The question of cyclicality is pondered by Spengler (1932, p. 18) when he asks: 'is there a logic of history? [...] Is it possible to find […] a series of stages which must be traversed, and traversed moreover in an ordered and obligatory sequence?' Spengler uses the competing astronomical models of Ptolemy and Copernicus as an analogy to argue in favor of one particular kind of cyclicality. Arguing against what he calls the Ptolemaic system, Spengler criticizes the hegemonic Western-European 'scheme of history' that presents non-Western 'civilizations' as 'made to follow orbits around [the West] as the presumed center of all world-happenings' (Ibid.). Instead, he proposes what he calls a Copernican system of history that 'admits no sort of privileged position to the Classical or the Western Culture' (Ibid.). Spengler uses these competing

astronomical models to argue in favor of a cyclical reading of history in which all 'civilizations' follow a similar trajectory of rise, decline, and renewal without appointing a central position to 'the West' as the civilizational model for all other 'civilizations' to follow.[14]

A (in)famous contemporary iteration of the 'pluralist' paradigm has been offered by Samuel Huntington (1993, p. 23), who argued that 'conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world [and] the clash of civilizations will dominate global politics.' On the topic of temporal cyclicality, he writes: 'civilizations are dynamic; they rise and fall; they divide and merge' (Huntington, 1993, p. 24). Criticized for its wide-spread essentialism and cultural determinism, the Huntingtonian paradigm has nonetheless been eagerly adopted by some contemporary civilizationists; for example, by contemporary Russian intellectuals who have celebrated Huntington's anti-universalist claim that Western civilization is local, thereby allowing Russia to be portrayed as an independent civilizational actor (Mjor, 2018, pp. 30–31; Mjør & Turoma, 2020, p. 2). Chapter 8 explores how this 'pluralist' paradigm has been adopted in Russo-Chinese discourses that agitate against the centrality of a 'Western' model for development.

Ultimately, the difference between the 'singularist' and the 'pluralist' paradigm lies therein that the first argues in favor of *one universal civilization* and the *linear progression* of humanity towards a common destiny, whereas the latter argues that there are *multiple civilizations*, each defined by their own normative framework, yet all following a similar *cyclical pattern* of rise, decline, and renewal.

The two civilizational paradigms come together in a final temporal leitmotif, however. Both models rely on eschatological themes of *temporal urgency*. Eschatology – that is, the 'doctrine of last things' – concerns assumptions about the end of time. Both the 'singularist' and the 'pluralist' civilizational paradigm are – in their own way – concerned with the temporal-eschatological notion of a 'final destiny'. Where the 'pluralist' paradigm emphasizes a negative understanding of temporal urgency (i.e. the idea of the pending downfall of a civilization and rise of a new one), the 'singularist'

[14] Note that while both the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems are cyclical, Copernicus discovered that the sun functions as the center of the universe thus providing a simpler system of circles, whereas Ptolemy believed the earth was the center of the universe, which meant his geometric model was unnecessarily complex.

paradigm relies on a positive representation of the end of time. Chapter 5 explores how the temporal trope of rise and decline has been adopted in eschatological narratives in contemporary Russian foreign policy, which have defined Russia as the katechon that – 'with its eyes fixed on the end of time' – prepares for an ideological battle to postpone that end (also see Hell, 2009, p. 290). A positive iteration of the temporal-eschatological leitmotif, on the other hand, can be found in Francis Fukuyama's end of history thesis (1989), which argues that liberal-democracy – conceptualized in Fukuyama's work as a 'civilization' in all but name – has progressed to its final, ultimate stage to such an extent that the end of history is near. The 'end of history,' in this context, consists of a representation of liberal democracy as the final form of government, now that its two most important competitors – fascism and communism – have been defeated.

2.5 Ethical leitmotifs: normative otherness, moral superiority, and the 'proselytizing crusade'

Now that the civilizational entity has been spatially delineated *and* rooted in a temporal narrative that connects past, present, and future, it is time for the final step in the construction of a civilizational identity: the need arises to articulate an *ethical code of conduct* to be used to differentiate the civilized Self from the uncivilized Other. As Jacinta O'Hagan (2007, p. 24) writes, 'civilizational identity is used to develop links and bonds that provide a normative foundation to [a particular] community.' Similarly, Durkheim and Mauss (1971 [1913]) describe civilizations as 'a kind of moral milieu encompassing a certain number of nations, each national culture being only a particular form of the whole.' For this 'moral milieu' to have any significant meaning, the civilizational community needs to measure itself against some kind of *normative externality* – this can be ethnocentric, religious, or civic-minded in nature, but there is always some kind of 'externality' in relation to which the civilizational Self is articulated (see also section 1.3.2 in chapter 1).

Closely tied to this need to articulate a normative externality is the tendency in civilizational discourses to reify *normative hierarchies*. Two central tropes used to articulate a civilizational hierarchy

are those of the 'barbarian' and the 'savage'. 'Lacking in manners, language, and morals,' Mark Salter (2002, p. 4) explains, 'barbarians represent a violent threat to the "civilized inside" […] The space of the barbarian illustrates the limits of the political community – the figure of the barbarian – either alone or in a horde – acts as the "constitutive outside" of the polis.' Whilst the 'barbarian' represents an existential danger to civilization and therefore constitutes an unsalvageable Other, the 'savage' – 'unrestrained by "civility" and thus closer to an animal state' – is conceived as redeemable and capable of being molded into a 'civilized' individual (Salter, 2002, pp. 20–22). Notably, the savage and barbarian tropes are found most explicitly in traditional colonial discourses, yet contemporary iterations can be found in a wide variety of civilizational constructs.

Importantly, the barbarian-savage-civilized trichotomy contains a *temporal* component. 19th century French civilizational theorists, for example, placed societies in a hierarchical taxonomy in which savagery and civilization represented different *stages* of societal development (Salter, 2002, p. 16). A more contemporary iteration of such a hierarchical taxonomy can be found in US discourses surrounding the 'war on terror' and representations of the 'Muslim Other' as an existential threat to Western liberal-democracy; or in the implicit 'hierarchy of states' oftentimes underlying 'Western' discourses surrounding the dissemination of a liberal-democratic model for governance and economic progress. A hierarchical taxonomy can also be found in Sino-Russian discourses that propagate an 'alternative' model for development that is supposedly more suitable to the needs of the 'non-West' (see chapter 8); or in contemporary Russian foreign policy discourses, through which Russian government actors have framed Belarus as a 'primitive' and 'savage' version of the Russian Self (see chapter 6). Equally, a hierarchical taxonomy can be found in the dynastic Chinese concept of *Tianxia* through which China is portrayed as the 'middle kingdom' surrounded by concentric circles of increasing 'barbarity' (see chapter 8 for a further exploration of the Tianxia concept in Sino-Russian civilizational discourses).

Interestingly, in some cases, normative alterity can also be found *internally*. This internalized 'civilizing' mission is clearly present in European discourses of post-WWII reconstruction. As

Arjomand and Tiryakian (2004, p. 36) argue, 'the manifest debacle of Western Europe made it impossible to maintain an intrinsic cultural superiority of its civilization and its values over those of the "others" [which] led to a greater sociological reflexivity regarding Western civilization.' Paul Betts (2020) demonstrates that 'the breakdown of order in 1945 opened up the possibility of seeing and thinking about Europe differently; competing claims about the meaning and direction of civilization underlay the politics of reconstruction [and] civilization emerged as a rallying cry for building a better Europe after the war, often in the name of peace, justice, decolonization and multiculturalism.' In these post-war discourses of reconstruction, the term civilization 'functioned as a rhetoric of moral alarm announcing cultural breakdown, and the need to erect frontiers of inclusion and exclusion' (Betts, 2020). In this particular case, normative alterity was thus found *within* – the past, 'uncivilized' Self functioned as the moral Other against which the more 'civilized' contemporary Self was measured.

Whilst the discursive strategy of othering the past Self appears to be rather unique to the case of post-war Europe, the notion that 'civilization' is threatened by perils from *within* seems to underlie many civilizational constructs. It is a theme that can be found in civilizational discourses in Nazi Germany in which various 'non-German' peoples were seen as 'depurifying' German society; but it also constitutes a key leitmotif in contemporary far-right discourses surrounding the internal threats of multiculturalism (see chapters 5 and 7 for an exploration of this discourse in contemporary Russia). In these and other civilizational discourses, 'savagery no longer lies outside the nation, on foreign shores or in the distant past [but] it is hidden among the people, waiting to burst forth from society's shadowy depths' (Starobinski, 1993, pp. 21–23). This *danger from within* has upon occasion assumed a social character – in some cases, as Starobinski (Ibid.) writes, 'the threat was seen as coming from the "dangerous classes", from the proletariat, [or] it was perceived as a consequence of an unshackling of instincts brought about by intellectual movements of emancipation and revolt.'

Tied to the notion that civilization is threatened by perils from within is the leitmotif surrounding the *corruptibility* of humankind and the distinction between 'true' and 'false' civilization. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, condemned the 'artificiality and corruption of supposedly civilized French society' (Mazlish, 2001, p. 18). Early French socialist philosopher Charles Fourier and the 18th century French economist the marquis de Mirabeau expressed similar criticisms (Mazlish, 2001; Starobinski, 1993). In this particular strand of civilizational discourses, the term civilization has been associated with a critique of excessive luxury, false politeness, and moral decay. As Mirabeau (1768) puts it, 'ask most people what their idea of civilization is, and they would answer that it is perfection of manners, urbanity, politeness, and diffusion of knowledge [...] – all of which to me is but the mask of virtue and not its true face [...]. It is in societies made soft by the aforementioned factors that the corruption of humanity begins.' Similar critiques surrounding a 'false' civilization can be found in the writings of someone like Karl Marx who criticized the 'petty bourgeoisie' for their vain attempts to imitate a 'haute bourgeoisie' morality. It can also be found in contemporary Russian discourses, in which a 'true' Russian civilization is contrasted by a 'corrupted West' (see chapter 5). The notion of a 'false civilization' has moreover – at times – been projected *inwards*, for example, in post-colonial discourses that explore the barbarity of the West's colonial past.

Finally, embedded in the normative taxonomy underlying civilizational discourses is yet another ethical leitmotif, that is the supposed '*burden of the civilized*' to spread their value-system in order to 'redeem' the uncivilized Other (Bowden, 2004b, p. 45). As Zygmunt Bauman (1987, p. 93) explains, 'the concept of civilization entered learned discourse in the West as the name of a conscious proselytizing crusade waged by men of knowledge and aimed at extirpating the vestiges of wild cultures.' The term civilization, Pagden (1988, p. 33) writes, 'describes a state, social, political, cultural, aesthetic – even moral and physical – which is held to be the optimum condition for all [hu]mankind, and involves the implicit claim that only the civilized can know what it is to be civilized.' A contemporary iteration of this 'burden of civilization' can be found in Russo-

Chinese foreign policy discourses, through which both states frame themselves as carrying the 'burden' to bring peace and stability to humankind (see chapter 8). This leitmotif can also be found in messianic discourses surrounding Russia's 'unique' position to protect the world from chaos and disorder and representations of the Russian people as the 'chosen ones' (see chapter 5). A similar sentiment can be found in discourses surrounding American exceptionalism and portrayals of the US as being destined to play a positive role in world affairs; or in Polish messianic discourses that frame the country as the 'Christ of Europe'.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the discussion demonstrated that the various iterations of civilizational identity found in modern history have built on similar notions of spatial entitlement, teleological readings of history, and ideas of moral superiority. Thus, as argued in this chapter, civilizational constructs have been united in their use of spatial, temporal, and ethical leitmotifs. At the same time, the various civilizational constructs have differed widely in terms of their normative content. As the chapter illustrated, modern history's five most impactful 'Civilizational Projects' have been both hegemonic and emancipatory, totalitarian and liberal, in nature. This connects to a final question often underlying discussion between civilizationists and their critics: can 'civilization' be a useful category to structure political interaction and cultural affiliations in society? Or is it an inherently dangerous concept that should be avoided at all costs?

My answer to this question is the following: whilst the notion of 'civilization' is *not* inherently menacing, danger – as with any essentialist or totalizing ideology – does loom just beneath the surface. As the chapter illustrated, the harmfulness of the civilizational concept ultimately depends on the identity markers used to distinguish between in- and out groups. Where ethnocentric civilizational concepts are inherently dangerous and – at times – even deadly (read: Nazism, colonialism), civic-minded civilizational constructs can actually function as instruments of emancipation (read: the post-colonial civilizational model). At the same time, given the totalizing

character of the civilizational concept, even civic-minded civilizational constructs have proven to be deadly in the past – look only at the communist civilizational project, for example. Whilst the harmfulness of the civilizational concept ultimately depends on the vehemence with which the idea of in- and out-groups is enforced, the notion of 'civilization' – as an *essentialist* container of identity – necessarily implies an effort to exclude and therefore rarely constitutes an innocent act of self-expression.

Thus, as the opening quotation by Lucien Febvre (1970 [1930]) reads, implied in the notion of civilization is 'the idea that the civilization we are talking about – ours – is in itself something great and beautiful; something too which is nobler, more comfortable and better, both morally and materially speaking, than anything outside it.' It also involves, as Zygmunt Bauman (1987) and other have argued, the inherent impulse to spread and impose its value system, which has – in many cases – acted as a fertilizer for conflict with the civilizational 'Other'. Ultimately, where civilizational constructs have been taken to their most extreme, and where they have been expanded and protected through violent means, they have been the driving force behind some of the most horrendous crimes against humanity. It is therefore an essential exercise to continuously study and deconstruct civilizational discourse in all its iterations.

In the following chapters, the thesis explores how the notion of 'civilization' as a container of identity is employed in contemporary Russian foreign policy discourses: first, by unpacking how Russian foreign policy actors employ the dimensions of space (chapter 3), time (chapter 4), and ethics (chapter 5) in their construction of a Russian-Eurasian civilizational identity at large; then, by exploring how Russian foreign policy actors adjust and refine these dimensions in relation to those countries Russia considers to be its key 'civilizational' partners: that is, Belarus in chapter 6, Kazakhstan in chapter 7, and China in chapter 8.

Chapter 3

Constructing 'Eurasian' Space:

Political Landscapes and Meta-Geographies in Russian Foreign Policy

'The Russian soul finds an echo of itself only in the boundless and endless Steppe […] Such must be the character of the Russian landscape: endless plains, mountainous or flat; the steppes, those plains which gave rise to Russia's bravery and its passionate, unbounded sympathy.'

– Nikolai Wagner, Peizazh i ego znachenie v zhivopisi, 1876

'What exactly is Russia? […] Who sees themselves as part of the future Russia? Where do the Russians themselves envisage the borders of Russia?'

– Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Kak nam obustroit' Rossiyu, 1990

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the discursive construction of 'Eurasian' space in Russian foreign policy discourse between 2000 and 2020. In the following sections, the chapter examines the ways in which cultural and political meta-geographies – in this chapter conceptualized as *discursively* constructed landscapes – are used to structure and signify 'Eurasian' space in Russian political discourse under the Putin regime. The discursive analysis focuses specifically on the ways in which the notion of 'Eurasian' space is used to formulate a territorially bounded identity that reaches beyond the countries that once made up the former USSR. The chapter is structured in the following way: the first section provides a brief outline of constructivist IR approaches that rely on space as an important axis along which to understand the construction of identity (e.g. Agnew, 1994; Toal, 1996). The analysis then unpacks four key spatial narratives in Russian foreign policy under the Putin regime.

First, the discursive analysis unpacks a narrative through which Russian foreign policy actors have framed various Russian landscapes as constitutive of a Eurasian spatial identity. The chapter then examines a second spatial narrative surrounding Russia's so-called 'spatial mission' through which Russian government actors have sought to frame their country as a 'benevolent force' that fosters unity across the Eurasian sphere. The discursive analysis then moves on to a discussion of the 'Russkiy Mir' ('Russian World') narrative through which Russian foreign policy actors have sought to promote a supranational understanding of Russian space. Finally, the chapter explores a spatial narrative that focuses on the concept of 'connectivity', arguing that this narrative has offered Russian foreign policy actors a de-politicized frame to portray Russia as a central 'hub' in the world's infrastructure. The chapter ends with a concluding overview of the target audiences and underlying political objectives of these various spatial narratives.

3.2 The nexus between space and identity in international relations theory

Mainstream IR approaches often formulate territorial space as fixed units that exist 'prior to and as a container of society' (Agnew, 1994, pp. 68–71). This geographical assumption has led IR theories into what John Agnew calls the 'territorial trap' – rather than conceptualizing geographical subjectivities as political commodities that are *created* and shaped by actors, mainstream – and especially realist – IR studies frame territorial space as objective, real-existing entities. This approach has been widely critiqued by constructivist IR theorists. In presenting political landscapes as objective, real-existing geographies, constructivists argue, traditional IR approaches overlook and legitimize the power relations that underlie the construction of territorial space. Edward Said (1993, p. 6) posits, for example, that no one is free from the 'struggle over geography'. This struggle is not just about conquering physical territory but also about imbuing meaning onto space.

Constructivist IR approaches take the struggle over geography as their point of departure (e.g. Bassin et al., 2010; Starr, 2013; Toal, 1996). Rather than conceptualizing territorial space as an

objective materiality, these studies conceive geographical entities as sites of power relations. Proposing a 'new spatial history', Mark Bassin (2010), for example, suggests to include a critical subjectivity to the study of space. Instead of hypothesizing space as what he calls 'terra firma' (i.e. space as an objective, real-existing entity), Bassin explores the processes through which real-existing space becomes filled with political and cultural meaning. The aim of critical approaches like Bassin's is not to deny the existence of physical geographies but to call attention to the relationship between space and power through which these geographies become filled with meaning.

3.2.1 Space as a site of power relations

The notion of space as a site of power relations finds its origins in the seminal works of Edward Said (1978, 1993) and Michel Foucault (1977, 1980). Exploring prisons and other micro-localities as sites of power struggle, Foucault (1980, p. 59) argues that space is characterized by a power/knowledge relationship. Edward Said's notion of the 'Orient' as Europe's demonized Other similarly relies on the notion that spatial categories are the effect of power relations. Both Said and Foucault argue that space gains meaning through appropriating and disciplining practices. Toal (1996) likewise argues that 'geography is not something already possessed by the earth'. Instead, he posits, geography consists of 'an *active* writing of the earth by centralizing states'. In *Critical Geopolitics*, Toal explores how territories and regions are the product of 'technologies of power'. Based on Foucault's notion of governmentality, he explores how spatialization is an organized practice of geo-power that aims to regulate subjects. In this context, centralization is understood as an 'aggressive form of geographical power/knowledge [used] to supervise the seizure and disciplining of space' (Said, 1989, p. 10; Toal, 1996).

In line with the studies discussed above, French neo-Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre (1991) similarly conceptualizes space as an arena for constructing and negotiating meaning. Exploring Lefebvre's concept of the 'production of space', John Law (2002) argues that 'space must not be

reified as a natural, pre-existing container of the social and the material, but [as] itself a performance'. Every society, according to Lefebvre (1991), produces its own spatial economy. The spatial (re)enactments that shape these economies reify and (re)produce socio-political relations both on an individual level and on a state-level. In his influential book *The Production of Space*, and inspired by Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Lefebvre (1991, p. 26) argues that '(social) space is a (social) product [...] space serves as a tool of thought and of action [...] it is a means of control, and hence of domination'.

3.2.2 Meta-geographies, imagined communities, and sites of memory

Various scholars have theorized the nexus between identity and space. Benedict Anderson (1983), for example, introduced the fundamental notion of 'imagined communities' to argue that political communities are socially constructed entities. 'The members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members', Anderson (1983, p. 6) posits, 'yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'. Conceptions of comradeship, fraternity, and spatial cohesion are what binds a political community together. They are, however, discursively constructed and rely on the creation of fictional spaces to define a sense of Self and Other (Clowes, 2011). Exploring notions of Russian selfhood, Edith Clowes examines the use of spatial metaphors to determine the ways in which group identities are formulated in a 'post-Soviet' context. She argues that the existential question 'who is Russia?' is more often than not answered by posing the question '*where* is Russia?' – an example of this type of questioning can be found in this chapter's opening citation by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, for instance.

In *Culture and imperialism*, Said (1993) argues that 'imaginative geographies' rely on narratives which highlight a collective past to construct a sense of place. Pierre Nora (1984) similarly illustrates how societies invent 'geographies of identity' to symbolize a community's cultural and political heritage. Proshansky et al. (2014) introduce the concept of 'place-identity' which suggests that collective identities are created in reference to a community's geographical surroundings. Place-

identity, according to Proshansky et al., is articulated through narratives surrounding the physical environment in which a society is located. Place, Agnew and Duncan (1989) argue, 'serves as a constantly re-energized repository of socially and politically relevant traditions and identity'. Place-identity, however, is never purely imaginative. For spatial imaginings to be salient, Anderson (1983) posits, a community needs 'natural ties' to its environment. Rembold and Carrier (2011) similarly speak of the need for 'organic rootedness'. Thus, place-identity is never invented *ex nihilo*; the physical materiality of the environment is an important source when negotiating spatial subjectivities.

How then do spatial identities materialize? Entrikin (1989) posits that 'place is discourse'. It is through narrative processes that spatial subjectivities are written into being. In the sections that follow, the chapter unpacks the various spatial narratives used by Russian foreign policy actors to articulate a 'Eurasian' identity under the Putin regime.

3.3 Constitutive loci of a 'Eurasian' identity: the steppe, the Urals, and the Volga region

Ever since the nineteenth century, Russian intellectuals have relied on a variety of landscapes to symbolize the 'essence' of a Russian-Eurasian identity – the steppe, the taiga, the forest, and the 'Black Earth' belt have all been framed as constitutive loci in the articulation of an imperial identity in Russian political discourse (Guroff & Guroff, 1994, p. 81). The chapter's opening citation by Slavophile author Nikolai Wagner reads, for example, that 'the Russian soul finds an echo of itself only in the boundless and endless steppe', which – according to Wagner – constitutes a source for 'Russia's bravery and passionate, unbounded sympathy'. Although published in 1876, this statement is strikingly similar to some of the spatial tropes found in contemporary Russian foreign policy discourse. Throughout the Putin era, Russian foreign policy actors have systematically framed a variety of landscapes as constitutive of Russia's supposedly 'unique' national character and special mission to 'unify' Eurasian space (see also Bassin, 2010).

The steppe – in particular – has been framed by Russian foreign policy actors as a constitutive locus in the formation of a Eurasian identity. A State Duma report from 2012 (id2694), for example, cites Lev Gumilyov's pseudoscientific theories to argue that the 'Eurasian heartland is united through a historical alliance of forests and steppes'. 'The geopolitical synthesis of forests and steppes on the Eurasian continent', the report reads, 'acts as a factor of cultural and strategic control over the West and the East'. A similar remark is made by State Duma member Ivan Belekov (id2220, 2018) who maintains that Russia is the sole 'heir to […] Ancient Rus and the Great Steppe' and – 'due to this cultural inheritance' – 'Russia's historical mission is to play a leading role in the populated Eurasian space […] as a guarantor of order'.

Elsewhere, Dmitry Medvedev (id3354, 2009) celebrates Russia for being 'the largest country on the planet, occupying one third of the largest continent, Eurasia […] which stretches from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean, from the Arctic to the Caucasus and Altai Mountains, […] and encompasses mountains, the taiga, the steppe, the tundra, rivers and lakes'.[15] Medvedev continues that 'the unity and cohesion of the peoples living on this territory has always been our wealth and advantage'. Other official documents assign the steppe with the 'historic role of spreading Russian culture across the Eurasian continent' (id0108, 2016) or describe the steppe as a key region in Russia's defense strategy (id0177, 2014). Here and elsewhere, Russian government actors systematically rely on esoteric notions that emphasize the mystical role of the steppe in unifying the Russian-led 'Eurasian' space, framing this particular locality as one of the key markers of a Russian-Eurasian identity.

A similar rhetorical move is made in Eurasian identity discourses when the Ural Mountains and the Ural River are presented as 'the heart of Eurasia' that supposedly 'unifies' the European and Asian continents. One policy document, for example, reads that 'Orenburg is the heart of Eurasia because the city is located on the Ural River, which geographically separates the two

[15] Chapter 8 on Russian discourses vis-à-vis China further explores Russian conceptions of 'spatio-demographic uniqueness' and claims to great power status based on Russia's territorial vastness in Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime.

continents' (id1381, 2019; also see id3231, 2014; id2845, 2017). Similarly, Siberia is described as a 'bridge' that connects 'East' and 'West' (id0044, 2010). Putin – in turn – refers to Buryatia as the 'heart of Eurasia' in which 'a single fusion of cultures and civilizations was formed, and friendship and relations of genuine mutual understanding developed' (id3360, 2011). Other official documents point to Bashkortostan as the supposed 'heart of Eurasia' (e.g. id3120, 2018).

Elsewhere, Putin (id3188, 2005) refers to Kazan and 'the great Volga river' as 'one of the oldest centers of Eurasian civilization'. He posits that 'Kazan played a truly unique role in the formation of a single Russian nation […] as the place where for centuries a unique fusion of languages, traditions, customs and cultures of the peoples of Russia has been created'. 'As a kind of ethno-religious laboratory, here, the traditions of a territory of considerable size were formed and matured over many centuries […] and Russian rulers began to shape Russia as an integrated Eurasian power', or so Putin argues. He ends his speech with the declaration that 'in the Volga region, the role of Russia as a bridge connecting two great civilizations – Europe and Asia – is more visible than anywhere else'.

Throughout the corpus, a variety of geographical landmarks and localities – e.g. Orenburg, the Ural region, the steppe – are portrayed as constitutive loci in the articulation of a Eurasian identity. The focus on these particular localities is rather striking. After all, the computational analysis lays bare that the discourse fixates on geographical zones that have traditionally been perceived as *fragile* in the Russian imagination (see figure 3.1 below for an illustration of the number of times specific localities co-occur with the key term 'heart of Eurasia' across the corpus). Both the examples above and the quantitative analysis presented in figure 3.1 demonstrate that Russian foreign policy actors consistently refer to 'peripheral' regions of the Russian Federation as the supposed 'heart' of a Russian-led Eurasian community. The choice to portray those particular geographical zones as the 'Eurasian heartland' is undoubtedly strategic in nature. In framing these landmarks as the absolute core of Russia's imperial identity, the discourse may serve to assert uncontestable 'ownership' over localities the Kremlin fears may otherwise be claimed by competing

identities, for example, by endogenous communities that have lived on these lands long before Russia's imperial conquest (e.g. the Tatar population in the Volga region or the Buryats in Siberia).

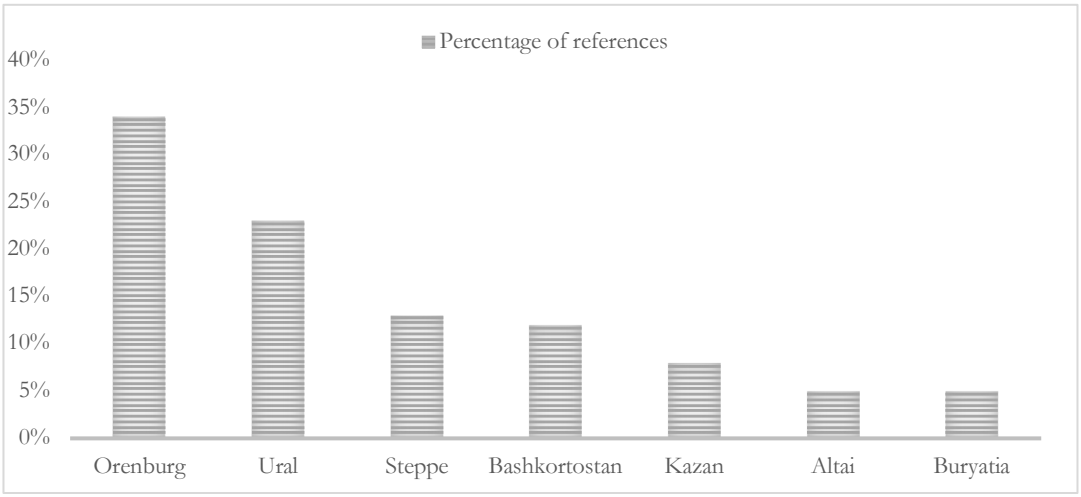


Figure 3.1. Word co-occurrence between key localities and the term 'heart of Eurasia' (*сердце Евразии*)

Historically, Russian efforts to conquer the steppe region commenced around the 1500s – 'the Russian state did not conquer the steppes by military force alone, but used a variety of methods to annex, incorporate, and subjugate parts of the region and its inhabitants […] manipulating rivalries between the various peoples' (Moon, 2013, pp. 11–12; see also Neumann & Wigen, 2012). Between the late fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, Michael Khodarkovsky (2002, p. 2) demonstrates, 'Russia's policies evolved from defending its vulnerable steppe frontiers by repulsing nomadic invasions to a deliberate aggrandizement and conscious transformation of the new territories and subjects'. 'Cultivating the new lands and pacifying, settling, and converting its new subjects to Orthodox Christianity', Khodarkovsky continues, 'became an imperial *raison d'état* in the eighteenth century and Russia's own *mission civilisatrice*'.

Following Willard Sunderland (2004, pp. 2–4), 'the steppe belonged to other peoples before governing Russians ultimately took it over and "established" and "maintained" it as part of their empire. The projection of Russian power onto the steppe was thus, in a very basic sense, a matter of imperialism'. As the discursive analysis above illustrates, the present-day spatial narrative that frames the steppe and other peripheral landmarks as the supposed 'Eurasian heartland' may be a

contemporary iteration of this imperial power projection, or – in other words – a discursive strategy that may seek to undermine the rise of discourses of independence and self-determination in the heterogenous 'peripheries' of the Russian Federation.

The examples above illustrate how these peripheral landmarks have been inscribed with meaning during the Putin era. Throughout the corpus, Russian government actors systematically invoke various geographies of identity to symbolize both the unique national character of the Russian state and the cultural and political heritage of the 'Eurasian people'. The narratives of spatial unity and regional cohesion surrounding these landscapes provide cognitive scripts that make it more palatable to imagine 'Eurasia' as a unified spatial category with Russia at its political and cultural center.[16] Thus, the sites of identity discussed above are not emphasized arbitrarily in Russian foreign policy discourse; much rather, they are part of a field of activity in which geographical locations 'are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political meaning' (Said, 2014).

3.4 Imperial tropes: Russia's spatial mission and the 'compatriots living abroad'

The notion of 'Eurasia' as a unified spatial order with Russia at its head also occurs in Russian foreign policy language when government actors talk about Russia's so-called 'spatial mission'. In this narrative, the notion of 'Eurasia' is characterized by a paradox, Spivak et al. (2006) illustrate. On the one hand, Eurasian integration is presented as an alternative to the global homogenizing force of 'the West', politically embodied by the European Union. Eurasian cooperation, in this context, is presented as a structure in which ethnically and culturally diverse countries can unite without losing their sense of self. On the other hand, this discourse relies heavily on the need for a unified spatial order and is therefore characterized by a strong 'totalizing impulse'

[16] Chapters 4 and 5 on temporal and ethical identity constructions further explore this discursive trope surrounding Russia's supposedly 'unique' national character and its 'natural' position to function as the leader of a unified 'Eurasia'.

itself (Spivak et al., 2006). This paradox becomes particularly apparent in a 2012 essay written by Vladimir Putin titled 'the national question' (id3116).

In this essay, Putin talks explicitly about Russia's so-called 'spatial mission'. On the one hand, he adopts an outright anti-imperialist rhetoric through which he criticizes cultural hegemony and territorial expansion beyond a country's established borders. He cites Russian political philosopher Ivan Ilyin, stating 'do not eradicate, suppress, or enslave other people's blood, do not strangle alien and heterodox life, but give everyone breath and a great Motherland [...] observe all, reconcile all, let everyone pray in their own way [and] work in their own way'. Underneath this anti-imperialist surface, however, lies something completely different. After all, Putin presents Russia as the benevolent, imperial force that creates unity across Eurasian space. To achieve this spatial unity, Putin argues that - above all else - 'the territorial integrity of the Motherland must be upheld'. The motherland of which Putin speaks, however, seems to be conceptualized as reaching *beyond* the current borders of the Russian state.

In this discourse, Putin conceptualizes modern-day Russia as a nation defined by the territory of its imperial past.[17] This links to Oxana Shevel's (2011) article on the politics of nation building in Russia after the Soviet collapse. Shevel argues that one of the main images through which political actors conceptualize the Russian state is through the territory of the former USSR. Shevel illustrates that the notion of 'compatriots' in Russian political discourse legitimizes the designation of other nationalities of the former USSR as an 'us' group within the Russian state. This – in turn – legitimizes the ambiguity surrounding Russia's state borders. The question becomes whether Russianness is defined by the reality of the Soviet collapse or whether the Russian people constitute an anthropological entity that live beyond the current borders of the Russian state. Throughout the corpus, and particularly in the essay studied here, Putin seems to allude to the latter – highly contested – understanding of Russian identity.

[17] See section 3.5 below for a further exploration of the non-Westphalian logic that underlies this imagery of the Russian nation.

In his essay on 'the national question' (id3116, 2012), Putin maps the boundaries of what he calls 'Greater Russia'. He writes that Russia's 'multi-ethnic civilization is held together by a strong Russian cultural core'. Throughout the essay, Putin relies on the imperial notion of a 'Greater Russia' to conflate 'Eurasia' and the Russian state, suggesting that the Eurasian sphere – both culturally and historically – falls within the national realm of the Russian Federation. Elsewhere, in a Duma report on Eurasian development (id2694, 2012), other government actors similarly suggest that 'the borders of Eurasia coincide with the borders of the Russian empire'.

Vera Tolz (1998a, p. 272) argues that this notion is influenced by Eurasianist narratives of the 1920s, which introduced the concept of a unique 'Russian-Eurasian' civilization. This Russian-Eurasian civilization, Tolz argues, 'was [seen as] a separate cultural and historical entity, which emerged out of a long period of homogenization of various peoples of Slavic, Finno-Ugric, Turkic, and Mongolian origin who had been living in close proximity to each other for centuries. With time these different ethnic groups blended into a single anthropological entity which shared a common cultural and historical heritage […] The Eurasianists argued that a new type of nation […] emerged from the culturally, linguistically, and religiously different peoples of the Russian empire. They called the population of "Russia-Eurasia" a multi-ethnic nation, rather than a multi-national, single people'.

Putin seems to play with this idea of 'Russia-Eurasia' as a 'multi-ethnic nation' throughout the corpus. In the 2012 essay (id3116), for example, Putin writes that 'the confidence with which we can ensure the harmonious development of a multicultural community is grounded in our culture, history, and identity […] our identity is based on a different kind of cultural code […] The Russian people are state-forming – this is Russia's calling. *The great mission of the Russians is to unite and consolidate civilization*. Through language and culture, we tie together Russian Armenians, Russian Azerbaijanis, Russian Germans, Russian Tatars [...] *to create a type of civilizational state in which there are no "nationalities", and the principle of recognizing "friend or foe" is determined by common culture and shared values*' (emphasis added). He further argues that 'the most important task of Eurasian integration is

to create a space to live and develop with dignity [and] *to build a model of the state*, a civilizational community, that is attractive and harmonious for everyone who considers Russia to be their homeland' (id3116, 2012).

Here and elsewhere, Putin suggests that Eurasian integration aims to place the 'Eurasian' region within the boundaries of the Russian state. The 'civilizational state' of which he speaks serves to envision the 'Eurasian people' as so-called 'compatriots living abroad' or – in less nebulous terms – Russian national subjects. Although this rhetoric primarily builds on connotative conceptions of identity (i.e. narratives surrounding cultural cohesion), the notion of 'compatriots abroad' necessarily consists of a denotative conception of identity; it implies that Russia's *legal* responsibility reaches beyond the current borders of the Russian federation, legally extending its state authority towards peoples that formally live outside the Russian state boundaries.[18]

In this discourse, Putin relies on age-old tropes of empire. After all, the civilizational identity of which Putin speaks is - in his words - 'based on Russian cultural dominance, the bearers of which are not only ethnic Russians, but all carriers of such an identity, regardless of nationality' (id3116, 2012). Throughout the essay, Putin refers to a 'cultural code' that makes the Russians a so-called 'state-forming' people. This imperial trope, which is more commonly expressed in Eurasian discourses in Russian foreign policy under the Putin regime, is further discussed in chapter 5 on ethical identity constructions. Relevant to the argument made in this chapter, however, is that this totalizing discourse relies on a strong message through which Putin preaches cultural-spatial homogeneity across Eurasian space.

Bassin (2010) argues that the call for spatial unity in Eurasian discourses coincides with a newborn interest in the 'periphery' over the 'center' as a building block for 'post-Soviet' identities in contemporary Russia. In this discourse, the 'Eurasian heartland' is 'civilized' and domesticated

[18] Following Lefebvre (1991), connotative discourses imbue space with shared meaning by invoking socio-cultural or emotional associations and imageries, whilst denotative discourses consist of 'juridical-administrative' narratives that serve to materialize the symbolic bonds created by connotative discourses (also see section 1.3.1 of the introductory chapter).

to serve as 'the benign provider of resources for the center' (Widdis, 2004, p. 48). Rather than relying on a discourse of conquest, however, Russia's spatial mission is presented in terms of a paternal effort to help peripheral regions reach their full potential. Russian foreign policy actors thus present Eurasian integration as Russia's 'special' responsibility. In this discourse, Moscow is depicted as the 'natural leader' of the countries that once made up the former USSR and a 'benevolent guarantor' of security and economic development across the 'Eurasian' continent.

3.5 'Russkiy Mir': the construction of non-Westphalian space in Russian foreign policy

Russian foreign policy actors have also pursued a *spatial* projection of Russian power through the concept of 'Russkiy Mir' – a concept which translates into 'Russian World'. Building on the narrative discussed above, the 'Russkiy Mir' concept has been used to promote a supranational understanding of the Russian nation as an entity not only comprising citizens of the Russian Federation but also Russian-speaking communities living *outside* the current boundaries of the Russian state, thereby advancing a non-Westphalian understanding of nation-stateness in Russian foreign policy under the Putin regime. The notion of 'Russkiy Mir' has thus offered Russian foreign policy actors a rhetorical tool to reify a de-territorialized understanding of the Russian nation – one that has left the exact boundaries of Russian space purposefully ambiguous.[19]

David Lewis (2020, pp. 171–172) explains that the discourse presenting Russia 'as unbounded by conventional borders has long historical roots, influenced by Russia's almost continual expansion into neighbouring territories from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.' 'This sense of historical "boundlessness",' Lewis (ibid.) writes, 'was compounded by the loss of empire and the collapse of the USSR.' The 'Russkiy Mir' concept constitutes one of the key contemporary iterations of this non-Westphalian projection of Russian space.

[19] Chapter 6 on Russian discourses vis-à-vis Belarus further explores how this de-territorialized understanding of Russian space is used with reference to Russia's western neighbor in particular.

Andis Kudors (2010) explains that the concept of a 'Russian World' was first formulated in the 1990s by such conservative thinkers as Petr Shchedrovitsky and Natalya Narochnitskaya. These and other Russian conservatives argued that the unifying factors supposedly tying this non-Westphalian space together were twofold. First and foremost, as a Russian-speaking community, the 'Russian World' was bound together by cultural-linguistic commonalities. The premise was that 'those who *speak* Russian in their everyday life – also *think* Russian, and as a result – *act* Russian' (Kudors, 2010, p. 3). Secondly, proponents of the 'Russkiy Mir' concept argued that the 'Russian World' was bound together by a common faith in the Russian Orthodox Church, emphasizing the 'civilizing mission' of the Russian people to defend and disseminate traditional values and to advocate against the universality of 'Western' liberal democracy.

Mikhail Suslov (2018) unpacks three distinct iterations of the 'Russian world' concept since its first appearance in Russian foreign policy discourse in the 1990s. During the first stage (1996-2001), or so Suslov (2018, p. 346) argues, the 'Russian world' was presented as a 'culturally-bounded, de-territorialized network' or 'cultural archipelago', which – following David Lewis (2020, p. 172) – 'emphasized difference and hybridity among Russia's extensive diaspora'. During the second stage (2001-2009), the concept of the 'Russian world' became understood through the prism of a 'nation-state and its loyal diaspora'. In this particular iteration of the 'Russian World' concept, Russian-speaking communities were framed as the 'tentacles' of the Russian nation, thereby emphasizing Russia's *influence* abroad (M. Suslov, 2018, pp. 337–338). Finally, in its third iteration, the 'Russian world' concept became infused with the irredentist notion of 'a new post-sovereign civilizational space' through which Russian foreign policy actors sought to actively *incorporate* the territories of neighboring states, such as Ukraine and Belarus (M. Suslov, 2018, pp. 341–346; Lewis, 2020, p. 172) (see chapter 6 on Russian discourses vis-à-vis Belarus for a further exploration of this non-Westphalian narrative).

With Putin's rise to power, Kudors explains, the 'Russian World' concept became officially part of Russia's compatriot policy – 'since belonging to a cultural-linguistic group [has been]

considered to be the main determinant of one's belonging to the "Russian World", its boundaries are not strictly delimited […] [which has allowed] Russian federal authorities to target their policy of "protecting compatriots' interests" at a broad group of foreign countries' citizens, flexibly adapting it to changing circumstances' (Kudors, 2010, p. 3).

In line with Kudors' assessment, a computational analysis of the corpus reveals that the 'Russian World' concept has been adopted vis-à-vis a wide variety of countries. The data visualization in figure 3.2 demonstrates that spatial belongingness in the 'Russian World' has been measured by the perceived *strength of the relationship* rather than proximity in geometrical, or Euclidean, terms. It is therefore possible, for example, that Greece – which is much more distant in Euclidean space – has been framed as *closer* to the center of the 'Russian World' than a country like Bulgaria, which may be closer in geometric terms but is nonetheless portrayed as more peripheral in the 'Russian World' discourse (section 3.6 below further explains the difference between Euclidian and non-Euclidean space).[20]

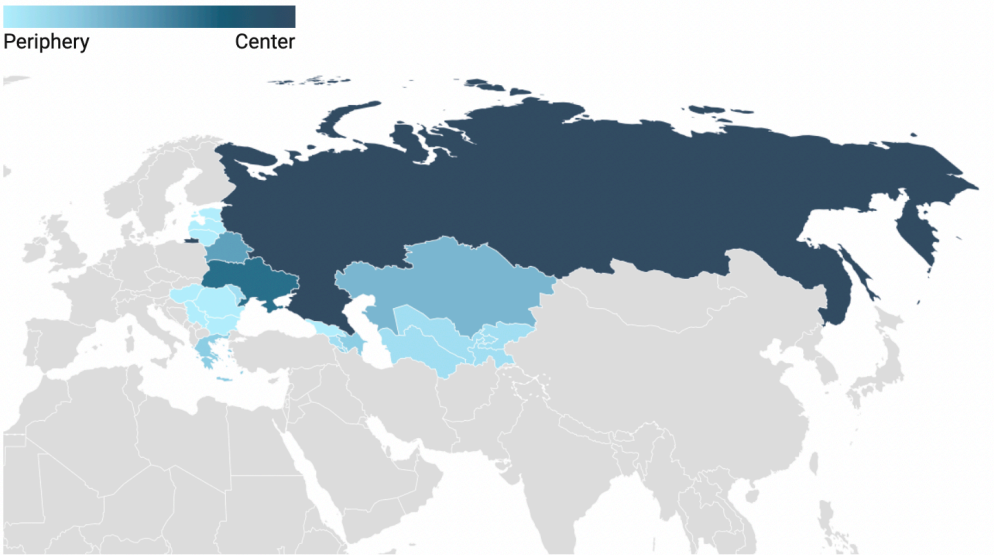


Figure 3.2 A visualization of the Russian understanding of 'Russkii Mir' based on word co-occurrence data from the corpus

[20] The strength of the relationship has been measured based on word co-occurrence between the key term 'Russkiy Mir' and positive references of country names. Based on the number of times a country is mentioned positively in the context of a 'Russian World', it has been color-coded as either more peripheral or central to the Russian 'core'. Countries that remain blank have not been referenced as part of a 'Russian World' at all.

The computational analysis thus indicates that Russian foreign policy actors have projected varying degrees of spatial 'belongingness' – in the data visualization depicted as ranging from peripheral to central – onto the countries they have counted as part of their 'Russkiy Mir' concept. A close reading of some of the documents in the corpus reveals, however, that Russian foreign policy actors have certainly articulated at least some characteristics that – according to them – define 'belongingness' to this spatial category. A report published by the Kremlin (id1251, 2018), for example, describes the 'Russian World' as a spatial entity bound together by a common tongue, arguing that 'the Russian language is the greatest asset […] of all peoples who historically lived together in the vast expanses of Eurasia'. Another report, published by Rossotrudnichestvo (id1351, 2015), similarly measures belongingness to the 'Russian World' concept by the degree to which 'people abroad feel the need to maintain contact with Russia, the Russian language and culture'.

Elsewhere, State Duma deputy Ivan Belekov (id0283, 2017) describes the 'Russian World' as the 'categorical embodiment of a system of values […] that has united and consolidated the cultural and civilizational space of Eurasia'. Belekov continues that 'the Russian World is united on the basis of immeasurable spirituality', pointing to the Russian Federation as 'the unifying center of the Russian World'. An official document published by the Russian Ministry of Defense (id0110, 2018) similarly lists the supposed 'characteristics […] of the Russian World', describing it as 'an historical community of ethnic groups and territories […] which are under the influence of Russian culture and statehood' and 'a common "civilizational space" united by the Russian Orthodox Church, Russian culture, and a common historical memory'.

Other than such fuzzy criteria as a 'common historical memory' and a 'shared spirituality', Russian government actors do not offer any precise characteristics that define spatial belongingness to the 'Russian World'. Arguably, precisely this undefined and ambiguous character of the 'Russian World' is what has made this spatial abstraction so politically expedient in a domestic Russian context. Throughout the corpus, Russian government actors consistently draw on the 'Russkiy Mir'

concept to project political power beyond the borders of the Russian state, targeting a vast range of countries in their so-called 'near abroad'.

Ukraine – in particular – is a key locality onto which Russian government actors have conveniently projected their non-Westphalian claim to extraterritorial power. For instance, Lavrov maintains that 'Russia's responsibility to protect compatriots living across the "Russian World" […] fully applies to those who live in Ukraine', stating that the Kremlin is 'committed to fulfilling all obligations under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the UN, including […] the protection of linguistic and cultural rights and – ultimately – the right of self-determination' (see also id0161, 2013). Notably, this particular frame has been eagerly used by Russian foreign policy actors to legitimize Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, as well as Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Embedded in these various expressions of Russia's supposedly 'altruistic' responsibility to protect Russian-speaking communities across the 'Russian World' is a clear threat – one that is explicated particularly clearly in a State Duma document published in 2016 (id0285), which reads that 'any violation of the rights of our compatriots may prompt the Russian Federation to revise its approach to the states that allow that kind of discrimination'. The document continues that 'Russia does not intend to sacrifice the interests of the Russian-speaking population abroad for the sake of good relations with the political elites of certain countries and will protect its citizens and non-citizens in these states by all means'. Notably, as Russia's all-out war against Ukraine in 2022 has demonstrated, the Kremlin has not shied away from instrumentalizing this narrative as a legitimizing basis to invade a sovereign neighbor.

Here and elsewhere, the rise of the 'Russian World' is framed as supposedly filling a vacuum created by 'western' decline. A State Duma report (id0292, 2017), for example, reads that the 'Russian World' has filled a void caused by 'the West's destruction of the word system', arguing that the 'confusion and indecisiveness of the United States and Europe has ultimately worked in Russia's favor, as it has given Russia time to organize, to tighten up the rear, and to decide who its

partners and allies are'. Similarly, a report published by the Ministry of Defense (id0110, 2018) reads that 'against the backdrop of the decline of Greater Europe and the emergence of Greater Eurasia, the idea of the Russian World has become especially attractive but, at the same time, it has been subjected to political and ideological suppression'. The report continues that 'the continental split [between Europe and Russia] will have a huge and lasting impact both on Europe and the world as a whole; […] whilst Eurasia is taking shape as a new center of global gravity'. 'In this new geopolitical reality', or so the report argues, 'Russia ceases to be the eastern flank of a failed Greater Europe and – instead – turns into the western flank of an emerging Greater Eurasia'.

The overall aim of this spatial discourse, or so it seems, is to promote a de-territorialized conceptualization of the Russian nation – one that not only comprises citizens of the Russian Federation but also Russian-speaking communities living *outside* the current boundaries of the Russian state, thereby advancing a non-Westphalian understanding of nation-stateness which enables Moscow to claim extraterritorial power over a variety of countries in its so-called 'near abroad'.[21]

3.6 The notion of connectivity: 'networked' and 'fluid' spatialities in Russian foreign policy

Another key spatial modality found in Russian foreign policy language under the Putin regime appears to be the discourse of connectivity. Throughout the corpus, Russian foreign policy actors systematically employ the spatial concept of 'connectivity' to perform or enact a (Eurasian) regional identity. Similar to the 'Russkiy Mir' narrative, this particular discursive strand does not express space in traditional Euclidean terms based on proximity and contiguity of borders, but rather in *networked* terms, meaning that Russian actors define space by the *intensity* of the relationship between nodes – which they seem to measure both materially through the existence of

[21] The spatial notion of the 'near abroad' is further scrutinized in section 6.2.1 of the chapter on Russian discourses vis-à-vis Belarus.

infrastructures such as roads, pipelines, and trade routes, as well as non-materially through the perceived intensity of social and political relations.

This spatial narrative is particularly prevalent in strategy documents published by the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation. In this particular sub-section of the corpus, a wide variety of strategy documents read that Russia should 'become a significant part of the world's transport corridor […] through the development of transport [and] energy infrastructure' (id0015, 2018); discuss the need to 'increase the connectivity of Russia's vast territory' (id0016, 2011); or argue that a 'key factor [in the development of Russia] is the creation of institutional infrastructure, […] infrastructural security, transport accessibility, and the […] connectivity of territories' (id0311, 2012). Military doctrine publications from the Russian Ministry of Defense adopt a similar discourse; one such document published by the MOD reads, for example, that 'Russia should develop transport infrastructure and growth in the level of transport connectivity across the Russian Federation […] in order to effectively counter threats to economic and state security' (id0223, 2015).

Elsewhere, Vladimir Putin (id0817, 2019) states that 'in order to ensure multifaceted ties between countries and integration associations on the Eurasian subcontinent, a modern developed transport, energy, and telecommunications infrastructure is required'. Putin continues that 'Russia is currently implementing large-scale national projects that cover these key areas of dynamic economic growth […] which will undoubtedly have a great synergistic effect not only on our country but on the Eurasian region as a whole'. Whilst these are just a few examples from the corpus, a quantitative analysis of the corpus – which is visualized in figure 3.3 below – demonstrates with regard to which countries and 'spatialities' Russian foreign policy actors most strongly emphasize this discourse of connectivity.

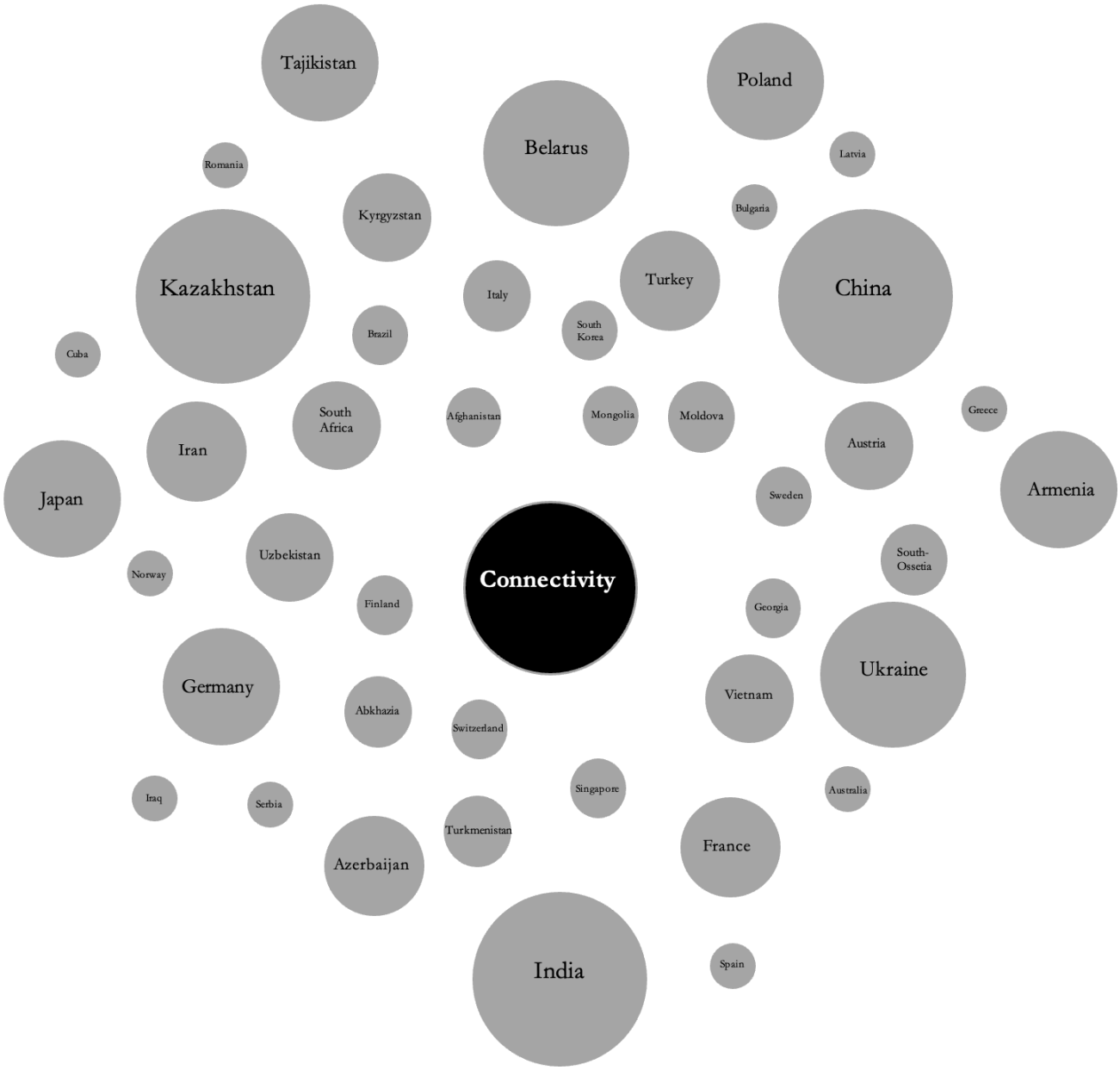


Figure 3.3. A visualization of the Russian discourse of connectivity based on word co-occurrence data

As demonstrated in figure 3.3, the computational analysis reveals that Kazakhstan, China, and India are the most referenced spatialities in the Russian discourse of connectivity. The second most-referenced spatialities in the discourse of connectivity are Ukraine and Belarus, whereas the third tier consists of countries such as Tajikistan, Poland, Armenia, japan, and Germany.

Importantly, this assessment is based on word co-occurrence between Russian terms related to connectivity, on the one hand, and country names, on the other.[22]

On the one hand, the central position assigned to some of these spatialities directly reflects the Kremlin's economic interests, mirroring Russia's key trading partners, such as China, Germany, and Belarus.[23] Equally, the discourse seems to be a reflection of Russia's geopolitical priorities with countries such as Ukraine and Armenia occupying a central position in the discourse. There are some interesting outliers, however. For example, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Moldova score unexpectedly low, falling in the fourth, fifth, and sixth tier, respectively, whereas Iran, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq score unexpectedly high, falling in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and nineth tier.[24] To make this ranking more tangible – Russian foreign policy actors have referred to Iran a total of 114 times in their discourse of connectivity, whilst referring to Moldova a total of 83 times. By comparison, Russian foreign policy actors have referred to Kazakhstan – the country with the highest number of references – a total of 221 times (see figure 3.4 below).

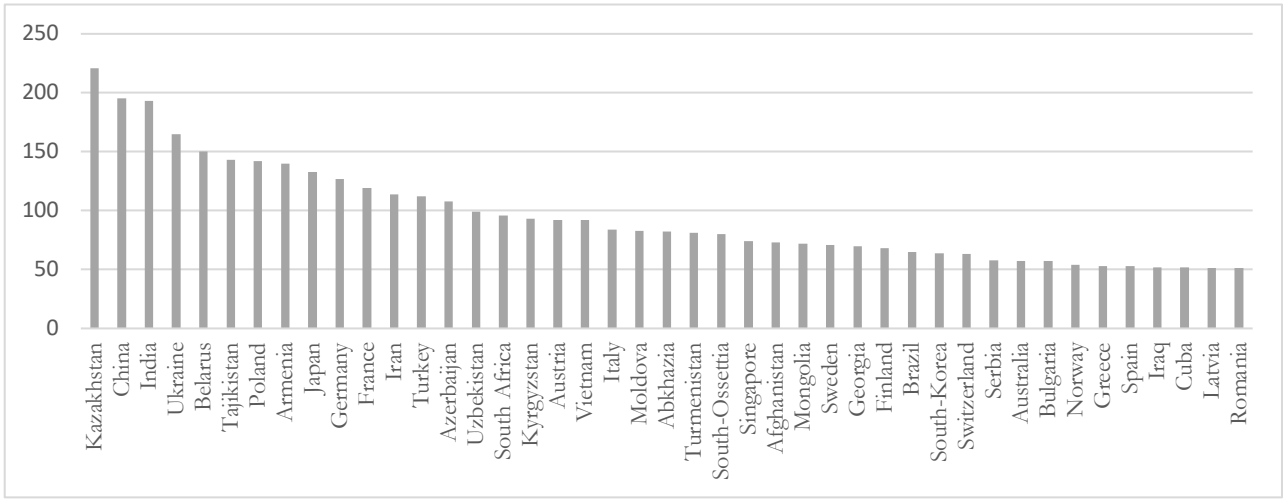


Figure 3.4 Word co-occurrence between different spatialities and key terms expressing 'connectivity' in Russian across the corpus

[22] The Russian terms related to 'connectivity' used in the computational word co-occurrence analysis are *соединение* (connection), *подключение* (connection), *связность* (connectivity), *связь* (connection), *взаимосвязь* (relationship), *связанность* (connectedness), *взаимодействие* (interaction), and *транспорт* (transport). The quantitative analysis has also included non-nation-state 'spatialities' such as Abkhazia and South-Ossetia.

[23] Importantly, this ranking of economic partners is based on data published by the World Bank in 2021. Trade patterns have shifted significantly since Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

[24] Figure 3.3 reflects these various tiers through different node sizes.

What the quantitative analysis presented in figures 3.3 and 3.4 reveals is that Russian foreign policy actors do not necessarily perceive 'space' in Euclidean terms – that is, as contiguous clusters defined in geometric terms and demarcated by territorial boundaries that categorically distinguish an inside from an outside (Lefebvre, 1991; Mol & Law, 1994, p. 643). Much rather, Russian foreign policy actors pursue a '*networked*' understanding of space – one through which space is measured by the (perceived) intensity of the relationship. This particular conception of space allows Russian foreign policy actors to tie together locations that are far removed from one another in Euclidean space, effectively 'folding' regional surfaces and bridging the metric distance between different nodes in the network (Cooper, 1991, p. 270; Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000; Lefebvre, 1991).

Importantly, whilst the data visualization presented in figure 3.4 demonstrates an average of the Russian discourse of connectivity over a time period ranging from 2000 to 2020, Russia's 'networked' understanding of space appears to be rather fluid. Naturally, throughout Putin's presidential terms, Russia's attitude towards the various nodes has changed and existed in contradictory ways. In this context, Jouni Häkli (2008, p. 8) speaks of 'structured flexibility', as Russian foreign policy actors have articulated regional spatialities that have continuously assimilated new elements and repelled old ones, 'gluing the population flexibly together into an imagined community'. It is precisely this flexible understanding of space that seems to have enabled Russian foreign policy actors to project a kind of 'regionness' onto the so-called 'Eurasian' space, allowing them to include various far-removed and contradictory localities into a Eurasian catch-all model. The case study chapters on Belarus (chapter 6), Kazakhstan (chapter 7), and China (chapter 8) explore how Russian foreign policy actors have adjusted and refined their spatial discourse vis-à-vis those countries Russia has framed as its key 'Eurasian' partners.

3.7 Discursive audiences and objectives

The various spatial narratives discussed in this chapter have sought to target a number of distinct audiences. In the domestic domain, these audiences have ranged from an ethnic Russian

('Russkiy') audience to a civic Russian ('Rossiyskiy') audience.[25] In the international domain, the discursive targets have ranged from a negative audience – which Russian government actors have labelled the 'collective West' – to a positive audience comprising so-called 'compatriots living abroad'. The following paragraphs offer a brief overview of the spatial narratives discussed in this chapter, their target audiences, and underlying political objectives (see figure 3.5 below for an overview).

Discursive strands	Audiences	Representations of a spatial Self	Representations of a spatial Other
The constitutive loci of a 'Eurasian' identity	• Ethnic Russian ('Russkiy') audience • Ethnic minorities living in the Russian Federation	• Russia as having a 'unique' national character • Russians as carrying a special responsibility to 'unify' the Eurasian region	• Ethnic minorities living within the Russian Federation as imperial subjects
Russia's spatial mission	• The 'collective West' • 'Compatriots living abroad' • Civic Russian ('Rossiyskiy') audience	• Russia as a 'benevolent' force promoting unity and stability across the 'Eurasian' space	• 'The West' as an imperialist power aggressively pursuing cultural hegemony and territorial expansion
'Russkiy Mir' ('Russian World')	• Civic Russian ('Rossiyskiy') audience • 'Compatriots living abroad'	• Russia as a supranational nation comprising Russian-speaking communities living outside the current boundaries of the Russian state	• The boundaries of the 'Russian World' are not strictly delimited and the 'Other' changes according to the political needs of the discursive agents promoting the narrative.
'Connectivity'	• A broad range of countries with a particular focus on Kazakhstan, China, and India	• Russia as a central 'hub' in the world's infrastructure	• Fluid understanding of otherness in which the Other can change and exist in contradictory ways.

Figure 3.5 An overview of the discursive strands, their intended audiences, and spatial representations of Self and Other.

The first discursive strand that this chapter explored has presented various Russian landscapes as constitutive of a Eurasian spatial identity. This narrative depicted the 'boundless Eurasian steppe' both as the center of a 'Eurasian civilization' and the birthplace of Russia's unique national character. Similarly, the Ural Mountains, the Ural River, and the Volga region have been

[25] See section 1.3 in the introductory chapter for a further explanation of the semantic distinction between 'Russkiy' and 'Rossiyskiy' in Russian foreign policy language.

framed as constitutive of a Eurasian regional identity throughout the corpus. Invoking various geographies of identity that symbolize both the unique national character of the Russian state and the cultural heritage of the 'Eurasian people', foreign policy actors have employed these narratives to present 'Eurasia' as a unified spatial category with Russia as its natural leader.

In these representations of the Russian Self – which articulate a 'special responsibility' of the Russian people to unify Eurasian space – Russian foreign policy actors seem to speak, in particular, to an ethnic Russian ('Russkiy') audience. The Other in this narrative – then – are undeniably the ethnic minorities living within the Russian Federation, as well as the non-Russian ethnic groups living across the 'Eurasian', or formerly Soviet, region. Ultimately, as argued in section 3.3, this particular narrative likely serves to assert uncontestable 'ownership' over peripheral regions within the Russian Federation which Russian foreign policy actors fear may otherwise be claimed by competing identities (e.g. endogenous communities such as the Tatar population in the Volga region or the Buryats in Siberia). The political objectives underlying this particular narrative thus appear to be twofold: on the one hand, the narrative seems to pursue national unity, whilst simultaneously re-invoking an ever-present power hierarchy within the Russian political system – one in which multi-ethnicity may be celebrated on the surface but only insofar as the leading 'core' remains homogenously 'Russkiy', that is, *ethnically* Russian.[26]

The second narrative studied in this chapter deals with Russia's so-called 'spatial mission'. This particular discursive strand seems to target three distinct audiences. One the one hand, the narrative targets a 'Western' audience through an anti-imperialist rhetoric that criticizes 'Western' cultural hegemony. On the other hand, the narrative speaks to two 'positive' audiences, that is, a domestic Russian audience and an external audience comprising what the Kremlin has termed 'compatriots living abroad'. The underlying message that Russian government actors seek to

[26] See chapter 7 on Russian discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan for a further exploration of the Kremlin's attitudes towards multi-ethnicity across the 'Eurasian' space.

convey to this 'positive' audience is that Russia supposedly constitutes a 'benevolent' force that creates unity and brings stability within the Eurasian sphere.

Throughout the corpus, Russian government actors map the boundaries of what they refer to as 'Greater Russia' – a multi-ethnic 'civilization-state' held together by a strong Russian cultural core. In this discourse, the 'Eurasian heartland' is supposedly 'civilized' to serve as 'the benign provider of resources for the center', whilst Moscow is portrayed as the paternal center that aids the peripheral regions in reaching their full potential (see also Widdis, 2004). Importantly, this spatial narrative is clearly driven by an *irredentist* political objective. In conceptualizing modern-day Russia as a nation defined by the territory of its imperial past, this discursive strand has long served as a rhetorical veil behind which Russia could hide its extraterritorial assertions over the sovereign territories of the countries that once made up the former USSR – assertions that progressively moved from the discursive to the material realm with the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 and Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014, culminating in Russia's all-out war against Ukraine in 2022.

The third spatial narrative explored in this chapter appears to be targeted more narrowly towards so-called 'compatriots living abroad'. In this narrative, Russian government actors have used the concept of a 'Russkiy Mir' ('Russian World') to promote a supranational understanding of the Russian nation as an entity not only comprising citizens of the Russian Federation but also Russian-speaking communities living *outside* the current boundaries of the Russian state. Through this narrative, Russian foreign policy actors have consistently sought to project political power beyond their national borders, targeting Russian-speaking audiences living in the countries in their so-called 'near abroad'. Importantly, this particular narrative has mostly been used vis-à-vis those neighboring countries in which Russian foreign policy actors have feared their influence may be declining.

A key target audience onto which Russian government actors have conveniently projected this non-Westphalian frame is the Russian-speaking community in Ukraine. One of the key political objectives underlying this particular spatial narrative has been to reify a de-territorialized

understanding of the Russian nation, one that leaves the exact boundaries of the Russian space purposefully ambiguous. By presenting belongingness to the 'Russian World' as something that is determined by cultural-linguistic characteristics, Russian foreign policy actors have been able to use this narrative to legitimize political – and military – interference in a variety of countries that once made up the former USSR, ranging from Ukraine to Kazakhstan.[27]

Finally, the fourth spatial narrative – which focuses on the concept of 'connectivity' – similarly appears to be directed towards a wide range of audiences (see figure 3.3 for an overview of the target countries). In this particular discourse, Russia is portrayed as both a regional and a global 'hub', a central node in the world's infrastructure. Interestingly, this narrative articulates space *not* in traditional Euclidean terms based on proximity and contiguity of borders, but rather in networked terms, meaning Russian actors define space by the intensity of the relationship between nodes. Three countries are targeted in particular – that is, Kazakhstan, China, and India. First and foremost, the choice of target audiences seems to be an expression of Russia's efforts to 'diversify' economic relations in light of worsening ties with 'the West' – particularly since the implementation of western sanctions following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. Importantly, the focus on rather 'dry' matters of connectivity and infrastructure may constitute an effort to approach relations with states such as China and India through a less politicized prism, which – in Moscow's calculation – may increase the chances of these countries reciprocating Russia's efforts to increase the breadth and depth of their relationship.

