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Constructing Crises in Europe: Multifaceted Securitisation in Times of Exception

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Introduction: Political Logics and Academic Rationalities of Securitisation and International Crises

Andrey Makarychev
University of Tartu, Estonia, corresponding address: andrey.makarychev@ut.ee

Thomas Diez
University of Tübingen, Germany, ORCiD: 0000-0001-8056-6693, corresponding address: thomas.diez@uni-tuebingen.de

Abstract
This introductory note discusses how the concept of securitisation might be used as a tool for understanding the different logics driving and standing behind foreign policies of major international stakeholders in situations of crises, emergencies and exceptions. The editors look at how securitisation functions as a discursive instrument for reshaping actors' subjectivities, and how it might be adjusted to the rapid changes in global politics triggered by Russia's war against Ukraine. They argue that the discursive construction of insecurities is not politically neutral and is driven by certain logics, presumptions and imaginaries. Russia's war against Ukraine is a particularly important focal point in this regard since it elucidates another crucial question: how do the parties involved in the war securitise and de-securitise – as well as exceptionalise and normalise – specific risks, dangers and threats, and what are the implications of these discursive strategies for international security?

Introduction

The concepts of securitisation and crisis are closely linked. Crises are moments in which existential threats are seen as dominating the political and societal agenda and in which fundamental decisions therefore must be taken. Securitisations serve as invocations and constructions of these threats, and legitimise policies that would not be considered legitimate in non-crisis situations. In doing so, they follow different political logics and may be analysed from different academic positions. How do securitisations construct crises as political events, justify specific policies, alter political identities and shift power? How do multiple crises and securitisations intertwine, reinforce or undermine each other? How has the Russian attack on Ukraine changed the perception of the link between different crises and the characteristics of securitisation in crisis narratives?

This special issue takes up these questions. In this introductory note, we discuss how the concept of securitisation might be used as a tool for understanding the different logics driving and standing behind foreign policies of major international stakeholders in situations of crises, emergencies and exceptions. We look at how securitisation functions as a discursive instrument for reshaping actors' subjectivities, and how it might be adjusted to the rapid changes in global politics triggered by Russia's war against Ukraine.

We argue that the discursive construction of insecurities is not politically neutral and is driven by certain logics, presumptions and imaginaries. Russia's war against Ukraine is a particularly important focal point in this regard since it elucidates another crucial question: how do the parties involved in the war securitise and de-securitise – as well as exceptionalise and normalise – specific risks, dangers and threats, and what are the implications of these discursive strategies for international security?

New insecurities: Academic conceptualisations

As Ned Lebow, among many others, has noted, there is no generally accepted consensus definition of crisis. Yet many works that deal with crises refer to a 'perception of threat, heightened anxieties on the part of decision-makers, the expectation of possible violence, [and] the belief that important or far-reaching decisions are required and must be made on the basis of incomplete information in a stressful environment' (Lebow 2020: 8). A core ingredient of crises is that they challenge previously dominant beliefs and policies. They are thus a threat

not only to the physical existence of political subjects, but also to their ontological security (Kinnvall & Mitzen 2018). Yet this threat is not an objective fact. Crises, and with them the threats that constitute them, must be constructed. Most often, such constructions take the form of securitisations as invocations of existential threats that legitimise extraordinary actions to restore or produce a new stable order (Buzan et al. 1998). Alternatively, securitisations may also emerge through the assemblage of governmental practices that forge a sense of crisis through spreading 'unease' and a feeling of heightened risk (Bigo 2002).

Crises thus need narratives of securitisation and governmental techniques to both exist and be overcome. They challenge the present as much as they are part of productive processes through which political actors and their policies get reconstituted (Hay 1999). As Thomas Diez reflects in his contribution to this special issue, the production of political identities and legitimation of governmental techniques can provide openings to new policies and transnational spaces or lead to exclusions and the reification of inward-looking nation-states. This necessitates a renewed debate on the ethical implications of securitisation and invocations of crises as a political logic and academic rationality.

Traditionally, crises refer to specific moments of existential challenges or 'turning points' (Brecher & Ben Yehuda 1985: 21). This is in line with the notion of securitisations as exceptional situations of particular urgency (Buzan et al. 1998). Yet both the literatures on securitisation and crises have discussed the extent to which these moments may be intertwined with routines or even themselves become 'routinised' or 'chronic' (Adamides 2020; Jeandesboz & Pallister-Wilkins 2016; Vigh 2008). In these cases, the exception becomes part of the daily life of societies, and the fighting of insecurities, both physical and ontological, part of a new *raison d'etre*. Governmental conceptions of crises and securitisation have always been closer to such an understanding of their everyday nature (Bourbeau 2014), although this does not mean that governmental practices may not also forge a particular crisis moment.

Over the past three decades, conceptions of crises have also changed in two other respects. One is the frequency of crises. With financial crises, health pandemics and war happening back-to-back and even overlapping, analysts and political commentators increasingly speak of a 'polycrisis' (e.g. Zeitlin et al. 2019; Tooze 2002; Lawrence, Janzwood & Homer-Dixon 2022) in which the securities and governmentalities of different policy fields overlap, reinforce or undermine each other. Crisis therefore has become a 'chronic condition' of 'cascading risks, challenges, uncertainties and transformations' (Henig & Knight 2023: 3). The second development concerns a shift in the focus of crises in international relations away from immediate military crises since the 1980s and especially in Western debates in the more than two decades following the end of the Cold

War. Yet with Russia's war on Ukraine, the military crisis has become a potentially overriding part of the polycrisis.

Security scholarship has reflected and indeed reinforced these developments in our conceptions of crisis through its own rationalities. Thus, Russia's attack on Ukraine has not only been linked to a variety of securitisations in political discourse and the media – as demonstrated in Alona Shestopalova's article – but also presents a challenge to critical security scholarship in particular. Since the 1980s, much of this scholarship (as well as activism in a variety of forums including the United Nations) has been focused on re-orienting the concept of security away from its statist and military definitions towards an understanding that takes individuals as its main point of reference, and thus moves security concerns from military issues towards everyday problems, including energy, environment, food or health security. This has been a necessary move in order to break through the 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Wendt 1992) of realist conceptions of security which serve to reinforce armament spirals, and to emphasise that the purpose of the state is to secure the well-being of its citizens, and not vice versa. Some scholars, thus, have even linked security to emancipation (Booth 1991). And while there are many debates and tensions between human security as a political concept leaning towards liberalism and critical security studies, they share their concern with discourses that tie security too much to the territorial state and its military defense (Newman 2010).

Since crises are constructed in the interplay of different speech acts and types of governmentality, it is important to analyse how they relate to and reinforce each other. Within this broad transformational framework, specific modes of governing might be identified – e.g. less liberal rights, less accountability, more direct and top-down crisis management, prioritisation of the 'collective' over the individual as the benefactor of governance, etc. Of particular salience is how different forms of governance (multilevel, liberal, authoritarian or other regimes) may deal with various forms of exceptionalism, and which agents are empowered and disempowered in the process of implementation of multiple exceptions from the extant rules on different levels. In this regard, Alina Jašina-Schäfer's article in this special issue approaches cultural institutions as spaces of governmentality that produce discourses and practices of de-securitisation and de-exceptionalisation of minorities hosted by European countries. Her two particular case studies deal with the Russian diaspora in Estonia and Finland, but the findings can be transferred to other cultural experiences of symbolic de-securitisation of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups all across Europe.

A particular form of governmentality is the new experience of Ukraine's resilience as a 'productive power' described by Yulia Kurnyshova in this special issue. She argues that resilience as a type of security governance is a major force

that makes possible and shapes Ukraine's normative agency as an ability to raise its voice and be accepted as a country capable of protecting itself and in the meantime to play by the rules constitutive for the Euro-Atlantic international society. Agency in this context is not only an attribute to a victimised identity, but also a driver for the future integration of Ukraine with the West. Her analysis confirms that 'sovereign and governmental security understandings might simultaneously coincide, work in parallel and in a dialectical relation, and thus are not necessarily mutually implicated or merged, but might correlate in different forms' (Vasilache 2014: 585).

In another conceptually rich academic debate, security was approached through the prism of emergencies and extraordinary situations, but not necessarily as normative deviations from democratic politics. Within this field of research, and in line with the argument that crises have become elongated, routinised and normalised features of our lives, the state of exception was discussed as a technique of governance (McLoughlin 2012: 697). As Michael Williams put it, 'extraordinary politics could function positively within democratic politics without falling into violent exceptionalism' (Williams 2015: 119). This conclusion might be corroborated by Māris Andžāns who in his article shows how Latvian Russophones are deployed in a hyper-securitised framework determined by the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the subsequent security challenges faced by the Baltic states. The case of Latvia might be juxtaposed with a similar experience of Estonia where the securitisation of local Russian speaking minority in the mainstream national discourse was facilitated by a lack of discursive resources for repositioning itself beyond the Russian world ideology of the Kremlin.

At the same time, there are at least four major challenges faced by critical security studies and emerging from the contributions to this special issue. First, the idea of regional security communities remains more like a desired security ideal than an established policy model or project (Kelly 2007: 223). Regions located at the cross-roads of different civilisational and institutional spaces – such as, for example, the Mediterranean – largely failed to become platforms where new practices of security are unfolding. On the contrary, most of the crucial regions, instead of becoming pioneers of 'asecurity' and de-securitisation (Wæver 1998), transformed into spaces reproducing and amplifying the logic of confrontation and conflictuality. We should take into serious account such research-based findings as a very limited replicability/spillover of regional security practices from one region to another, and regions' lack of both political will and resources to engage with security issues (Kirchner & Dominguez 2014: 175-176; Diez & Tocci 2017). The cases of the Baltic and Black Sea regions made clear that normative inclusiveness does not necessarily prevail over fragmentation and disintegration

along national lines; equally dysfunctional were the expectations of regions to be solidified by common technical, financial or economic projects, be it in the Nord Stream or the idea of a Black Sea transportation ring.

Second, the re-orientation of security discourses has often led to a bifurcation of the debate between traditional and critical security, failing to appreciate that both may be interrelated. Thus, while it is important to interrogate exclusively military conceptions of security, individuals can only be secure if their societal contexts are protected against military aggression. Or, in the terms of human security, the 'freedom from want' and the 'freedom from fear' are two sides of the same coin. Thus a focus on hard security is only as problematic as turning a blind eye to the persisting threat of aggression.

The shift of attention from hard to soft security had created a basis for a relative marginalisation of military components of security, from the rise of pacifism to defense budget cuts. In response to the armament spiral of the Cold War and in the context of its aftermath, these were important moves towards more open and just societies. Overcoming this legacy of softening the security language in confrontation with direct military aggression is a lengthy and painfully introspective process in all European countries. Yet in two, Finland and Sweden, it has led to a drastic revision of the previous neutrality policy and application for NATO membership. The same goes for a substantial rethinking of the German *Ostpolitik* and the revision of its key pillars after the restart of Russian intervention in Ukraine in February 2022.

Third, after 9/11 the bulk of the critical studies literature was aimed at blaming the neoliberal order for deviation from normative instruments of security governance. Some Western governments were accused of extra-judicial practices of confinement and incarceration, for turning a blind eye to hundreds of thousands of refugees trying to physically reach Europe, as well as for establishing ubiquitous systems of surveillance and control, particularly enhanced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nowadays, after the restart of Russian aggression in Ukraine, it has turned out that the same countries that for decades were accused of transgressions against democracy are the frontrunners of defending and protecting democracy against the dictatorial regime of the Kremlin. In other words, the major problems lie not within the Euro-Atlantic West, but outside of it, necessary criticism of problematic policies, for instance in relation to migration, notwithstanding. The acceptance of this fact requires serious readjustments in critical security studies, including a greater attention to the ability of illiberal regimes to challenge the foundations of the liberal international society.

Fourth, what critical security studies need to cope with is the growing extension of old concepts onto new security domains, along with interconnections between modalities of the extant concepts (terrorism, fascism, Nazism, geno-

cide, war crimes, etc.). In other words, concepts through which specific crises are constructed might be projected onto other security emergencies. The linkage between genocide and ecocide is illuminating at this juncture. For instance, the pandemic crisis is discussed within other yet related discursive frames. It is often narrated in a constitutive conjunction with the broadly understood ecological crisis triggered by the intrusive encroachment of humans into nature, with the ensuing consequences for human beings. This logic might be extended to the increasingly meaningful and intense debates of the Anthropocene and a variety of post-humanist and post-anthropocentric perspectives of the future of the globe.

This trend is paralleled by the augmenting variability of key security concepts: there are different states of exception/exceptionalities that unleash different effects, as well as different sovereignties: as Cynthia Weber (1998: 90) put it, the meaning of sovereignty can't be established definitionally and is always framed and reframed 'by the same expressions that are said to be its results'. These different constructions of crises through different securitisations and constructing different sovereignties may run in parallel or be closely intertwined. They may be reinforcing or contradicting each other. Either way, they call for an investigation of how they produce new social and political realities, a call that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reinforced.

Securitisation after 24 February 2022

Various scholars have analysed the interactions between different securitisations in the past. In Buzan and Wæver's analysis of regional security complexes, for instance, securitising moves between actors overlap and reinforce or undermine each other to form geographical spaces of security regions (Buzan & Wæver 2003). Others have analysed the assemblages of security technologies drawing on diverse security rationalities and interrelating different actors and normativities (Abrahamsen & Williams 2009). The literature has also pointed to the ways in which wars have generally relied on the coalescence of various securitisations in the presentation of the other as evil and the re-inscription of a self that needs to be defended (Wilhelmsen 2017). Rather than focusing on the effects of the polycrisis on the strategic options of actors such as the EU or the changing cleavages within European electorates (e.g. Zeitlin et al. 2019), we thus suggest focusing on the ways crises are discursively constructed through securitising moves in multiple societal domains, and how these constructions serve to legitimise specific policies and power relations. The question of how Russia, Ukraine and the EU securitise and de-securitise the previous crises is of high relevance in this regard.

Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine is an example of military securitisation as a case in which a range of securitisations are linked in an attempt to

reinforce each other. While states normally try to legitimate wars by reference to codified international law in addition to specific securitisations (Rapp 2022), Putin's justifications included a series of moral claims relying on the articulation of existential threats to a variety of referent objects, including Russia, the Russian-speaking people in Ukraine and world peace. He has thus invoked NATO or US expansionism, atrocities in Donbas, Nazism in the Ukrainian government as well as the deteriorating values of Western liberalism against which one must fight. Ukraine, along with the Baltic states and Poland, counter-securitised Russia as a terrorist state and as a source of troubles in European energy markets, as well as of the food crisis of a global scale.

Thus, while the linkages between securitisations and their instrumentalisation to back up power structures and reconstruct identities are not new, these processes come to the fore in relation to the Russian invasion in Ukraine in the context of the multiple crises that we have identified above. The ways in which the securitisation of threats has reinforced some yet de-securitised others is therefore of particular interest. At the same time, one would expect the interlinking of securitisations to lead to a central overall war aim. Yet, this is a war without clearly defined goals, a sequence of different securitisations with different threats and referent objects, which do not clearly build on each other. As a Russian author claimed, Russian foreign policy is a chain of wars, crimes and impunity (Cherkasov 2023).

Russia has tried to capitalise on the legacies of the war on terror, claiming that the Ukrainian government committed terrorist acts against Russian forces. Likewise, we have seen Putin indirectly invoking arguments resembling the Responsibility to Protect and thus the human security discourse it builds on in his legitimation of the invasion by reference to supposed atrocities on Russian speakers in Ukraine. The Kremlin was also portraying the mass scale migration from Ukraine to EU member states as a continuation of the 2015 migration crisis that became a heavy burden to host economies. When it comes to the energy crisis, Moscow de-securitised its role in its emergence by claiming that the deficit and high prices of energy resources are outcomes of the EU's Green Deal policy and sanctions against Russia. At the same time, by restarting the war in Ukraine, Russia de-securitised the Covid-19 pandemic by discarding its malign effects on Russian society, from demography to finances and economy.

In this context the concept of securitisation in its multiple variations allows us to capture these processes of constructing crises, as their articulation invokes existential threats in different domains and to different degrees. We generally agree that the centre of gravity in crisis management policies is gradually shifting from the state as a singular centre of authority and sovereign power, to more dispersed 'techniques of government' (and therefore also a dispersed exercise of power/au-

thority). While Russia's war in Ukraine may have reinforced the importance of state actors and the military sector, it is as yet too early to assess whether this alters the long-standing trend towards dispersion of functions and competences – it may be the desperate last-ditch attempt of a fading imperial state to stop the tide or the re-assertion of traditional geopolitics, a move from progressive to regressive securitisation, in the terms developed by Thomas Diez in his contribution.

Proliferation of insecurities: Political narratives
As argued above, the notion of polycrisis implies that we live in times of multiple crises: a recent health crisis provoked by Covid-19, an environmental crisis as a consequence of climate change, a succession of financial crises, a crisis of democracy in the light of strengthened authoritarianism and populism, a migration crisis and a new version of the East–West geopolitical divide exemplified by the drastic deterioration of the EU's and NATO's relations with an increasingly self-assertive and aggressive Russia supported by China. Some contributors to this special issue discuss how critical security studies adjust to the proliferation of multiple crises that often intersect and mix up with one another. The juxtaposition of different security threats allows us to find policy areas where they overlap and intermingle. For example, the disastrous economic effects of Russia's war against Ukraine are juxtaposed with the ruinous consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Makarychev and Romashko's article in this issue discusses how three recent crises in Russia's relations with the EU – the harsh reaction from Brussels and many European national capitals to the imprisonment of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, the border lockdown during the pandemic and the war in Ukraine – might be analysed from the viewpoint of normativity, geopolitics and governmentality. They show how these logics relate to each other and produce both securitising and desecuritising effects.

   Therefore, crises are increasingly discussed as multifaceted and hybrid emergencies, sometimes lacking a dominant logic. A good illustration is Alexander Etkind's (2023) approach to Russia's war in Ukraine: 'The age of climate change and digital work—the Anthropocene—has put Russia's oil and gas trading in mortal danger. . . . The Russian invasion of Ukraine is an imperialist war, but the purpose is not to conquer new colonies in search of new commodities. It is to force the old colonial trade on its customers'. Likewise, Russia's invasion, just as other wars, e.g. in Yemen, are directly related to energy and climate security. Three different migration crises – the mass-scale influx of Syrian refugees in 2015, the weaponisation of migrants by the Lukashenka regime on the borders with EU member states in 2020 and the inflow of millions of Ukrainians into Europe in 2022 – are often compared with each other, thus spurring discussions of a nexus between people's mobility and security.

The phenomenal multiplication of crises, one after another, makes us think of them not as separate events, but as different insecurities whose elements are explicitly or implicitly interconnected. Thus, 9/11 and the ensuing war on terror ended up with the military intervention in Iraq that the Kremlin used as a pretext for legitimising Russia's interferences in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine since 2014. In its turn, the escalation of Russia's offensive against Ukraine in 2022 provoked a bunch of related emergencies. One is the grain supply crisis that severely affected global food markets (Behnassi & El Haiba 2022); another is the mass-scale influx of Ukrainian war refugees in Europe; yet another is the challenge of rising energy prices. Potentially disastrous environmental consequences of a probable – intentional or unintended – incident in the Russia-occupied nuclear station in Zaporizhzhia makes this list even more eerie.

The fact that Russia started preparing to attack Ukraine against the background of the continuing pandemic makes connections between crises even more entangled, and opens an ample space for a range of interpretations. May we assume that Putin's aggressive inclinations were to some extent fostered by his lengthy isolation from the public starting from spring 2020? Or, perhaps, another factor to be taken into account was Putin's fear of losing power as an effect of a relative decentralisation within the governmental apparatus he unleashed during the anti-pandemic crisis management? Was the military interference proof of his prioritisation of militaristic geopolitics over the domestic biopolitics of fighting Covid-19? Or – alternatively – was the decision to intervene in the neighbouring country boosted by Putin's misperception of the inherently declining West that refuses to accept Russia 'rising from its knees' as an equal and indispensable partner? All these questions point to the importance of understanding hierarchies of different securities and insecurities, discursively constructed and politically instrumentalised, as well as the ways in which they build upon, reinforce or undermine each other.

Another two crises interlink with Russia's war on Ukraine. One is the crisis of democratic governance in many Western countries exemplified by the rise of anti-establishment parties. The Kremlin has supported such parties both through direct financial aid as well as personal support and trolling in social media (Butt & Byman 2020; Futàk-Campbell 2020; Weiss 2020). It is likely that Putin's expectation was that their influence on public debates in reaction to the attack on Ukraine would have been much stronger than it turned out to be. Even if this was a miscalculation, countries such as Germany have seen a collusion of the far left and right in joint demonstrations articulating securitising moves against Western escalations of the war rather than Russia as the aggressor (Assheuer 2023).

Secondly, the domestic crisis in Belarus in the aftermath of the rigged presidential election on 9 August 2020, which demonstrated the internal weakness

of his personalistic regime, spurred Aliaksandr Lukashenka's gradual submission to Moscow. This became an additional factor for Ukraine's military insecurity, since Ukrainian territory was directly attacked by Russian military units located in Belarus (Edelman, Kobets & Kramer 2023). In a broader sense, confrontational references to the Euro-Atlantic international order are constitutive for the narrative of Lukashenka's subaltern dictatorship. Thus, harsh European reaction to the escalation of political repressions in Belarus was one of the triggers that inspired Lukashenka to 'weaponize' migrants in summer 2021 (Kliem 2021).

The crisis directly affected Belarus' relations with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia and by default with the EU and NATO. In constructing the linkages between his anti-EU stand and weaponisation of migration, the Belarusian dictator was maneuvering between two logics. One was an attempt to connect the war in Donbas – provoked, in Lukashenka's mind, by Ukraine acting on behalf of the West – with the flow of displaced persons from eastern Ukraine who in 2014 found a safe haven in Belarus instead of moving further to Europe. Another logic was bent on linking the artificially staged migration crisis with the EU's sanction policy due to which the EU failed to finalise the construction of facilities for migrants on the Belarusian side of the border, as stipulated by the readmission agreement between Minsk and Brussels of June 2020. Both roads lead in the same direction: Lukashenka explicitly securitised Europe (both the EU and the UK), legitimising a possible asymmetric reciprocation from his side.

Despite the apparent interconnections between these crises, their juxtaposition and linkages in various narratives and images are far from mechanical and self-evident. Each connection is discursively constructed and meant to corroborate a certain argument or political position. For example, as seen from a leftist perspective – largely supported by mainstream discourses in the global South – the alignment of several insecurities, from the financial crisis to Russia's military revolt against the dominance of the Euro-Atlantic West, attests to the gradual collapse of the liberal international order in general and neoliberalism as its conceptual underpinning in particular: 'the financial crisis of 2008, Brexit, and Trump are said to mark a new chapter of global history in which illiberalism and nationalism are in the ascendant' (Specter 2022: 1). Meanwhile, right-wing parties have often tried to divert attention from Russian aggression and instead emphasised the challenge to energy security and the social implications of an energy crisis, legitimising their own calls for strengthening national autonomy or arguing against sanctions (Ivaldi & Zankina 2023).

It is due to this variety of logics behind the multiple linkages and interconnections between securitisations and crises that the contributions to this special issue analyse how the discursive constructions and perceptions of different

crises differ or are related to each other, and what their political significance is. For example, the discursive frames of the war on terror, with its focus on exceptionality and different categorisations of human lives, might be projected onto narratives about refugees and Covid-19. Equally important is to look at how the coronavirus pandemic, with its border lockdowns and restrictions of people's mobility, affected the extant geopolitical frames of foreign policy, or how the climate change debate is correlated with the new biopolitical conceptualisations of global health and resilience.

A Multi-disciplinary approach to the securitisation of crises

Against this background, a number of more specific questions pop up: Who are the driving agents of constructing crises, the securitising actors? To what extent do they differ between crises and different spaces of securitisation? How is the construction of different crises interrelated, or are there marked differences between these processes depending on national identities or other differentiating factors? Which actors and governmental practices are legitimised by the different constructions of crises? In particular, given that the crises mentioned may all be described as transnational, what is the role ascribed to inter- and transnational actors such as regional organisations? How do institutions function during crises, and why do some of them lose their 'voice', or agency in the time of exception (International Organization of Migration in the course of the refugee crisis, most regional organisations – such as the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Barents-Euro Arctic Council, etc. – during the pandemic)? How do material factors and cultural processes interact in the construction of crises? To what extent does the materiality of crises have an impact on its societal construction? Of particular importance at this juncture is the role of minorities in shaping crisis-ridden perceptions and narratives. What is the role of images, memories and historical narratives in crises narratives? How do securitising actors draw on such discursive elements, and to what extent are they transformed in the process?

As we have indicated in our references throughout this brief introduction, the contributions to this special issue engage with these questions from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and mutually reinforcing perspectives – from semiotics and critical discourse analysis, from political science and media studies. In our view, it is only through mutual engagement with a variety of research vistas that we can come to capture the multi-faceted ways in which securitisation processes construct crises. Most of the papers collected for this special issue are case-specific, but are juxtaposed with other global and regional crises that challenge the structural foundations of the liberal international order and trigger meaningful transformation within it. Although most of the articles focus

on a specific crisis the EU has to face, each of the authors deploys their analysis in a broader context encompassing different dimensions of securitisation and desecuritisation, while all of the contributions include the Corona crisis or the war in Ukraine in their analyses.

This collection of articles demonstrates different figurations of crises, emergencies and states of exception as discursive phenomena. With all the undeniable materiality and physicality of crises, their meanings are constructed and framed through narratives, speech acts and other forms of public debate. For example, the mass influx of refugees might be qualified as a security threat, a risk factor or as a humanitarian issue. Disruptions in energy markets might be discussed as pertaining to the domain of energy security or as an economic problem. Maritime security might be approached as a geopolitical issue or as a matter of transportation safety, and so on.

This variety of perspectives leaves ample room for governmentalisation of crises, either within security paradigm (as demonstrated by Yulia Kurnyshova's analysis of the idea of resilience in the war-torn Ukraine), or as a part of desecuritised policy moves and initiatives (see Alina Jašina-Schäfer's article). The former case implies that the governmentality of resilience is more a strategy of physical survival than of victory over the aggressor, and includes a strong component of othering, exclusion and distinction between the security perpetrator and its victims. The latter case operates within a paradigm of societal inclusion that is decoupled from divisive geopolitical conflicts.

The various forms of securitisation and de-securitisation matter, since it is discourses that define whether the multiplication of threats and risks results in a sense of despair and fatigue, or on the contrary consolidates societies and produce robust anti-crisis policies. Within the panoply of crises and insecurities, a major distinction should be drawn between those with blurred threat-producing agency (such as COVID-19), and those clearly masterminded by a well identifiable international actor (Russia's invasion in Ukraine). In the latter case the concept of crisis needs a linguistic reformulation since in the Ukrainian context it resonates as implicitly denying or discarding Russia's full responsibility for the war and its atrocities.

Some articles of this special issue might be instrumental in further discussing interconnections between different crises. One of the most relevant questions in this regard is whether these connections are established analytically (as Thomas Diez does in the case of the pandemic and Russia's military intervention in Ukraine), or articulated as key elements of strategic narratives (as exemplified by multiple Volodymyr Zelensky speeches). From these different angles one may see how multiple securitisations of different crises interlink, differ, reinforce or undermine each other.

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Andrey Makarychev is professor of regional political studies at the University of Tartu Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies. He teaches courses on 'Globalization', 'Political Systems in post-Soviet Space', 'EU-Russia Relations', 'Regional Integration in post-Soviet Space', 'Visual Politics' and 'The Essentials of Biopolitics'. He is the author of Popular Biopolitics and Populism at Europe's Eastern Margins (Brill, 2022), and co-authored three monographs: Celebrating Borderlands in a Wider Europe: Nations and Identities in Ukraine, Georgia and Estonia (Nomos, 2016), Lotman's Cultural Semiotics and the Political (Rowman and Littlefield, 2017) and Critical Biopolitics of the Post-Soviet: from Populations to Nations (Lexington Books, 2020). He has co-edited a number of academic volumes: Mega Events in post-Soviet Eurasia: Shifting Borderlines of Inclusion and Exclusion (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), Vocabularies of International Relations after the Crisis in Ukraine (Routledge, 2017); Borders in the Baltic Sea Region: Suturing the Ruptures (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). His articles have been published in such academic journals as Geopolitics, Problems of Post-Communism, East European Politics and Societies, European Urban and Regional Studies, among others.

Thomas Diez is professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Tübingen and a former president of the European International Studies Association (EISA) 2015-7. From 1997 to 2000, he was Research Fellow at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute and subsequently taught at the University of Birmingham. Among his recent publications are *The Routledge Handbook on Critical European Studies* (co-editor Routledge 2021), *The EU and Global Climate Justice* (co-author Routledge 2021), *The EU, Promoting Regional Integration, and Conflict Resolution* (co-editor, Palgrave 2017), and *The Securitisation of Climate Change* (co-author, Routledge, 2016). In September 2009, he received the Anna Lindh Award for his contribution to the field of European Foreign and Security Policy Studies.

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Progressive and Regressive Securitisation: Covid, Russian Aggression and the Ethics of Security

Thomas Diez

University of Tübingen, Germany, ORCiD: 0000-0001-8056-6693, corresponding address: thomas.diez@uni-tuebingen.de

Abstract

This paper contributes to the debate about the normative assessment of securitisation in light of Covid-19 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It develops the distinction of progressive and regressive securitisation. In doing so, it emphasises the processual, contextual and ambiguous nature of securitisation. I suggest that progressive securitisation is closely linked to the solidarisation, whereas regressive securitisation implies the pluralisation of international society. The two cases of Covid-19 and Russia illustrate that international order has increasingly been characterised by regressive securitisation and a pluralisation of international society, despite possible alternatives, such as a transnational response to the spread of Covid-19. They have thus contributed to the further demise of the post–Cold War liberal order, which despite its problems, has involved a re-orientation of security away from state territory and national identity as the core referent objects. I end with a plea to take the ethics of security more seriously again, and in particular to scrutinise the ways in which our own behaviour reinforces regressive securitisation.

Introduction

The world is in emergency mode. More than two years of the Covid-19 pandemic have not only led to increased death rates but also to continuing restrictions of public life as well as serious societal divisions. Russia's raid on Ukraine has reinforced a resurgence of realist, geopolitical thinking that had already been evident for at least about a decade before (Makarychev 2020) in what Kornprobst and Paul (2021) have called 'deglobalization'. The rise of a post–Cold War liberal order, sometimes problematically hailed as the 'end of history' (Fukuyama 1989), now seems a memory from a distant past (Ikenberry 2018).

As Makarychev and I have argued in the introduction to this special issue, securitisation plays a central role in the construction of such emergencies and the legitimisation of policies to counter them. Most of the literature has focused on the negative consequences of securitisation in terms of the limitations it poses to democratic debate as well as its exclusionary and marginalising force. Others have pointed to potential benefits of securitisation, including the placing of new items on the political agenda. What is the role of securitisation in the current crises?

One of the distinguishing features of the post–Cold War liberal order was a shift in the securitisation modes of international politics. In its ideal form, the main threats were no longer to be seen as located in other states. As the Human Development Report 1994 famously argued: 'The concept of security must change from an exclusive stress on national security to a much greater stress on people's security, from security through armaments to security through human development, from territorial security to food, employment and environmental security' (UNDP 1994: 2). The new order was supposed to be one of cooperation in combatting evils that affected us all, and to overcome the fixation on state territory and its defence against the threats in an anarchical system (Duncombe & Dunne 2018).

Such a vision of a new world order had been blue-eyed from the start – a metaphorical expression perhaps not entirely out of place in this context, given that the vision of a liberal order was carried forward largely by Western states who equated their own interests with a general, global interest (Kundnani 2017). It tended to ignore or marginalise continuing violence in both military terms and through exploitation in the capitalist world system. Yet even so, it would be wrong to dismiss the transformations in international institutions and global governance, the changing security discourse on the global level and the degree

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to which this vision of a new order was shared by many actors from the Global South (as exemplified for instance in the work of Francis Deng, see Bode 2014).

How different does the world look today. Instead of humanitarianism and a spirit of cooperation, we seem to find securitisation everywhere – and of the kind that I consider 'regressive'. The existential threat posed by 'the Other' has resurfaced as a standard trope in political debates. The protection of 'our' territory is on the forefront of national security strategies again, while nationalist autocrats such as Erdoğan and Putin are questioning agreed borders and advancing claims on territory with references to history that from the perspective of only a few years back could have only been considered bizarre.

This paper develops the concepts of regressive and progressive securitisation to characterise this shift and assess it normatively. In doing so, I draw on previous conceptions of 'positive' and 'negative' security. In contrast to some of the earlier contributions to this debate, I emphasise the contextual nature of normative assessments of securitisation and argue that securitisation must always be thought in a political space in which both progressive and regressive elements are present. Furthermore, progression and regression imply political processes and remind us that security is never fixed but always in production. I also suggest linking securitisation to the political space between a pluralist and a solidarist international society. I thus argue that progressive securitisations involve solidarisation in the sense of an acceptance of broader responsibilities of states. Such responsibilities need to be negotiated in a specific historical context and find their limit in colonial attempts to impose universal truths. Regressive securitisation, in contrast, reifies sovereignty and a prime concern for one's own fellow citizens, and thus a pluralisation of international society in the sense of increasingly protecting state sovereignty and non-domination. My argument presupposes that taking on responsibility, while never free from power, does not have to equate to forcing one's own will upon others. The main distinction between progressive and regressive securitisation would thus rest in its construction of referent objects constitutive of international society and their exclusivity.

The paper thus seeks to contribute to the debate about the ambiguous ethics of securitisation (section 2), which had initially stressed the negative effects of securitisation on the political debate and the inclusivity of society, but later emphasised the potentially positive effects on agenda-setting and addressing global threats that would otherwise be ignored by international society. My clarifications on the contextual and processual nature of securitisation and its normative assessment also answer the challenge laid out in the introduction to this special issue that critical security studies need to be re-thought in view of the challenge of the military security threat of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While I endorse the attempt to move security away from its focus on the military sec-

tor, the re-focusing of the normative assessment on the referent object does not exclude military threats but makes us wary to think of war only in terms of attacking or defending 'nations' and 'states'.

Empirically, I focus on Covid-19 (section 3) and the war in Ukraine (section 4) as crises that could have been and indeed are securitised in more or less progressive or regressive ways, and in which regressive securitisations have prevailed, leading to a pluralisation rather than a solidarisation of international society. I thus want to problematise the way in which the debate about Covid-19 has turned a transnational threat into a national one and how the Russian aggression (not only) towards Ukraine has invoked elements of the liberal order as well as its critics to justify a traditional, geopolitical war. I end by suggesting that the reproduction of regressive securitisation towards a pluralisation of international society severely limits our ability to address some of the core global challenges the world is facing today. I thus plead for a re-emphasis on the ethics of security, in terms of an invocation of human security threats, of an inclusive political debate and an appreciation of the ambiguities of securitisation.

Progressive and regressive securitisation

Securitisation as a concept of security studies was introduced in the 1990s by Ole Wæver (1995) and became the core contribution of the so-called Copenhagen School (Wæver et al. 1993; Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998). It introduced a formal-discursive definition of security: instead of pushing a particular substantive understanding of security as 'human', 'state', 'environmental' or other security, Wæver and his colleagues were interested in the logic of the articulation that turned something into a security object by representing it as an existential threat to a referent object, thus justifying measures that would otherwise not be considered legitimate (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998; Diez, von Lucke & Wellmann 2016).

The concept has become one of the core reference points in the security debate at least within Europe. The debates surrounding it fill whole libraries (for overviews, see, among others, Balzacq 2011; Balzacq, Leonard & Ruzicka 2016; Butler 2020). This is not the point to rehearse them. Instead, I want to focus on two aspects that are of immediate relevance to my argument and the distinction between 'progressive' and 'regressive' forms of securitisation. These aspects relate to the widening and deepening of security and the normative assessment of securitisation, respectively.

The attempt to move away from a purely military understanding of security is commonly referred to as the 'widening' of the concept of security to relate it to other 'sectors', such as the environment, energy, migration, poverty, etc. (Buzan

1997; Huysmans 1998). The Copenhagen School significantly contributed to this debate. Buzan had already suggested such a move as early as 1983 (Buzan 1983), and the 1998 book *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998) may be seen as one of the central statements of the widening agenda, suggesting five sectors of security: political, military, societal, economic and environmental. However, the book also made a case against taking the widening too far and risking the analytical utility of the concept of security if it became indistinguishable from politics. Thus, Buzan et al. cautioned against extending the referent object of security to the individual (the 'deepening' of security), as for them, security always had to refer to a societal group. Instead, they suggested that their discursive-formal definition, while widening security, allowed a clear separation from politics.

Many have criticised this limitation of widening. One strand of argumentation considers the definition of Wæver and Buzan too narrow to capture the variation of security understandings across space and time (Ciuta 2009; Sheikh 2014), and accused the Copenhagen School of being too state-centric and ontologising its referent objects (McSweeney 1996). While a good part of the problem is more likely a matter of methodological convenience (it is easier to observe securitising moves by state actors than in broader society) than theoretical constraint (as the critics argue) or empirical result (which was Buzan and Wæver's response to the charge of state-centrism, Buzan & Wæver 1997), it is nonetheless true that many of the writings of the Copenhagen School do not advocate widening without restraint. Their hesitation to apply the securitisation framework to human security rests on the condition that to be societally relevant, the referent object must be some form of a collective. To them, 'individuals or small groups can seldom establish a wider security legitimacy in their own right' (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998: 36). While this may be true for specific individuals, there is not a theoretically coherent requirement to exclude individuals as a social category or humankind as possible referent objects. In fact, Buzan and Wæver themselves entertain the possibility of the individual as a referent object in the political sector (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998: 39), and thus accept that the widening of security may also include a 'deepening' towards referent objects within states that do not form politically relevant groups.

Thus, securitisation has undoubtedly been a crucial part in the broader move to take security out of its exclusive link to the military from the 1980s to the 2000s. These efforts sought to heighten the priority of the daily concerns of people on the policy agenda and reorient funding streams away from military spending to productively use what was seen as a post–Cold War 'peace dividend' (Haq 1995). While it is true that military organisations such as NATO later embraced both the widening and deepening of security and re-branded themselves,

for instance, as guardians of gender rights (Wright 2022), historical evidence does not support the view that the efforts to loosen the conceptual boundaries of security were nothing but a plot to reinforce military legitimacy in a post–Cold War world. Instead, securitisation as a widening effort of security may be seen as progressive in the sense that if successful, it would lead to policies combatting climate change, malnutrition or pandemics, and move security away from a focus on the nation and state as predominant referent objects and the military as the main security instrument (McDonald 2008: 580).