Ultimately, all four of the spatial narratives discussed in this chapter rely on a two-track discursive strategy that aims to project spatial unity across the 'Eurasian' region. This two-track approach links to Henri Lefebvre's (1991) distinction between connotative and denotative discourses (also see section 1.3.1 of the introductory chapter). Lefebvre describes two discourses that shape a society's spatial economy. On the one hand, *connotative discourses* imbue space with

[27] See chapter 7 on Russian discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan for a further analysis of the 'compatriot' discourse.

shared meaning, encouraging political, cultural and social cohesion among members of that society. Spatial economies 'valorize certain relationships between people in particular places, and thus give rise to connotative discourses concerning these places; these in turn generate "consensuses" or conventions regarding the purpose or identity of a particular place' (Lefebvre, 1991).

Denotative discourses, in turn, perpetuate narratives that aim to institutionalize the cultural-spatial unity constructed within connotative discourses. Where connotative discourses reify a unified spatial order between countries that fall within the 'Eurasian' sphere, denotative discourses materialize the symbolic bonds by imposing material and legal infrastructure. Making use of juridical-administrative narratives, foreign policy actors formalize the spatial unity of the 'Eurasian' region – not only through a discourse of connectivity but also by implementing legal networks such as the Eurasian Economic Union and the Belt and Road Initiative. Formal schemes promoting trade and free movement of goods and people, in this context, contribute to the image of 'Eurasia' as a tight-knit political community and help solidify a sense of place-identity within the 'Eurasian' sphere. Together, denotative and connotative discourses create structures – both on a socio-cultural, juridical-administrative, and material level – that tie the 'Eurasian' region together. They provide cognitive scripts that make it more palatable to visualize 'Eurasia' as a unified spatial category.[28]

3.8 Conclusion

The chapter opened with a citation by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1991) in which he pondered the question where Russians envisage the borders of Russia. In an effort to explore some of the possible answers to this recurring question in Russian political thinking, the sections thereafter proceeded to explore how various understandings of space have co-existed in Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime. The discursive analysis revealed four key narratives

[28] This two-track approach in Russian foreign policy between 2000 and 2020 is discussed more in-depth in chapter 5 on ethical identity constructions.

through which Russian foreign policy actors have sought to articulate a 'Eurasian' spatial identity in contemporary Russia, ranging from a discourse surrounding constitutive loci in Russian political thinking to the notion of 'connectivity' in Russian foreign policy. Through an exploration of these various spatial concepts, the chapter sought to illustrate how various understandings of space have co-existed in Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime.

Importantly, the various spatial narratives discussed in this chapter seem to have grown in popularity throughout Putin's tenure as president. Most likely, the various claims to extraterritorial, supranational, and non-Westphalian power embedded in these spatial narratives have offered Russian foreign policy actors a convenient 'national story' at a time when Moscow's standing in the international domain has progressively faltered. Ultimately, it appears these narratives have offered the Kremlin a discursive 'coping mechanism' to deal with the mismatch between the great power status it believes Russia supposedly deserves and the real-existing position it has or – in Moscow's eyes – 'the West' has allowed Russia to have.

Ultimately, the spatial (re)enactments studied throughout this chapter not only seem to shape understandings of 'Eurasia' as a unified spatial entity in Russian foreign policy but also (re)produce socio-political relations among countries in what Russia frames as its 'Eurasian' sphere. The case study chapters will further explore how these spatial narratives are adjusted and refined in relation to those countries Russia considers to be its key 'Eurasian' partners: Belarus (chapter 6), Kazakhstan (chapter 7), and China (chapter 8). First, however, the thesis unpacks the *temporal* and *ethical* constructions of a 'Eurasian' civilizational identity in chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

Chapter 4

Temporal Identity Constructions in Russian Foreign Policy: Narrating Eurasia's Past, Present, and Future

'The history of our people presents unprecedented features; spiritual growth and creation, not recognized by our contemporaries and future generations.'

- Vladimir Vernadsky, Prometej, 1988

4.1 Introduction

Human collectives are not only 'written into existence' by forging identities along a spatial axis – as discussed in the previous chapter – but also by articulating identities in temporal terms (Neumann, 1998, p. 223). This chapter explores the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors have articulated a temporal identity in Eurasian discourses between 2000 and 2020. The chapter first offers a review of the literature on temporality and identity in international relations theory (sections 4.2 and 4.3). The analysis then unpacks the five key narratives used in the construction of a temporal identity in Russian-Eurasian discourses under the Putin regime.

First, section 4.4 sets out how Russian foreign policy actors have employed a kinship narrative to 'lock' discursive subjects in the 'Eurasian' region into a subordinate relationship. Hereafter, section 4.5 explores how Russian foreign policy actors have framed the 'Eurasian' region as being tied together by a shared past. In this section, the chapter explores how Russian foreign policy actors have employed the notion of 'crisis,' or 'smuta' (*смута*), to emphasize the cyclical recurrence of 'ruin' and 'renewal' in Eurasia's temporal development. Section 4.6 explores the ways in which metaphors of 'fate' and 'destiny' have been used in Russian-Eurasian discourses to frame the course of time as predetermined – a discursive move that has allowed Russian foreign policy

actors to frame their country's supposed leadership position in the 'Eurasian' sphere as a predestined reality.

The latter half of the chapter reveals the various ways in which Russian government actors have employed temporal conceptions of *otherness*. In section 4.7, the analysis demonstrates how Russian foreign policy actors have portrayed 'the West' as a victim of postmodernity, whilst framing the Russian-Eurasian sphere as an ideal-type modern temporality. Section 4.8 – in turn – uncovers how contemporary Russian foreign policy actors have presented 'Eurasia' as the West's *positive* Other through an appropriation of 19th century European tropes surrounding Russia's supposedly 'unique' national character. Finally, section 4.9 provides a concluding overview of the main discursive strands, their target audiences, and political objectives.

4.2 Temporality & identity in international relations (part I): constructing a temporal Self

Temporal identities rely on structured chronologies to express a shared past and a common future. In temporal identity discourses, time provides a narrative framework (Bender & Wellbery, 1991, p. 3) – a tool to bring order, to cognitively organize the social world, and to negotiate and position subjectivities within that world. Exploring the discursive construction of time, Thomas Luckmann (1991) argues that temporal narratives are ideologically motivated and serve to legitimize social order. John Bender and David Wellbery (1991, p. 15) similarly argue that time bears ideological implications – 'time is not a single medium of consciousness or a unified movement in history. It is intrinsically manifold […] Time asserts itself in contemporary inquiry less as a given than as a range of problems, the solutions to which are constantly open to re-negotiation'.

Bender and Wellbery (1991) introduce the concept of 'chronotypes'. They argue that chronotypes contribute to the formation of social, cultural, and individual identities through processes of 'temporal determination' (Bender & Wellbery, 1991, p. 5). Exploring the concept of temporal determination, Bas van Fraassen (1991, p. 24) argues that while time – as an absolute

category – does not exist, 'time *order* is constituted by means of, or on the basis of, relations between events and processes'. Events, van Fraassen (1991, p. 24) argues, 'occur in some sort of order, some after others, some before, and some simultaneously', creating a temporal narrative of identity. Slavoj Žižek (2014) – in turn – conceptualizes events as 'changes in the way reality appears to us'. Importantly, the ontological significance of events is not inherent to the events themselves. Rather, their ontological status is discursively constructed *ex post facto*. The temporal construction of identity thus consists of assigning meaning to events, framing them as 'turning points' in a discursively constructed history to mark some sort of narrative order.

Similar to the construction of spatial identities, which I discussed in the previous chapter, temporal identities are the product of sociohistorical imaginings (Bender & Wellbery, 1991, p. 8). Russian foreign policy actors make avid use of temporal imageries to construct a Eurasian identity. For example, Russian government actors regularly rely on various chronotypes – 'models or patterns through which time assumes practical or conceptual significance' (Bender & Wellbery, 1991, p. 4) – to narratively structure a shared 'Eurasian' past and a common 'Eurasian' future. In line with Bender and Wellbery (1991, p. 4), these chronotypes are 'improvised from already existing repertoires of cultural forms'. Thus, Russian foreign policy actors consistently refer to real-existing historical events to demonstrate the existence of a fraternal bond between the 'peoples of Eurasia'. The various temporal narratives explored in this chapter's discursive analysis are a manifestation of what Helga Nowotny (1992) calls 'social time' – 'inter-subjective time created through social interaction, both on the behavioral and symbolic plane' (Nowotny, 1975).

4.3 Temporality & identity in international relations (part II): constructing a temporal Other

Importantly, to temporally construct a political community, some form of *othering* is also required. Exploring global identity constructions, Patomäki (2010, p. 3) looks at the ways in which alterity is constituted through temporal conceptions of otherness. He locates otherness either in a

community's own past or in its contemporary being seen from the perspective of its possible future (Patomäki, 2010, pp. 19-20). Alexander Wendt (2003) makes a similar argument about temporal self-differentiation. Wendt (2003, p. 527) argues that 'history' can become the Other in terms of which the Self is defined. He posits that identities are created through temporal narratives in which the present Self is framed as identical to an imagined past Self. In a Russian context, this temporal logic is used to present the Eurasian Self as a necessary extension of various historical periods, such as Kievan Rus', the Petrine empire, and the recent Soviet past, for example (see section 4.5). In addition, Wendt (2003, p. 528) argues that temporal self-differentiation can also be used to draw a distinction between a community's past and present; one such example is contemporary Germany, which articulates its identity through a temporal differentiation from its Nazi past (see chapter 2 on civilizational leitmotifs).

Where Wendt (2003) and Patomäki (2010) present temporal othering as an independent mechanism, other studies (e.g. Diez, 2004; Prozorov, 2011; Rumelili, 2004) argue that processes of temporal and spatial othering are connected with one another. Thomas Diez (2004, p. 320), for example, distinguishes between temporal and geopolitical forms of othering. Exploring the processes of European identity construction, Diez (2004, p. 320) argues that geographical identity constructions 'tend to be more exclusive and antagonistic against out-groups than otherings with a predominantly temporal dimension'. He posits that temporal othering is a self-reflexive process in which the Other is represented in the Self's own past, which makes it more open towards other expressions of identity. Thus, whilst Diez acknowledges the co-existence of temporal and spatial modalities of identity construction, he does present the two as *separated* mechanisms.

Bahar Rumelili (2004), on the other hand, takes the point further by arguing that spatial and temporal identity constructions are co-constitutive and co-dependent. She illustrates that the temporal and geographical often cannot be isolated from one another. In her article on the relationship between Self and Other in IR literature, Rumelili (2004, p. 33) posits that when 'difference is located temporally (internally) [that] does not mean that it is not simultaneously

located spatially (externally). For example, by constructing Europe's past to be the Others' present state – as is the case in most development discourses – the past/present dichotomy maintains the distinction between inside versus outside'. Temporal differentiation, in Rumelili's argument, is thus framed as an internal process, whereas spatial differentiation is presented as an external one.

Sergei Prozorov (2011) similarly illustrates that processes of temporal and spatial othering are highly co-dependent. In order to constitute temporal alterity within a region, he argues, that region must first be spatially constructed. Thus, according to Prozorov, spatial subjectivities precede temporal identity constructions. He posits that 'it is only the *topological* distinctness of an entity that endows it with ontological consistency: "to be" is to be a spatially delimited entity alongside other such entities' (Prozorov, 2011, p. 1274). Thus, any act of temporal othering must necessarily consist of a gesture of spatial othering.

To conclude the theoretical part of this chapter – the studies discussed above all highlight the importance of the temporal in the construction of group identities. They diverge, however, when it comes to conceptualizing the conflation of temporal and spatial dimensions of identity construction; where Wendt (2003) and Patomäki (2010) present temporal othering as a stand-alone mechanism, Rumelili (2004) and Prozorov (2011) argue that the temporal and spatial dimension are inseparable when negotiating group identities. In line with Rumelili's and Prozorov's argument, an analysis of the language of temporal otherness in Russian foreign policy discourse suggests that there is a clear hierarchy between spatial and temporal identity constructions.[29] The primary discourse in Eurasian identity narratives consistently appears to be a spatial one. The temporal rhetoric, on the other hand, functions as a sub-discourse that flows from this primary spatial narrative.

The analysis presented in this chapter departs from these studies with regards to one crucial point, however. Where the studies discussed above present temporal differentiation as an

[29] I further explain the hierarchy between spatial, temporal, and ethical identity constructions in the concluding chapter.

exclusively *self-referential* and *internally focused* process, Eurasian identity narratives in Russian foreign policy illustrate that – similar to colonial discourses – temporal othering is not always self-referential but also consists of othering the past, present and future of other spatial loci. How exactly this temporal othering functions in Russian foreign policy texts between 2000 and 2020 is explored in the latter half of the chapter. First, however, the chapter unpacks the key narratives surrounding a 'Eurasian' temporal *Self* in Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime.

4.4 Temporal kinship narratives in Russian foreign policy

One of the key temporal narratives employed by Russian foreign policy actors implies that the 'Eurasian' community is bound together through familial or kinship bonds. A Duma report from 2016 (id2948), for example, states that Eurasian integration is 'more than just relations between foreign states […] Eurasia is bound by a common historical fate'. Elsewhere, foreign policy actors similarly refer to Eurasia's 'historical fate' by emphasizing a brotherly connection between the various Eurasian countries (e.g. id2222, 2018; id2587, 2012; id0297, 2013). A strategy document from 2013 (id0297), for example, states that the Eurasian countries are 'united by their common historical heritage […] a commitment to traditional values, and a common culture'. The document further reads that the 'peoples of Eurasia share a genetic makeup and therefore belong to co-exist in a unified space'. Throughout the corpus, this notion of a shared 'genetic makeup' functions as the legitimizing basis for Russia's – increasingly forceful – interactions with the various 'Eurasian' states.

Ukraine, for example, is regularly described as the 'estranged brother' – a metaphor that not only served to legitimize Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 but has since been used to vindicate Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 by presenting Russia's military aggression as an effort to 'regain authority over a younger sibling'. Duma deputy Vitaly Zolochevsky (id2218, 2014), for example, states that 'no matter how Ukraine treats us, we understand that the Ukrainians are still our brothers. Yes, they have gone astray, yes, their government is leading them in the wrong

direction, but they remain [our brothers] all the same, and we will help them, just as we helped many other countries'. In this narrative, the family metaphor serves to reframe Russia's aggression as a so-called act of 'brotherly benevolence'.

The family metaphor is similarly adopted vis-à-vis other Slavic countries – for example, in a document published by the Ministry of Defense (id0237, 2018) in which Bulgaria is portrayed as 'betraying its traditional ancestors' by siding with 'the West' and joining NATO. The document reads that 'although every stone [in Bulgaria] cries out the glory of the Russian liberator […] and several generations of Russian warriors have laid down their heads in battle', Bulgaria has opted for a 'treacherous course' against Russia.

At times, the family metaphor is also eagerly projected onto 'the West,' mostly as a way of infantilizing the US. This particular use of the family metaphor is clearly present in an article written by Duma deputy Sergei Naryshkin (id2794, 2015), for example. Here, Naryshkin describes the US as Europe's 'overgrown child that never mastered the cultural heritage of its [European] ancestor'. He argues that 'both Europe and its old colonial child, the United States […] are affected by a hereditary disease', that is the illness of imperialism, and posits that 'American claims to exceptionalism are the result of a painful conflict between father and son'.

Elsbeth Locher-Scholten (1994, p. 22) explains how these kinship narratives function as a 'subtle and euphemistic expression of strict hierarchy and power relations'. The family metaphor, she explains, has 'a double-edged and ambiguous connotation' – on the one hand, it implies familial solidarity and harmony, yet, on the other hand, it imposes a hierarchical order onto states. In a colonial European context, for example, the family metaphor was used by the 'fatherland' or 'mother country' to exert power over the indigenous 'children' or 'sons' (Laarman, 2013, p. 1233).

Not unlike traditional colonial discourses, contemporary Russian foreign policy actors have eagerly adopted a kinship rhetoric to assert that relations in the 'Eurasian' sphere are 'more than just relations between states'. By implying that the 'Eurasian' countries are bound by genetic ties, Russian foreign policy actors have been able to impose a kind of 'temporal continuity' onto the

'Eurasian' region. In this narrative, the notion that the 'Eurasian peoples' historically come from the same family tree has served as a discursive tool to forcefully structure relations in the future. Iver B. Neuman (2018, pp. 1–2) explains how notions of kinship have offered an 'enabling metaphor'– one that 'can expand or limit actors' political room for maneuver in the international political arena, making some actions and practices appear more possible and likely'.

4.5 'Crisis,' 'ruin,' and 'renewal' in Russian foreign policy discourse

As an extension of the temporal kinship narrative, Russian foreign policy actors have routinely portrayed the 'Eurasian' region as being tied together by a shared past. Throughout the corpus, Russian government actors frame various historical periods as constitutive of a contemporary Eurasian identity. A recurring leitmotif in this discourse is that Eurasia arose from 'the ruins of the USSR' (e.g. id2888, 2011, id3116, 2012; id2948, 2016). In this context, Russian foreign policy actors have eagerly employed the notion of temporal crisis, or 'smuta' (смута) to emphasize the cyclical recurrence of ruin and renewal in Eurasia's temporal development. This narrative, Kåre Johan Mjør (2018, p. 20) explains, 'focuses on recurrent "Times of Troubles" (*smuty*) in Russian history, i.e. periods of breakdown and the subsequent struggle to recover.' Following David Lewis (2020, pp. 8–9), this 'existential mode of thinking' has become commonplace in official discourse under the Putin regime – 'This sense of impending crisis [has] continued to inform Putin's discourse, even after more than a decade in power'.

Notably, as chapter 2 on civilizational leitmotifs pointed out, this temporal model of cyclicality emphasizes the existence of *multiple* civilizations rather than a single universal one. In this cyclical-temporal model, history is understood as consisting of cycles in which 'civilization' necessarily gives way to decadence, which – ultimately – causes the moral decline and downfall of a civilization (Mirabeau, 1761, p. 99; Starobinski, 1993, p. 6). According to this civilizational paradigm, the civilizing process thus consists of repeated cycles of rise, decline, ruin, and renewal.

This cyclical reading of history is clearly expressed in a publication by the Russian Ministry of Defense (id0161, 2013), which discusses the 'sinusoid of Russia's historical consciousness'. The document reads that 'Russian history is the history of empires, their rise, destruction, miraculous and mysterious resurrection, and destruction again. And when the […] Russian civilization collapses into a black hole [once more], a nightmare will occur'. The document continues that 'Russia, despite the fact that it has been circumcised, castrated, and cut off from its vast lands, its vast Eurasian conquests, still remains an empire […] and this empire has a deep tendency to regenerate and recover'. Importantly, whilst decline and ruin is ultimately inevitable according to this civilizational paradigm, Russian foreign policy actors – at least, for the time being – continue to frame the 'Russian-Eurasian' civilization as being on the *rise*. This supposed rise of a 'Russian-Eurasian' civilization is all the more emphasized by their avid portrayals of a declining 'West'.

The collapse of the Soviet Union – in particular – is framed as a moment of ruin and subsequent renewal in the cyclical-temporal development of a 'Russian-Eurasian' civilization. In a 2012 essay, for example, Putin (id3116, 2012) argues that 'Great Russia was formed back in the 18th century, but the inevitable degradation of state, social, and economic institutions followed.' He points to the collapse of the Soviet Union as a defining moment of civilizational decay: 'The deputies of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, in the heat of the fight against the "Union center", launched the process of building a "national state" and […] the "Union center", in turn, trying to suppress its opponents, promised them more autonomy […] One thing is clear – their actions equally and inevitably led to collapse and separatism.'

'With the collapse of the Soviet Union,' Putin (id3116, 2012) continues, 'we found ourselves on the verge, and in some regions, even beyond the brink, of a civil war. Through great sacrifices, we succeeded in extinguishing these fires. […] What then happened was what Vasily Klyuchevsky spoke about in relation to the first Russian Time of Troubles [*smuta*]: "When the political bonds of social order broke, the country was saved by the moral will of the people".' Putin points to the multi-ethnic qualities of the 'peoples of Eurasia' – 'held together by a strong Russian core' – as the

driving force behind this renewal of the 'Russian-Eurasian civilization'. Similarly, a Duma report from 2011 (id2888) reads that – after the collapse of the Soviet Union – 'it took many years to crystallize the national interests of the newly independent states, searching for the optimal model of Eurasian integration'. Here, the immediate period after Soviet collapse is equally depicted as a time of crisis and fraternal hostility – 'at that time, the political crisis was killing the economy […] Many people were left without work and livelihoods […] which set in motion a path of fratricidal strife between our countries'.

These are just two examples of a wider discourse in Russian foreign policy that frames the period immediately following the Soviet collapse as a time of crisis and civilizational ruin (e.g. id0311, 2012). In this discourse, the 1990s is often referred to as the '*likhiye devyanostyye*' (лихие девяностые), which translates into the 'troubled 1990s'. Whilst this period was indeed characterized by an unprecedented influx of unemployment, poverty, and organized crime, it is important to emphasize the ways in which the concept of the 'troubled 1990s' has also been *instrumentalized* by Russian foreign policy actors (see also Lewis, 2020, pp. 8–9). This period has been used by the current Russian government to serve as a negative counter-image to the supposed 'stability' offered by the Putin regime. Through this narrative, Russian state actors have been able to imply that the only choice available to the Russian people is between the 'Times of Troubles', or smuta, of the 1990s and the (semi-)authoritarian but 'stable' model offered by Putin – a discursive move which has ultimately sought to make the latter more palatable.

The Russian Civil War (1917-2923) has equally been used as a temporal commonplace in Russian civilizational discourses to emphasize how a 'Russian-Eurasian' civilization has – time and again – overcome periods of crisis, or smuta. A State Duma report (id0294, 2014), for example, points to the Russian Civil War as a 'troubled time [*smutnoye vremya*] during which political differences tore the country apart', whilst also lauding this period as a time during which citizens 'took up arms and sacrificed their lives in the name of the fatherland, driven by the ideals of high honor and the deepest faith in God'.

The cyclical-temporal notion of ruin and renewal also appears in a speech delivered by the chairperson of the Constitutional Court of Russia, Valeriy Zorkin (id3343, 2013), who posits that 'Voltaire once asked himself what the difference is between a donkey and a man and answered: a donkey walks in a circle, whereas man develops in a spiral.' 'As Dante pointed out, however,' Zorkin continues, 'this spiral can also end in hell – […] while the donkey has no choice, a man can choose between two spirals, and, in today's reality, we see that there is a movement both in a good and bad direction.' Zorkin points to the supposed pathologies of 'Western modernity' as an example of the ways in which ruin and renewal can lead to an *unwanted* future.[30] He states that 'Western modernity has been defined by an erosion of normativity […] and a complete denial of the principles of human life.' He argues that 'history teaches us that if renewal is not brought to the shores through thoughtful and timely measures, chaos, crisis [smuta], wars, and revolutions inevitably occur.'

Importantly, a quantitative analysis of the corpus demonstrates that the discourse surrounding 'smuta' becomes particularly popular from 2012 onwards, whereas the corpus demonstrates a negligible occurrence of Russian terms signifying crisis prior to 2010 (see figure 4.1 below). A quantitative analysis of the corpus demonstrates that – between 2010 and 2012 – the 'smuta' narrative is most prominently employed by actors within the Russian State Duma and the Office of the President of the Russian Federation, whereas actors within other segments of the Russian government take the lead after 2013. For instance, there is a significant rise in the 'crisis' discourse amongst actors within the Russian Ministry of Defense from 2014 onwards. This particular pattern may demonstrate a link between the crisis discourse in Russian foreign policy and political events, such as the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent Western sanctions.

[30] See the section on 'opposing temporalities' below for a further explanation of this narrative surrounding a 'Western modernity'.

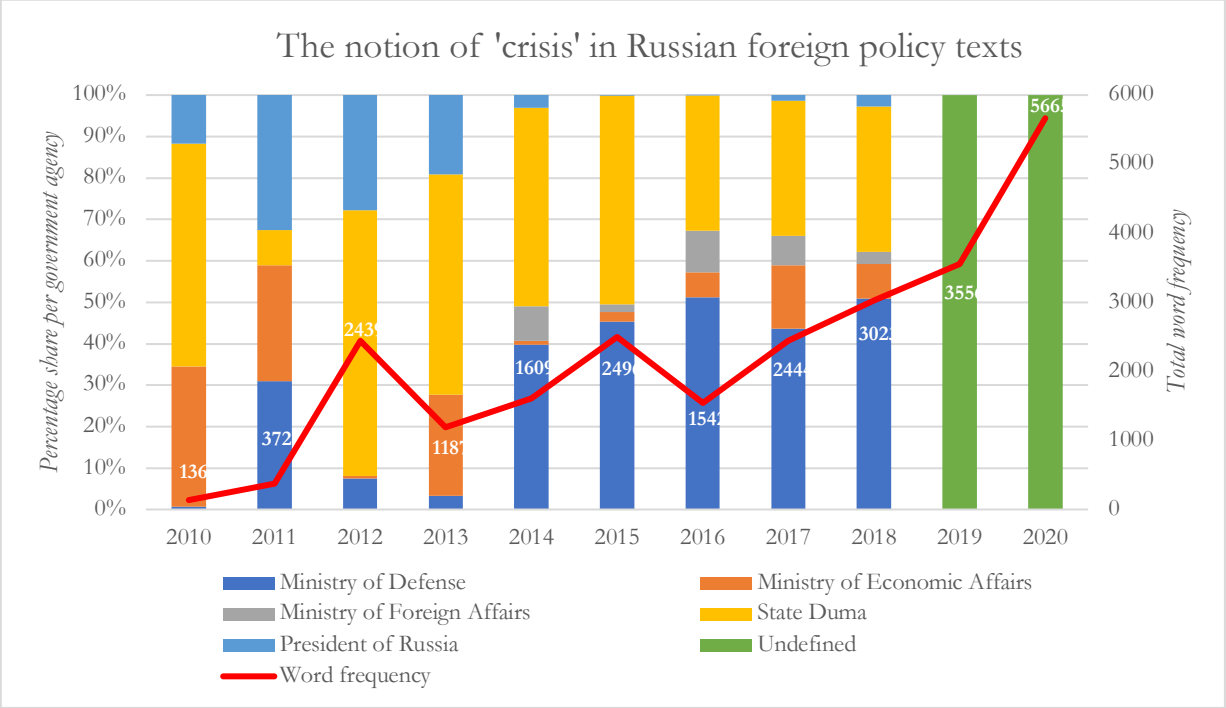


Figure 4.1 Word frequency analysis of the corpus demonstrating the use of Russian terms signifying 'crisis' in foreign policy texts published between 2010-2020

Likely, the notion of 'smuta' has thus been used by Russian foreign policy actors as a unifying concept during times of heightened tensions with 'the West'. Through this narrative, Russian foreign policy actors have sought to frame the Russian people as being able – more than any other nationality – to overcome times of crisis. Notably, it has also offered the Putin regime a rhetorical defense against potential domestic criticism. By framing cyclical occurrences of smuta, or crisis, as something inherent to Russia's temporal development, the narrative has taken away blame and responsibility from the political elites, framing 'ruin' or 'crisis' – instead – as something that is naturally part of Russia's cyclical evolution. The notion of 'smuta' thus functions as a rhetorical tool to obfuscate the fact that the current troubles experienced by Russia are the direct outcome of choices made by its political regime.

Finally, where the collapse of the Soviet Union functions as the embodiment of civilizational ruin, the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is often framed as a starting point in the process of *renewal* after the downfall of the Soviet empire. One of the State Duma reports cited earlier, for example, argues that 'the creation of the CIS put a stop to the

collapse of a superpower […] This became the starting point of a new integration process in the post-Soviet space […] The Commonwealth became a platform of cooperation and interaction […] which allowed for more effective forms of regional integration' (id2888, 2011). In this off-shoot of the narrative, Eurasian cooperation is framed in terms of 'voluntary integration', stating that 'each state independently came to the understanding that – in a globalized world – there was no reason to revel endlessly in your own identity and lock yourself within your borders' (id2888, 2011).

Notably, the report (id2888, 2011) refers to a 'civilizational turn' in Russian foreign policy and reads that 'without denying the importance of cultural and civilizational factors, we first proposed to unite on the basis of economic pragmatism [because] the wave of euphoria from gaining independence prevented a generation of leaders to see the long-term potential of the Eurasian idea'. The report then continues that 'we are now witnessing a complementary process of "vertical integration", which is permeating the entire depth of life in our societies […] Today, our peoples increasingly feel themselves to be part of an evolving Eurasian identity based on cultural, religious and linguistic diversity […] We are all witnessing the birth of a new unique Eurasian community […] which not only shares a common past but also an indivisible common future'.

4.6 The notion of 'destiny' in Russian-Eurasian discourses

The recent Soviet past is not the only constitutive period in the articulation of a temporal identity in contemporary Russian foreign policy. The Eurasian past, Russian foreign policy actors seem to suggest, goes back much further. Putin (id3116, 2012), for example, states that 'the vast territories [of Eurasia] arose and developed over centuries [through] a constant process of mutual need and integration'. A Duma report from 2012 (id2694) – in turn – presents 16th century Muscovy as the birthplace of a civilization of 'Eurasian scale, [which] has determined the geopolitical status of the Russian state in the future'. This particular report argues that it was during the Muscovy period that Russia – given its special location 'between the hammer of Europe and the Anvil of Asia' – recognized its messianic role in the construction of a Eurasian civilization in its own right.

Elsewhere, a Duma report (id0291, 2015) depicts Kievan Rus' as the birthplace of a Russian-Eurasian civilization. Similarly, the Petrine era is used as a building block in the articulation of a Eurasian temporal identity (12421242, 2018; id1358, 2018). Referring to various temporal landscapes, Russian state actors thus rely on mythologizing narratives surrounding the recent and not so recent past to construct a Eurasian identity in Russian foreign policy texts.

When using these temporal narratives, Russian foreign policy actors eagerly employ metaphors of 'fate' and 'destiny' to frame history as 'doing things' and possessing agency on its own. In a 2011 speech, for example, Vladimir Putin (id3360) calls it 'fate' that Russia was to turn into 'a mighty power from the Baltic to the Pacific Ocean'. Similarly, in a speech from 2012, Putin (id3328) states that 'key milestones in history determined the fate of Russia, its thousand-year path'. Elsewhere, Putin (id3189, 2005) points to 'the thousand-year fate of Kazan' as 'having played a truly unique historical role in the formation of a single Russian nation'.

Dmitry Medvedev (id3354, 2009) similarly posits that 'the multinational peoples of the Russian Federation are united by a common destiny'. This 'destiny', Medvedev maintains, is rooted in Russia's vast territory that 'occupies one third of the largest continent - Eurasia […] from the Baltic to the Pacific Ocean, from the Arctic to the Caucasus and Altai mountains'. Medvedev continues that 'Russia has been formed over centuries [and] passed through the most difficult trials with honor, saving the world from enslavement more than once'. He ends his speech by saying that 'as has always been our history, the guarantee of Russia's prosperity is in unity and cohesion of the peoples who live on our territory.'

Here and elsewhere, Russian foreign policy actors portray the course of time as predetermined. This discursive move is likely undertaken strategically. Not only does it allow the Kremlin to consolidate its supposed leadership position in the 'Eurasian' sphere as a predestined reality, but it also offers a discursive remedy against potential anxieties around Russia's hegemonic intentions in the region. After all, by framing Russia's role in the 'near abroad' as the necessary outcome of history, Russian foreign policy actors remove agency from Moscow and – instead –

place it in the intangible hands of 'fate'. The question remains, of course, whether this discursive move is considered credible by Russia's target audiences in the neighboring countries (see section 4.9 for a further analysis of discursive audiences).

Notably, the ends-driven logic presenting Eurasian integration in teleological terms of 'destiny' is especially present in a certain subsection of the corpus. This logic is particularly visible in foreign policy texts from 2012 onwards (see figure 4.2 below). This appears to be a manifestation of a broader shift in Russia's foreign policy positioning in Putin's third term as president. Where the Russian authorities pursued a language of Russian Europeanness up to around 2008, foreign policy actors started presenting the historical development of 'Eurasia' in explicitly teleological terms from 2012 onwards. Since then, the notion of 'destiny' appears to have played an increasingly central role in Moscow's foreign policy posture – functioning, for example, as one of the key legitimizing narratives underpinning Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, as well as Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Through this narrative, Russian government actors have sought to portray Russians and Ukrainians as a 'single people' supposedly united by the 'common destiny' to exist within a consolidated Russian nation – a speech act that has sought to frame Russia *not* as the aggressor but as the mere executor of 'fate' in the context of its full-scale war against Ukraine.

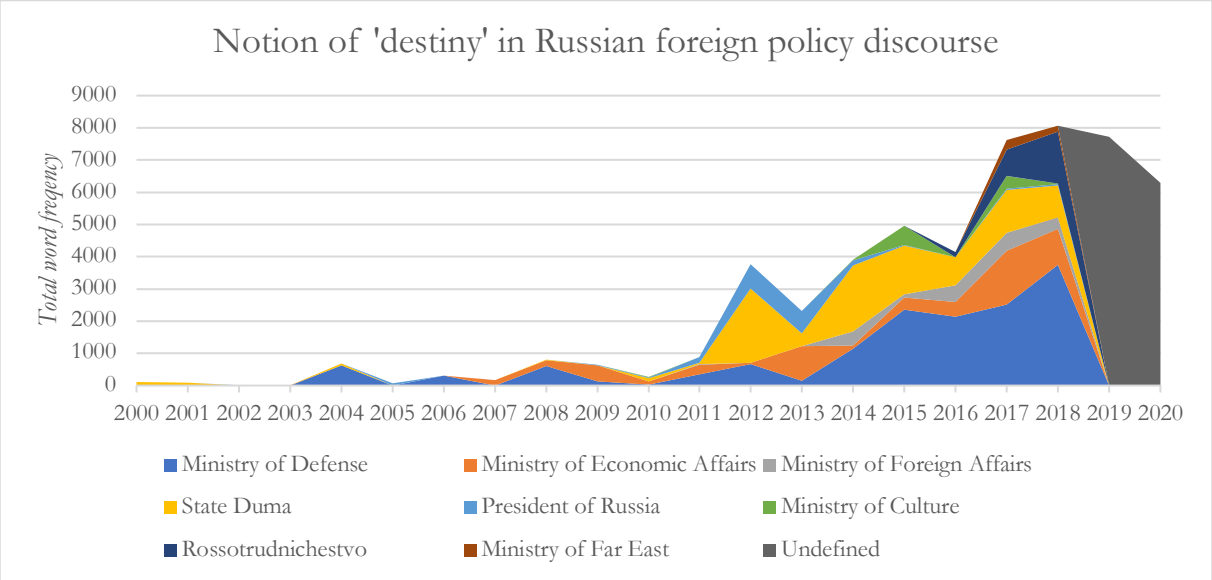


Figure 4.2 Word frequency analysis of the corpus demonstrating the use of Russian terms signifying the notion of 'destiny' in foreign policy texts published between 2000-2020

4.7 Opposing temporalities: 'modern' Russia and the 'postmodern' West

Alongside the various narratives that construct a temporal Self, as set out in the sections above, Russian foreign policy actors actively employ a narrative of temporal *alterity*. Unlike traditional (colonial) discourses of temporal alterity that rely on narratives of temporal *backwardness* to express otherness, however, Russian-Eurasian discourses frame the Other as a victim of temporal *progression*. The Eurasian Self, on the other hand, is framed as the positive product of regressive or 'traditional' politics. This narrative of temporal alterity is clearly visible in a State Duma report on the future of Russian conservatism (id2698, 2010). Here, head of the analytical department of the State Duma, Aleksandr Belousov, argues that – 'to preserve its civilizational status and future' – Russian society should 'embrace the unifying ideology of Russian conservatism'.

In the same State Duma report (id2698, 2010), deputy chairman of the Russian scientific council, Mamikon Ayrapetyan, similarly conceptualizes the so-called 'unifying ideology of Russian conservatism' in temporal terms. Ayrapetyan argues that Russia should develop a 'system of politics, law and state' that is based on a 'conservative spatio-temporal order'. The dichotomy of Self and Other becomes most clear when Ayrapetyan sets out two opposing temporal systems. He argues that the West has adopted a 'postmodernist temporality' based on 'relativism, dualism and subjective idealism', which he separates from the Russian 'modernist temporality' based on 'determinism, monism and objective idealism'.[31] Where the Russian modernist temporality – according to Ayrapetyan – results in 'stability, order, and predictability', the postmodernist system of the West has resulted in 'instability and chaos'. He points to a postmodernist temporality as the cause behind the West's supposed 'civilizational decay'. The Russian-Eurasian Self, on the other hand, is presented as the positive product of regressive politics.

[31] A similar modern/postmodern dichotomy is used by (western) critics to designate Russian politics as postmodern (e.g. Pomerantsev, 2013; D. Shlapentokh, 1995; Wilson, 2005). In the chapter on ethical identity constructions, I explore the notion of postmodernity in relation to Russian politics.

This dichotomy between Russia and the West is presented as a result of what Ayrapetyan calls the 'spatio-temporal world order'. He argues that international relations are characterized by a 'constant movement – consisting of confrontation and change – between various types of space and temporality'. He describes inter-state interactions in this spatio-temporal world order as a constant battle between a modernist temporality (embodied by Russia, or Eurasia more broadly) and a postmodernist temporality (embodied by the West). If Russia wants to 'retain an active place in the world order […] as a political, cultural, and economic center', or so Ayrapetyan argues, the authorities should continue to pursue 'a modernist spatio-temporal management system [based on] a conservative ideology both in the domestic and foreign policy sphere'.

The Duma report (id2698, 2010) further reads that the Russian authorities should focus on 'the effective use of tactical myths to construct a Russian civilizational identity'. In a postmodern temporality, the report argues, 'collective myths have been replaced with personal ones [and] the marketplace of ideas now offers numerous cockroaches for the brain for every taste and color'. Here and elsewhere, this 'marketplace of ideas' – which appears to be synonymous with the western liberal order – is depicted as a postmodern spectacle. This Western postmodern spectacle, Russian actors seem to suggest, blurs the lines between fact and fiction, right and wrong – there is only interpretation, they argue; a recurring leitmotif is that 'anything goes' in western society. This sentiment similarly appears in one of Vladimir Putin's essays (id3378, 2019), for example, which is presented in more detail in chapter 5 on ethics. Criticizing LGBT rights and gender equality, Putin's essay argues that the western liberal order has lost its grip on traditional values.

A study published by the Russian Ministry of Defense (Id3533, 2019) similarly describes the 'postmodern' West as threatening Russia on a spiritual and material level. The document reads that '[…] the Anglo-Saxon states (the USA and Great Britain) and their military-political bloc (NATO) […] adhere to an expansive and predatory orientation in their military-social practices. These offensive Anglo-Saxon military-social practices consist of a […] reformatting, simulacratization, and distortion of existing worldviews, implemented through conceptual,

cognitive and conscientious wars, axiological deconstruction, and the introduction of conflicting ideas such as Eurocentrism, multiculturalism, and tolerance.' As a result of these various practices, the document reads, 'the spiritual and intellectual space [of the Anglo-Saxon world] has become postmodern.' The document ends by criticizing 'the Anglo-Saxon world' for 'spreading the Western way of life, which calls into question the domestic [Russian] ideals of collectivism, the values of family life, national unity and – instead – activates the processes of social atomization and disunity'.

A report published by the national research institute of the Russian Ministry of Defense (Id0188, 2015) similarly describes 'the values and ideals of the Free World' as 'the bourgeoisie ideology of postmodernity'. Equally, a document published by the State Duma (Id0291, 2015) labels Europe as a 'postmodern space in which religion has become obsolete'. Here and elsewhere, a western postmodern temporality – with its various 'cockroaches for the brain' and its lack of a unifying value-system – is framed as one of the main threats to the Russian-Eurasian space. Notably, a quantitative analysis of the corpus demonstrates that the key actors pursuing this discourse in Russian foreign policy texts are the Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Defense, as well as the State Duma and the Office of the President (see figure 4.3 below).

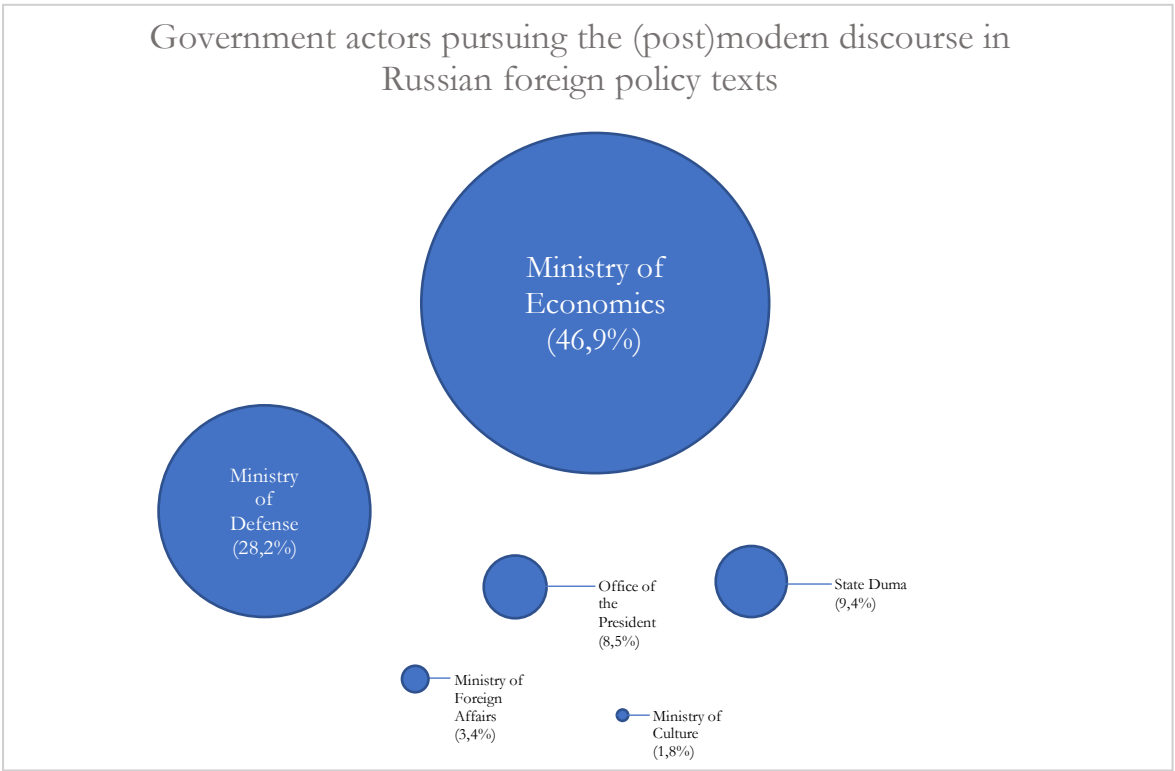


Figure 4.3 Data visualization of the percentage share of Russian government actors pursuing the (post)modernity discourse in foreign policy texts published between 2000 and 2020

In this narrative, the West's so-called pathological temporal progression features as a cautionary tale of civilizational decline. To prevent a similar trajectory of civilizational ruin from afflicting the 'Eurasian' sphere, or so a Duma report (id2698, 2010) posits, the Kremlin should promote 'the single, unifying concept of Eurasian integration,' which supposedly 'could guarantee the process of creation, rather than decay in Russia'. Embedded in this argument is the notion that those societies (read: 'the West') which have departed from their collective belief system have triggered the inevitable process of civilizational ruin. The fate of the Russian-Eurasian sphere, however, is presumed to be salvageable – at least, insofar as it continues to chart the course of a 'modernist' temporality based on 'traditional' values. Ayrapetyan (id2698, 2010) points to 'Russian conservatism' as the ideological base for this modernist temporality. 'The goal of Russian conservatism', Ayrapetyan posits, 'should not be to consolidate the achieved social order […] but to promote the Russian world as a civilizational, religious, and cultural project'.

Throughout the corpus, Eurasian integration is described as a 'new ontology' that can 'counterbalance the West's postmodern project' (id0296, 2014). The State Duma report cited here, for example, reads that 'liberal Western ideology prioritizes the absolute freedom of the individual: freedom from society, freedom from moral laws and, in the end, freedom from any law whatsoever' (id0296, 2014). 'Such an absolutization of individual freedom,' the report continues, 'comes into obvious contradiction with the objective laws of the universe'. The Eurasian Economic Union, on the other hand, prioritizes 'the spiritual traditions of the peoples inhabiting the Eurasian space, […] which are Orthodoxy and Islam'. Despite the obvious differences between Russian Orthodoxy and Islam, or so the report argues, a synthesis of both religions 'can create a single ideology that is capable of resisting Western […] postmodernism'.[32] This Eurasian ideology 'should be based on an understanding of the objective stability and immutability of moral laws […] and should actively

[32] See chapter 7 on Russian-Eurasian discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan for a further analysis of the contradictory representations of Islam in Russia's civilizational language.

oppose Western relativism, which blurs objective reality and makes it dependent on the point of view of the subjective observer'.

Another State Duma document (Id3137, 2017) similarly reads that 'the creation of our Eurasian movement is a powerful impetus to solidarity, which will be directed to the future and the development of all the peoples of Eurasia'. The document continues that '[the peoples of Eurasia] are all God's creatures, we have great ideas of solidarity, justice, friendship, and peace, which have been trampled in the era of postmodernism'. However, the process of Eurasian integration, or so the document argues, can offer a way 'to give these concepts back their meaning'.

Thus, rather than characterizing 'the West' by its backwardness or primitiveness, which defines temporal differentiation in conventional civilizational discourses, Eurasia's radical Other is presented through a paradigm of unwanted development. In this discourse, 'the West' is framed as the willful victim of a postmodern temporality. Eurasia, on the other hand, is presented as an ideal-type modernist space within which traditional values are upheld.[33]

4.8 An identity of otherness: Eurasia as the West's positive Other

Russian foreign policy actors complement their modern/postmodern rhetoric with an additional narrative of temporal alterity. In this second narrative of temporal otherness, the question posed is not 'what *is* Eurasia?' but rather 'what is *not* Eurasia?'. The starting point for articulating a Eurasian identity – in this discursive strand – is thus not a positive conception of the Self but rather a negation of the Other. This identity of otherness builds on various temporal narratives surrounding Russia's unique position in world affairs and frames the Russian-Eurasian sphere as Europe's positive Other rather than its individual Self.

[33] Importantly, the markedly conservative 'opposing temporalities' narrative is often used to criticize the 'New Left' and its ideals of cosmopolitan-liberal individualism. At the core of this criticism lies a cynicism towards and discontent with (multicultural) pluralism in Russian foreign policy discourse. Whist an in-depth analysis falls outside the scope of this dissertation, some striking similarities exist between this Russian narrative and far-right discourses in Western Europe and North America that equally frame 'Western' society as charting a pathological course of progressiveness. Similar leitmotifs can, for example, be found in Donald Trump's anti-'political correctness' stance or in Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration rhetoric.

This discursive process becomes very clear in a speech by foreign minister Sergey Lavrov (id0914, 2014) in which he criticizes the EU for 'drawing dividing lines' across the European continent. Lavrov argues that 'instead of promoting harmonization' – something that, according to this narrative, the Russian state *does* tend to do – 'the EU has forced states across the post-Soviet space to choose between the West and the East. In a fragile state such as Ukraine, this pressure was enough to provoke a large-scale crisis of statehood'.

Ukraine, in particular, occupies a special place in this narrative. In publications from 2014 onwards, Europe is consistently portrayed as 'degenerate' and threatening traditional values, whilst Ukraine is framed as a proxy for this 'European' degeneracy. Duma deputy Sergei Naryshkin (Id2614, 2014), for example, states that Ukraine 'abandoned its Eurasian path of development in 2005 and, under pressure from the West, pursued a different direction'. Elsewhere, in a 2015 speech (id2356), Sergei Naryshkin frames the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 as a 'fascist coup d'état' in Kyiv, which – or so he argues – has been facilitated by 'the West'. Naryshkin then blames 'the West' for its 'centuries-old attempts to "correct" Russia's cultural code by military means' and argues that 'cold ideological warfare has become a constant in Western politics'. Throughout the corpus, the Ukrainian state is portrayed as a 'fascist' entity, whilst 'the West' – embodied by NATO and the EU – is framed as parasitically trying to use Ukraine's 'weaknesses' to its advantage. Ultimately, in a cynical reframing of reality, this narrative serves to portray Russia as a 'liberator' and 'bearer of peace' that supposedly carries the moral burden to suppress the chaos caused by Ukraine and the 'collective West'.[34]

Russian foreign policy actors consistently criticize the EU for drawing so-called 'dividing lines' and pursuing an 'all or nothing' approach in relation to the countries that once made up the former USSR; countries which the Kremlin – with increasing force – claims are part of its so-called 'exclusive zone of interest'. Lavrov (id0914, 2014), for instance, criticizes both the EU and NATO

[34] See chapter 5 on the ethical construction of a Eurasian civilizational identity for a further analysis of this katechontic narrative.

for their policies based on 'exclusivity, double standards, and one-sidedness'. In this discourse, the West is presented as a power-hungry geopolitical force. From this negative perception of the West, Eurasia is framed as its *positive* Other; a spatio-temporal entity that – unlike its European counterpart – does respect the cultural and political idiosyncrasies of its constitutive members. In a recent speech (id0816, 2019), for example, Vladimir Putin argues that – unlike the European project – Eurasian integration is based on 'the natural desire of peoples to live in peace and harmony […] while maintaining their cultural and spiritual identity'.

Elsewhere, in a State Duma report (2886, 2013), 'the West' is presented as an 'anti-system,' or mirage, to the Eurasian model for cooperation and integration. The document reads that 'the West' as an 'anti-system […] has created a false and illusory image of the ideal economic order and has distorted the motives of economic agents by orienting them *not* towards creating sources of economic growth but towards the *simulation* of development'. Here and elsewhere, 'the West' is framed as a *simulacrum* – an optical illusion that may pretend to be the superior model but is in fact a degraded form of the 'real' superior system, that is the 'Eurasian' community.

The practice of 'othering the self' that we see above thus indicates an alternative process of identity construction in which the articulation of a Self is no longer the starting point: it is from a negative perception of 'the West' and 'Europe' that a 'Eurasian' identity is constructed as the West's *positive* Other. This identity of otherness builds on what Ellen Rutten (2017, p. 42) calls 'old clichés about the Russian's inner world'. Rutten illustrates how Russian identity narratives build on various temporal myths of an 'intrinsically Russian national character that is supposed to be less rational and more spontaneous than the temperament of other nations'. This mythologizing narrative relies on old European tropes of Russia as the West's 'exotic Other'. In this narrative, a 'Russian soul' is framed as the foundation for Russia's unique national character. Robert C. Williams (1970, p. 575) illustrates how Russian actors have adopted this notion of Russian Otherness by presenting the 'Russian soul' both as 'a legacy of past virtues [and] a source of future greatness'. Paradoxically, it

is thus a traditionally Western-European notion of Russian otherness that provides Russia with the lexicon to articulate a 'Eurasian' identity in opposition to 'the West'.

An article published by the Russian Ministry of Defense (id0161, 2013), for example, discusses the various 'postulates of Russia's historical development,' arguing that it is a 'postulate that the Russian soul, the Russian mind, and the Russian dream is intertwined with the idea of an ideal being, a fair being'. The article continues that the Russian soul 'cannot live in a realm of evil and cannot live in an unjust society'. Elsewhere, Duma deputy Zugura Rakhmatullina (id3148, 2013) describes the 'all-unifying and just spirit' of the Russian Republic of Bashkortostan as being defined by 'a kind of supranational, all-human soul based on tolerance, harmony, friendship, and internationalism'. These various references to the 'Russian soul' as being just and harmonious are strengthened by consistent portrayals of 'the West' as hypocritical, unjust, and antagonistic.

Gayatri Spivak (1991) refers to this process as a 'mirror game of Self and Other'; the same construction in which Russia has been allocated the role of the exotic Other of European development is adopted by Russian actors in the assertion of their own authentic Self. Through this process of 'othering the Self,' European tropes of Russia as the 'exotic neighbor' with a distinct soul have thus been appropriated by Russian government actors, which have turned these negative tropes into a narrative that frames Russia as the West's 'positive' Other.

4.9 Discursive audiences and objectives

In these various temporal narratives, Russian foreign policy actors differentiate between two broad audiences. Whilst some narratives seem to speak to a 'positive' or internal audience, others appear to be directed towards a 'negative' or external one. The 'positive' strands of the temporal discourse are either directed towards the 'Eurasian' civilizational community at large or the Russian people more narrowly. The 'negative' strands of the temporal discourse – in turn – seem to speak either to a 'collective West' or to those Slavic countries Russia considers to have gone 'astray' by siding with 'the West' (e.g., Ukraine, Bulgaria). Figure 4.4 below provides an

overview of the main discursive strands, their target audiences, and the various representations of a temporal Self and Other that are embedded in them.

Discursive strands	Audiences	Representations of a temporal Self	Representations of a temporal Other
Kinship narrative	• Positive audience – the 'Eurasian' community • Negative audience – the 'estranged' Slavic countries	• 'Eurasia' as being tied together by a shared past and a common future based on historical 'kinship' bonds	• Slavic countries that have supposedly sided with 'the West' as having betrayed their family (e.g. Ukraine, Bulgaria) • 'The West' as being afflicted by the hereditary disease of imperialism
'Smuta' or crisis narrative	• Positive audience – the Russian people	• Cyclical occurrences of smuta, or crisis, as something inherent to Russia's temporal development • Russia as having the unique quality to 'recover' from such crises and 'renew' itself • (Semi-)authoritarian 'stability' offered by the Putin regime as an effective model to prevent historical crises from reoccurring	• 'The West' as a civilization in decline
Teleological 'destiny' narrative	• Positive audience – the 'Eurasian' community	• Eurasian integration as the necessary outcome of various constitutive periods in history	• –
'Opposing temporalities' narrative	• Positive audience – the 'Eurasian' community • Positive audience – the Russian people • Negative audience – the 'collective West'	• 'Eurasia' as an ideal-type modernist temporality in which traditional values are upheld	• 'The West' as a postmodern temporality charting a pathological course of progressiveness
'Positive alterity' narrative	• Positive audience – the Russian people • Positive audience – the 'Eurasian' community • Negative audience – the 'collective West' • Negative audience – the 'estranged' Slavic countries	• The Russian-Eurasian sphere as Europe's positive Other • Russia as possessing a unique national character that can supposedly suppress the chaos caused by the 'collective West'	• 'The West' or Europe as degenerate and Ukraine as a proxy for this 'European' degeneracy

Figure 4.4 An overview of the discursive strands, their intended audiences, and temporal representations of Self and Other.

The kinship narrative discussed in section 4.4 appears to speak to both a positive 'Eurasian' audience and a negative audience consisting of those Slavic countries Russia frames as having become 'estranged' from their family through their association with 'the West'; either through an expressed interest in joining NATO and the EU (read: Ukraine) or due to their actual accession into these institutions (read: Bulgaria). On the one hand, this narrative offers Russian foreign policy actors a way to imply familial solidarity and harmony amongst the 'Eurasian' peoples, whilst on the other hand enabling them to express discontent with, or out-right hostility towards those countries that have broken the 'familial' bonds and chosen an 'adoptive' or 'false' family, i.e. 'the West'. The kinship narrative thus offers Russian political actors a tool to impose a strict hierarchical order onto the Eurasian sphere. Even though the discourse lauds the 'brotherly' bonds between the peoples of 'Eurasia,' it is often implied that Russia – at the very least – functions as a *primus inter pares*, that is the 'eldest sibling,' if not the 'parental figure' to the various 'Eurasian' states.

The 'smuta' or crisis narrative discussed in section 4.5 seems to be directed towards a domestic Russian audience. Russian foreign policy actors have consistently employed the notion of smuta to portray Russia's temporal development as consisting of various cycles of ruin and subsequent renewal. In this temporal narrative, Russia is framed as possessing the unique quality to 'recover' from political and societal crises. As section 4.5 demonstrated, this notion of 'smuta' has been eagerly employed by Russian foreign policy actors as a unifying concept during times of increased conflict with 'the West'. In presenting moments of crisis as something inherent to Russia's temporal development, this narrative has offered Moscow a discursive workaround that obscures the fact that these various 'crises' are often the direct result of choices made by the political regime. Additionally, Russian foreign policy actors have employed the notion of 'smuta' to increase domestic support for (semi-)authoritarian forms of government. In foregrounding the crisis, or smuta, of the 1990s, Russian political actors have actively sought to make the (semi-)authoritarian model of 'stability' offered by the Putin regime more palatable in a domestic context.

Thus, in both its iterations, the 'smuta' narrative has served as a domestic legitimizing tool for the Putin regime.

The teleological narrative that frames Eurasian integration as the necessary outcome of various constitutive periods in history (section 4.6), on the other hand, seems to be primarily directed towards a 'Eurasian' audience. By framing integration and cooperation as the historical *telos* of the 'Russian-Eurasian' sphere, this narrative offers Russian foreign policy actors a rhetorical defense against potential complaints around Moscow's hegemonic intentions in the region. After all, it frames Eurasian integration as the predetermined outcome of history, rather than the result of active efforts by the Russian government to consolidate and expand its influence in what it claims as its 'privileged zone of interests'.

The 'opposing temporalities' narrative (section 4.7) – in turn – appears to target three audiences. On the one hand, it seems to be directed towards a domestic and 'Eurasian' audience, insofar as it imposes a conservative moral framework onto the 'Russian-Eurasian' space and thus serves to legitimize authoritarian leadership in Russia and the 'near abroad'. On the other hand, the narrative seems to target a 'Western' audience, insofar as it agitates against 'Western interventionism' by arguing that the 'Russian-Eurasian' sphere exists in its own temporality and therefore lives by its own endogenous moral code that cannot and should not be changed by 'the West'.

Lastly, the 'positive alterity' narrative (section 4.8) seems to target an even wider circle of audiences. Insofar as this narrative promotes popular myths surrounding Russia's unique national character, it appears to be directed towards a domestic audience. Where the narrative foregrounds the argument that the 'Russian-Eurasian' sphere offers an alternative to a 'hegemonic' system imposed by the West, it seems to target a 'Eurasian' audience. And in those instances that the narrative emphasizes negative representations of 'the West' as degenerate, it not only offers a way to discredit the 'Western' model amongst domestic and 'Eurasian' recipients, but it also allows Russian state actors to take a stance vis-à-vis a 'Western' audience. Finally, where Russian actors

talk about Ukraine as a proxy for 'European' degeneracy, the narrative seems to be targeting the 'estranged' Slavic countries in particular. Here, Russia's positioning vis-à-vis Ukraine functions as a warning sign to those Slavic countries not to 'defect' to the enemy, that is 'the West'.

4.10 Conclusion

To conclude – this chapter explored the ways in which foreign policy actors under the Putin regime make use of temporal narratives of Self and Other to construct a Eurasian identity. In the discourses studied in this chapter, temporal imaginings not only function as a tool to create narrative order but also as an instrument to negotiate and position subjectivities within the Eurasian sphere. The analysis revealed a variety of narratives through which Russian political actors have constructed a temporal identity in foreign policy texts between 2000 and 2020 using such notions as kinship, temporal crisis, destiny, modernity and postmodernity. Firstly, the chapter unpacked how Russian foreign policy actors have articulated a *temporal Self* through narratives that project a shared past and common future onto the Eurasian sphere. The chapter then demonstrated how Russian actors have relied on narratives of *otherness* to articulate a temporal identity.

Notably, the various temporal themes studied in this chapter link to Pierre Nora's (1984) sites of memory, a concept discussed in the previous chapter on spatial identity constructions. In their articulation of a 'Eurasian' civilizational identity, Russian foreign policy actors consistently refer to various sites of memory to express a 'geography of belonging' (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003, p. 107). These geographies are as much articulated in spatial terms (as the previous chapter argued) as they are in temporal terms. The recurrence of temporal sites of memory in Russian foreign policy discourse, either conceptually (through imaginings of certain historic periods) or materially (through representations of physical sites of remembrance, such as monuments and other landmarks), confirms the rhetorical relationship between narratives of the past and the construction of group identities in the present.

Overall, the chapter demonstrated how temporal narratives surrounding a (constructed) past have offered Russian foreign policy actors a way to (re)define Russia's place in the contemporary political theater. At the root of these temporal narratives lies a question that reoccurs in all components of Russia's civilizational discourse: that is, who has the authority to set the international 'standard' – not only of time but also of development trajectories, international norms, modes of inter-state interaction, and so on? Embedded in this question is a wider discursive theme that is ubiquitous in Russia's civilizational language: the supposed incompatibility between a 'Western' model of development and the (assumed) needs of the 'non-West'. In the subsequent chapters, the thesis further unpacks how this discursive theme is employed strategically by Russian foreign policy actors – not only to support Russian contestations against so-called 'Western' hegemony, but also to strengthen Russia's own (hegemonic) aspirations in and beyond the 'Eurasian' region.

Chapter 5

Constructing an Ethical Self:

Normative Vocabularies in Russian Foreign Policy

'Russia was born with the fate to rid you from the barbarian ties'

– Gavrila Derzhavin, On the taking of Izmail', 1791

'Do you know who are the only "god-bearing" people on earth, destined to regenerate and save the world in the name of a new God, and to whom are given the keys of life and of the new world […] there is only one truth, and therefore only a single one out of the nations can have the true God […] Only one nation is "god-bearing," that is the Russian people.'

– Fyodor Dostoevsky, Demons, 1871

5.1 Introduction

Following on from the chapters on spatial and temporal identity constructions, this chapter looks at the ways in which normative, moral, and ethical identities have been constructed in Eurasian discourses in Russian foreign policy between 2000 and 2020. The discursive analysis presented in this chapter unpacks a variety of narratives through which Russian foreign policy actors have articulated a Eurasian ethical Self in opposition to a supposedly immoral 'West'. Tracing narratives of victimization, self-exclusion, and non-interventionism in Russian political discourse, the chapter demonstrates how Russian foreign policy actors have presented their country as the moral counterimage of an 'antagonistic West' and a cooperative and brotherly partner in the 'Eurasian' space.

To place the various discursive regimes into a broader historical context, the chapter explores how these narratives have relied on a variety of key concepts in political thought – ranging

from the Slavophile notion of *sobornost'* ('spiritual harmony') to Carl Schmitt's theory of *Grossraum* ('Great Space'). The chapter demonstrates that Russian foreign policy actors under the Putin regime have combined various – oftentimes conflicting – normative vocabularies and aims to unpack the political objectives underlying this tendency towards 'ideological syncretism' in Russian foreign policy thinking. As the citations at the beginning of this chapter suggest, the discursive analysis moreover unpacks messianic tendencies in Russian foreign policy discourse. The notion that the Russian people constitute a 'chosen nation', or so the chapter argues, has functioned as a key civilizational leitmotif in contemporary Russian foreign policy, particularly since Putin's third term as president in 2012. The chapter demonstrates that – since then – Russia's self-image as the 'katechon' – that is, the biblical figure that wards off the dangers and chaos threatening civilization – has dominated Russian interactions with countries in 'the West' and the 'Eurasian sphere' alike.

5.2 Norms, morals, and ethics in foreign policy

Following Lene Hansen (2006, pp. 44–45), there are two dimensions to the study of ethical identity in foreign policy discourse. On the one hand, Hansen argues that the analysis of ethical identity implies 'a concern with the discursive construction of ethics, morality, and responsibility'. On the other hand, this branch of IR theory is concerned with the ways in which *difference* is constituted through the articulation of ethical identities. In those instances that foreign policy actors articulate an explicitly *transnational* responsibility, as is the case in Russian-Eurasian discourses, Hansen writes, 'a powerful discursive move is undertaken in that the issue is moved out of the realm of the strategic and "selfishly national" and re-located within the "higher grounds" of the morally good'.

Taking Lene Hansen's considerations as a starting point, the discursive analysis presented in the sections below thus looks at two distinct dimension of identity construction: firstly, the analysis unpacks how Russian foreign policy actors construct a normative framework that propagates common responsibilities and understandings about appropriate international and

domestic order among Eurasian states; and, secondly, the analysis explores how Russian government actors frame an antagonistic West as Russia's moral Other, whilst presenting their own country as a protector and mediator in world affairs.

Although the three dimensions studied in this chapter – norms, morals, and ethics – are highly connected, where possible, they are conceptually separated from one another. Following Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998, p. 891), norms consist of 'standard[s] of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity'. International society regulates what is considered to be appropriate behavior; therefore, norms are not necessarily based on value judgments. This is where norms differ from morals. Morals inherently involve certain judgments about right and wrong. Ethics, in turn, consist of wider sets of rules about what is considered morally good and bad. Although, at times, it is difficult to conceptually distinguish between the three dimensions, and these terms inevitably become conflated, this chapter aims to draw clear distinctions between norms, morals, and ethics. Where Russian foreign policy actors speak about general standards of appropriate behavior, the chapter refers to these as 'norms'. Where their statements are explicitly based on a value judgment about right and wrong, the chapter speaks of 'morals'. And where Russian government actors refer to wider sets of moral codes and standards of 'good and bad', the chapter employs the term 'ethics'.

5.3 Antagonism, individualism, and the liberal idea, or 'what the West is doing wrong'

One of the key modalities of ethical identity construction found in foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime contrasts a supposedly antagonistic 'West' to a morally righteous Russia. In this narrative, Russian foreign policy actors appropriate a traditionally 'western' liberal discourse surrounding a so-called 'rules-based order' to criticize 'the West' for its perceived moral misconduct. Throughout the corpus, Russian actors systematically rely on a dichotomous understanding of international order. Vladimir Putin, for example, consistently conceptualizes the

international system as divided between two poles – an Eastern and a Western pole (e.g. id3378, 2019). The East, following Putin's logic, consists of Russia and China, and is supported by a wider ring of 'brotherly states', whilst 'the West' is embodied by the EU and NATO (chapter 8 on Russian-Eurasian discourses vis-à-vis China further explores this 'civilizational' dichotomy in Russian foreign policy thinking).

In this dichotomous narrative, Russian foreign policy actors consistently point to a so-called 'Western' contempt for 'international norms' as the main cause behind growing tensions between 'East' and 'West'. Throughout the corpus, Russian foreign policy actors refer to what they call a 'rules-based order' as 'the basis for a positive movement forward' in international politics (e.g. id3378, 2019). Vladimir Putin (id3378, 2019) argues, for example, that during the Cold War 'there were at least some rules that all participants in the international community more or less adhered to, whereas now it seems that there are no rules at all […] the world has become increasingly more fragmented and less predictable'.