In contrast, and I consider this one of the main themes of the Copenhagen School, Wæver (1995) has emphasised the negative effects of securitisation in its constraining effects on the political debate and the marginalisation of political actors, although he has also stressed that while 'desecuritization is preferable in the abstract, . . . concrete situations might call for securitization' (Wæver 2011: 469). Against the positive connotations of security, he and others writing from a securitisation perspective have highlighted that securitisation takes an issue out of the bounds of the normal political debate and thus allows actors to pursue policies that would otherwise not be considered legitimate, often infringing on personal rights, from data surveillance to anti-immigration measures and war. Likewise, scholars have noted how the securitisation of migration turns the migrant into a societal threat (Huysmans 2000) or how the securitisation of AIDS leads to turning patients into pariahs (Elbe 2006).

However, the ensuing debate has increasingly pointed to the ambiguities of securitisation and the normative value of security in a more general sense (Nyman 2016; Roe 2012; McDonald 2008). While securitisation may constrain the political debate in some instances, it may open up such debate in others, especially if an issue is not yet on the political agenda. Thus, in the case of climate change, for instance, scholars have pointed to the fact that securitisation was necessary in order to get the international society to move at all, while the problem may thus rather lie with the specific forms that securitisation may take (McDonald 2021; Diez, von Lucke & Wellmann 2016; Trombetta 2008). Likewise, in the case of AIDS, the stigmatisation of patients has to be weighed against the mobilisation of funds for research and treatment programmes (Elbe 2006).

The underpinning theoretical problem of these debates is related to the stark distinction between politics and security that informs the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of securitisation. Many critics have pointed out that politics always emerges from securitisation, that securitisation may be a matter of degree rather than either/or, and that there may be different forms of securitisation (Williams 2015; Trombetta 2008; Diez, von Lucke & Wellmann 2016). Likewise, scholars have argued that whether securitisation is to be welcomed is dependent on normative criteria outside of the theory itself. Thus, Rita Floyd for

instance has suggested a number of criteria against which securitisation could be measured to assess whether it was 'just' or not, including the 'objective' existence of the invoked threat, the legitimacy of the referent object and the appropriateness of the suggested measures to combat the threat (Floyd 2019, 2011).

All of this suggests that securitisation may not be inherently good or bad, but that securitisation nearly always will be ambiguous in its effects, and lead to ambivalent assessments depending on the normative preferences of the analyst as well as contextual conditions (Kirk 2022: 14; Nyman 2016; Roe 2012). Yet the debate also suggests that there may be more progressive and more regressive forms of securitisation. Thus, *securitisation may be considered progressive if it leads to a widening of security that allows threats to be tackled that would otherwise lead to unnecessary harm (Linklater 2006), while at the same time avoiding the exclusion of those who disagree from the political process*. Such an understanding of progressive securitisation will always imply a deepening of security as well, as it is individuals (and possibly other, non-human beings) that suffer from harm, not states. While states thus may remain the main security providers, progressive security moves the security discourse towards referent objects beyond the 'nation' and the 'state'.

At the same time, very different securitising actors may be involved in the articulation of progressive security – as much as in the production of regressive security. State actors may call for preventing migrant boats from reaching coastal shores as much as societal actors or the media. Or they may call for safeguarding migrants. Progressive security is not about who speaks security, but what and who security is spoken for.

Understood in such a way, progressive and regressive securitisations are closely related to the distinction between pluralism and solidarism as the spectrum in which international society may exist (Bain 2021; Knudsen 2016; Ahrens & Diez 2015). A solidarisation of international society involves the assumption of more responsibility towards 'strangers' (Wheeler 2000), whereas a pluralisation re-inscribes the sovereignty and exclusivity of national identities and state territories. Moving along this spectrum always involves securitisations to legitimise the defence of the status quo or a possible change.

Regressive securitisation thus moves the representation of international order to that of a pluralist state system with weak institutions, inter-state competition and the exclusion of world societal claims. It reproduces 'a fear-based imaginary, which is concerned with the protection of the integrity of the political body in the face of exogenous elements' (Nunes 2016: 550) rather than with the development of strategies to effectively cope with the threat and protect those in need. Progressive securitisation, by contrast, does not invoke the state or nation or any other exclusive community as the referent object of threats, but conceptualises

the referents of threats as contextually and openly defined, transnational groups that do not necessarily share a single societal identity. Yet even such securitisation runs the risk of 'imposing international purpose' (Ashley 1989) or engaging in colonial or quasi-colonial practices by assuming that others will universally share one's own concerns. While as humans, we will never be able to think completely outside of ourselves, responsibility for strangers however always needs to take the stranger as the starting point. In our normative assessment of securitisation, it is therefore important not only to ask about the referent object but also about the standing of this referent object in relation to the self of the securitising actor: is the referent object a mirror of the self on which the securitising actor imposes its own desires, or is it a stranger that we really care about?

In that sense, the *Human Development Reports* engaged in progressive securitisation, as did the activists that warned of the effects of climate change at an early stage. In contrast, securitisation may be considered regressive if it limits security to military force and the protection of nations and state territories or involves infringements of people's freedoms and rights through stigmatisation, marginalisation and exclusion. These two regressive implications do not necessarily occur together, even if they often do. We have, for instance, seen stigmatisation, democratic backsliding and surveillance as effects of health securitisation that are not linked to classical expressions of national identity and territorial security (Bengtsson & Rhinard 2019; Hassan 2022; Boer, Bervoets & Hak 2022). Indeed, not all regressive securitisation in the Covid-19 crisis has been related to territorial re-inscriptions. Nonetheless, the return of geopolitics as the focus of security and thus the pluralisation of international society is of particular concern and thus the focus of this paper.

The distinction between progressive and regressive securitisation has some advantages over the previous discussion about positive and negative security (see Nyman 2016). First, it highlights the *processual character* of securitisation. Security is not some stable property; it always has to be reproduced in specific contexts that make a difference to what we understand to be harmful and marginalising. Thus, the normative assessment of securitisation cannot rest only on consequentialism as in Floyd's conception of just security (Floyd 2011). It must look at the securitisation process as much as its outcome. Second, the terms progressive and regressive imply not only a movement over time but also *within political spaces*. As others have pointed out before (Roe 2012; Nyman 2016), the positive/negative debate at times has suffered from establishing a false dichotomy. Securitisation is never only good or bad: it establishes new power relations and political identities, while excluding others even as it opens up new discursive spaces. It will thus move a debate within a political space in which all politicisation will contain some securitisation (Diez, von Lucke & Wellmann

2016). By the same token, there is no international society (and indeed no society in general) without some form of power and even domination.

Yet within that political space, since the 2000s, we have been witnessing more regressive securitisation, especially in relation to the return of geopolitical exclusion and the 'nation' and 'state' as core referent objects, rather than those who suffer from specific threats or harm, wherever they are. In the following two sections, and by way of illustrating my argument, I discuss this trend in relation to the two dominating security issues in the Europe of the early 2020s, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Regressive securitisation I: Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic is an excellent example of a successful securitisation. The successful representation of the virus as an existential threat that requires urgent action led to emergency procedures and restrictions of public life and individual freedoms that would have otherwise been unthinkable. Within a month after the first outbreaks in Wuhan, China, had become publicly known at the very end of 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. On 11 March 2020, the WHO announced Covid-19 to be a pandemic. By the end of March, many countries had issued decrees restricting public gatherings. Lockdowns with the closure of any non-vital public activity followed in late autumn/winter 2020/21. While some states such as Sweden took a light touch approach on lockdown measures and relied on voluntary distancing (Frans 2022; Larsson 2022), others such as Germany closed down schools for extended periods of time and still demand the wearing of face masks in public transport at the end of 2022. Many East Asian countries even pursued a Zero-Covid strategy and imposed lockdowns that remain partially in place. All of these measures had been unthinkable before early 2020. They represent severe infringements on individual liberties and caused economic shortfalls so that states had to spend billions of extra monies to cover at least some of the lost revenue of private shopkeepers, hotels and restaurants.

The securitisation of Covid-19 illustrates a number of interesting aspects of securitisation processes. For one, constructing something as a security threat does not mean that the threat does not exist (see, for the case of HIV/AIDS, McInnes & Rushton 2013). Covid-19 has been highly infectious and has caused an average of about 120 extra deaths per 100,000 people (Wang et al. 2022) as well as long-term symptoms that may continue to negatively affect the daily lives of millions of people (Wulf Hanson et al. 2022). The point of a securitisation analysis thus is not to say that a threat does not exist and is fabricated; instead, the analysis points to the specific ways in which this threat has been represented

and thus affected the political process and its outcomes. In the context of the US, Kirk (2022), for instance, observes a securitisation of the virus as a 'foreign enemy' as well as a securitisation of everyday behaviour, such as close physical interaction.

Furthermore, in comparison to climate change, which also causes many deaths and has devastating consequences on people's lives, the securitisation of Covid-19 demonstrates various felicity conditions for a successful securitisation. The seemingly unstoppable global spread of the pandemic versus the unevenly distributed natural disasters caused by climate change; the images of piles of dead bodies without any visible cause compared to the havoc caused by floods and storms that are not unique in history but 'only' occur with a higher frequency (on the importance of images in the securitisation of health issues, see Krause 2021); the undisputed linkage between these deaths and the virus opposed to the statistical uncertainty and long-term effects of climate change – all of these point to the importance of the threat characteristics and its possible visualisations in the securitising process.

Yet what is more interesting for the present argument is that securitisations have actually differed between countries in the way that they moved the debate within the respective political spaces. I have already noted the more cautious approach of Sweden. At the same time, New Zealand arrived at strict lockdown measures despite few Covid cases without resorting to a strongly exclusionary rhetoric, and thus did not close down the political debate to the same degree as in other countries (Kirk & McDonald 2021). However, in their analysis of the case, Kirk and McDonald (2021) overstate the difference between riskification and securitisation (see Diez, von Lucke & Wellmann 2016): thus, even though the New Zealand debate invoked risks more than existential threats, such riskifications still display the basic grammar of securitisations in the articulation of a severe challenge to the public. It is thus not surprising that the result was what in Kirk and McDonald's view was 'exceptionalism without securitisation' (Kirk & McDonald 2021). It would thus be more appropriate to consider this a case of progressive securitisation rather than an instance of absent securitisation.

At the same time, Kirk and McDonald (2021) underestimate the transnational character of the pandemic so that differences in the number of actual cases per country may matter less than the possibility that the virus will very soon kill thousands of people 'at home' as well. Nonetheless, it is important to note that while securitisation may have enabled protective measures, it was possible to arrive at such measures without some of the exclusionary rhetoric of securitisation (New Zealand) or to come to less restrictive measures which did not lead to higher degrees of excess mortality (Sweden, Frans 2022). Both instances serve as

examples for how progressive securitisation does not remove contestation from the debate while allowing the formulation and legitimisation of diverse policies to prevent death.

In line with the theoretical discussion above, the problem with the securitisation of Covid-19 was however not only how it shaped the political debate but also that it led to a re-inscription of state borders into global discourse and thus reinforced an already existing trend towards a re-pluralisation of international society after the rise of populism, among others, had started to undermine the post–Cold War liberal order. As any pandemic, Covid-19 is first and foremost a threat to individual human beings and thus a matter of human security (Newman 2022). It is transnational: it does not stop at state borders and spreads easily across distances. One would have therefore thought that an appropriate response would have focused on transnational measures protecting individuals and not territories. Yet, responses were taken at the national level with little coordination even within the European Union (EU), let alone globally. Mobility was constrained on the basis of national boundaries instead of geographical hotspots. Attempts by the European Commission to link restrictions to subnational, regional incidence rates came late and have not really informed policy. Instead, national borders were closed, even between EU member states, cutting through regions with dense economic and personal interrelations. To the extent that borders remained open, immigration conditions varied according to countries and not regional hotspots. Rhetorically, the pattern of blaming health security threats on other countries (Campbell 1992) resurfaced in charges of the 'Chinese virus' (Trump cited in Rogers & Swanson 2020) or blaming the US to be the real source of the virus (BBC 2021). Likewise, Kuteleva and Clifford (2021) have shown how both Putin and Trump used the securitisation of Covid-19 to invoke imaginaries of paternalistic sovereignty protecting their nations.

Thus, a global health emergency that should have had the individual as a referent object was turned into a reification of nation-state borders. While possibly necessary to mobilise action against the disease, the progressive potential of the securitisation of Covid-19 to forge global transnational agency was foregone to promote national security imageries. While there have been other forms of regression in the securitisation of Covid-19, for instance in the stigmatisation of marginalised populations and the way in which they were targeted by pre-emptive measures (Russell et al. 2022), the rendering of a global pandemic in terms of territorial protection including the representation of the viral threat as coming from outside state borders is nonetheless a particularly disconcerting example of securitisation that undermines the initial impetus of widening and deepening the concept of security.

This is not to say that states should not have played a role in dealing with the challenge of the pandemic, or that the world would be better off without states. Given the infrastructural requirements of our contemporary lives, the resources needed to meet them, and their simultaneous contestation within societies, states are important agents to provide the means through which such public goods may be provided. The problem rather lies with the exclusionary state narratives and externalisations of threat that regressive securitisation sustains. The effect is a re-pluralisation of international society in which responsibility is first and foremost for one's own kin, undermining effective transnational efforts to combat crises.

Regressive securitisation II: Russian aggression

The Russian invasion of Eastern Ukraine is an even more obvious case of regressive securitisation. The invocation of history to defend Russian territory and influence or the representation of NATO as an existential threat to Russia played the tunes of classical security to bolster the military and engage in geopolitical violence. The Russian transgression of both state and human rights falls squarely into the military-strategic logics that progressive securitisation was meant to overcome.

If Putin had intended to weaken NATO influence at its Western borders, the war has achieved the opposite, with more states queuing up for NATO membership, including long-time adherents of neutrality such as Finland and Sweden (Alberque & Schreer 2022). Likewise, countries such as Germany, in which, despite some steps towards more military involvement since the 1990s, military expenditure has long been viewed sceptically and in tension with its civilian power identity (Maull 2000), have significantly increased their defence budgets. Both the applications to NATO and the rise in military expenditure have been legitimised through the representation of Russia as an existential threat to Western democracy and state integrity, resembling the dominant rhetoric of the Cold War.

Yet Putin has also invoked human security claims to support Russia's war, thus demonstrating that it is not the rhetoric as such that matters but its broader context. For instance, in Putin's justification of the invasion, he has cited human security arguments by pointing to the violation of the human rights of Russian speakers in the Donbas, amounting to what Putin claimed was 'genocide': 'The purpose of this operation is to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kyiv regime' (Hinton 2022). In his speech announcing the partial mobilisation of reservists on 21 September 2022, Putin argued that what he refers to as 'the West'

used indiscriminate Russophobia as a weapon, including by nurturing the hatred of Russia for decades, primarily in Ukraine ... They used the army against civilians and organized a genocide, blockade and terror against those who refused to recognize the government that was created in Ukraine as the result of a state coup ... We cannot, we have no moral right to let our kin and kith be torn to pieces by butchers; we cannot but respond to their sincere striving to decide their destiny on their own (Washington Post 2022).

Some observers have argued that the logic of justifying an invasion through references to human security, and thus instrumentalising progressive securitisation in the name of regressive securitisation has been a common feature of Western powers in relation to their interventions in Iraq, Kosovo or Libya (e.g., Murray 2022; Saul 2022). Yet while it is true that these interventions, to various degrees, have been problematic from a legal as well as a normative point of view, there are also some fundamental differences (Brunk & Hakimi 2022: 690–92). Three of them stand out:

- In contrast to Russia, the United States and its allies performed their legitimating securitisations in the UN Security Council, providing evidence for the violation of human rights or the imminent threat posed by the development of chemical weapons. Even if this evidence turned out to be false in some cases, it was not always incorrect. Russia, in contrast, did not even bother to take the Security Council route or provide evidence to the international society at large. It even attempted to prevent a debate in the United Nations General Assembly in September 2022. This raises important question marks about the credibility and sincerity of its claims.
- While all the three mentioned Western cases led to long-term military occupation or interventions, none of them had the explicit aim to eliminate a country (as opposed to changing its regime) and to integrate parts of its territory into the aggressor's territory. The fact that Putin claimed Ukraine as historical Russian territory is at odds with the human security justification and serves to undermine it, as it ultimately negates the essential norm that sustains international law and returns to pure geopolitical strategy (Brunk & Hakimi 2022: 691).
- To bolster his claims, Putin has linked them with explicit references to the threat posed by the Nazi regime. In his mobilisation speech, he used the term neo-Nazi to characterise the Ukrainian government ten times. While the official argumentation of Western states in relation to Iraq or Libya involved analogous rhetoric, for instance in the 'debaathification' of Iraq

(Longobardo 2022: 20–21), it by and large shied away from making such an explicit link.

In addition, Russia has taken severe steps to increasingly silence public debate – a classic concern in securitisation theory. In March 2023, for instance, a bill was proposed in the Duma to make it a criminal offence not only to discredit the military but also private security actors fighting in the war (Moscow Times 2023). Observers have called the twelve months following February 2022 'the most repressive in Russia's modern history' (Ivanova 2023). Even granting that the sources I have used here are second-hand reports that may have their own agenda, there can be no doubt that the Russian government has been limiting the scope of political debate by portraying those who question the military as threats to national security.

Thus, the securitising moves performed by Putin in justifying Russia's aggression against Ukraine are an example of regressive securitisation in which arguments of deepened security are instrumentalised for the sake of geopolitical power claims, while at the same time silencing opposing views. In addition, they have led to a reinforcement of regressive securitisation on a broader scale, especially in Europe, the self-assumed forerunner of a solidarist international society (Ahrens & Diez 2015; Diez, Manners & Whitman 2011), in which geopolitical considerations of military security have taken on renewed significance in political debates.

Yet these securitisations may also serve as a reminder of the contextuality and complexity of normatively assessing securitisation. In the case of Ukraine, the broader regressive move needs to be set against the harm done to the many civilians and their food, energy and health security. So while the overall re-emphasis on military security of sovereign states pushed by Russia's invasion is deplorable, this cannot serve as an argument against military support for Ukraine, as Russia's destruction of vital infrastructure and more direct infringements of individual bodily and psychological integrity need to be countered, although it does remind us of the problematic nature of over-stating Ukraine as an exclusive nation (as opposed to the individuals whose physical security as threatened) as the main referent object.

Navigating the difficult normative terrain of war ultimately requires political choices that cannot be anchored in any unambiguous ethical consideration (Moses 2018: 55). Yet the regressive securitisation of the broader security discourse in Europe that Russia's war has, if not caused, then at least intensified, must not lead to forgetting the many other harms that our world inflicts on people – indeed, at least some of them, such as those related to energy and climate security, are deeply intertwined with the war. Emphasising military secu-

rity would thus be problematic if it is not accompanied by addressing the risks caused by Western policies themselves, such as the privileging of cheap gas and thus energy security over climate security, which in turn have been crucial factors in the genesis of the war.