Importantly, a quantitative analysis of the corpus demonstrates that the notion of a 'rules-based order' originates in foreign policy texts published by the Russian State Duma from 2004 onwards, after which is has gradually been adopted by other segments of the Russian state apparatus (see figure 5.1 below). The first minor surge of this discourse occurs in the period between 2006 and 2008 in documents published by the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. However, it is not until 2011 that the notion of a 'rules-based order' steeply rises in popularity – particularly in foreign policy texts published by the State Duma and the Office of the President of the Russian Federation. The discourse appears to have a second surge in 2015, particularly in documents published by the State Duma and the Ministry of Defense, whilst reaching an unprecedented high in 2020. Overall, the quantitative analysis presented in figure 5.1 illustrates that the narrative surrounding a 'rules-based order' is characterized by a strong upward trend in Russian foreign policy texts published between 2000 and 2020. Notably, the various surges in the discourse appear to be linked to particular moments of political turmoil, such as (i) Russia's

invasion of Georgia in 2008, (ii) domestic electoral protests in 2011-2013, and (iii) Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. The significant rise of the narrative between 2016 and 2020 can be understood in light of the broader 'radicalizing' trend in Russian foreign policy discourse, which appears to be both a cause and effect of heightened tensions with 'the West'.

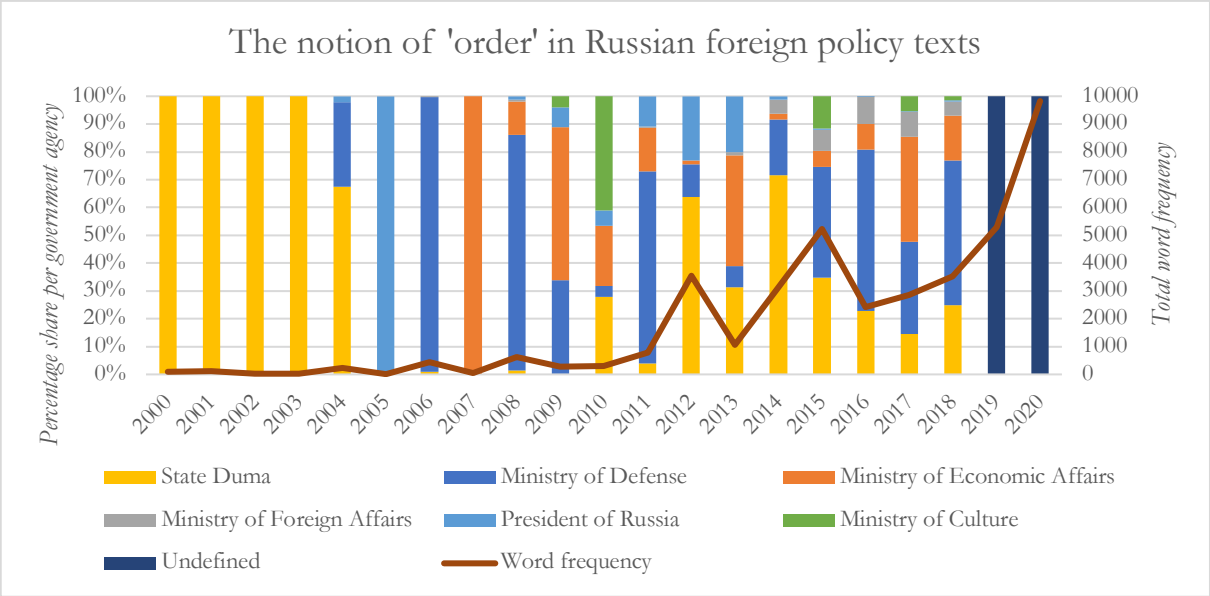


Figure 5.1 Word frequency analysis of the corpus demonstrating the use of Russian terms signifying a '(rules-based) order' in foreign policy texts published between 2000-2020

5.3.1 Victimization or self-exclusion?

In this particular strand of Russia's ethical discourse, Russian foreign policy actors consistently oscillate between two opposing forms of self-representation vis-à-vis 'the West'. On the one hand, Russian foreign policy actors present themselves as the 'victim' of an antagonizing 'West' – thereby implying an underlying wish to be included in European decision-making processes. On the other hand, Russian foreign policy actors employ a narrative of self-exclusion – thereby suggesting that their country constitutes a normative, or civilizational, actor in its own right. Both strands of ethical identity construction are particularly well-captured in the Russian discourse vis-à-vis China (also see chapter 8). Throughout the corpus, Russian foreign policy actors regularly frame Chinese-Russian rapprochement as an effect of EU exclusionary policies towards Russia.

When asked whether 'Russia has put too many eggs in China's basket', for example, Putin (id3378, 2019) answers that Russia has 'enough eggs but not that many baskets in which the eggs can be placed'. With nowhere else to go, or so Putin suggests, Russia has been forced to turn eastward. Sergey Lavrov (id1056, 2016) similarly states that 'since Europe has cut ties with Russia, Russia has been forced to maximize its opportunities in the East'. Here and elsewhere, Russian government actors clearly rely on a narrative of victimization which frames a cooperative Russia as the victim of an antagonistic West. Importantly, this narrative has only increased since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Since then, Russian state actors have consistently promoted a 'warped' version of events through which they have sought to reframe Russia's aggression vis-à-vis Ukraine as a 'proportional' response to Western encroachment.

Notably, the victimization trope in Russian political discourse dates back to the Slavophile movement and, in particular, to the writings of Vladimir Odoevsky (see also Roggeveen & Rutten, 2020). As early as the 1840s, Odoevsky put forward the notion that Russia possessed superior moral values in comparison to the West (see also Mersereau & Lapeza, 1988, p. 294). Building on the idea of a multipolar world order, this ethical identity construction has placed western antagonism and individualism in opposition to eastern – and particularly Russian – collectivism and solidarity.

This victimization narrative stands in contrast to the 'emancipatory' narrative of self-exclusion, which the thesis briefly touched upon in the introductory chapter. Rather than casting oneself as a victim of exclusionary EU politics, the rhetoric of self-exclusion has actively called for Russia's non-participation in EU schemes, such as the European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership. In this narrative, which appears to have gained popularity in the latter half of the 2010s, Russia has alienated itself from the European Union in order to become a dominant actor in its own right. Duma representative Sergey Naryshkin (id2372, 2016), for example, states that 'the model of absolute "westernization" imposed over the years has led to structural imbalances'. To fix these structural imbalances, or so Naryshkin argues, Russia should pursue an

alternative model of '*pan-Eurasian cooperation*' in which the Russian Federation – 'given its geographical location, historical and cultural traditions' – should take a leading role.

Here and elsewhere, Russian foreign policy actors promote the idea that the EU and Russia are two incompatible entities and, as Prozorov (2006, p. 55) writes, suggest that 'the only possibility for Russia to establish an equal intersubjective relationship with Europe is by becoming the leading actor and the guarantor of order in the post-Soviet space, which remains outside the EU and is not liable to EU control'. The narrative of self-exclusion represents an important change in Russian political discourse since Putin's second term as president. Up to the mid- to late 2000s, Russian foreign policy actors relied on the concept of 'Greater Europe' to argue for the existence of two sets of complementary integration projects based around Brussels and Moscow. This rhetoric changed after 2008, however. This year marks a shift from 'the valorization of European integration at any price towards the increasing realization that the price may well be too high' (Prozorov, 2006, p. 55). This gradual shift has irreversibly solidified with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, as Russian participation in European schemes – particularly in light of the (alleged) war crimes committed against the Ukrainian population – is now completely unthinkable for the foreseeable future.

5.3.2 The language of western liberalism

Alongside the narratives discussed above, Russian political actors have eagerly sketched Eurasian integration as the necessary next-step in a long tradition of positive socio-political relations amongst actors in the 'non-West' – a narrative which has served as a positive counterpart to both the narratives of self-exclusion and victimization. This affirmative narrative accentuates shared socio-political attributes between the 'peoples of Eurasia'. It is thus that Putin (id3378, 2019) posits, for example, that '[Chinese and Russian] positions coincide on a number of matters on the global agenda, including our attitude towards compliance with generally accepted rules in trade [and] the international financial system […] Both China and Russia adhere to these concepts' (see

chapter 8 on Russian-Eurasian discourses vis-à-vis China for more examples). Similar to the victimization and self-exclusion strands, this narrative equally relies on the notion of a 'cooperative' and 'morally superior' East in opposition to an individualistic and antagonistic West.

Here and elsewhere, Russian foreign policy actors adopt a conventionally liberal notion – that is, the idea of a 'rules-based order' – to project it onto markedly 'illiberal' actors, such as Moscow and Beijing. Throughout the corpus, Russian government actors make strategic use of the language of liberalism – on the one hand, adopting such 'liberal' notions as a 'rules-based order' to criticize 'the West', whilst elsewhere agitating *against* the 'liberal idea'. For example, in a pre-election article – which is discussed in further detail below – Putin (id3380, 2012) criticizes the so-called 'politicization of the human rights agenda' by the West, stating that 'when state sovereignty is too easily violated in the name of human rights, when human rights are protected from the outside and on a selective basis, and when the same rights of a population are trampled in the process of such "protection" […] these actions cannot be considered a noble mission but rather outright demagogy'.

Adopting a similarly anti-western rhetoric, Putin regularly presents his country as the victim of 'biased and aggressive criticism' from 'the West' (id3378, 2019). In the speech cited above, Putin frames this 'blanket criticism' by the West as 'a persistent effort to influence our citizens, their attitudes, and our domestic affairs'. Pointing to this supposed ethical misconduct of 'the West', Putin argues that 'these attacks are not rooted in moral values' (id3378, 2019). Here and elsewhere, Putin appears to appropriate western liberal discourses surrounding a 'rules-based order', sovereignty, and human rights in order to 'weaponize' it against 'the West'.

Prozorov (2006, pp. 55–56) illustrates that this instrumental approach is also visible in the language of Russian liberal critics such as Aleksandr Baunov (2003), who argue that 'Russia is the only state that can realistically guarantee the development of liberal-democratic order' in the 'vast Eurasian space'. 'The easiest and most painless way to eliminate obstacles and prejudices', writes Baunov (2003), would be to 'speak in the language of western liberalism'. Liberal discourses, these

examples illustrate, are thus used strategically in Eurasian identity narratives. At the same time, however, Russian political actors vehemently criticize the so-called 'western liberal idea'. The negative strand of this rhetoric presents liberalism as synonymous with an immoral West. Stating that 'the liberal idea has outlived its purpose', Putin (id3378, 2019) argues, for example, that 'some elements of the liberal idea, such as multiculturalism, are no longer tenable'. Elsewhere, Putin (id3116, 2012) similarly talks about the 'failure of the multicultural project in the West'.

Putin regularly argues that the ideological foundations underpinning western society have become outdated, criticizing 'the West' for its passivity. He posits, for example, that '[Europe] says it cannot pursue hardline policies. Why exactly? Just because. We have the law, they say. Well, then change the law! […] The liberal idea presupposes that nothing needs to be done. Migrants can kill, plunder and rape with impunity [in Europe] because their rights as migrants must be protected. The liberal idea has become obsolete. It has come into conflict with the interest of the overwhelming majority of the population' (id3378, 2019).

5.3.3 'Traditional Russian values'

Importantly, Russian political actors extend their moral criticism of 'the West' to include the subject of traditional values. Putin (id3378, 2019), for example, argues that his government is 'not trying to insult anyone, because we have been condemned for our alleged homophobia as it is. We have no problems with LGBT people. God forbid, let them live as they wish. But some things do appear excessive to us […] Let everyone be happy, we have no problem with that. But this must not be allowed to overshadow the culture, traditions, and traditional family values of millions of people making up the core population'. Throughout the corpus, Russian foreign policy actors consistently talk about the need to protect 'traditional Russian values' from the negative influences of 'Western' immorality (e.g. id2578, 2012; id2219, 2015; id1152, 2018).

In the pre-election essay cited above, Putin (id3378, 2019) links the idea of 'traditional values' to religion, arguing that 'liberal circles [in the West] are beginning to use elements and

problems of the Catholic Church as a tool for destroying the Church itself. I consider this to be incorrect and dangerous. Have we forgotten that we all live in a world based on biblical values? […] Deep inside, there must be some fundamental human rules and moral values. In this sense, traditional values are more stable and more important […] than this liberal idea, which, in my opinion, is ceasing to exist'. Figure 5.2 below demonstrates which key terms are used in Russian foreign policy texts published between 2000 and 2020 to signify the notion of 'traditional Russian values'. In particular, the data visualization illustrates that the notions of 'culture', 'unity', and 'cooperation' are consistently employed by Russian foreign policy actors to set the parameters of a so-called 'Russian' value system – one that, according to Russian government actors, opposes what they frame as the 'immoral West'.

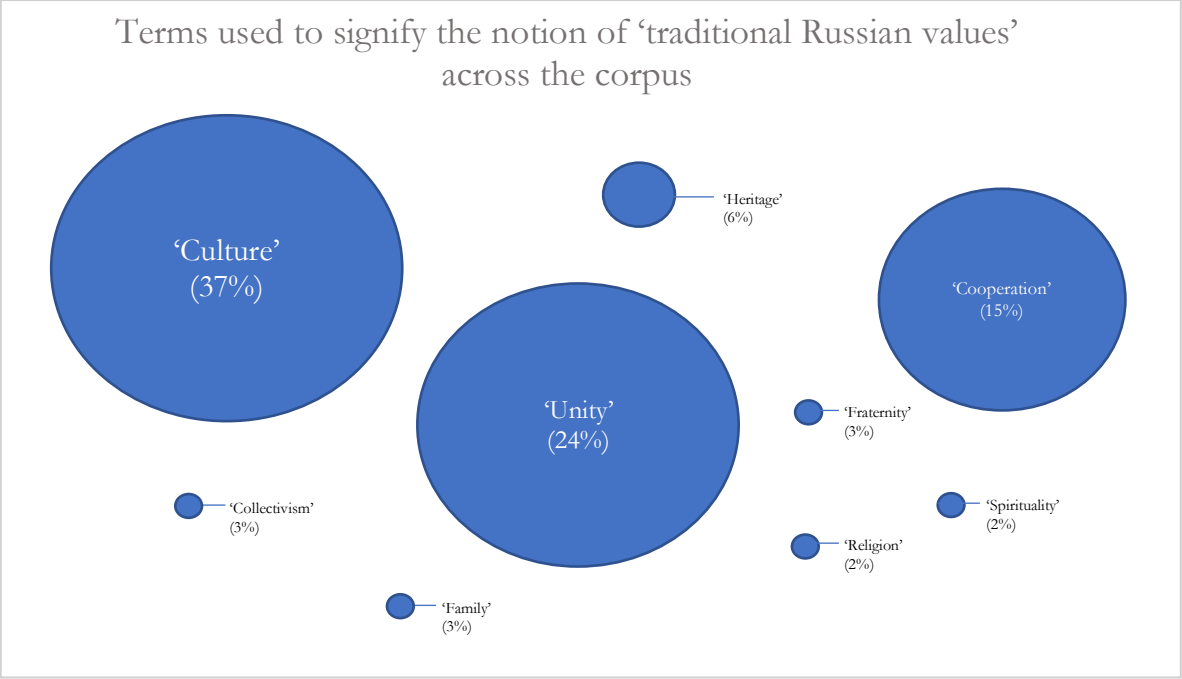


Figure 5.2 Data visualization of the percentage share of terms signifying 'traditional values' in Russian foreign policy texts published between 2000-2020

In linking the notion of biblical, or religious, values to a criticism of 'the West', Putin reaches back to a strong tradition of conservative thinking influenced by Slavophile ideology.[35] As

[35] Importantly, as chapter 7 on Russian-Eurasian discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan demonstrates, Russian foreign policy actors have made various attempts to adapt the notion of 'traditional Russian values' – which implies a strong Christian

early as the 19th century, influential philosophers such as Ivan Kireevsky and Fyodor Dostoevsky criticized the West for its 'spirit of rationalism'. In their writings, Lantz (2004, p. 218) illustrates, Slavophile thinkers argued that spirituality had been lost in the West; western society was portrayed as 'a collection of disconnected, rationally thinking individuals motivated by personal advantage'. The notion of a false unity of the West became contrasted with a 'true' sense of unity in the East. This normative othering of the West links to the mythologizing narrative discussed in the chapter on temporal identity constructions through which the Russian collective psyche has been portrayed as supposedly less rational and more sincere than the national character of countries in 'the West' (see also Rutten, 2017, p. 42).

The emphasis on the 'collective' in contemporary political discourse in Russia is very explicitly articulated in a 2017 Duma report (id2731), which reads that 'the Eurasian peoples, choosing between collectivism and individualism, gravitate toward the pole of collectivism, which is fundamentally different from the positions of western Europe […] This movement in favor of collectivism and traditional values provides the basis for the articulation of the Eurasian idea of joint development'. The notion of fraternal collectivism in the East, a concept that Putin and other political actors eagerly employ in their political discourse, relates to Kireevsky's concept of sobornost' (Roggeveen & Rutten, 2020) – both chapter 4 on temporal identity constructions and chapter 6 on Russian-Eurasian discourses vis-à-vis Belarus explore how the ethico-temporal notion of fraternity is instrumentalized by Russian state actors.

Importantly, Nikolai Lossky (1952) describes the notion of sobornost' as 'the combination of freedom and unity of many persons on the basis of their common love for the same absolute values'. In a political context, Biryukov et al. (1995, pp. 150–152) explain, the notion of sobornost' constitutes a demand to act in unison; '[it] implies that the community in question is an intrinsically integral entity [in which] the constituent parts are legitimate only inasmuch as they contribute to

Orthodox core – in order to fit the multi-confessional reality of the 'Eurasian' space; for example, through a narrative of 'cross-confessional spirituality'.

the general goal'. They argue that this induces 'a peculiar, totalitarian kind of egalitarianism'; one in which the constituent groups that make up a society are equal vis-à-vis the 'social whole' but do not enjoy equal political agency because, as Biryukov et al. (1995, p. 152) explain, political pluralism would contradict the notion of sobornost'.

> '[A] society of the sobornost' type quickly develops oligarchic bureaucratic structures and invests them with extraordinary powers. These oligarchies excel in behind-the-scenes decision-making [because] pluralism, openness and glasnost' would immediately destroy the illusion of sobornost'. The result of this is the duality (or duplicity) of political life: the politics of sobornost' splits into a sobornost'-flavored political show performed for the benefit of the masses and the *realpolitik* practices by the power elite behind the Kremlin' (Biryukov et al., 1995, p. 152).

Similar to the processes described in Biryukov et al., contemporary foreign policy actors apply the notion of sobornost' in their political language to present the Eurasian project as an organic community of nations in which the constituent countries are portrayed as equal vis-à-vis the whole but where Russia clearly appropriates the role of spiritual and cultural hegemon. It does so by asserting itself as Eurasia's norm-maker, rather than a norm-taker.

Articulating a common normative framework for the 'Eurasian' sphere, the Russian state amalgamates different moral vocabularies which results in a sort of ideological syncretism – one in which the discourse of western liberal democracy is combined with conservative notions such as sobornost'. Various 'normative frameworks' – some imported from a western-European tradition, others taken from the Russian conservative tradition and the Slavophile movement – are recombined to create the political eclecticism that characterizes Eurasian identity discourses in Russian foreign policy (see also Kazharski, 2019, p. 39; Neumann, 1995, 2016).

5.3.4 Ideological syncretism in Russian politics

Notably, Aleksey Kazharski (2019, pp. 37–40) refers to this discursive process as a 'hybridization of leftist ideology with right-wing politics and religious conservatism'. What we see in Eurasian identity discourses is a combining of different, at times conflicting, moral codes. This is representative of what Kazharski calls Russia's 'post-Soviet condition', which is, he writes, 'characterized not merely by ideological pluralism understood in conventional liberal terms, but also by what one could call a "postmodernization" and relativization of ideologies'.

Kazharski cites an op-ed written by prominent neo-Eurasianist Aleksandr Dugin (2013) titled 'Eurasian Integration in Postmodern Optics'. Here, Dugin posits that the Russian authorities should approach the Eurasian project from a postmodern angle; 'the postmodern intellectual', Dugin writes, 'does not look for meaning, he operates with meaning. He is free from ethical or aesthetic connotations. He is like a DJ, bringing together different models of meaning, different theories and concepts into a general intellectual rhythm […] but he is coldly detached from every one of them'. This positive representation of a postmodernist logic stands in contrast to the Eurasian criticisms of a postmodern temporality in the West, as explored in chapter 4 on temporal identity constructions.

The call for ideological syncretism that we see in Dugin's essay, however, is clearly answered in Eurasian discourses in Russian foreign policy. It is not only visible on a discursive level (when Russian foreign policy actors strategically switch between different moral vocabularies) but also on a policy level. Throughout the corpus, Russian foreign policy actors amalgamate various – at times conflicting – policy approaches. On the surface, for instance, they present the Eurasian project as a strictly legalistic and economic endeavor but beneath this practical exterior lies – almost consistently – a normative, or 'civilizational', core (see chapter 3 on spatial identity constructions for a further analysis of this two-track approach).

Their ideological syncretism is furthermore visible when Russian foreign policy actors try to balance between the pragmatic pursuit of nationalist interests, on the one hand, and the

pervasive use of a discursive frame that presents Moscow as a 'selfless' and paternalistic actor in the Eurasian space, on the other. Similarly, the ideological syncretism is visible when Russian foreign policy actors try to maneuver between exclusionary, xenophobic policies and the multi-ethnic reality of the 'Eurasian' space; or when they balance between a so-called 'Eurasianism-of-values' based on Russian 'traditional' - i.e. Orthodox - values and their efforts to appeal to a multi-confessional constituency both in and beyond Russia (see chapter 7 on Russian-Eurasian discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan). Here and elsewhere, Russian foreign policy actors pursue a kind of ideological pluralism that lays bare the highly syncretic character of the 'Eurasian' ethical Self – a Self that paradoxically combines various – conflicting – normative vocabularies.

5.4 Non-interventionism, messianism, and multipolarity, or 'what Russia is doing right'

Where the narratives discussed above ultimately build on a *negative* perception of 'the West', the ethical narratives discussed in this section are based on a *positive* understanding of Russia's own political agency. One of the key narratives through which Russian foreign policy actors articulate this positive understanding of an ethical Self in the notion of non-interventionism. In this particular strand of Russia's discourse on ethical identity, Russian state actors frame their country's foreign policy as a non-interventionist alternative to 'western' meddling in other countries' affairs. Roy Allison (2013, p. 18) illustrates how Russia 'wield[s] the principle of non-intervention […] as a shield against foreign involvement in Russian domestic state order'. Since the early 1990s, Allison writes, 'Russia has tried to interpret international law [in ways that] counteract human-focused normative universalism where this is seen potentially as challenging its own state and political order'.

Throughout the corpus, Russian foreign policy actors position their country as a non-interventionist power, framing Moscow as a peace-bringer and uniter of the 'vast Eurasian space'. In a 2019 interview, for example, Putin (id3378) argues that 'what we should be talking about is

not how to make North Korea disarm, but how to ensure the unconditional security of North Korea and how to make any country, including North Korea, feel safe and protected by international law that is strictly honored by all members of the international community […] we must respect North Korea's legitimate security concerns. We must show them respect, and we must find a way of ensuring its security that will satisfy North Korea'. Here and elsewhere, Putin foregrounds a 'non-interventionist' solution to key security concerns in the international domain. Importantly, although this non-interventionist frame is most often projected onto *other* illiberal actors, Russian government actors clearly employ this narrative as a circuitous way to argue against a similar kind of Western interventionism vis-à-vis Putin's *own* illiberal regime.

In the same interview (id3378, 2019), Putin makes similar rhetorical moves when talking about Venezuela ('let them sort things out by themselves, and leaders will come to power by democratic means'), Syria ('the Syrian people should be free to choose their own future'), and China ('we do not interfere. Russia has its own principles and rules of life, and China has its own'). Evidently, the principle of non-interventionism *pro forma* advocated by Russian state actors strangely contrasts the hard power approach that *de facto* characterizes Russian foreign policy – the most extreme case in point being Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

5.4.1 Russia as the 'mediator' of world affairs

To fully understand this paradoxical non-interventionist strand in contemporary Russian politics, it is necessary to explore the political legacy of such thinkers as Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky in Russian political thought. A look at the 19th century Slavophile tradition shows a rich history of non-interventionist discourses in Russian political thinking. Various influential Slavophile thinkers paradoxically promoted notions of non-violence, whilst simultaneously embracing the use of force as a legitimate instrument to defend Russian national interests.

Arguing in favor of non-interventionism, Leo Tolstoy, for example, strongly advocated non-violence based on his ethical interpretation of Christianity (Atack, 2019). Where Tolstoy's

understanding of non-interventionism resulted in a full-blown condemnation of the state as a form of institutionalized violence (thus bordering an anarchical or libertarian position), Fyodor Dostoevsky proposed a more targeted notion of anti-interventionism which he directed towards *the West* in particular. Hans Kohn (1945, p. 399) illustrates how Dostoevsky claimed that 'the Russians were destined to be the mediators, pacifiers and rulers of mankind, that they understood all other peoples, while these could not understand the Russians and therefore not appreciate their intentions. Russia was not a nation like other nations, but a world for itself, which […] could only be understood by loving intuition, not by rational thought'. Kohn argues that this supposed 'understanding of other nations' was rooted in the notion of *sobornost'* ('spiritual harmony') and the deep sense of community, which – as discussed earlier in this chapter – has long been framed as characteristic of the 'Russian people'. It was thus that Dostoevsky could simultaneously condemn western 'aggression' and 'domination by force', whilst also defending Russian military interventionism.

Dostoevsky demanded a return to primitive Christian values, which – in his view – were embodied by the Russian people. 'He saw the root of all evil in the lack of religion,' Kohn (1945, p. 401) writes, 'but the God of whom he spoke was the Russian God, the religion which he meant was nationalism'. An exploration of contemporary Eurasian identity narratives reveals that Dostoevsky's rhetoric of non-interventionism does not constitute a mere distant legacy of the Slavophile movement but a strong political tradition that has extended well into the 20th and 21st century; visible, for example, in Mikhail Gorbachev's rhetoric of de-escalation in the 1980s and, more recently, in Vladimir Putin's language of non-interference, particularly with regard to the 'Eurasian' space.

In the interview cited above (id3378, 2019), for example, Putin posits that he 'made very energetic attempts to convince our US partners not to withdraw from [the Anti-Ballistic Missile] treaty […] I am convinced that the world would have been a different place today, had our US partners accepted this proposal'. Here, Putin again frames Russia as the pacifier and mediator of

world affairs, while sketching the West as antagonistic and uncooperative. He furthermore extends his supposedly non-interventionist politics to domestic affairs, saying, for instance, that when appointing his political successor 'the decision must be made by the people of Russia. No matter what the current leader does, no matter who he represents, it is the voter that has the final word, the citizen of the Russian Federation […] the choice is always made by the Russian people'. Putin (id3380, 2012) makes a similar rhetorical move in one of the examples provided earlier in this chapter; when he says that the Russian LGBT community should 'live as they wish'. That his supposedly 'accepting' and – at times – laissez-faire rhetoric is coupled with persistent human rights abuses against the LGBT community, an active meddling in domestic elections, and an aggressive foreign policy that relies on (the threat of) military intervention remains unsaid throughout the discourse.

This narrative is thus characterized by a paradox. Even though Russian foreign policy actors regularly propagate the notion of non-interventionism, they couple this narrative with aggressive intra- and extraterritorial interventions by the Russian state. This inconsistency is equally visible in Russia's approach to the CIS region. On the one hand, Russian foreign policy actors pursue a language of non-interference towards countries in the CIS space. On the other hand, the CSTO – a Russia-led security bloc – changed its charter in 2011 to explicitly allow for the intervention in internal crises in the various CIS countries (Allison, 2013, pp. 144-145); a change that was put into action in early 2022, for example, when Russia deployed 'peacekeepers' to Kazakhstan in order to quell domestic protests against the Tokayev regime.

5.4.2 Messianic narratives in Russian foreign policy: Russia as a katechontic power

The narrative of Russia as a mediator and pacifier of mankind links to a wider messianic rhetoric in Russian political and theological discourse. Peter Duncan (2000) illustrates that Russian messianism has achieved the status of a 'national myth' in Russian political language. Importantly, Russian messianism 'is often adorned with eschatological characteristics'(Laruelle, 2019, p. 23).

Maria Engström (2014, p. 363) argues that this eschatological doctrine is based on the notion of Moscow as the Third Rome (see also Duncan, 2000) – a national self-image that builds on the premise that the Russian people are a 'chosen nation', who carry the burden to act as savior and liberator of the world. As this chapter's opening citation from Fyodor Dostoevsky's 'Demons' (1871) demonstrates, this pervasive identity discourse has eagerly been used to frame the Russian people as supposedly 'destined to regenerate and save the world'. According to Engström (2014), this messianic postulate has made a comeback in Russian political discourse during Putin's third term as president in 2012 (see also Lewis, 2020, pp. 193–194).

> 'According to the text of the new Foreign Policy Concept [of 2013], Russia considers itself on the one hand as an important military and economic pole and as a unique restraining factor in the world of increasing chaos, and on the other, as one of the world's ideological poles and a unique civilization, whose values should be transplanted to the world through 'soft power'. This view of Russia […] as a restraining factor in the chaos of international relations is in fact a 'bureaucratic', secular version of the messianic concept of the katechon' (Engström, 2014, p. 362).

The notion of the katechon, Engström argues, has formed the ideological foundation of a new wave of conservatism and anti-westernism in Russia. In biblical literature, the katechon functions as a figure that constrains chaos and restores order in the world. Political theorist Carl Schmitt – notorious for his allegiance to Nazi ideology – was the first to relocate the figure of the katechon to the political realm; his theory gained popularity amidst Russian neoconservative circles in the 1990s (Engström, 2014, p. 367; Lewis, 2020, pp. 193–194). Following Julia Hell (2009, p. 288), the katechon is 'a function of imperial logic […] It is the effect of Schmitt's engagement with the trope of imperial rise and decline and with the scopic scenario that is part of all imperial mimesis, namely, the sight of an empire in ruins' (see chapter 2 on civilizational leitmotifs and

chapter 4 on temporal identity constructions for a further exploration of the notions of rise and decline in civilizational identity discourses).

The figure of the katechon, Hell (2009, p. 290) argues, is defined through 'a kind of ruin-gazer scenario: the imperial sovereign — empire or emperor — who, with its or his eyes fixed on the end of time, prepares for a political battle to delay that very end. This battle is both military and ideological'. Carl Schmitt uses the symbol of the katechon to legitimize total state control as a means to create order amidst chaos and thus prevent the demise of an empire. Engström (2014) illustrates that this (originally biblical) notion of the katechon has been reformulated as a secular concept in Russian foreign policy from 2012 onwards. Through this katechontic narrative, Engström (2014, p. 364) argues, Russia is framed as 'as the protector of the world and the military "shield" of Europe'.

David Lewis (2020, pp. 193–194) explains how 'Putin's third term became identified with a "civilisational turn", in which Russia claimed to represent a post-Westphalian "state-civilisation", with a special role to play in international affairs […] This messianic discourse characterised Russia as a civilisation fated to play an essentially tragic role in an imperfect world, a bulwark against the chaos and destruction unleashed by the dangerous excesses of American liberalism.' In this messianic narrative, the eschatological notion of the katechon was retheorized 'to portray Russia as "the restrainer", the power that holds back the apocalypse and maintains an imperfect order in a sinful world' (ibid.).

This katechontic narrative is exceptionally clear in a pre-election essay written by Vladimir Putin (id3380, 2012) entitled 'Russia and the changing world'. In this essay, Putin consistently refers to Russia's 'unique position in world affairs', stating, for example, that Russia's 'foreign policy objectives are strategic in nature and do not proceed from opportunistic considerations. They reflect Russia's unique role on the world political map as well as its role […] in the development of civilization'. Whilst these remarks sound relatively composed, elsewhere, in a broadcast on Russian TV channel NTV, Putin (id3382, 2018) adopts an outright apocalyptic rhetoric. Warning

for the imminent danger of a nuclear war, Putin posits that 'if something like this arises, it can lead to the death of an entire civilization. The question is serious, and the tendency to underestimate the threat is dangerous'. In these and other examples, Putin presents Russia as the katechontic power that wards off the various dangers threatening 'civilization'.

A similar rhetoric is visible in a speech by Sergey Lavrov (id1644, 2018), in which the Russian minister of foreign affairs states that 'it is in our common interests to ensure that the world does not result in chaos but is shaped by constructive dynamics […] it is necessary to find the strength to work together for the sake of a safe and prosperous future for all of humanity'. Here and elsewhere, Lavrov positions 'the West' as a source of chaos ('our western colleagues, positioning themselves as advocates of democracy, avoid – in every way possible – the consolidation of a just world order'), whilst presenting Russia as the katechontic shield ('Russia, however, as an independent center of world politics, will continue to promote a positive agenda in world affairs in the interests of global stability. We do not impose anything on anyone […] we are guided by international law [and] respect for the interests, traditions, and identities of all nations and peoples.'). Chapter 8 on Russian-Eurasian discourses vis-à-vis China further explores how Russian foreign policy actors have employed a katechontic frame to position a 'Russo-Chinese axis' – in particular – as the stabilizing force in world affairs.

This notion of Russia as the katechontic shield overlaps with Carl Schmitt's conceptualization of the katechon as the restrainer (*der Aufhalter*) – the figure that 'holds down the chaos that pushes up from below' (Taubes, 2004, p. 103). Russian foreign policy actors consistently frame their country as a constructive actor in world affairs; one that – in Vladimir Putin's words – 'enhances global security, renounces confrontation, and counters such challenges as the proliferation of nuclear weapons, regional conflict and crises' (id3380, 2012). Through this narrative, Putin presents Russia as a messianic force, one that 'actively and constructively engages in global politics and in efforts to solve global and regional problems' (id3380, 2012). He couples his apocalyptic message to a utopian vision, stating that Russia 'will strive to ensure a new world

order, one that meets current geopolitical realities and develops smoothly and without unnecessary upheaval' (id3380, 2012). Sergey Lavrov (id0914, 2014) similarly promotes a utopian vision for the future, arguing that 'the key to a just and democratic world order is an equal partnership between different cultures and civilizations'.

Importantly, these contemporary Russian applications of the katechontic frame are fraught with conflict. David Lewis (2020, p. 211) explains: 'The contradictions of katechontic thinking became increasingly evident in Russian foreign policy, where the narrative of "good against evil" in the Syria war was constantly undermined by accusations of war crimes against Russian forces and their Syrian allies. The katechontic framework provided a form of moral justification for these ethical violations, since the ultimate goal – the restraint of a greater, radical evil, or what Russian officials termed "global chaos", an "abyss of violence", the "erosion of global order", etc. – seemingly justified the short-term tragedy of war and repression, with its moral shortcomings, human rights abuses, violence and suffering.' This discrepancy between the Kremlin's rhetorical self-positioning as a force of stability in global affairs, on the one hand, and the material effects of Russia's foreign policy, on the other, has become even clearer during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Russian foreign policy actors have consistently employed the katechontic frame to legitimize their full-scale invasion of Ukraine, presenting their war of aggression as a necessary means to supposedly counter the greater evils of 'extremism and fascism', whilst blatantly committing war crimes against the Ukrainian population.

5.4.3 'A more just world order' and the notion of multipolarity

The katechontic rhetoric found in Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime promotes a variety of principles – most importantly, this rhetoric builds on the ideal of 'Russian' multipolar thinking (i.e. what Russia is supposedly 'doing right'), which is contrasted by a 'western' unipolar approach (i.e. what 'the West' is comparatively 'doing wrong'). How exactly Russian foreign policy actors use the two opposing notions of 'multipolarity' and 'unipolarity' to frame their

country as a 'normative' force in world affairs becomes clear in an essay written by Vladimir Putin (id3380, 2012), who states, for example, that he 'will continue to prioritize [Russia's] cooperation with BRICS partners. That unique structure, created in 2006, is a striking symbol of the transition from a unipolar world to a more just world order' (see chapter 8 on Russian-Eurasian discourses vis-à-vis China for a further exploration of this BRICS narrative). Lavrov (id1056, 2016) similarly talks about multipolarity as a tool to create a 'more just world', which – according to him – should be 'based on the principles of openness, inclusivity, and equal security'. In this discourse, Russian foreign policy actors paradoxically invest the notion of multipolarity – a concept deeply rooted in realism and relative power – with an ethical purpose, presenting the correct ordering of power in the international system as a moral objective in its own right.

In his pre-election essay, for example, Vladimir Putin (id3380, 2012) links his vision of multipolarity to a variety of norms, saying that 'the major principles necessary for any feasible civilization include indivisible security for all states, the unacceptability of excessive use of force, and the unconditional observance of the basic standards of international law. The neglect of any of these principles can only lead to the destabilization of international relations [and] it is through this prism that we perceive some aspects of US and NATO conduct as contradicting the logic of modern development, as they rely on stereotypes of a block-based mentality'.

Here and elsewhere, Russia is presented as the driving force behind global peace and stability. The West, on the other hand, often embodied by NATO and the EU, is framed as a source of chaos and aggression. Putin (id3380, 2012) posits, for example, that NATO's positioning towards Russia 'will backfire with respect to global objectives, making it more difficult to cooperate on a positive agenda in international relations and impeding any constructive flexibility'. Lavrov (id1056, 2016) similarly argues that NATO unjustly 'demonizes Russia […] to create a pretext under which the North Atlantic Alliance can remain relevant by strengthening the role of the US and Europe in world affairs'. Putin (id3380, 2012) even goes so far as to claim that NATO-backed 'armed conflicts started under the pretext of humanitarian goals are undermining the time-honored

principle of state sovereignty, *creating a void in the moral* […] *implications of international relations*' (emphasis added).

A quantitative analysis of the corpus reveals that both the positive strand, which is formulated through the notion of 'multipolarity', and the negative strand, which is expressed through the idea of 'unipolarity', have steadily grown in popularity from 2008 onwards (see figure 5.3 below). Whilst both narrative strands broadly follow a similar word usage pattern in Russian foreign policy texts published between 2000 and 2020, the word frequency analysis presented in figure 5.3 demonstrates that the positive 'multipolarity' strand – marginally but consistently – takes the lead over the negative 'unipolarity' strand, *except* in the period between 2010 and 2013 during which the negative notion of 'unipolarity' temporarily rises in popularity. The word frequency analysis may thus point towards an instrumentalization of both terms, illustrating that Russian foreign policy actors may have consciously chosen to focus on negative portrayals of 'the West' through the prism of unipolarity in the period leading up to the watershed moment of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

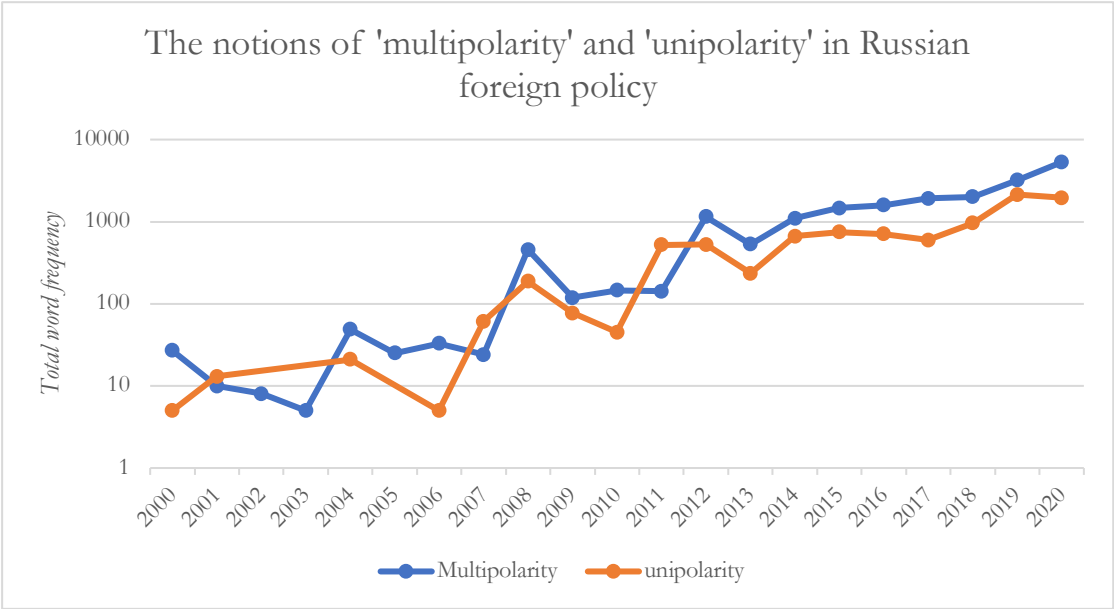


Figure 5.3 Word frequency analysis of the corpus demonstrating the use of Russian terms signifying 'multipolarity' and 'unipolarity' in foreign policy texts published between 2000-2020

5.4.4 'New Asia': Russia's pivot to the East

Although the katechontic discourse primarily centers around Russia's own role as a 'bearer of peace', a particular subset of the discourse focuses on Russia's 'civilizational' partners in 'the East'. In his 2012 pre-election essay (id3380), for example, Vladimir Putin introduces the term 'new Asia' to refer to what he elsewhere calls the 'Eurasian' states. He writes that 'we see before our eyes not only the rise of China and India, but the growing weight of the entire Asia-Pacific Region […] We promote the further development of Siberia and the Russian Far East to enable our country to become more involved in the dynamic integration processes in this "new Asia".' Here and elsewhere, Putin eagerly frames 'new Asia' as a positive force behind global stability and economic development. 'Against the backdrop of a rising China and India', Putin writes (id3380, 2012), 'the financial and economic upheavals in Europe – *formerly an oasis of stability and order* – are particularly worrisome' (emphasis added). Here, Europe is once again presented as a source of chaos, whilst Russia's so-called 'civilizational' partners in 'the East' are presented as a katechontic shield that protect the world against the instability caused by 'the West'.

This ethical narrative offers Russian foreign policy actors a normative framework through which they can propagate a common understanding about appropriate international and domestic order amongst Eurasian states. In his pre-election essay, for example, Putin proposes to create 'a harmonious community of economies', arguing in favor of 'Russia's pivot towards "new Asia"' (id3380, 2012). Here, Putin once again adopts a katechontic frame – on through which he contrasts an 'harmonious East' to a 'chaotic West'. Importantly, the common understandings about appropriate normative behavior of which Putin speaks are based on what he calls a 'shared vision of the emerging equitable world order' amongst Eurasian states.

In this 'more just world order', Russia is envisioned as the normative center of a wider 'Eurasian' region. To legitimize Russia's hegemonic position, Putin (id3380, 2012) persistently refers to Russia's 'unique role' in world affairs, stating, for instance, that 'our vast land repeatedly served as a *buffer against foreign aggression*' (emphasis added). In this discourse, Russia is framed as the

savior of a socially and economically decaying West; Putin (id3380, 2012) posits, for example, that 'Russia is actively participating in the international effort to support the ailing European economy'. Here and elsewhere, Russia is imagined as the katechontic shield that protects the world from chaos and economic ruin. As a remedy for this prospect of decay, Putin (id3380, 2012) proposes a kind of cultural imperialism, saying, for instance, that 'Russia has a great cultural heritage, recognized both in the West and the East […] It has a chance not only to preserve its culture but to use it as a powerful force for progress of the international market […] This is not about empire, but rather about cultural progress'. Thus, relying on old tropes of empire, Putin positions Russia as the benevolent force behind global development (see also chapter 2 on civilizational leitmotifs).

Russian foreign policy actors eagerly frame the 'more equitable world order' as one that is open for all, including the western states – as long as they abide by Russia's rules. Putin writes, for instance, that 'the Greater Eurasia project is, of course, open for Europe, and I am convinced that such cooperation may be mutually beneficial […] Europe is our next-door neighbor, and we are not indifferent to what is happening in the lives of our neighbors' (id3380, 2012). Here and elsewhere, Putin presents the Russian state as a benevolent actor that turns the other cheek even when it is – itself – excluded from EU mechanisms. Putin moreover presents Europe's possible participation in Russian-led Eurasian integration processes as a solution to its supposed 'untapped potential', stating that 'Europe has a vast potential and placing all bets on just one regional association has clearly narrowed its opportunities' (id3380, 2012).

5.4.5 Ethico-temporal narratives: the imperial trope of rise and decline

The katechontic narrative found in Russian foreign policy discourse heavily builds on ethico-temporal imaginings of imperial rise and decline. The objective of the katechon, François Debrix (2015) writes, is 'to keep at bay forces of temporal finitude seen as disorder or chaos'. This imperial trope is best understood in terms of Julia Hell's (2009, p. 290) 'ruin-gazer scenario' discussed earlier in the chapter. Through this ethico-temporal narrative, the empire – in this case,

the 'Eurasian' region headed by Russia – is defined as the katechon that 'with its eyes fixed on the end of time, prepares for a political [and ideological] battle to delay that end'. Hell illustrates how the 'ruin-gazer scenario' reaches back to Oswald Spengler's theories regarding the organic development of *Kulturkreisen* and the temporal genesis – rise and decline – of empires (see also chapter 2 on civilizational leitmotifs and chapter 4 on temporal identity constructions). With its mystical and pseudo-scientific conceptualizations of the organic growth of a 'Eurasian civilization', there are some striking similarities between Eurasian identity narratives in contemporary Russian foreign policy and Spengler's theories.

The visions of 'western decay' that we see in Putin's language, for example, are remarkably similar to Spengler's theories related to an empire's temporal rise and decline. Hell and Schönle (2010, p. 170) refer to these imperial imaginaries as 'scopic regimes' through which 'the imperial subject contemplates […] a mighty empire in ruins while thinking about the future of their own empire'. The katechontic narratives studied in this chapter consistently allude to the existence of 'opposing' temporalities of Western decay, on the one hand, and Eurasian progress, on the other – a dichotomy that is strikingly similar to the one explored in chapter 4 in which Russian government actors have aimed to reify the existence of a western 'postmodern' temporality versus a Russian 'modern' temporality. This discursive regime structures the Eurasian subject in an imaginary temporality of progress and development that emphasizes the potential of 'Eurasian civilization', whilst leveling down the influence of a decaying civilization in 'the West'. What these scenarios ultimately delineate, Hell and Schönle illustrate, are power relations – between one empire and another, between a morally decaying 'West' and a developing 'East'.

5.4.6 Ethico-spatial imaginings: Carl Schmitt's theory of Grossraum and 'Greater Eurasia'

Additionally, the notion of the katechon builds on ethico-spatial imaginings surrounding a new spatial world order, which – Russian foreign policy actors argue – is headed by the so-called 'new East'. Particularly in Russian foreign policy texts from 2016 onwards, Russian government

actors seem to draw directly on Carl Schmitt's theory of Grossraum to promote their own 'Great Space' theory through the notion of a 'Greater Eurasia'. Carl Schmitt developed the concept of Grossraum in 1939. Within its original context, the idea of Grossraum was linked to the invention of 'a new "powerful German empire" as the "strong and unassailable center of Europe"' (Hell, 2009, p. 294). Ideologically linked to Nazi theory, Schmitt connected the concept of Grossraum to notions of empire and Volk ('a people'). There are some striking similarities between the Russian narratives studied in this chapter and Schmitt's spatio-ethical theory.[36]

In his writings around the concept of Grossraum, Schmitt propagated the pursuit of a politicized spatial idea to replace the 'empty', neo-Kantian concept of space (Adair-Toteff, 2008; Hell, 2009, p. 294). In *Völkerrechtliche Grossraumordnung*, Schmitt (1941) argued that 'Great Space' could only be governed by an special type of 'empire-building' people; in other words, he argued that 'not all Völker [peoples] have the capacity to create Reiche [empires]' (Hell, 2009, p. 294). He pointed to Germany as the 'natural hegemon' in his spatial construct. Paradoxically, however, he also suggested that his 'Grossraum' would not be ruled by 'selfish motives' but by the 'organic bonds' that supposedly existed between its members. These contradictory aspects of Schmitt's ethico-spatial theory reappear in the 'Greater Eurasia' discourse found in contemporary Russian foreign policy.

Vladimir Putin first articulated the notion of a 'Greater Eurasia' at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum in June 2016. Here, Putin (id3381, 2016) referred to the 'greater Eurasian project' as an 'extensive Eurasian partnership involving the Eurasian Economic Union and countries with which we already have close partnerships – China, India, Pakistan and Iran'. In his speech, Putin described 'Greater Eurasia' as a project that is 'future-oriented and provide[s] the basis for a *harmonious joint development resting on equal and effective cooperation'* (emphasis added). David Lewis (2018,

[36] I am not drawing comparisons between Nazi ideology and Eurasian ideologies in Russian foreign policy. I am only comparing ethico-spatial identity constructions as they appear in Carl Schmitt's theory (i.e. the notion of Grossraum) to Eurasian identity constructions in contemporary Russia. There are no parallels beyond this strictly discursive comparison.

p. 1613) illustrates that this geopolitical imaginary has offered Russian foreign policy actors a discursive instrument to argue in favor of '(re-)uniting' the countries that once made up the former USSR with countries such as China, Mongolia, Iran, Pakistan and India, thereby creating a 'geopolitical zone that poses a fundamental challenge to the US-led liberal international order'.

Following Lewis (2020, p. 171), the Schmittian concept of Grossraum has offered Russian foreign policy actors 'a framework though which to rethink the dilemmas faced by Russia in its evolving response to a dominant international liberal order'. 'The ideas of Grossraum thinking,' Lewis (ibid.) argues, 'suggest four key claims about Russian foreign policy. First, Russia cannot be conned by the boundaries of a modern nation-state but can only assert its identity through the articulation of a greater space, which does not coincide with its formal state borders. Second, within this space, Russia acts as the "politically awakened" nation, whose sovereignty is assured, but whose influence extends into a space occupied by other states, who therefore enjoy only partial sovereignty. Third, in this grand space, Russia is the bearer of a "political idea", a set of values and ideas that unite peoples across the wider region in ways that transcend ethnicity. Fourth, this Russian-dominated Grossraum is one from which it will endeavour to exclude the ideological, political and military presence of foreign powers.'

Similar to Schmitt's notion of Grossraum, Putin has consistently sought to present 'Greater Eurasia' as a mutually beneficial spatial order that respects the cultural autonomy of its (potential) members (unlike, or so Putin argues, the 'unipolar' system pursued by 'the West'). At the same time, however, and not unlike Schmitt's theory, Putin has placed a powerful Russian hegemon at the center of this supposedly 'cooperative' structure. Reminiscent of notions such as 'Volk ohne Raum' – a political slogan popularized in Weimar and Nazi Germany meaning 'a people without space' – Putin consistently suggests that the current political order, supposedly unfairly dominated by NATO and the EU, has deprived Russia of its natural position in world affairs. As an alternative to this supposedly 'oppressive' Western-led world order, Russian foreign policy actors suggest creating 'a more just' ethico-spatial system in which the 'new East' or the 'Eurasian axis' is assigned

the position it supposedly deserves. These Russian visions of a 'more just world order' bear a striking resemblance to Carl Schmitt's utopian vision of 'a well-ordered global space' that will be achieved only once the earth has found its 'secure and just distribution of different *Grossräume*' (Hell, 2009, p. 299). Moreover, bearing traces of Schmitt's concepts of 'Volk' and 'Volksgemeinschaft', Russian foreign policy actors consistently flirt with essentialist conceptions of a so-called 'Eurasian people' and a mystical unity amongst the 'Eurasian' states (see also chapter 4 on temporal identity constructions).

Thus, Eurasian identity discourses found in contemporary Russian foreign policy unmistakably echo notions of civilization, multipolarity, and spatial ordering that are directly related to Schmitt's Grossraum concept. The notion of the katechon takes center stage in these Schmittian narratives surrounding a 'Greater Eurasia'. In this discourse, Russia – with its supposedly 'unique position on the world political map' (id3380, 2012) – functions as the katechontic shield that protects the world from disorder caused by 'the West'. A common thread in this ethical narrative is the normative notion that 'the West' is supposedly tainted by a 'spirit of rationalism and individualism', whilst Russia functions as the 'moral savior' in and beyond the 'Eurasian' space.

5.5 Discursive audiences and political objectives

Ultimately, the nine discursive strands discussed in this chapter all aim to present Russia as a 'normative' actor in regional and global politics. They do so whilst relying on a variety of different representations of Self and Other, thereby speaking to a broad range of audiences. Whilst Russian foreign policy actors consistently target 'the West' as their 'normative' Other, this 'negative' audience takes on a variety of forms throughout the discourse. In the various foreign policy texts cited throughout this chapter, Russian foreign policy actors appear to switch between a 'collective West', NATO, the European Union (perceived as a political entity), Europe (perceived as a socio-cultural entity), and the US. Similarly, when addressing their 'normative' Self, Russian foreign policy actors seem to switch between a variety of different audiences; at times, narrowly addressing a *civic*

Russian (Russkiy) or even *ethnic* Russian (Rossiyskiy) audience,[37] whilst – at other times – targeting the countries that once made up the former USSR more broadly, as well as the wider 'non-West', or individual sub-components of what Moscow perceives as the 'non-West', such as China and India (see figure 5.4 for an overview of the various discursive strands and their intended audiences).

Discursive strands	Audiences	Representations of a normative Self	Representations of a normative Other
'Victimization'	• Domestic Russian (Rossiyskiy) audience, i.e. civic Russian audience	• Russia as the victim of exclusionary EU policies	• The EU as an antagonistic normative hegemon
'Self-exclusion'	• Domestic Russian (Rossiyskiy) audience • A 'Eurasian' audience, particularly the non-EU countries that once made up the former USSR	• Russia as a normative, or 'civilizational' hegemon in its own right	• The EU as normatively incompatible with Russia
'Rules-based order'	• A 'Eurasian' audience, particularly China • Domestic Russian 'Rossiyskiy' audience	• The 'Eurasian axis' as a 'cooperative' and 'morally' superior partnership	• 'The West' as Eurasia's 'individualistic' and 'antagonistic' Other
'Traditional Russian Values'	• Domestic Russian (Russkiy) audience, i.e. ethnic Russian audience	• Russia as protecting the Eurasian sphere from 'Western immorality'	• 'The West' as a morally decaying society of disconnected individuals motivated by personal gain
'non-interventionism'	• The 'non-West', beyond the 'Eurasian' region	• Russia as a non-interventionist alternative to 'western' meddling in other countries' affairs	• 'The West' as 'abusing' normative universalism to achieve selfish goals in the foreign policy domain
'Katechon'	• Domestic Russian (Rossiyskiy) audience • A 'Eurasian' audience, particularly the non-EU countries that once made up the former USSR	• Russia as the savior and protector that wards off the various dangers threatening 'civilization'	• 'The West' as a source of chaos and instability
'Multipolarity'	• The 'non-West', beyond the 'Eurasian' region	• Russia as the creator of a 'more just world order'	• 'The West' as an aggressive and destructive actor in international affairs
'New Asia'	• India and China	• The 'Eurasian' space – in this context conceptualized as an entity that includes China and India – as a driving force behind global stability and economic development	• A 'decaying' Europe as causing chaos and instability in global affairs
'Greater Eurasia'	• Russia's 'eastern' partners, particularly China, India, Mongolia, Iran, and Pakistan	• Russia as '(re)uniting' the countries that once made up the former USSR with countries such as China, Mongolia, Iran, Pakistan, and India	• NATO and the EU as unfairly dominating global politics, thereby depriving both Russia and other 'Eurasian' actors from the hegemonic normative position they supposedly deserve

Figure 5.4 An overview of the discursive strands, their intended audiences, and normative representations of Self and Other.

[37] See section 1.3 in the introductory chapter for a further explanation of the semantic distinction between 'Russkiy' and 'Rossiyskiy' in Russian foreign policy language.

The first discursive strands explored in this chapter consisted of the 'victimization' narrative, through which Russian government actors have sought to frame their country as the victim of exclusionary EU policies, whilst portraying their 'normative' Other – in this case, the EU – as an antagonistic hegemon. Through this narrative, Russian foreign policy actors have sought to target one audience in particular – that is, a civic Russian ('Rossiyskiy') audience, employing the 'victimization' narrative to absolve the Russian government from any responsibility with regard to Russia's stalled economic development by pointing the finger to an 'exclusionary' European Union. Interestingly, in so doing, Russian foreign policy actors – at least to some extent – have accepted the EU's (self-assigned) position as a 'normative' power. After all, the fact that the Kremlin has framed itself as a victim of EU exclusion has implied a lingering wish to be associated with the European Union.

The second discursive strand explored in this chapter functions as a positive counterpart to the 'victimization' narrative. Rather than casting Russia as a victim of exclusionary EU policies, the rhetoric of self-exclusion has actively called for Moscow's non-participation in EU schemes. Through this narrative, Russian foreign policy actors have sought to frame their country as a 'normative' hegemon in its own right. This 'emancipatory' narrative appears to speak to two different audiences. On the one hand, the narrative of 'self-exclusion' targets a civic Russian (Rossiyskiy) audience, insofar as it plays into Russia's self-image as a great power actor in regional and global affairs. At the same time, the narrative of 'self-exclusion' speaks to a wider 'Eurasian' audience; in particular, the countries that once made up the former USSR that do not (yet) hold EU membership.

Insofar as the narrative targets a civic Russian audience, regime security appears to be the driving force. Here, the goal is to discredit a 'western' outlook in domestic politics, whilst promoting an 'illiberal' normative framework instead. The political objective appears to be somewhat different insofar as the narrative targets a wider 'Eurasian' audience. With regard to this

second audience, the 'self-exclusion' narrative offers Russian foreign policy actors a way to frame Moscow as a normative alternative to the European Union, through which the Kremlin may be seeking to prevent a 'westward' turn amongst non-EU countries that once made up the former USSR, with the ultimate aim of locking these countries into a Russian-led path of integration.

The third discursive strand this chapter explored consisted of an attempt by Russian foreign policy actors to appropriate the 'Western' liberal concept of a 'rules-based order'. Through this particular narrative, Russian foreign policy actors have sought to frame a 'Eurasian axis' – led by Russia and China – as the cooperative and morally superior alternative to an individualistic and antagonistic 'West'. Whilst targeting a 'Eurasian' audience at large, the narrative speaks most directly to a Chinese audience. First and foremost, the narrative seeks to promote the idea that Russia and China share a similar vision of 'world order' – one that is markedly different from the 'Western' concept of 'order', or so the Kremlin argues. Thus, the primary political objective underlying this narrative is to enable Moscow to bandwagon on a more powerful actor in global politics. However, similar to the 'self-exclusion' narrative discussed above, there also appears to be at least some element of domestic regime security at play. By seeking normative alignment with a powerful illiberal actor such as China, whilst actively framing the 'liberal West' as their 'immoral' Other, Russian government actors have also sought to indirectly validate repressive politics in a *domestic* context.

The fourth discursive strand appears to be targeted to an even narrower domestic audience. This particular narrative found in Russian foreign policy discourse relies on the notion of 'traditional Russian values' to articulate a normative framework that directly serves to replace a 'Western' liberal value system. In this narrative, Russian foreign policy actors have actively promoted (neo-)conservative values, whilst portraying their country as protecting the Eurasian sphere from what they call 'Western immorality'. Speaking mostly to an ethnic Russian ('Russkiy') audience, this narrative has relied on the promotion of Russian Orthodox values to frame 'the

West' as an entity supposedly characterized by 'moral decay' – an imagery that ultimately serves to discredit 'Western liberalism' as a viable alternative Vladimir Putin's illiberal rule.

The fifth discursive strand explored in this chapter frames Russia's foreign policy approach as a 'non-interventionist' alternative to 'Western' interference in international affairs. In this particular narrative, Russian foreign policy actors have portrayed 'the West' as 'abusing' normative universalism to achieve selfish goals in the foreign policy domain. This narrative not only targets a 'Eurasian' audience but also seeks to target a wider audience in the so-called 'non-West' – in particular, the narrative seeks to appeal to illiberal regimes in the Middle East and on the African continent. Through this non-interventionist frame, Russian government actors have sought to discredit 'Western' democratization efforts, whilst positioning Moscow as a normative center that supposedly offers an alternative to 'Western' hegemony across the 'non-West'. Ultimately, the narrative appears to be driven by a wish to elevate Russia's status in global politics by framing Moscow as the leader of a coalition of 'non-Western' countries – an objective ultimately driven by Russia's zero-sum mentality in the foreign policy domain, which dictates that Russia's success is only possible at the expense of the West's failure.

The sixth narrative explored in this chapter employs the messianic notion of the katechon to frame Russia as savior and protector of a global 'civilization'. This particular narrative seems to target two distinct audiences. On the one hand, the narrative appears to speak to a civic Russian ('Rossiyskiy') audience by playing into Russia's self-image as a 'chosen nation'. In this strand of Russia's ethical discourse, Russian foreign policy actors employ the notion of a 'Sonderweg' to validate various neo-conservative and illiberal policies pursued by the Putin regime. The logic driving this narrative is based on the assumption that Russia cannot follow a 'Western' path of liberal democracy because it is tied to its own unique path of temporal progression (see also chapter 2 on civilizational leitmotifs and chapter 4 on temporal identity constructions). On the other hand, the katechontic narrative appears to target a 'Eurasian' audience. In particular, it seems Russian

foreign policy actors employ the katechontic narrative to appeal to the countries that once made up the former USSR that have not (yet) obtained EU membership.

Insofar as the katechontic narrative targets a 'Eurasian' audience, the messianic notion of the katechon serves to position Russia as a leading actor of 'civilizational' proportions in what the Kremlin perceives as its so-called 'zone of privileged interest'. By offering a 'spiritual' reasoning behind Russia's hegemonic position, Russian government actors may have sought to make the uneven power dynamics in Russia's self-proclaimed 'zone of influence' more emotionally palatable for Moscow's various 'subsidiaries'. Ultimately, this narrative has aimed to bind countries that once made up the former USSR to Russia in a 'positive' manner, rather than on the basis of 'negative' motivations (i.e. the use of force by Russia, or the threat thereof). However, the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014, and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 all demonstrate that even when Russian government actors may – at least, initially – prefer to employ 'positive' identity narratives to ensure allegiance to the Kremlin, the 'stick' is never fully out if sight in Russian foreign policy.

The seventh discursive strand explored in this chapter consists of a narrative surrounding the notion of 'multipolarity', which is used to frame Russia as the creator of a 'more just world order'. This particular narrative appears to be targeted towards the 'non-West' at large and seeks to frame Russia's proposed 'new world order' as an emancipatory structure in which the 'non-West' can supposedly escape the 'limitations' imposed by a 'Western' or US-led 'liberal world order'. Ultimately, this narrative has served to elevate Russia's status in global politics by framing Moscow as a normative leader in global affairs. There is also a *domestic* component at play, however. After all, the narrative surrounding a 'more just world order' is used by Russian foreign policy actors to promote a plethora of illiberal values, thereby offering Russian government actors yet another discursive outlet to promote an 'illiberal' normative framework in global politics, which – similar to some of the discursive strands discussed above – ultimately serves to validate the normative legitimacy of the Putin regime in a domestic context.

The eighth discursive strand – in turn – relies on the notion of a 'new Asia' to place Russia in the same normative axis with two 'alternative', non-Western centers of global power. In this narrative, the Eurasian space is conceptualized as an entity that extends Eastward to include China and India. The notion of a 'new Asia' is used by Russian foreign policy actors to overcome an identity gap when addressing Chinese and Indian counterparts, arguing that Russia, China, and India ultimately belong to the same 'Eurasian' identity category. Finally, the nineth discursive strand – that is, the 'Greater Eurasia' narrative – similarly serves to place Russia at the center of what Moscow hopes to be a new 'axis of power' in global politics. However, this particular narrative not only targets an Indian and Chinese audience but is broadened to include a wider circle of 'recipient states', such as Pakistan, Iran, and Mongolia. Playing into shared grievances around 'Western' hegemony and exclusionism, Russian foreign policy actors employ both the 'new Asia' narrative and the 'Greater Eurasia' narrative to overcome identity gaps in Russia's Eurasian discourse by arguing that the various targeted states belong to one and the same 'Eurasian' identity category, which supposedly blends Russian, Chinese, Muslim, Turkic, and even Indian influences.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, conducting close readings of various foreign policy documents published between 2000 and 2020, this chapter explored the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors have constructed a normative framework that propagates common understandings about appropriate international and domestic order amongst Eurasian states. The chapter also explored how – in these documents – an antagonistic West has been framed as Russia's immoral Other, whilst Russia has been presented as katechontic protector and mediator of world affairs. The narratives studied above have all placed western antagonism and individualism in opposition to eastern – and particularly Russian – collectivism and solidarity. Ultimately, the chapter demonstrated, these narratives have all relied on the notion that Russia possesses superior moral values in comparison to 'the West'.

The chapter began with an opening citation by Fyodor Dostoevsky (1871) which describes Russia as a 'god-bearing nation […] destined to regenerate and save the world'. Exploring foreign policy texts published by the Putin regime, the discursive analysis demonstrated that this age-old messianic trope has continued to function as a primary mode of self-representation in contemporary Russian politics. In the chapters that follow, the thesis explores how Russian foreign policy actors under the Putin regime have employed particular elements of this ethical discourse in their language vis-à-vis three key 'Eurasian' partners: that is, Belarus in chapter 6, Kazakhstan in chapter 7, and China in chapter 8.

Chapter 6

'An All-Russian Civilization':

The Russian Discourse of Liminality vis-à-vis Belarus

'The constitutive parts of the Russian nationality have united under one authority: Little Russia, Belorossiya, and Novorossiya have all joined Great Russia one by one, together forming the all-Russian empire […] This political unification of the Russian land is the dominant political factor of our time.'

– Vasily Klyuchevsky, Kurs Russkoy istorii (1904)

'I address the Belarusian and Ukrainian people not as outsiders but as my own. Our people may have been divided into three separate branches because of the terrible misfortunes of the Mongol yoke and Polish colonization […] but we all come from precious Kyiv where the Russian land begins, […] where Christianity dawned on us.'

– Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Kak nam obustroit' Rossiyu? (1990)

6.1 Introduction

Whether that be in the writings of a pre-revolutionary thinker such as Vasily Klyuchevsky or the works of a Soviet dissident such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, questions around where the 'Russian nation' begins, and ends, have always been at the fore of Russian political discourse. Belarus, in particular, has been framed as an ambiguous space in Russian political thinking and – to this day – Russian foreign policy actors continue to portray Belarus (and Ukraine) as a sub-component of the Russian nation and inherent part of an 'all-Russian' civilization. This chapter unpacks the main narratives in Russian foreign policy discourse vis-à-vis Belarus under the Putin regime. In particular, the analysis demonstrates how Russian foreign policy actors have employed

a discourse of *liminality* in order to conflate the Russian and Belarusian Self, thereby presenting Belarus as a *sub-element* of a 'Russian civilization' rather than a sovereign state in its own right.

Whilst the notion of liminality originates in anthropology (Gennep, 1960; V. W. Turner, 1969), an increasing number of scholars has transported the liminal frame to the study of international relations (e.g. Rumelili, 2012; McConnell, 2017; Loh & Heiskanen, 2020; Kazharski & Kubová, 2021). Originally conceptualized by Victor Turner (1969, p. 95) as 'entities [that] are neither here nor there [but] are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial', the idea of liminality has recently been adopted by contemporary scholars such as Bahar Rumelili (2012, p. 503) to explore conflicting Self/Other distinctions in foreign policy discourse. According to Rumelili (2012, p. 498), liminal identities occur when the Other is constructed not as anti-Self or non-Self but as *less-Self*. The following sections explore the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors have adopted this liminal frame to ambiguously portray Belarus as a sub-component of the Russian nation.

First, the chapter explores the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors have aimed to portray Belarus as a *spatial* liminal. Here, the chapter unpacks a non-Westphalian discourse that has sought to encapsulate Belarus into the Russian nation-state through such concepts as the 'near abroad', the 'Union State', and the notion of 'buffer zones'. The chapter then explores how Russian foreign policy actors have employed a *temporal* discourse of liminality vis-à-vis Belarus. In this section, the discursive analysis focuses on two main temporal narratives. Firstly, the analysis unpacks how Russian foreign policy actors have relied on a 'fraternal kinship' narrative to frame Belarus as Russia's 'younger brother' whose main ambition is to reunite with its 'elder sibling'. Secondly, the analysis demonstrates that Russian actors have relied on a traditional civilizational discourse of savagery and primitivity to portray Belarus as a 'less-developed' version of the Russian Self. Here, the chapter examines how Russian foreign policy actors have pursued a romanticized image of Belarus as 'temporally immobile' or 'stuck' in the past. The chapter then explores the ways in which Russian actors have sought to frame Belarus as an *ethical* liminal through (i) a narrative

that portrays Belarus as a sub-element of a Russian-led normative community of 'Eastern Slavs', and (ii) a katechontic narrative that portrays the 'Russo-Belarusian axis' as a stabilizing force in international politics.

Finally, the discursive analysis explores a counternarrative through which Russian foreign policy actors have framed Belarus as 'parasitically' extracting support from Russia. The chapter argues that this negative portrayal has been used to express a certain unease and 'unsettling-ness' embedded in the notion of liminality (V. W. Turner, 1969; Rumelili, 2012, p. 496; McConnell, 2017). The chapter thus demonstrates how Russian foreign policy actors have paradoxically sought to 'lock' Belarus into a relationship of dependence by framing their neighbor as an 'in-between' category or 'appendix' that ambiguously falls both *inside* and *outside* the boundaries of the Russian nation, whilst simultaneously *criticizing* this relationship of dependence by negatively portraying the Belarusian state as an entity that somehow expects 'special treatment' from Russia. Throughout the discursive analysis, the chapter explores how Belarusian state actors have both reciprocated and contested these various Russian narratives. Lastly, the chapter ends by mapping the specific audiences that Russian foreign policy actors have sought to target through their various narratives of liminality.

6.2 Spatial liminality: the near abroad, the Union State, and buffer zones

Spatially, Russian foreign policy actors have consistently framed Belarus as an 'in between' category – a space that is neither external to the territory of the Russian state nor fully incorporated into the domestic domain. Belarus has, in other words, been portrayed as a *liminal space* in Russian foreign policy discourse. Such a liminal framing, Fiona McConnell (2017, p. 142) writes, has often been used to 'shake up epistemological assumptions by disrupting the essentialized binaries of center/periphery and domestic/international'. The concept of liminality, Shmuel Eisenstadt (1985, p. 324) explains, thus emphasizes the structuring of space seemingly outside of given boundaries. As the following paragraphs demonstrate, Russian foreign policy actors have found a variety of

ways through which they have blurred the spatial boundaries between the domestic and the international in their relationship with Belarus.

6.2.1 The 'near abroad'

A key discursive modality in Russian foreign policy that has enabled the portrayal of Belarus as a liminal space has been the 'near abroad' narrative. The term 'near abroad' (*blizhneye zarubezh'ye*) gained traction in Russian foreign policy discourse after the Soviet collapse and has since been used by Russian government actors to lock neighboring states into a (forced) position of 'historical' and 'cultural' proximity to the Russian Federation (see also Toal, 2017). Aliaksei Kazharski and Monika Kubová (2021, p. 253) illustrate how Russian foreign policy actors have employed this category to frame the countries that once made up the former USSR as a block of 'semi-sovereign states'. In this discourse, Russian government actors have sought to portray the so-called 'post-Soviet' countries as spatial appendices that have somehow remained tied to the Russian Federation even after the Soviet collapse.

This liminal imagery builds on a 'spatial conceptualization that goes beyond the borders of present-day Russia' (Kazharski & Kubová, 2021, p. 253). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, 'it was hard to conceive of these states as being fully independent, and a new ambiguous category of the "near abroad" was devised to designate the unsettled meaning that this space had for various groups of Russian elites' (Kazharski & Kubová, 2021, p. 254). It was thus, Jef Huysmans (1998) writes, that these newly independent states came to embody a *liminal* position in Russian state discourse that was seen as neither *external* to the territory of the Russian state nor fully incorporated into the domestic domain.

Belarus in particular has played a key symbolic role as a 'liminal entity' in Russian state discourse due to its presumed (or imposed) religious, cultural and linguistic closeness to Russia. A document published by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (id0815, 2019), for instance, reads that 'the near abroad is the natural priority in Russia's foreign policy' and points to the Union State

of Russia and Belarus as the main 'institutional vehicle' for Russia's near abroad strategy.[38] Elsewhere, in a roundtable discussion between Belarusian government officials and members of the Russian State Duma Committee for Eurasian integration, Duma deputy Leonid Slutsky (id0283, 2017) argues that 'Russian language is the cementing basis for integration in the Russian-Eurasian space'. He continues that 'spreading Russian culture across the "near abroad" is a task of civilizational importance' and argues that without such an effort '[…] the Eurasian Economic Union will turn into a colossus with feet of clay, suffering the fate of the Tower of Babel'.

A quantitative analysis of the corpus reveals that the majority of Russian foreign policy documents adopting this liminal frame is published by the Russian Ministry of Finance. In these various documents, Russian state actors consistently point to Belarus – often alongside Ukraine and Kazakhstan – as Russia's key trading partner in the 'near abroad' (e.g. id0418, 2007; id0358, 2008; id0016, 2011; id0065, 2013; id0363, 2013; id0022, 2017; id0011, 2018; id0046, 2019; id0050, 2019).[39] Here and elsewhere, Russian foreign policy actors seem to employ the 'near abroad' concept to project a 'de-territorialized' outlook onto the various countries that once made up the former USSR – one that incorporates the former Soviet states into 'an imagined […] community of Russian speakers [unbound] by legally established borders' (Kazharski, 2018, p. 2).

The 'near abroad' narrative thus neatly fits within Russia's wider non-Westphalian discourse discussed in chapters 3 and 5. Maria Mälksoo (2012, p. 485) explains how 'liminality [constitutes] an intellectual manifestation of an attempt to transform the structuralist understanding of the world into a vital field of immanence where there is no "outside", but rather a continuous flow between

[38] Section 6.2.2 further unpacks Russian discourses regarding the institutional framework of the Union State of Russia and Belarus.

[39] Notably, particularly since 2014, Ukraine has been increasingly absent from these documents. Nonetheless, Russian foreign policy actors have continued to project a similar liminal frame onto Ukraine based on an (artificial) distinction made in Russian state discourse between the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian state. Whilst the Ukrainian state has been portrayed as an existential threat in Russian foreign policy language, the Ukrainian people continue to be framed as a liminal entity so close to Russia's cultural community that they are basically *part of* the Russian Federation. It is thus that Russian foreign policy actors have been able to simultaneously legitimize a full-scale military invasion (which supposedly targets the Ukrainian state), whilst also pursuing a liminal discourse surrounding the 'brotherly' connection that supposedly exists between themselves and the Ukrainian people.

different forms and ways of being'.[40] 'In light of the distinctively in-between quality of liminality,' writes Mälksoo, 'the standard topographical division of international relations between what is happening inside and what outside of the sovereign state […] loses its argumentative purchasing power'. Thus, by employing a liminal frame, Russian actors have given further expression to the non-Westphalian notion that Russia constitutes a civilizational entity that supposedly 'transcends' the boundaries of the nation-state.

Embedded in this non-Westphalian imagery is the 'postulate' that Russia supposedly carries the 'moral' responsibility to restore the geographical congruence between 'state' and 'nation' and to 'reunify' the peoples of Belarus (and Ukraine) with their Russian 'brethren' (Forsberg & Mäkinen, 2019, p. 228).[41] As will be discussed in chapter 7 on Kazakhstan, this non-Westphalian narrative – which suggests that the Russian nation somehow carries *extraterritorial* authority – builds on two key premises: 1) that ethnicity and territory *cannot* always align, particularly in a so-called 'post-Soviet' context where the sudden collapse of the Soviet empire left ethnic Russians and their 'liminal' counterparts (read: Belarusians and Ukrainians) scattered across the former Soviet Union; and (2) that *ethnicity* takes precedence over *state territory* when defining political authority, thus advancing a non-Westphalian understanding of state sovereignty vis-à-vis the '*Eastern Slavic*' communities that exist outside the territory of the Russian state.[42]

Importantly, Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine confirms that this discourse of extraterritorial power has generated detrimental 'real-life' outcomes for those entities that are

[40] There are some clear parallels between the notion of spatial liminality discussed here and the concept of 'networked space' discussed in chapter 3 on spatial identity constructions. Chapter 3 explores how Russian foreign policy actors articulate a certain type of spatiality in their foreign policy language which enables them to construct space not in metric terms or in terms of territorial contiguity and geographical proximity but based on the 'intensity' of relations between separate elements.

[41] See the sections on temporal and ethical liminality below for a further exploration of this kinship narrative.

[42] Note that this discourse of extraterritorial authority is *antithetical* to the Russian discourse vis-à-vis *non-Russian* constituencies in the Eurasian region, which builds on two very different premises: (1) that there is a 'natural fit' between ethnicity and territory, and ethnic groups should therefore stay within their designated territorial units; and (2) that – in the 'unfortunate' situation when a mismatch between territorial and ethnic boundaries does occur – state territory takes precedence over ethnicity when defining political authority, thus promoting a Westphalian understanding of state sovereignty. The sum of these two premises is that no non-Russian ethnic group could ever claim political authority on the territory of the Russian state. See chapter 7 on Kazakhstan for a further exploration of these two contradictory narratives.

constituted as liminals in Russian foreign policy. In the case of Ukraine, it was precisely this non-Westphalian narrative that has provided the main legitimizing basis for Russia's all-out war. The main difference between Belarus and Ukraine being the response to Russia's non-Westphalian assertion by the recipient state – which, in the case of Ukraine, has consisted of a categorical rejection, whilst the Belarusian response could be seen as a qualified acceptance (see section 6.3.2 below for an analysis of the Belarusian response).

6.2.2 The Union State of Russia and Belarus

Another key discursive modality through which Russian foreign policy actors have portrayed Belarus as a *liminal space* is the narrative that promotes the Union State as a spatio-institutional vehicle for the territorial merger between Russia and Belarus. The Union State of Russia and Belarus is a bilateral institutional framework initially negotiated by Russian president Boris Yeltsin and Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko in the late 1990s. Whilst both countries have been eager to present the Union State as a leading example of 'post-Soviet' re-integration, many of the legal provisions – particularly in the political and economic domains – have been merely declarative and symbolic in nature; a plethora of ambitious plans initially negotiated by Yeltsin and Lukashenko have never been implemented (e.g. the monetary union, the common energy market, a joint constitution) (Roggeveen et al., 2021, p. 7). Regardless, Russian foreign policy actors have eagerly sought to portray the Union State as a successful vehicle for the spatial merger between Russia and Belarus.

An example of this spatio-liminal narrative can be found in a 2015 speech by State Duma deputy Leonid Slutsky (id2791). Here, Slutsky argues that 'the Union State has acted as a catalyst for interstate integration, which has given [the peoples of Russia and Belarus] a sense of closeness [and] has removed the artificial barriers formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union'. A similar attitude towards the Union State can be found in a 2019 interview with Putin and Lukashenko (id8105). When asked to what extent both leaders wished to pursue integration with one another

in the framework of the Union State, Lukashenko and Putin provided vastly different answers. Whilst Lukashenko strongly emphasized that he 'proceeds from the fact that today we are two independent states', Putin undermined this expression of Belarusian sovereignty by saying that 'there are simply no fully independent states in the world [and] the modern world is one of interdependence'.

Throughout the corpus, the Union State has been framed by Russian foreign policy actors as a catalyst and model for wider integration across the Eurasian region. Leonid Slutsky (id2791, 2015) argued, for example, that 'the Union State is a pioneering initiative in the process of Eurasian economic integration that has […] tested a new model for interstate interaction, which is now actively implemented across the Eurasian sphere'. In the 2019 interview cited above, Putin adopted a similar rhetoric when he described the Union State as 'the main locomotive of integration in the wider post-Soviet space' (id8105). Elsewhere, Putin (id8102, 2019) stated that 'the experience gained by Belarus and Russia […] within the framework of the Union State has been widely used in the formation of integration projects across Eurasia'.

From 2009 onwards, Putin has made similar claims in almost *all* instances in which he discussed relations between Russia and Belarus (e.g. id8122, 2017; id8133, 2016; id8155, 2013; id8166, 2009; id8167, 2009) – for example, when he stated that 'the positive experience gained within the framework of the Union State is actively used in the wider format of the Eurasian Economic Union' (id8103, 2019); or when he referred to the Union State as 'a driver of the development of integration processes throughout the post-Soviet space' (id8133, 2016); or when he described the Union State as 'a pillar in the overall architecture of Eurasian integration' (id8143, 2015). Thus, not only has the Union State been framed by Russian government actors as a spatio-institutional vehicle for the territorial merger between Russia and Belarus, but it has also been portrayed as a model for Russia's wider integrational thrust across the 'Eurasian' region – a mental image that is far removed from the reality of the Union State, which, despite years of pompous rhetoric, has failed to offer substantive levels of integration between Russia and Belarus.

6.2.3 Buffer zones: Belarus as Russia's 'most Western limit'

Finally, the third discursive modality through which Russian foreign policy actors have sought to frame Belarus as a *liminal space* is the narrative that portrays Belarus as a 'buffer zone' that separates Russia from a hostile 'West' (see also Savchenko, 2009). Especially within Russian military circles, the border between Belarus and NATO territory has been framed as Russia's *de facto* strategic border with 'the West' (Trenin, 2005, p. 71). Following Ian Klinke (2008, p. 118), this 'buffer zone' narrative builds heavily on the spatial notion of 'spheres of influence', through which Russian government actors have consistently sought to portray Belarus as Russia's most Western limit.

A report published by the Kremlin (id0316, 2012), for example, argues that Russia needs to create a 'regional union' around its territory, which should function as a defensive belt against 'EU enlargement, the deployment of military bases along the perimeters of Russia's territory, […] and Western resistance to Moscow's goal of integrating the CIS countries into the Russian sphere'. The report also reads that Russia 'regards the CIS market as an *expanded domestic* market', further blurring the line between the 'international' and the 'domestic' within Russia's so-called 'buffer zone'. In a similar vein, a publication by the Russian Ministry of Defense (id0228, 2014) argues that Moscow needs 'to maintain a buffer zone' by creating a 'defensive belt' along Russia's western borders in order to maintain control over the Black Sea region. Elsewhere, a State Duma report (id0404, 2012) argues that 'the Union State of Russia and Belarus […] which has aimed to create one unified state […] has offered a way to neutralize the [Western] implementation of a *cordon sanitaire* from the Baltic to the Black Sea'.

Martin Bayly (2015, p. 817) explains how the concept of 'buffer zones' is used by states as 'a site for […] ontological security-seeking' (see also Pratt, 2008). In the case of Russia, the 'buffer zone' narrative has offered Moscow a discursive path to frame Belarus as 'the only remaining allied geopolitical space on Russia's western borders […] and [the last] "substantive" guarantee that

NATO won't [expand onto Russia's] doorstep' (Klinke, 2008, p. 118). This liminal portrayal of Belarus as an 'in-between' zone has thus been used by Russian foreign policy actors to perpetuate a 'geopolitical script of continued conflict between East and West, in which Belarus [has played] a crucial role as buffer between Russia and NATO' (Klinke, 2008, p. 120).

6.2.4 The Belarusian response: instrumentalization and contestation

Belarusian state actors have reciprocated these narratives of liminal spatiality to varying degrees. In the period immediately following the Soviet collapse, Lukashenko in particular fashioned himself a strong proponent of merging Belarus and Russia into a so-called 'Union State'. Ian Nice (2013, p. 7) describes, for example, how Lukashenko traveled across Russia in the late 1990s as part of a PR campaign in which he positioned himself as the post-Soviet 'unifier of the Slavic peoples'. This rhetoric changed in the early 2000s once it became clear that Putin – and *not* Lukashenko – would be heading this Russo-Belarusian union (Kazharski & Makarychev, 2021, pp. 1–2). Since then, Lukashenko has continued to provide rhetorical support to Russo-Belarusian integration, whilst simultaneously ensuring that his grip on power cannot be challenged by Moscow. Moreover, as section 6.3.2 below explains, Belarusian state actors have outright *contested* Russia's liminal frame at various moments of crisis in the Russian-Belarusian relationship.

Nevertheless, Lukashenko has been keen to adopt the narrative that frames the Union State as a catalyst and model for wider integration processes across the Eurasian region. In a 2013 speech (id8154), for example, the Belarusian leader referred to the Union State as 'an icebreaker capable of solving the most complex issues related to integration across the Eurasian region'. Elsewhere, alluding to Russia's 'Greater Eurasia' project, Lukashenko (id8153, 2013) argued that 'the locomotive of all integration processes in the post-Soviet space was and always will be the Union State [and] we will do everything to preserve this locomotive, so that – like an icebreaker – it goes ahead in setting an example of close cooperation not only in the post-Soviet space but from Lisbon to Vladivostok'. Similarly, in a 2015 speech (id8144), he refers to the establishment of the Union

State as 'a fateful step that not only strengthened the strategic partnership of our fraternal states but also impacted the development of integration processes throughout the post-Soviet space'.

Most likely, Lukashenko has perceived the Union State as a vehicle that can help carve out a position of relevance for Belarus in regional affairs, whilst also offering a tool to frame *himself* as indispensable to the success of Putin's integration project – a rhetorical move that may have driven the Kremlin to accept and support Lukashenko's continued dominance in Belarus despite various major rows between Minsk and Moscow. Thus, in reciprocating this particular Russian narrative of spatial liminality, the Lukashenko regime may have sought to (re)claim some form of political agency vis-à-vis the Kremlin. In the 2015 speech cited above, for example, Lukashenko argued that 'largely thanks to the Union State, [Belarus] has found itself not at the periphery of global and regional integration processes but at the center of creating the Customs Union, the Common Economic Space, and then the Eurasian Economic Union'. Thus, even when the power dynamic between Minsk and Moscow has been such that Lukashenko has often been forced into submission by Russia, he has also managed to leverage his country's participation in the Union State as a way to appropriate – albeit on a symbolic plane only – a relevant role in political affairs after the Soviet collapse.

Finally, Lukashenko has instrumentalized the notion of spatial 'in-betweenness' to avoid a categorical choice between 'East' and 'West' – a discursive move likely undertaken in order to obtain economic benefits from both the European Union and Russia (Allison et al., 2005, p. 489). Chairman of Belarus' House of Representatives Vladimir Andreichenko maintained, for example, that 'due to its geographical position, Belarus constitutes a link between East and West' (id2854, 2016). However, ever since diplomatic relations between Belarus and the European Union have hit an all-time low due to Lukashenko's violent repression of electoral protests in 2020, this particular strategy has lost its discursive purchasing power. Should Belarus and the EU resume

diplomatic relations in the future, however, it is likely that Lukashenko will once again seek to instrumentalize the 'liminal' frame to extract benefits from both 'East' and 'West'.[43]

6.3 Temporal liminality: kinship, the 'Great Patriotic War', and the Belarusian 'savage'

Importantly, as Iver Neumann (2012, p. 474) explains, liminality is not an exclusively spatial category but also a markedly *temporal* one – the concept of liminality has often been used to signify 'a condition of being in the midst of two stages […], of being suspended or even trapped between two different sets of role expectations'. In Russian foreign policy discourse, this notion of temporal inbetweenness has been used to portray Russian and Belarusian society as a cohesive whole. Russian politician and state secretary of the Union State Grigory Rapota (id2731, 2017), for example, maintained that 'the Russian-Belarusian formation […] is an association of two peoples connected by a great historical and cultural community […], a Eurasian civilization'. Similarly, in a 2018 speech, Duma deputy Ildar Gilmutdinov (id2729) argued that 'the history of the Russian and Belarusian peoples is inseparable and continues to be so'. Throughout the corpus, Russian foreign policy actors consistently refer to a shared past as the legitimizing basis for a supposedly 'inevitable' common future between Russia and Belarus. The following paragraphs explore some of the key discursive modalities through which Russian foreign policy actors have framed Belarusian sovereignty as a *liminal phase* – or, in other words, an 'in-between' period to be resolved through Belarus' 'inevitable' incorporation into the Russian nation.

6.3.1 The Kinship narrative

The notion of 'kinship' in particular has offered Russian state actors a key rhetorical tool to frame Belarus as a liminal actor that ambiguously falls both *inside* and *outside* Russia's domestic

[43] Notably, the scenario in which Belarus and the EU resume diplomatic relations has become increasingly unlikely following Lukashenko's direct support to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in 2022.

sphere. In this particular strand of Russia's liminality discourse, Russian foreign policy actors have portrayed Belarus as the 'younger brother' whose main ambition is to reunite with its 'elder sibling' or 'parental figure', i.e. Russia (Kazharski, 2018, p. 2). Ian Klinke (2008, pp. 115–117) explains that this narrative 'initially emerged during the mid-1990s and has since been the driving force behind political, economic and military integration of the two states […] [presenting] Belarus as a "fraternal nation" and allied place […] [and] the Union State as a success story and beacon for the integration of the post-Soviet space'. Importantly, 'the fraternity narrative has organized events in Russo-Belarusian relations into a *linear sequence of success stories* that is directed at further integration [within the framework of] the Union State' (Klinke, 2008). Seen through this temporal prism of linear development, 'the independence of Belarus as a state [has been portrayed] as a temporary misunderstanding that [will] sooner or later be resolved' (Kazharski, 2018, p. 2).

A statement published by Rossotrudnichestvo (id1247, 2017), for instance, describes Russia and Belarus as 'allies [whose] all-encompassing ties are based on sincere feelings of centuries-old friendship, trust, and mutual respect between two fraternal peoples'. Adopting a similar kinship rhetoric, Vladimir Putin has also been eager to discuss the 'fraternal bonds' that supposedly shape relations between Russia and Belarus. In a 2019 speech, for example, Putin (id3060) argues that 'to this day the bonds of fraternal friendship and mutual assistance, bequeathed by our fathers and grandfathers, are the key to the strength of Russian-Belarusian relations'. Elsewhere, in a 2020 speech, Putin (id8101) maintains that 'relations between Russia and Belarus are neither subject to time nor conjuncture, they have a solid foundation, because our states are united by strong, centuries-old, cultural and spiritual family ties'.

In yet another speech, Putin (id8103, 2019) describes the Russo-Belarusian relationship as 'based on centuries-old traditions of fraternal friendship and spiritual intimacy'. Similarly, Dmitry Medvedev (id8163, 2011) argues that 'our countries are bound by strong ties of common history, friendship, and a centuries-old brotherhood, which predetermines a special responsibility for the effective promotion of Russian-Belarusian integration'. These are just a handful of examples but

throughout the corpus Russian government actors refer to 'fraternal kinship' bonds as the basis for a supposedly 'inseparable' relationship between Russia and Belarus (for other examples see also id8116, 2018; id8119, 2018; id8134, 2015; id8137, 2015; id8162, 2011)

In this vastly popular kinship narrative, the Second World War in particular features as a 'unifying experience' shared between Russia and Belarus. Dmitry Medvedev (id8164, 2010) states, for example, that 'we [Russians and Belarusians] are all citizens of the Union State […] and we are united by a centuries-old history, joint culture, common joys and common grief. We will always remember that our people – and I will always say: our *united* people – suffered great losses during the Great Patriotic War and together we have gone through terrible hardships'. Elsewhere, Vladimir Putin (id8147, 2014) adopts a similar rhetoric when he states that integration between Russia and Belarus has been 'watered with the blood of our ancestors, our fathers and grandfathers'. In yet another speech, Putin (id8150, 2014) argues that 'Russia and Belarus […] have made huge contributions and suffered great losses in the fight against Nazism and therefore being together these days is a natural matter'. Similarly, Dmitry Medvedev (id8178, 2008) maintains that 'our people [read: Russians and Belarusians] not only remember the Great Patriotic War but are *united* by this experience'.

Figure 6.1 below demonstrates the ways in which this narrative has developed between 2000 and 2020. A quantitative analysis of the corpus reveals that references to WWII in Russia's foreign policy language vis-à-vis Belarus first surged in 2004 and 2008 to then steadily increase from 2011 onwards with significant spikes in 2012, 2014, and 2020. Interestingly, the first two spikes more or less coincide with moments of *conflict* in the Russian-Belarusian relationship, particularly in 2004 and 2007, at which time Russia's WWII narrative may have served as a 'reminder' to Minsk that it cannot escape the historical ties that supposedly bind the two nations. The gradual increase from 2011 onwards coincides with a broader anti-Western shift in Russian foreign policy discourse, at which time the WWII narrative may have offered the Kremlin a tool to elevate Russia's international status by portraying the country as Europe's 'savior' from Nazism.

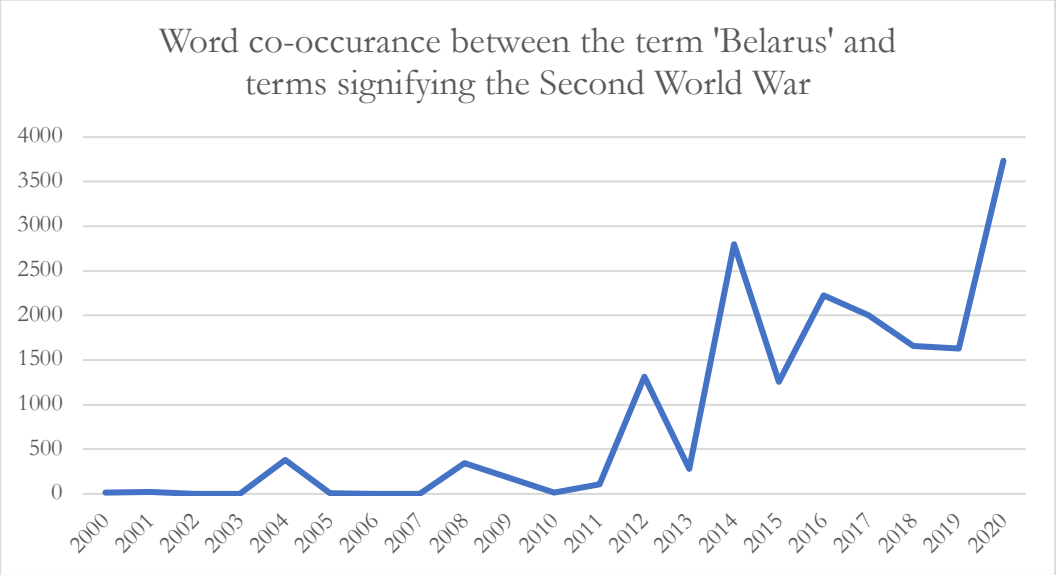


Figure 6.1 Quantitative analysis of the corpus demonstrating word co-occurrence between the term 'Belarus' and Russian terms signifying WWII in foreign policy texts published between 2000-2020

Throughout the corpus, the Second World War and the fight against Nazism are thus framed as a unifying historical experience that supposedly demands a harmoniously 'fraternal' relationship between Russia and Belarus in the present. In portraying the Second World War as a historical experience suffered by Russians and Belarusians as one *united* people, this temporal rhetoric has offered Russian foreign policy actors yet another discursive modality to further normalize the conflation of Russian and Belarusian society, enabling the Kremlin to portray Belarusian sovereignty as an 'in-between' period, or *liminal phase*, to be resolved through the country's 'inevitable' incorporation into the Russian nation. More generally, the family metaphor has offered Russian foreign policy actors a discursive tool to project an image of familial solidarity and harmony onto the 'Eurasian' sphere, whilst simultaneously imposing a hierarchical order onto Eurasia's 'constitutive parts' (see also Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, 1994, p. 22) – one through which Russia as the so-called 'motherland' has sought to exert power over its various 'younger siblings' (Laarman, 2013, p. 1233) (see also chapter 4 on temporal identity).

6.3.2 The Belarusian response: 'brothers' but with boundaries

To the extent that this has been advantageous to Belarusian state interests, the Belarusian leadership has reciprocated Russia's fraternal kinship rhetoric. For example, whilst facing unprecedented regime instability during the 2020 electoral protests, Lukashenko (id8100, 2020) – in particular need of Russian financial and political aid – stated that '[the protests] show us that [Belarus] needs to be closer to its older brother and needs to cooperate on all issues'. Lukashenko then went on to call Russia and Belarus 'a brotherly peoples or, in fact, *one* people', thanking the Russian president for 'demonstrating that the Belarusian borders are the borders of the Union State and no one is allowed to rattle weapons there'. It was thus that Lukashenko reinterpreted the electoral protests as events caused by 'external involvement' rather than being driven by domestic dissatisfaction with the regime. Unsurprisingly, this interpretation was eagerly reciprocated by Russian government actors; for example, when Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov argued that the protests in Belarus were the result of 'Western colleagues pursuing geopolitical gains […] [thereby] causing ethnic discord […] between fraternal nations' (Kazharski & Kubová, 2021, p. 265).

Elsewhere, at a 2014 meeting with Putin, Lukashenko (id8149, 2014) similarly referred to Russia as 'a brotherly state and [Belarus's] closest reliable ally', stating that 'it was together with Great Russia and the fraternal Russian people that we achieved the difficult but necessary victory in the Great Patriotic War'. Likewise, at a celebration of the ten-year anniversary of the Union State, Lukashenko (id8167, 2009) argued that 'the rapprochement of two fraternal peoples is worthy of appreciation', thanking the Orthodox clergy for 'their fruitful efforts to promote Belarusian-Russian spiritual unity […] which has glued together [the Belarusian and Russian people] […] and has offered a strong basis to execute the will of the peoples of Belarus and Russia to live together as one family'. At various other moments, Lukashenko has similarly celebrated the 'spiritual unity of the Russian and Belarusian peoples' (id8180, 2007), emphasized that 'Russia is

not just a strategic partner […] but a brotherly state' (id8173, 2008), portrayed the Union State as a 'partnership between brothers' (id8144, 2015), and so on.

Importantly, however, this fraternal kinship narrative is only one side of the discursive medal. Parallel to the fraternity narrative, Belarusian state actors have also begun to employ a more contentious discourse – particularly from the 2010s onwards – in which they have sought to counterbalance the influence of Russian language, culture, and soft power in Belarus (Marin, 2020, p. 36; Ioffe, 2007). Anaïs Marin (2020, p. 47) explains, however, that official state support for Belarusianisation has been moderate so far – 'after all, the Lukashenko regime has built its legitimacy on pro-Russian values and worldviews which are exactly opposite to the Belarusophile ones, it will [thus] have to continue […] balancing the influence of the "Russian World" narrative, while at the same time being cautious not to offend the Russian leadership'.

6.3.3 Belarus as a 'primitive' or 'savage' version of the Russian Self

Notably, Russian foreign policy actors have strengthened the kinship imagery through an additional albeit less-popularized narrative of temporal liminality that portrays Belarus as a 'primitive' or 'savage' version of the Russian Self. Chapter 2 on civilizational leitmotifs explained how the trope of the 'savage' has oftentimes been used in civilizational discourses to create a hierarchical taxonomy – ranging from savagery to civilization – to reify different *stages* of societal development (Salter, 2002, p. 16). In these temporal discourses, the 'savage' – 'unrestrained by "civility" and thus closer to an animal state' – has been conceived as redeemable and capable of being molded into a 'civilized' individual (Salter, 2002, pp. 20–22).

The figure of the 'savage' has occasionally resurfaced in Russia's liminal framing of Belarus. On the one hand, the Belarusian state has been derogatively portrayed as an underdeveloped entity 'stuck' in the Soviet past, yet – at the same time – it is precisely this state of 'temporal immobility'

that at times has been romanticized in Russian discourses on Belarus.[44] Aliaksei Kazharski and Monika Kubová (2021, p. 260) explain that Russia's mental map of Belarus is informed by 'a romanticized image of a small, hard-working people, whose strict but wise leader […] preserved the best parts of the Soviet social and economic system' (see also Feduta, 2005). This imagery of Belarus, they write, 'became a projection of what Russians themselves felt they lacked at home', especially in the immediate period after the Soviet collapse.

A State Duma report (id0282, 2012) laments, for example, that 'the new elites [in the countries that once made up the former USSR] are no longer nostalgic for the USSR […] and their desire for integration is much weaker'. The report then goes on to celebrate Belarus for being 'an exception to this rule'. Just as easily, however, another State Duma report (id0287, 2016) reads that 'Eurasian integration is not at all based on nostalgic memories of the common Soviet past but – rather – on an objective historical process based on political pragmatism and economic expediency'. This same report scolds Belarus for its 'declining economic output'.

Here and elsewhere, Belarus is both derogatively framed as a country that is 'stuck' in an earlier stage of societal development whilst also being celebrated for supposedly preserving the 'Russo-Soviet heritage' better than Russia itself (Kazharski, 2018, p. 2). Arguably, in so doing, this temporal frame has offered Russian foreign policy actors a 'controlled' environment to give expression to post-communist nostalgia in Russian society – *controlled* because Russian state actors have continuously coupled the romanticized image of Belarus, and a 'yearning for the past' that underlies it, with a cautioning rhetoric that portrays Belarus as having *failed* in its so-called 'post-Soviet' transition.[45] In other words, even when this narrative may have carved out a discursive space to express a yearning for the past, Russian foreign policy actors have consistently paired these

[44] See section 6.5 below on counternarratives for a further exploration of the ways in which Russian state actors have relied on negative portrayals of Belarus in their foreign policy language.
[45] For further examples, see section 6.5 on negative counternarratives below.

expressions of nostalgia with a strong sidenote that Belarus is unequivocally 'worse off' than Russia.[46]

Thus, the notion of temporal liminality may have offered Russian foreign policy actors a discursive tool to come to terms with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Adopting Turner's understanding of liminality as 'becomingness' (see also Mälksoo, 2012), Russian foreign policy actors have consistently sought to frame the period after the Soviet collapse as a temporary limbo, or 'liminal' phase, to be surpassed through Russia's various (re-)integration projects in the Eurasian sphere. In this discourse, Russian foreign policy actors have employed the notion of liminality to frame the period after Soviet collapse as a transitory state of inbetweenness, one that occurs – Fiona McConnell (2017, p. 141) explains – 'after separation and the removal of social status, and before reincorporation into society with a new status' (see also Gennep, 1960). As the paragraphs above have demonstrated, Belarus has occupied a special place in this discourse of temporal liminality – featuring as Russia's closest 'fraternal' partner and loyal second, whilst Russia stars as the 'great (re)unifier' of Eurasian space. Importantly, however, to the extent that even Russian-Belarusian relations have failed to move towards any substantive form of integration, this relationship has ultimately acted as a barometer of the wider failure of Russia to integrate the CIS region after the Soviet collapse.

6.4 Ethical liminality: a community of Eastern Slavs, the triune nation, and the katechon

Building on the discourses of spatial and temporal liminality, Russian foreign policy actors have moreover framed Belarus as an *'ethical' liminal* – depicting the Russian and Belarusian peoples as bound together by 'normative' and 'spiritual' commonalities. Through this ethical frame, Russian

[46] Notably, this is part of the case for not seriously proceeding with the Union State because it does not make economic sense for Russia to pursue far-reaching integration with Minsk, because both countries' economic reform processes after the collapse of the Soviet Union have diverged too much (also see section 6.5 below).

government actors have sought to portray Belarus (and Ukraine) as 'subsidiaries' of a Russian-led normative community, supposedly tied together by a shared 'cultural code', the Eastern Orthodox faith, and the Russian language. The following paragraphs demonstrate how Russian foreign policy actors have used such notions as a 'community of Eastern Slavs', the 'triune nation' and the 'katechon' to portray Belarus as a subordinate part of the Russian nation.

6.4.1 A Russian-led 'community of Eastern Slavs' and the 'triune nation'

The narrative surrounding a 'community of Eastern Slavs' stems from the 19th century Russian imperial imagination (Tolz, 1998b; Plokhy, 2006; Shevel, 2011). Whilst most nations and tribes of the Russian empire were allowed to retain their respective identities, there were two important exceptions – 'Ukrainians ["Little Russians"] and Belarusians ["White Russians"] were officially recognized as two segments of the great Russian nation, returned to its bosom after centuries of foreign oppression and therefore in need of brotherly help and support to make them proper Russians' (Savchenko, 2009, p. 39). It was thus that Russia came to portray the linguistic and confessional differences that existed between Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine as 'contaminants brought by centuries of foreign domination and in need of correction by means of government intervention' (Weeks, 1996, pp. 71–72; Savchenko, 2009, p. 39).

A similar frame has been adopted in Russian foreign policy under the Putin regime. This ethico-spatial narrative gained particular traction with the onset of the color revolutions and has since culminated in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Through this particular discourse, Russian foreign policy actors have sought to provide a smokescreen for Russia's irredentist ambitions towards the countries that once made up the former USSR, re-framing Moscow as a 'benevolent force' driving out foreign and dangerous contaminants from Belarusian and Ukrainian society. Notably, a clear example of this narrative can be found in Russia's war rhetoric vis-à-vis Ukraine, which has sought to legitimize Russia's aggression by framing Ukrainian society as being in need of 'liberation' from 'fascist' elements. An article published by Vladimir

Putin (2021) titled 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians' provides an unusually clear roadmap to this revisionist narrative.[47]

In this particular essay, Putin writes extensively about the so-called 'community of Eastern Slavs', as he unpacks the Russian notion of a Moscow-led 'triune nation' that supposedly incorporates Belarus and Ukraine into the Russian 'motherland'. Throughout the text, Putin refers to Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus as 'a single whole' and 'a triune people' comprising 'Great Russians', 'White Russians', and 'Little Russians'. According to Putin, 'the division that emerged in recent years […] between parts of what is essentially the same historical and spiritual space […] is the consequence of deliberate efforts by forces that have always sought to undermine our unity'. He continues: 'The formula they apply has been known since ancient times – to divide and conquer […] and to pit the constitutive parts of one single people against one another'. He ends his essay with a long revisionist tangent in which he argues that 'Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians are all descendants of Ancient Rus […] bound together by one language […], economic ties, […] and the Orthodox faith', whilst Moscow supposedly constitutes 'the center of reunification that has continued the tradition of ancient Russian statehood'.

Similarly, an article published by the Kremlin (id1434, 2017) refers to Belarus as a sub-component of the 'all-Slavic' civilization, while pointing to Russia as the 'unifying force of all Slavs' and the 'spiritual center' of the Eurasian space. Adopting a similar rhetoric, a document published by the Russian Ministry of Defense (id0253, 2017) describes 'ancient Rus' as the 'first East Slavic state' and the 'spiritual center' of contemporary Russia. Elsewhere, a State Duma report (id0291, 2015) argues that 'all East Slavic peoples come from a common root […] called Kievan Rus and therefore are incorporated into the Russian World'. The report then reads that 'even the word "Belarusian" contains at its very root the word "Russian"', arguing that Belarusians and Ukrainians therefore 'belong to live in a single Russian World and a single Slavic nation'.

[47] Published July 2021, this essay is not formally part of the corpus (which consists of Russian foreign policy documents published between 2000 and 2020). The essay has nonetheless been included because it provides an unusually clear roadmap to Russia's revisionist narrative surrounding a 'triune nation'.

A recurring ethico-spatial leitmotif found in Russian discourses vis-à-vis Belarus (and Ukraine) is thus that the 'community of Eastern Slavs' – which in the Kremlin's imagination consists of Russians, Belarusian, and Ukrainians – supposedly shares a cultural, moral, and spiritual code which has made them inherently entangled, thereby offering a legitimizing basis to the liminal claim that these communities 'belong' to coexist in a unified space. In this ethico-spatial narrative, Moscow has featured as the 'Great Unifier', supposedly carrying the moral burden of righting the historical wrongs of 'post-Soviet' disintegration.

Needless to say, this understanding of the Russian state as a 'triune nation' of Eastern Slavs is fraught with tensions. First and foremost, in adopting a non-Westphalian understanding of Russia as a 'civilizational' or 'spiritual' entity that supposedly transcends the current borders of the Russian Federation, the concept of a 'triune nation' necessarily entails an irredentist and expansionist claim to the sovereign territories of other nation states. Vera Tolz (1998b, p. 1000) explains how Russian foreign policy actors have sought to resolve this problem by framing the so-called 'community of Eastern Slavs' as being bound together by *primordial* qualities, thereby circumventing any need for *voluntary* membership. Thus, Tolz writes, 'it does not matter for them whether Ukrainians [or Belarusians] also believe that they share a common national identity with Russians' – a fact regrettably confirmed by Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Secondly, by framing Russia as an *ethnically* defined community of Eastern Slavic peoples, the notion of a triune nation raises the 'dangerous' question to what extent non-Slavic groups fit into the Russian nation, potentially undermining the cohesion of Russia's ethno-federal structure (Shevel, 2011, p. 189). As chapter 7 on Russian discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan explains, Russia's supposed 'celebration' of multi-ethnicity in the 'Eurasian' space, on the one hand, and the implied primacy of ethnic Russians or 'Eastern Slavs', on the other, remains an insurmountable contradiction in contemporary discourses of identity and state-building in Russia. The chapter on Russian discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan (chapter 7) demonstrates how Russian foreign policy actors have nonetheless attempted to resolve this particular tension.

6.4.2 The katechon: the Russo-Belarusian axis as a 'stabilizing force' in world affairs

Alongside the ethico-spatial narrative surrounding a 'community of Eastern Slavs', Russian foreign policy actors have also employed an *ethico-temporal* frame that has served to conflate Russian and Belarusian society. In this particular strand of the liminality discourse, Russian foreign policy actors have built on the narrative – discussed in section 6.3 above – that frames the Second World War as a unifying experience in order to portray Russia and Belarus as a single katechontic force in world affairs. Chapter 5 on the construction of an ethical identity explained how the notion of the katechon has been at the center of a new wave of conservatism and anti-westernism in Russia. Finding its roots in biblical literature, the katechon represents a figure that supposedly constrains chaos and restores order in the world (Hell, 2009; Hell & Schönle, 2010; Engström, 2014; Lewis, 2020). Russian foreign policy actors have eagerly adopted this katechontic frame to portray their country as a stabilizing force in world affairs, or in Schmittean terms, as a retainer (*Aufhalter*) – the figure holding down the chaos that pushes up from below (Schmitt, 1941; Taubes, 2004, p. 103).

A discursive analysis of the corpus reveals that Russian foreign policy actors have similarly employed the notion of the katechon in their discourse vis-à-vis Belarus. In this particular strand of Russia's ethical liminality discourse, Moscow has sought to conflate Russian and Belarusian society by presenting the two nations as one single katechontic force. This narrative has two distinct branches: a *historical* branch which is used to reify a Russian-Belarusian 'katechon' as Europe's savior and liberator from Nazism and a *contemporary* branch which is used to extend this frame to the present-day by portraying Russia and Belarus as a single 'stabilizing force' on the European continent.

The historical branch of Russia's katechontic narrative appears, for example, in a 2015 speech by Vladimir Putin (id8143, 2015) in which he argues that 'our people' – referring explicitly to Russians and Belarusian as a single entity – 'fought Nazism shoulder to shoulder and suffered the hardest trials'. Despite these tribulations, Putin continues, 'we did not yield to the aggressors

and expelled the enemy not only from our own land but also liberated the European countries from the brown plague'. Elsewhere, discussing the Russian-Belarusian 'special friendship', Putin (id8101, 2020) states that 'our fathers and grandfathers defended our native land, liberated Europe, and firmly defended and will continue to defend the historical truth about that war'. Similarly, in a 2014 speech, Putin (id8149, 2014) maintains that 'our fathers and grandfathers won because they fought together, and this tradition is being respected – to this day, Russia and Belarus continue to strengthen their ties within the framework of the Union State […] and I am convinced that the unity of the peoples of Russia and Belarus, and the stability and prosperity that comes with it, is what the heroes of the Great Patriotic War fought for and dreamed of'. In these various examples, Russian foreign policy actors consistently portray Russia and Belarus as Europe's katechontic liberators.

The contemporary branch of Russia's katechontic narrative emerges, on the other hand, in a speech by Duma deputy and commissioner of human rights Tatyana Moskalkova (id2948, 2016), who argues that 'in today's world we must do everything we can to keep the fragile peace on earth', pointing to the Russian-Belarusian Union State and the 'friendship between our parliaments […] and peoples' as a driving force behind stability in global affairs. In a similar vein, Dmitry Medvedev (id8158, 2012) states that the 'centuries-old tradition of friendship [between Russia and Belarus], our common spiritual roots, and the glorious pages of our joint history […] serve to strengthen pan-European stability and security'. In another speech, Medvedev (id8163, 2011) similarly maintains that Russian-Belarusian efforts to 'strengthen the democratic foundations of statehood and to protect human rights and freedoms […] is the driving force behind stability and security on the European continent'.

A key realm in which Russian state actors have employed this contemporary katechontic frame is energy relations. In a bilateral meeting with the Belarusian leadership, Putin (id8181, 2007) argued, for example, that Russia and Belarus 'make a significant contribution to the stabilization of the European energy market […] and the fraternal, truly close relationship between Russia and

Belarus functions as an absolute authority [across the European continent]'. Here and elsewhere, Russian government actors frame Russia and Belarus as jointly 'stabilizing' or 'feeding' Europe through energy supplies, thereby making a contribution to the socio-political stability of the European continent. This particular katechontic frame is eagerly reciprocated by the Belarusian leadership. In response to Putin's remarks, for example, Lukashenko (id8181, 2007) argued that Belarus and Russia 'are committed to ensuring that Western Europe – rich or poor – feels stable in its energy supplies'. He then continued that – due to their shared position in the energy market – Belarus and Russia 'make an enormous contribution to economic and sociopolitical stability in the European Union and on the European continent as a whole'. And because of this katechontic role, or so Lukashenko argues, 'Belarus and Russia expect the same adequate treatment by Europe in return'.

Elsewhere, Belarusian state actors similarly reciprocate the *historical* branch of the katechontic narrative. In a 2014 meeting with Vladimir Putin, for example, Lukashenko (d8149, 2014) argued that 'only through the unity of the multinational Soviet people […] who stood up for the common Fatherland was it possible to defeat a powerful, hitherto invincible enemy, […] freeing all mankind from the threat of fascist enslavement'. Similarly, in a 2013 meeting with Putin, Lukashenko (id8154, 2013) maintained that 'the Great Patriotic War […] is not only our common history and common pain, but also our greatest asset and common pride', referring to the 'shared Russian-Belarusian victory' as 'the key to a successful future for our countries'.

Notably, both for the Russian and the Belarusian leadership, the katechontic discourse has offered some important perlocutionary outcomes. Not only has it legitimized a negative portrayal of 'the West' as the cause behind instability and chaos in global affairs, but it has also enabled both countries' leaderships to set the parameters of allowed civic action in their respective domestic (and regional) contexts. After all, the 'anti-Nazi' frame has allowed both Putin and Lukashenko to invalidate domestic political opposition as supposed 'fascist collaborators' (see also Kazharski & Makarychev, 2021, p. 2). In the case of Putin, the katechontic narrative has moreover offered

international perlocutionary outcomes, providing the Kremlin with a legitimizing narrative for Russia's 2022 military invasion of Ukraine by presenting Russia's aggression as a so-called 'fight against fascism'.

6.5 Negative counternarratives: parasitism and the 'economization' of Russian foreign policy

Parallel to the positive narratives that frame Belarus as a spatial, temporal, and ethical 'liminal', Russian foreign policy actors have also employed various negative counternarratives. Bahar Rumelili (2012, p. 496) explains how liminals are often perceived as threats – because, 'as entities that are neither here nor there, they undermine the categorical distinctions that social structures rely on'. Thus, embedded in the concept of liminality is a certain unease and 'unsettling-ness' (McConnell, 2017; V. W. Turner, 1969). In the Russian case, this 'unsettling-ness' has been expressed through a negative counternarrative that frames Belarus as 'parasitical' and 'needy'. Naturally, the parallel representations of Belarus found in Russian foreign policy are fraught with paradox. On the one hand, Russian foreign policy actors have sought to 'lock' Belarus into a relationship of dependence by framing the country as an 'in-between' category or 'appendix' that ambiguously falls both *inside* and *outside* the boundaries of the Russian nation. On the other hand, they have criticized this relationship of dependence by negatively portraying the Belarusian state as an entity that somehow expects 'special treatment' from Russia, for example, through energy subsidies.

In a 2018 speech, for instance, Putin (id8111, 2018) portrayed his country as 'altruistically' providing aid to Belarus, whilst blaming Minsk for 'parasitically' wanting to extract financial support from Russia. 'To our own detriment', Putin states, 'Russia has been financing a nuclear power plant in Belarus, rather than supplying Minsk with gas'. Similarly, in a 2010 videoblog (id9028), Dmitry Medvedev states that 'Russia has always helped the Belarusian people'. He continues that 'since the collapse of the Soviet Union, which happened almost 20 years ago, the

volume of this support […] has been substantial. This year alone, due to preferential oil supplies, our assistance to Belarus amounted to almost two billion dollars […] We do all this because we are convinced that our peoples are inextricably linked. Therefore, it is especially surprising that the leadership of Belarus has recently adopted an anti-Russian rhetoric'.

Belarusian state actors – in turn – have incessantly sought to delegitimize Russia's parasitism narrative. In a meeting with Vladimir Putin in 2008, for example, Lukashenko (id8173, 2008) stated that he 'publicly wants to break down any insinuation […] about the fact that Belarus is on its knees crawling to the Kremlin to beg for something'. Lukashenko continues that he 'wants to say right away that we are absolutely not going to ask for anything today. I just want to remind people that Belarus has always been the "assembly shop" […] of the Russian economy. And if our economy were to stop functioning, mass unemployment would follow in Russia'. Similarly, in a 2014 meeting with Putin, Lukashenko (id3246, 2014) argued that 'Belarus has not come [to Moscow] with stretched out hands […] we do not want to squeeze anything out of Russia […] and if our Russian brothers ever need anything, we will always lend a hand'.

Importantly, the rise of the parasitism narrative in Russian foreign policy discourse has coincided with various conflicts in Russian-Belarusian affairs, particularly in 2004, 2007, and 2010. During these conflicts, 'a key area of contention has been the price of oil and gas supplies to Belarus as Russia has gradually sought to reduce the level of subsidy it provides to its neighbor' (Nice, 2013, p. 6). This change in the Kremlin's geo-economic approach towards Minsk has coincided with a 'broader shift in Russia's approach towards the near-abroad through which it has sought to put relations on a more commercial footing, whilst pushing to acquire control over "strategic" industrial assets and pipelines' (Nice, 2013, p. 6). This 'commercialization', or 'economization' of Russian foreign policy vis-à-vis the countries that once made up the former USSR has been most explicitly captured in Moscow's wish for 'equal profitability'. This policy was announced by the Kremlin in 2006 and has sought to gradually raise gas prices across the CIS space to levels paid by the European Union (Klinke, 2008; Meister, 2010).

Ian Klinke (2008, pp. 118–120) explains how the parasitism narrative rests on an understanding of Belarus opposite to the one driving the kinship narrative – 'it has (1) represented Belarus as a parasite on Russia's economy, (2) emphasized Belarus' role as a fully sovereign state and a burden to Russia, (3) constructed the […] the Union State as a failure, [and] (4) urged the Kremlin to be more concerned with its economic gains vis-à-vis Minsk'. Through this parasitism narrative, Russia has portrayed Belarus as 'a sovereign and essentially separate state, an act that carves Belarus off of its "Russian brother" on the mental geopolitical map' (Klinke, 2008). Importantly, however, this parasitism narrative has existed *alongside* Russia's positive discourse of liminality, demonstrating the ambiguity embedded in the liminal concept which has allowed Russia to frame Belarus both as an inseparable, fraternal appendix *and* a fully sovereign, parasitical state. Whilst the parasitism narrative may represent the 'real' view of a Russia frustrated by a Belarus that has not complied with Moscow's wishes, the fraternal frame may be seen as an 'aspirational' state of being – one that has proven useful both internationally and domestically for the purpose of status branding by presenting Russia as the hegemon of 'post-Soviet reintegration'.

6.6 Discursive audiences and objectives

The various discursive strands discussed in the sections above have targeted a wide variety of audiences (see figure 6.2 for an overview). In the *spatial* domain, the 'near abroad' narrative, which has sought to 'lock' neighboring states into a (forced) position of 'historical' and 'cultural' proximity to Russia, appears to speak not only to a regional 'Eurasian' audience but also to a *domestic* Russian audience. In claiming some kind of *extraterritorial* authority over the countries that once made up the former USSR, the 'near abroad' narrative may have offered Russian foreign policy actors a discursive tool to manage domestic anxieties around a (mis)recognition of Russia's 'great power' status after the Soviet collapse.

Similarly, the 'Union State' narrative – which frames the supposed 'territorial merger' between Russia and Belarus as a model for Russia's wider integrational thrust across the 'Eurasian'

region – seems to speak to both a regional 'Eurasian' audience (by portraying Russia as the 'Great Unifier') *and* a domestic Russian audience (by playing into tropes surrounding Russia's 'state-forming' character and the 'great mission' of the Russian people to unite and consolidate civilization)[48].

The spatial 'buffer zone' narrative – on the other hand – may have been primarily directed towards what Russia calls the 'collective West' – providing Russian foreign policy actors with a useful 'geopolitical script' through which they have sought to frame NATO as an aggressor in international affairs. Through this particular spatial strand, the Kremlin has been able to position itself as being threatened by an expansionist and hostile 'West', whilst Belarus has featured as the *de facto* border between Russia and NATO territory.

In the *temporal* domain, in turn, the 'fraternal kinship' narrative appears to have been narrowly directed towards a *Belarusian* audience. Particularly in periods of conflict between Moscow and Minsk, Russian foreign policy actors have made a clear distinction between the Belarusian *regime* and its *subjects*. Thus, more often than not, the 'brotherly' bond of which Russian government actors speak has pointed towards the 'fraternal Belarusian *people'* rather than the Belarusian *regime* (see also Klinke, 2008, p. 116). However, there has been one key moment during which the Russian and Belarusian regime have *converged* in their use of the kinship narrative, i.e. both sides employed the notion of 'fraternity' to limit the subversive potential of the 2020 electoral protests in Belarus.

As Aliaksei Kazharski and Monika Kubová (2021, p. 265) explain, the fraternity narrative allowed both Lukashenko and Putin to reinterpret events in such a way that it denied the Belarusian people a role that could transgress Belarus' traditional image of a reliable ally and fraternal nation, thereby re-establishing the unity of social and political order in Belarus and Russia. After all, by relying on the fraternity narrative whilst discussing the 2020 electoral protests, both Putin and Lukashenko undermined 'the very idea that the threat to the established order could come from

[48] See chapter 3 on the spatial construction of a Eurasian identity for a further discussion of Russia's so-called 'spatial mission' to consolidate a 'Eurasian' civilization; also see chapter 5 on the ethical construction of a Eurasian identity for the 'messianic' implications that are embedded in this discourse.

within Belarusian society. Instead, the supposed cause of the protests was externalized, placed beyond this shared social order, and ascribed to the Western other. This, in effect, drew a line, situating Russia and Belarus as friends and brothers on one side, and the Western antagonists who were trying to undermine this relationship on the other' (Kazharski & Kubová, 2021, p. 266).

The second temporal strand has sought to portray Belarus as a 'less-developed' version of the Russian Self through a traditional civilizational frame of savagery and primitivity. Logically, this particular narrative has had less discursive purchasing power in a Belarusian context. However, Russian foreign policy actors may have sought to target a Russian domestic audience through this particular representation of Belarus. By coupling a *romanticized* image of Belarus as 'temporally immobile' or 'stuck' in the past with a cautioning rhetoric that portrays Belarus as having *failed* in its so-called 'post-Soviet' transition, this narrative may have offered Russian foreign policy actors a *controlled* environment in which they could give expression to post-communist nostalgia in Russian society. Importantly, any yearning for the Soviet past has consistently been paired with a strong cautionary sidenote that Belarus – whilst it may have preserved the 'Russo-Soviet heritage' better than Russia itself – has been unequivocally 'worse off' than Russia since the Soviet collapse. The logic behind this discursive move may have been to take the 'political edge' off of communist nostalgia – creating a discursive outlet to express a certain yearning for the past, whilst simultaneously silencing any 'dangerous' perlocutionary effects this discourse may cause (e.g. mass-discontent with the post-Soviet regime).

Finally, in the *ethical* domain, the narrative that portrays Belarus (and Ukraine) as a sub-element of a Russian-led 'community of Eastern Slavs' appears to have been targeted both towards a regional 'Eurasian' audience, a domestic Russian audience, and a 'Western' audience. Through this narrative, Russian foreign policy actors have framed their country as a 'benevolent' force driving out foreign 'contaminants' from Belarusian (and Ukrainian) society. It has thus offered Russian state actors a useful geopolitical script that legitimizes Russian interventionism by framing Moscow's intentions in the neighboring states as an 'altruistic' move to protect them from a

dangerous and corrupting 'West'. The 'katechontic' narrative – in turn – has portrayed the Russian-Belarusian axis as a 'stabilizing' force in global affairs, which has ultimately sought to target a domestic Russian and regional 'Eurasian' audience – setting the parameters of allowed civic action in and beyond the Russian Federation by equating political dissidence with 'fascist collaboration'.

Finally, the negative counternarrative which has portrayed Belarus as 'parasitically' extracting support from Russia appears to predominantly target the Belarusian *regime*. Through this narrative, Russian foreign policy actors have sought to signal to the Belarusian leadership that 'Russia [is no longer willing] to subsidize the economies of post-Soviet states that show questionable loyalty' (Meister, 2010). Instead, Stefan Meister (2010) argues, 'it seeks to award credits for those who meet clear political demands and pave the way for Russian firms to take over strategic branches of the economies of neighboring countries'. Figure 6.2 below provides an overview of the various narratives, their intended audiences, and accompanying representations of Russia and Belarus.

Discursive strand	**Intended audience**	**Representation of Russia**	**Representation of Belarus**
Spatial narrative *'near abroad'*	• Regional 'Eurasian' audience • Domestic Russian audience	• Russia as 'civilizational entity' that 'transcends' the boundaries of the nation-state	• Belarus as semi-sovereign 'appendix' to the Russian nation
Spatial narrative *'Union State'*	• Regional 'Eurasian' audience • Domestic Russian audience	• Russia as 'Great Unifier' of the so-called 'post-Soviet' region	• Integration with Belarus as 'model' for re-integration across the so-called 'post-Soviet' space
Spatial narrative *'Buffer zones'*	• 'Collective West'	• Russia as threatened by expansionist and hostile 'West'	• Belarus as *de facto* border between Russia and NATO territory
Temporal narrative *'Fraternal kinship'*	• 'The Belarusian *people*'	• Russia as 'elder sibling' or 'parental figure'	• Belarus as 'younger sibling' whose main ambition is to reunite with its 'elder brother'
Temporal narrative *Belarus as 'primitive'*	• Domestic Russian audience	• Russia as successfully completing its post-communist transition	• Belarus as residing in an earlier stage of societal development
Ethical narrative *'Triune nation'*	• Regional 'Eurasian' audience • Domestic Russian audience • 'Collective West'	• Russia as 'benevolent' force driving out foreign 'contaminants' from Belarusian society	• Belarus as sub-element of the Russian-led 'community of Eastern Slavs'
Ethical narrative *'Katechon'*	• Domestic Russian audience • Regional 'Eurasian' audience	• The Russo-Belarusian axis as a stabilizing force in international politics	
Counternarrative *'Parasitism'*	• 'The Belarusian *regime*' • Domestic Russian audience	• Russia as 'altruistically' providing aid to Belarus	• Belarus as 'parasitically' extracting support from Russia

Figure 6.2 An overview of the discursive strands, their intended audiences, and accompanying representations of Russia and Belarus.

6.7 Conclusion

To conclude, the discursive analysis presented in this chapter unpacked the various ways in which Russian foreign policy actors have employed the notion of liminality to present Belarus not as a non-Self, or Other, but as a lesser 'Self' (See also Rumelili, 2012, p. 498). More specifically, the chapter demonstrated how Russian actors have employed the notion of liminality to present Belarus as a *sub-element* of a 'Russian civilization' rather than a sovereign state in its own right, thereby conflating Self/Other distinctions in their foreign policy discourse.

The chapter argued that this liminal frame has been articulated in three distinct ways (see figure 6.3 below for a visualization of the discursive field): (i) liminality has been expressed *spatially* by propagating that the Russian nation reaches beyond the current borders of the Russian Federation, thereby territorially encapsulating Belarus (and Ukraine) into the Russian nation-state through such notions as the 'near abroad', the 'Union State', and the concept of 'buffer zones'; (ii) liminality has been expressed *temporally* through a narrative that frames Belarus as Russia's 'younger brother', or 'lesser Self', thereby ambiguously portraying Belarus as an entity that falls both *within* and *outside* Russia's domestic sphere; and (iii) liminality has been expressed *ethically* through ethico-spatial concepts such as the 'triune nation' and ethico-temporal concepts such as 'katechon', which have sought to frame Belarus as a *sub-component* of a Russian-led normative community, or an 'all-Russian' civilization. Alongside these liminal portrayals of Belarus, Russian foreign policy actors have pursued a counternarrative through which they have sought to portray the Belarusian state as 'parasitically' trying to extract benefits from the Russian Federation.

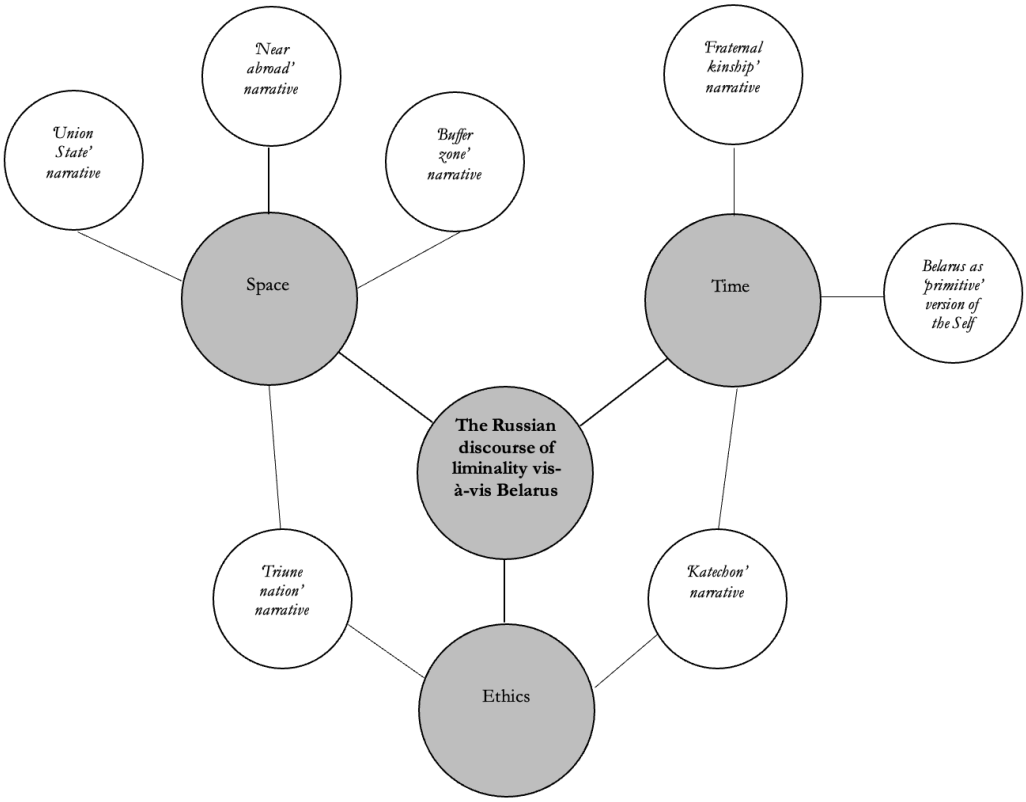


Figure 6.3 A visualization of the Russian discourse of liminality vis-à-vis Belarus

Whilst the discursive analysis focused on *contemporary* iterations of Russia's discourse of liminality, the narratives explored throughout the chapter build on a long 'usable past'. As the opening citations by Vasily Klyuchevsky and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn demonstrated, 'both tsarist-era and Soviet-era […] historiographies promoted the idea that Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians were three "branches" of the same people' (Shevel, 2011, p. 188). It was thus that Klyuchevsky could refer to Belarus as a 'constitutive part of the Russian nationality' and Solzhenitsyn could call on the Belarusian people 'not as outsiders but as my own'. In line with these earlier representations of Belarus, the discursive analysis demonstrated, contemporary Russian foreign policy actors have similarly framed Belarus as a semi-sovereign appendix to the Russian nation and part of the innermost core of Russia's civilizational concept.

The chapters that follow explore how Russian foreign policy actors have widened this 'civilizational frame' in their discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan in chapter 7 and China in chapter 8. Thus, whilst this chapter explored the discursive construction of an 'all-Russian' civilization of

which Belarus – according to Moscow's logic – constitutes a liminal sub-element, the Kazakhstan case study will demonstrate how Russian foreign policy actors have framed their country as a 'civilizational' leader of *regional* proportions, whereas the China case study will unpack how Russian actors have positioned their country as a civilizational actor of *global* magnitude.

Chapter 7

'A Regional Civilization':

The Russian Discourse of (De)securitization vis-à-vis Kazakhstan

'Does Russia need muftis? […] one may as well ask: "should the Russian government support anti-Russian elements in Russia?" […] before the reign of Empress Catherine II […] there were no muftis as powerful heads of the Mohammedans in Russia. Only due to Catherine's passion for western pernicious principles of godless religious tolerance […] did we allow the first mufti to be established. Before the establishment of these muftis, the Mohammedans in Russia did not yet constitute a whole, united, separate state within the state, as they do now.'