Conclusion: Remembering the ethics of security

In this piece, I have set out an argument to distinguish between progressive and regressive securitisation. I have associated progressive securitisation with inclusive political debates and an expansion of security towards individual and global rights and needs in a solidarising international society, which would otherwise go unnoticed or would not be tackled. In contrast, I have associated regressive securitisation with exclusionary debates and a narrow conception of security that reifies state boundaries and exclusionary state practices in a pluralist framing of international society. I have, however, also pointed out that no securitisation can ever be purely progressive. Instead, I have suggested that both progressive and regressive be understood as movements within contextualised political spaces, pulling debates into different directions. Thus, securitisations will always entail a degree of normative ambivalence.

Yet this does not mean that we cannot identify the direction in which debates are moving. The two examples I have provided demonstrate the marginalising or even exclusionary force of regressive securitisation processes as well as the reification of militarised geopolitics as their consequence. It is such an understanding of security that the debate about widening and deepening security since the 1980s has attempted to undermine to open up the political debate and pave the way for a redistribution of resources and a change in the global security agenda.

I have also claimed that since about 2010 at the latest, regressive securitisation has started to prevail, which I have exemplified through my brief considerations of the cases of Covid-19 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The success of these securitisations illuminates some of the facilitating conditions for securitising moves to work, including the credibility of the urgency and existentiality of the threat through media visibilisation (Vultee 2011; Lukacovic 2020). Yet they also share a re-inscription of national territory and geopolitical concerns into the broader discourse. This is more immediately obvious in the case of Russia's aggression, in the justification of which human security references may hardly be interpreted as nothing else but a smokescreen for imperialist aims. However, even in a case such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which first and foremost threatens the health and lives of individuals, states have turned to regressive securitising moves and have linked the Covid threat to the protection of national territories and borders, while managing the crisis through thinking in conceptions of national territory instead of inter- and transnational cooperation.

While regressive securitisations have reinscribed nation and state as referent objects and geopolitics as the main mode of international thinking, they have also been enabled by the continuing domination of pluralist modes of international order based on a division of the globe into state territories. Whereas the humanitarianism of the post–Cold War liberal order was supposed to enhance solidarist visions of transnational responsibility, in fact it never really succeeded in undermining the 'territorial trap' of our dominant conceptualisations of the international (Agnew 1994). Thus, Covid-19 is just another illustration that in times of crisis, framing challenges in relation to the state and national identities provides the most likely option to make sense of a rather complex world. Likewise, invocations of national history and territorial defence produce rally-round-the-flag effects that are able to override the daily struggles in the minds of many people and serve to silence those with different views.

These developments are pushing the security debate back towards the early 1980s. They have significant effects on governmental budgets and on the global governance agenda. We are at a historical juncture in which the ethics of security need to be re-emphasised. On the one hand, this implies a reminder that there are significant threats to individuals, humankind and the planet as a whole, from food shortages to climate-change induced disasters and species extinction, which are not receiving the attention they require, and thus need to be securitised further to legitimise necessary action. On the other hand, we need to take into account that progression and regression are inherent pulls in all securitisations. Thus, it is important to always leave enough room for political debate and avoid or at least counteract the marginalising and exclusionary consequences of securitisation. In the case of Covid-19, this would necessitate a stronger global or at least transnational reaction, placing individuals at the centre as referent objects. In the case of Russia's aggression, the need to build up defence capacities to protect individuals' lives and freedoms notwithstanding, it implies a change in the way EU member states, for instance, cooperate in energy security and link it to environmental security, and not only to rely on realist deterrence in thinking about a post-Putin European security architecture (Diez 2022).

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THOMAS DIEZ is professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Tübingen and a former president of the European International Studies Association (EISA) 2015-7. From 1997 to 2000, he was Research Fellow at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute and subsequently taught at the University of Birmingham. Among his recent publications are *The Routledge Handbook on Critical European Studies* (co-editor Routledge 2021), *The EU and Global Climate Justice* (co-author Routledge 2021), *The EU, Promoting Regional Integration, and Conflict Resolution* (co-editor, Palgrave 2017), and *The Securitisation of Climate Change* (co-author, Routledge, 2016). In September 2009, he received the Anna Lindh Award for his contribution to the field of European Foreign and Security Policy Studies.

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Ukraine at War: Resilience and Normative Agency

Yulia Kurnyshova
University of Bremen, Germany, ORCiD: 0009-0006-5717-4804, corresponding address: ikurnyshova@gmail.com

Abstract

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has transformed all aspects of life in the country, including societal attitudes, national politics and Ukraine's agency on the international arena. The article seeks to discuss and conceptualise how practices of resilience create discursive spaces for producing and shaping Ukraine's agency. In other words, how do experiences of resilience in four different spheres (societal, institutional, communicative and subregional) affect Ukraine's capacity not only to cope with the intervention and survive as a nation, but also to contribute to the future of international security order. The author argues that by containing the Russian army, Ukraine can be viewed as a co-producer of European security, which is particularly acknowledged by European countries bordering on Russia. Ukraine's agency, as unfolded in 2022, addresses Western countries with an insistent demand to perceive Ukraine as a part of the European normative order.

Introduction

For decades Ukraine was often perceived in the West as a weak, Russia-dependent and peripheral country (See for example Gil, 2015) that did not much resist the annexation of Crimea and failed to prevent the occupation of Donbas in 2014. However, after the restart of the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022 this state of affairs has significantly altered: Ukrainian society has shown a determination to fight back against the more resourceful invader, which boosted Ukraine's positions both in the battlefields and in relations with its international partners. Moreover, it turned out that major issues that the Ukrainian state was negatively associated with – corruption and the oligarchic structure of the Ukrainian economy, critical attitudes to the leadership, and cultural distinctions between eastern and western regions – did not lead to the collapse of the Ukrainian state. Instead, such novel topics as the robustness of Ukrainian society, the scale of the volunteer movement and the functionality of Ukrainian public institutions, were placed in the limelight of public discourses.

From an academic perspective, these changes and their transformative effects can be approached from the viewpoint of two interrelated concepts – *agency* and *resilience*. Ukraine's agency is a multifaceted phenomenon that is primarily grounded in the strong resistance of the Ukrainian Armed Forces that, starting from the very beginning of the intervention, were capable of thwarting the Russian army and thus created the solid and endurable basis for resistance. Yet in the meantime agency has other non-hard-security components as well: politically it is manifested in the persistent strategy of decoupling the country from the 'post-Soviet' legacy, breaking with the externally imposed constructs of 'Eurasia' and the 'Russian world', and consistently moving towards reasserting Ukraine as a full-fledged European nation paying the dearest price for being accepted in this capacity. From the practical vantage point, Ukraine's agency is the fulcrum for building enduring partnerships with its allies, and integrating with the institutional structure of the broadly defined Euro-Atlantic community. From the international perspective, key was the decision of the European Commission to open the membership procedure for Ukraine, which is crucial for boosting Ukraine's agency.

This is exactly why the idea of resilience becomes an appropriate reference point. Ukraine's agency is to a large extent grounded in the ability and determination of Ukrainian society to withstand the Russian aggression, consolidate human and material resources for resistance and thus provide a solid ground for patriotic mobilisation and future de-occupation of the annexed territories. This approach follows the logic of the critical tradition of international studies through refocusing the security agenda from states and governments to societal sources of agency, with such operational characteristics as ability to act, visibility, recognition and acceptance by other members of international society.

In my previous publications (Kurnyshova & Makarychev 2022) I have introduced the concept of *hybrid resilience* which can be expanded and readjusted to the present research. More specifically, I single out four spheres – societal, public institutional, communicational and local – where practices of resilience unfold as preconditions for Ukraine's agency, both domestically and internationally. Therefore, the nexus of agency and resilience is key to my analysis. The research question I am going to address is how practices of resilience create discursive spaces for producing and shaping Ukraine's agency. In other words, how do resilience in four different spheres affect Ukraine's capacity not only to cope with the intervention and survive as a nation, but also to contribute to the future of the international security order?

My basic argument is two-fold. I argue that Ukraine's agency is grounded in different yet interconnected types of resilience, which conflate and reinforce each other, particularly in institutional and communicative domains. In the meantime, agency, as an intersubjective construct, builds upon resilience and due to its normative compatibility and consonance with the principles of democratic governance opens prospective avenues for Ukraine's eventual integration with the Euro-Atlantic institutional and normative structures as a power capable of contributing to common security.

My methodological approach is grounded in the traditions of critical discourse analysis claiming that 'narratives of international politics are not simply reflections of reality but also constituting elements in their own right' (Fazendeiro 2016: 497). I agree with Theirry Balzacq's assertion that 'discourse is part of agency in that it instantiates a sphere of action wherein agents dealing with defined questions operate' (Balzacq 2005: 187). The emphasis on the discursive production of agency in no way denies the centrality of practices and experiences of resilience; it means to affirm that these practices form a basis of people's attitudes to public authorities of different levels and information producers. Beyond discourse resilience might remain less visible and noticeable for a broader audience; it might not be properly reflected, timely communicated and discussed as inherent components of agency-making. In the works of constructivist and post-structuralist scholars this is called performativity, or an ability to practically activate the discursive resources of agency through speech acts and other practices of communications (Wodak 2001). From this theoretical standpoint, foreign policy is not simply a field where pre-given subjects operate and react to the geopolitical and normative environments, 'but the means through which a particular mode of subjectivity is reproduced' (Laffey 2000: 430-431). Along these lines, Ukraine discursively builds its agency through reflecting upon and assessing practices of resilience, and translates them into specific policies aimed at prospective integration with European and Euro-Atlantic normative spaces.

My empirical base consists of two types of primary sources. One is the discourses of top Ukrainian decision- and opinion- makers. Evidently, the key speaker exemplifying Ukrainian agency is President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who after the full-scale invasion delivered a massive body of speeches (more than 300) for the internal and foreign audiences. Yet I also refer to other key public figures and decision-makers. Another source of data is of sociological background, including opinion polls conducted by the most trustworthy Ukrainian polling companies: Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives, Razumkov Centre, Rating Group and Gradus Research.

Structurally, the article is divided into three parts. I start with an analytical overview of the academic literature that touches upon connections between agency and resilience, and inscribe the case of Ukraine into the existing theories, which requires some critical reexamination of certain scholarly approaches. Then I turn to four domestic facets of resilience and relate them to Ukraine's agency. Finally, I discuss external reverberations of the resilience–agency nexus and argue that it is largely framed and shaped by the normative principles constitutive for the EU and Euro-Atlantic political community in a broader sense.

Resilience and agency: A conceptual nexus

The concept of agency is approached differently by major international relations theories. For realism, agency is derived from the possession of physical and material resources, primarily military might. While for theories of liberal background, agency implies a co-production of international mechanisms of promoting freedom, democracy and the rule of law. From the constructivist perspective that I am sympathetic with, agency is an intersubjective construct that involves constant communication and interaction between producers of essential discourses and the audience (Côté 2016: 554). I tend to agree that 'agency entails "being" and "doing", implying a "self" defined by an identity, articulated through a narrative and performed through practice and action, which is continuously regrounded as a reflexive project' (Flockhart 2016: 813).

Within this framework, the spectrum of the most discussed academic questions is quite broad – from what constitutes actors' agency and (metaphorically speaking) 'who should sit at the table?' (Hofferberth 2019: 129) to 'which qualities enable the agents in the self-governing processes to engage in reflection and to undertake the action that is needed to remain fit for purpose?' (Flockhart 2020: 218). Agency has as its condition a 'purposive behavior' (Carlsnaes 1992: 246), but extends far beyond that to embrace such categories as the ability to make a difference, to intervene in international relations, to influence and to exercise control – even if partially – over other actors. Agency might connote

free will of political subjects and the capability of triggering meaningful changes (Berenskötter 2016: 273) within the normative order. By the same token, 'agency denotes the ability to choose among different courses of action, to learn from previous experience, and to effect change' (O'Neill, Balsiger & VanDeveer 2004: 155).

Of particular importance for my study is the idea of critical agency rooted in post-colonial thinking that looks at how 'the sum of disaggregated, uncoordinated and fragmented, hidden, disguised and marginal agencies represents a significant totality' and 'how the "powerless" engage in politics and international relations?' (Richmond 2011: 434). I agree with those scholars who argue that 'prewar Ukrainian discourse was based not so much on the realization of national interests, as on the low self-esteem, with constant eye on Moscow's opinion, and thus excluded the possibility of any major conflict with neighbor' (Parahonsky 2022: 10). At the same time, it would be fair to say that Ukraine's critical agency, reinvigorated by Russia's invasion and overlooked by many in the world, is based on the traditions of mass-scale emancipatory protests against injustice and autocracy exemplified by the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity. In this respect Ukraine's agency is grounded in the previous experiences of building and fighting for national independence and sovereignty against the former imperial hegemon.

Critical agency implies emancipation and resistance to imperial impositions, which makes Oliver Richmond's words of 2011 quite applicable to today's Ukraine: 'Without incorporating critical agency and resistance into its conceptual, theoretical and methodological discourses, without recognizing its dynamics, abilities, impacts and legitimacy, any peace that emerges will be a crude or subtle victor's peace' (Richmond 2011: 436). In other words, any peace agreement without due consideration of a full-fledged agency of Ukraine won't last and will hardly make any practical sense. This understanding of critical agency drastically challenges the logic of 'resolving the conflict' within the great power management frame, as exemplified by Henry Kissinger, John Mearsheimer, Richard Sakwa, Marlene Laruelle and some other scholars.

In a constructivist logic, 'agency emerges from relations and is always "performed" within loose and ever-changing configurations' (Hofferberth 2019: 138) of policies and discourses. To put it bluntly, there is no agency prior to, without or beyond performativity. Consequently, the state has to be approached as one that 'a discursively produced structural/structuring effect that relies on constant acts of performativity to call it into being... (A)gents (like the state) are always effects of discourse and should be "decentred" rather than made the starting point for theory' (Dunn 2010: 80). In other words, the state, usually being the most visible manifestation of agency, is not a well-fixed, constant or

pre-given unit, but a result of multiple discursive practices that require the government, the presidency, the parliament and other institutions to operate in a particular way.

This approach suggests looking more attentively at how agency is performed, enacted and empowered. For that, in my analysis I turn to the concept of resilience that I find highly relevant for understanding the dynamic and the logic of Ukraine's agency. In the academic literature resilience is referred to as a process of societal adaptation to complex shocks; it implies partnerships and self-reliance, and envisages the 'shifting of responsibility onto communities and promotion of reflexive self-governance through strategies of awareness, risk management and adaptability' (Humbert & Joseph 2019: 216). Consequently, individuals and groups are ultimately becoming responsible for their own adaptability vis-à-vis external transgressions and crises.

Since resilience operates through many practices, this article focuses on constructivist interpretations of how they arise out of existing 'webs of discourse' (Bleiker 2003: 38). Key is that practices are 'embedded in discourse(s) which enable particular meaning(s) to be signified' (Doty 1997: 377). Thus, practices might be differently named, and resilience relates them to specific meanings and interpretations. Examples of the usage of resilience in various spheres are multiple: in Western assistance programmes it is related to Ukrainian agriculture, the civilian security sector, reconstruction of the destroyed civilian infrastructure, and many others[1]. From a constructivist viewpoint, by applying the concept of resilience Ukraine's partners wish to reach beyond charity or technical help; the language they use puts an emphasis on strengthening Ukraine's ability to protect itself in the future against Russia, whose behaviour is much harder to predict and deter than to empower Ukraine. A similar logic applies to my characterisation of local self-governance as local resilience, information management as information resilience, institution building as institutional resilience and social capital as societal resilience. Through this wording I want to underline the strategy of self-reliance in an inevitable struggle with external aggression that is impossible to prevent.

However, the case of Ukraine deploys the concept of resilience in an explicit hard security context, which differs from the bulk of the existing literature that generally discusses resilience in non-military or soft security categories. For example, some authors deem that 'resilience and social inclusion are of greater

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1   EU Resilience Programmes Examples in Ukraine: https://www.euam-ukraine.eu/news/euam4ukraine-now-wholly-redeployed-euam-experts-continue-building-resilience-with-their-ukrainian-counterparts/; https://www.euam-ukraine.eu/news/euam4ukraine-now-wholly-redeployed-euam-experts-continue-building-resilience-with-their-ukrainian-counterparts/; https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/forum-iz-ekonomichnoi-stiikosti-ta-vidbudovy-ukrainy-frantsiia-dopomozhe-ukraini-z-posivnym-materialom

Yulia Kurnyshova

significance in maintaining and enhancing national security than are defense and law enforcement systems" (Behm 2010: 60), while others assume that resilience requires 'adaptability and flexibility, rather than strength' (Giske 2021: 5). Obviously, these recipes do not fully apply to Ukraine, which opens a wide space for a discussion on how the Russian military interference might change the way resilience is understood and academically problematised.

Some authors assume that in times of violent conflicts resilience produces different forms of power (Korostelina 2020: 3), yet other scholars still suggest that resilience is rarely discussed from the viewpoint of power and agency (Béné et al. 2012: 13). One of the possible ways to relate resilience to agency is through the Foucauldian concept of *productive power* as a key element of the governmentality paradigm. The productivity of power was highlighted by Michel Foucault as an opposite to its oppressive functions, and implied incentives on the side of the state and responsibility on the side of society. In this respect the case of Ukraine appears to support those scholarly voices who reject the detachment of governmentality from sovereignty: to a large extent the two overlap and intersect, producing other forms of power. Institutional power is grounded in the vitality and efficacy of public institutions as producers of norms and regulations with a high degree of legitimacy and acceptance in society. Another – and closely related – is communicative power as 'a form of power being generated by communicative action' (Flynn 2004: 445). As Manuel Castells (2013: 1) claimed, power relationships and 'the foundations of institutions that organize societies are largely constructed in people's minds through the communication process'. The effective functioning of communicative power presupposes a 'non-despairing, non-cynical, and non-pessimistic' discursive mode (O'Mahony 2010: 70), which seems to be confirmed by the Ukrainian experience of information resilience to be discussed below.

The following three perspectives are tied to my discussion on Ukraine's resilience. First, the non-state-based concept of resilience seems to be too radical for Ukraine, since it was the state that generated prerequisites for resilience through reforming state institutions, including the military sector and decentralisation reform. The case of Ukraine does not support the idea that 'resilient peoples do not look to governments to secure and improve their wellbeing because they have been disciplined into believing in the necessity to secure and improve it for themselves' (Reid 2018: 648). When it comes to resilience during military conflicts, the dichotomic distinction *state–society* does not seem to be plausible: in Ukraine, the functionality of the government, the consolidation of political elites and the professional communication and information management boosted the legitimacy of the state as a security provider and simultaneously inspired resilience within society.

Second, I disagree with authors who believe that resilience 'discourages active citizenship', and even puts 'into jeopardy the concept of public space' (Juntunen & Hyvönen 2014: 196). On the contrary, the Ukrainian experience proves that resilience is deeply political since it 'seeks to empower people to be agents of their own vulnerability reduction in order to make the proper choices and avoid maladaptation in an emergent environment' (Grove 2014: 244). Therefore, practices of everyday resilience 'create subjects' (Cavelty, Kaufmann & Kristensen 2015: 9) – civil society organisations, grass-roots groups and networks as key sources of the life-saving strategy of survival and safeguarding human security.