– Evstafiy Nikolaevich Voronets, 1891[49]

7.1 Introduction

With the collapse of communism, Kazakhstan became the second-largest independent state amongst the countries that once made up the former USSR, next only to the Russian Federation. Considering Kazakhstan's landmass and relative economic strength compared to the other newly independent states, Mikhail Alexandrov (1999, p. ix) argues that – particularly in the immediate period following Soviet collapse – the 'geopolitical equilibrium on the Eurasian mainland depend[ed] to a large degree on relations between Russia and Kazakhstan'. To this day, Marlene Laruelle (2019, p. 214) claims, 'Russia's status as the pivotal state of the Eurasian space cannot be validated without Kazakhstan playing the role of loyal second'. This chapter explores official discourses surrounding Kazakhstan and – by extension – the wider Central Asian region under the Putin regime. The analysis focuses on two main discursive modalities used in Russian-Eurasian discourses on Kazakhstan and Central Asia – (i) a *securitization* modality through which Russian

[49] Source: E.N. Voronets, Nuzhny li Rossii muftii? (1891), https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Evstafij_Voronec/nuzhny-li-rossii-muftii/

foreign policy actors have sought to frame inter-ethnic and multi-confessional strife as the two main sources of instability in Eurasia's so-called 'Central Asian flank', and (ii) a *de-securitization* modality through which Russian actors have sought to strategically dismantle these threats.

The discursive analysis demonstrates that the spatial and ethical modes of identity construction loom particularly large in the Russian-Eurasian discourse vis-à-vis Kazakhstan. Building on the spatial analysis presented in chapter 3, this chapter deconstructs the ethno-spatial assumption – found in Russian-Eurasian discourses – that a mismatch between ethnic and territorial boundaries is inherently conflict-generating. The chapter moreover explores a spatial imaginary used by Russian foreign policy actors to present their country as a 'Eurasian bridge' connecting European and Muslim worlds, thereby legitimizing their position as 'arbiter of peace' in religious and ethnic conflicts in and beyond Eurasia's so-called 'Central Asian flank'.

The discursive analysis moreover builds on the ethical analysis presented in chapter 5 by exploring the articulation of a 'Muslim threat' in Russian-Eurasian discourses under the Putin regime. The chapter reveals how notions of ethnic and religious identity have tied into the ethical construction of a Eurasian civilizational community. Here, the analysis demonstrates how Russian foreign policy actors have presented an 'exogenous' and supposedly dangerous type of Islam as threatening the stability of the Eurasian continent – a discourse, as demonstrated in this chapter's opening citation, that has long predated Vladimir Putin's accession to power. The analysis moreover reveals that – parallel to the discourse surrounding a 'Muslim threat' – Russian foreign policy actors employ a reconciliatory language of cross-confessional spirituality to unite the religiously diverse 'peoples of Eurasia'. In exploring the language of cross-confessional spirituality, the chapter shows how Russian government actors have attempted to market a Eurasian civilizational model based on Eastern Orthodox values to *non-Christian* constituencies in the Eurasian sphere. Finally, the sections below strengthen the ethico-temporal analysis presented in chapter 5 by exploring how Russian actors employ both strands of the securitization narrative to portray their country as a katechontic stabilizer in Eurasia's Central Asian flank.

Importantly, the concept of securitization that this chapter relies on was first introduced by researchers associated with the Copenhagen School of security studies. Researchers at the Copenhagen School explored the ways in which the discursive construction of 'existential threats' could be used as a tool to legitimize extraordinary measures in the foreign policy domain (Wæver, 1995; Buzan et al., 1998). These researchers defined 'securitization' as a speech act through which a referent object is labelled as existentially threatening, thereby dramatizing the object as an issue of supreme priority (van Munster, 2012). Whilst this chapter builds on elements from securitization theory, the goal is not to narrowly apply the conceptual framework put forward by the Copenhagen School. The analysis relies on the securitization model to the extent that it aims to untangle the main 'threats' that Russian foreign policy actors articulate with reference to Eurasia's 'Central Asian flank', i.e. inter-ethnic violence and religious extremism.

The discursive analysis contrasts these processes of securitization with acts of de-securitization in Russian foreign policy vis-à-vis Kazakhstan. Ultimately, the discursive analysis unpacks how Russian foreign policy actors have instrumentalized their language vis-à-vis Kazakhstan in order to position their country as a necessary stabilizer in a region supposedly overcome by 'inter-ethnic' and 'inter-religious' discord, thereby enabling Russia's wider self-positioning as the hegemon and 'bearer of peace' in a *regional* 'Eurasian' civilization. The chapter ends with an analysis of the target audiences and political objectives underlying these various narratives in Russian foreign policy under the Putin regime.

7.2 Spatio-ethical securitization: territory, ethnicity, and political authority (part I)

The first threat articulated in Russian foreign policy discourse on Kazakhstan and the wider Central Asian region is the notion of 'inter-ethnic strife'. Alexandrov (1999, pp. 228–229) demonstrates that Russian foreign policy actors 'perceive Central Asia as a zone of potential political instability, which [they fear] could spiral out into Russian territory'. Portraying Central Asia as a theater for imminent ethnic conflict, the spatio-ethical narrative of 'inter-ethnic strife' allows

Russia to position itself as a stabilizing force in the so-called tumultuous 'post-Soviet' region. The driving factor behind this discourse is what Madeleine Reeves (2014, p. 57) describes as a 'reflex tendency […] to assume an originary natural "fit" among people, culture, and territory'. This 'ethno-spatial' assumption looms large in Russian foreign policy discourses on Kazakhstan and Central Asia, which systematically foreground the supposedly 'dangerous consequences of [a] "mismatch" between state and ethnic boundaries' (Reeves, 2014, pp. 67–68).

Importantly, this strand of the Russian securitization narrative builds both on spatial and ethical modes of identity construction discussed in the longitudinal analysis. In their discourse vis-à-vis Kazakhstan, Russian foreign policy actors consistently employ a spatial rhetoric to assert political power beyond the borders of the Russian Federation (see chapter 3 on the construction of a spatial identity). Additionally, here and elsewhere, Russian foreign policy actors rely on an ethical frame through which they present their country as a 'bearer of peace and stability'.[50]

Reeves (2014, pp. 80–81, 89–91) explains that the ethno-spatial narrative vis-à-vis Kazakhstan presents the discrepancy between ethnic and territorial boundaries as 'inherently conflict-generating' and argues that the process of ethno-spatial fixing in contemporary Russia is connected to an 'early-Soviet […] fascination with ethnicity's *spatialization*'. The Soviet authorities divided their territory along ethno-spatial lines; by bounding ethnic groups to specific localities, they turned ethnicity partly into a *geographical* category. The urge to assign specific ethnic groups a titular homeland was driven by the belief that inter-ethnic conflict was bound to occur if different ethnicities were to mix. A discursive analysis of the corpus illustrates that this Soviet-era narrative of inter-ethnic conflict, and its underlying ethno-spatial assumption, still resonate in Russian-Eurasian discourses on Kazakhstan and the wider Central Asian region under the Putin regime.

[50] For a more in-depth discussion of this katechontic frame, see the longitudinal analysis in chapter 5, which unpacks the construction of an ethical identity in Russian foreign policy under the Putin regime. See also chapter 8 on Russian discourses vis-à-vis China to understand how a similar portrayal of Russia as a 'bearer of stability' is used with reference to another 'Eurasian' partner country.

A State Duma transcript published in 2014 (id0289), for example, reads that 'if the Russian state wishes to resolve the dangers of ethnic conflict, […] it should assume two levels in its state-territorial structure; the first level should consist of a purely ethnic Russian state, on whose territory the formation of non-ethnic Russian communities ought to be banned.' The second level, or so the document reads, 'should consist of a wider federation, which ought to include Kazakhstan […] and all other territories of the former USSR that fall outside the ethnic Russian state'.[51] In a similar vein, albeit more euphemistically, a document published by the Russian Ministry of Culture (id2119, 2015) equally advocates for 'the unity of the cultural space on the territory of the Russian Federation'. Similarly, a State Duma transcript published in 2013 (id3140) argues that the Russian state 'needs to regulate the cultural presence of non-Russian peoples on the territory of the Russian Federation […] in order to prevent inter-ethnic conflict'.

Importantly, the threat of 'inter-ethnic conflict' is especially emphasized with reference to the Central Asian region. A Kremlin strategy document on socio-economic development in the Southern Federal District (Id0016, 2011), for example, describes the borderland between Russia and Kazakhstan as a region defined by increased threats of terrorism and inter-ethnic strife. The document reads that Russia's 'Central Asian flank' 'is threatened by […] a difficult multi-ethnic composition […] and the unregulated influx of foreign low-skilled workers […] has changed the region's ethnic and religious-civilizational structure and blurred the socio-cultural identity of the population'. The document continues that this 'temporary workers syndrome […] has reduced the stability of the settled cultural core and has hindered the development of socio-cultural identity, local self-consciousness, and patriotism'.[52]

[51] Besides the highly controversial segregationist attitude expressed in this State Duma transcript, the document also demonstrates a strong irredentist impulse towards the various countries that once made up the former USSR. See section 7.3 for a further analysis of irredentism in the Russian discourse vis-à-vis Kazakhstan.

[52] This rhetoric is remarkably similar to white supremacist narratives surrounding a 'Great Replacement' found in the United States, a conspiracy theory which suggests that America's white population is consciously being replaced by non-white immigrants.

A strategy document published by the Russian Ministry of Economic Development (id0046, 2019) similarly refers to the borderland between Russia and Kazakhstan as a space defined – first and foremost – by its 'inter-ethnic composition'. The 273-page strategic report systematically foregrounds the need to 'promote interethnic harmony,' 'to preserve and protect the identity of the Russian people', and 'to prevent the spread of extremism' in Russia's Central Asian flank. The document reads that Russia's strategy towards the Central Asian region consists of (i) 'strengthening the civil unity of the population on the basis of Russian socio-cultural values'; (ii) 'ensuring a stable balance of ethno-social and ethno-cultural interests of the region's population and ethnic groups'; (iii) 'strengthening the adherence to an all-Russian identity and the formation of a single cultural space'; and (iv) 'preventing inter-ethnic and ethno-confessional conflicts'.[53]

Here and elsewhere, Russian foreign policy actors present Central Asia as a region overcome by ethnic violence. Importantly, Sergey Abashin (2018) demonstrates, this 'ethnic' label 'essentializes […] the reasons for aggression' and depoliticizes conflict in Central Asia to the advantage of the Russian Federation (see also Reeves, 2014, pp. 89–91). Following Abashin (2018), the Russian practice to label conflict in Central Asia as *ethnically* driven serves three distinct political purposes.

Firstly, it takes responsibility away from the former Soviet authorities, who systematically pitted the Central Asian states against one another and whose unequal distribution of resources has functioned as the root cause for many contemporary tensions and inequalities in the region (Olcott, 1994; Reeves, 2014, pp. 89–91). The language of 'inter-ethnic strife' thus depoliticizes Russia's historic stake in various contemporary tensions in Central Asia, while also providing a legitimizing basis for the current Russian authorities to proceed with similar policies of competitive distribution, once again turning the Central Asian states into 'administrative rivals, competing for

[53] See chapter 6 on Russian discourses vis-à-vis Belarus for a further exploration of the notion of an 'all-Russian' civilizational community, and the *ethnic* implications embedded in this concept.

centrally allocated resources' rather than equal partners in the shared 'Eurasian' region (Olcott, 1994).

Secondly, by framing an ethnically diverse region such as Central Asian as having an *inherent* predisposition for ethnic violence, Russian foreign policy actors can present the Russian Federation as a necessary stabilizer in the region. Reeves (2014, p. 92) demonstrates that the language of 'inter-ethnic strife' legitimizes 'practices of anticipation', thereby validating Russian intervention in Central Asia before conflict actually appears. Russian foreign policy actors eagerly employ this so-called 'preventative imperative' (ibid.), presenting the Russian Federation as the katechontic mediator in a region that is 'inherently' prone to ethnic violence.[54] The language of 'inter-ethnic strife' thus provides a legitimizing basis for Russia's continued military and political presence in Kazakhstan and the wider Central Asian region. One of the strategy documents cited above clearly articulates this katechontic motive when it describes Russia's long-term strategic goal as 'being a stronghold of stability and constructive Russian influence in the Caucasus macro-region, the Black Sea, and Caspian Sea regions […] which require the development of human potential through the harmonization of inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations' (id0016, 2011).

Thirdly, by celebrating the multi-ethnic character of the Eurasian region *only* insofar as the various ethnic minorities remain *within* their titular homelands, this narrative solves a fundamental tension in Eurasian discourses under the Putin regime; it reveals how Russian foreign policy actors can confidently combine a narrative that *celebrates* the multi-ethnic character of the Eurasian community with a discourse that *criticizes* multiculturalism in 'the West',[55] as it portrays multi-ethnicity as something that can only be commended if the relevant ethnic groups stay within their designated enclaves or homelands. Compared to these moderately positive representations of multi-ethnicity in the Eurasian sphere, Russian government actors consistently criticize 'Western' multiculturalism, because it encourages ethnic groups to mix, which – taking into account the

[54] See chapter 5 on the use of a katechontic narrative in Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime.
[55] See chapter 5 on anti-multicultural discourses.

ethno-spatial assumption discussed above – is portrayed by the Kremlin as inherently conflict-generating.

7.3 Spatio-ethical desecuritization: territory, ethnicity, and political authority (part II)

The spatio-ethical narrative that presents the incongruity between territorial and ethnic boundaries as a threat – especially with reference to *non-Russian* ethnic minorities – is coupled with a desecuritization narrative that presents the presence of *Russian* ethnic minorities – also referred to as 'compatriots' – living beyond the administrative borders of the Russian state as an opportunity; one through which the Russian state can assert its authority across the 'Eurasian' space. As discussed in chapter 3 on the construction of a spatial identity in Russian foreign policy discourse, this spatial narrative builds on the non-Westphalian notion that Russia as a nation is defined by the territory of its imperial past. Embedded in this non-Westphalian imagery, chapter 6 on Russian civilizational discourses vis-à-vis Belarus explains, is the postulate that Russia supposedly carries the 'moral' responsibility to restore the geographical congruence between 'state' and 'nation' and to 'reunify' Russian-speaking minorities living outside the borders of the Russian state.

A State Duma transcript from 2018 (id0292), for example, reads that 'the Russian Federation is actively pursuing a policy to support compatriots permanently residing abroad', arguing that – in particular – 'Russian compatriots living on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan continue to feel a sense of pride towards Russia, their ethnic homeland, and its successes in the world economy and politics.' Elsewhere, a Kremlin report on 'Eurasian integration in the 21st century' (id0316, 2012) highlights 'the important role of compatriots living in Kazakhstan […] in promoting the Eurasian project and countering Russophobia instigated by destructive forces in Kazakhstani society'. A report published by the Duma Committee on Eurasian Integration (id2882, 2015) – in turn – discusses 'the important task of preserving the Russian-

speaking space and protecting the rights of Russian compatriots', specifically lauding 'compatriots' living in Kazakhstan's northern territory for their pivotal influence on the successful implementation of Russia's Eurasian integration project in the so-called 'post-Soviet' space.

The difference between the rhetoric found in these examples and the securitization narrative discussed in the previous section is based on two varying assumptions. When Russian foreign policy actors talk about *non-Russian* constituencies in the Eurasian region, they pursue an ethno-spatial discourse that builds on two premises: (1) that there is a 'natural fit' between ethnicity and territory, and ethnic groups should therefore stay within their designated territorial units; and (2) that – in the 'unfortunate' situation when a mismatch between territorial and ethnic boundaries does occur – *state territory* takes precedence over *ethnicity* when defining political authority, thus promoting a Westphalian understanding of state sovereignty. The sum of these two premises is that no *non-Russian* ethnic group could ever make a claim to political authority on the territory of the Russian state, which – as is implied by the Kremlin – 'belongs' to the ethnic Russian population. In this discourse, non-Russian ethnic groups are only tolerated insofar as they stay within their designated 'ethnic' republics (e.g., Tatarstan) or titular homelands (e.g., Kazakhstan).

Alternatively, when Russian foreign policy actors talk about *Russian* ethnic minorities living outside the territory of the Russian state, they pursue an ethno-spatial narrative that builds on two very different premises: (1) that ethnicity and territory *cannot* always align, particularly in the so-called 'post-Soviet' space where the sudden collapse of the Soviet empire left ethnic Russians scattered across the former Soviet Union; and (2) that *ethnicity* takes precedence over *state territory* when defining political authority, thus advancing a non-Westphalian understanding of state sovereignty. By maintaining this double standard between non-Russian and Russian constituencies, Russian foreign policy actors can simultaneously thwart any assertion to power or secession by non-Russian ethnic groups living within the Russian Federation, while confidently asserting power beyond their country's borders to engage with so-called Russian 'compatriots' in the Eurasian region.

Importantly, the ethno-spatial *desecuritization* narrative used with reference to *Russian* ethnic minorities consists of two discursive elements: (i) a positive 'compatriot' strand through which the Russian Federation expresses the wish to foster 'diasporic' relations with ethnic Russians living across the Eurasian sphere, and (ii) a negative 'irredentist' strand, which occasionally moves to the fore when the Russian leadership feels the need to (re-)assert its so-called 'privileged interests' in the Eurasian region. This irredentist strand saw a temporary rise in popularity around Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. In a now infamous speech at the 2014 Seliger Youth Forum (id3384), for instance, Putin denied the legitimacy of Kazakhstani statehood, arguing that the former Kazakhstani president Nursultan Nazarbayev 'created a state on a territory where there had never been a state before'. A similar irridentist streak can be found in a State Duma transcript (id0289, 2014) which reads that 'northern Kazakhstan, that is, the traditionally Russian territories inhabited mainly by ethnic Russians and other Slavic peoples, is part of Russia […] and should be reunified with the Russian Motherland'.

Notably, as chapter 6 demonstrates, a strikingly similar discourse is found in the Russian language vis-à-vis Belarus through which the Kremlin conflates the Russian and Belarusian Self based on presumed ethnic and linguistic commonalities, thereby presenting Belarus as a sub-element of the Russian nation rather than a sovereign state in its own right. The main difference between Moscow's use of the compatriot discourse vis-à-vis Kazakhstan, on the one hand, and Belarus, on the other, lies in the breadth with which Russian actors seem to apply the 'compatriot' logic – where the 'compatriot' narrative is applied narrowly onto ethnic Russian minorities in the Kazakhstani case, Russian foreign policy actors seem to project the 'compatriot' frame onto the population as a whole in the case of Belarus.

As discussed in chapter 3 on spatial identity constructions, Russian foreign policy actors eagerly couple their 'compatriot' language to the spatial notion of a 'Russian world' (*Russkiy mir*). Alexander Diener (2020, p. 7) describes the Russian world as a 'historical-civilizational imaginary [that] transcends both borders and ethnicity, functioning largely as a discursive delineator between

a categorically amorphous "us" of pro-Russianness and a strategically malleable "them".' Employing this civilizational imaginary, Russian state actors consistently attempt to legitimize their political involvement in what they portray as Eurasia's Central Asian flank, presenting particularly Kazakhstan's northern borderland – with its large population of ethnic Russians – as *their* zone of privileged interest (see also Zabortseva, 2016, pp. 118–122).

A document published by the Russian Ministry of Culture (id2119, 2015), for example, defines Moscow's 'cultural space' as supposedly reaching beyond the borders of the Russian state, arguing that it also includes 'adjacent territories inhabited by individuals who speak Russian and accept Russia's historically established cultural norms and values'. Putin explicitly projects this irredentist notion of a 'Russian World' onto Kazakhstan in his Seliger-2014 speech (id3384) when he asserts that 'the Kazakhs proceed from the fact that it is beneficial for them to remain inside the space of the Russian World [*Russkiy Mir*], which is part of the world's civilization'. Various other state documents similarly project the spatial notion of a 'Russian World' onto Kazakhstan (e.g. id1290, 2018; id1340, 2018; id1455, 2019).[56]

Here and elsewhere, the Russian discourse proceeds from the notion that *ethnicity* takes precedence over *state territory* in extraterritorial regions where *Russian* ethnic minorities have settled, which – according to this logic – grants Russian foreign policy actors a say in the political affairs of various countries in the so-called 'Eurasian' region. This instrumental understanding of ethnicity and state authority has had the most far-reaching repercussions for Ukraine, where Russia's non-Westphalian interpretation of state sovereignty has offered both a legitimizing basis for the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the all-out military invasion in 2022. In the case of Kazakhstan, the irredentist impact of these discourses has been limited – it has, however, caused increasing tensions in the relationship between the Russian and Kazakhstani leadership.

[56] See chapter 3 on the construction of a spatial identity in Russian foreign policy for a further analysis of the 'Russian World' concept.

7.4 Ethical securitization: a 'Muslim threat', a Central Asian 'buffer zone', and Russia as the katechontic stabilizer

Another securitization narrative eagerly employed by the Kremlin with reference to Kazakhstan frames a 'Muslim threat' as one of the main hazards facing Eurasia's Central Asian flank. Throughout the corpus, Russian foreign policy actors consistently employ a fear of Islamist fundamentalism as a legitimizing basis underlying Russia's so-called 'preventative imperative' in the Central Asian region (see also Reeves, 2014, p. 92). Through this narrative, Russian foreign policy actors suggest that prevention is better than retrospective intervention, thereby validating Russia's continuous military and political involvement in Kazakhstan and wider Central Asia. Figure 7.1 below exhibits which state actors under the Putin regime most strongly promote this narrative surrounding a so-called 'Muslim threat', revealing that this securitization narrative is most explicitly found in official documents published by the State Duma and Rossotrudnichestvo[57], as well as the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

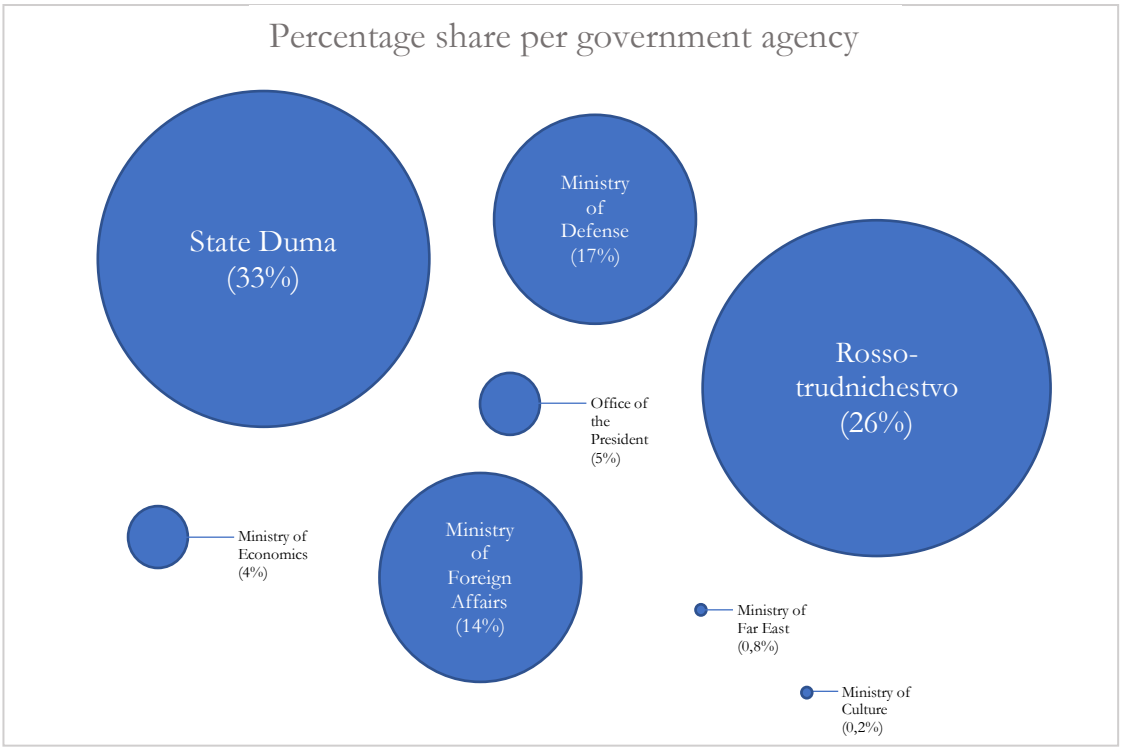


Figure 7.1 Data visualization of the percentage share of Russian state actors employing the securitization narrative surrounding a 'Muslim threat' in foreign policy texts published between 2000 and 2020

[57] Rossotrudnichestvo is an autonomous government agency that falls under the jurisdiction of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is responsible for 'cultural exchange' between Russia and the CIS states.

Although this strand of the securitization narrative has been most prevalent in the early Putin years, during the heights of instability in Afghanistan, the Putin regime has never fully abandoned the rhetoric surrounding a 'Muslim threat', employing it more recently – for example – to legitimize Russia's engagement in the Syrian civil war. This section examines the evolution of Russia's anti-fundamentalist rhetoric and argues that the Russian language surrounding a 'Muslim threat' has been characterized by a discursive shift: where official language in the early Putin years was defined by an alarmist and fearful anti-fundamentalist discourse through which Russia aimed to associate itself with a 'western' effort against a 'Muslim Other', the later Putin years reveal an 'anti-American' turn through which Russia has aimed to assert itself as an arbiter of peace in its own right.

The discourse of the early Putin years has been particularly well-captured in a televised address immediately following the September 11 attacks on the United States. Here, Vladimir Putin (id3385, 2001) argues that 'today's events in the United States go beyond national borders', calling the terrorist attacks 'a brazen attack on the whole of civilized humanity'. Putin continues that the terrorist attacks 'once again emphasize the relevance of Russia's proposal to unite the efforts of the international community in the fight against terrorism', arguing that 'Russia knows firsthand what terror is, and, therefore, understands the feelings of the American people'. Whilst this is just one example, the 'anti-fundamentalist' discourse of the early Putin years is fraught with references to a shared 'Western' civilizational thrust against a 'Muslim Other'. In this narrative, Russian political actors consistently employ the 9/11 attacks to 'position themselves on the side of reason, enlightenment, and secularism' by placing their anti-fundamentalist rhetoric within the context of a 'universal [fight] against fanaticism, obscurantism, and reaction' (Khalid, 2014, p. 168; see also Bogaturova, 2014a, pp. 328–329; Aris, 2011, p. 111).

The notion of 'civilization' occupies a special place in this anti-fundamentalist rhetoric of the early Putin years, presenting the Russian Federation as the co-defender of a western 'secularized' Christian community. Using the 'western' language of anti-fundamentalism, Russian

foreign policy actors eagerly present Russia as Europe's first line of defense in the fight against a 'Muslim threat', portraying the Russian Federation as an active contributor to the global 'war of terror'. Shireen Hunter (2015, p. 339) demonstrates that this discursive move has allowed Russia to temporarily recast its relations with 'the West', portraying the Russian Federation as a vital participant in a joint effort against a threatening 'Muslim' Other. Interestingly, this anti-fundamentalist language found in the early Putin years locates the Russian civilizational Self within a wider European or Western Christian civilization. This narrative thus differs substantially from Russia's later utterances of a Eurasian civilizational identity, which are explicitly formulated in *opposition* to a Western civilization.

A discursive analysis of the corpus demonstrates that this discourse of normative alignment with 'the West' occurs in two waves. As illustrated above, Russian foreign policy actors first demonstrated heightened interest in this discursive frame shortly after the 9/11 terror attacks. More surprisingly, however, the second wave occurred after the 2016 election of Donald Trump. In a 2017 speech, for example, Russian minister of foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov (id2779) states that 'Donald Trump has special views, which differ significantly from the views of his predecessors', arguing that – as opposed to other American presidents – Trump's objectives in the 'fight against terrorism' are pure, as 'he will not resort to double standards in order to use the terrorist threat to achieve goals that are unrelated to this task'.

The discourse in the early Putin years, as well as its temporary revival around 2016, stands in stark contrast to the general discourse surrounding a 'terrorist threat' in the later Putin years, which is driven by a strong anti-American sentiment and – rather than seeking normative alignment with 'the West' – promotes alignment with actors in the so-called 'non-West', such as Iran and the Assad regime in Syria. A State Duma report from 2018 (id2658), for example, reads that 'the fight against terrorism is a shared priority of the Russian Federation and Iran […] which both countries see as a necessary requirement to support the processes of integration in the Eurasian space'. In an obvious attempt to criticize 'the West', the report continues that both Russia and Iran 'are

convinced that that the fight against terrorism should be conducted without politicization and double standards'. A similar rhetoric can be found in a speech by Duma deputy Vyacheslav Volodin (id2556, 2019), who argues against 'double standards' and 'hidden agendas' in the 'fight against terrorism', criticizing the United States for 'interfering in the affairs of sovereign states […] under the guise of democratization'.

Moreover, as part of the wider anti-American turn in Russia's securitization narrative, the Russian leadership slowly begins to assert itself as a broker of peace in the 'Muslim world'. One report published by the Russian ministry of foreign affairs (id1133, 2016), for example, explicitly portrays Russia as a mediator between Christianity and Islam. Here and elsewhere, Russian foreign policy actors appear to employ a markedly katechontic narrative through which they position their country as a stabilizer in Eurasia's Central Asian flank and – by extension – the wider 'Muslim world'. As argued in chapter 5 on ethical identity constructions, this katechontic narrative has offered Russian foreign policy actors a way to portray their country as a 'shield' that supposedly protects the world from chaos (also see Lewis, 2020). This katechontic positioning in Russian discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan is amplified through the use of a spatial narrative that presents the Russian Federation as a 'bridge between East and West' and therefore argues that Russia is best placed to act as 'arbiter of peace' between a European and Muslim civilization. Compared to the anti-fundamentalist language of the early Putin years, which places Russia within a western Christian civilization, this later strand of the anti-fundamentalist discourse firmly positions Russia within a Eurasian civilization, which is portrayed as combining European, Muslim, Turkic, and Chinese influences.

Importantly, Russian foreign policy actors point to Central Asia – in particular – as the main locus from which a 'terrorist threat' arises. In a 2014 article (id0149), for example, Russian army general Valeriy Gerasimov maps the main perils facing the Russian armed forces, pointing to 'inter-state, inter-ethnic, and inter-faith conflicts' as the main source of instability on Russia's Central Asian flank (as opposed to, for example, NATO enlargement along its European border).

Whilst recognizing that this discourse is tied to real-existing security concerns related to a rise in religious extremism, the notion of a 'Muslim threat' has clearly been *instrumentalized* by the Russian authorities to frame non-state sanctioned expressions of Islam as a danger to the Eurasian region. Marlene Laruelle and Natalia Yudina (2018) demonstrate, for example, that the 1990s and 2000s saw a significant increase in the securitization of Islam in Russian political discourse. They argue that political actors in contemporary Russia rely on a dual discursive regime, combining a Soviet-inspired discourse of 'friendship between peoples' with a narrative that presents all 'nonconformist [or "foreign"] versions of Islam' as a threat to Russian society (Laruelle & Yudina, 2018, p. 52).

Roland Dannreuther and Luke March (2011, pp. 10–14) similarly explore a 'Soviet-inherited dualism' in contemporary Russian discourses on Islam, arguing that the state-promoted dichotomy 'politicizes Islam into a simple state-approved and state-opposed bipolar form […] expressed [through] an opposition between "Wahhabism", which is seen as both foreign and extremist, and a "traditional" Russian Islam.' This dualism, Dannreuther and March (2011, p. 10) argue, 'places a "loyal" or "official" […] Islam in opposition to an "unofficial", and potentially "disloyal", foreign Islam, [reflecting] a recognition, on the one hand, of the rootedness of Islam in [the Russian Federation] and, on the other, of the territorial disembodiment of Islam as a universal religion which necessarily transcends and potentially threatens the Russian state'.

Adopting a rhetoric strikingly similar to the one found in this chapter's opening citation by E.N. Voronets (1891), a 2013 State Duma transcript (id3140) articulates this dualism particularly clearly when it talks about the need to educate imams to become *Russian* clergymen, suggesting that the Russian government should take precautions to eradicate 'foreign' Muslim influences from Islamic praxis across 'Eurasia' (see also id0289, 2014). In this document, representations of a dangerously 'exogenous' type of Islam are contrasted with a celebration of so-called 'Russian' Islamic praxis. Similarly, in a State Duma speech, Vladimir Putin (id3140, 2013) celebrates the 'self-organization of the Muslim community in Russia, and its fruitful development for the sake of

serving society and country'. Here, Putin argues that Russia's 'endogenous' Muslim community 'has played an essential role in strengthening Russian statehood, contributing to the creation of a common spiritual and cultural space and the formation of values and traditions that unite us.' In his explicit celebration of a 'Russian' type of Islam, Putin seems to suggest that its mirror-image, that is, an unsanctioned type of Islam imported from abroad, constitute a clear danger to the 'Eurasian' space.

Lena Jonson (2004, p. 10) illustrates that the Russian authorities have been particularly suspicious of a 'Muslim threat' in Kazakhstan's southern 'underbelly' – a fear that manifested itself particularly strongly in the early Putin years, as the Tajik civil war (1992-1997), the ascent of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the Chechen insurgency fueled anxieties around a 'foreign' and 'dangerous' type of Islam imported from the 'Muslim south', i.e. Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan (see also Jonson, 2004, p. 10; Bogaturova, 2014b).

In this particular off-shoot of Russia's 'anti-fundamentalist' narrative, Kazakhstan has been spatially portrayed as a 'buffer zone' that prevents the spread of an 'exogenous' and unsanctioned type of Islam into Russia. Throughout the corpus, Russian government documents consistently refer to Kazakhstan – along with such states as Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan – as the main buffers which have helped to prevent a spread of terrorism and extremism onto Russian soil (e.g. id2869, 2017; id1509, 2017; id0957, 2017). This spatial 'buffer zone' narrative is not too far removed from the Russian discourse vis-à-vis Belarus. As chapter 6 demonstrates, Russian foreign policy actors have similarly portrayed their Western neighbor as an 'in-between' space – with one key difference, however. Where Kazakhstan supposedly protects Russia from its main 'Eastern' threat – that is, Islamist fundamentalism – Belarus has been framed as a 'buffer' against what Russia perceives as its main threat stemming from the West, that is, NATO enlargement.

Finally, this buffer narrative has not only been projected *onto* Kazakhstan by the Russian leadership but has also been eagerly employed by the Kazakhstani elites themselves (e.g., Cummings, 2003; Ambrosio & Lange, 2014). Thomas Ambrosio and William Lange (2014, pp.

547–551) demonstrate, for example, how former Kazakhstani president Nursultan Nazarbayev has presented his country as a 'buffer of peace', a 'center of inter-cultural and inter-religious accord', and a 'facilitator between civilizations' (see also id3177, 2002; id2860, 2016; id2859, 2016).

7.5 Ethical desecuritization: 'cross-confessional spirituality' and the 'congruence' between state authority and hegemonic religion

In addition to the alarmist anti-fundamentalist discourse, which portrays non-state sanctioned Islam as detrimental to the stability of the 'Eurasian' region, Russian foreign policy actors employ a more reconciliatory rhetoric of 'cross-confessional spirituality' that aims to circumvent Eurasia's confessional divides. A quantitative analysis of the corpus reveals that from the end of Putin's second presidential term onwards (i.e. 2008), the notion of 'spirituality' becomes particularly popularized in official documents published by the Russian government – with further surges of the discourse in 2015, 2018, and 2020 (see figure 7.2). Thus, whilst the alarmist anti-fundamentalist narrative surrounding a 'Muslim threat' takes precedence in the early Putin years, the desecuritization narrative of 'cross-confessional spirituality' starts taking over the discursive mainstream in the latter half of Putin's rule.



Figure 7.2 Word frequency analysis of the corpus exhibiting the use of the notion of 'spirituality' in foreign policy texts published between 2000 and 2020

Importantly, the discursive analysis demonstrates that Russian foreign policy actors employ the notion of 'spirituality' in two ways – they use the language of cross-confessional spirituality to 'desecuritize' Eurasia's multi-religious reality and to unite the diverse 'peoples of Eurasia', whilst also employing the notion to express support for a congruence between hegemonic religion and political power-structures in the Eurasian sphere.

Clark Roof (2003, p. 138) explains that 'spirituality' can be understood as a broad affirmation of 'the human spirit or soul [or] a quest for meaning and experiential wholeness', which – divorced from its traditional Judeo-Christian context – can be used to appeal to people of various religious and secular beliefs. In a Russian-Eurasian context, Mikhail Epstein (2012) argues, 'spirituality' is presented as a 'third neutral' between Eastern Orthodoxy and secularized politics. This contemporary Russian conceptualization of 'spirituality', which frames the spiritual as a neutral space between the religious and the political, is eagerly employed in official discourse surrounding Eurasia's Central Asian flank under the Putin regime. Throughout the corpus, and particularly with reference to Kazakhstan and the wider Central Asian region, Russian foreign policy actors speak of a 'cross-confessional spirituality' that is supposedly shared among the various 'peoples of Eurasia'.

A report published by the Russian ministry of foreign affairs (id1133, 2016), for example, reads that 'Eurasia constitutes a space along whose borders the most ancient civilizations arose and developed'. And because of this position betwixt other 'civilizations', or so the report argues, the Eurasian space – in all its religious diversity – has grown to be 'connected by a "common confession" that is incompatible with European rationalism and mercantilism' – a 'commonality' that is based on a shared understanding of 'spirituality'. Dmitriy Medvedev (id3354, 2009) makes a similar argument around the supposedly unifying qualities of 'cross-confessional spirituality' when he states that the Russian-Eurasian space 'forms a single multinational people: […] Among us are Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, and representatives of other religions and together we create a bright and harmonic unity, our spiritual space.'

Adopting a similar rhetoric, former Kazakhstani Ambassador to the Russian Federation and current representative of the Eurasian Economic Union, Tair Mansurov (2001, pp. 552–553), writes that 'the political stability [in the Eurasian sphere] not only depends on economic growth but also on the spiritual and moral condition of our society […] Cooperation [between Russia and Kazakhstan] is a clear expression of the spiritual closeness of our countries and our peoples […] which is defined by our shared Eurasian roots, our united humanitarian space, and the joint history between our countries.' Here and elsewhere, the narrative of cross-confessional spirituality is thus eagerly reciprocated by the Kazakhstani authorities.

By occupying the supposedly 'neutral' zone of spirituality, which lies between Eastern Orthodoxy and secularized politics, Russian foreign policy actors seek to appeal to non-Christian audiences in countries such as Kazakhstan without having to distance themselves from their Eastern Orthodox values, which would alienate them from large parts of their domestic constituency. Implied in this discourse of cross-confessional spirituality is the existence of a 'shared moral code' among the 'Eurasian peoples', which Russian government actors argue helps to transcend confessional divides in the Eurasian sphere (see also chapter 5 on ethical identity constructions).

A 2017 State Duma transcript (id0292), for example, describes 'Eurasia' as 'a space of historical coexistence of different civilizations and cultures, in which cultural diversity has always been an integral feature, and intercultural dialogue has constituted a key factor in establishing a cultural identity'. 'For centuries', or so the document continues, 'traditions of interethnic and intercultural dialogue between the peoples living in the vast ethnocultural space have been developed by Russia […] and our poly-ethnicity and multiculturalism have contributed to the creation of a shared historical consciousness, a shared sense of spirituality, a shared historical code'. Elsewhere, this 'ethical code' supposedly shared between the 'Orthodox, Islamic, Buddhist, Jewish, and other cultures of Eurasia' is said to be based on a 'moral postulate which seeks to oppose the

neoliberal Western civilization', one that – according to the 2017 State Duma transcript (id0292) cited earlier – 'is based on an unconditional recognition of the inherent value of human life'.

Here and elsewhere, Russian foreign policy actors employ the concept of 'spirituality' to bridge the confessional cleavages in the multi-religious Eurasian region (see also Frear & Mazepus, 2020, p. 12). This discourse of cross-confessional spirituality appears to be a shallow diversion, however – one that enables Russian government actors to incorporate non-Christian countries into a 'Eurasian' civilizational model ultimately based on Russian Orthodox values, while preventing backlash from 'Eurasian' constituencies that do *not* adhere to Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Following Michaela Ondrašinová (2011, pp. 42–43), the pragmatic use of spirituality serves to 'build bridges' between people of diverse religions by stressing a tolerance to diversity of confessions and emphasizing a 'mystical and spiritual experience that transcends a formal affiliation to a specific confession'. This shallow diversion becomes painstakingly clear in the State Duma transcript cited earlier (id0292, 2017), which – in spite of all celebrations of 'poly-ethnicity' and 'multi-religiosity' – reads that 'it is Russia, as a Eurasian power, that functions as the center where Eurasian values are integrated into a coherent whole'.

A discursive analysis of the wider corpus illustrates that the Russian-Eurasian discourse vis-à-vis Kazakhstan is particularly prone to these acts of spiritualization, as it allows the Russian authorities to transcend Central Asia's confessional divides through the articulation of a mystical identity that supposedly synthesizes Russian, Muslim, Chinese, and Turkic elements. In this discourse, the notion of a 'shared spirituality' is thus used pragmatically, offering Russian foreign policy actors a way to appeal to the diverse 'peoples of Eurasia' by combining elements from a variety of cultures and religions into a flexible 'Eurasian' civilizational amalgam.

Importantly, although the concept of 'cross-confessional spirituality' may be portrayed as a 'neutral' condition that unites the diverse 'peoples of Eurasia', Mikhail Epstein (2012, pp. 16–18) illustrates that – in reality – the notion of 'spirituality' cannot be separated from its Eastern Orthodox context in contemporary Russian discourses. Thus, contrary to the Kremlin's surface-

level goal of presenting 'cross-confessional spirituality' as an independent 'third zone' of interaction between the 'peoples of Eurasia', Epstein (2012, p. 16) shows that spirituality is 'not […] an intermediate, neutral zone [but] a sort of integral one, […] *joining church and state'* (emphasis added).

Thus, in addition to presenting 'cross-confessional spirituality' as a *psychological state* shared among the diverse 'peoples of Eurasia', true spirituality seems to be understood as a *congruence between state authority and hegemonic religion*. A report published by the Kremlin (id0291, 2015), for instance, frames the 'symphony [*symphonia*] between Church and State' as the key condition which prevents the Russian-Eurasian space from reaching – what the report calls – a state of 'Euro-Sodom'. Here and elsewhere, the notion of *symphonia* – which Russian Orthodox doctrine explains as the ability of Church and state 'to speak with a single voice and express a united position' (Antonov, 2020, pp. 476–477) – is used as a discursive vehicle to express the supposed need for hegemonic religion and state authority to converge and act as a congruent whole.

Russian government actors thus use the notion of 'spirituality' to denote the *stable condition in which the hegemonic religion of a country or region* – be that Islam or Eastern Orthodoxy – *and political authority align*. Tobias Köllner (2020) describes this instrumentalization of religion in contemporary Russia as a system in which the religious realm is used to achieve *political* legitimacy (see also Menzarini, 2011, p. 114). In this narrative, the functioning of religious institutions in service of the state is presented as a necessary condition to maintain 'stability' in the Eurasian region, promoting the idea that religion should act to preserve political power-structures (see also Keller, 2020, p. 17). Spirituality, in this discourse, is thus understood as the condition in which hegemonic religion functions, at least in part, to enhance the position of the state.

Contrasted to this ideal-type state of spirituality in the Eurasian sphere is the 'western' context, which Russian foreign policy actors characterize by its so-called *lack* of spirituality. The notion that 'the West' supposedly lacks 'spirituality' is clearly expressed by Vladimir Putin in a 2019 interview with the Financial Times (id3378). Here, Putin argues that 'liberal circles [in the West] are destroying religion'. 'Have we forgotten that we live in a world based on religious values?', Putin

asks, stating that whilst 'we do not need to attend church every day to show that we are devout Christians or Muslims or Jews, […] deep inside, there must be some fundamental human rules and moral values.' He ends his argument with the implication that in Russia – at least – the state continues to promote traditional values, rather than permitting the kind of moral 'free floating' which supposedly defines the 'liberal West'. Here and elsewhere, the 'lack of spirituality' observed in 'the West' is not related to an absence of traditional Christian values *per se*, but rather to a *disconnect* between hegemonic religion and state authority. In this context, 'spiritual stability' thus appears to be synonymous with the authoritarian ideal of the state as a strong centralizing power, which manages to exert control over most aspects of society, including religious institutions.[58]

This discourse of 'cross-confessional spirituality' ties into some of the key themes discussed in chapter 5 on ethical identity constructions. In this chapter, the thesis demonstrates that the Russian trope surrounding a supposed 'lack' of spirituality in the West originates in the writings of Slavophile thinkers such as Ivan Kireevsky and Fyodor Dostoevsky. These and other Russian thinkers portrayed western society as 'a collection of disconnected, rationally thinking individuals motivated by personal advantage' (Lantz, 2004, p. 218), whilst framing the Russian nation as an 'intrinsically integral entity' united by a traditional value system based on Russian orthodoxy (Biryukov et al., 1995, pp. 150–152).

Building on these 19th-century iterations of the Russian discourse of 'spirituality', contemporary actors employ the notion of 'cross-confessional spirituality' to articulate a common value system that serves to transcend Eurasia's confessional divides, whilst also formulating a shared authoritarian understanding regarding the position of religious institutions vis-à-vis state-power structures in the Eurasian sphere. Finally, although the examples above illustrates that Russian foreign policy actors apply the concept of spirituality just as easily to a Christian context as they do a Muslim one, there are clear boundaries to Russia's tolerance towards Islam. The

[58] See chapter 5 on the ethical construction of a Eurasian identity for a further exploration of the notion of 'stability'. In this chapter, the discursive analysis explores the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors employ the notion of 'stability' to articulate a shared framework of 'anti-liberal' rule among leaders in the 'Eurasian' sphere.

reconciliatory rhetoric of cross-confessional spirituality in the multi-religious Eurasian space is only applied to those Muslim constituencies that adhere to what Russian government actors perceive to be the 'right-kind' of Islam; that is, a highly secularized, toned-down, and symbolic version of Islamic praxis – the type that can only be found in the Central Asian states that were once part of the former USSR, where, as Shoshana Keller (2020, p. 17) demonstrates, 'decades of Soviet militant atheism and 20th-century authoritarianism make this region "a world apart" from any other Islamic culture'.

7.6 Discursive audiences and political objectives

Importantly, the securitization and de-securitization narratives explored in this chapter rely on a variety of different representations of a Russian Self and Kazakhstani Other, thereby appealing to a distinct set of audiences (see figure 7.3 below). On the one hand, Russian foreign policy actors seem to distinguish between a 'positive' and a 'negative' audience. On the other hand, they appear to distinguish between an internal (domestic) and an external (international) audience. The following paragraphs offer a brief overview of the securitization and desecuritization narratives discussed in this chapter, their target audiences, and underlying political objectives.

Discursive strands	Audiences	Representations of the Russian Self	Representations of the (Kazakhstani) Other
Spatio-ethical securitization *'Inter-ethnic strife'*	• Ethnic Russian (Russkiy) audience • Ethnic Kazakh audience, and – by extension – other non-Russian ethnic minorities living in the so-called 'near abroad'	• Russia as 'katechontic' buffer and mediator in a tumultuous Central Asia	• Eurasia's 'Central Asian flank' as a theater for potential ethnic conflict
Spatio-ethical desecuritization *'Compatriots'*	• Ethnic Russian (Russkiy) audience • The government of Kazakhstan	• Russia as responsible actor fostering 'diasporic' relations	• Political authority of the Kazakhstani government as inferior to Russia's 'moral' responsibility to 'protect' Russian-speaking communities living beyond the borders of the Russian state
Ethical securitization *'Muslim threat'*	• The 'international community', and – more specifically – 'the West' • The government of Kazakhstan	• Russia as responsible stakeholder and contributor to the global 'war on terror' • Russia as stabilizer and mediator in Eurasia's Central Asian flank	• Kazakhstan as spatial 'buffer zone' preventing the spread of an 'exogenous' and unsanctioned type of Islam into Russia • Kazakhstani government as having to follow the Russian-set parameters of 'acceptable' Islamic praxis
Ethical desecuritization *'Cross-confessional spirituality'*	• Non-Christian constituencies living across the 'Eurasian' sphere	• Russia as spiritual leader of the multi-religious 'Eurasian' space	• The multi-religious 'peoples of Eurasia' as united by a common value system and shared adherence to the congruence between state authority and hegemonic religion • 'The West' as defined by a 'lack' of spirituality

Figure 7.3 An overview of the discursive strands, their intended audiences, and accompanying representations of Russia and Kazakhstan.

The first discursive strand that this chapter explored foregrounds the threat of 'inter-ethnic strife' vis-à-vis Kazakhstan and the wider Central Asian region. As argued in section 7.2, this spatio-ethical discourse has offered Russian foreign policy actors a rhetorical tool to frame Eurasia's 'Central Asian flank' as a theater for potential ethnic conflict, thereby enabling them to position Russia as a necessary mediator in regional affairs. In this particular narrative, Russian foreign policy actors have presented the threat of ethnic conflict as something brought about by a supposed 'mismatch' between territorial and ethnic boundaries, building on an ethno-spatial logic which 'assumes an originary "fit" among people, culture, and territory' (Reeves, 2014, pp. 57, 67–68).

The second discursive strand explored in this chapter has aimed to 'desecuritize' the discourse of 'inter-ethnic strife' by presenting the presence of *Russian* ethnic minorities – also

referred to as 'compatriots' – living beyond the administrative borders of the Russian state as a *non-threat*. As argued in section 7.3, this narrative has relied on an *opposite* spatio-ethical logic – that is, the non-Westphalian notion that the Russian nation is defined by the territory of its imperial past and that Russia supposedly carries a 'moral' responsibility to restore the geographical congruence between 'state' and 'nation' and to 'reunify' Russian-speaking minorities living outside the borders of the Russian state.

Targeting an identical set of audiences through contradictory notions of territory, ethnicity, and political authority, these two spatio-ethical strands constitute opposite sides of the same discursive medal. Framing ethnicity as a legitimizing basis for the exertion of extraterritorial power by the Russian state, both the narrative of 'inter-ethnic strife' and the 'compatriots' narrative speak directly to a 'positive' audience consisting of *ethnic* Russians, or – in other words – a 'Russkiy' audience. Concurrently, both narratives appear to speak to a 'negative' audience consisting of non-Russian ethnic constituencies, which – in this particular off-shoot of the Russian-Eurasian discourse – consist primarily of ethnic Kazakhs but is extended – more broadly – onto *all* non-Russian ethnic minorities living across Russia's so-called 'near abroad'. Moreover, insofar as this discourse is used to frame the political authority of the *Kazakhstani* government as inferior to Russia's supposed moral responsibility to 'protect' ethnic Russian communities living beyond the borders of the Russian state, the government of Kazakhstan too constitutes a 'negative' audience in this particular discourse.

In celebrating multi-ethnicity *only* insofar as it pertains to *ethnic Russians* living outside the borders of the Russian Federation, the discourse offers Russian state actors a rhetorical path that legitimizes their ambivalent stance vis-à-vis ethnic diversity in the 'Eurasian' sphere. On the surface, the discourse allows the Kremlin to performatively 'celebrate' multi-ethnicity – a necessary move given the fact that Moscow has a need to enthuse non-Russian constituencies for its 'Eurasian' idea. Underneath this discursive veil, however, the discourse simultaneously serves to preemptively undermine potential claims to political authority by non-Russian ethnic communities on the

territory of the Russian Federation, whilst – paradoxically – enabling the Kremlin *itself* to assert extraterritorial power in neighboring countries with an ethnic Russian population. Ultimately, this discrepancy lays bare the very core of Vladimir Putin's failure to implement his 'Eurasian' project. Whilst the Kremlin desperately needs the support of non-Russian ethnic constituencies – should it want the 'Eurasian' idea to have any consequential weight in regional and global politics –, Moscow continues to refuse carving out a meaningful place for those constituencies in the 'Eurasian' socio-political and cultural landscape, holding on to a policy of Russian primacy instead.

The third discursive strand explored in this chapter consists of an additional securitization narrative in Russian-Eurasian discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan and the wider Central Asian region. Unpacking this particular narrative, section 7.4 demonstrated how Russian foreign policy actors under the Putin regime have framed a 'Muslim threat' as one of the main sources of instability in Eurasia. The discursive analysis reveals a shift in Russia's anti-fundamentalist discourse: where the early Putin years were marked by a decidedly alarmist and fearful rhetoric through which Russia aimed to associate itself with a 'western' civilizational effort against a Muslim Other, the later Putin years show that Russia has started to assert itself as a 'Eurasian bridge' between European and Muslim worlds.

The securitization narrative surrounding a 'Muslim threat', section 7.5 demonstrated, has been coupled with a more reconciliatory desecuritization rhetoric that serves to soften Eurasia's confessional divides. Here, the discursive analysis revealed how Russian foreign policy actors have employed the notion of 'cross-confessional spirituality' (i) to unite the religiously diverse 'peoples of Eurasia', particularly in regions with non-Christian constituencies such as Central Asia, and (ii) to present an 'asymmetric harmony' (J. Anderson, 2007) between hegemonic religion and political power-structures as a necessary condition to maintain stability in the Eurasian region.

Importantly, these two narratives speak to a variety of different audiences. Particularly in the early Putin years, the ethical securitization narrative surrounding a 'Muslim threat' seems to target a 'positive' Western audience by framing Russia as a reliable partner in the so-called 'global

war on terror' – a discursive move that stands in rather stark contrast to most other narratives found in the Russian-Eurasian discourse, almost all of which have addressed 'the West' in a negative capacity. As argued in section 7.4, the tone of this narrative changes from the 2010s onwards, and – with this change in tonality – the target audience similarly appears to shift. Rather than targeting a 'Western' audience, Russian foreign policy actors start using their anti-fundamentalist discourse to steer the *Kazakhstani government* towards an 'acceptable' version of Islam, thereby setting the parameters of 'acceptable' religious praxis in the wider Central Asian region. The narrative of 'cross-confessional spirituality' – in turn – seems to 'desecuritize' the discourse surrounding Islamist fundamentalism, explicitly targeting non-Christian constituencies living across the 'Eurasian' sphere.

Concurrent with a shift in target audiences, the political objective underlying Russia's anti-fundamentalist narrative similarly appears to change. Whilst the political objective of the anti-fundamentalist narrative appears to consist of normative alignment with 'the West' in the early Putin years, the Kremlin departs from this goal in the later Putin years. Rather than trying to frame Russia as a 'Western' actor, Russian foreign policy actors begin to emphasize the notion that Russia's Eurasian integration project functions as a *normative competitor* to European integration. This change in strategic messaging coincides with a broader shift in Russian foreign policy explored in chapter 4 on the construction of a temporal identity – one in which Russian foreign policy actors departed from their language of Russian Europeanness post-2008 to pursue a narrative that presents Russia as a leading civilizational actor in its own right. Ultimately, the various audiences can be mapped along two axes: positive/negative and domestic/international. Figure 7.4 below offers a visualization of this mapping process.

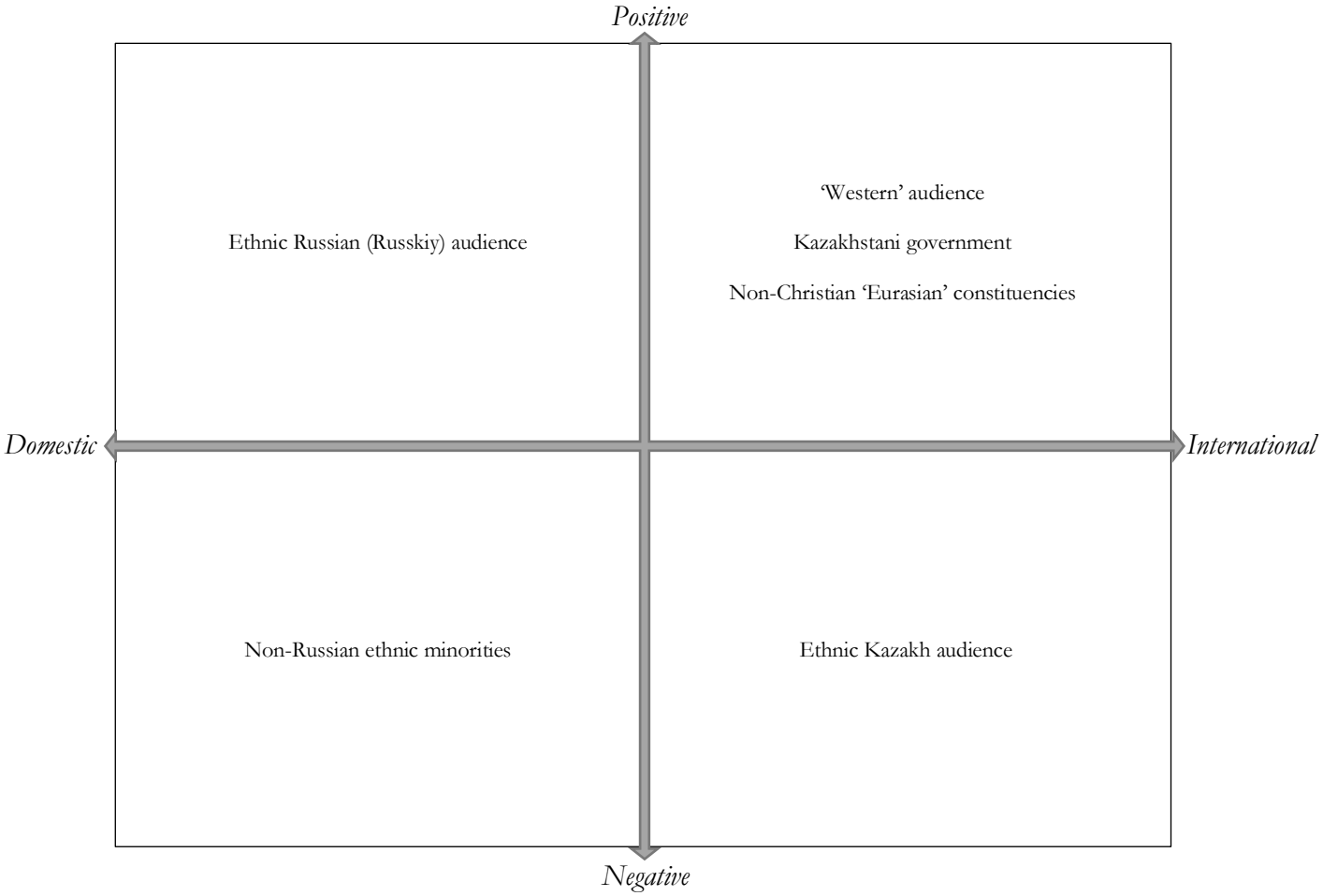


Figure 7.4 An overview of target audiences mapped onto the two main axes found in Russian foreign policy discourse

7.7 Conclusion

Focusing on the securitization and desecuritization narratives, this chapter explored the use of Russian-Eurasian discourses surrounding Kazakhstan and wider Central Asia throughout the Putin era (see figure 7.5 below for a visualization of the discursive field). An exploration of Russian-Eurasian narratives surrounding Kazakhstan and Central Asia provided a gateway to unravel some of the fundamental tensions found in wider discourses on Eurasia in Putin's Russia. Exploring two strands of the securitization narrative, the discursive analysis revealed, for example, how Russian foreign policy actors reconcile their assertion of Russian cultural primacy with the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional reality of the Eurasian sphere. The analysis furthermore revealed how Russian

foreign policy actors under the Putin regime present an 'asymmetric harmony' (J. Anderson, 2007) between political power-structures and hegemonic religion – one in which religion operates in service of the state – as a necessary condition to maintain stability in the Eurasian region.

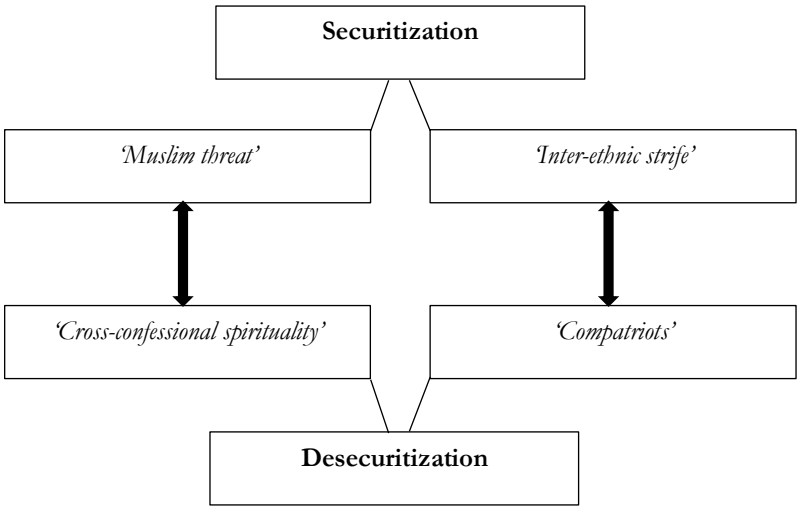


Figure 7.5 Kazakhstan as Eurasia's Central Asian flank: an overview of the discursive field

The chapter demonstrated that whilst Kazakhstan may be amongst the most-referenced 'partner countries' in Russian-Eurasian discourses under the Putin regime, Russian foreign policy actors have often employed a *negative* rhetoric vis-à-vis their southern 'partner'. Ultimately, the various narratives explored in this chapter appear to be driven by one overarching objective; they have served to position Russia as a necessary stabilizer in a region supposedly overcome by 'inter-ethnic' and 'inter-religious' discord, thereby enabling Russia's wider self-positioning as the hegemon and 'bearer of peace' in a *regional* 'Eurasian' civilization. The chapter hereafter – on Russian discourses vis-à-vis China – explores how Russian foreign policy actors have widened this civilizational frame in order to position their country as a katechontic actor of *global* proportions.

Chapter 8

'A Unique but Compatible Civilization':

The Russian Discourse of Stability vis-à-vis China

'Light comes from the East, strength comes from the East! […] By the strength of reason and law […] an empire of the West arose […] What more was needed? Why was the whole world again in blood? The soul of the universe craved the spirit of faith and love! And the prophetic word was not false, and a light from the East shone, heralding and promising what had been impossible. And, spilling wide, full of portent and strength, that light from the East made peace between East and West. O Rus'! […] You ponder a proud idea; which East do you want to be?'

– Vladimir Solovyov, Ex Oriente Lux, 1890[59]

8.1 Introduction

The question whether Russia belongs to Europe or Asia has long occupied the minds of Russian political thinkers. Posing this exact question in 1890, the famous Russian philosopher and poet Vladimir Solovyov aimed to offer a definitive answer when he argued that 'enlightenment comes from the East.' As Russia's identity ambitions under the Putin regime failed to materialize within a US-led international order, and relations with 'the West' soured, this age-old question regained relevance once more. It is thus that a former minister for development of the Russian Far East declared that 'Russia can and should develop using the eastern vector, the eastern energy of development, and the eastern wind' (id3386, 2017) and Duma deputy Vyacheslav Nikonov (id7410, 2018) proclaimed that 'Russia should look eastward for moral and spiritual guidance.'

Exploring five key discursive strands in Russia's foreign policy discourse vis-à-vis China, this chapter traces how Russian government actors have articulated a 'shared' Russo-Chinese vision

[59] Translation taken from http://max.mmlc.northwestern.edu/mdenner/Demo/texts/ex_oriente_lux.html (Northwestern University, 2001).

of world order over the last two decades. Compared to the other two case studies (on Belarus in chapter 6 and Kazakhstan in chapter 7), the analysis demonstrates that China itself is not seen as *part* of a Russian-Eurasian civilization. Much rather, China is framed as a unique but 'spiritually' and morally compatible civilization. Ultimately, the discursive analysis disentangles one core narrative found in Russia's civilizational discourse vis-à-vis China. This particular master-narrative frames Russia and China as guarantors of stability in global affairs. In the following sections, the chapter unpacks the five main spatial, temporal, and ethical building blocks of this Russo-Chinese language of stability: that is, (i) the spatial notion that both countries are defined by their supposed 'spatio-demographic uniqueness'; (ii) the ethico-spatial claim that both countries supposedly fall within a 'special' category of 'civilization-states'; (iii) the ethical idea that – because of their 'civilizational' character – both countries are supposedly bound to function as 'stabilizers' in global affairs; (iv) the ethico-temporal notion that a 'Western' model for development is supposedly detrimental to global stability; and (v) the ethico-temporal promise that Russia and China will deliver an *alternative* model for development to the 'non-West'.

Despite the hypothesis that the notion of 'Eurasia' would be a leading concept in Russia's civilizational language vis-à-vis China, the discursive analysis paints a different picture. The chapter demonstrates that Russian government actors often avoid the notion of 'Eurasia' as a relevant civilizational entity in their foreign policy language vis-à-vis China. Instead, Russian foreign policy actors talk about a shared Russo-Chinese 'civilizational responsibility' at the *global* level, framing both countries as separate but compatible '*civilization-states*'. As the following sections explain, this discourse adds a new layer to Russia's civilizational logic. The chapter ends by mapping the specific audiences that Russian foreign policy actors have sought to target through their discourse surrounding a shared vision of 'world order'.

Whilst the exact content of a shared Russo-Chinese 'civilizational responsibility' in world affairs remains vague throughout the corpus, the value of Russia's civilizational discourse vis-à-vis China lies therein that it enables Moscow to position itself as a 'normative force' of *global*

proportions, whereas Russia's language vis-à-vis Belarus and Kazakhstan only seems to accomplish this at a *regional* level. Normative association with a non-Western 'great power' such as China ultimately allows Russian government actors to reframe their 'moral code' to appeal to the wider 'non-West,' as opposed to the Russian discourses vis-à-vis Belarus and Kazakhstan, which ultimately do not translate beyond a Slavic or former Soviet context, respectively (see also chapter 5 on ethical identity constructions). The discursive analysis ultimately demonstrates how Russian state actors employ the Russo-Chinese language of stability to (i) discredit 'Western' models of development and governance and (ii) to offer alternative options to a 'non-West'.

Importantly, whilst the chapter explores how Russian government actors articulate a 'shared' Russo-Chinese civilizational discourse, the emphasis remains on the *Russian* side. The discursive analysis, which builds primarily on joint declarations and bilateral documents, is thus supplemented with primary sources published by the Russian government. The chapter only occasionally cites Chinese government actors to demonstrate how the various narratives are reciprocated by officials from the People's Republic of China (PRC). The reason behind this focus on Russia is twofold: firstly, to maintain coherence throughout the thesis, which explores *Russian* state discourses; and secondly, to accommodate language constraints. Thus, where Chinese government actors are cited, these citations are translated from Russian-language documents issued by the Russian government rather than from Chinese government sources. Therefore, the notion that the narratives studied in this chapter form a 'shared' Russo-Chinese discourse is first and foremost prompted by Russia's *own* conviction that Russia and China supposedly share a similar vision of world order and not by an exhaustive analysis of Chinese government texts. Notwithstanding, the discursive analysis *does* contain references to the Chinese discourse but only insofar as this is found in transcripts of bilateral meetings between Chinese and Russian officials.

Finally, while much of the academic literature focuses on the cultural, political, and economic differences that exist between Russia and China, and therefore conclude that the Russo-Chinese relationship is bound to fail – an argument most famously made by Bobo Lo (2002) – very

few scholars explore the ways in which both countries' identities (at least, at the *global* level) overlap (for an interesting exception see Rozman, 2014). This chapter aims to demonstrate how both actors, whilst building on different cultural traditions (a Russian Orthodox one, on the one hand, and a Communist-Confucian one, on the other), arrive at similar understandings of world order and 'civilizational responsibility' in international affairs.