Third, another flaw in the extant body of academic literature concerns the interpretation of resilience as an opposite to various forms of interventionism. In David Chandler's opinion, central is the differentiation between the resilience paradigm and liberal internationalism: the former 'puts the agency of those most in need of assistance at the center, stressing a programme of empowerment and capacity-building, whereas the (latter - Author) puts the emphasis upon the agency of external interveners, acting post hoc to protect or secure the victims of state-led or state-condoned abuses' (Chandler 2012: 216). Therefore, for resilience 'the emphasis is on prevention rather than intervention, empowerment rather than protection, and work upon the vulnerable rather than upon victims' (Chandler 2012: 217). This interpretation highlights a structural change within the Western political order towards 'the post-liberal approach to resilience that emphasizes the ongoing participatory and self-organizing empowerment of local agents' (Natorski 2022: 4).

Yet the case of Ukraine demonstrates that interventionism, rather than disappearing, takes multiple forms which, again, largely depend on and is constructed by discourses. I share the view that resilience-driven programmes ought to be linked with arms supply and other forms of military assistance (Hamilton 2022). Resilience, in other words, ought to 'be seen as an integrated element of national security' (Fjäder 2014: 123). The insufficient interventionism exhibited by the Western partners after the war started in 2014 might be among the root causes of the further conflict dynamics. However, what makes a difference in 2022 is that Ukrainian leadership, building on the ability of the Ukrainian Army to withstand and deter the superior Russian forces during the first months of the full-scale invasion, persuaded western partners to unblock weapons delivery, in some cases altering the existing skepticism regarding the matter. As a result, the Ramstein Contact Group on the defence of Ukraine was created, the law on land lease was adopted in the US and the supply of American Patriot systems was approved. Thus, the provision of external resources (being military or not) is embedded in the resilience, but its acquisition is not assured until Ukraine's agency is performed and duly communicated. Furthermore, as it was underscored by

President Zelenskyy, 'the provided military aid is not a charity but an investment in global security', and Ukraine, consequently, is a contributor to global security (Zelenskyy 2022b).

Based on these three critical points, I conceptualise resilience as a set of performative practices that conflate and constitute the foundation for Ukraine's agency. In the next section I will specifically focus on four dimensions, or facets, of this phenomenon and relate them to different types of power (productive, institutional and communicative). The four types of resilience are connected and synergetically reinforce each other. Thus, information resilience creates a sense of national unity which is indispensable for the society›s resoluteness to go through the ordeals of the war. By the same token, local resilience, largely stemming from decentralisation reform, operates hand in hand with the mechanism of societal determination to thwart the Russian invasion. In its turn, institutional resilience is a precondition for the effective functioning of the state at both central and local levels, which serves as a major reference point for the Ukrainian media and an inspiration for multiple social groups (volunteers, fundraisers, urban activists, etc.).

Ukraine's resilience: Four domestic facets

As seen from the outside, resilience is viewed as defiance despite occupation, sieges, energy blackouts and Russian war crimes including systematic sexual violence, forced deportations and mass killings (Mefford 2022). Domestic sociological data (Rating Group 2022c) indicated a high level of resilience among Ukrainians – 3.9 points out of a possible 5. In this rating, resilience consists of two indicators: physical health and psychological well-being and comfort, including interest in life, feeling of usefulness, ability to make decisions and plans for the future and lack of regret for the past. In my view, this is valuable empirical material that can be interpreted in a constructivist way. I suggest expanding this spectrum and singling out four facets of resilience to be tackled below.

Societal resilience
The resumption of the war produced a strong anti-imperial momentum in Ukrainian society. It implied an exponential growth of negative attitudes towards the Russian state that had already been quite explicit since 2014. Both the annexation of Crimea and the proxy war in Donbas had a major impact on public opinion. Thus, since December 2021 polls showed that about three quarters of Ukrainians perceived Russia as a hostile state (KIIS 2021; Rating Group 2022f). Since the restart of the war the numbers have risen significantly to almost 100%. By the same token, the shift in attitudes was even more dramatic in the case of

Belarus: the number of Ukrainians who saw this northern neighbour as a hostile country jumped from 22% in late 2020 to 84% after the invasion in 2022 (Rating Group 2022h; Ilko Kucheriv 2022a).

Until the beginning of the invasion in February 2022, the south-east of Ukraine demonstrated less animosity towards Russia, but the numbers of those who saw Russia as an enemy were already high enough. Socioeconomic ties of the south-east with Russia – exemplified by integrated supply chains and trans-border economics – were damaged years ago. Since 2014 Ukraine and Russia have gradually lowered their economic interdependence. If in 2013 bilateral trade counted for almost $40 billion, by 2019 it had dropped to $10 billion (Zachmann 2020). These cuts left the alleged affinity to Russia in the predominantly Russophone regions of Ukraine without a strong material basis. The first days of the full-scale invasion clearly showed that even in the largely Russian-speaking areas no support for invasion existed, and in the areas that Russian troops put under their control they were perceived as an occupation force. The vast majority of the population in the south (90%) and in the east (85%) of Ukraine have a negative attitude towards Russia (KIIS 2022a).

What changed indeed was the attitude towards Russians. Prior to the war Ukrainians tended to make a distinction between the Russian state (seen as the perpetrator of the conflict), and the Russian society, which was usually perceived as friendlier or at least neutral to Ukrainians. The restart of the war and the realisation of the fact that a majority of Russians support it, wiped out this distinction in Ukrainian public opinion. Now Ukrainians equally blame both the Russian leadership and Russian people (Ilko Kucheriv 2022a), and almost 70% of Ukrainians have negative feelings towards Russians (Rating Group 2022d). The absolute majority of Ukrainians now are point-blank rejecting the idea that Ukrainians and Russians are the same people, neither ethnically nor politically. Only 8% of respondents still raise their voice in support of this Russian political narrative, while less than a year ago, in August 2021, almost 40% somehow accepted it (Rating Group 2022c). The invasion of 2022 resulted in the rise of a general anti-Russian mood in Ukraine, while massive pro-Russian sentiments among the general public vanished much earlier.

The transformation of the public perceptions of Russia and Russians denotes a further shift in the identity politics of Ukraine. Alienation from associations with Russia became a universal trend. Since the restart of the war Ukrainians revisited their views of common history and culture, moving apart from the Russian state and society. The most notable shifts included the symbolic downgrading of the Soviet era May 9 celebration: nowadays only a small number of Ukrainians treat it as 'victory day', thus distancing themselves from the Russian historical narrative. Earlier attempts by the Ukrainian government to substitute

the Soviet era May 9 with the Day of Europe on May 8, undertaken since 2014, initially faced massive opposition within society, not only in the south-east, but even in the centre of Ukraine (Rating Group 2019). But since February 2022 what was seen as a government-imposed narrative turned into a consensually accepted approach as the majority of Ukrainians voluntarily drifted away from the Soviet/Russian interpretation of WWII.

Analysis of local electronic petitions allows us to monitor the changing attitudes and perceptions within the society. In 2022 the petitions most supported in numbers demanded getting rid of Russian and Soviet cultural and political legacy (Pidenko 2022). More than ever before, Ukrainian people do not want to live on streets named after Russian notables and writers, affiliate with the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate or tolerate monuments to the Russian imperial past. Similar shifts occurred with the linguistic self-identification: according to the polls, the number of Ukrainians using the Russian language decreased from 26% in 2021 to 15% in late spring 2022 (Rating Group 2022d; KIIS 2022c). After the start of the invasion many Russian-speaking Ukrainians switched to Ukrainian in daily life. For them this was a political gesture, as they were keen to demonstrate the affinity to Ukraine and to break up ties with Russia. For many Ukrainians this trend further developed into a personal rejection of Russian culture and references to it in their lives: this is manifested in calls to cancel classes in Russian literature in school curricula, demands to ban Russian popular culture (songs, books, movies) and massive support for removal of Russian and Soviet memories from Ukrainian toponymics (Hunder 2022).

This reactive negation of the Russian world ideology is, however, productive. A poll conducted at the very start of the Russian intervention showed that 82% of Ukrainians were sure that it would be repelled (Gradus Research 2022a). After Ukrainian forces withstood the first Russian assaults, confidence in the victory grew even further (95% in late March 2022 and January 2023 (Rating Group 2022b; KIIS 2023)). After months of fierce fighting and devastation Ukrainians still remained positive that they will prevail – to such an extent that any territorial concession to Russia is seen by 89% of Ukrainians as an unacceptable price for peace, which is a push factor for eventually retaking the territories of Donbas and Crimea occupied in 2014 (KIIS 2022d). Lack of overtly pessimistic attitudes in public narratives also drives the dominant political narrative: as society does not show demand for peace at any cost, there is no space for political actors with explicit pacifist attitudes, or proponents of immediate peace talks with Russia.

Thus, at the end of the 2022, 82% of Ukrainians believed that things in Ukraine were going in the right direction, compared to only one fourth of respondents who agreed with that prior to the war (Rating Group 2022i; KIIS 2023). Amid

worsening economic, social and security situations this poll reflects not a lack of critical thinking among Ukrainians, but rather their readiness to accept hardships in order to secure independence and a democratic future. Since the start of the war collective interests of national survival, freedom and sovereignty have prevailed, which has turned out to be the socio-political foundation for resilience. More than half of the population (56.9%) were physically and financially involved in volunteering (Reznik 2022). Indicatively, in the words of the head of the Central Bank of Ukraine, societal resilience translates into a financial and economic asset due to adaptability and flexibility of the Ukrainian labour force, even during the war (Verbyany 2022).

By the same token, the war displayed mechanisms through which social capital and family networks became helpful elements of resilience, including new incentives for collective actions, solidarity and mutual aid. Ties between relatives, neighbours and communities serve as a critical engine in resilience-building: thus, according to a survey, the number of Ukrainians who trust the residents of their locality almost doubled (from 35% to 62%), two-thirds of citizens (67%) trust neighbours and people living nearby and as many as 80% of the respondents declare that they trust their acquaintances (Gradus Research 2022b). Members of large families from the war-torn regions have found refuge in the western part of Ukraine. Neighbourhoods, where residents relied on mutual help and assistance, could better overcome shared problems (Opanasenko 2022). These practices of grass-roots resilience are substantial components of Ukraine's development as a networked society where the middle class has proven capable of taking social and financial responsibility in times of previous crises, including the Maidan Revolution, protection of doctors at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19 and now the war with Russia.

My analysis shows that the war enhanced the attraction of Ukrainian and European cultural identity for most Ukrainians, while elements of Russian-oriented self-identification are vanishing from the national mindscape. Ukraine's agency is not elite-driven, but rests on strong grass-roots components. This agency implies the erasure of a Russia-promoted narrative of a split within Ukrainian identity and the allegedly unbridgeable gaps between different parts of the country. Ukraine's agency in this respect is explicitly anti-post-Soviet in the sense that the country does not wish to position itself within the geopolitical cage of 'former Soviet republics', and preferred a long-term strategy of cultural and normative association with Europe. The productive negation of path dependence on Russia might be seen as a form of power that drives Ukraine in the direction of the Euro-Atlantic security community, which requires an institutional backup to be discussed next.

Institutional resilience

The war didn't just overshadow every other issue of political relevance in the country – it literally 'silenced' political life compared to the one before the invasion. All of public politics is almost entirely focused on supporting the common cause of defeating the aggressor, and foreign, economic, financial and legislative policy agendas are significantly streamlined in accordance to this priority. Undoubtedly, the functionality of the main public institutions is conditioned by the military efficacy of the Ukrainian Army that during the first phase of the war managed to repel superior Russian forces and regain control over some territories. This created preconditions and facilitated the coping of Ukrainian public institutions with numerous challenges with IDPs, relocation of enterprises and operation of social and economic systems; later on, when Russia resorted to the tactic of missile attacks against energy infrastructure, public authorities' efforts were focused on repairing the damage and sustaining basic heating and water supplies during the winter season.

From an institutional viewpoint, a number of shifts happened due to the war. President Zelenskyy became an icon of Ukrainian resistance both at home and abroad. His robust leadership style won a predominant support of almost 90% of Ukrainians, with his political reputation index at an all-time record of 77% (Gradus 2022a; Ilko Kucheriv 2022b). Zelenskyy's model of leadership encouraged Ukrainian society to self-mobilise for the sake of shared goals, encouraging everyone 'to do their part from their place', as they see fit to achieve victory (Pisano 2022: 11). The high approval rating of Zelenskyy is handing him huge authority to lead the changes in the country, even bigger than he had after the landslide victory in the 2019 presidential election. He is now in the position to define the direction of Ukraine's reconstruction and reforms, and has enough reputational resources to revamp both his party and the presidential office.

After the first month of the war, when the Ukrainian Army withstood the initial assault by the Russian troops, many Ukrainians found another national hero in the Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, with whom the leadership in strategic planning is associated (Romanyuk 2022). In public opinion Valeriy Zaluzhny is perceived as the only figure – besides the President – who can share the glory of successful leadership during this war (Rating Group 2022g; Razumkov 2023).

In some Ukrainian regions too, military commanders responsible for the successful defense and counter-offensive gained trust and support from the local population and are considered as potential runners-up for regional public offices. One example is Major General Viktor Nikoliuk, the key figure in the defense of Chernihiv. Additionally, some veteran organisations have already shown themselves as political actors in recent years, and with many more vet-

erans coming home after the current phase of the war, these groups can be even more influential than before – both as grass-roots movements and as national NGOs.

The high level of trust in the President and the army can be attributed to the rally- round-the-flag effect, which for Ukraine, where society has been traditionally critical of authorities, is a novelty. At the same time, it should not gloss over the fact that the high level of society–state unity and almost entire absence of internal critique – 82% of respondents believe that things in Ukraine are going in the right direction (Rating Group 2022i; KIIS 2023) – are wartime conditional only, and can barely be suitable for a post-war democratic society. As research literature suggests, such vertical social cohesion is usually bolstered by external physical threats and has the increased demand for decisive military response as its flip side (Lambert et al. 2010).

The Verkhovna Rada clearly confirms this argument. Earlier a backbone of pluralism as any parliament in a democratic society, it currently functions as the 'legislative department of the President' (Rahmanin 2023). The actorship of most political parties presented there have diminished during the war. A number of parties designated as pro-Russian collaborators were banned by the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine on 18 March 2022, and approved by the majority of Ukrainians (Rating Group 2022d). But the presidential party is also facing a challenge when appealing to the wide public: while still the most popular among voters, 'The Servant of the People' with an approval rating of only 45% (NDI 2022) is lagging far behind its leader. Since parliament is a key actor to enable reforms, it should be a respected force on its own, capable of forming coalitions necessary for constitutional changes and of developing a long-term strategy even beyond the (potential) second term of Zelenskyy. Yet the weakness of the presidential majority in the Rada lies in the low level of trust in the parliament. For Ukrainians it is one of the least respected political institutions, trusted by only a quarter of the population (IRI 2022; Ilko Kucheriv 2022b). A potential political landscape with a highly popular president and a much less popular Rada could be a cause of institutional destabilisation as there might be a temptation to preserve such a disposition in order to enable resilience-laden reforms and to secure their support among Ukrainians.

The overall functionality of the Ukrainian state apparatus and public institutions under the dire conditions is a key factor defining Ukraine's agency grounded in what might be dubbed 'democratic resilience', or the ability of a political regime to prevent or react to challenges without losing its 'democratic character' (Merkel 2023: 4). The legitimacy of the state apparatus and the ensuing institutional power builds upon effective management during the war, its resoluteness and strategic communication with society. The war catalysed major changes in

the nature of relations between the state and society in a more trustful and supportive way. It created a mobilised environment during the war, but also raised expectations for the post-war transformation of the state, rather than a return to the old practices. This implies building socio-political relations without oligarchy, corruption and inefficient bureaucracy, further expanding the rights of citizens and opportunities of communities, and the eventual membership in the EU and NATO. As the key representative of Ukraine, President Zelenskyy performs as both an incarnation of a functional institutional apparatus and a communicative leader of international scale. I will dwell upon this in the last part of this section, but before that let me show how Ukrainian subnational units contribute to resilience and boost Ukraine's agency.

Local resilience

In pre-war Ukrainian politics the central government usually respected the established regional balances of power and avoided reshuffling regional elites. Yet since the restart of the war the President has appointed new cadres to key positions at subnational level. Under the martial law *oblast* administrations were transformed into military–civil administrative units tasked with organisation of defence and logistics for the military. In some cases governors were substituted by high-ranking military officers.

Overall, public institutions have remained functional in regions, including those most affected by Russia's military attacks. One third of local authorities in Ukraine never halted their operations, almost half of them returned to normal functioning two weeks after the invasion or liberation, and a majority (72%) haven't stopped providing administrative services (Keudel 2023).

The key prerequisite for this is decentralisation reform which was among the most successful transformations in Ukraine in recent years, and during the war it paid off a lot. It consolidated and empowered local governance through a combination of local amalgamation and fiscal decentralisation. All the amalgamated territorial communities were given independent budgets and direct access to inter-budgetary relations with the central budget (Romanova 2022).

Even though at the initial stage of the invasion local self-governance in *hromadas* (communities) often were left on their own, in most cases they coped fairly well with taking care of infrastructure and meeting daily demands of the population (Local 2022). Most of the local authorities (92%) had emergency plans (Keudel 2023). The findings of a wide specialised research attest to their ability to deal with such major shocks of the war as unexpectedness of the full-scale invasion, missile strikes, disinformation and psychological operations of the enemy, mass-scale influx of IDPs and threats to economic stability and critical infrastructure (Rabinovich 2022).

Local authorities, businesses and social networks have been particularly essential to resilience at the grass-roots level. In the first months of Russia's invasion, local governments and volunteers, rather than the central government or international responders, were in the limelight of practical resilience. They provided vital humanitarian aid, especially in remote and frontline areas, and helped communities to remain resilient during Russian occupation when access to aid and public services was typically cut off. After the liberation of the occupied parts of Kyiv, Sumy and Chernihiv, oblasts, local communities and volunteers were helpful in restoring destroyed houses and transporting humanitarian aid to the population. The role of local actors was particularly salient given that international organisations (including the UN, Doctors Without Borders and the International Committee of the Red Cross) were absent on the ground during the first months of the invasion (Costa-Kostritsky 2022).

The experience of communities shows that local self-governance gained a much higher public confidence due to the successful management of the war consequences both in the occupied/affected *hromadas* and elsewhere. What is even more valuable for the development of local self-governance is people's high level of confidence – up to 56% – in these institutions, which is higher than public support for the Ukrainian government and the majority of national level public institutions (KIIS 2022b). This gives local governance much popular credit for a more active involvement with the nationwide politics of resistance and post-war reconstruction to be largely funded from international sources, which in the meantime might create competing claims over control and management of financial flows between the central government and local/regional authorities.

Therefore a potential rise of local self-governance from mostly administrative to more political roles is another trend affecting Ukraine's resilience at subnational level. A decades-long balance of interests between different regions in Ukraine has ultimately changed, and a search for a new balance is about to emerge. The major split in this regard is not cultural, linguistic or religious, but economic. Since the massive privatisation of heavy industries in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, two distinct economic models have been established in two macro-regions of Ukraine. The industrial south-east was developing predominantly along export-oriented lines to sell low added value products abroad, thus seeking cheap workforce and being interested in strong national currency. Regional economies in the west, north and – to certain extent – the centre of Ukraine rather consisted of large import-oriented companies (mostly retailers), as well as small and middle businesses. These actors were economically more liberal, keen to establish a sizable internal consumer market and a weaker national currency. As the interests of the two models diverged, their

lobbying efforts led to a similar confrontation in politics in which identity and historical memories were meticulously used to alienate one part of the country from the other and to establish a reliable and long-lasting electoral foundation to sustain each model's interests. This disbalance may not live further because of the changes caused by the war. Heavy industries of the southeast are damaged or destroyed (World Bank 2022), mass migration is watering out a cheap workforce (IOM 2022) and the conservative political camp is losing both its electorate and economic foundations.

A large-scale movement within the country has a particular imprint on the mass resilience of Ukrainians. The displacement of one-third of the country's population within Ukraine is a unique phenomenon with potentially positive repercussions, as despite mutual prejudices and stereotypes existed before the war, residents of different regions had to cooperate and get to know each other. This experience of domestic integration of residents of different regions will hopefully contribute to an even greater consolidation of the nation and a crystallisation of collective identity.

Therefore, the efforts undertaken by local governments and civil society were an example of how decisions on responding to threats are made at the lowest possible level, which corresponds to the principle of subsidiarity effectively operational in Western federations. This is especially noteworthy given that Ukraine lacked strong traditions of local self-government prior to the war. Local resilience contributed to the ability of local governments, volunteers and population to deal together with the shocks of war. The horizontal cooperation of various local actors with clearly defined roles and responsibilities serves as a basis for Ukrainian agency both in the sense of domestic coherence and consolidation, and in terms of consonance with an EU-promoted emphasis on reliance on local resources and ownership for building resilient societies (Joseph & Juncos 2020). The success of the decentralisation reform in Ukraine was already acknowledged by the EU (von der Leyen 2022) and served as a building block for granting Ukraine the status of candidate for EU membership.

Information resilience
The fact that the full-scale invasion was preceded by a hybrid war with Russia has helped Ukraine to gain experience in countering Russian propaganda. Russian television channels in Ukraine were banned (2014), access to the popular Russian social networks was halted (2017) and the broadcasting of several Ukrainian TV channels, which systematically disseminated messages of Russian disinformation, was stopped (2021). At the same time, it was important for Ukraine that the EU countries perceive it as a part of their big family, so a lot of effort has been made to explain that these decisions about blocking propaganda re-

sources do not limit freedom of speech. In contrast to Russia, Ukrainian media were characterised by diversity and pluralism of opinions before the war. This remained in effect after the invasion, although media coverage sometimes suffers from over-optimism (Dan'kova 2022).

As has been shown earlier, amid the Russian invasion all major political forces in Ukraine publicly demonstrated unity and willingness to contribute to the defense of the country. A set of meetings on 23-24 February 2022 in Rada resulted in the coordination of legislative activities to put aside previous political contradictions. No formal agreement was signed, but the de facto political armistice was agreed upon from that moment and is mostly respected by key political forces. This convention was widely promoted in the media space: many politicians, especially those in opposition, were keen to underline their positive input to the internal consensus by praising their restraint from criticising the head of the state (Rahmanin 2023).

The first test to the unity of political actors was set in March 2022, when the government pushed for unified information policy in the media space to further consolidate public politics in Ukraine. A major element of those efforts was the introduction of a unified information policy by the National Security and Defense Council decision of 18 March 2022 to set a single frame for news coverage and political analysis as long as the martial law is in place. All-national TV channels were to abide by the policy, while the presidential team effectively limited national television broadcasting to one channel (United News), whose information policy is under control of the President's office (Dan'kova 2022). Also, Ukrainian journalists signed a joint statement on maintaining a balance between press access to events and state security and acknowledged their compliance with the Commander-in-Chief's order on the rules of journalists' work in the area of hostilities (DetectorMedia 2022).

While centralisation of information management was justified by the ongoing information warfare, there were concerns over its implications for democracy and freedom of speech. Some politicians openly criticised this decision. The opposition also instigated an anti-presidential campaign (primarily, in the social media), whose main target was the President and his team's failure to properly heed to the United States' warnings about the imminent Russian invasion, communicated to Zelenskyy in December 2021–January 2022. The aim of this campaign was specifically to discredit the President's ability to properly react to the war threat, and thus to blame him for the losses and to devalue his merits in resistance to Russia. This outburst of political fight in late May 2022 soon calmed down, but demonstrated the true state of diversity in the Ukrainian political landscape and attempts to find a balance between national unity and factional political interests.

Ultimately, a November 2022 poll has shown that 84% of Ukrainian viewers trust the United News (Ukrainian media 2022). The uniformity of the information space contributed to the cohesion of society and improved attitudes towards state institutions and the President. This was influenced by both the war and the lack of opposition channels, which earlier criticised the authorities and Zelenskyy personally. On the other hand, the monotony of the official telecast pushed viewers to turn more often to the Internet and social networks in search for more diversity (Korba 2022).

To summarise my findings, information resilience is a powerful booster to Ukraine's agency. Three points are particularly important here: one is public trust in media sources which was a major basis for preserving a high morale in society and maintaining confidence in the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Another important characteristic is the self-sufficiency of Ukrainian mediascape that cut off Russian (dis)information sources and made them irrelevant even for Ukraine's Russophones. One more facet of information resilience is the voluntary responsibility of journalists, opinionmakers, media celebrities and cultural producers: their consolidated position was instrumental in sustaining a consensual coverage of the Russian invasion and in diminishing the importance of domestic contradictions between different fractions of political elite.

Ukraine's normative agency: External manifestations

Multiple forms of resilience in Ukraine would not have been possible without the prolonged support from the EU that produced and promoted resilience discourses and practices to the entire neighbourhood area, facilitating reforms and creating favourable conditions for resilience. The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement of 2014 was the most comprehensive one that the EU has signed with any other third country. Ukraine has received an unprecedented level of financial support, which became an important contribution to the reification of practices of resilience defined by the EU as the ability of states and societies 'to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises' (Shared 2016). Therefore, it would be fair to say that EU-promoted resilience acts within the logic of the 'power of attraction' through grant-based assistance programmes aimed to boost civil societies of recipient countries, including Ukraine (Lebrun 2018: 5).

In 2020 the EC presented the Eastern Partnership Policy 'Reinforcing Resilience - an EaP that delivers for all', which emphasised the positive results achieved in three out of four priority areas (stronger economy, stronger connectivity and stronger society) in the work plan for reforms '20 Deliverables for 2020'. As regards the stronger governance priority area, the document advocated for 'the need to significantly improve results' in the governance sphere connect-

ed with anti-corruption efforts and empowerment of civil society (European Commission 2020).

The decentralisation and self-governance reform in Ukraine has been one of the pillars of this process. Besides, the EU assistance is instrumental in the support of civil society, free media and grassroot activism in Ukraine, including facilitation of 'local ownership' and 'bottom-up' engagements with the whole society, which allows Ukraine to remain on the right policy track for prompt post-war recovery based on European norms of democracy, transparency and good governance.

Against this background, the EU candidacy status is an important gain to enhance Ukraine's resilience and political agency. The overwhelming support for EU membership among Ukrainians turned out to be one of the few consensual elements in Ukrainian politics since long ago. Approval rating for EU membership was around 70% prior to the war, but since February 2022 it skyrocketed to 80% (Burkovsky 2022). What's important is that in 2022 Ukrainians' perception of the EU was much more pragmatic and responsible than ever before. With a clear understanding that further reforms are a precondition for eventual membership, many Ukrainians are ready to make sacrifices for the sake of ensuring the ultimate success of the required transformations. Almost 70% of Ukrainians support the idea that the necessary reforms are to be implemented regardless of the war, with almost half of those believing the war must not impede even the pace of the reforms (Gradus Research 2022c). Most political actors sustain these popular sentiments for a strong support for the pro-EU reforms.

The EU's contribution to boosting Ukraine's resilience attests to the importance of the structure of international relations within which agency is practiced and effectuated. It is the Euro-Atlantic political community that serves as the major point of attraction and gravitation for Ukraine. Agency within this community is possible only on the basis of internalisation of democratic norms that ought to be accepted and instrumentalised (Sending 2016: 67). Thus, Ukraine builds its agency by incorporating it into a broader structure of the international normative system. The Orange Revolution (2004) and the Revolution of Dignity (2013), along with the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, as well as the newly acquired candidate status for a prospective EU membership can be identified as the key milestones of Ukraine's pathway to normative agency that denotes an ability to act and develop specific policies in accordance with values, principles and rules of the Western democratic tradition. It is a normative agency that makes Ukraine a full-fledged subject of international politics, particularly in the security domain. For example, cross-society resilience implied the adaptation of NATO's best practices of armed forces transformation and mobilisation of net-

works of reservists (Shelest 2022), which in the future might become a valuable asset for Ukraine's integration with the North Atlantic Alliance in the capacity of a country that, as the German Foreign Ministry acknowledges, 'is defending Europe's freedom' (Federal Foreign Office 2022).

The concept of productive power (Barnett 2005) that I briefly touched upon earlier might be instrumental for my analysis of the resilience-grounded normative agency which significantly differs from the status of Ukraine as merely a victim of foreign aggression. Two points are particularly important to underline in this respect. First, when it comes to resilience as a meaningful part of the EU–Ukraine agenda, it results in a 'joint venture' aggregating European experiences and financial means, on the one hand, and Ukrainian practices of grass-roots self-management and the institutional resources of governance on the other. Moreover, by containing the Russian Army, Ukraine can be viewed as a co-producer of European security, which is particularly acknowledged by European countries bordering on Russia. Ukraine's agency, as unfolded in 2022, addresses Western countries with an insistent demand to avoid negotiating Ukraine without Ukraine (Yermak 2022), and to perceive military assistance to Ukraine as an investment in common security, as opposed to charity toward the victim of aggression.

Second, this co-productive power is grounded in normative foundations. Ukraine is fully aware of the fact that its road to Europe is paved with normative commitments that require adherence to common and shared practices of democratic governance, checks and balances, the rule of law, strong civil society and local self-government as preconditions for a resilient society.

However, both points require further problematisation. Chandler's interpretation of resilience as part of the post-interventionist paradigm helps to better understand Ukraine's agency as co-produced by multiple Western investments in its resilience infrastructure. He also makes clear that assistance with resilience does not guarantee protection; moreover, it may imply a shift from the 'responsibility to protect' to a post-interventionist paradigm of empowering vulnerable countries to secure themselves. This shift triggered by the crisis of the liberal interventionism of the first post-Cold War decade explains the hesitancy of many Ukraine's partners to quickly supply the weapons requested by the Ukrainian government, and reluctance to make steps that the Kremlin might consider provoking further escalation. The hesitation of NATO members to include a military component in any negotiated solution, dating back to the previous experiences of US engagement with the issues of Ukrainian security avoiding military options, looks quite illuminating in this respect.

Therefore, the structural circumstances of the Euro-Atlantic security order are beneficial for strengthening Ukraine's agency-through-resilience, yet in the meantime they prevent major Western powers from playing a role of interven-

ing and securing actors, at least not to the extent that Ukraine might need it. This ambiguity is core for the intersubjective understanding of agency and the role of communication between Ukraine and its key partners: the former appeals to the agency of Western governments in containing Russia to secure the Euro-Atlantic liberal order, while the latter praise Ukraine's resilience and incrementally integrate it in their practical security measures.

Conclusion

Ukraine demonstrated several important features of resilience that were not sufficiently visible before the war and that define Ukraine's agency. Ukrainian society is characterised by a high level of self-organisation, social horizontality and self-control. Ukrainian public institutions have largely remained functional, including in the regions most affected by Russia's military activities. The popularity of Zelenskyy handed him a huge authority to lead the country, but also put the major question of whether he will be able to use the popular trust to continue crucial reforms in much more complicated circumstances. Even though all political forces in Ukraine publicly demonstrate unity, oppositional political interests have not disappeared. New political actors – either from war heroes or renowned activists – will most certainly find their way to the political scene, and regional elites may join the ranks of national party politics.

The article contributed to scholarly debate in international relations in a number of ways. It showed the nexus of resilience and agency as two sides of the same coin, and discussed how agency functions as productive negation in a sense that rejection of compromises with the Kremlin-promoted 'Russian world' served as a basis for state- and nation-building in Ukraine. I also demonstrated that agency is grounded in different types of productive power, which conflate and reinforce each other, particularly in institutional and communicative domains. As my next step, I posited that this power might be dubbed co-productive since it was largely stimulated by multiple Western assistance programmes that before the war prepared Ukraine for a resilient agency, including effective resistance to Russian encroachments. Finally, my last argument concerned the concept of normative agency that treats resilience as a strategy of self-reliance that in the meantime due to its normative compatibility and consonance with the principles of democratic governance opens prospective avenues for Ukraine's eventual integration with the Euro-Atlantic institutional and normative structures as a power capable of contributing to common security. Ukraine's success in this long pathway will largely depend on whether and how its normative agency will be accepted and translated into specific policies and decisions of the EU and NATO as two main pillars and gravitation polls for Ukraine in the foreseeable future.

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Yulia Kurnyshova is a postdoctoral researcher in the Centre for East European Studies (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa) at the University of Bremen. Before moving to Germany in 2022, she had been working in National Institute for Strategic Studies, USAID and EBRD programmes. Kurnyshova's areas of expertise include international security, US foreign policy as well as internal and foreign policy of Ukraine. She received her Ph.D. in History from the National Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv (2004). Yulia Kurnyshova has authored a large number of academic and analytical publications and is a frequent media commentator.

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Conflictual Rebordering: The Russia Policies of Finland and Estonia

Andrey Makarychev
University of Tartu, Estonia, corresponding address: andrey.makarychev@ut.ee

Tatiana Romashko
University of Jyväskylä, Finland, ORCiD: 0000-0002-9912-3697, corresponding address: tatiana.t.romashko@jyu.fi

Abstract

This article seeks to analyse the process of conflictual rebordering in the EU's relations with Russia. The authors single out three major crises that triggered and shaped the process of toughening the border regime and the related transformations of political meaning of the EU-Russia border: the COVID-19 pandemic, the drastic deterioration of Moscow-Brussels relations in the beginning of 2021 and the war in Ukraine that started on 24 February 2022. Correspondingly, the EU's reactions to each of these critical junctures might be described through the academic concepts of governmentality, normativity and geopolitics. Our aim is to look at the three ensuing models – governmental, normative and geopolitical rebordering – from the vantage point of Estonia and Finland, two EU member states sharing borders with Russia, yet in the meantime remaining distinct from each other in developing particular border policies and approaches vis-a-vis their eastern neighbour.

Introduction

In only a decade, EU-Russia relations have degraded from a multi-dimensional institutional partnership to a standoff followed by a deep freezing of almost all policy tracks after Russia's invasion in Ukraine on 24 February 2022. The EU reacted by applying sanctions to make Russia pay a dear price for deviation from international norms and as an instrument for containing Russia, to which the Kremlin responded with a complete disruption of relations with Brussels as a key element of Russia's strategy of unconstrained freedom to act at its own discretion.

In this article we look at the deterioration of Russia's relations with the EU through the prism of three constitutive events. First, the coronavirus crisis has aggravated the frigid EU-Russia coexistence. Russia's and the EU's crisis management strategies were largely detached from each other (Baunov 2021) which expanded the space for conflictuality. The border closure between Russia and the EU in March 2020 looked like a metaphorical completion of the whole cycle of confrontation, symbolically marking the descending trajectory of relations. The lockdown provoked by COVID-19 duly reflected the state of bilateral relations: Europe did not trust Russian official statistics (from electoral to medical), while Russia did not seem to be interested in discussing conditions for a full border re-opening with Brussels. In this sense, COVID-19 has proved that Europe can live apart from Russia, and that many Putin sympathisers have apparently overrated the indispensability of Russia for the entirety of the EU.

The second crisis erupted due to the arrest of Alexei Navalny, Russian opposition leader, on his way back to Moscow in January 2021 after being poisoned in Russia and then medically rehabilitated in Germany. A particularly significant sign of the aggravation of tensions between Moscow and Brussels was Josep Borrell's visit to Russia in February 2021, and its controversial echoes that have incited a chain of events consequential for the EU's relationship with Russia.

Thirdly, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has exposed a clash of two fundamentally different conceptions of power in international relations. On the side of the Euro-Atlantic West, power is inherently normative and institutional, and is based on shared principles and rules supporting them by the governmentality of multilateral organisations that prioritise technocratic, legalistic and utilitarian policies over transgressive, revisionist and potentially dangerous politics of sovereign reason. Never before has the contrast between the two philosophies

of power been so lucid. By the same token, Russia's war against Ukraine has demonstrated the distinction between NATO members (such as the Baltic and Central European states) and non-members such as Ukraine, as well as Georgia invaded by Russia in 2008. The decision of Sweden and Finland to apply for NATO membership was a clear indication of a change in structural conditions of security, where governmentality can no longer mitigate geopolitical concerns and is thus shrinking under the pressure of sovereign power.

The borderland location is a politically important factor in each of these conflicts and crises, since some of Russia's neighbours claim to possess a unique experience with Russia, yet in the meantime they are the most vulnerable to Russia's policies. Two countries – Finland and Estonia – exemplify this ambiguity. On the one hand, both tried to maintain a space for national diplomacies towards Russia: the Finnish foreign minister visited St. Petersburg in the immediate aftermath of Borrell's failure in Moscow, and the Estonian government that came to power in January 2021 has demonstrated its willingness to restart negotiations with Moscow on the border treaty. On the other hand, structural distinctions between Finland and Estonia are lucid. The former has used its border location for managing the Northern Dimension programme as a multilateral instrument for engaging Russia and its north-west regions in environmental, educational and people-to-people contacts, while the latter has always been trying to persuade its Western partners to reconsider their idealistic perceptions of Russia. The roots of these distinctions are structural and date back to the fall of the Soviet Union that brought economic losses to Finland and political freedom to Estonia. Multiple asymmetries between these two culturally and geographically close neighbours elucidated a strategic importance of balancing sanctions as a deterrence tool with safeguarding unity of EU diplomacy, as well as between harsh criticism of Russia and maintenance of bilateral tracks of relations with Moscow.

Therefore, the overall *research puzzle* we tackle in this article is how different logics and the ensuing discourses – geopolitical, normative and governmental – shape Russia policies of Finland and Estonia? How may these logics be conceptualised, and what does the imbrication of these logics imply for the two countries? How does the conflation of different rationalities dislocate foreign policies of the two countries? A related puzzle deals with the explanatory potential of the three logics regarding discrepancies between the EU's external relations and bilateral contacts of the member states with Russia.

By looking at the interaction of Finland and Estonia with their common eastern neighbour, we want to expose distinctions between the two countries that share common institutional (EU membership and the ensuing normative regulations) and geolocational characteristics. Our theoretical approach allows us to capture the patterns of each country's Russia policy through a combination

of certain logics that sometimes operate in unison and overlap, and sometimes contradict each other, thus creating a room for manoeuvre. For this reason, our paper seeks not only to compare the two given countries, but also to broaden the academic discussion on the variability of possible strategies of bordering and re-bordering that are simultaneously affected by geopolitical tensions, national priorities and member states' commitments to EU policies.

Materials and methods
The research is based on an analysis of three critical moments – the border lockdown due to the pandemic, Navalny's imprisonment and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. We study Finnish and Estonian reactions and approaches to these events and their adjustment to the border policies with Russia. To do so, we draw on discourse analysis of governmental reports and official statements derived from open sources of information such as:

1. the websites of official bodies: the Library of Parliament (*Eduskunnan kirjasto*), Finnish Government (*Suomen valtioneuvosto*), Estonian Government (*Eesti Vabariigi Valitsus*), Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Välisministeerium*) and Permanent Mission of Estonia to the UN;
2. the key news media in Finland and Estonia: Yle Uutiset (*http://yle.fi/*), Helsingin Sanomat (*https://www.hs.fi*) and ERR (*https://news.err.ee/);*
3. and findings from previous fieldwork and the interviews collected in Lappeenranta in February-March 2019 for the Finnish case of border governance.