8.2 Russo-Chinese conceptions of spatio-demographic uniqueness

The first spatial building block of the Russo-Chinese discourse of stability articulates the notion that both countries share a 'special responsibility' to promote stability in world affairs due to their spatio-demographic uniqueness. For both Russia and China, a 'key claim to greatness' has traditionally been the 'physical sense of controlling vast territories' (Paine, 1996, p. 351). According to this spatio-demographic logic, Russia's exceptionalism lies in its territorial size, while China's unique character is rooted in its vast population. Throughout the corpus, the notion of 'spatio-demographic uniqueness' offers Russian government actors a key rhetorical device to support their claims surrounding the 'special' relationship that supposedly exists between Russia and China.

The notion of spatio-demographic uniqueness is clearly expressed in a report published by the State Duma in 2020 (id4189), which argues that 'the size of a state's territory greatly affects its power and influence in the international community.' 'Given that modern Russia has the largest territory of all countries of the world,' the report continues, 'our nation's status in the world community ought to be strengthened.' The Duma report then states that 'the *demographic* potential […] of a country equally […] influences a state's strength and power in modern international relations', arguing that China's 'numerical superiority' far exceeds the power of other key actors in the international domain. Elsewhere, Russian minister of foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov (id3599, 2016) asserts that Russia and China are the 'two largest states living in close proximity to one another.' He continues that this spatio-demographic attribute makes Russo-Chinese cooperation 'a key factor in ensuring international and regional stability' (id3599, 2016; see also id9001, 2015).

A joint statement published in 2013 (id9002) similarly argues that 'Russia and China […] are building a new type of relationship between large countries', emphasizing the 'great responsibility of large countries in ensuring international peace and stability.'[60] It is thus that Russia's territorial vastness and China's demographic size are consistently portrayed as the spatio-demographic drivers behind their shared position as guarantors of global order.[61]

The spatio-demographic narrative explored here links to the wider practice of spatial identity construction in Russian foreign policy discussed in chapter 3. This earlier chapter explained how 'space' is characterized by a power/knowledge relationship (Foucault, 1977, 1980; Said, 1978, 1993). Both Said and Foucault argue that space gains meaning through appropriating and disciplining practices. While the sub-narrative of Russo-Chinese spatio-demographic uniqueness is rooted in real-existing demographic and territorial factors – Russia is in fact the world's largest country and China by far the most populous one – the *constructed* nature of this narrative lies in the fact that these geographical and demographic factors are framed as vehicles for a Russo-Chinese 'special' position in world affairs. This idea of 'space' as an arena for the construction and negotiation of meaning has been discussed thoroughly by neo-Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre (1991), who argues that every society produces its own spatial economy which reifies and (re)produces socio-political relations (see also Law, 2002). In this case, the narrative of spatio-demographic uniqueness offers Russia and China a discursive tool to distinguish themselves from other 'great powers' and to position themselves as inherently capable of taking on a role as peace broker in world affairs. How this special responsibility for peace and stability is further articulated is discussed in the following sections.

[60] The language of spatio-demographic uniqueness is equally employed by Chinese government actors. During a regular meeting between the heads of state in 2014 (id9013, 2014), for example, premier of the State Council of the PCR Li Keqiang states that 'China and Russia are the largest neighboring countries […] with leading economies,' arguing that both countries 'are determined to […] jointly defend peace and stability in the region and the world as a whole.' Li Keqiang makes similar remarks in annual meetings between the Russian and Chinese heads of state in 2017, 2018, and 2019, repeatedly framing Russo-Chinese spatio-demographic uniqueness as having a stabilizing effect on regional and global politics (id9023, 2017; id9024, 2018; id9025, 2019).

[61] See section 5 for a further analysis of the notion that Russia and China should act as global peace brokers.

Importantly, there are two fundamental flaws in the narrative of spatio-demographic uniqueness that remain unrecognized by Russian and Chinese state actors. First, the Russian Federation might be the largest country on earth, but it also ranks among the most thinly populated ones. While both sides seem eager to emphasize Russia's vast territory, the question of population density is carefully avoided in interactions between Russian and Chinese counterparts. Although the Russian leadership has openly discussed its country's demographic difficulties in a *domestic* context (for example, to express support for pro-natalist policies), Russian foreign policy actors have been careful to admit to the fact that demographic decline might also constitute a *geopolitical* or *territorial* weakness. Secondly, the matter of latitude appears to be consciously omitted from the Russo-Chinese narrative of spatio-demographic uniqueness. Again, while Russia might have the largest territory on earth, its high latitude renders much of it useless. These factors evidently weaken the credibility of this narrative, and the silence on these matters among Russian and Chinese state actors indicates that they too are aware of the fragility of their claims.

8.3 Russia and China as 'civilization-states'

Building on the notion of spatio-demographic uniqueness, the second spatial building block of the shared Russo-Chinese discourse of stability presents the two countries as something *more* than mere nation-states: that is, as 'civilization-states' (see also Jacques, 2009, p. 13; Chu, 2020, p. 18). A clear example of this ethico-spatial discourse is offered by Vladimir Putin (id7675, 2007) during a meeting with former general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Hu Jintao. During this meeting, Putin states that 'Russia and China are more than close neighbors – in the very history and culture of our peoples lies a huge cultural and spiritual attraction of two great civilizations.' Putin continues that 'despite the complexity of political events in the world […] our peoples have retained sincere respect for each other. Both in Russia and China, we have always known that we are destined not only to live side by side, but also […] to closely cooperate [and to offer an] example of how harmonious and equal relations between peoples should be built.'

Here and elsewhere, Putin's civilizational rhetoric is eagerly reciprocated by Chinese actors. During this particular meeting, for example, Hu Jintao (id7675, 2007) declares that 'Russia is a great country […] which has made an outstanding contribution to the development of world civilization and human progress', adding that 'behind the Russian people lies not only a deep antiquity and brilliant culture – but also a long and gloriously titanic struggle.'[62]

An important element of this ethico-spatial discourse is the non-Westphalian notion that both countries – as 'civilization-states' – *transcend* the nation-state.[63] This non-Westphalian strain in the Russo-Chinese discourse of stability overlaps with a dominant ethico-spatial doctrine in Chinese foreign policy; that is, Beijing's contemporary *Tianxia* discourse. 'Literally meaning "all under heaven," Ban Wang (2017, pp. 1–2) writes, 'Tianxia refers to a system of governance held together by a regime of culture and values that transcends […] geographical boundaries.' This notion of Tianxia, Chishen Chang and Kuan-Hsing Chen (2017, p. 268) demonstrate, has been turned into a potent 'framing device' in Chinese foreign policy and serves to articulate an international order that moves beyond the dominant paradigm of Western modernity anchored in the nation-state (see also Callahan, 2008, p. 751; Chu, 2020).

Contemporary iterations of China's Tianxia doctrine aim to provide an alternative to the Euro-American model for world order, which – both in Beijing's and Moscow's eyes – has unfairly benefitted nation-states to the detriment of actors of *civilizational scale*, such as Russia and China. The reason behind this 'Western' misrecognition of 'civilization-states', according to this logic, is that the Euro-American Westphalian model only recognizes entities no larger than the nation-state and regards the world as a 'space between states' rather than a 'space between civilizations' (Chang & Chen, 2017, pp. 274–279).

[62] See section 5 for a further exploration of this reference to messianic suffering.

[63] See also chapter 7 on Kazakhstan for a further analysis of non-Westphalian narratives in Russian-Eurasian discourses.

Importantly, these representations of Russia and China as operating on a higher post-Westphalian level are at odds with the expressed support for the Westphalian principles of sovereignty and non-interference that both Russian and Chinese state actors preach elsewhere, underlining once more their instrumental commitment to such norms. This double standard is particularly evident in the Russian case. Moscow fervently supports the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in its interactions with Western powers in response to what Russia perceives as the West's erosion of Westphalian norms through the promotion of non-state, human-focused normative universalism (Allison, 2013, p. 18), yet it is quick to disregard the principles of sovereignty and non-interference itself when it invades a nation like Ukraine.

Employing a non-Westphalian narrative, Russian and Chinese state actors frame the 'western-imposed' system of nation-stateness as one of the driving forces behind today's chaos and instability and argue that the Westphalian system has generated an environment of destructive competition between nation-states. Sergei Lavrov (id3936, 2016) states, for example, that 'the desire of our partners in the West, led by the US, to achieve global domination by all means is felt more and more clearly […] It is obvious that not a single state, even the most powerful one, or a group of countries, can claim to solve the numerous problems of modernity alone.'

Similarly, a report published by the MoD (id3593, 2020) states that 'the aggravating confrontation between the global power centers – the US, China, and Russia – has led to chaos in international relations.' The report continues that 'the world is entering an era of greater disunity [in which individual states] are unable to effectively respond to challenges and threats.' The MoD report then reads that 'the West has consolidated against Russia and China [and] the powerful of this world have created a template for world order that is cruel and inhumane. We are witnessing a tough struggle that is no longer about [inter-state politics] but about cultural and civilizational factors' (see also id4239, 2019). Here and elsewhere, the Westphalian system is presented as a Hobbesian 'state of nature' in which nation-states compete with one another in a constant struggle for power and in which none of the basic human needs can be met. However, through a system of

'civilization-stateness,' or so Russian and Chinese state actors argue, stability can once more be restored.

Russian and Chinese state actors repeatedly suggest that both countries – as 'civilization-states' – have the unique faculty to co-exist peacefully and to promote stability in world affairs, because they supposedly act on behalf of the well-being of *all peoples* rather than the narrow nation-state interest. State Duma deputy Sergei Gavrilov (id7328, 2017) argues, for example, that 'global civilization […] is exposed to enormous […] spiritual and moral perils [because] the very foundations of understanding good and evil, family values, values of the state, and values of virtue are being undermined.' According to Gavrilov, 'only two countries are currently offering an answer to this universal human crisis – Russia and China.' He argues that 'Beijing's position largely coincides with the position of Moscow: […] China, like us, offers cooperation instead of competition and division […] to restore the harmonious unity of human civilization in the future.' Here and elsewhere, Russia's civilizational discourse is explicitly elevated to a *global* level (as opposed to the *regional* focus of Moscow's civilizational language vis-à-vis Belarus and Kazakhstan).

Russian and Chinese government actors similarly upgrade their civilizational language to a *global* setting in the 'Joint Statement on International Order in the 21st Century' (id7627, 2005), which reads that 'diversity of cultures and civilizations in the world should become the basis for mutual enrichment rather than conflict. Not a "clash of civilizations," but the need for global cooperation – this is the defining requirement of the world in modern conditions.' The statement then continues that Russia and China must 'conduct an inter-civilizational dialogue to mutually enrich and complement one another in the name of joint progress.'[64] These examples demonstrate that the Russo-Chinese language of stability differs significantly in spatial scale and civilizational

[64] Importantly, while both statements are relevant to demonstrate how Russian government actors elevate their civilizational discourse to a *global* level with reference to China (as opposed to the *regional* level with reference to Belarus and Kazakhstan), the statements do offer very distinct, if not incompatible, views on the concept of civilization – where Gavrilov refers to the existence of an all-human civilization in the singular, the joint statement cited thereafter alludes to the notion of civilizational distinctiveness and the existence of civilizations in the plural. This distinction between 'civilization in the singular and 'civilizations in the plural is discussed more in-depth in the literature review offered in chapter 2.

hierarchy compared to Russian narratives vis-à-vis Belarus (chapter 6) and Kazakhstan (chapter 7). In the case of Belarus, Russian foreign policy actors allude mostly to an 'all-Russian civilization' in which Belarus is seen as a subordinate element. In the case of Kazakhstan, Russian actors refer to a civilization of 'Eurasian' scale in which Russia takes on a leading role, but the constitutive parts are nonetheless respected as independent actors. And in the case of China, Russian foreign policy actors refer to a civilization of *global scale* in which Russia and China co-function as *equal* guarantors of peace and stability.

Thus, avoiding the 'Eurasian' region as a relevant civilizational category in their foreign policy language vis-à-vis China, Russian government actors much rather emphasize a shared Russo-Chinese civilizational responsibility at the *global* level. While the global focus aligns with Russia's apparent discursive aim – that is, to present the Russo-Chinese partnership as an ordering force in world affairs – it is also driven by the real-life limitations of bilateral cooperation between Moscow and Beijing. After all, the 'Eurasian' space constitutes the domain in which Russian and Chinese interests are most likely to collide. It is thus that both Russian and Chinese state actors may prefer a globalist projection of their shared responsibilities instead. Thus, despite the expectation that the notion of 'Eurasia' would be a leading concept in Russia's civilizational language vis-à-vis China, the discursive analysis paints a different picture. This finding reveals a new layer to Russia's civilizational logic (see figure 8.1 below).

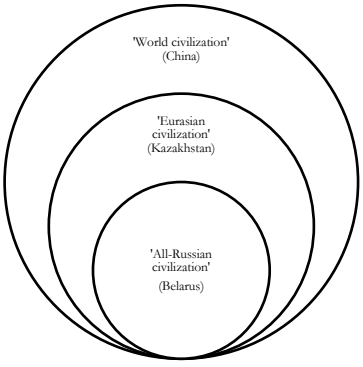


Figure 8.1 The civilizational hierarchy in Russian foreign policy discourse

Throughout the corpus, Russian government actors consistently frame China as a compatible civilizational actor, which supposedly shares a similar moral code and vision on global order. A report published by Rossotrudnichestvo (id3824, 2018), for example, compares Russia and China to a phoenix, arguing that both countries have 'risen from the ashes to defend their right to exist.'[65] While the Rossotrudnichestvo report portrays the 'American dream' and 'European dream' as civilizational competitors to the 'Russian world,' it describes China as a civilizational 'fellow traveler'. In another instance, Putin (id4306, 2019) refers to Russo-Chinese cooperation as a 'truly civilizational task.' Other documents describe China as 'a uniquely grandiose civilization' (id6210, 2020), stress the 'civilizational factor' in Russo-Chinese relations (id3744, 2018), and describe Sino-Russian cooperation as a 'partnership between civilizations' (id7619, 2016).

Here and elsewhere, Russian foreign policy actors portray China as a unique but compatible civilizational entity that strives towards a similar goal of global stability through a shared opposition against 'Western hegemony'. Beyond general expressions in support of such classic pluralist principles as non-interference and sovereignty, however, the exact content of their 'civilizational compatibility' remains vague. This demonstrates that the discourse – to a large extent – functions as an empty shell. In other words, while there is plenty of rhetoric surrounding the 'spiritual' and normative compatibility between Russian and Chinese 'civilizations,' there is very little to show for in terms of real-life, pragmatic cooperation to substantiate these claims.

8.4 A Russo-Chinese path to modernity

The (ethico-)temporal building block of the Russo-Chinese discourse of stability frames the imposition of a 'western' model for modernity as the root cause behind the so-called instability and chaos of the modern world (see figure 8.2 below for an overview of this narrative).[66] The 2008 financial crisis – in particular – is framed as a temporal turning point, embodying the 'rock bottom'

[65] Section 5 further explores the notion of messianic suffering in the Russo-Chinese discourse of stability.
[66] See also chapter 4 on temporal identity constructions in Russian foreign policy discourse.

of a failing western system for modernity and globalization. A State Duma report published in 2015 (id4132), for example, argues that 'the world crisis, which began in 2008, has shifted global rivalry from a national to *civilizational scale*.' 'The current competition between development models', the report reads, 'has brought about a real clash of civilizations.' A joint statement published by the Russian and Chinese leaderships in 2016 (id7619) similarly reads that 'the global financial crisis has had a noticeable impact on the international situation.' 'Against the backdrop of continued low rates of economic growth,' the statement reads, 'the creation of closed trade associations, the implementation of unilateral sanctions, […] and other steps aimed at fragmenting the global economic space have had a destructive effect on international economic relations […].'

Implied in these various statements is a 'failing' and 'uncooperative West'. What exactly drives the alleged failure of the western program of modernity is clearly expressed in a report published by the Russian MoD (id3487, 2017) titled 'moral values and the future of humankind', which argues that '[western-led] globalization and postmodernism are the main sources of the spiritual and moral crisis of modernity.' The report continues that the West's hegemonic model for modernity is characterized by a 'decreased moral consciousness expressed through cruelty, indifference, and consumerism.' Figure 8.2 below visualizes the key elements of the Russian narrative emphasizing the so-called 'problems of postmodernity', which includes persistent references to such notions as a 'crisis of spirituality', 'unilateralism', and 'Western hegemony'.

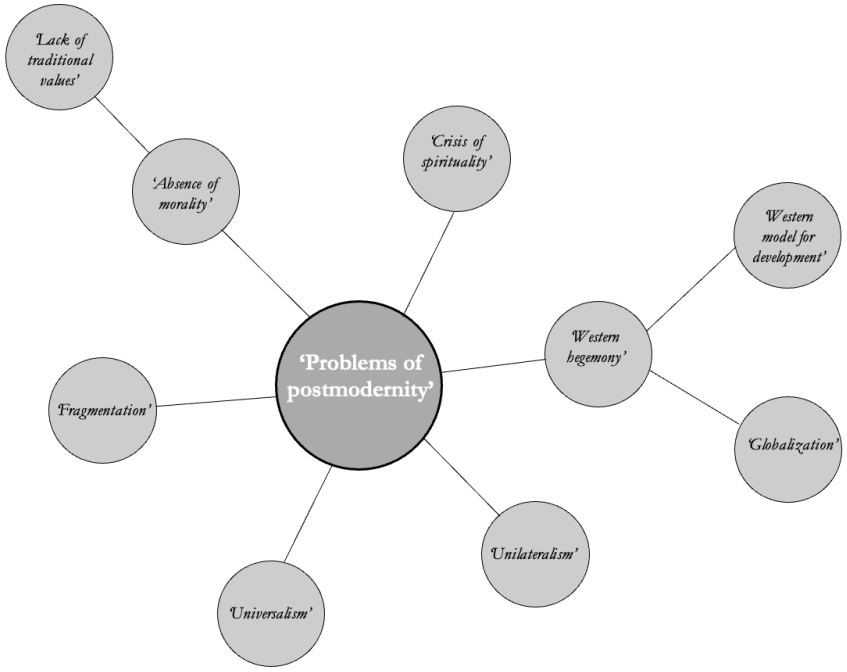


Figure 8.2 Key elements of the Russo-Chinese narrative of 'postmodernity'

Contrasting these negative portrayals of a failing 'Western modernity', Russia and China – in turn – are framed as 'solving global problems in a spirit of openness, […] promoting the development of a just and rational international […] order, [whilst pursuing] a constructive dialogue between civilizations that strengthens the harmony and mutual enrichment of different cultures and religions' (id7619, 2016). According to this ethico-temporal narrative, Russia and China are particularly well suited to lead the world on an alternative path to modernity in their special capacity as 'civilization-states'. This sentiment is well captured in the work of contemporary Russian philosopher Alexander Panarin, as Richard Sakwa (2003, pp. 178–181) explains. Panarin (1999) argues that the 'world historical cycle' has shifted from a western phase to an eastern one. While the western phase brought technological development, the eastern phase is said to bring a 'post-economic' and 'post-material' value system. This turn to 'Easternism' in Russian political discourse, Sakwa (2003, pp. 178–181) illustrates, 'is no longer […] provoked by the failure to become Western, but [constitutes] an attempt to forge an alternative to Western modernity in its entirety' (see also Paikin, 2020, p. 9).

Importantly, these various claims that Moscow and Beijing are following a non-Western path to modernity clash with Russian and Chinese efforts elsewhere to be included in Western-led financial and economic institutions. It exemplifies how Russian and Chinese state actors walk two different paths at the same time — trying to extend their influence in a Western-led system of globalization, while also trying to promote the creation of alternative, non-Western structures for global (economic) interaction. The fact that China has been much more successful than Russia in embedding itself in the Western-led global economy is likely to be a source of tension between the two actors. Russia's failure to fully embed itself in the Western-led system of globalization has undoubtedly contributed to its willingness to defy international norms (after all, Moscow has far less to lose), whereas China — even under a more assertive leadership of Xi Jinping – has continued to stand by its maxim of acting as a 'responsible stakeholder'. This friction is carefully avoided in interactions between Russian and Chinese counterparts, however, and Chinese government actors have so far managed to justify Russia's aggressive posture in international affairs by framing it as a proportional response to '*Western provocations'*.

Notably, one of the core ethical premises of Russia's alternative 'Eastern' modernity is the expressed preference for cultural pluralism. This anti-universalist strand in the discourse criticizes the Western program of modernity for its universal pretenses and argues that the western model has conflated modernization with 'westernization' by imposing exogenous and 'non-traditional' values onto non-western communities.[67] One of the State Duma reports (id4132, 2015) mentioned earlier, for example, criticizes 'the West' for 'aggressively imposing its development model […] on all peoples as a universal one,' arguing that 'the American model for globalization has been detrimental to the original culture and spirituality of other civilizations.' Elsewhere, a Duma report (id4189, 2020) argues that Russia's modernization path should be driven by Eurasianism rather than a universalist 'westernization' agenda. The pluralist approach found in these foreign policy

[67] See also the discursive analysis in chapter 5, which further explores the Russian discourse surrounding 'traditional values' and the supposed 'western imposition of LGBT rights.'

documents proposes a multiplicity of civilizations and opposes the suitability of the westernization-modernization paradigm as a universal one (see also Mjør & Turoma, 2020).[68]

This anti-universalist discourse is filled with ambiguities. For example, while criticizing the universalist character of the westernization-modernization model, Russian foreign policy actors clearly aim to 'universalize' their own program of modernity – one which ultimately does not seem to have any proclaimed substantive content beyond the wish to fight 'Western hegemony', however. While relying on a post-colonial discourse surrounding the multiplicity of modernities, Russian foreign policy actors ultimately suggest subsuming the various modernities under a hegemonic Russo-Chinese leadership. This anti-universalist/universalizing paradox dates back to Eurasianist discourses from the 1920s. Sergei Glebov (2015, p. 48) explains how traditional Eurasianists such as Nikolai Trubetzkoy provided 'a strong critique of "European" ideas of civilizational competence and hierarchies, while [reinventing] Eurasia […] as a colonized country, a potential leader [in] the uprising of the colonized against the colonizers.' Importantly, writes Glebov (2015, p. 49), 'the Eurasianist "postcolonial" argument was not emancipatory but pursued [opposite] goals: to sustain the unity of the imperial space, to disarm local nationalisms, and […] to articulate a non-European subjectivity [for the Russian empire]' (see also Glebov, 2003).

Relying on a similarly paradoxical 'decolonizing' logic, the Russo-Chinese discourse of stability equally 'asserts Eurasia as a counter-hegemonic actor, in revolt against a Western, neo-colonial order' (Lewis, 2018, pp. 1618–1624). Moreover, similar to Eurasianist discourses from the 1920s, this 'decolonizing' logic is not emancipatory at all – the alternative program of modernity offered by Russia and China does not truly allow for a multiplicity of modernities, as it imposes a fixed normative framework onto the 'Eurasian' space (Lewis, 2018, pp. 1618–1624).

[68] This Russian critique of modernization can be traced back to the 'dependency theory' developed by analysts of Latin America during the 1960s. James Mahoney and Diana Rodríguez-Franco (2018) explain that 'whereas modernization theory seemed to suggest that there was a single path to modernity that most or all underdeveloped states would eventually follow, dependency theorists believed that the countries of the Third World could not follow a pattern of development at all similar to the rich western countries.' Russian government actors almost verbatim mimic this argument when they criticize the universal applicability of the westernization-modernization paradigm.

8.5 BRICS and the Russo-Chinese 'rising nations' discourse

Closely linked to the Russo-Chinese 'alternative modernity' discourse is the ethico-temporal narrative, which promotes the idea that Russia and China can offer the 'non-West' an alternative path to modernization that avoids the 'dark' sides of western modernity, e.g., hyper-individualism, spiritual alienation, and moral decline. This alternative path to modernity, Tsygankov (2019, pp. 204–207) explains, is particularly concerned with finding opportunities outside 'the West' through flexible partnerships with the BRICS nations (Brazil, India, China, and South-Africa). The BRICS countries were initially grouped together as promising market economies in a Goldman Sachs report published in 2001 (see O'Neill et al., 2001). '[I]n a stroke of diplomatic ju-jitsu aimed at the West,' Cynthia Roberts (2010, p. 39) writes, '[Kremlin propagandists] transformed a successful investment strategy into Russia's own novel international agenda.' Russia has since used the BRICS framework to coordinate development policies with non-Western allies. China has similarly welcomed the BRICS as 'an avenue […] to enhance both its identity as a representative of developing countries in bringing about a more just world and its position as a rising power' (Bolt & Cross, 2018, pp. 16–20, 31–32).

In a speech in 2019 (id6744), for example, Sergei Lavrov argues that 'the BRICS have played a key role in the transition from a unipolar system to a polycentric world order.' Lavrov continues that 'globalization is changing the balance of power in the world in favor of the rising nations [and] influence is shifting from the Euro-Atlantic to other regions.' He states that 'such tendencies are "not to the taste" of those who would like to slow down […] the development of human civilization and who would like to artificially preserve their dominance through methods of blackmail, threat, and unfair competition.' Elsewhere, State Duma deputy Vyacheslav Nikonov (id7346, 2019) argues that 'the BRICS are not a construction invented by Goldman Sachs, but a reality: a centuries-old dialogue of powerful civilizations.' For centuries, Nikonov continues, 'Europe owned the world, and the struggle for peace was essentially a struggle within Europe […]

now, Europe no longer owns the world. The EU is the most economically stagnant region [and] the internal struggle in Europe is no longer at the center of world politics.'

Here and elsewhere, Russian foreign policy actors frame the BRICS structure as a distinctly 'Russian' cooperation project. In reality, however, the only strong economic and trading ties that the BRICS states have – that are *not with major Western powers* – are with China. Thus, it is a China-dominated system of linkages to the extent that it is anything at all. This fact is scarcely acknowledged in interactions between Russian and Chinese counterparts, however. Instead, Russian government actors make every possible effort to frame the BRICS as an equal partnership between 'rising nations'. Similarly, the conflictual relationship between China and India is consciously overlooked by Russian government actors. Christopher Weidacher Hsiung (2019, p. 12) explains that uneven bilateral relations between Russia, India, and China pose a serious challenge to future developments of the wider BRICS format. He writes that 'China-India relations are by far the most complicated [and] deep-rooted mistrust, a hard-to-resolve border conflict, China's "all-weather-relationship" with Pakistan and India's concerns over China's growing naval presence in the Indian Ocean [continue to] hamper steps towards deeper cooperation.'

In spite of these tensions, however, Russian foreign policy actors continue to optimistically portray the BRICS format as a 'civilizational association'. In a 2012 speech, for example, Putin (id4070) states that the BRICS format 'guarantees Russia's sovereignty, prosperity and the preservation of Russia's position as a civilizational leader.' Elsewhere, the BRICS framework is described as a 'dialogue between civilizations' (id7567, 2010; id7346, 2019) and a 'pillar of the emerging just and democratic world order […] where culturally and civilizationally diverse countries have united on the basis of a creative foreign policy philosophy much needed in our troubled modernity' (see also id5680, 2012).

According to Duma deputy Vyacheslav Nikonov (id7346, 2019), the BRICS nations share a common value system based on *independence* ('the US no longer has the right to do whatever it wants in the world'), *non-interference* ('we retain the right to our own path'), and *pluralism* ('We have

different cultural matrices but […] our differences show us the world in all its colors'). Pointing towards the 'dark' sides of the westernization-modernization model, Nikonov argues that the BRICS nations distinguish themselves by their respect for the *'value of human life'* ('Most of the wars were fought between western countries [and] for centuries Europe has been the main theater for war'). Nikonov concludes that 'the BRICS nations provide an example […] of how modern humanity should be arranged, in contrast to the liberal world order.' Adopting a non-discriminatory rhetoric similar to the one discussed in chapter 5, Nikonov states that 'if you want to be part of this value system, you can join, but you have to look at others as equals, which is so difficult in Western political culture.'

Elsewhere, Russian government actors similarly celebrate a 'moral code' shared between the BRICS nations. Sergei Lavrov (id3831, 2020) states, for example, that the BRICS 'are committed to building interstate communication based on the principles of the UN Charter and the values of equality, respect and mutual interests.' Lavrov furthermore argues that the BRICS nations 'oppose a revision of the results of the Second World War [and] aim to build a stable and predictable future by developing a common response to global challenges and threats.' Here and elsewhere, Russian government actors frame the BRICS format as a response to the West's 'failed attempt to build a unipolar model of international governance after the end of the Cold War,' portraying the BRICS – by contrast – as 'a new polycentric world order, in which [non-Western states] have the opportunity to build independent models of socio-economic and political development and conduct an independent foreign policy' (id3831, 2020).

Among the BRICS nations, Russian government actors argue, Russia and China in particular function as leaders of the 'non-West' and as facilitators of sustainable development for humankind more generally. In a speech in 2017, for example, Putin (id3585) argues that it is Russia and China that 'jointly look for answers to the most acute challenges and threats to peace and stability [and] collectively solve the socio-economic problems of modernization […].' Elsewhere, Putin (id4605, 2016) states that Russia and China – with their respective regional integration

projects, the EEU and BRI – are particularly committed to the future development of the Eurasian continent. According to Putin, 'only a world with ample opportunities for everyone […] and a wealth of ways of self-realization can be considered truly free [and] only a world in which people from different countries live a full life, and do not struggle for survival, can be stable.'

The stabilizing potential of the BRICS model for development is supposedly based on its 'de-ideologized' character (see also Rozman, 2014, pp. 252–254). In a 2017 speech, for instance, Lavrov (id3870) states that the BRICS model is 'aimed at building trust at the global level [and] developing a culture of mutually acceptable compromise based on a de-ideologized and multilateral approach.' He continues that the BRICS format 'builds on the spiritual foundation of the traditional values of the five countries' and aims to 'enrich the cultural and civilizational diversity of the modern world.' Elsewhere, Putin (id3585, 2017) similarly describes the BRICS format as a 'very promising association, without any co-opinions, which is not united based on ideological principles, but […] on a common desire to give the world economy a more just and noble character.' This principle of 'de-ideologized' international relations is equally employed in Russo-Chinese bilateral documents (e.g., id9003, 2016). Underlying this notion of 'de-ideologization' is a criticism of the 'Western' liberal world order and what both Moscow and Beijing frame as the imposition of liberal norms by 'the West'. Instead, Russian and Chinese state actors claim to promote a pluralist – or 'de-ideologized' – system of international relations in which cultural or 'civilizational' entities can choose their own path of development.[69]

Importantly, representations of Russia and China as being at the 'vanguard' of human development can be traced back to early-Soviet times. Ted Hopf (Hopf, 2002, 2009) explains that under Stalin 'the Soviet Union [was portrayed as] the apex and the center of the world communist community, and the teleological end point for all modern humanity,' while China functioned as 'the Soviet Union's oldest little brother, a revolutionary comrade-in-arms who aspired to become

[69] Note section 8.4 on the anti-universalist/universalizing paradox in Russo-Chinese discourses, however.

just like its elder and better' (see also Malinova, 2018, pp. 237–238). After the death of Stalin in 1953, this shared vanguard position turned into a source of tension. The Soviet change of leadership provided the People's Republic of China with more leverage to pursue equality (Rozman, 2014, pp. 217–220). Soon thereafter, writes Rozman, 'each country strove to outdo the other in proving its vanguard status in what was then called the Third World.'

With the onset of the Sino-Soviet split in 1956, the early-Soviet discourse surrounding a shared responsibility for 'human development' was thus replaced with a belligerent narrative that framed the PRC as a hostile actor (see also Lukin, 2015; V. Shlapentokh, 2007). Although acute tensions eased as Deng Xiaoping came to power in the 1980s, ideological divisions remained until the 1990s, after which criticisms of China were gradually muted by Russia's post-Soviet leadership (Rozman, 2014, pp. 244–246). Under Putin, negative discourses surrounding China have been suppressed at the highest levels of government and Russian state actors have tended to prefer a positive narrative of Sino-Soviet relations, turning a blind eye to the decades of tensions that existed between the PRC and the Soviet Union.[70] It is thus that Putin has been able to return to an early-Soviet inspired discourse surrounding the shared Russo-Chinese responsibility for 'equal global development'.

There has been one vital change, however. Where the early-Soviet hierarchy of modernity placed the PRC below the Soviets, it is clear that the contemporary dynamic of economic development dictates that Russia stands lower in the pecking order. This new reality is willfully ignored by the Russian leadership. China, in turn, while remaining polite in its interactions with Russian counterparts, is unlikely to accept any Russian assertion to power or even a partnership of true equality, rendering the Russo-Chinese 'rising nations' discourse inherently fragile.

[70] Importantly, some negative representations of China – and particularly the racist notion of a 'yellow peril' – continue to persist at a parliamentary level, although these voices are highly marginalized in Putin's Russia (e.g., id4044, 2012; id4132, 2015).

8.6 Russia and China as 'peace brokers'

The ethical building block of the Russo-Chinese discourse of stability frames both countries as peace brokers in and beyond the Eurasian region. From 1992 onwards, joint statements published by the Russian and Chinese governments have regularly contained references to the katechontic notion of a Russo-Chinese peace broker position. The first joint statement published in 1992, for example, states that both countries 'will make efforts to promote peace, security, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific […] and strengthen peace and security in [wider] Asia and the world by searching for solutions to major global and regional problems' (id9004). This section further explores the use of a katechontic narrative in Russo-Chinese joint statements published in the last two decades. The discursive analysis demonstrates how the ethical narrative of a shared Russo-Chinese peace broker position brings together the various spatial and temporal themes discussed in the earlier sections.

The Russo-Chinese peace broker narrative links to a wider messianic tendency in Russian political discourse, which frames Russia as a mediator and pacifier of humankind (see chapter 5 on ethical identity constructions). As discussed in this earlier chapter, katechontic portrayals of Russia as the 'guarantor of peace and stability' have been eagerly employed by the Putin regime. Equally relying on a messianic narrative, the Russo-Chinese language explored here similarly frames Russia and China as the 'chosen ones' – those who carry the burden to ward off global chaos and act as savior and liberator of the world (see also Hell, 2009; Engström, 2014, Lewis, 2020).

While katechontic references to a Russo-Chinese peace broker position during the 1990s consisted mostly of generalized statements about both countries' contributions to 'world peace' and the 'joint progress of humankind' (e.g., id9005, 1997; id9006, 2000; id9007, 2000), the language of stability as we see today starts to take shape from 2001 onwards. At this point, the Sino-Russian peace broker discourse shifts its focus to specific themes, ranging from terrorism, separatism and extremism to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). A joint statement published in 2001 (id9008), for example, argues that 'terrorism, separatism and extremism pose a

serious threat to […] global peace and stability.' The document continues that 'Russia and China are determined take resolute and necessary steps in the tough fight against terrorism in all its manifestations.'[71] The same statement reads that Russia and China aim 'to strengthen […] global and regional stability […] through the development of effective measures in the field of arms control, disarmament, and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction' (see also id9935, 2005).

Over time, the Russo-Chinese peace broker discourse becomes progressively pessimistic. A 2003 joint statement (id9009, 2003) argues, for example, that 'the modern world is undergoing complex and profound changes [and] the logic of force and unilateral action brings new factors of instability to an already troubled world.' Meanwhile, Russia and China are increasingly framed as forces for good. This is expressed through a progressively grandiose rhetoric that frames Russia and China as 'peace-loving' actors and implies that – given their spatio-demographic uniqueness – the two countries are better placed than a hegemonic and aggressive 'West' to lead global efforts to counter the various 'challenges of modernity' (id9009, 2003; see also id9010, 2004; id9011, 2005; id9012, 2006).

This katechontic notion of both countries' supposedly unique position to ensure global peace and stability and to ward off global chaos caused by the 'Western' model for modernity is particularly well expressed in a joint statement from 2013 (id9027), which reads that 'while the situation on the planet remains turbulent, […] Russia and China, based on […] their historical responsibility for world peace and the progress of humankind, call on all states to unite efforts, guided by the principles of equality, mutual trust, and tolerance […] to jointly strengthen peace, ensure stability, development and prosperity, and to build a more just, democratic and harmonious world order.' During a speech in 2014 (id9013), Dmitry Medvedev employs a similar katechontic

[71] Interestingly, the joint statement reads that Russia and China take resolute steps in the fight against terrorism *'in all its manifestations,'* which further corroborates the argument surrounding Russian understandings of 'terrorism' presented in chapter 7 on Kazakhstan.

rhetoric by arguing that strong bilateral relations between Russia and China 'will make our world calmer and more stable […] which will benefit the general situation in the world.'

This katechontic rhetoric is enthusiastically reciprocated by the premier of the State Council of the PCR, Li Keqiang (id9013), who likewise states that 'both countries are determined to develop their eternal friendship and jointly defend regional and global peace and stability.' Strong bilateral ties between Russia and China, Li Keqiang argues, 'will benefit not only our two peoples, but will also contribute to peace, prosperity, and stability in the region and the world as a whole.'

The Russo-Chinese katechontic 'peace broker' narrative gets its first *civilizational* twist in a joint statement published by the Russian and Chinese governments in 2014. This particular statement reads that 'Russia and China, as states with a centuries-old cultural, civilizational and historical tradition, intend to contribute in every way to the advancement of a dialogue of cultures and civilizations on a global scale' (id9014, 2014). This reference to Russia and China as 'civilization-states' is quickly followed by a remark surrounding both countries' important roles in 'ensuring global and regional security and stability.' A similar rhetoric can be found in a speech by Li Keqiang during an annual meeting between the Russian and Chinese heads of state (id9015, 2016), which reads that both countries aim to 'jointly defend stability and peace' and frames the Sino-Russian partnership as a 'mutual enrichment between civilizations.'

The peace broker narrative starts to become more polarized and more assertively anti-Western from 2016 onwards. The joint statement published that year contains the following paragraph (id9016, 2016):

> 'The world is experiencing an alarming increase in factors that negatively affect global stability. This dangerous trend is primarily associated with the desire of individual states and military-political alliances to achieve decisive military […] superiority, which would allow them to freely use force […] to advance their interests in the world arena. […] The fundamental principle of not harming the security of states is openly ignored and attempts

are being made to ensure security at the expense of others […] which undermines global […] stability.'

Importantly, while this statement clearly refers to what Russia and China perceive as *Western* attempts to establish military hegemony, which both countries see as being embodied by NATO enlargement, NATO or 'the West' as such are never explicitly referenced. However, *implicit* references to an immoral and expansionist 'West' as the Russo-Chinese Other can be found with increasing frequency in the peace broker narrative from 2016 onwards.

It thus becomes increasingly clear that the threats to stability of which Russia and China warn are seen to be coming from one particular direction: The West. Russia and China – in turn – are portrayed as katechontic powers that ward off the various dangers threatening global stability. Similar to the katechontic narrative explored in chapter 5, the notion of Russia – and in this case, China – as katechontic shields aligns with Carl Schmitt's conceptualization of the katechon as the restrainer (*der Aufhalter*) – the bulwark that holds back the chaos pushing up from below (see also Taubes, 2004, p. 103). A joint statement from 2018 (id9017), for example, reads that 'as the international situation is characterized by high conflict potential, an exacerbation of geopolitical contradictions, a shrinking space for constructive interaction, and manifestations of economic protectionism, […] the Russian-Chinese [relationship] is an essential factor in maintaining balance and stability in the world.'

8.6.1 The spatio-ethical SCO narrative

Two organizations in particular function as the main institutional loci through which Russia and China supposedly enact their peace broker role: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) regionally and the UN Security Council (UNSC) globally. Notably, the use of these spatio-ethical narratives surrounding the SCO and the UNSC in combination with the wider peace broker

narrative is an example of the interplay between denotative and connotative discourses.[72] While connotative discourses imbue shared meaning – in this case, the notion that Russia and China function as katechontic shields in the struggle for regional and global stability – denotative discourses formalize these discursive claims by referring to institutionalized 'spatial' structures (Lefebvre, 1991): here, the SCO and the UNSC.

A publication by the Russian MoD (id3633, 2012), for example, reads that 'institutionalized organizations operating in Eurasia […] have failed to provide peace and stability on the continent […] [The US and the EU] have sought to ensure their national interests [in Eurasia] by implementing their so-called new Asian policies, which run counter to the interests of the Asian states […] This has led the "Shanghai Five" (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) to create a new type of international structure – the SCO.' The report continues that the creation of the SCO has been an attempt to 'reverse negative trends,' which – according to the MoD – were caused by 'a general imbalance in the system of international relations that developed after the end of the Cold War.'

In the various joint declarations published by the so-called 'Shanghai Five', a term describing the initial grouping of countries which later came to be called the SCO, the creation of the SCO is framed as a necessary response to the challenges of modernity. A declaration from 2014 (id4319), for example, reads that 'the modern world is going through a difficult transitional period, which is characterized by the transformation of the entire system of international relations while the multipolar world order is being created.' The declaration then continues that 'the heads of state positively assess the cooperation [between SCO member states], […] which has contributed to the strengthening of good-neighborliness, […] spiritual rapprochement, and the promotion of intercivilizational dialogue in the interests of the peoples living in the SCO space.' Similarly, a joint SCO declaration published in 2018 (id4378) reads that 'the dynamically developing world is

[72] Also see section 1.3.1 and section 3.7 for a further discussion of the distinction between 'connotative' and 'denotative' discourses.

undergoing a period of major changes [and] the geopolitical landscape is becoming more diverse and multipolar.' 'At the same time,' the declaration continues, 'factors of instability and uncertainty are increasing: […] the process of economic globalization is faced with unilateral protectionist measures, […] regional conflicts are exacerbating, and the terrorist threat – along with threats caused by infectious diseases and climate change – are rising.'

Throughout the corpus, the 'Shanghai Five' – and the SCO's two biggest member states, Russia and China, in particular – are painted as saviors of humankind holding down the chaos caused by a western-imposed model for modernity. The messianic imperative of the 'Shanghai Five' to unite is most strongly expressed in a 2008 speech by Putin (id4245) in which he argues that 'we [read: the 'Shanghai Five'] must do everything to ensure our progressive development […] God himself commanded the countries of this region to use their competitive advantages, both geographically and historically. This is what the SCO is doing, and we are doing it very successfully.'[73]

The alternative path to modernity that the 'Shanghai Five' promise to deliver is designed according to the so-called 'Shanghai spirit'. Whilst generally ill-defined, this moral code of conduct is described in one MoD report (id3633, 2012) as 'a qualitatively new model of interstate relations, which is characterized by genuine equality of large and small countries, mutual trust, respect for the diversity of civilizations, cultures, religions, forms of government, and development concepts, and the pursuit of joint prosperity.' 'The "Shanghai spirit" as the underlying philosophy of this model,' the MoD report continues, 'embodies the basic principles of international relations in a multipolar world and has significance beyond a narrow SCO framework.' Elsewhere, the 'Shanghai spirit' is described as 'embodying mutual trust, equality, mutual benefit, […] and respect for the diversity of cultures, whilst striving for the joint development of world affairs' (id4378, 2018).

[73] Note that such a reference to a deity will not be met with enthusiasm by the Chinese leadership.

Here, too, 'the West' functions as a silent Other. The Russian and Chinese leaderships continuously propagate 'respect for the independent choice of all peoples,' 'the settlement of disputes on the basis of equal and indivisible security,' 'the inadmissibility of intervention and interference in domestic affairs,' 'the opposition to regime change through external interference,' and 'a prohibition of the extraterritorial application of national laws', framing these classic pluralist principles through a civilizational lens (e.g., id7619, 2016; id9011, 2005; id9012, 2006; id9018, 2008; id9019, 2010; id9020, 2015; id9021, 2019). Evidently, whilst implicitly criticizing 'the West' through these statements, the Russian and Chinese leaderships do not abide by their own rules of ethical international conduct – two obvious examples being Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and China's conduct vis-à-vis Taiwan.

8.6.2 The spatio-ethical and temporal UNSC narrative

While the SCO narrative focuses primarily on questions of *regional* security, its *global* spatio-ethical counterpart can be found in the Russo-Chinese language surrounding the UN Security Council. Similar to the SCO narrative, the language surrounding the UNSC constitutes a denotative discourse – one that aims to 'materialize' the connotative language surrounding a Russo-Chinese peace broker role by invoking institutionalized 'spatial' structures that embody this self-assigned position. A joint statement published in 2006 (id9012), for example, reads that deepening bilateral cooperation between Russia and China is 'making a positive contribution to the development of our planet,' emphasizing – in particular – normative alignment between Russia and China in the UNSC. The statement further reads that both countries 'are convinced that there is no alternative to the important role of the UN in such areas as ensuring peace and security throughout the world' (see also id9018, 2008; id9020, 2015; id9022, 2016).

The Russo-Chinese katechontic responsibility to promote global peace and stability within a UN framework is consistently emphasized. A joint statement from 2008 (id9018), for example, argues that both countries – as permanent members of the UNSC – share a special 'responsibility

for peace and development on the planet'. Another joint statement reads that 'the goal of interaction between Russia and China in the international arena is to carry out their mission as major world powers and permanent members of the UNSC to protect global peace, stability and international justice […] and to create a more just and rational world order' (id9021, 2019). Elsewhere, Sergei Lavrov (id3851, 2015) argues that 'we [read: Russia and China] are often accused of […] paralyzing the UNSC through our use of the veto right.' Lavrov continues, however, that '[…] the veto is not a privilege, but a great responsibility,' arguing that Russia's and China's consistent use of their right to veto has brought salvation to various international crises. While this discourse may sound like classic P5 rhetoric on the surface, the positive language of a shared Russo-Chinese responsibility for world peace is clearly driven by the negative assertion that current global instabilities are caused by a hegemonic 'West'.

Importantly, the Russo-Chinese UNSC narrative also contains a *temporal* component. This temporal sub-narrative portrays Russia and China as having a special responsibility for world peace not only as the 'victors' of the Second World War but also as the countries that sustained the most losses. A joint statement from 2005 (id9011), for example, states that Russia and China are 'guided by a sense of historical responsibility for peace and development on the planet', which they bear as victors of World War II and as permanent members of the UNSC (see also id9002, 2013; id4307, 2013; id9013, 2014; id3480, 2014; id9026, 2020).

The historical authority that Russia and China supposedly carry to maintain global peace and stability is expressed through an ethico-temporal narrative of messianic suffering. A joint statement published by the Russian and Chinese leaderships in 2010 (id7625), for example, argues that 'having taken the main blow of fascism and Japanese militarism, having gone through the most terrible trials, and having suffered the greatest human losses, the peoples of our countries bore the brunt of resistance to the aggressors and eventually won.' The statement continues that 'Russia and China strongly condemn attempts to falsify the history of WWII […] and to denigrate the liberators,' stating that both countries, 'as permanent members of the UNSC, are determined to

continue working together with all peace-loving states and peoples in the name of forming a just and rational international order and preventing wars and conflicts on the planet.' The same statement argues that 'a repetition of such a catastrophe [read: WWII] would cause the destruction of our entire civilization.' The ethico-temporal narrative that presents Russia and China as the 'maintainers of global peace and stability' due to their historical experience during WWII is similarly found in various other joint statements and bilateral documents (e.g., id9013, 2014; id3480, 2014; id9020, 2015; id9022, 2016; id6314, 2021).

The ethico-temporal narrative explored here is an offshoot of the wider messianic narrative discussed in chapter 5 and perpetuates the idea that Russia and China had to undergo a process of suffering to 'return to glory'. While the Russian rhetoric builds on the Judeo-Christian notion of the messiah, Chinese government actors perpetuate these narratives through a Confucian-Communist messianic amalgam.[74] Barend ter Haar (2005, p. 154) demonstrates that 'like messianic traditions elsewhere, Chinese messianism builds on the concrete expectation that one or more saviors will descend to earth to rescue a select group of human beings from imminent […] apocalyptic disaster.' Ter Haar writes that Chinese messianism has a strong political dimension, as the messianic savior 'often [appearing] as [a] human ruler, [is thought to] subsequently reign over a radically changed world.' This ethico-temporal vision of messianic change is clearly reflected in the Russo-Chinese peace broker narrative.

Both countries find one another in what Bolt and Cross (2018, pp. 25–26) call a 'psychology of loss' – the idea that both Russia and China, at varying points in history, have been robbed of their position of power and are now on a trajectory to 'restore fairness' (see also Wishnick, 2017, p. 116; Larson & Shevchenko, 2019; Pieper, 2020, p. 2). In Russia's case, the loss of its great power position began with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, whereas China's 'century of humiliation' took place between 1839 to 1949 as China witnessed its dynastic collapse and the

[74] See Harald Wydra (2012) for an interesting analysis of Communist messianism. Wydra (2012, p. 53) explores how Communist ideology offered a 'doctrine of salvation […] by a collective savior, the proletariat'.

chaotic aftermath. Differences aside, both countries now portray themselves as being on a path to restore their historical 'greatness'. In doing so, they jointly articulate a *hierarchy of suffering*, implying that – as the two countries which supposedly suffered the most during WWII – they are now most entitled to a peace broker position in global affairs.

The Russo-Chinese peace broker narrative is thus overflowing with katechontic motifs: apocalyptic visions surrounding a western-led path to modernity, the notion of a Russo-Chinese messianic role in eliminating a corrupt world order, promises of a 'more just order' to be placed in its stead, and steady references to a Russo-Chinese great power destiny to save the world from (Western) decadence and to restore global stability. The historical narrative that frames Russia and China as 'saving humankind from fascism and Japanese militarism' provides the ethico-temporal base for the Russo-Chinese peace broker rhetoric. The related spatio-ethical narratives surrounding the SCO and the UNSC further strengthen the notion of a Russo-Chinese peace broker position by offering a denotative discourse – one that formalizes the discursive claims to a peace broker role by referring to institutionalized 'spatial' structures.

8.7 Discursive audiences and political objectives

The sections above explored the five main discursive strands, or building blocks, in the shared Russo-Chinese civilizational discourse. Importantly, these discursive building blocks have been used by Russian government actors to target a distinct set of audiences (see figure 8.3 below). The first two discursive strands explored in this chapter operate as the 'constitutive narratives' defining the parameters of a shared Russo-Chinese position in international affairs. This shared position has been based on (i) the notion that the two countries share a similar claim to 'greatness' due to their spatio-demographic uniqueness, (ii) the assumption that there is a spiritual connection between the two countries due to their nature as 'civilization-states', and (iii) the claim that both countries – given their 'civilizational' character – can act as 'responsible stakeholders' in world

affairs.[75] The latter three discursive strands this chapter explored seem to offer 'normative substance' to these various claims, employing two main discursive modalities: (i) a *negative* modality denouncing 'western-imposed' development models and (ii) a *positive* modality promising to deliver alternative options to the 'non-West'. Whilst the negative discursive strands seem to target a 'Western' audience, which is most directly embodied by NATO, the positive strands speak to an ill-defined and context-dependent 'non-West'.

Whilst the discursive analysis has been based on joint declarations and bilateral documents to which Chinese government actors themselves contribute, the discourse ultimately seems to be driven by an eager Russia and – insofar as the statements align with Beijing's interests – a largely receptive China. This raises the question to what extent the Chinese leadership itself is a main audience. The first two discursive strands in particular consist of affirmative narratives surrounding the 'special' character of the Russo-Chinese partnership, and therefore seem to have Chinese government officials as the intended audience in mind. It is hard to determine whether Russian transcripts of bilateral documents used in the analysis are reliable conveyors of the actual *Chinese* position. Thus, as a minimum, we can assume that Chinese state actors are *receptive* to the narratives explored in this chapter (after all, all bilateral documents contain a stamp of approval from the Chinese side), but it is impossible to determine the level of *reciprocity* in their internal communications and interactions with third parties based on the sources used in the analysis.

An audience that seems to be missing from the discourse is the *Russian population*. This does not come as a surprise considering that racist stereotypes and negative representations of China continue to be highly prevalent within Russian society (see, for example, Lo, 2008, pp. 1–16). This makes for an interesting comparison with the other two case studies and reveals the political value and purpose of Russia's language surrounding China. In the cases of Belarus and Kazakhstan, the discourses employed by Russian government actors have strong discursive currency in a domestic

[75] The notion that Russia could position itself as a 'responsible stakeholder' seems absurd given Moscow's aggressive positioning in foreign affairs and its various attempts at territorial aggrandizement. However, from a Chinese perspective, Russia's actions are framed as a *proportional response* to 'Western provocations,' such as NATO enlargement.

context. After all, the various narratives surrounding Russia's responsibility to foster 'diasporic relations' and to maintain ties with 'fraternal peoples' speak to popular beliefs surrounding Russian exceptionalism and the framing of Russia as a paternal and benevolent actor in the so-called 'post-Soviet' region. In their language surrounding China, on the other hand, Russian foreign policy actors can hardly frame Moscow as a benevolent power.

Thus, the discursive currency of Russia's language vis-à-vis China lies elsewhere. Most likely, it offers Russian government actors a way to present their country as a global ordering force by bandwagoning with a more powerful actor (also see chapter 5 on ethical identity constructions). Consequently, the intended audiences for this discourse can be found *outside* the Russian Federation. At the same time, much of it can be read as an *internal dialogue* – one in which Russian government actors try to come to terms with Moscow's inability to take up its desired role in the European security architecture by carving out a new, 'non-Western' position in the global system. Figure 8.3 below provides an overview of the various audiences that Russian government actors have likely sought to target in their foreign policy language vis-à-vis China.

Discursive strands	Audiences	Representations of Russia and China
Spatial narrative *'Spatio-demographic uniqueness'*	• Chinese government	• Russia and China as sharing a similar 'claim to greatness' due to their unique spatio-demographic characteristics.
Ethico-spatial narrative *'Civilization-states'*	• Chinese government	• Russo-Chinese relations as driven by the spiritual attraction between two 'unique but compatible civilizations'
	• Chinese government	• Russia as a 'responsible stakeholder' in international affairs on par with China.
	• 'Collective West'	• Russia and China as jointly fighting a 'western-imposed' Westphalian system of nation-stateness.
	• 'Non-West'	• Russia and China as having the unique faculty to promote stability in international affairs by acting on behalf of the well-being of all peoples rather than the narrow nation-state interest.
Ethico-temporal narrative *'Alternative modernity'*	• 'Collective West'	• Russia and China as fighting a 'western-imposed' model for modernity.
Ethico-temporal narrative *'Rising nations'*	• 'Non-West'	• Russia and China as offering the 'non-West' an alternative path to modernity that avoids the 'dark' sides of western modernity.
Ethical narrative *'Peace brokers'*	• 'Non-West'	• Russia and China as katechontic 'guarantors of peace and stability'.

Figure 8.3 An overview of the discursive strands, their intended audiences, and accompanying representations of Russia and China.

8.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the discursive analysis has demonstrated how a shared Russo-Chinese vision of world order has emerged over the last two decades. Disentangling the spatial, temporal, and ethical building blocks, the chapter unpacked how the Russo-Chinese language of stability has been used to frame the two countries as 'the last of the Mohicans' – the last ones standing up for the true values of a 'just' and 'rational' international community (see figure 8.4 below for an overview of the Russo-Chinese discourse of stability). Additionally, the analysis revealed how China has been portrayed as a 'unique but compatible civilization' and a civilizational 'fellow traveler' in Russian political discourse under the Putin regime.

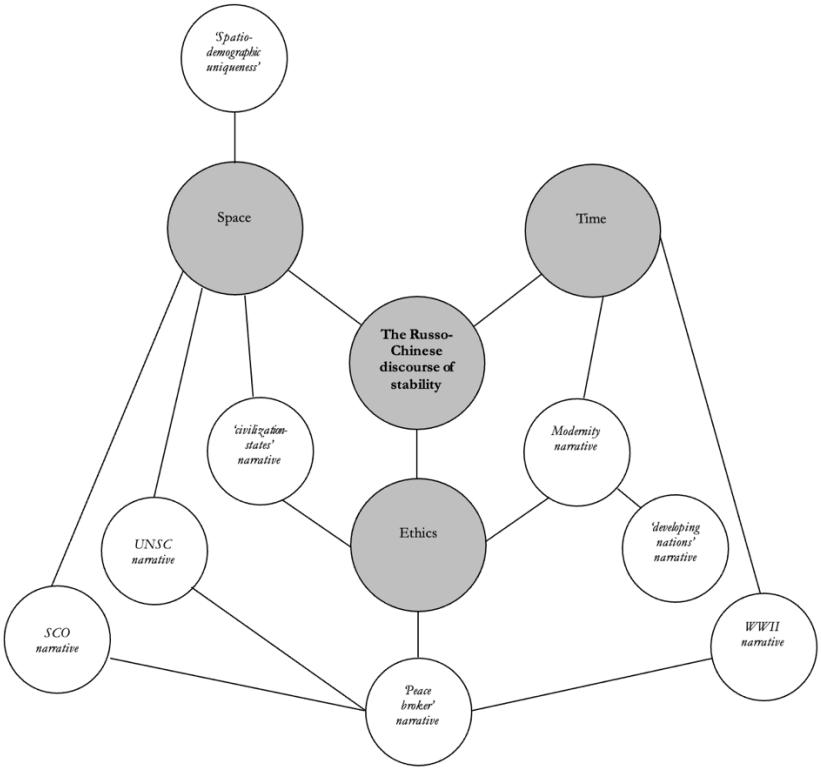


Figure 8.4 An overview of the Russo-Chinese discourse of stability

Contrary to the expectation that the notion of 'Eurasia' would be a leading concept in Russia's civilizational language vis-à-vis China, the discursive analysis revealed that Russian government actors mostly avoid the notion of 'Eurasia' as a relevant civilizational category. Instead, Russian state actors have preferred a globalist projection of Moscow and Beijing's 'shared civilizational responsibility'. This finding reveals a clear break with Russia's civilizational language vis-à-vis the other two case study countries, Belarus and Kazakhstan. One of the main purposes of Russia's civilizational discourse, the earlier chapters demonstrated, is to frame the Russian Federation as a normative force in international affairs. Where Russia's civilizational discourses vis-à-vis Belarus and Kazakhstan seem to accomplish this – at least to some extent – within a *regional* context, it is Russia's discourse vis-à-vis China that has enabled Moscow to elevate these normative claims to a *global* setting. The discursive value of the Russo-Chinese language of stability, this chapter revealed, is thus that it 'boosts' Russia's civilizational claims by enabling Moscow to position itself as a normative power of *global proportions* that can supposedly offer a viable alternative to the 'Western-led liberal world order'.

The chapter began with a poem written by Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov. Published in 1890, this poem neatly captures some of the main themes found in the contemporary Russo-Chinese discourse of stability. The discursive analysis presented in this chapter revealed how notions of 'Eastern' spiritual enlightenment, ideas of 'the West' as a source of instability, and messianic visions of 'bringing peace on earth' are as relevant in Russian political discourse today as they were when Solovyov uttered them more than a century ago. At the same time, the discursive analysis laid bare the fragilities of the contemporary Russo-Chinese discourse of stability. At least for now, there is a clear discrepancy between word and deed, and the Russo-Chinese 'normative partnership' remains largely rhetorical.

Chapter 9.

Conclusion

9.1 Main arguments

My research set out to explore the following research question: *How – with what purpose and for whom – has a Eurasian civilizational identity been spatially, temporally, and ethically constructed in Russian foreign policy discourse between 2000 and 2020?* I answered this research question by combining a longitudinal analysis of Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime with three contextualized case studies. In the longitudinal analysis, the thesis traced the constitutive narratives surrounding a Eurasian civilizational identity along spatial (chapter 3), temporal (chapter 4), and ethical lines (chapter 5), whilst simultaneously unpacking the political objectives underlying the various discursive strands used in the construction of a 'Eurasian' civilizational identity. In the case studies, the thesis explored how – and with what purpose – Russian foreign policy actors have adjusted and refined the spatial, temporal, and ethical modes of identity construction to fit and advance bilateral relations with those countries Russia considers to be its key 'Eurasian' partners: that is, Belarus in chapter 6, Kazakhstan in chapter 7, and China in chapter 8.

Chapter 2 unpacked the discursive toolbox used in the construction of a civilizational identity and argued that there are certain spatial, temporal, and ethical leitmotifs that civilizational theorists have consistently relied upon regardless of their geographical, cultural, and historical positionality. The arguments presented in this chapter offered a conceptual foundation for the chapters that followed, in which the thesis explored how these various civilizational leitmotifs have been employed in a *contemporary Russian context*.

Chapters 3 through 5 contained a longitudinal analysis of policy-discursive structures under the Putin regime. The spatial analysis presented in chapter 3 explored the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors have employed the notion of 'Eurasia' to formulate a territorially bounded

civilizational identity that purportedly reaches beyond the various countries that once made up the former USSR, such as China and South-Korea. Chapter 4 – in turn – explored how Russian foreign policy actors have articulated a 'Eurasian' temporal identity. The temporal analysis first examined how Russian actors have articulated a temporal Self through notions of 'kinship' and 'destiny' to then unpack how Russian government actors have relied upon narratives of *otherness* to articulate a temporal identity. Here, the thesis revealed that Russian foreign policy actors have portrayed 'the West' as a victim of postmodernity, whilst framing the Russian-Eurasian sphere as an ideal-type modern temporality. Finally, chapter 5 examined the ways in which normative, moral, and ethical identities have been constructed in Eurasian discourses in Russian foreign policy under the Putin regime. The discursive analysis unpacked a variety of narratives through which Russian foreign policy actors have articulated a Eurasian ethical Self in opposition to an 'immoral West'. The ethical analysis revealed that messianic notions of Russia as the 'katechon' or 'chosen nation' have dominated Russian foreign policy discourse since Putin's third term as president in 2012. Figure 9.1 below offers an overview of the various narratives explored throughout the longitudinal analysis.

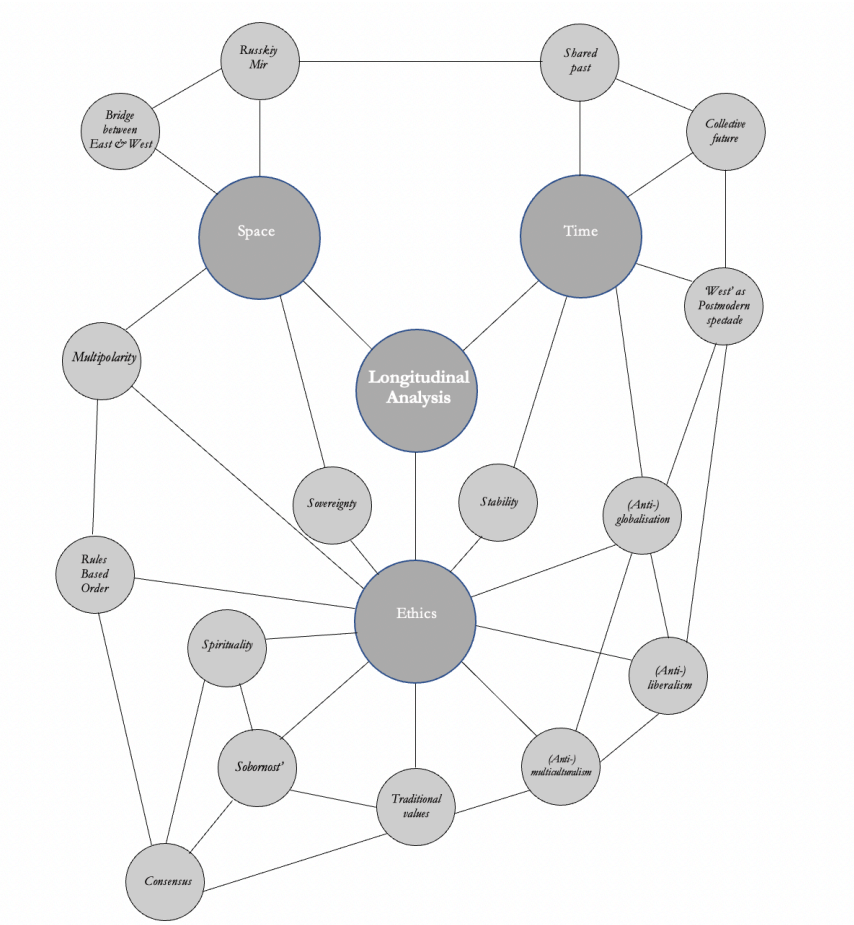


Figure 9.1 Overview of the narratives explored in the longitudinal analysis

Chapters 6 through 8 consisted of contextualized case studies of Russia's civilizational discourse vis-à-vis three 'partner' countries. First, chapter 6 explored Russian foreign policy discourses vis-à-vis Belarus, revealing how Russian government actors have sought to present Belarus as a *sub-element* of a 'Russian civilization'. The chapter argued that Russian government actors have employed notions of spatial, temporal, and ethical liminality to frame the country as an 'in-between' category or 'appendix' that ambiguously falls both *inside* and *outside* the boundaries of the Russian nation. Chapter 7 – in turn – examined Russian foreign policy discourses vis-à-vis Kazakhstan and explored how Russian actors have consistently relied upon spatial and ethical modes of identity construction to portray the ethnically diverse and multi-religious Central Asian region as having an *inherent* predisposition for inter-ethnic and inter-religious discord – thereby presenting the Russian Federation as a necessary stabilizer and civilizational actor in Eurasia's 'Central Asian flank'. Finally, chapter 8 traced the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors have

portrayed China as a unique but 'spiritually' and 'morally' compatible civilization. Here, the discursive analysis unpacked how Russian foreign policy actors have articulated a 'shared' Russo-Chinese vision of world order along spatial, temporal, and ethical lines. The chapter revealed that Russian government actors have sought to portray Moscow and Beijing as global guarantors of stability and 'civilization-states' in their own right. Figure 9.2 below offers an overview of the various narratives explored throughout the three country case studies.