In addressing these debates, we treated them as discourses that construct the multiplicity of actors with their governmental and security practices. We seek to explore how these discourses articulate Russia as a geographic neighbour for Finland and Estonia, and how Russia unfolds discursively in the contexts of various logics and rationalities and official pronouncements. Our study is limited to the period of the escalation of three critical junctures, that is from March 2020 when the first measures of border lockdown were put in place till May 2022 when Finland (along with Sweden), enthusiastically supported by Estonia, applied for NATO membership.

The three critical junctures and the logic of escalation
In this section, we discuss how three crises – the coronavirus pandemic, the political aggravation of Russia-EU relations in the aftermath of the Navalny case and Russia's aggression against Ukraine – can be approached from the viewpoint of trans-border relations.

The biopolitical lockdown

The ongoing conflict between Russia and the West was complicated by CO-VID-19, particularly by the unprecedented border lockdown and Russia's complaints about the EU's hesitance to accept the Sputnik V vaccine. The gaps between Russia and the EU in tackling COVID-19 can be discerned while looking at the major foreign policy tenets of both parties. As seen from the Russian dominant perspective, globalisation is in crisis, and the pandemic paved the way for a return to national policies and sovereignties. In the Russian interpretation, COVID-19 showcased vulnerabilities of liberal democracies, questioned the idea of liberal internationalism and proved the effectiveness of unilateral actions and bilateral deals. Russian diplomacy tried to use the pandemic to prevent a return to a normative and value-based structure of international relations, and therefore to blur the lines between liberal and illiberal regimes, as well as between democracies and non-democracies, which – in this interpretation – makes all regimes similar to each other, since all the affected countries have to resort to deviations from classic democracy. The Western liberal order, in the eyes of Putin and his associates, does not have competitive advantages over illiberal regimes when it comes to the life protection function (Trenin 2020). Generally, Russia is interested in capitalising on the shifting attention from such issues as the war-by-proxies in Donbas or the annexation of Crimea, to health diplomacy and the mutual recognition of vaccines.

The EU approach is grounded in a different set of premises. Despite all setbacks in the COVID-19 crisis management, the EU stood strongly for global coordination policies exemplified by its contribution to the COVAX initiative. The Commission and member states have taken a common EU approach to securing supplies and facilitating the rollout of vaccines as practical implementations of liberal internationalism.

When it comes to practicalities, during the pandemic Russia tried to diversify its foreign policy toolkit. Putin proposed lifting international sanctions against the most badly affected countries, but it went unnoticed. More visible were performative actions of Russian 'health diplomacy' in Italy and Serbia in spring 2020. In 2021 vaccine diplomacy became a new foreign policy tool to re-define the relations with 'Europe' (less with the EU and more with member states). In this context Russia found in the vaccine a new policy instrument that could allow the Russian state to reposition itself as a globally indispensable power possessing an effective cure against the deadly disease. However, a common EU-wide approach boiled down to accepting the Russian vaccine only after its certification by the European Medicines Agency (EMA). Most EU member states, Estonia and Finland included, adhered to this norm aimed at what in a different context was called a 'biopolitical demarcation of Europe' (Baar 2017: 215). There-

fore, the COVID-19 crisis has strengthened the cleavages between Russia and the EU, which was exemplified by Putin's irritation with the reluctance of the EU authorities to accept Sputnik V beyond EMA regulations. In the meantime, the pandemic left it up to each specific country to construct their border policies along the lines of normative, geopolitical or governmentally biopolitical logics to be introduced later.

The Navalny crisis and its repercussions

Conceptually, this conflict has pitted the EU's adherence to democratic norms and de-legitimation of autocracies, on the one hand, and Russia's insistence on national sovereignty and the ensuing equality of all power holders, regardless of the nature of their political regimes, on the other. In a practical sense, at the centre of attention was the unfriendly treatment that the head of EU diplomacy received in Russia, including a well synchronised expulsion of European diplomats from Moscow. The EU has introduced a bunch of sanctions based on the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime[1] that envisaged travel bans and the freezing of funds for individuals and entities associated with human rights violations. From its side, the Russian Foreign Ministry declared the president of the European Parliament David Sassoli and the EU commissioner Věra Jourová *personae non gratae*.

The tug-of-war between Russia and the EU over the imprisonment of Alexei Navalny was followed by harsh tensions between Prague and Moscow regarding Russian intelligence operatives involved in an explosion at a Czech arms depot in 2014 that killed two people. In May 2021, twelve European countries expelled Russian diplomats as a sign of solidarity with Czechia. Russia included Czechia, along with the United States, in a list of 'unfriendly countries', a new concept in the Russian foreign policy toolkit. The coordinated attempt of Germany and France to replicate the Biden-Putin summit in Geneva with the symmetric move of inviting the Russian president to resume the tradition of EU-Russia summits was blocked by a consolidated position taken by Central European and Baltic states.

Russia's war against Ukraine

From the viewpoint of the Russian mainstream discourse, the so-called 'crisis' in Ukraine was the 'last drop', the 'final clarifying issue', (Haukkala 2021: 196) that allegedly left Russia with no choice than to intervene, to which the EU, from its perspective, had to respond with sanctions. Under these conditions, the Russian policy is one of the few foreign policy domains where the EU does have a common approach. The institutional coherence shown by the EU put the

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1   https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/02/22/

Russian elite in a disadvantageous position: even the most Russia-friendly European governments voted for sanctions when it comes to their compliance with a shared policy of the Union. While Russia perceives sanctions as an illegitimate geopolitical tool, the EU sees them as a way to make Russia pay an economic price for deviation from normative rules of democracy and as an instrument of preventing Putin's regime from undertaking other illegitimate actions in the future.

Based on empirical material, in the following section we show how the three events might be explained through three logics that intersect in Estonian and Finnish contexts expanding the room for policy manoeuvres (Pic.1). Our goal is to open these binarised conflicts to a discussion of three different logics or rationalities (in a Foucauldian sense) that shape policy choices of EU member states: geopolitics, normativity and governmentality. These logics manifest themselves through particular discourses that develop in parallel to each other, overlap or clash, thus producing various fields of tensions and hybridities. A pluralistic approach to the EU's relations with Russia is particularly topical since, as some observers suggest, 'in the absence of any improvement in Russia-EU ties in the short to medium-term, it might be pertinent to focus on building bilateral ties between Russia and individual European states' (Kapoor 2021). This primarily concerns countries bordering Russia, since the deterioration of the Kremlin's relations with the EU still leaves some space for interaction between neighbours. However, the critical state of EU-Russia relations creates a more fertile ground for multiple asymmetries in foreign policy tactics and diplomatic styles of countries sharing borders with Russia, which might be explained by a cleavage between the EU's consolidated position on sanctions and the autonomy of each member state to conduct its trans-border policies, which creates some ambivalence within the EU, and allows each state to manoeuvre.

Introducing the three logics

In this section, we introduce the three logics constitutive for EU-Russia relations, explain how they overlap and discuss what policy effects they entail. None of these logics belong to a specific actor. They rather function as discursive fields in which different interpretations of values, spaces and governance interact with each other.

This taxonomy is grounded in the discussions on different dimensions of the EU power based on structures of international order (Wagner 2017). Our approach is consonant with the assumption that logics of power in EU-Russia relations can't be reduced to a single category, and that different forms of power do not exclude each other (Casier 2018: 103-104). The simultaneous operation of different options of policies in general and bordering in particular creates cer-

Figure 1. Display of mixed logics in Finland and Estonia
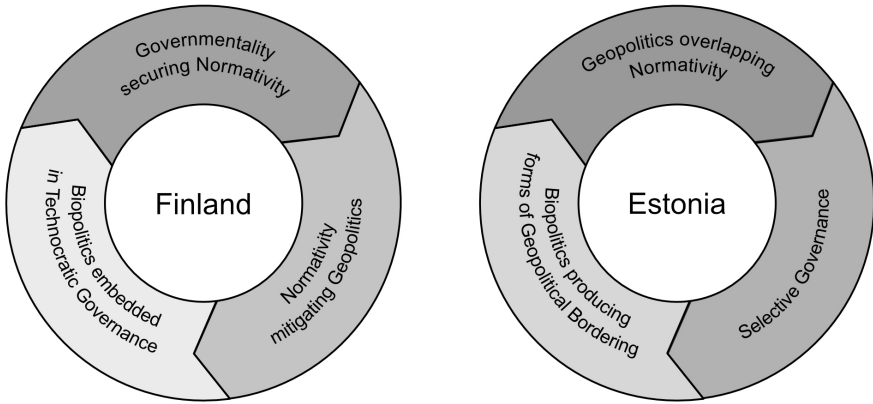
Source: authors

tain ambiguity which in the meantime implies a 'particular productive dynamic' (Ahrens 2018: 203). Each logic is an intersubjective construct reshaped through interactions with actors beyond the liberal international order who might ascribe to the EU's normative or governmental policies geopolitical meanings (Michalski & Nilsson 2019: 445).

Let us start with the **normative** logic that in the EU's interpretation is grounded in transforming international politics wherein normative commitments and value-based foreign policies play increasingly prominent roles. In the categories of the English school, this transformation might be described as a transition from an international system to an international society and then to an international community. This trajectory explains the prominence of the normative logic in EU foreign policy: the post-Cold War European order drastically changed the understanding of power from military force projection or economic coercion to sharing liberal norms, responsibilities and institutions through communication and engagement. The EU's normativity envisages common or compatible values and identities, a post-national, post-sovereign, post-Westphalian, networked type of foreign policies, and a greater role for NGOs. The EU's normative actorship presupposes that liberal norms define interests and gains, that these norms geographically expand and that the EU is a norm-projector, as exemplified by the Eastern Partnership (EaP) project. In this sense, the concept of normative power not only constructs the EU's identity (Diez, Manners & Whitman 2011), but also defines the normal (and therefore the deviant) and implies a balance between normative ends and normative means, along with the ability to set a common normative agenda as a basis for

the institutional power of multilateral diplomacy through a system of partnerships. Within this logic, the EU is a producer of various regional spaces premised upon a nexus between institutions and identities – the Northern Dimension, the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy or the Black Sea Synergy.

This normative logic was unfolding in a sharp contrast with the Russian claim that integration into the Western-centric system of rules and values would not give Russia an unconditionally equal status, or what Russians prefer to dub 'respect'. This explains a trajectory of Putin's illiberal transition – from adaptation to the main principles of liberal democracy to its parodic imitation, then to contesting the very idea of norm-based international politics. The crucial component of this turn is the fascination with sovereignty and the ensuing reinterpretation of power as a type of material ownership and a physical possession of tangible and measurable resources, as opposed to the understanding of power as embedded in communicative and institutional relations. Russia's disdain for normativity stems exactly from a disbelief in the possibility to derive power from immaterial sources – commitments to rules and values, techniques of good governance or communicative skills. The gap between the two political philosophies, normative (ideational) and realist (materialist), is one of the frontiers that delineates liberalism and illiberalism, and Russia under Putin has meaningfully contributed to the construction of this divide.

The conflictual interaction with Russia has reinvigorated the EU's ***geopolitical*** logic. Policy experts suggest that the EU and its major member states need to be more geopolitical and less ideational/'romantic' when dealing with Russia (Pishchikova & Piras 2017: 113). This perspective is rooted in the perception of the growing power of Russia, including Russia's abilities to permeate and penetrate Europe from inside (through recruiting ex-politicians for lucrative jobs and support for anti-establishment parties), along with the fear that the EU's intransigent normative position will ultimately push Russia towards an alliance with China. However, the EU's geopolitics might be characterised as a 'hybrid' (Nitoiu & Pasatoiu 2020) realm of complex interactions between spatial/territorial/geographic calculations and normative agenda. Accordingly, the EU's normative policies might have geopolitical effects since the EU's 'productive/enabling power' transforms its neighbours through the force of attraction and mechanisms of external governance and expands their scope of choices for the EU's partners (Hyde-Price 2006).

The concept of ***governmentality*** is based on a Foucauldian legacy and can be regarded as a managerial response to problems that cannot be tackled through normative or geopolitical policy tools. The application of this concept to the sphere of border studies is marked by a duality. On the one hand, governmentality is usually discussed as a productive form of power aimed to achieve great-

er freedom through knowledge-based practices grounded in the logics of the market and liberal political economy. Governmentality operates through (self-) regulative incentives and implies risk assessment, calculation, best practices promotion, fostering competitiveness through indexing, benchmarking and other empowerment techniques. It exemplifies a technocratic model of steering, incentivising and rationalising policy making (Lemke 2013: 37). Governmentality tools do not impose coercive power but rather help to optimise limited resources. Governmental mechanisms incorporate communicative and transformational power with its spill-over effects in such policy spheres as anti-corruption, transparency and accountability, anti-discrimination, civil service, intellectual property, public procurement, environmental protection, energy efficiency and education (Dean 2010). The EU's agenda of external governmentality includes best practices transfer, learning at a distance and educational exchange programmes, along with measures of conflict reconciliation through dialogue and democratisation. Externalisation of norms includes transformative impact over neighbours, modernisation assistance with respective commitments (through conditionality), and visa liberalisation.

On the other hand, border governmentality implies certain forms of othering, which is illustrated by controlling cross-border immigration. In the terrain of the EU's neighbourhood policy, the bordering function of governmentality seems to be quite important: in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and EaP, political practices and their governmental rationality are based on the idea of governing through neighbourhoods. The ENP and EaP represent the types of soft power through which the EU gently enforces the implementation of its rules and regulations beyond its territory to ensure its security. Hence 'the ENP and EaP governmental rationalities are deeply entrenched in the Eurocentric spatial imaginaries of the EU' (Grzymski 2018: 591). Thus, traditional matters of territorial control and sovereign border are replaced by 'the governmentality - security dispositif' (Vasilache 2019: 687), which can give rise to new forms of othering and division.

Within governmental logic there is ample space for *biopolitical* practices related to measures of controlling, managing and administering human bodies through the investment in matters affecting lives and protecting the physical existence of the population. Biopolitics places human bodies at the centre of social, cultural and political relations, shaping such concepts as nation-building, security, borders, ideology, inclusion and exclusion. In biopolitics, borders are constructed on the contingent basis of distinguishing between groups of population who are taken care of, and those whose protection is not unconditional, which ultimately sets rules of belonging and conditions of abandonment. In this regard, border biopolitics might be approached as an

assemblage of medical, immigration and transportation authorities, aimed at codification of incoming groups of people, their examination and ascription to them of certain statuses (Walters 2002: 563-575). The pandemic represents a case of drastically constrained mobility and circulation of travellers across the borders (Kenwick & Simmons 2020) that play a role of biopolitical 'filters' (Murphy 2019: 9). Of particular importance is the idea of a 'generalized biopolitical border' (Vaughan-Williams 2009) mostly applied to the refugee crisis to demonstrate that the EU's external borders not only delineate national jurisdictions but also filter out and categorise border crossers for which various biopolitical norms, rules and procedures are established. A similar approach was applied for studying 'biometrical borders' as an element of the war on terror (Amoore 2006). Due to the generalisability of the concept of a biopolitical border it can be extended to other cases where borders function as institutional spaces producing practices of exclusion from and inclusion in the neighbouring polities.

In the context of our analysis, these concepts play different explanatory roles. A combination of *normative* disagreements and *geopolitical* cleavages is a key driver for the crisis in EU-Russia relations that shapes policy choices of individual member states. *Governmentality* ought to be regarded as a set of specific policies designed by individual member states as a response to the growing complexities in the geopolitical and normative spheres. The case of Finland is particularly illustrative of the practical significance of this concept. The *biopolitical* elements of governmentality exacerbated by the outburst of COVID-19 is an additional factor that further complicates bilateral relations, which the case of Estonia seems to corroborate.

Some authors have discussed different contexts in which the adherence to *norms* might be based on a *biopolitical* background (Farneti 2011: 959-960). This might be illustrated by EMA's regulations integrated into the EU's normative approaches to vaccination. Another important linkage is between *governmentality* and *normativity*: 'If the international realm is thickening due to the institutionalization of liberal norms about human rights, market economy, democracy and the rule of law, then there seems to be a good case for subjecting the preconditions for the emergence of these norms to a governmental reading' (Neumann and Sending 2007: 694). By the same token, the prevalence of biopolitical governmentality might be viewed as a road to post-liberalism (Chandler 2015: 12). The terminological distinctions, along with the dissimilar experiences of Finland and Estonia, only actualise the academic interest in the governmentality-normativity nexus.

A game of logics: The case of Finland

The Finnish discourse on Russia is double-edged, exemplifying a form of governmentality with a practical value for domestic purposes. A broader range of public statements, particularly in Navalny's case, positions Finland within the European system of values. We explore how these discourses discuss Russia as an object of bilateral relation and how Russia is discursively deployed in the contexts of governmental rationalities, normative claims and geopolitical concerns.

Finland's Russia policy is a search for a balance between expansive governmentality and normative commitments to EU solidarity implemented through technicalities of governmental practices of managing trans-border relations. The commitment to EU normativity eventually resulted in the technocratisation of Finnish-Russian cross-border cooperation, which permitted both countries to maintain border activities, and allowed switching from highly politicised issues to more practical matters of trans-border collaboration and detaching Finnish-Russian relations from antagonistic geopolitics. To illustrate that, we track the changing patterns of trans-border cooperation from its early stage of nascent governmentalisation to its current mode.

At the dawn of the post-Soviet period, prevailing trends of decentralisation encouraged Russia to strengthen its cooperation with Finnish partners. Between 1996 and 2004, Russian nascent civil society obtained substantial help from the EU-funded programmes of technical assistance – TACIS and cross-border regional development – INTERREG (Scott 2010). In the mid-2000s, the institutional mechanism of EU support for cross-border initiatives with Russia turned into different instruments of 'pedagogical governance' (Prozorov 2004), which sought to promote the Finnish model of civil society for border management but were limited by Russia's capabilities (Laine 2013: 187-201). The EU-driven territorial development was traditionally based on principles of partnership, participation and a bottom-up and multi-level approach to regional governance. This sort of governmentality coincides with the neoliberal logic of differences that inclusively absorbs differential positions of local authorities, economic, cultural and social actors making them *partners* equally responsible for common initiative. The scale of these policies expanded dramatically within the pioneering projects in sectoral, regional and local dimensions to a great extent resembling the key characteristics of 'good governance' in the EU. Nevertheless, in the mid-2000s, EU projects started facing limitations due to the growing contradictions between Putin's centralisation approach and the EU vision of cross-border governance. Political and fiscal freedoms of Russian regions were affected by Putin's 'vertical of power' (Ross 2007), which later discontinued regional practices of social entrepreneurship and risk-management (Yarovoy 2010). Nevertheless, as some studies show (Belokurova 2010; Koch 2019), by shifting from explicitly

democratic ambitions towards more depoliticised and technical problem-solving targets of regional management, the ENP's financial instruments managed not only to obtain a necessary legitimation but also to support Russian-Finnish cross-border governmentality (Laine & Demidov 2012; Scott & Laine 2012).