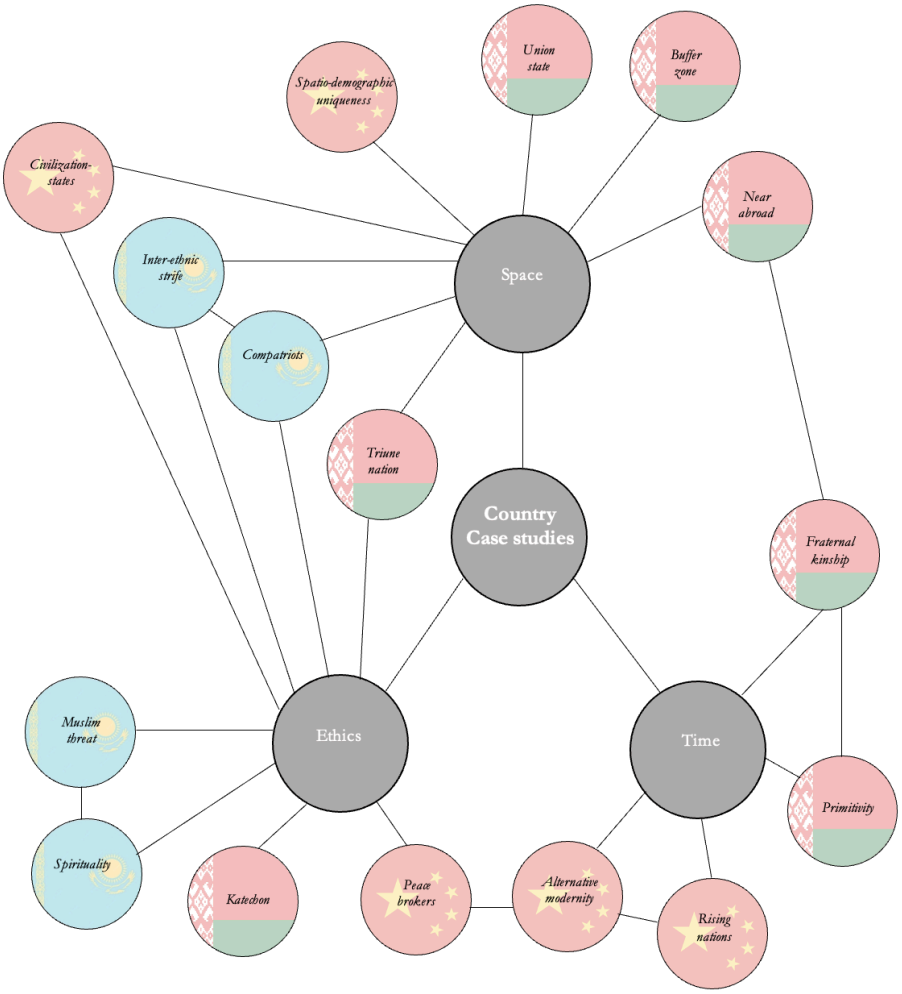


Figure 9.2 Overview of the narratives explored in the country case studies

9.2 Findings

9.2.1. Audiences in Russia's civilizational discourse

With regards to discursive audiences, the thesis demonstrated that whilst there is a differentiation in target audiences across the various narratives explored in the empirical chapters, Russia's civilizational discourse under the Putin regime has nonetheless been directed towards two broad audience categories (see figure 9.3 below). On the one hand, Russian government actors have targeted an *internal audience* which has alternated between an ethnic ('*Russkiy*') audience and a civic ('*Rossiyskiy*') audience.[76] On the other hand, Russian state actors have targeted an *external audience* which – in turn – can be divided into two generalized groups: firstly, a *positive* external audience which has both consisted of a more narrowly defined regional 'Eurasian' audience (see the Belarus and Kazakhstan case studies, for example), as well as a more broadly defined 'non-Western' audience (see the China case study in particular). Alongside a targeting of these positive audiences, the thesis demonstrated, Russian government actors under the Putin regime have also targeted *negative* external audiences in their foreign policy discourse between 2000 and 2020. Importantly, through the various discursive processes explored in this thesis, Russian foreign policy actors themselves have actively contributed to the *construction* of these audiences. Thus, rather than analyzing these audience categories as *a priori* recipients of the discourse, it is important to remain sensitive to the ways in which Russian foreign policy actors *themselves* have actively reified the political, ethnic, national, and co-national audiences which they have sought to target through their civilizational narratives.

The empirical chapters revealed that the 'negative' audience category has mostly consisted of the so-called 'collective West', which – in the Russian imagination – has most often been

[76] Section 1.3 in the introductory chapter explained the semantic difference between the term 'Russkiy' and 'Rossiyskiy' in Russian language. Whilst both terms translate into 'Russian' in English, the 'Russkiy' concept denotes a non-Westphalian understanding of the Russian nation as an entity that encompasses all ethnically Russian communities living in the various countries that once made up the USSR, whereas the 'Rossiyskiy' concept denotes a civic understanding of Russianness as an identity category that encompasses the citizens of the current Russian Federation, thereby steering clear of any expansionist implications.

embodied by NATO, the EU, individual EU member states, and the US. However, Russian foreign policy actors have also sought to target yet another negative external audience, which they have framed as the so-called 'estranged Slavic countries', i.e. countries that once made up the former USSR but have since – at least in Russia's perception – steered a 'Western' course. Whilst the 'collective West' has unambiguously been framed as Russia's radical Other, the so-called 'estranged Slavic countries' have occupied a more ambivalent position in Russia's foreign policy discourse – on the one hand, being addressed through the lens of alterity, whilst also being framed as a constitutive part of the Russian-Eurasian Self, albeit one that is 'temporarily' alienated. Figure 9.3 below provides a schematic overview of the various audience categories found in Russia's civilizational discourse.

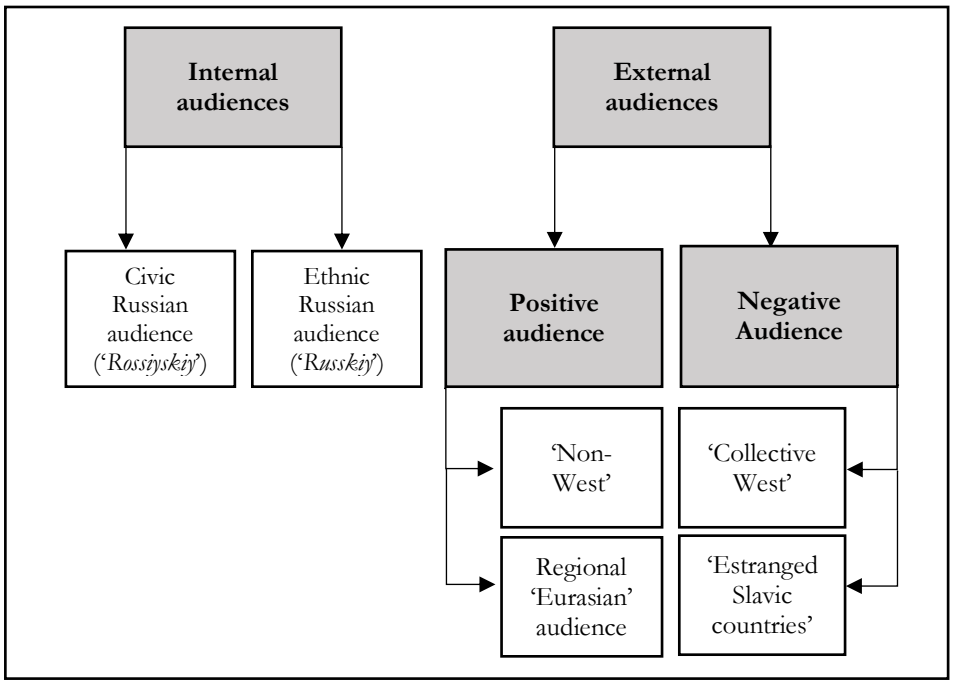


Figure 9.3 Overview of the main audiences in Russia's civilizational discourse

Importantly, there are some notable tensions in the choice for particular audiences in Russia's civilizational language. For instance, to the extent that official foreign policy discourse has targeted an internal audience, both the civic and ethnic audience categories have relied on contradictory understandings of Russian nationhood (see also section 1.3 of the introductory

chapter). On the one hand, the narratives targeting a civic audience have built on an 'inclusive' conception of Russianness based on citizenship and territoriality, thereby framing Russian identity as something that can be acquired. The various narratives targeting an ethnic audience, on the other hand, have relied on an exclusionary and hegemonic conception of the 'Russian people' as an identity group that is defined by race and ancestry (also see Shevel, 2011).

This differentiation between 'civic' and 'ethnic' Russian audiences ultimately touches upon one of the main balancing acts in Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime. The empirical chapters demonstrated that – when speaking to an ethnic 'Russkiy' audience – Russian foreign policy actors have often sought to justify a political hierarchy that frames 'ethnic' Russians as the so-called 'natural leaders' in a 'Eurasian' civilization. This imagery stands in stark contrast to the narratives that have aimed to target a civic 'Rossiyskiy' audience, through which Russian foreign policy actors have sought to frame their civilizational construct as an inclusionary space that 'organically' combines the cultures of the various 'peoples of Eurasia'. The empirical chapters revealed how Russian foreign policy actors have alternated between these two contradictory political objectives: the first one driven by Russian exceptionalism and the later by a realist understanding that – should the Kremlin wish for its 'civilizational' project to have any real traction beyond a narrow group of people who may identify as 'ethnic' Russians – it must ascertain at least to some degree the support of non-ethnic Russian constituencies in and beyond the Russian Federation.

Additionally, the empirical chapters demonstrated that a second balancing act in Russian foreign policy discourse has been the extent to which Russian government actors have sought to target 'the regime' versus 'the people' in their *externally* oriented narratives. The various empirical chapters revealed that, on the one hand, the Kremlin has actively sought to promote narratives specifically targeting the *governments* of the so-called 'Eurasian' states in order to garner international support for Russia's 'civilizational project'. On the other hand, Russian state actors have actively portrayed their country as a 'paternalistic force' in the so-called 'Eurasian' space. Importantly, this

latter discursive frame has ultimately undermined – both implicitly and explicitly – the authority of the sovereign governments of the various nations that Russia has included in its 'Eurasian' concept by discursively placing the subjects of these nations under a hegemonic *Russian* leadership.

This tension between 'regime' and 'people' as target audiences in Russia's externally oriented discourse appeared most clearly in the Belarus case study. There, the thesis demonstrated, for example, how Russian foreign policy actors have sought to make a distinction between a negatively portrayed Belarusian *regime* and the so-called 'fraternal Belarusian *people'*. The longitudinal analysis revealed that Russian government actors have similarly employed this discursive tactic vis-à-vis Ukraine, portraying the Ukrainian government as a so-called 'fascist threat', whilst presenting the Ukrainian people as 'fraternal subjects that are in desperate need of Russia's protection'. The thesis argued that this discursive frame has served to establish a parallel discursive reality – one through which the Kremlin has ultimately sought to obfuscate, albeit unconvincingly, its irredentist political intentions in the so-called 'Eurasian' region.

9.2.2. A longitudinal analysis of policy-discursive structures: space, time, and ethics

In addition to revealing various audience categories in Russia's civilizational language, the discursive analysis confirmed that the three-dimensional framework proposed by Lene Hansen (2006) offers an insightful prism through which to analyze the discursive construction of a civilizational identity in Russian foreign policy discourse. Although the research relied on an inductive approach, meaning that the spatial, temporal, and ethical dimensions of identity construction were not *a priori* projected onto the corpus, every single narrative that emerged from the corpus fit into one of the three categories of identity construction: that is, space, time, and ethics.

Importantly, the longitudinal analysis revealed that the temporal and ethical dimensions stand in a hierarchical relationship to the spatial dimension of identity construction – a finding that adds an additional layer to Hansen's conceptual framework. The discursive analysis demonstrated

that whenever Russian government actors have articulated a temporal or ethical Self, these identity constructs have – without exception – been performed within a spatially bounded imagery of 'Eurasia'. In other words, the thesis found that the construction of a temporal and ethical identity has been *subordinate* to the construction of a spatial identity.

In turn, the thesis also revealed that the temporal and ethical modes of identity construction have been highly *co-constitutive*. Chapter 4 illustrated, for instance, that Russian foreign policy actors have been hugely dependent on a *normative* lexicon in their construction of a temporal identity. The thesis revealed that Russian foreign policy actors have consistently placed a Eurasian temporal Self within the higher grounds of the morally good, whilst framing a 'Western' temporal Other through a prism of 'moral failing' and 'abnormality'. Equally, chapter 5 demonstrated that ethical identity constructs in Russian foreign policy have been highly dependent on a *temporal* vocabulary. Here, the thesis analyzed how Russian foreign policy actors have employed the notion of the katechon to counterpose an ethical Self to a morally depraved 'West', demonstrating the ways in which this ethical narrative has consistently relied upon temporal notions of imperial rise and decline. Figure 9.4 below offers a visualization of the hierarchical relationship that exists between the categories of space, time, and ethics in Russian foreign policy discourse under the Putin regime.

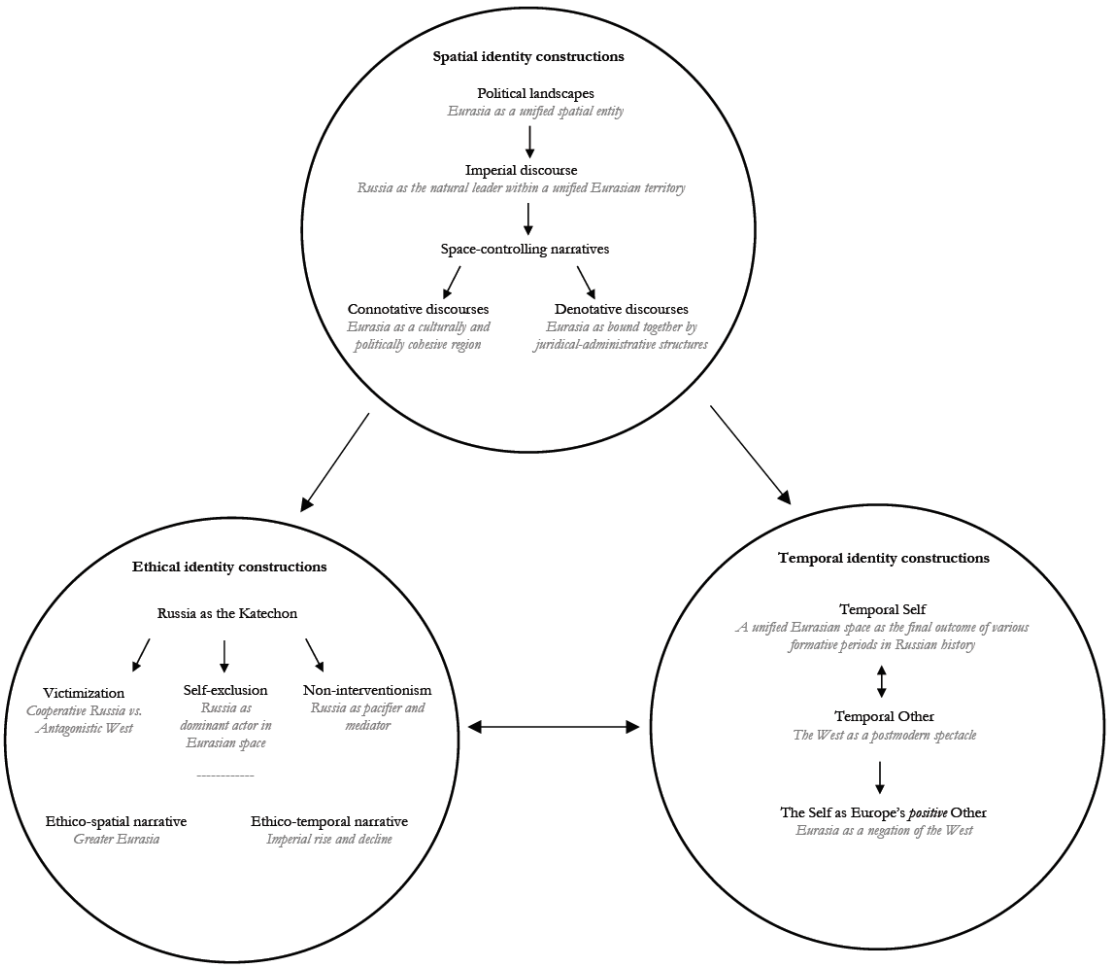


Figure 9.4. Discursive hierarchies in Russia's civilizational discourse

In addition to the *conceptual* hierarchy discussed above, the thesis also uncovered a *discursive* hierarchy in contemporary Russian foreign policy language surrounding a Eurasian civilizational identity. One of the key findings from the longitudinal analysis is that Russian government actors under the Putin regime have consistently relied upon three core assumptions to promote an irredentist and exceptionalist foreign policy. Importantly, these core assumptions can be neatly divided along the spatial, temporal, and ethical lines of identity construction.

First, the thesis revealed how Russian foreign policy actors under the Putin regime have developed an ever-stronger sense of *non-Westphalianism* between 2000 and 2020. In line with this non-Westphalian understanding of space, the thesis argued, Russian government actors have created an implicit distinction between 'state' and 'nation' in their foreign policy discourse. Whilst

the notion of 'state' has been used to define Russia by the current boundaries of the Russian Federation, the concept of the 'nation' has offered Russian foreign policy actors a discursive pathway to promote an amorphous spatial conception of Russia as a non-Westphalian entity that reaches beyond the administrative borders of the Russian Federation, thereby enabling a markedly irredentist foreign policy (see also Lewis, 2020, p. 175).

The case studies laid bare how Russian foreign policy actors have *refined* the non-Westphalian frame to fit and advance bilateral relations with their key 'Eurasian' partners. First, the Belarus case study demonstrated how Russian government actors have adopted a non-Westphalian frame to portray their Western neighbor as a *liminal actor*, which – the thesis argued – has ultimately served to portray Belarus as a sub-component of the Russian nation rather than a sovereign state in its own right. The Kazakhstan chapter uncovered how Russian government actors have adopted a non-Westphalian 'compatriot' discourse to argue that *ethnicity* takes precedence over *state territory* when defining political authority, thereby proclaiming an extraterritorial mandate in the various countries that once made up the former USSR in which Russian ethnic minorities have settled after the Soviet collapse. Finally, the China case study revealed how Russian government actors have employed the non-Westphalian frame to portray Moscow and Beijing as 'civilization-states' that supposedly *transcend* the 'western-imposed' system of nation-stateness.

The non-Westphalian logic driving these various assertions to extraterritorial authority has been clearly articulated in an essay by Russian conservative thinker Pyotr Shchedrovitsky (2002), who argues that 'hardly half of the population of the Russian world lives on the territory outlined by the administrative borders of the Russian Federation [and] the line between "internal" and "external" is blurring more and more […] between the Russian population living "inside" the state and the Russian diaspora.' The discursive analysis in chapters 3 through 8 demonstrated that the exact boundaries of the non-Westphalian Russian 'nation' have strategically shifted to fit the varying political objectives of the Russian government. It is thus that Russian foreign policy actors have – at times – sought to define the boundaries of a 'Russian-Eurasian nation' based on notions

of an 'Eastern Slavic' or 'triune' brotherhood, whilst – elsewhere – promoting a spatial understanding of the 'Russian-Eurasian nation' based on Russia's imperial past, a shared Soviet experience, or the presence of so-called 'compatriots living abroad'.

Ultimately, the various expressions of a civilizational identity explored throughout the thesis can be divided along two axes: an irredentist/non-irredentist axis, on the one hand, and a civic/essentialist axis, on the other (see figure 9.5 below) (see also Tolz, 1998a; Shevel, 2011). Where the various irredentist expressions of a Russian-Eurasian identity necessarily involve a claim to territories lying outside the current boundaries of the Russian Federation, the non-irredentist expressions of a Russian-Eurasian identity imply no such extraterritorial claim. Additionally, where the civic expressions of a Russian-Eurasian identity are based on 'acquirable' notions, such as citizenship and language, the essentialist expressions of a Russian-Eurasian identity are based on ancestry, ethnicity, and notions surrounding an 'unchangeable' cultural core. As the thesis has demonstrated, those iterations of a civilizational identity that fall in the civic-irredentist and essentialist-irredentist quadrants have involved the strongest claim to non-Westphalian authority.

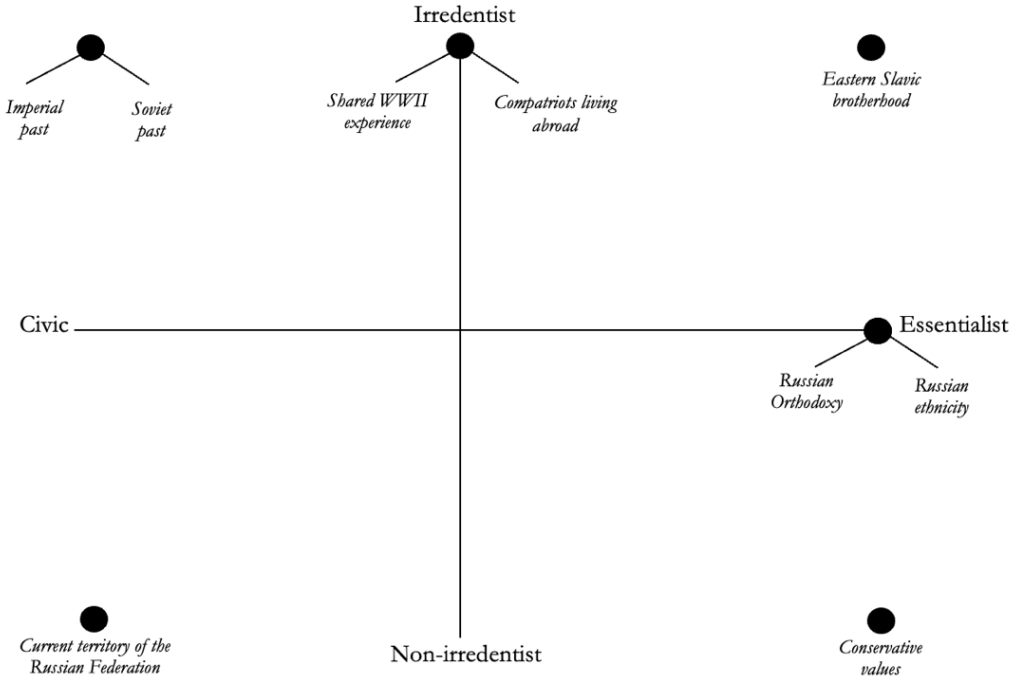


Figure 9.5 Russian conceptions of a civilizational identity mapped along irredentist/non-irredentist and civic/essentialist lines

The second core assumption that has emerged from the discursive analysis relates to the *temporal* dimension of identity construction. The thesis revealed that Russian government actors have consistently relied upon an idiosyncratic notion of *historicity* to promote their irredentist and exceptionalist foreign policy. In the various narratives explored throughout the thesis, Russian foreign policy actors have consistently framed history in teleological or 'ends-driven' terms. This teleological frame, the thesis argued, has enabled Russian foreign policy actors to project a kind of 'directionality' onto the passage of time, which has ultimately allowed Moscow to present the 'peoples of Eurasia' as a single entity bound together by a shared past, present, and future (see also Bowden, 2009, p. 2).

The discursive analysis revealed that embedded in this teleological frame has been the temporal notion of *cyclicality*. The thesis demonstrated that Russian foreign policy actors under the Putin regime have consistently relied upon a cyclical-temporal logic through which they have sought to portray the 'civilizing process' as consisting of repeated sequences of rise, decline, ruin, and renewal (see also Mirabeau, 1761, p. 99; Starobinski, 1993, p. 6; Lewis, 2020, pp. 8–9). This temporal frame has allowed Russian government actors to portray history as consisting of cycles in which 'civilization' necessarily gives way to decadence, which then causes the moral decline and downfall of a civilization. Importantly, as argued in chapter 2, this cyclical model implies the existence of *multiple* civilizations rather than a single universal one.

The case study chapters revealed how Russian foreign policy actors have refined this temporal frame to fit and advance bilateral relations with some of its key 'Eurasian' partners. The Belarus case study, for instance, demonstrated how Russian government actors have adopted a markedly *ends-driven* temporal logic to portray Belarus as a 'younger brother' or 'less-developed' version of the Russian Self – a discursive move that has ultimately served to 'lock' Minsk in a deterministic path of development modelled after Russia's *own* illiberal trajectory. The China case study – in turn – demonstrated how Russian foreign policy actors have applied their idiosyncratic

temporal frame to portray Moscow and Beijing as compatible 'civilization-states' *destined* to lead the world onto an alternative, 'non-Western' path to modernity.

Ultimately, this particular temporal frame has enabled Russian foreign policy actors to pursue two political objectives: first, by adopting the 'civilizations in the plural' paradigm, Moscow has been able to counterpose a *rising* 'Russian-Eurasian' civilization against a declining and destructive 'West' – a discursive move that has ultimately served to position Russia as a necessary stabilizer in global affairs (which – evidently – contradicts Russia's *actual* contributions, or rather lack thereof, to global security, but more on this below). Second, by adopting a teleological reading of time, Russian foreign policy actors have been able to present history as 'doing things' and possessing agency in its own right, thereby framing Russia's dominant position in the 'Eurasian' sphere as a predestined reality rather than a direct result of Russia's hegemonic assertions in and beyond the so-called 'near abroad'. Ultimately, this idiosyncratic reading of *historicity* has functioned as a discursive instrument to promote Moscow's irredentist and exceptionalist foreign policy.

Finally, the third core assumption that emerged from the discursive analysis relates to the *ethical* dimension of identity construction. The thesis demonstrated that one of the key premises relied upon by Russian government actors to promote an irredentist and exceptionalist foreign policy has been the notion of *messianism*. As demonstrated in the discursive analysis, the idea that Russia supposedly carries a messianic responsibility to act as 'mediator' and 'pacifier' of humankind has been brought to the fore with increasing ferocity throughout Putin's tenure as president. Importantly, the thesis demonstrated that Russian government actors have progressively framed Russia's 'messianic' postulate through a markedly *eschatological* lens (see also Engström, 2014; Laruelle, 2019).

Particularly since Putin's third term as president in 2012, Russian foreign policy actors have increasingly relied upon the eschatological notion of the *katechon* to promote a new wave of conservatism and anti-Westernism in Russia. In biblical literature, the katechon functions as a figure that constrains chaos and restores order in the world. Nazi ideologist Carl Schmitt was the

first theorist to relocate the figure of the katechon to the realm of politics (see also Lewis, 2020, pp. 194–195; Engström, 2014, p. 367; Hell, 2009, p. 288). Following Julia Hell (2009, p. 290), the longitudinal analysis defined the figure of the katechon through a 'ruin-gazer scenario' in which Russian state actors under the Putin regime have adopted a katechontic frame to portray their country as protecting the world from military and ideological ruin caused by 'the West'. This messianic discourse has been used by Russian foreign policy actors to portray Russia 'as a civilization fated to play an essentially tragic role in an imperfect world, a bulwark against the chaos and destruction unleashed by the dangerous excesses of American liberalism' (Lewis, 2020, pp. 193–194).

Interestingly, the case studies revealed how Moscow has *refined* the katechontic frame to fit and advance bilateral relations with its key 'Eurasian' partners. Thus, the Belarus case study unpacked how Moscow has employed the katechontic frame in order to present Russia and Belarus as a single 'stabilizing force' on the European continent. The Kazakhstan case study – in turn – demonstrated how Russian government actors have portrayed their country as a 'katechontic' buffer and mediator in a tumultuous Central Asian region. Finally, the China case study uncovered how Russian state actors have employed the notion of the katechon to frame Russia and China as compatible 'civilization-states' that carry a unique responsibility to ensure global peace and stability.

Ultimately, by framing the Russian people as the agents of a 'messianic' mission that seeks to suppress the chaos caused by 'the West', Putin has sought to portray both his country and himself as the misunderstood 'beholders of wisdom' or 'truth-seekers' in the international domain. The fact that this position is not recognized by the hegemonic majority – i.e. the so-called 'collective West' – has only reinforced the self-imposed notion that Russia pursues a 'special' mission to ward off the various dangers threatening 'civilization' (see also Lewis, 2020, p. 204). Interestingly, this imagery of Russia is not too far removed from the traditional trope of the 'wise fool' who opposes 'hegemonic' knowledge but – in doing so – manages to get closer to the 'real' truth. Conveniently, this particular imagery has allowed the Kremlin to portray 'the West' as the unreasonable actor that

refuses to open its eyes to reality – a mental image that has ultimately served to promote Russia's exceptionalist foreign policy.

To conclude, whilst the longitudinal analysis unpacked a variety of spatial, temporal, and ethical narratives, three core assumptions have formed a *red thread* throughout Russia's contemporary civilizational discourse, ultimately serving to promote the Kremlin's irredentist and exceptionalist foreign policy. As outlined in this section, these core assumptions have been (i) the spatial notion of *non-Westphalianism*, (ii) the temporal notion of *historicity*, and (iii) the ethical notion of *messianism*. Whilst the spatial notion of non-Westphalianism has been employed by the Kremlin in order to assert political authority outside the administrative boundaries of the Russian state, the temporal notion of historicity has offered Russian government actors a discursive tool to portray the process of Eurasian integration – and Russia's leading role therein – as the necessary outcome of various constitutive periods in history. The ethical notion of messianism – in turn – has served to propagate the idea of Russia as a 'chosen nation', thereby legitimizing Russia's so-called natural position as a 'civilizational leader' in and beyond the 'Eurasian' sphere. Together, these three core assumptions have formed the ideational foundation of Russia's contemporary civilizational discourse.

Examining the various articulations of a Eurasian civilizational identity in Russian foreign policy discourse, the thesis ultimately laid bare a key tension in Russia's 'civilizing' project – that is, whilst almost all iterations of a civilizational identity found in official Russian discourse between 2000 and 2020 sought to frame Eurasia as 'playing a counter-hegemonic role against the West', the various narratives simultaneously endeavored to assert a hegemonic Russian position within the so-called 'Eurasian' civilizational space (see also Lewis, 2020, p. 173). It is precisely this tension that could be considered a defining feature of Vladimir Putin's foreign policy – that is, the conceptual contradiction 'between Russia as an imperial power, intent on continuing its dominance over other states in the region, and Russia as the would-be subject, attempting to emancipate itself

from a hegemonic Western ordering of the world' (Lewis, 2020, p. 173; see also Glebov, 2015, pp. 48–49).

9.2.3. Three contextualized case studies:

Russian foreign policy vis-à-vis Belarus, Kazakhstan, and China

The country case studies not only confirmed the overall importance of the spatial, temporal, and ethical dimensions of identity construction in Russia's civilizational discourse, but also demonstrated how Russian government actors have adjusted and refined the three dimensions of identity construction to fit and advance bilateral relations with three key 'Eurasian' partners: that is, Belarus in chapter 6, Kazakhstan in chapter 7, and China in chapter 8. One of the key findings that emerged from the country case studies has been that Russian government actors have distinguished between different *scales of civilization* in their foreign policy language (see figure 9.6 below). The Belarus case study demonstrated how Russian foreign policy actors have employed notions of spatial, temporal, and ethical liminality to portray Belarus (alongside Ukraine) as a sub-component of an 'all-Russian' or 'Eastern Slavic' civilization. The Kazakhstan case study revealed how Russian foreign policy actors have referred mostly to a regional 'Eurasian' civilizational. And, finally, the China case study illustrated how Russian government actors have referred primarily to a 'global' civilization.

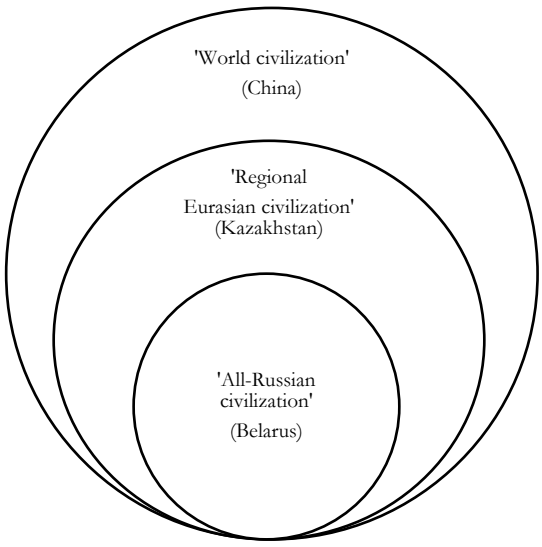


Figure 9.6 The civilizational hierarchy in Russian foreign policy discourse

Thus, whilst Russian government actors have consistently relied upon notions of a 'Eurasian' identity with reference to the three case study countries, the exact application and scale of the discourse has differed. Where both Belarus and Kazakhstan have been *directly* framed as part of the 'Russian-Eurasian' sphere, China's position in Russia's 'Eurasian' rhetoric has been more ambivalent. Although Russian foreign policy actors under the Putin regime have certainly maintained that Chinese and Asian culture constitute identitary strands in their Eurasian concept, China as a country has been framed as a civilization in its own right, rather than a direct sub-component of Russia's civilizational construct – a framing that is markedly different from Russia's civilizational discourse vis-à-vis Belarus and Kazakhstan which portrays the two countries as *subordinate elements* in Russia's civilizational model.

The thesis can therefore conclude that Russia's civilizational language vis-à-vis China constitutes somewhat of a discursive outlier – one that is evidently driven by the power dynamics that exist between Moscow and Beijing, as Russia (unlike in its relationship with Belarus and Kazakhstan) must follow rather than lead. It thus appears that Russian foreign policy actors have settled for a discursive hybrid in their civilizational language vis-à-vis China. Whilst stopping short of portraying China as an unambiguous *member* of their 'Eurasian' civilizational community – as this would undermine the Kremlin's self-assigned leadership position (not even to mention Beijing's probable lack of interest in such a role) – Russian government actors have gone for the second-best option. That is, to frame Beijing as a civilizational 'fellow-traveler' and partner in the fight against 'Western hegemony'.

Ultimately, the case studies have been representative of what could be seen as three 'modes' of inter-state relations (see figure 9.7 below). The China case study has offered a clear example of *alignment*, which can be defined as a (generally) equal 'relationship between two or more states that involves mutual expectations of some degree of policy coordination […] in the political, economic, military, and cultural spheres' (Wilkins, 2012, p. 56). The Kazakhstan case study – in turn – has

offered an example of *integration*, in which a leading state (Russia) sets certain demands in terms of policy compliance in the political, economic, military, and cultural spheres, whilst continuing to recognize the weaker state (Kazakhstan) as an independent actor in its own right. Finally, the Belarus case study has offered an example of *incorporation*, in which a leading state (Russia) has – at times explicitly, at times implicitly – sought to subjugate and undermine the sovereignty of the weaker state (Belarus).

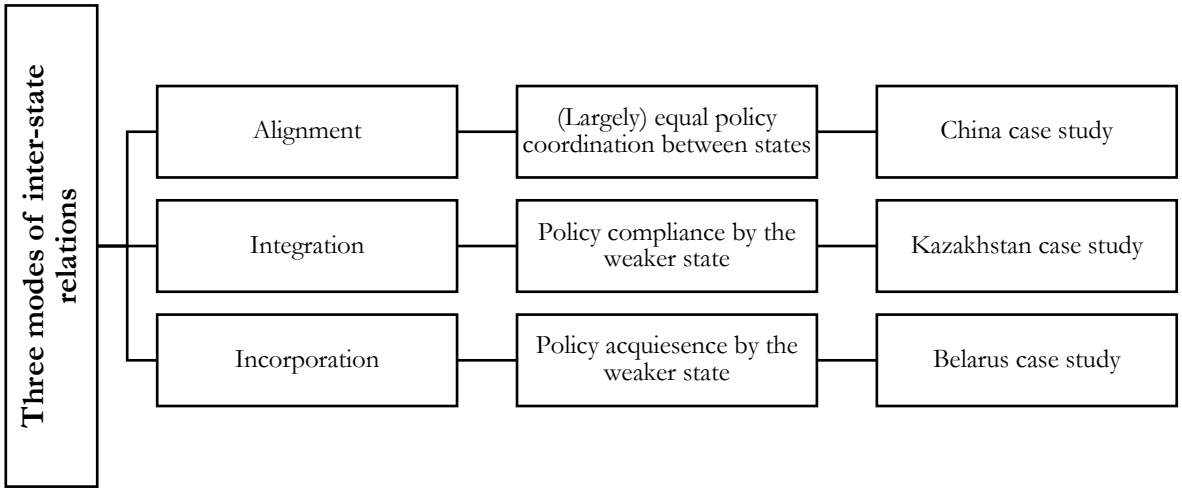


Figure 9.7 Three modes of inter-state relations based on a discursive analysis of Russian foreign policy under the Putin regime

The different levels of assertiveness shown by the Kremlin vis-à-vis the three case study countries are partly driven by the degree to which the Kremlin has been able to portray the recipient countries as part of its own 'civilizational' sphere. Whilst Russian foreign policy actors have spoken of a *shared* 'Eurasian' civilizational identity with reference to Belarus and Kazakhstan, China has not been framed as a constitutive part of Russia's 'civilizational' community, but – much rather – as an actor that possesses an *overlapping* identity. This difference between *shared* and *overlapping* identities appears to be driven by the ability – or lack thereof – to articulate a 'positive' identity in relation to the three case study countries.

As set out in the introductory chapter, one of the aims of the country case studies was to explore the extent to which Russian foreign policy actors have been able to articulate a 'positive' conception of a Eurasian civilizational identity. The *inductive* character of the study meant that the

longitudinal analysis predominantly explored narratives that have defined a 'Eurasian' Self almost exclusively in opposition to a 'Western' Other – the simple reason being that the overwhelming majority of Russia's civilizational discourse has consisted of such 'negative' expressions of identity. In order to explore whether the Kremlin has been able to move beyond defining a 'Eurasian' Self solely through superficial negations of a 'Western' Other, the country case studies zoomed in on Russia's civilizational language vis-à-vis three *partner* countries – the expectation being that this would open up a specific subset of Russia's civilizational discourse in which 'positive' expressions of a 'Eurasian' identity would be more likely to be found (that is, treaties, joint declarations, and other bilateral documents adopted between 'friendly' states).

A comparison between the three country case studies has brought to the fore a certain hierarchy in the articulation of a 'positive' identity. The Belarus case study has demonstrated that Russian government actors have managed to articulate the strongest 'positive' identity with reference to Minsk. In their civilizational language vis-à-vis Belarus, Russian foreign policy actors have consistently relied upon the notion of liminality to effectively frame Belarus as a *sub-element* of the Russian Self. Here, Russian state actors have defined linguistic commonalities and a so-called 'cultural code' rooted in Eastern Orthodoxy as the main bases for a 'shared' positive identity. With reference to Kazakhstan, on the other hand, the pillars of a 'shared' identity have been somewhat less stable. Here, Russian foreign policy actors have foregrounded a shared Soviet experience and the notion of 'cross-confessional spirituality' as the main bases for a 'shared' positive identity. Thus, with reference to Astana, the discursive foundation of a shared positive identity has been predominantly rooted in weak claims to 'unity in diversity'. However, the discursive basis appears to be weakest in Russia's civilizational language vis-à-vis China. Whilst Russian foreign policy actors have consistently referred to a joint Russo-Chinese vision of 'world order', this 'vision' has not been given much substance beyond the negation of a so-called 'Euro-American' model for global development.

Thus, the thesis has found that a positive basis for a shared identity has been lacking, particularly in Russia's civilizational language vis-à-vis China. With reference to Beijing, Russian government actors have almost exclusively defined their so-called 'shared' civilizational outlook in opposition to a 'Western' civilizational model. As a result, Russian foreign policy actors have managed to articulate – at best – an *overlapping* identity but have fallen short of truly constructing a *shared* civilizational identity between themselves and their Eastern 'partner'. The absence of a 'positive' basis in Russia's civilizational language vis-à-vis China certainly undermines the effectiveness of the discourse. It is unlikely that Russia's civilizational language maintains any *emotive* currency – whether that be in a Russian or Chinese context. However, this does not necessarily mean that we should underestimate or dismiss Russia's civilizational narrative vis-à-vis China as mere decorative chitchat. In fact, it has offered an important discursive veil for both Moscow and Beijing to pursue a variety of political goals – often to the detriment of those political actors they have placed under the umbrella of 'the West' (i.e. the European Union and its member states, NATO, and the US).

By comparison, Russia's ability to articulate a 'positive' identity with reference to Minsk and – albeit to a lesser degree – Astana has meant that these branches of Russia's civilizational discourse very likely do maintain emotive currency, particularly in a Russian domestic context. The Belarus and Kazakhstan case studies demonstrated that many of the narrative strands in Russia's civilizational discourse vis-à-vis Minsk and Astana have sought to target a *Russian* audience. In a Russian context, notions of a shared Soviet experience with reference to Kazakhstan and a shared 'cultural code' with reference to Belarus have often served as a legitimizing basis for Russia's interventionist foreign policy, conveniently playing into the 'national myth' of Russia as a 'chosen nation'.

In the recipient countries, the actual *emotive* content of these narratives may carry less weight, but the positive iterations of a shared civilizational identity have nonetheless served an important political goal: they have enabled the Kremlin to soften its 'stick' approach vis-à-vis the

countries that once made up the former USSR by wrapping it in a discourse of 'civilizational' brotherhood. Whilst the hard power reality may be that both Belarus and Kazakhstan do not have much choice other than to go along with Russia's policies, the 'positive' narrative of a shared civilizational identity has certainly made this hard power reality more *palatable*. Arguably, this has not only served the Russian leadership but also the leaderships of Belarus and Kazakhstan. After all, Moscow's 'soft power' framing has enabled Minsk and Astana to avoid any public recognition of their own lack of agency vis-à-vis the Kremlin, which would likely undermine their political authority in a domestic context.

9.2.4. Wider contributions to the field of Eurasian studies

More broadly, the thesis has offered a new contribution to the field of Eurasian studies by merging two erroneously divided fields of scholarly inquiry. As discussed in the introductory chapter, the study of Eurasia has so far consisted of two separated strands of literature. On the one hand, there have been scholars who have explored the Eurasian concept as an ideological schema, focusing almost exclusively on doctrinal expressions of (neo-)Eurasianism in contemporary Russian politics (e.g. Bassin et al., 2015; Hollwerth & Umland, 2007; Laruelle, 2004b). These *ideology-based* studies, which have focused rather narrowly on the intellectual impact of the (neo-)Eurasianist movement and have often assigned excessive importance to the idiosyncratic views of some of its most prominent members, such as Aleksandr Dugin, have been contrasted by studies that focus almost exclusively on Eurasia's *institutional* dimensions (e.g. Vinokurov & Libman, 2012; Dragneva, 2016; Vinokurov, 2017; Dragneva & Hartwell, 2021). Scholars adhering to the institutional approach, in turn, have narrowly focused on the formal and legalistic structures that shape Eurasian space (e.g., EEU, SCO, CSTO, and so on).

Whilst the institutional approach has offered a scholarly perspective that is void of cultural analysis, the ideological approach has often been rooted in pseudo-scientific theories of Eurasianism. Thus, the thesis argued that – on their own – both strands of literature have only

been able to provide limited insight into Russia's civilizational project. In order to thicken existing scholarship of Eurasia, the thesis stepped outside the dominant dichotomy and combined insights from both institutional and ideological strands of Eurasian scholarship. Importantly, one of the main 'conduits' to overcome this dichotomy has been Henri Lefebvre's theory for the production of space.

By adopting Henri Lefebvre's (1991) distinction between *connotative* and *denotative* discourses, the thesis was able to demonstrate that both institutional and cultural-ideological conceptions of Eurasia have converged in one and the same policy discourse in Russia. On the one hand, the thesis revealed how Russian foreign policy actors have adopted *connotative discourses* to imbue 'Eurasian' space with shared meaning – a discursive move that has ultimately served to encourage political, cultural and social cohesion among the so-called 'Eurasian' states. In line with Lefebvre (1991), the thesis demonstrated that connotative discourses have sought to 'valorize certain relationships between people in particular places, and [have ultimately served to generate] "consensuses" or conventions regarding the purpose or identity of a particular place'.

On the other hand, the discursive analysis demonstrated how Russian foreign policy actors have employed *denotative discourses*. The thesis argued that Russian government actors have employed denotative discourses in order to *institutionalize* the cultural-spatial unity constructed within their connotative discourse. Thus, where connotative discourses have sought to reify a unified spatial order between countries that fall within the 'Eurasian' sphere, denotative discourses have served to materialize these symbolic bonds by imposing material and legal infrastructure. Chapter 3 in particular demonstrated how Russian government actors have relied on juridical-administrative narratives to formalize the spatial unity of the 'Eurasian' region. Here, the thesis argued that legalistic narratives surrounding the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization have ultimately contributed to the image of 'Eurasia' as a tight-knit political community and helped solidify a sense of place-identity within the 'Eurasian' region. Thus, in adopting Henri Lefebvre's two-track

approach, thereby focusing both on connotative and denotative discourses, the thesis was able to tap into ideology-based *and* institutional studies alike.

In addition to integrating two erroneously divided fields of scholarly inquiry, the thesis offered a key contribution to the field of Eurasian studies through its innovative mixed methods approach, which combined close readings and discourse analysis with computational methods of data collection and analysis. The corpus was generated using automated data collection tools in RStudio. By building a targeted text mining model, I was able to collect large quantities of data, whilst simultaneously lowering the risks that come with manual data input, such as data duplication or loss of data. The text mining model scraped every single document containing the relevant key terms – that is, all grammatical forms of the Russian term for 'Eurasia' (*Евразия*) and 'civilization' (*цивилизация*) – from all officially registered Russian government website, thereby building a representative corpus of Russian foreign policy texts.[77]

This particular methodology allowed the study to combine a small-N analysis rooted in close readings with a large-N quantitative analysis of the corpus. Whilst the close readings allowed for a meticulous examination of complex discursive concepts driving Russian foreign policy thinking, the quantitative analysis served to provide confirmatory and overlapping conclusions that reinforced the overall persuasiveness of the arguments derived from the discursive analysis. Importantly, all arguments made throughout the thesis have been entirely rooted in primary source materials (i.e., official Russian state documents). In doing so, the research relied on an analysis of the consensual language directly used by the Russian state apparatus between 2000 and 2020. This methodological approach enabled the thesis to unpack the 'collective narratives' and 'shared interpretations of external reality' pursued by the Putin regime with the one limitation that, as David Lewis (2020, p. 6) explains, 'official discourse is not always designed to make clear political beliefs and motivations'. However, through a parallel analysis of conflicting narratives, and by exploring

[77] see appendix 1 for an overview of the online government archives used in the process of data collection.

the gaps and tensions in the discourse, the thesis was ultimately able to provide a detailed analysis of Russia's civilizational discourse under the Putin regime.

9.3 Implications: the future of Russia's 'civilizing' project?

To conclude – since I began this research project in 2020, the political landscape in and beyond Russia has changed dramatically. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has arguably constituted (i) a confirmation of the radicalizing trend this thesis identified in Russian foreign policy discourse, (ii) a culmination or 'implosion' of Russia's 'civilizing' project, and (iii) an irreversible turning point in Russia's relations with the countries that once made up the former USSR. The thesis offered important insights into the discursive environment that has shaped Russia's irredentist and exceptionalist foreign policy between 2000 and 2020 – a discursive environment that has ultimately allowed the Putin regime to make a full-scale invasion of Ukraine more thinkable in policy terms and more justifiable *ex post facto*.

As argued above, between 2000 and 2020, Russia's civilizational discourse served one core objective: that is, to enable the Kremlin to make the unequal power relations in the so-called 'post-Soviet' region more palatable to the various recipient countries and to soften its 'stick' approach by presenting Russia's hegemonic position as a 'naturalized ontology'. Thus, up until February 2022, Russia's civilizational language predominantly sought to target audiences in the countries that once made up the former USSR, portraying the Kremlin's hegemonic and expansionist attitude towards the former Soviet region as a static 'reality' and *the only possible way forward*. With the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, an act that has constituted a frontal assault on the principle of CIS state sovereignty, Vladimir Putin has overplayed his hand and the discursive veil of 'good intentions' vis-à-vis the so-called 'near abroad' has now been irreparably torn. In light of Russia's unparalleled aggression against Ukraine – a country that has always been framed as a constitutive part of the *very core* of Russia's civilizational construct – the 'Eurasian' narrative anchored in notions of

brotherhood and friendship may now have irreversibly lost discursive purchasing power in many of the key target countries.

The findings of this study nonetheless suggest certain outlooks for the future of Russia's civilizational project. Notably, the thesis points to a *new directionality* in Russia's civilizational model – one for which the discursive seeds have already been planted in Moscow's foreign policy language vis-à-vis China between 2000 and 2020. Putin's foreign policy discourse since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine may have been devoid of references to a fraternal or civilizational bond between the CIS partners, but the Kremlin has doubled down on pitching its civilizational model to a wider 'non-West' using a markedly anti-Western and anti-colonial discourse. It is likely that this discursive shift towards the 'non-West', and the ex-colonial states on the African continent in particular, will constitute a new focal point in Russia's civilizational project and – by extension – will shape the future of Russia's foreign policy orientation.

Appendix 1.

Overview of online Russian government archives

Website name	URL
Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia	kremlin.ru
Archive of the Government of the Russian Federation	archive.government.ru
Archive of the Official Site of the 2008-2012 Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin	archive.premier.gov.ru
Official Website of the State Duma of the Russian Federation	duma.gov.ru
Committee of the State Duma for Affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eurasian Integration and Relations with Compatriots	komitet.info
State Duma Nationality Committee	komitet2-4.km.duma.gov.ru
State Duma Culture Committee	komitet2-3.km.duma.gov.ru
State Duma Foreign Affairs Committee	komitet9.km.duma.gov.ru
State Duma Defence Committee	komitet2-15.km.duma.gov.ru
State Duma Committee on Regional Policy and Problems of the North and the Far East	komitet2-1.km.duma.gov.ru
State Duma Committee on Economic Policy, Industry, Innovative Development and Entrepreneurship	komitet2-7.km.duma.gov.ru
State Duma Energy Committee	komitet2-13.km.duma.gov.ru
Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation	economy.gov.ru
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation	mid.ru
Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo)	rs.gov.ru
Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation	mil.ru
Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation	mkrf.ru
Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic of the Russian Federation	minvr.ru

Bibliography

Primary sources

Archive of the Official Site of the 2008-2012 Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin. (2011). *id3360. Predsedatel' Pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii V.V.Putin vystupil na torzhestvennom sobranii, posvyashchonnom 350-letiyu dobrovol'nogo vkhozhdeniya Buryatii v sostav Rossiyskogo gosudarstva*. http://archive.premier.gov.ru/visits/ru/15770/events/15773/

Belekov, I. (2018). *id2220. Zasedanie Gosudarstvennoj Dumy № 120*. http://api.duma.gov.ru/api/transcriptFull/2018-06-06

Dmitry Medvedev. (2009). *Id3354. Videoblog Dmitriya Medvedeva: Obrashcheniye k shkol'nikam*. http://blog.da-medvedev.ru/post/31/transcript

Dmitry Medvedev. (2012). *id3343. Soveshchanie o merakh po stimulirovaniyu primeneniya novykh materialov v stroitel'stve*. http://archive.government.ru/docs/24279/print/

Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation of the Russian Federation. (2017a). *id1247. Vtoraya mezhdunarodnaya promyshlennaya vystavka «Yexpo-Russia Belarus 2017» otkrylas' v Minske*. http://blr.rs.gov.ru/ru/news/14707?category_id=1

Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation of the Russian Federation. (2017b). *id1434. Delegaty programmy «Novoye pokoleniye» dogovorilis' ob organizatsii slavyanskogo dvizheniya*. http://rs.gov.ru/ru/news/13670?category_id=9

Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation of the Russian Federation. (2017c). *id1509. Ugrozy terrorizma v Yevrazii i metody bor'by s nim obsudili na mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii*. http://tjk.rs.gov.ru/%C2%A0%C2%A0%C2%A0%C2%A0%C2%A0%C2%A0%C2%A0%C2%A0%C2%A0/news/17856?category_id=9

Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation of the Russian Federation. (2018a). *id1251. Zasedaniye II Vsekanadskogo konkursa po russkomu yazyku v Karltonskom universitete*. http://can.rs.gov.ru/ru/news/44776

Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation of the Russian Federation. (2018b). *id1290. V Orenburge podveli itogi foruma «Yevraziya»*. http://gbr.rs.gov.ru/ru/news/34367

Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation of the Russian Federation. (2018c). *id1340. Predstaviteli boleye 70 stran mira sobralis' v Orenburge na Mezhdunarodnom molodezhnom obrazovatel'nom forume «Yevraziya»*. http://kaz.rs.gov.ru/%20%09/news/34213

Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation of the Russian Federation. (2019). *id1455. Podpisan Plan sovmestnykh meropriyatiy Rossotrudnichestva i Pravitel'stva Orenburgskoy oblasti*. http://rs.gov.ru/ru/news/34151

Kremlin. (1992). *id9004. Sovmestnaya Deklaratsiya Ob Osnovakh Vzaimootnosheniy Mezhdu Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey I Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respublikoy*. http://legal-way.ru/agr48.php

Kremlin. (1997). *id9005. Rossiysko-Kitayskaya Sovmestnaya Deklaratsiya O Mnogopolyarnom Mire I Formirovanii Novogo Mezhdunarodnogo Poryadka*. http://legal-way.ru/agr47.php

Kremlin. (2000a). *id9006. 5-e Sovmestnoye kommyunike po itogam pyatoy regulyarnoy vstrechi Glav pravitel'stv Rossii i Kitaya*. http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901783745

Kremlin. (2000b). *id9007. Pekinskaya deklaratsiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki*. http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901765200

Kremlin. (2001a). *id3385. Teleobrashcheniye v svyazi s terroristicheskimi atakami v SSHA*. http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21328

Kremlin. (2001b). *id9008. Dogovor o dobrososedstve, druzhbe i sotrudnichestve mezhdu Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respublikoy*. http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/3418

Kremlin. (2003). *id9009. Sovmestnaya deklaratsiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki ot 27 maya 2003 g.* http://www.chinaruslaw.com/RU/CnRuTreaty/002/20091119121255_418468.htm

Kremlin. (2004). *id9010. Sovmestnaya Deklaratsiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii I Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki*. http://legal-way.ru/agr51.php

Kremlin. (2005). *id9011. Sovmestnaya deklaratsiya Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki i Rossiyskoy Federatsii o mezhdunarodnom poryadke v XXI veke*. http://ru.china-embassy.org/rus/xwdt/t202668.htm

Kremlin. (2006). *id9012. Sovmestnaya Deklaratsiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii I Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki*. Sovmestnaya Deklaratsiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii I Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki

Kremlin. (2008). *id9018. Sovmestnaya deklaratsiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki po osnovnym mezhdunarodnym voprosam*. http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/240

Kremlin. (2010a). *id9019. Sovmestnoye Zayavleniye Rossiyskoy Federatsii I Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki O Vsestoronnem Uglublenii Rossiysko-Kitayskikh Otnosheniy Partnerstva I Strategicheskogo Vzaimodeystviya*. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/rus/wjdt/gb/t757139.htm

Kremlin. (2010b). *id9028. The senseless period of tension in relations with Belarus is certain to come to an end.* http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/9126/photos

Kremlin. (2013). *id9002. Sovmestnoye zayavleniye Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki o vzaimovygodnom sotrudnichestve i uglublenii otnosheniy vseob"yemlyushchego partnerstva i strategicheskogo vzaimodeystviya.* http://docs.cntd.ru/document/499014847

Kremlin. (2014a). *id3384. Vserossiyskiy molodozhnyy forum «Seliger-2014».* http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46507

Kremlin. (2014b). *id9013. 19-ya regulyarnaya vstrecha glav pravitel'stv Rossii i Kitaya.* http://government.ru/news/15197/

Kremlin. (2014c). *id9014. Sovmestnoye zayavleniye Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki o novom etape otnosheniy vseob"yemlyushchego partnerstva i strategicheskogo vzaimodeystviya.* http://kremlin.ru/supplement/1642

Kremlin. (2015a). *id9001. 20-ya regulyarnaya vstrecha glav pravitel'stv Rossii i Kitaya.* http://government.ru/news/21123/

Kremlin. (2015b). *id9020. Sovmestnoye zayavleniye Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki ob uglublenii vseob"yemlyushchego partnerstva i strategicheskogo vzaimodeystviya i o prodvizhenii vzaimovygodnogo sotrudnichestva.* http://kremlin.ru/supplement/4969

Kremlin. (2016a). *id9003. Sovmestnoye zayavleniye Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki.* http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/5100

Kremlin. (2016b). *id9015. 21-ya regulyarnaya vstrecha glav pravitel'stv Rossii i Kitaya.* http://government.ru/news/25196/

Kremlin. (2016c). *id9016. Sovmestnoye Zayavleniye Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii I Predsedatelya Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki Ob Ukreplenii Global'noy Strategicheskoy Stabil'nosti.* https://ruchina.org/china-article/china/1123.html

Kremlin. (2016d). *id9022. Sovmestnoye zayavleniye Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki.* http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/5100

Kremlin. (2017a). *Id3386. Aleksandr Galushka: Vse novoye rozhdayetsya neprosto (interv'yu).* https://minvr.ru/press-center/news/5703/?doc=1

Kremlin. (2017b). *id9023. 22-ya regulyarnaya vstrecha glav pravitel'stv Rossii i Kitaya.* http://government.ru/news/29983/

Kremlin. (2018a). *id1358. Iz Ural'ska v Sankt-Peterburg za znaniyami ob istorii Gosudarstva Rossijskogo.* http://kaz.rs.gov.ru/ru/news/28060

Kremlin. (2018b). *id9017. Sovmestnoye zayavleniye Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki.* http://kremlin.ru/supplement/5312

Kremlin. (2018c). *id9024. 23-ya regulyarnaya vstrecha glav pravitel'stv Rossii i Kitaya.* http://government.ru/news/34600/

Kremlin. (2019a). *Id1381. Spiker parlamenta Shri-Lanki K. Dzhayasuriya otkryl vystavku "Orenburg—Serdce Evrazii" v RCNK v Kolombo.* http://lka.rs.gov.ru/%C2%A0/news/43323

Kremlin. (2019b). *id3378. Interv'yu gazete The Financial Times.* http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60836

Kremlin. (2019c). *id9021. Sovmestnoye zayavleniye Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki o razvitii otnosheniy vseob"yemlyushchego partnerstva i strategicheskogo vzaimodeystviya, vstupayushchikh v novuyu epokhu.* http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/5413

Kremlin. (2019d). *id9025. 24-ya regulyarnaya vstrecha glav pravitel'stv Rossii i Kitaya.* http://government.ru/news/37872/

Kremlin. (2020). *id9026. 25-ya regulyarnaya vstrecha glav pravitel'stv Rossii i Kitaya.* http://government.ru/news/41002/

Kremlin. (id1242). *id1242. XV obrazovatel'naya programma dlya sootechestvennikov «Istoriya Gosudarstva Rossijskogo».* http://blr-gomel.rs.gov.ru/ru/news/29875

Lavrov, S. (2014). *id0914. Vystuplenie Ministra inostrannyh del Rossii S.V.Lavrova na III Moskovskoj konferencii po mezhdunarodnoj bezopasnosti.* https://brazil.mid.ru/-/vystuplenie-ministra-inostrannyh-del-rossii-s-v-lavrova-na-iii-moskovskoj-konferencii-po-mezdunarodnoj-bezopasnosti-moskva-23-maa-2014-goda

Lavrov, S. (2016). *id1056. Interv'yu Ministra inostrannyh del Rossii S.V.Lavrova izdaniyu Soveta po vneshnej i oboronnoj politike.* https://malaysia.mid.ru/zaavlenia-vystuplenia-stat-i-rukovodstva-rf/-/asset_publisher/wRrUP2V72nVw/content/interv-u-ministra-inostrannyh-del-rossii-s-v-lavrova-izdaniu-soveta-po-vnesnej-i-oboronnoj-politike-moskva?inheritRedirect=false

Lavrov, S. (2017). *Id2779. Sergej Lavrov: «Nash vybor v pol'zu pragmatizma, osnovannogo na korennyh interesah Rossijskoj Federacii».* http://komitet.info/about/direct/14626/

Lavrov, S. (2018). *id1644. Vystuplenie Ministra inostrannyh del Rossijskoj Federacii Sergeya Lavrova na VII Moskovskoj konferencii po mezhdunarodnoj bezopasnosti MCIS-2018.* http://mil.ru/mcis/news/more.htm?id=12169995@cmsArticle

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (n.d.). *id0110. Armenskiy Sbornik.* http://army.ric.mil.ru/upload/site175/5S1HFVicuC.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2012). *Id3633. Shankhayskaya Organizatsiya Sotrudnichestva—Novaya Model' Mezhgosudarstvennogo Partnorstva.* http://history.ric.mil.ru/Stati/item/117743/

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2013). *id0161. Flag Rodiny.* http://sc.mil.ru/files/morf/military/archive/%5B%C2%AB%D0%A4%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B3%20%D0%A0%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%8B%C2%BB%5D%5B2013-06-01%5D.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2014a). *id0149. III Moskovskaya Konferentsiya Po Mezhdunarodnoy Bezopasnosti.* http://mil.ru/files/morf/MCIS_report_catalogue_final_RUS_21_10_preview.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2014b). *id0177. Rossiyskoe Voennoe Obozrenie.* http://sc.mil.ru/files/morf/military/archive/rvo_2014-07.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2014c). *Id0228. Krepleniye Antigitlerovskoy Koalitsii: Dostizheniya I Problemy*. https://encyclopedia.mil.ru/files/VOV/tom8/VOV_Vol8_188-256_Chap4.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2014d). *id3480. III Moskovskaya Konferentsiya Po Mezhdunarodnoy Bezopasnosti*. https://www.mkrf.ru/documents/problemy-kulturnoy-komponenty-v-rossiyskoy-politike-integratsii-v-stranakh-blizhnego-zarubezhya-vyzo/

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2015). *id0188. Vooruzhenie I Ekonomiki.* http://sc.mil.ru/files/morf/military/archive/VIE30%281%29.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2016a). *id0108. Osnovnaya Obrazovatel'naya Programma Osnovnogo Obshchego Obrazovaniya Federal'nogo Gosudarstvennogo Kazennogo Obshcheobrazovatel'nogo Ychrezhdeniya "Aksayskiy Danily Efremova Kazachiy Kadetskiy Korpus."* http://adekkk.mil.ru/upload/site15/document_text/000/001/915/programma_5_let_2016_2021.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2016b). *id3599. Rossiyskoe Voennoe Obozrenie.* http://sc.mil.ru/files/morf/military/archive/RVO_2016-02.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2016c). *id4605. Rossiyskoe Voennoe Obozrenie.* http://sc.mil.ru/files/morf/military/archive/RVO-10_sayt.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2017a). *id0253. Rossiyskoe Voennoe Obozrenie.* https://sc.mil.ru/files/morf/military/archive/rvo_2017-02.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2017b). *Id3487. Tserkov' i gosudarstvo: Sbornik statey po materialam yezhegodnykh Mitrofanovskikh tserkovno-istoricheskikh chteniy «Nravstvennyye tsennosti i budushcheye chelovechestva» ".* https://vva.mil.ru/upload/site21/document_file/sVo6KlQSH2.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2017c). *id3585. Rossiyskoe Voennoe Obozrenie.* https://sc.mil.ru/files/morf/military/archive/rvo_2017-09.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2019). *Id3533. Problema Igry V Sovremennykh Sotsial'nykh Praktikakh: Sotsial'no-Filosofskiy Analiz.* https://vumo.mil.ru/upload/site57/document_file/Pt0Wb02U0T.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2020a). *Id3593. Voenno Mysl': Voenno-teoreticheskiy zhurnal.* https://vm.ric.mil.ru/upload/site178/RJvfqCrBxZ.pdf

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2020b). *id6210. Yestestvenno-nauchnoye napravleniye.* http://vlnvmu.mil.ru/Dopolnitelnoe-obrazovanie/Estestvenno-nauchnoe-napravlenie-DO

Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. (2021). *id6314. V Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respublike proshli pamyatnyye meropriyatiya, posvyashchennyye 75-y godovshchine Pobedy v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945 gg.* https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12291475@egNews&_print=true

Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2007). *Id0418. Otchet po vtoromu etapu nauchno-issledovatel'skoy raboty po teme: «Razrabotka kontseptsii i dolgosrochnogo prognoza diversifikatsii bazovykh otrasley promyshlennosti na period do 2020 goda».* http://aisup.economy.gov.ru/niokr/downloadfile?uuid=pprtflfs000080000hldae21e8gaei70

Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2008). *id0358. Vneshneekonomicheskaya Strategiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii Do 2020 Goda.* http://economy.gov.ru/minec/resources/7047f98040ccc0139b51bf90e96aee3b/ves_2020_short.doc

Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2010). *id0044. Strategiya Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskogo Razvitiya Sibiri Do 2020 God.* http://economy.gov.ru/wps/wcm/connect/bd09077d-0fe1-49c5-afe2-e6523919dbb6/%D0%A1%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%B3%D0%B8%D1%8F+%D1%81%D0%BE%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D0%BE-%D1%8D%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BE+%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%8F+%D0%A1%D0%B8%D0%B1%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B8+%D0%B4%D0%BE+2020+%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B0.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=bd09077d-0fe1-49c5-afe2-e6523919dbb6

Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2011). *id0016. Strategiya Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskogo Razvitiya Yuzhnogo Federal'nogo Okruga Na Period Do 2020 Goda*. Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation (id0016, 2011), Strategiya Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskogo Razvitiya Yuzhnogo Federal'nogo Okruga Na Period Do 2020 Goda, http://economy.gov.ru/wps/wcm/connect/31489b0b-257e-412d-a211-bd82067df8ff/%D0%A1%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%B3%D0%B8%D1%8F+%D1%81%D0%BE%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D0%BE-%D1%8D%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BE+%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%8F+%D0%AE%D0%B6%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BE+%D1%84%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BE+%D0%BE%D0%BA%D1%80%D1%83%D0%B3%D0%B0+%D0%BD%D0%B0+%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%B4+%D0%B4%D0%BE+2020+%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B0.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=31489b0b-257e-412d-a211-bd82067df8ff

Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2013a). *id0065. Rekomendatsii dlya sovershenstvovaniya deyatel'nosti obshchestvennykh organizatsiy*. http://nko.economy.gov.ru:81/data/files/dictionary/1455/249/%D0%A0%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B8%20%20%D0%BF%D0%BE%20%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%88%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8E%20%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%20%D0%9D%D0%9A%D0%9E.pdf

Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2013b). *id0363. Prognoz Dolgosrochnogo Sotsial'no – Ekonomicheskogo Razvitiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii Na Period Do 2030 Goda*. http://economy.gov.ru/minec/resources/9cb190804f0500cd8e6fee008a11733f/%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B7+2030_%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B3-21032013.doc

Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2017). *id0022. Strategiya Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskogo Razvitiya Irkutskoy Oblasti Na Period Do 2030 Goda*. http://economy.gov.ru/wps/wcm/connect/48807477-e977-4718-9c8b-

9b86899d45bc/Irkut2030.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=48807477-e977-4718-9c8b-9b86899d45bc

Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2018a). *id0011. Otchet O Realizatsii Publichnoy Deklaratsii Tseley I Zadach Minekonomrazvitiya Rossii Po Itogam 2018 Goda.* http://economy.gov.ru/wps/wcm/connect/039f0c4d-4e94-4056-8111-993d4964b34e/report6m.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=039f0c4d-4e94-4056-8111-993d4964b34e

Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2018b). *id0015. Strategiya sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya Respubliki Buryatiya na period do 2035 goda.* http://economy.gov.ru/wps/wcm/connect/07a7fd06-583e-44ed-9857-bb6f9aac39dd/sb2035.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=07a7fd06-583e-44ed-9857-bb6f9aac39dd

Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019a). *id0046. Strategiya Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskogo Razvitiya Stavropol'skogo Kraya Do 2035 Goda.* ttp://economy.gov.ru/wps/wcm/connect/c7b54500-9a3e-4c09-bf02-d5d2b24fedbb/CK_2019.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=c7b54500-9a3e-4c09-bf02-d5d2b24fedbb

Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019b). *id0050. Strategiya Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskogo Razvitiya Stavropol'skogo Kraya Do 2035 Goda.* http://economy.gov.ru/wps/wcm/connect/daa69733-0384-4976-8222-7906b4df8866/210119sk.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=daa69733-0384-4976-8222-7906b4df8866

Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. (2012). *Id0404. Otchet o nauchno-issledovatel'skoy rabote po teme: Opyt stroitel'stva soyuznogo gosudarstva belorussii i rossii dlya razvitiya yevraziyskoy integratsii.* http://iam.duma.gov.ru/upload/iblock/ff3/nir13-6.doc

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2012). *id0316. Yevraziyskaya Integratsiya V XXI Veke.* https://russia.mfa.gov.ua/mediafiles/sites/russia/files/___-_.pdf

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2015). *id3851. Vystupleniye Ministra inostrannykh del Rossiyskoy Federatsii S.V.Lavrova na otkrytii Moskovskoy mezhdunarodnoy modeli OON, Moskva, 20 aprelya 2015 goda.* http://www.mid.ru/press_service/minister_speeches/-/asset_publisher/7OvQR5KJWVmR/content/id/1189335

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2016a). *Id1133. Rossiya mezhdu «novym internatsionalizmom» i salafizmom—Iz dos'ye diplomata.* https://slovakia.mid.ru/v-dos-e-

diplomata/-/asset_publisher/9eKlIfPSgood/content/rossia-mezdu-novym-internacionalizmom-i-salafizmom?inheritRedirect=false

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2016b). *id3936. Vystupleniye i otvety na voprosy Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii S.V.Lavrova na «Pravitel'stvennom chase» v Gosudarstvennoy Dume Federal'nogo Sobraniya Rossiyskoy Federatsii, Moskva, 15 iyunya 2016 goda.* https://malaysia.mid.ru/pl/zaavlenia-vystuplenia-stat-i-rukovodstva-rf/-/asset_publisher/wRrUP2V72nVw/content/vystuplenie-i-otvety-na-voprosy-ministra-inostrannyh-del-rossii-s-v-lavrova-na-pravitel-stvennom-case-v-gosudarstvennoj-dume-federal-nogo-sobrania-ros?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=http%3A%2F%2Fmalaysia.mid.ru%2Fpl%2Fzaavlenia-vystuplenia-stat-i-rukovodstva-rf%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_wRrUP2V72nVw%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_p_col_count%3D1

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2017a). *Id0957. O mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii «bor'ba s terrorizmom i ekstremizmom v yevrazii: Obshchiye ugrozy i sovmestnyy opyt».* https://dushanbe.mid.ru/novosti-posol-stva/-/asset_publisher/tKTpTrZaRYxl/content/o-mezdunarodnoj-konferencii-bor-ba-s-terrorizmom-i-ekstremizmom-v-evrazii-obsie-ugrozy-i-sovmestnyj-opyt-?inheritRedirect=true

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2017b). *id3870. Vystupleniye Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii S.V.Lavrova v khode zasedaniya ministrov inostrannykh del stran BRIKS.* http://thailand.mid.ru/key-issues/2604-vystuplenie-ministra-inostrannykh-del-rossii-s-v-lavrova-v-khode-zasedaniya-ministrov-inostrannykh-del-stran-briks

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2018a). *id1152. Prezident Rossii V.V.Putin vystupil na plenarnom zasedanii Vtorogo Yevraziyskogo zhenskogo foruma.* https://spain.mid.ru/web/spain_ru/novosti-iz-rossii/-/asset_publisher/EvlE2aX48xbA/content/id/26549405

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2018b). *Id3744. Vecher kul'tury «Rossiya-Kitay-Tadzhikistan: Prostranstvo tsivilizatsionnogo dialoga» proshel v RKTS Pekine.* http://chn.rs.gov.ru/ru/news/37926

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2018c). *Id3824. A.A. Gromyko «Russkiy mir: Ot metafory do real'nosti».* http://rs.gov.ru/%20/news/48574

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019a). *id0815. Osnovnyye vneshnepoliticheskiye itogi 2018 goda*. http://thailand.mid.ru/key-issues/5253-osnovnye-vneshnepoliticheskie-itogi-2018-goda

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019b). *id0817. Zasedaniye kruglogo stola foruma «Odin poyas, odin put'»*. http://thailand.mid.ru/key-issues/5440-zasedanie-kruglogo-stola-foruma-odin-poyas-odin-put

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2019c). *Id6744. Vystupleniye Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii S.V.Lavrova na zasedanii ministrov inostrannykh del stran BRIKS, Rio-de-Zhaneyro, 26 iyulya 2019 goda—Novosti Posol'stva*. https://brazil.mid.ru/novosti/-/asset_publisher/et3HQUkhpNsF/content/id/27803208

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2020). *id3831. Rossiyskoe Predsedatel'stvo 2020*. http://www.rs.gov.ru/uploads/document/file/14452/%D0%91%D0%A0%D0%98%D0%9A%D0%A1%202020%20%D1%81%D0%B1.pdf

Moskalkova, T. (2016). *Id2948. Tat'yana Moskal'kova: «O Evrazijskoj Integracii, Poryadke I Mire»*. http://komitet.info/eurasian-integration/history/10485/

Naryshkin, S. (2016). *id2372. Vystuplenie Predsedatelya Gosudarstvennoj Sergeya Naryshkina na pervom Soveshchanii spikerov parlamentov stran Evrazii*. http://duma.gov.ru/news/12121/

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2002). *id3177. Zayavlenie dlya pressy po itogam peregovorov s Prezidentom Kazakhstana Hursultanom Nazarbaevym v uzkom sostave*. http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21817#sel=8:7:hBU,8:16:jUa;8:50:vaa,9:4:UZU

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2005a). *id3189. Torzhestvennoe sobranie, posvyashchennoe 1000-letniyu Kazani*. http://special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/23140

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2005b). *id7627. Sovmestnaya deklaratsiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki o mezhdunarodnom poryadke v XXI veke*. http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/3660/print

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2007a). *id7675. Tseremoniya otkrytiya Goda Kitaya v Rossii*. http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24097

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2007b). *id8180. Nachalo zasedaniya Vyschego Gosudarstvennogo Soveta Soyuznogo Gosudarstva Rossii i Belorussii*. http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24726

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2007c). *id8181. Zayavleniya dlya pressi i otvety na voprosy po itogam zasedaniya Vyschego Gosudarstvennogo Soveta Soyuznogo Gosudarstva Rossii i Belorussii*. http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24727

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2008a). *id4245. Predsedatel' Pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii V.V.Putin po zavershheniyu svoyego rabochego vizita v Respubliku Kazakhstan poobshchalsya s predstavitelyami rossiyskikh SMI*. http://archive.government.ru/docs/2309/print/

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2008b). *id8173. Nachalo vstrecha s Prezidentom Belorussii Aleksandrom Lukashenko*. http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/2529

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2008c). *id8178. Nachalo vstrecha s Prezidentom Belorussii Aleksandrom Lukashenko*. http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/498

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2009a). *id8166. Nachalo zasedaniya Vyschego Gosudarstvennogo Soveta Soyuznogo Gosudarstva Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Respubliki Belarus'*. http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/6304

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2009b). *id8167. Zayavleniya dlya pressy po itogam zasedaniya Vyschego Gosudarstvennogo Soveta Soyuznogo Gosudarstva Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Respubliki Belarus'*. http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/6305

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2010a). *id7567. Sovmestnoye zayavleniye glav gosudarstv i pravitel'stv stran – uchastnits Vtorogo sammita BRIK (Braziliya, Rossiya, Indiya, Kitay)*. http://kremlin.ru/supplement/524/print

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2010b). *id7625. Sovmestnoye zayavleniye Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii D.A.Medvedeva i Predsedatelya Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki Khu TSzin'tao v svyazi s 65-letiyem okonchaniya Vtoroy mirovoy voyny*. http://kremlin.ru/supplement/720/print

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2010c). *id8164. Bessmyslennaya polosa napryazhheniya v otnosheniyakh s Belorussiey obyazatel'nyu zakonchitsya*. http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/9126

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2011a). *id8162. Soboleznovaniya Prezidenty Respubliki Belarus'*. http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/10910

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2011b). *id8163. Poslanie prezidenty Respubliki Belarus' Aleksandru Lukashenko po sluchayu dnya edineniya narodov Rossii i Belarusi*. http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/10799

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2012a). *id5680. Zasedaniye Komissii po voprosam voyenno-tekhnicheskogo sotrudnichestva s inostrannymi gosudarstvami.* http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/16673

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2012b). *id8158. Poslanie Aleksandry Lukashenko po sluchayu dnya edineniya narodov Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Respubliki Belarus'.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/14886

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2013a). *id4307. Sovmestnoye zayavleniye Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki o vzaimovygodnom sotrudnichestve i uglublenii otnosheniy vseob"yemlyushchego partnorstva i strategicheskogo vzaimodeystviya.* http://kremlin.ru/supplement/1423

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2013b). *id8153. Zayavleniya dlya pressy po itogam zasedaniya Vyschego Gosudarstvennogo Soveta Soyuznogo Gosudarstva Rossii i Belorussii.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/19923

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2013c). *id8154. Nachalo zasedaniya Vyschego Gosudarstvennogo Soveta Soyuznogo Gosudarstva Rossii i Belorussii.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/19922

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2013d). *id8155. Vstrecha s Prezidentom Belorussii Aleksandrom Lukashenko.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/19920

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2014a). *id4319. Dushanbinskaya deklaratsiya glav gosudarstv – chlenov Shankhayskoy organizatsii sotrudnichestva.* http://kremlin.ru/supplement/4750/print

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2014b). *id8147. Rossiysko-Belorusskie peregovory.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/46139

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2014c). *id8149. Vystupleniya na otkrytii novogo zdaniya Belorusskogo gosudarstvennogo muzeya istorii Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/46140

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2014d). *id8150. Vstrecha s Prezidentom Belorussii Aleksandrom Lukashenko.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/20981

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2015a). *id8134. Zayavleniya dlya pressy po itogam Rossiysko-Belorysskikh peregovorov.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/50960

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2015b). *id8137. Vtoroy forum regionov Rossii i Belorussii.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/50322

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2015c). *id8143. Zayavleniya dlya pressy po itogam zasedaniya Vyschego Gosudarstvennogo Soveta Soyuznogo Gosudarstva.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/47775

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2015d). *id8144. Zasedaniya Vyschego Gosudarstvennogo Soveta Soyuznogo Gosudarstva.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/47773

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2016a). *id7619. Sovmestnoye zayavleniye Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respubliki.* http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/5100

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2016b). *id8133. Vstrecha s Prezidentom Belorussii Aleksandrom Lukashenko.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/51389

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2017). *id8122. IV forum regionov Rossii i Belorussii.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/54914

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2018a). *id4378. Tsindaoskaya deklaratsiya Soveta glav gosudarstv – chlenov Shankhayskoy organizatsii sotrudnichestva.* http://special.kremlin.ru/supplement/5315

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2018b). *id8111. Pyatyy forum regionov Rossii i Belorussi.* http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58807

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2018c). *id8116. Zasedanie Vyschego gossoveta soyuznogo gosudarstva.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/57811

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2018d). *id8119. Pozdravlenie s dnem edineniya narodov Rossii i Belarusi.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/57171

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2019a). *id4306. Tseremoniya zakrytiya chempionata WorldSkills.* http://special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/61390

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2019b). *id8102. Vstrecha s Prezidentom Belorussii Aleksandrom Lukashenko.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/62373

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2019c). *id8103. Pozdravlenie po sluchayu 20-letiya podpizaniya dogovora o sozdanii Soyuznogo Gosudarstva.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/62266

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2019d). *id8105. Otvety na voprosy zhurnalistov.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/59844

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2020a). *id8100. Vstrecha s Prezidentom Belorussii Aleksandrom Lukashenko.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/64031

Office of the President of the Russian Federation. (2020b). *id8101. Privetstvie uchastnikam plenarnogo zasedaniya VII foruma regionov Rossii i Belorussii.* http://kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/BY/events/64107

Putin, V. (2005). *id3188. Torzhestvennoe sobranie, posvyashchennoe 1000-letiyu Kazani.* http://special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/23140

Putin, V. (2012a). *Id3116. Rossiya: Nacional'nyj Vopros.* http://komitet2-4.km.duma.gov.ru/Publikacii-i-vystupleniya/item/57848/

Putin, V. (2012b). *id3380. Rossiya i menyayushchijsya mir.* https://rus.rusemb.org.uk/press/289

Putin, V. (2016). *id3381. Plenary session of St Petersburg International Economic Forum.* http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52178

Putin, V. (2019). *id0816. Vladimir Putin prinyal uchastie vo vtorom Mezhdunarodnom forume «Odin poyas, odin put'».* http://thailand.mid.ru/key-issues/5436-26-mf-19

Putin, V. (Director). (2018, December 20). *id3382. Putin ob ugroze yadernoj vojny.* NTV. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qoXOWtWK-E

State Duma. (2010). *Id2698. Rossijskij konservatizm—Ideologiya, politika, ekonomika.* http://pda.iam.duma.gov.ru/node/8/4640

State Duma. (2011). *Id2888. Evrazijskij Soyuz: Ot Idei K Istorii Budushchego.* http://komitet.info/eurasian-integration/eurasia-project-history/337/

State Duma. (2012a). *Id0282. Rossiyskaya Gosudarstvennaya Duma: Istoricheskiy Opyt I Perspektivy Razvitiya Parlamentarizma.* http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/1iyyrLf0wTT7RYWTueJ2oC8H4AFM445P.pdf

State Duma. (2012b). *id0311. Rossiyskiy Sever Modernizatsiya I Razvitiye.* http://www.komitet2-1.km.duma.gov.ru/upload/site24/document_text/000/057/956/RosSev_1.pdf

State Duma. (2012c). *Id2578. Vystupleniye Predsedatelya Gosudarstvennoy Dumy S.Ye.Naryshkina v Yevraziyskom universitete im. L.N.Gumileva «Yevraziyskaya integratsiya: Itogi, problemy i perspektivy» (25 aprelya 2012 goda).* http://duma.gov.ru/news/6760/

State Duma. (2012d). *id2694. Geopoliticheskaya doktrina Rossii i eyo rol' v sozdanii Evrazijskogo soyuza.* http://pda.iam.duma.gov.ru/node/10/4961/20199

State Duma. (2012e). *id4070. Kommentariy predsedatelya Komiteta Gosudarstvennoy Dumy po federativnomu ustroystvu i voprosam mestnogo samoupravleniya Viktora Kidyayeva programmnuyu stat'yu prem'yer-ministra RF Vladimira Putina.* http://komitet4.km.duma.gov.ru/Novosti-Komiteta/item/25699

State Duma. (2013a). *id0297. Evrazijskay Ekonomicheskaya Perspektiva.* http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/zNSO2B6Qbe3oAaZbiOSTsRMXw8Me9loe.pdf

State Duma. (2013b). *Id2608. Predsedatel' Gosdumy napravil privetstvie organizatoram, uchastnikam i gostyam Molodezhnogo Foruma Rossiya—Kazakhstan "Liderstvo i inovacii v XXI veke: Zglyad v bubushchee*. http://duma.gov.ru/news/8583/

State Duma. (2013c). *id3140. Zasedanie Soveta po mezhnatsional'nym otnosheniyam*. http://www.komitet2-4.km.duma.gov.ru/Publikacii-i-vystupleniya/item/57746/

State Duma. (2013d). *Id3148. Stat'ya zamestitelya predsedatelya Komiteta Z. Rakhmatullinoy "Sovremennyy Bashkortostan cherez prizmu Rossiysko-Turetskikh otnosheniy: Dialogicheskoe obshchenie I kul'turotvorcheskoy potentsial"*. http://www.komitet2-3.km.duma.gov.ru/Novosti-Komiteta/item/20575/

State Duma. (2014a). *Id0289. Fraktsiya LDPR v Gosudarstvennoy Dume 1993–2013: Bor'ba za vozrozhdeniye Rossii v vystupleniyakh deputatov LDPR*. http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/jNxlZMGljVRJAIUO4vXMgFMWdUgYpflM.pdf

State Duma. (2014b). *Id0294. Rossiya v Velikoy voyne Materialy Mezhdunarodnogo obshchestvenno-nauchnogo foruma «Velikaya voyna. Uroki istorii»*. http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/SSGCPsEmveMLj46JOfApPVdNH3DSShaE.pdf

State Duma. (2014c). *id0296. Yevraziyskaya ekonomicheskaya perspektiva Materialy Vtorogo Mezhdunarodnogo foruma Sankt-Peterburg, 17 aprelya 2014 goda*. http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/wDMf1xT0KtDcMLyJslklNXenAhHRkyI4.pdf

State Duma. (2014d). *id2218. Zasedaniya Gosudarstvennoy Dumy 26 sentyabrya 2014 goda*. http://api.duma.gov.ru/api/transcriptFull/2014-09-26

State Duma. (2014e). *id2614. Sergey Naryshkin prinyal uchastie v rabote vtorogo mezhdynarodnogo foruma «Evraziyskaya ekonomicheskaya perspektiva»*. http://duma.gov.ru/news/9225/

State Duma. (2015a). *Id0291. Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo v Rossii: Vchera, segodnya, zavtra*. http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/pUAtqbBL1pCFcnxNNghH2g3VgUMt45db.pdf

State Duma. (2015b). *Id2219. Khronika: Zasedaniya Gosudarstvennoy Dumy 20 maya 2015 goda*. http://api.duma.gov.ru/api/transcriptFull/2015-05-20

State Duma. (2015c). *id2356. Gazeta Izvetiya opublikovala stat'yu Sergeya Haryshkina «Slabost' Bolshoy Evropy»*. http://duma.gov.ru/news/11666/

State Duma. (2015d). *Id2791. Leonid Slutskiy: Evraziyskiy ekonomicheskiy soyuz—Eto Edinaya integratsionnaya struktura, I lyubye raznoskorostnye tendentsii my dolzhny preodolevat'*. http://komitet.info/about/direct/7500/

State Duma. (2015e). *Id2794. Sergey Naryshkin: Sanktsii protiv Rossii unizitel'ny i nelogichny dlya Evropy*. http://komitet.info/about/direct/9840/

State Duma. (2015f). *Id2882. Maksim Kramarenko: Vce temy kongressa uzhe izvestny, i kazhdaya iz nikh vyzyvaet bol'shoy interes*. http://komitet.info/compatriots/world-congress-of-compatriots/8677/

State Duma. (2015g). *id4132. Deyatel'nost' deputatov fraktsii KPRF v Gosudarstvennoy Dume po zashchite russkogo yazyka, naslediya velikikh predkov i traditsiy narodov Rossii.* http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/gfybyGO2pDDJCtVYNQ3MlIbjyy8dJV9i.pdf

State Duma. (2016a). *id0285. Osnovnyye napravleniya deyatel'nosti Komiteta Gosudarstvennoy Dumy po delam Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv, yevraziyskoy integratsii i svyazyam s sootechestvennikami (shestoy sozyv).* http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/AaTwermmh808RKCNGBelYIh2Uyxc0BJ6.pdf

State Duma. (2016b). *Id0287. Yevraziyskaya ekonomicheskaya perspektiva: Materialy Chetvortogo Mezhdunarodnogo foruma Sankt-Peterburg, 19 maya 2016 goda.* http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/FN25H401kCsuSzih8YiO3Zyoqu5nXhq1.pdf

State Duma. (2016c). *id2859. Kazakhstan v CB OON napravit uciliya na deeskalatsiyu konfliktov v Evrazii*. http://komitet.info/cis-parliaments/kazakhstan/news/12175/

State Duma. (2016d). *id2860. President Kazakhstana prizval strany Evrazii k tesnoy integratsii.* http://komitet.info/cis-parliaments/kazakhstan/news/14320/

State Duma. (2017a). *Id0283. Perekrestok Kul'tur: Mezhkul'turniy dialog na evraziyskom prostranstve.* http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/2VmVmhV2qA2agbPGDwN091VMLnKIABAM.pdf

State Duma. (2017b). *id0292. Aktual'nye vorposy sodruzhestva nezavisimykh gosudarstv I svyazey Rossii s sootechestvennikami za rubezhom.* http://duma.gov.ru/media/files/RbxXjbn8Yx5Z2A39zrCSOc7aOvRSCqCK.pdf

State Duma. (2017c). *id2731. Assambleya narodov Evrazii sobrala na svoej ploshchadke bolee 2500 uchastnikov iz 60 stran.* http://www.komitet2-4.km.duma.gov.ru/Publikacii-i-vystupleniya/item/484506/

State Duma. (2017d). *Id2845. Yuriy Mishcheryakov: Regulyarnoe obshchenie s izbiratelyami pozvolyaet bolee kachestvenno i s pol'zoy dlya lyudey rabotat' nad prinyatiem federal'nykh zakonov.* http://komitet.info/about/membersblogs/yuri-mishcheryakov-regular-communication-with-voters-allows-more-qualitative-and-useful-for-people-t/

State Duma. (2017e). *id2869. V Dushanbe proydet mezhdunarodnaya konferentsiya po bor'be s terrorizmom.* http://komitet.info/cis-parliaments/tajikistan/news/16602/

State Duma. (2017f). *id3137. Assambleya narodov Evrazii sobrala na svoey ploshchadke bolee 2500 uchastnikov is 60 stran*. http://www.komitet2-4.km.duma.gov.ru/Publikacii-i-vystupleniya/item/484506/

State Duma. (2017g). *Id7328. Deputat Gavrilov: Na Arkhiyereyskom sobore Putin nametil puti vykhoda iz krizisa tsivilizatsii*. http://komitet2-22.km.duma.gov.ru/Press-centr/item/15169500/

State Duma. (2018a). *Id2222. Khronika: Zasedaniya Gosudarstvennoy Dumy 25 oktyabrya 2018 goda*. http://api.duma.gov.ru/api/transcriptFull/2018-10-25

State Duma. (2018b). *id2658. Rossiyskaya Gazeta rasskazala o vizite delegacii Komiteta po Bezopasnosti i protivodeystviyu korrupcii v Iran*. http://komitet2-16.km.duma.gov.ru/Novosti_Komiteta/item/17417263

State Duma. (2018c). *Id2729. Il'dar Gil'mutdinov: Den' edineniya narodov Belarusi i Rossii s kazhdym godom stanovitsya vce bolee znachimym i simbolichnym*. http://www.komitet2-4.km.duma.gov.ru/Publikacii-i-vystupleniya/item/15891547/

State Duma. (2018d). *Id3120. Zugura Rakhmatullina: «natsional'niy kostyum—Eto vzglyad iz proshlogo v nastoyashchee i budushchee»*. http://www.komitet2-4.km.duma.gov.ru/Drugie-meropriyatiya/item/16364029/

State Duma. (2018e). *id7410. Vyacheslav Nikonov pozdravil Institut vostokovedeniya RAN s dvukhsotletnim yubileyem*. http://komitet8.km.duma.gov.ru/Novosti-Komiteta/item/17349293/

State Duma. (2019a). *Id2556. Vyacheslav Vołoding: Forum stanovitsya avtoritetnoy ploshchadkoy dlya obmena luchwhimi zkonodatel'nymi praktikami*. http://duma.gov.ru/news/45515/

State Duma. (2019b). *id7346. Vyacheslav Nikonov otkryl zanyatiya v Mezhdunarodnoy shkole BRIKS*. http://komitet8.km.duma.gov.ru/Novosti-Komiteta/item/19804000

State Duma. (2020). *id4189. NIR Opyt stroitel'stva soyuznogo gosudarstva Belorussii i Rossii dlya razvitiya yevraziyskoy integratsii*. http://pda.iam.duma.gov.ru/node/10/4961/20199

Vladimir Putin. (2012). *id3328. Predsedatel' Pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii V.V. Putin vystupil v Gosudarstvennoy Dume s otchetom o deyatel'nosti Pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii za 2011 god*. http://archive.government.ru/docs/18671/print/

Vladimir Putin. (2014a). *id3231. Rabochnaya vstrecha s gubernatorom Orenburgskoy oblasti Yuriem Begrom*. http://special.kremlin.ru/catalog/regions/ORE/events/21020

Vladimir Putin. (2014b). *id3246. Zayavleniya dlya pressy po itogam zasedaniya VYeES*. http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47318

Secondary sources

Abashin, S. (2018). Ethnic Conflict in Modern Central Asia. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.319

Adair-Toteff, C. (2008). The neo-Kantian Raum controversy. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*. https://doi.org/10.1080/09608789408570902

Adler, E. (2013). Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates. In W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse-Kappen, & B. A. Simmons (Eds.), *Handbook of international relations [electronic resource]* (pp. 112–144). SAGE Publications. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=1046504

Agnew, J. (1994). The territorial trap: The geographical assumptions of international relations theory. *Review of International Political Economy*, *1*(1), 53–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/09692299408434268

Agnew, J., & Duncan, J. S. (1989). Introduction: The Power of Place. In *The power of place: Bringing together geographical and sociological imaginations* (pp. 1–8). Unwin Hyman.

Alexandrov, M. (1999). *Uneasy alliance: Relations between Russia and Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet era, 1992-1997*. Greenwood.

Allen, M. (2017). Narrative Analysis. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381411.n368

Allison, R. (2013). *Russia, the West, and military intervention*. Oxford University Press.

Allison, R., White, S., & Light, M. (2005). Belarus between East and West. *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, *21*(4), 487–511. https://doi.org/10.1080/13523270500363411

Althusser, L. (1977). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. In *Lenin and philosophy, and other essays* (2nd ed.). NLB.

Ambrosio, T., & Lange, W. A. (2014). Mapping Kazakhstan's geopolitical code: An analysis of Nazarbayev's presidential addresses, 1997-2014. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, *55*(5), 537–559. https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2015.1024272

Anceschi, L. (2016). *Kazakhstan's foreign policy: Regime neo-Eurasianism in the Nazarbaev era [electronic resource]* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.

Anderson, J. (2007). Putin and the Russian orthodox church: Asymmetric symphonia. *Journal of International Affairs*, *61*(1), 185–IX.

Angermuller, J. (2020). Poststructuralist Discourse Studies: From Structure to Practice. In A. Georgakopoulou & A. De Fina (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Discourse Studies* (pp. 235–254). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108348195.012

Angermuller, J., Maingueneau, D., & Wodak, R. (2014). *Discourse Studies Reader: Main currents in theory and analysis*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/z.184

Anghie, A. (2008). *Imperialism, sovereignty and the making of international law*. Cambridge University Press.

Antonov, M. (2020). Church-State Symphonia: Its Historical Development And Its Applications By The Russian Orthodox Church. *Journal of Law and Religion*, *35*(3), 474–493. https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2020.38

Arendt, H. (1966). *The origins of totalitarianism*.

Aris, S. (2011). *Eurasian regionalism: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Arjomand, S. A., & Tiryakian, E. A. (Eds.). (2004). *Rethinking civilizational analysis [electronic resource]*. SAGE. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=https://sk.sagepub.com/books/rethinking-civilizational-analysis

Atack, I. (2019). Tolstoy's Pacifism and the Critique of State Violence. In J. Kustermans, T. Sauer, D. Lootens, & B. Segaert (Eds.), *Pacifism's Appeal* (pp. 81–102). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2461/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-13427-3_5

Bassin, M. (1991). Russia between Europe and Asia: The ideological construction of geographical space. *Slavic Review*, *1*(50), 1–17.

Bassin, M. (2003). Classical Eurasianism and the geopolitics of Russian identity. *Ab Imperio*, *2*, 257–266.

Bassin, M. (2010). Introduction: Russian Space. In C. D. Ely & M. K. Stockdale (Eds.), *Space, place, and power in modern Russia: Essays in the new spatial history* (pp. 3–22). Northern Illinois University Press.

Bassin, M., Ely, C. D., & Stockdale, M. K. (2010). *Space, place, and power in modern Russia: Essays in the new spatial history*. Northern Illinois University Press.

Bassin, M., Glebov, S., & Laruelle, M. (2015). *Between Europe and Asia: The Origins, Theories, and Legacies of Russian Eurasianism*. University of Pittsburgh Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt15nmjch

Bassin, M., & Pozo, G. (2017). *The Politics of Eurasianism: Identity, Popular Culture and Russia's Foreign Policy*. Rowman & Littlefield International.

Bauman, Z. (1987). *Legislators and interpreters: On modernity, post-modernity, and intellectuals*. Polity.

Baunov, A. (2003, October 10). *Как войти в Европу. Часть вторая: Путь, открытый для России.* http://www.globalrus.ru/opinions/134824/

Bayly, M. (2015). Imperial ontological (in)security: 'Buffer states', International Relations and the case of Anglo-Afghan relations, 1808–1878. *European Journal of International Relations*, *21*(4), 816–840. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066114557569

Bazeley, P., & Jackson, K. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo* (Second edition / edited by Pat Bazeley, Kristi Jackson.). SAGE.

Beardsworth, R. (1996). *Derrida & the political*. Routledge.

Bender, J. B., & Wellbery, D. E. (1991). *The constitution of human life in Time*. Stanford University Press.

Benveniste, É. (1954). *Civilisation: Contribution à l'histoire du mot*.

Betts, P. (2020). *Ruin and renewal: Civilising Europe after the Second World War*. Profile Books.

Bhaskar, R. (1979). *The possibility of naturalism: A philosophical critique of the contemporary human sciences*. Harvester.

Biryukov, N., Gleisner, J., & Sergeyev, V. (1995). The Crisis of Sobornost': Parliamentary Discourse in Present-Day Russia. *Discourse & Society*, *6*(2), 149–175. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926595006002002

Bogaturova, A. (2014a). Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya v regione v 2000-kh godakh. In *Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya v Tsentral'noy Azii* (pp. 327–392). Aspekt Press.

Bogaturova, A. (2014b). Stabilizatsiya regional'noy podsistemy (1997-2000). In *Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya v Tsentral'noy Azii* (pp. 295–326). Aspekt Press.

Bolt, P. J., & Cross, S. N. (2018). *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics*. University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198719519.001.0001

Bowden, B. (2004a). In the Name of Progress and Peace: The "Standard of Civilization" and the Universalizing Project. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, *29*(1), 43–68. https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540402900103

Bowden, B. (2004b). The ideal of civilisation: Its origins and socio-political character. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, *7*(1), 25–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369823042000235967

Bowden, B. (2009). *The empire of civilization: The evolution of an imperial idea*. University of Chicago Press. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=448527

Browning, C. S. (2008). *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland*. Peter Lang.

Bruner, J. S. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, *18*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1086/448619

Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity [electronic resource]*. Routledge. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&AN=70541

Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & Wilde, J. de. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner.

Callahan, W. A. (2008). Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-hegemonic or a New Hegemony? *International Studies Review*, *10*(4), 749–761. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2486.2008.00830.x

Campbell, D. (1992). *Writing security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity*. Manchester University Press.

Chang, C., & Chen, K.-H. (2017). Tracking Tianxia: On Intellectual Self-Positioning. In B. Wang (Ed.), *Chinese visions of world order: Tianxia, culture, and world politics* (pp. 267–292). Duke University Press.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2009). Shifting the Grounds: Constructivist Grounded Theory Methods. In J. M. Morse (Ed.), *Developing grounded theory: The second generation* (pp. 127–154). Left Coast Press.

Chu, S. (2020). Whither Chinese IR? The Sinocentric subject and the paradox of Tianxia-ism. *International Theory*, 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971920000214

Clowes, E. W. (2011). *Russia on the edge: Imagined geographies and post-Soviet identity*. Cornell University Press ; University Presses Marketing distributor.

Collins, R. (2001). Civilizations as Zones of Prestige and Social Contact. *International Sociology*, *16*(3), 421–437. https://doi.org/10.1177/026858001016003011

Connolly, W. E. (1991). *Identity\difference: Democratic negotiations of political paradox*. Cornell University Press.

Cooper, R. (1991). Formal Organisation as Representation: Remote Control, Displacement and Abbreviation. In M. R. M. Hughes (Ed.), *Rethinking Organization: New Directions in Organization Theory and Analysis* (pp. 254–272). SAGE Publications.

Cummings, S. N. (2003). Eurasian bridge or murky waters between east and west? Ideas, identity and output in Kazakhstan's foreign policy. *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, *19*(3), 139–155. https://doi.org/10.1080/13523270300660021

Dannreuther, R., & March, L. (2011). *Russia and Islam: State, society and radicalism*. Routledge.

Debrix, F. (2015). Katechontic Sovereignty: Security Politics and the Overcoming of Time. *International Political Sociology*, *9*(2), 143–157. https://doi.org/10.1111/ips.12088

Derrida, J. (1976). *De la grammatologie*.

Derrida, J. (1978). *Writing and difference*. University of Chicago Press. https://books.google.nl/books?hl=nl&lr=&id=eolGLbsWZEIC&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=derrida&ots=UjY1HIXorg&sig=sPsnAaVHQV1pDTSp-1ymFYN66rQ

Derrida, J. (2001). *On cosmopolitanism and forgiveness*. Routledge.

Diener, A. C. (2020). Multi-Scalar Territorialization in Kazakhstan's Northern Borderland. *Geographical Review*, *0*(0), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/00167428.2020.1814676

Diez, T. (2004). Europe's others and the return of geopolitics. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, *17*(2), 319–335. https://doi.org/10.1080/0955757042000245924

Dragneva, R. (2016). *The Eurasian Economic Union: Balancing Sovereignty and Integration*. University of Birmingham. http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/2220/1/IEL_Working_Paper_10%2D2016%2Ddragneva.pdf

Dragneva, R., & Hartwell, C. A. (2021). The Eurasian Economic Union: Integration without liberalisation? *Post-Communist Economies*, *33*(2–3), 200–221. https://doi.org/10.1080/14631377.2020.1793586

Dragneva, R., & Wolczuk, K. (2013). *Eurasian economic integration: Law, policy and politics*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Dugin, A. (1997). *Foundations of Geopolitics*.

Dugin, A. (2009). *The Fourth Political Theory*.

Dugin, A. (2012). *The Theory of a Multipolar World*.

Dugin, A. (2013). *Евразийская интеграция в оптике постмодерна*. http://evrazia.org/article/2354

Duncan, P. J. S. (2000). *Russian messianism: Third Rome, holy revolution, communism and after*. Routledge.

Dunn, K. C. (2010). There is No Such Thing as the State: Discourse, Effect and Performativity. *Forum for Development Studies*, *37*(1), 79–92. https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410903558285

Durkheim, E., & Mauss, M. (1971). Note on the Notion of Civilization (B. Nelson, Trans.). *Social Research*, *38*(4), 808–813.

Eisenstadt, S. (1985). Comparative liminality: Liminality and dynamics of civilization. *Religion (London. 1971)*, *15*(3), 315–338. https://doi.org/10.1016/0048-721X(85)90018-1

Elias, N. (2000). *The civilizing process: Sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations* (E. F. N. Jephcott, E. Dunning, J. Goudsblom, & S. Mennell, Eds.; Revised edition / edited by Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell.). Blackwell Publishers.

Elliott, J. (2005). *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Sage. http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0661/2006618240-t.html

Elsbeth Locher-Scholten. (1994). Orientalism and the Rhetoric of the Family: Javanese Servants in European Household Manuals and Children's Fiction. *Indonesia (Ithaca)*, *58*(58), 19–39. https://doi.org/10.2307/3351101

Engström, M. (2014). Contemporary Russian Messianism and New Russian Foreign Policy. *Contemporary Security Policy*, *35*(3), 356–379.

Entrikin, J. N. (1989). Place, Region, and Modernity. In J. A. Agnew & J. S. Duncan (Eds.), *The power of place: Bringing together geographical and sociological imaginations* (pp. 30–43). Unwin Hyman.

Epstein, C. (2008). *The power of words in international relations: Birth of an anti-whaling discourse*. MIT.

Epstein, M. (2012). Russian Spirituality and the Theology of Negation. *Russian Culture*, 74.

Fairclough, N. (1980). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and Power*. Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2013). General Introduction. In *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (Second edition., pp. 1–22). Routledge. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=1397484

Febvre, L. (1973). Civilisation: Evolution of a word and a group of ideas. In P. Burke & K. Folca (Eds.), *A new kind of history: From the writings of Febvre*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Feduta, A. (2005). *Lukashenko: Politicheskaya biografiya*. Labirint. https://www.labirint.ru/books/80634/

Finnemore, M., & Sikkink, K. (1998). International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. *International Organization*, *52*(4), 887–917. https://doi.org/10.1162/002081898550789

Forsberg, T., & Mäkinen, S. (2019). Russian Discourse on Borders and Territorial Questions—Crimea as a Watershed? *Russian Politics*, *4, 2019*(2), 211–241. https://doi.org/10.1163/2451-8921-00402004

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.; 2nd Vintage Books ed). Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* (C. Gordon, Trans.). Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Frear, M., & Mazepus, H. (2020). Security, Civilisation and Modernisation: Continuity and Change in the Russian Foreign Policy Discourse. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *0*(0), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2020.1843601

Fukuyama, F. (1989). *The end of history?*

Gennep, A. van. (1960). *The rites of passage*. University of Chicago Press.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Polity.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine Pub.

Glebov, S. (2003). Границы империи как границы модерна. Антиколониальная риторика и теория культурных типов в евразийстве. *Ab Imperio*, *2003*(2), 267–291. https://doi.org/10.1353/imp.2003.0048

Glebov, S. (2015). N. S. Trubetskoi's Europe and Mankind and Eurasianist Antievolutionism. In M. Bassin, S. Glebov, & M. Laruelle (Eds.), *Between Europe and Asia: The origins, theories, and legacies of Russian Eurasianism*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Gray, J. (1995). *Enlightenment's wake: Politics and culture at the close of the modern age*. Routledge.

Guroff, A., & Guroff, G. (1994). The paradox of Russian national identity. In K. Dawisha & R. Starr (Eds.), *National identity and ethnicity in Russia and the new states of Eurasia*. Sharpe.

Hagström, L., & Gustafsson, K. (2019). Narrative power: How storytelling shapes East Asian international politics. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, *32*(4), 387–406. https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2019.1623498

Häkli, J. (2008). Regions, networks and fluidity in the Finnish nation-state. *National Identities*, *10*(1), 5–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/14608940701819751

Hall, M., & Jackson, P. T. (2007). *Civilizational identity: The production and reproduction of "civilizations" in international relations*. Palgrave Macmillan. http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0711/2007013168-t.html

Hansen, L. (2000). Past as Preface: Civilizational Politics and the `Third' Balkan War. *Journal of Peace Research*, *37*(3), 345–362. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343300037003004

Hansen, L. (2006). *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. Routledge.

Hell, J. (2009). Katechon: Carl Schmitt's Imperial Theology and the Ruins of the Future. *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory*, *84*(4), 283–326. https://doi.org/10.1080/00168890903291443

Hell, J., & Schönle, A. (2010). *Ruins of modernity*. Duke University Press.

Hettne, B., & Söderbaum, F. (2000). Theorising the Rise of Regionness. *New Political Economy*, *5*(3), 457–472. https://doi.org/10.1080/713687778

Hinchman, L. P., & Hinchman, S. (1997). *Memory, identity, community: The idea of narrative in the human sciences*. State University of New York Press.

Hodgkin, K., & Radstone, S. (2003). *Contested pasts: The politics of memory*. Routledge.

Hollwerth, A., & Umland, A. (2007). *Das sakrale eurasische Imperium des Aleksandr Dugin. Eine Diskursanalyse zum postsowjetischen russischen Rechtsextremismus. Mit einem Vorwort von Dirk Uffelmann: 59*.

Hopf, T. (2002). *Social construction of international politics: Identities & foreign policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*. Cornell University Press. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.32422

Hopf, T. (2009). Identity Relations and the Sino-Soviet Split. In R. Abdelal (Ed.), *Measuring identity: A guide for social scientists* (pp. 297–313). University Press.

Howarth, D. (1998). Discourse Theory and Political Analysis. In E. Scarbrough & E. Tanenbaum (Eds.), *Research strategies in the social sciences: A guide to new approaches* (pp. 268–292). University Press.

Howarth, D. R. (2000). *Discourse*. Open University Press.

Hsiung, C. W. (2019). A tenuous trilateral? Russia-India-China relations in a changing world order. *The Swedish Institute of International Affairs*, 18.

Hunter, S. (2015). *Islam in Russia: The politics of identity and security*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Huntington, S. P. (1993). The Clash of Civilizations? *Foreign Affairs*, *72*(3), 22–49. https://doi.org/10.2307/20045621

Huysmans, J. (1998). Security! What Do You Mean?: From Concept to Thick Signifier. *European Journal of International Relations*, *4*(2), 226–255. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066198004002004

Ioffe, G. (2007). Culture Wars, Soul-Searching, and Belarusian Identity. *East European Politics and Societies*, *21*(2), 348–381. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325407299790

Jacques, M. (2009). *When China rules the world: The rise of the middle kingdom and the end of the Western world*. Allen Lane.

Jones, M. D., & Mcbeth, M. K. (2010). A Narrative Policy Framework: Clear Enough to Be Wrong? *Policy Studies Journal*, *38*(2), 329–353. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2010.00364.x

Jonson, L. (2004). *Vladimir Putin and central Asia: The shaping of Russian foreign policy*. IBTauris.

Jorgensen, M., & Phillips, L. (2002). Laclau & Mouffe's Discourse Theory. In *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (pp. 24–59). SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208871

Karpf, D. A. (2011). Social Science Research Methods in Internet Time. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1929095

Kazharski, A. (2018). Belarus Inside the Bear Hug | And Its Geopolitical Predicament After the Ukraine Crisis. *Ponars Eurasia - Policy Memos*. https://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/belarus-inside-bear-hug-and-geopolitical-predicament-after-ukraine-crisis

Kazharski, A. (2019). *Eurasian Integration and the Russian World: Regionalism as an Identitary Enterprise*. Central European University Press. https://muse.jhu.edu/book/65976/

Kazharski, A., & Kubová, M. (2021). Belarus as a liminal space for Russia's ontological security before and after the 2020 protests. *New Perspectives (Prague, Czech Republic)*, *29*(3), 249–271. https://doi.org/10.1177/2336825X211032900

Kazharski, A., & Makarychev, A. (2021). Belarus, Russia, and the escape from geopolitics. *Political Geography*, *89*, 102377-. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102377

Keller, S. (2020). *Russia and Central Asia: Coexistence, conquest, convergence*. University of Toronto Press.

Khalid, A. (2014). *Islam after Communism: Religion and politics in Central Asia* (New edition / with a new afterword.). University of California Press.

Khodarkovsky, M. (2002). *Russia's Steppe Frontier:The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800*. Indiana University Press.

Kim, Y., & Blank, S. (2013). Rethinking Russo-Chinese Relations in Asia: Beyond Russia's Chinese Dilemma. *China: An International Journal*, *11*, 136–148.

Klinke, I. (2008). Geopolitical Narratives on Belarus in Contemporary Russia. *Perspectives*, *16*(1), 109–131.

Kohn, H. (1945). Dostoevsky's Nationalism. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *6*(1), 385.

Köllner, T. (2020). *Religion and politics in contemporary Russia: Beyond the binary of power and authority [electronic resource]* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Korolev, A. (2016). Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging: China–Russia Relations. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, *9*(4), 375–397. https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pow013

Kotkin, S. (1998). 1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks *. *The Journal of Modern History*, *70*(2), 384–425. https://doi.org/10.1086/235073

Krebs, R. R. (2015). *Narrative and the Making of US National Security [electronic resource]*. University Press. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316218969

Kudors, A. (2010). *"Russian World"—Russia's Soft Power Approach to Compatriots Policy* [Application/pdf]. 13. https://doi.org/10.3929/ETHZ-A-006249299

Laarman, C. (2013). Family metaphor in political and public debates in the Netherlands on migrants from the (former) Dutch East Indies 1949-66. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *36*(7), 1232–1250. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.783707

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. Verso.

Lantz, K. A. (2004). *The Dostoevsky Encyclopedia*. Greenwood Publishing Group.

Larson, D. W., & Shevchenko, A. (2019). *Quest for status: Chinese and Russian foreign policy*. Yale University Press.

Laruelle, M. (2004a). The two faces of contemporary Eurasianism: An imperial version of Russian nationalism. *Nationalities Papers*, *32*(1), 115–136. https://doi.org/10.1080/0090599042000186197

Laruelle, M. (2004b). The two faces of contemporary Eurasianism: An imperial version of Russian nationalism. *Nationalities Papers*, *32*(1), 115–136. https://doi.org/10.1080/0090599042000186197

Laruelle, M. (2006). *"Aleksandr Dugin: A Russian Version of the European Radical Right?" Kennan Institute Occasional Papers, No. 294*.

Laruelle, M. (2012). *Russian Eurasianism: An ideology of empire*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Laruelle, M. (2019). *Russian nationalism: Imaginaries, doctrines, and political battlefields*. Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9780429426773

Laruelle, M., Royce, D., & Beyssembayev, S. (2019). Untangling the puzzle of "Russia's influence" in Kazakhstan. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, *60*(2), 211–243. https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2019.1645033

Laruelle, M., & Yudina, N. (2018). *Islamophobia in Russia: Trends and Societal Context* (Religion and Violence in Russia, pp. 43–64). Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep22453.6

Lavi, L. (2013). Making time for national identity: Theoretical concept and empirical glance on the temporal performance of national identity. *Nations and Nationalism*, *19*(4), 696–714. https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12027

Law, J. (2002). Objects and Spaces. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *19*(5–6), 91–105. https://doi.org/10.1177/026327602761899165

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Blackwell.

Lewis, D. G. (2018). Geopolitical Imaginaries in Russian Foreign Policy: The Evolution of

'Greater Eurasia.' *Europe-Asia Studies*, *70*(10), 1612–1637. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2018.1515348

Lewis, D. G. (2020). *Russia's New Authoritarianism: Putin and the Politics of Order*. Edinburgh University Press. https://doi.org/10.3366/j.ctv10kmcxz

Linde, F. (2016). The Civilizational Turn in Russian Political Discourse: From Pan-Europeanism to Civilizational Distinctiveness. *Russian Review*, *75*(4), 604–625. https://doi.org/10.1111/russ.12105

Lo, B. (2002). *Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet era: Reality, illusion and mythmaking*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Lo, B. (2008). *Axis of convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the new geopolitics*. London ; Washington, DC: Chatham House : Brookings Institution Press.

Loh, D. M., & Heiskanen, J. (2020). Liminal sovereignty practices: Rethinking the inside/outside dichotomy. *Cooperation and Conflict*, *55*(3), 284–304. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836720911391

Lossky, N. O. (1952). *History of Russian philosophy*. Allen and Unwin.

Luckmann, T. (1991). The constitution of human life in Time. In J. B. Bender & D. E. Wellbery (Eds.), *Chronotypes: The construction of time* (pp. 151–166). Stanford University Press.

Lukin, A. (2015). *The bear watches the dragon: Russia's perceptions of China and the evolution of Russian-Chinese relations since the eighteenth century [electronic resource]*. London, England ; New York, New York : Routledge. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=4692119

Mahoney, J., & Rodríguez-Franco, D. (2018). Dependency Theory. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Politics of Development*. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199845156.013.13

Malinova, O. (2018). Russian Identity and the "Pivot to the East." *Problems of Post-Communism*. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10758216.2018.1502613

Mälksoo, M. (2012). The challenge of liminality for International Relations theory. *Review of International Studies*, *38*(2), 481–494. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000829

Mansurov, T. (2001). *Kazakhstansko-Rossiyskiye Otnosheniya v Epokhu Peremen: 1991-2001*. Real-Press.

Marin, A. (2020). Belarusian Nationalism in the 2010s: A Case of Anti-Colonialism? Origins, Features and Outcomes of Ongoing "Soft Belarusianisation." *Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, *2019, 9*(1), 27–50. https://doi.org/10.30965/20526512-12340003

Morozova, N. (2009). Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian Foreign Policy Under Putin. *Geopolitics*, *14*(4), 667–686. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040903141349

Mazlish, B. (2001). Civilization in a Historical and Global Perspective. *International Sociology*, *16*(3), 293–300. https://doi.org/10.1177/026858001016003003

Mazzei, L. A. (2007). CHAPTER 2: A Deconstructive Methodology. *Counterpoints (New York, N.Y.)*, *318*, 13–26.

McConnell, F. (2017). Liminal geopolitics: The subjectivity and spatiality of diplomacy at the margins. *Transactions - Institute of British Geographers (1965)*, *42*(1), 139–152. https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12156

Meister, S. (2010). The Economization of Russian Foreign Policy. *German Council on Foreign Relations*. https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/economization-russian-foreign-policy

Menzarini, D. (2011). The Negotiation of Borders between "Religion" and "Spirituality". The Case of the Czech Spiritual Milieu. In A. Máté-Tóth & C. Rughinis (Eds.), *The Interaction between Orthodox Church and State in Post-Soviet Russia Identifying the Borders of Political Development* (pp. 104–116). De Gruyter. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110228144

Mersereau, J., & Lapeza, D. (1988). Russian Romanticism. In R. Porter & M. Teich (Eds.), *Romanticism in National Context* (pp. 284–316). Cambridge University Press.

Minasyan, S. (2012). Multi-vectorism in the foreign policy of post-Soviet Eurasian states. *Demokratizatsiya*, *20*(3), 268–273.

Mirabeau, V. de R. (1761). *Théorie de l'impôt*. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/ien.35556003206166

Mirabeau, V. de R. (1768). *Traité de la civilisation*. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/ien.35556003206166

Mitzen, J. (2006). Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma. *European Journal of International Relations*, *12*(3), 341–370. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066106067346

Mjor, K. J. (2018). Smuta: Cyclical visions of history in contemporary Russian thought and the question of hegemony. *Studies in East European Thought*, *70*(1), 19–40. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11212-018-9298-0

Mjør, K. J., & Turoma, S. (2020). *Russia as civilization: Ideological discourses in politics, media and academia [electronic resource]* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Mol, A., & Law, J. (1994). Regions, Networks and Fluids: Anaemia and Social Topology. *Social Studies of Science*, *24*(4), 641–671. https://doi.org/10.1177/030631279402400402

Moon, D. (2013). *The Plough that Broke the Steppes: Agriculture and Environment on Russia's Grasslands, 1700-1914*. University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199556434.001.0001

Morozova, N. (2009). Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian Foreign Policy Under Putin. *Geopolitics*, *14*(4), 667–686. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040903141349

Neumann, I. (2003). Theories of New Regionalism. In F. Söderbaum & T. M. Shaw (Eds.), *Theories of new regionalism: A Palgrave reader*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Neumann, I. (2012). Introduction to the Forum on Liminality. *Review of International Studies*, *38*(2), 473–479. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000817

Neumann, I. B. (1995). *Russia and the idea of Europe: A study in identity and international relations*. Routledge.

Neumann, I. B. (1996). Self and Other in International Relations. *European Journal of International Relations*, *2*(2), 139–174. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066196002002001

Neumann, I. B. (1998). *Uses of the Other: The East in European Identity Formation*. University of Minnesota Press. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=310434

Neumann, I. B. (2016). Russia's Europe, 1991-2016: Inferiority to superiority. *International Affairs*, *92*(6), 1381–1399. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12752

Neumann, I., Haugevik, K. M., & Lie, J. H. S. (2018). Kinship in International Relations: Introduction and framework. *Kinship in International Relations*. http://hdl.handle.net/10642/9728

Neumann, I., & Wigen, E. (2012). The importance of the Eurasian steppe to the study of international relations. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, *16*(3), 311–330. https://doi.org/10.1057/jird.2012.27

Nice, A. (2013). Playing both sides: Belarus between Russia and the EU. *Economization versus Power Ambitions*, 73.

Nora, P. (1984). *Les Lieux de mémoire*. Gallimard.

Northwestern University. (2001). *From the Ends to the Beginning. A Bilingual Anthology of Russian Verse*. http://max.mmlc.northwestern.edu/mdenner/Demo/texts/ex_oriente_lux.html

Norton, A. (1988). *Reflections on political identity*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Nowotny, H. (1975). Time Structuring and Time Measurement: On the Interrelation Between Timekeepers and Social Time. In J. T. Fraser & N. M. Lawrence (Eds.), *The study of time II: proceedings of the second conference of the International Society for the Study of Time, Lake Yamanaka, Japan* (pp. 325–342). Springer.

Nowotny, H. (1992). Time and Social Theory: Towards a Social Theory of Time. *Time & Society*, *1*(3), 421–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X92001003006

O'Hagan, J. (2007). Discourses of Civilizational Identity. In M. Hall & P. T. Jackson (Eds.), *Civilizational identity: The production and reproduction of "civilizations" in international relations* (pp. 15–31). Palgrave Macmillan. http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0711/2007013168-t.html

Oktay, J. S. (2012). *Grounded Theory* (pp. 1–192). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199753697.001.0001

Olcott, M. B. (1994). The Myth of "Tsentral'naia Aziia." *Orbis (Philadelphia)*, *38*(4), 549–565. https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-4387(94)90164-3

Ondrašinová, M. (2011). The Negotiation of Borders between "Religion" and "Spirituality". The Case of the Czech Spiritual Milieu. In A. Máté-Tóth & C. Rughinis (Eds.), *Spaces and Borders: Current Research on Religion in Central and Eastern Europe [electronic resource]* (pp. 33–48). De Gruyter. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110228144

O'Neill, J., Davies, G., Walton, D., Bevan, A., Nielsen, E., Potter, S., Britten, L., Broadbent, B., Buchanan, M., Garzarelli, F., Hull, S., Lawson, S., Patel, B., Scacciavillani, F., Teixeira, C., de Azpillaga, J. P., Stolper, T., Knight, P., Lake, F., … Fung, E. (2001). Goldman Sachs Economic Research Group. *Global Economics Paper*, *66*, 16.

Pagden, A. (1988). The "defence of civilization" in eighteenth- century social theory. *History of the Human Sciences*, *1*(1), 33–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/095269518800100104

Paikin, Z. (2020). Through thick and thin: Russia, China and the future of Eurasian International Society. *International Politics*. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-020-00260-6

Paine, S. (1996). *Imperial rivals: China, Russia, and their disputed frontier*. MESharpe.

Panarin, A. (1999). *Россия в циклах мировой истории*. Изд-во Московского университета.

Pandey, S. K. (2007). Asia in the Debate on Russian Identity. *International Studies (New Delhi)*, *44*(4), 317–337. https://doi.org/10.1177/002088170704400403

Patomäki, H. (2010). *Is a global identity possible? The relevance of big history to self-other relations.*

Peoples, C. (2010). *Critical security studies: An introduction*. Routledge.

Peters, M. A. (2018). The end of neoliberal globalisation and the rise of authoritarian populism. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *50*(4), 323–325.

Pieper, M. (2020). The linchpin of Eurasia: Kazakhstan and the Eurasian economic union between Russia's defensive regionalism and China's new Silk Roads | SpringerLink. *International Politics*. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-020-00244-6

Plokhy, S. (2006). *The origins of the Slavic nations: Premodern identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*. Cambridge University Press.

Poirier, S., & Ayres, L. (1997). Endings, secrets, and silences: Overreading in narrative inquiry. *Research in Nursing & Health*, *20*(6), 551–557. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-240X(199712)20:63.0.CO;2-L

Pomerantsev, P. (2013). *Russia: A Postmodern Dictatorship?* Legatum Institute. https://www.li.com/docs/default-source/publications/pomeransev1_russia_imr_web_final.pdf

Pratt, M. L. (2008). *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation* (2nd ed.). Routledge. http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0720/2007024479.html

Propp, V. I. (1968). *Morphology of the folktale* (L. Scott, S. Pírková-Jakobsonová, L. A. Wagner, & A. Dundes, Eds.; 2nd ed. / revised and edited with a preface by Louis A. Wagner; new introduction by Alan Dundes.). University of Texas Press.

Proshansky, H., Kaminoff, R., & Fabian, A. (2014). place-identity: Physical world socialization of the Self. In J. J. Gieseking & W. Mangold (Eds.), *The people, place, and space reader* (pp. 12–16). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Prozorov, S. (2006). *Understanding conflict between Russia and the EU: The limits of integration*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Prozorov, S. (2011). The other as past and present: Beyond the logic of 'temporal othering' in IR theory. *Review of International Studies*, *37*(3), 1273–1293. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510000586

Putin, V. (2012). *Russia and the changing world*. http://rusemb.org.uk/press/612

Putin, V. (2016, June 17). *Plenary session of St Petersburg International Economic Forum*. President of Russia. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52178

Reeves, M. (2014). *Border work: Spatial lives of the state in rural Central Asia*. Cornell University Press.

Rembold, E., & Carrier, P. (2011). Space and identity: Constructions of national identities in an age of globalisation. *National Identities*, *13*(4), 361–377. https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2011.629425

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Sage.

Roberts, C. (2010). Russia's BRICs Diplomacy: Rising Outsider with Dreams of an Insider. *Polity*, *42*(1), 38–73. https://doi.org/10.1057/pol.2009.18

Roggeveen, B. (2020). *Eurasia as the 'Birthplace of Civilization': Theorizing the Spatial, Temporal, and Ethical Construction of Identity in Russian Politics*. Dutch-Flemish Slavists' Meeting.

Roggeveen, B. (2021). From strategic partner to normative rival? EU-Russian relations and

Russia's civilizational pursuits in the Eurasian sphere. *FEPS EU-Russia Roundtable*.

Roggeveen, B., & Rutten, E. (2020). *Ritorika iskrennosti v segodnyashnej Rossii*.

Roggeveen, B., Zweers, W., & Deen, B. (2021). *An Ever Closer Union? Ramifications of further integration between Belarus and Russia*. Clingendael Institute. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep34578

Roof, W. C. (2003). Religion and Spirituality: Toward an Integrated Analysis. In M. Dillon (Ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (1st ed., pp. 137–148). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511807961.011

Rozman, G. (2014). *The Sino-Russian Challenge to the World Order: National Identities, Bilateral Relations, and East Versus West in the 2010s*. Stanford University Press.

Rumelili, B. (2004). Constructing identity and relating to difference understanding the EUs mode of differentiation. *Review of International Studies*, *30*(1), 27–47. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210504005819

Rumelili, B. (2012). Liminal identities and processes of domestication and subversion in International Relations. *Review of International Studies*, *38*(2), 495–508. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000830

Rutten, E. (2017). *Sincerity after Communism: A Cultural History*. Yale University Press.

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Routledge.

Said, E. W. (1989). Yeats and decolonization. In B. Kruger & P. Mariani (Eds.), *Remaking history*.

Said, E. W. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. Chatto & Windus.

Said, E. W. (2014). Invention, memory, and place. In J. J. Gieseking & W. Mangold (Eds.), *The people, place, and space reader* (pp. 361–365). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Sakwa, R. (2003). Putin's Foreign Policy: Transforming the East. In G. Gorodetsky (Ed.), *Russia between East and West: Russian foreign policy on the threshold of the twenty-first century* (pp. 174–194). Frank Cass.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Salter, M. B. (2002). *Barbarians and civilization in international relations*. Pluto Press.

Savchenko, A. (2009). *Belarus: A perpetual borderland*. Brill.

Schmitt, C. (1941). *Völkerrechtliche Großraumordnung mit Interventionsverbot für raumfremde Mächte. Ein Beitrag zum Reichsbegriff für Völkerrecht*. Duncker & Humblot.

Shchedrovitsky, P. (2002, March 2). Russkiy mir i Transnatsional'noye russkoye. *Russkiy Zhurnal*. http://old.russ.ru/politics/meta/20000302_schedr.html

Shevel, O. (2011). Russian Nation-building from Yel'tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic or Purposefully Ambiguous? *Europe-Asia Studies*, *63*(2), 179–202.

https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2011.547693

Shlapentokh, D. (1995). History and irrationality: Postmodernism—East and West. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, *9*(2), 179–195. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02904333

Shlapentokh, V. (2007). China in the Russian mind today: Ambivalence and defeatism. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *59*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130601072555

Shlapentokh, D. (2007). *Russia between East and West: Scholarly debates on Eurasianism*. Brill.

Sivic, J., & Zisserman, A. (2009). Efficient Visual Search of Videos Cast as Text Retrieval. *IEEE Transactions on Pattern Analysis and Machine Intelligence*, *31*(4), 591–606.

Söderbaum, F. (2015). Regionness: The Solidification of Regions. In *Rethinking regionalism*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Solzhenitsyn, A. (1991). *Kak nam obustroit' Rossiyu: Posil'nye soobrazheniya*. Patriot.

Spengler, O. (1932). *The decline of the West*. Allen and Unwin.

Spivak, G. C. (1991). Time and Timing: Law and History. In J. B. Bender & D. E. Wellbery (Eds.), *Chronotypes: The construction of time*. Stanford University Press.

Spivak, G. C., Condee, N., Ram, H., & Chernetsky, V. (2006). Are We Postcolonial? Post-Soviet Space. *PMLA*, *121*(3), 828–836.

Starobinski, J. (1993). The Word Civilization. In *Blessings in disguise, or, The morality of evil* (pp. 1–35). Polity Press.

Starr, H. (2013). On Geopolitics: Spaces and Places. *International Studies Quarterly*, *57*(3), 433–439. https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12090

Steele, B. J. (2005). Ontological Security and the Power of Self-Identity: British Neutrality and the American Civil War. *Review of International Studies*, *31*(3), 519–540.

Stojanović, J. D. (1928). The First Slavophils: Homyakov and Kireyevsky. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, *6*(18), 561–578.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Sage.

Suganami, H. (1999). Agents, Structures, Narratives. *European Journal of International Relations*, *5*(3), 365–386. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066199005003004

Sunderland, W. (2004). *Taming the wild field: Colonization and empire on the Russian steppe*. Cornell University Press. http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0413/2004001132.html

Suslov, M. (2018). "Russian World" Concept: Post-Soviet Geopolitical Ideology and the Logic of "Spheres of Influence." *Geopolitics*, *23*(2), 330–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2017.1407921

Suslov, M. G., & Bassin, M. (2016). *Eurasia 2.0: Russian geopolitics in the age of new media*. Lexington Books.

Taubes, J. (2004). *The political theology of Paul*. Stanford University Press. http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip047/2003017562.html

ter Haar, B. (2005). Messianism and the Heaven and Earth Society: Approaches to Heaven and Earth Society Texts. In D. Ownby & M. F. S. Heidhues (Eds.), *Secret Societies Reconsidered: Perspectives on the Social History of Early Modern South China and Southeast Asia* (pp. 153–176). https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2717596/view

The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. (2008). Kremlin. http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4116

Thrift, N. J. (1983). On the Determination of Social Action in Space and Time. *Environment and Planning. D, Society & Space*, *1*(1), 23–57. https://doi.org/10.1068/d010023

Toal, G. (1996). *Critical geopolitics: The politics of writing global space*. Routledge.

Toal, G. (2017). *Near Abroad: Putin, the West and the Contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus*. University Press, Incorporated.

Tolz, V. (1998a). Conflicting "Homeland Myths" and Nation-State Building in Postcommunist Russia. *Slavic Review*, *57*(2), 267–294. https://doi.org/10.2307/2501851

Tolz, V. (1998b). Forging the nation: National identity and nation building in post-communist Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *50*(6), 993–1022. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668139808412578

Trenin, D. (2005). Moscow's Relations with Belarus: An awkward ally. In D. Lynch (Ed.), *Changing Belarus* (pp. 67–78). European Union Institute for Security Studies. https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/changing-belarus

Tsygankov, A. P. (2007). Finding a Civilisational Idea: "West," Eurasia," and "Euro-East" in Russia's Foreign Policy. *Geopolitics*, *12*(3), 375–399. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040701305617

Tsygankov, A. P. (2019). *Russia's foreign policy: Change and continuity in national identity [electronic resource]* (Fifth edition.). Rowman & Littlefield. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2031489

Turner, F. J. (1894). *The significance of the frontier in American history*. State Historical Society of Wisconsin. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89069486553

Turner, V. W. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure* ([Renewed] / by Edith Turner.). Aldine Transaction.

van Fraassen, B. (1991). Time in Physical and Narrative Structure. In J. B. Bender & D. E. Wellbery (Eds.), *Chronotypes: The construction of time* (pp. 19–27). Stanford University Press.

van Munster, R. (2012). *Securitization*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199743292-0091

Verovšek, P. J. (2016). Collective memory, politics, and the influence of the past: The politics of memory as a research paradigm. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, *4*(3), 529–543. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1167094

Vinokurov, E. (2017). Eurasian Economic Union: Current state and preliminary results. *Russian Journal of Economics*, *3*(1), 54–70. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ruje.2017.02.004

Vinokurov, E., & Libman, A. (2012). *Eurasian integration: Challenges of transcontinental regionalism*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Wæver, O. (1995). Securitization and Desecuritization. In R. D. Lipschutz (Ed.), *On security* (pp. 46–86). Columbia University Press.

Wæver, O. (2002a). Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory. In L. Hansen & O. Wæver (Eds.), *European integration and national identity: The challenge of the Nordic states*. Routledge.

Wæver, O. (2002b). Identity, communities and foreign policy: Discourse analysis as foreign policy theory. In L. Hansen & O. Wæver (Eds.), *European integration and national identity: The challenge of the Nordic states*. Routledge.

Wang, B. (2017). Introduction. In *Chinese visions of world order: Tianxia, culture, and world politics* (pp. 1–22). Duke University Press.

Weber, C. (1998). Performative States. *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, *27*(1), 77–95. https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298980270011101

Weeks, T. R. (1996). *Nation and state in late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the western frontier, 1863-1914*. Northern Illinois University Press.

Welbers, K., Van Atteveldt, W., & Benoit, K. (2017). Text Analysis in R. *Communication Methods and Measures*, *11*(4), 245–265. https://doi.org/10.1080/19312458.2017.1387238

Wendt, A. (2003). Why a World State is Inevitable. *European Journal of International Relations*, *9*(4), 491–542. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066103940001

Wendt, A. E. (1987). The agent-structure problem in international relations theory. *International Organization*, *41*(3), 335–370. https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830002751X

Wertheim, S. (2019, January 2). Return of the Neocons. *The New York Review of Books*. https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/01/02/return-of-the-neocons/

Widdis, E. (2004). Russia as space. In S. Franklin & E. Widdis (Eds.), *National identity in Russian*

culture: An introduction (pp. 30–50). University Press.

Wight, M. (1991). Theory of mankind: "barbarians." In G. Wight & B. Porter (Eds.), *International theory: The three traditions* (pp. 49–98). University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Wilkins, T. S. (2012). 'Alignment', not 'alliance' – the shifting paradigm of international security cooperation: Toward a conceptual taxonomy of alignment. *Review of International Studies*, *38*(1), 53–76. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000209

Williams, R. (1970). The Russian Soul: A Study in European Thought and Non-European Nationalism. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *31*(4), 573–588.

Wilson, A. (2005). *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*. Yale University Press.

Wishnick, E. (2017). In search of the 'Other' in Asia: Russia–China relations revisited. *The Pacific Review*, *30*(1), 114–132. https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2016.1201129

Wittig, M. (1981). One Is Not Born a Woman. In C. R. McCann & S.-K. Kim (Eds.), *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspectives* (Fourth edition.). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Wydra, H. (2012). The Power of Symbols—Communism and Beyond. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, *25*(1/3), 49–69. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-011-9116-x

Zabortseva, Y. N. (2016). *Russia's relations with Kazakhstan: Rethinking ex-Soviet transitions in the emerging world system [electronic resource]*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/login?url=https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781315668727

Žižek, S. (2014). *Event: Philosophy in Transit*. Penguin.