Discrepancies between the changed centre-periphery landscape in Russia and the EU's priorities have directly affected Finland. While the Finnish side has succeeded in using the allocated EU funds for local needs (Scott 2010) and sustaining people-to-people relations as well as civil society networks in border regions (Scott & Laine 2012), the Russian government proceeded with an imitation of grassroots activities (Demidov & Belokurova 2017), establishing a new technocratic rationale for programme implementation on the Russian territory. For instance, after the annexation of Crimea, a new set of rules was adopted for the EU programme South-East Finland-North-West Russia Cross-Border Cooperation 2014-2020, SEF–NWR CBC[2]. To receive the 'green light'[3] for operations in Russia, this programme had to adjust to the so-called 'foreign agent' legislation. The changes predominantly concerned limitations in participation for Russian NGOs and prioritisation of the Moscow-driven large infrastructure projects over local initiatives. This significantly reduced opportunities for Russian third sector participants of cross-border cooperation and increased the number of state-affiliated NGOs and Moscow-based governmental agencies participating in EU programmes at the expense of local agents in Russia. Finally, there is a growing gap between Russian officials, sinking deeper into 'bad governance', and their European counterparts adhering to the 'ideals and values of participatory democracy' (Yarovoy 2021). Thus, technical governance and fast-track policy implementation were prioritised over the contribution of grassroots actions and 'people-to-people' activities which weakened the projects' scope and legitimacy.

Despite all this, 'the EU's approach to EU-Russia civil society cooperation has not radically changed as a result of the 2014 crisis in the official relations: the existing instruments of democracy promotion were kept and adapted' (Belokurova & Demidov 2021: 295). In fact, Finnish partners often emphasise 'personal relationship and trust' (Fritsch et al. 2015; Koch 2018) between Finnish municipalities and local administrations in Karelia or St. Petersburg. Moreover, the former director of Managing Authorities of the SEF–NWR CBC Tiina Jauhiainen highlighted[4] that depoliticisation of the cross-border programme is a key resil-

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2 	One of three Finnish-Russian programmes, which is still operating within the externally oriented ENP. See more: https://sefrcbc.fi/en/home/
3 	From the interview with Päivi Ilves, January 2019. Project: Finnish-Russian Cross-Border Neighbourship: Political Perspectives and Cultural Resilience (2018-2019), Principal Investigator Tatiana Romashko.
4 	Interview with Tiina Jauhiainen and the focus group with other members of the Managing Authorities in Lappeenranta, February-March 2019, "Finnish-Russian Cross-Border Neighbourship" project.

ience strategy against the 2014 geopolitical complications. In this respect, EU governance created some opportunities for communication on both sides of the border. The border functioned as an area of cooperation, where relations are governmentalised, and practical issues of material background are prioritised. The centre of gravity shifted from the EU level to the technical management of two states. The dominant logic of depoliticisation in Finnish-Russian relations transforms the geopolitical conflictuality in the direction of pragmatism, supported from both sides of the border.

COVID-19: Biopolitics embedded in technocratic governance

Finland's COVID-19 crisis management was an extrapolation of governmentality to the biopolitical functioning of the borders. The EU's hard line stance on the non-recognition of Russia's vaccines (Nilsen 2021) was balanced by Finnish governmental calculation and calibration of security and individual practices of risk-taking. Despite an epidemiological threat from Russia (Khinkulova 2021), the Finnish Border Guard (RAJA 2021) issued rather flexible recommendations and case-by-case assessments on border crossers arriving from third countries such as Russia.

From March–April 2021, relatives and family members were allowed to enter Finland despite the fact that Finland still kept the borders shut for non-essential trips with Estonia, which had lower infection rates and death tolls compared to Russia. In mid-July 2021, the Russian SovAvto bus-line[5] resumed regular trips from St. Petersburg to Helsinki and Lappeenranta for 'passengers with the necessary documents and permits of the countries of departure and arrival', while Finland kept restrictions (Finnish Government 2021) on cross-border public transport with Russia in place. Likewise, *de facto* exceptions were made for Finnish fans travelling to the European Football Championship in St. Petersburg, which technically contravened the official recommendations of 'avoiding unnecessary travel to Russia' (THL 2021) and subsequently caused a spike of corona cases in Finland (Yle 2021a).

In the official statements, Finland adhered to the EU normative rule. For instance, the question of accepting Sputnik V and its certificates in Finland was clearly relegated to EMA authority. To neutralise the biopolitical issue at stake, Foreign Minister Haavisto mentioned that Finland prefers to maintain closed borders and Corona-testing rules with all neighbours. However, in the actual biopolitical border management the Finnish authorities relied on governmentality tools that transformed the problematisation of security into a technical and pragmatic rationale of self-government, risk-taking and self-care. In such a way, technocratic governance at once fostered biopolitical operation of the

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5   https://bus.sovavto.ru/

border and maintained a balance between the EU rules and the Finnish border regulations regarding crossing, passing and containing the human flows. Moreover, on several occasions, Finnish parliamentarians speculated on the possibility of benefiting from the Sputnik V vaccine, putting forward the question of state-to-state procurement with Russia in case of the positive decision from the EMA.

The case of Navalny: Normativity mitigating geopolitics

The scope of the official rhetoric in the Finnish Parliament, backed by a governmental rationale, is grounded in a chain of equivalences between economic, environmental and border/neighbourhood priorities. In 2020–2021, even amid Navalny's imprisonment, Russia was predominantly mentioned in connection to practical issues of coordinating telecommunication policies in border regions, COVID-related restrictions, Finnish export to Russia and Russian imports of raw materials to Finland. Aimed at solving technical and matters-of-fact issues, the tone of the rhetoric bore a non-political character. Russia in this respect was most commonly seen as:

1. a 'partner' with various connotations, i.e., economic; strategically important; potential; unreliable; difficult; unstable; and in specific areas: in the Baltic Sea; in climate change actions; in the Northern Dimension;
2. a powerful and dangerous but important neighbour that Finns know best how to deal with.

By that time, Russia was problematised in the Parliamentary debates as an object of state governance and not as a geopolitical challenger. A dislocation of conflictual meanings occurred through depoliticisation of transborder issues and a technocratic approach to the neighbourhood. The problem for Finland was how to maintain positive relations with a powerful neighbour, capitalising on geographic proximity and treating Russia as a 'partner'. This governmental logic unfolded through productive policies of cross-border cooperation between the two neighbours. This logic supported the Finnish strategy of cultural diplomacy in building bridges between Russia and the EU, and making the Finnish position less political and more technical.

In Finland, a normative logic operates along the prevailing technocratisation and governmentalisation, mitigating geopolitical issues and providing a room for articulating them. To illustrate this, we examined a range of statements of the Finnish politicians on Navalny's case,[6] which symbolically positioned

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6   The media coverage of Navalny's imprisonment for the period of January–May 2021 was derived from the Finnish media outlets such as Yle Uutiset, Helsingin Sanomat and Ilta-Sanomat.

Finland within the European value system but without far-reaching practical implications. It provided a secure space for voicing concerns over violations of human rights in Russia, while remaining in the mode of partnership with Moscow.

In January 2021, the Finnish government reacted to Navalny's imprisonment by demanding his release. The Prime minister Sanna Marin joined the consolidated position of the Euro-Atlantic West demanding an investigation of the poisoning, and release of all arrested for peaceful protests in Navalny's support (Yle 2021b). President Sauli Niinisto supported this claim, saying that there was 'no ground for arrest' (Yle 2021b). However, Niinisto did not admit the links between injustice toward Navalny and Putin's interference in the court decision-making, referring to his unfamiliarity with Russian law, while Foreign Minister Haavisto defined this situation as a failure of democracy in Russia (which implied that Finnish foreign policy officials still think about Russia in democratic terms) (Yle 2021c).

On 15 February 2021, Haavisto met with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov (Gråsten 2021) and stated that Navalny's case is an international issue due to the decision of the Human Rights Court and the European Council. The Finnish position in this case was to protect international law and a rule-based system, of which Russia is a part. At the same time, both ministers repeated that old agreements on the Arctic and cross-border cooperation are still in place, yet each counterpart formulated it in his own way. While Lavrov reaffirmed close relations between the two countries, referring to the cooperation with pre-EU Finland, Haavisto stressed the importance of today's issues in the context of Finnish commitment to the EU and NATO policies. In a nutshell, Finland was privileged as a reliable partner in the Kremlin's rhetoric, maintained all the established agreements with Russia on border, energy, ecology cooperation, and preferred to treat Russia as a peculiar democracy that had problems with the opposition. On the top of that, Finland was ready to continue the exchange of opinions on controversial issues, while going deeper into the negotiations on the matters that concern border and neighbourhood issues.

In this respect, sharp statements on human rights had a largely declarative character as a gesture of support for the EU's normative agenda. In practical terms, Finland was consistently committed to the strategy of building bridges between the EU and Russia through cultural diplomacy and cross-border connectivity. The vocal debate in January 2021 over the violation of human rights, which Finland traditionally stands for, did not have much to do with the actions of the Finnish government that did not pay particular attention to this issue due to more urgent matters such as COVID-19 or the EU's 'recovery package'. The question of 'what do we do with Russia?' was left to the EU level. Thus, the Finn-

ish normativity went along with the EU value-based agenda but did not imply any radical shifts in relations with Russia after Navalny's imprisonment. Within this approach, a series of public statements supportive of liberal values caused no serious consequences for relations with Russia.

Responding to Russia's invasion in Ukraine

Finnish-Russian multilateral diplomacy as a 'functional dialogue' (Hakahuhta 2021) illustrated the prevalence of the technocratic logic of governmentality over geopolitical issues. Along with various forms of 'depoliticization' (Ylönen et al. 2015), this reduced geopolitical tensions in the most important areas of the Finnish economy. Unless it comes to open war, a functional dialogue with Russia continued to be a legitimate practice. For instance, after almost two months of the 'special operation' in Ukraine, a few Finnish researchers (Kojo & Husu 2022) became perplexed by the question of how it was even possible to continue cooperation with Russia in such a critical niche as nuclear energy, given that Finland has never recognised the legality of the annexation of Crimea. The authors exposed the shortcomings of the pragmatic approach behind 'nuclear diplomacy' with ROSATOM,[7] and revealed that a critical take on Russia as an 'unreliable partner' has been diminished by depoliticising appeals to a history of good practices, previous neighbourhood experience, cost minimisation and dismissing geopolitical risks in business and energy policy. The desire 'to present the purchase of Russian nuclear technology . . . as an energy, economic and climate policy, without a geopolitical dimension - by keeping one's head cold and talking about energy as energy' (Kojo & Husu 2022) seemed rational until recently.

Similar discrepancies can be observed after the 2022 restart of the war in Ukraine. Despite official statements in support of Ukraine and open assertion of actual hybrid threats emanating from Russia (Yle 2022a), including the 'instrumentalized immigration' (Finnish Administrative Committee 2022), Finland's take on Russia still went along the EU rule-of-law register and did not lead to any drastic steps, such as the expulsion of Russian enterprises from Finland or the closure of borders. On 25 February Finland deprived the representatives of the Russian government of diplomatic immunity when applying for a Schengen visa, but this did not affect the rest of Russian citizens (Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022). The Russian Embassy in Helsinki operated in a regular mode. At the end of March 2022, the Finnish state-owned railway company VR suspended passenger traffic to Russia, but not freight (Yle 2022b). And the Yangon taxi services were not banned in Helsinki the way it happened to Yandex business activities in Estonia and Latvia (Linnake 2022). When these palliative

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7   Russian governmental agency dealing with atomic energy.

measures were called into question in the Parliament, the responsible committee typically explained that everything is in line with the common position of the EU and all the possible risks are assessed case by case (Finnish Parliament 2022a, 2022b).

By the same token, from the very beginning of the war, Finnish authorities recommended refraining from travelling to Russia (Yle 2022d), but no urgent actions against a possible spill-over of the Russian aggression were planned. In this regard, Finland still inscribed its big-brother-neighbour policy into the EU's normative standpoint toward Russia and yet relied on the principles of 'liquid neutrality' (Roitto & Holmila 2021) that allows for the emergence of a depoliticised space for transborder activities. Helsinki was trying to detach cross-border cooperation from geopolitical tensions, applying the logic of governmentality as a way to avoid entanglement in conflicts with Russia. This manoeuvre entailed the depoliticisation of both the administrative and cultural dimensions. For instance, the pre-war polls (Finnish Government Communications Department 2022) showed that the attitude of the Finns has significantly changed towards Russia, but not towards Russian citizens living in Finland. Therefore, Finland could strike a balance between its domestic leadership in protecting the equality and liberal rights of all its inhabitants, and complying with EU regulations regarding Russian aggression in Ukraine.

However, the all-national polls on NATO have revealed a watershed in public opinion of Finland. A record-high 62 percent of respondents supported the alliance with NATO at the end of February 2022 in the absence of an official stance from the Finnish Government (Yle 2022c). Niinistö and Marin openly announced their pro-NATO attitudes only at the parliamentary debates devoted to Finnish application to the North-Atlantic alliance at the end of March. Parliamentary hearings over Russia in February–May 2022 indicate a clear shift in tone and rhetoric: from March Russia appeared exclusively as an 'aggressive neighbor' and an 'unreliable' ex-partner, which can only be countered by a united position of the EU. Starting from this moment Finland sought to join NATO as a reaction to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, yet in the meantime still avoided boosting military confrontation elsewhere. Within this narrative, Russia was seen as an equal participant in international law, whose economic, social or cultural rights must not be violated unless they pose an acute and proven threat to Finnish society. Moreover, in the official rhetoric of the parliamentary discussions, Russia remained a neighbour that Finland has to live with, which makes *Russian society* a potential 'partner' of the future border dialogue. Apparently, previous models of technocratic governance are seen as yet capable of mitigating geopolitical conflicts and continuing pragmatic dialogue with Russia relying on the EU rule-of-law normativity.

Estonia's trilemma

For Estonia, adherence to a common normative approach to Russia by and large overrides potential advantages of trans-border governmentality. Estonian geopolitical calculus implies European normative solidarity as a precondition for belonging to the trans-Atlantic West that secures the very independence of the country. As a flip side of this strategy, both geopolitical and biopolitical bordering became essential elements characterising Estonia's relations with Russia. In 2021 as a – largely symbolic – gesture of securitising Russia, the Estonian government started to build a border fence. A particularly sensitive issue in this regard is the sizable Russophone population of Estonia which is often 'treated by political elites with suspicion because of their instrumentalization by Russia, adversely affecting their prospects of integration' (Pigman 2019: 31).

COVID-19 and the governmental rebordering

The biopolitical dimension of the functioning of Estonia's border with Russia became prominent with the outbreak of COVID-19. Two types of biopolitical bordering emerged. The first one was an effect of Estonia's reluctance to unilaterally accept Sputnik V regardless of the preference for this vaccine among Estonian Russian speakers (TASS 2020). Some Estonian commentators opined that 'it would be good for Estonia if Sputnik V is registered by EMA' (Gabuev, Liik & Trenin 2021). However, joint EU-wide approaches prevailed over pragmatic considerations. Moreover, in June 2021 the Estonian health authorities identified Russia as a source of epidemiological threat and introduced additional measures of control on the border (Barsyonova 2021).

The second type of bordering was triggered by a lower scale of vaccination in the Russian speaking county of Ida-Virumaa whose population was negatively affected by the falling revenues from tourism from Russia, as well as the shrinking cross-border trade and business. These developments became an additional divisive factor for Estonia that struggles to foster the integration of local Russian speakers into the Estonian national mainstream (Wright 2021a). During the pandemic Ida-Virumaa boosted its reputation as an Estonian domestic Other and as a region that biopolitically differs from the rest of the country when it comes to vaccine scepticism. The head physician of the Narva city hospital framed the debate in biopolitical categories by saying that the major problem for fighting COVID-19 in this city is that its dwellers 'are not afraid of death' (Parv 2021). Some Estonian politicians and medical professionals proposed introducing special measures for the predominantly Russophone county. Being largely disconnected from Russia and treated through the lens of exceptionalism by Estonian political and medical authorities, Ida-Virumaa faced a double bordering, which challenged the policy of socio-cultural integration long pursued by the Estonian government.

Estonia's normative standpoint

Geopolitically, Estonia's attitudes to its eastern neighbour are to a large extent defined by Russia's reiterative accusations toward the Baltic States of discriminating against the Russophone population (Russian Foreign Ministry 2021). In the first public explanation of the critical state of Russia-EU relations after Borrell's visit to Russia in February 2021, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov particularly underscored the malign, in his view, role of the Baltic States in making EU foreign policy 'Russophobic'. This was a replica of the decades-long Russian disdain for Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian membership in the EU and NATO. The fact that the three countries were referred to in an explicitly confrontational speech meant that this Baltic trio remained an object of information attacks from Russia. Moscow did not unconditionally accept their integration with the Euro-Atlantic West, and instead kept trying to portray them as troublemakers within the EU and NATO. The mutual expulsion of diplomats from Moscow and Tallinn in February 2021, followed by the detention of the Estonian consul in St. Petersburg in July 2021, added a new element to the reciprocally alienated relations.

For Estonia, Russia is not a global player (Turovski 2021) but rather a potentially dangerous neighbour. For years, Estonia has tried to convince other EU member states that Europe needs to stay vigilant when it comes to Russia's policy of political conditionality that treats dialogue not as a normal state of affairs but as a reward for loyalty (Rumer & Weiss 2021). As a non-permanent UN Security Council member in 2020-2021, Estonia has clearly positioned itself at the frontline of opposition to Russia's annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas. In the words of the Estonian foreign minister, 'Russia's aggressive foreign policy, its abandonment of voluntary international commitments and democratic values and attempts to alter the security architecture of Europe have a direct impact on the security environment around us' (Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021a).

However, as former President Ilves put it, Estonia does not waste time thinking of being invaded by Russia (The Agenda 2019). Being deeply integrated in EU foreign and security policy, Estonia, however, has from time to time experimented with developing its own pathways to the Kremlin. In particular, the former Estonian president Kersti Kaljulaid's meeting with Vladimir Putin in Moscow in 2019 was an example of Estonian bilateral diplomacy rather than a policy coordinated with EU partners. In February 2021, another attempt to appeal directly to the Kremlin was undertaken; the Estonian foreign minister confirmed the interest of the Estonian government to come back to the unresolved ratification of the Border Treaty (Stoicescu 2020). On the one hand, this statement was made largely due to domestic reasons: the new government that came to power after

the resignation of the former governing coalition was eager to position itself as a functional team, ready to repair the reputational losses associated with a series of controversial statements made earlier by the members of EKRE, a national populist party that was part of the tripartite governance in 2019–2021. Yet on the other hand, a return to a positive agenda in relations with Russia was announced in the beginning of the new crisis in EU-Russia relations related to the Navalny affair, and developed in parallel with the heated discussion about sanctions. The policy of developing a bilateral track in dealing with Russia found some support among the Estonian expert community: 'should a Russian fighter jet crash over Lithuania, or a NATO one lose a missile over Estonia, it would be good for the capitals concerned to exchange information directly, as opposed to relying solely on the link between NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe and the Chief of the Russian General Staff' (Liik 2020).

However, Estonian attempts to establish a bilateral communicative liaison were rejected by Russia. As a *de facto* precondition for the resumption of the border treaty ratification process, the Russian Foreign Ministry referred to its concerns about the status of the Russian-language community in Estonia, along with what the Kremlin dubs 'falsification of history'. The mainstream Russian media was assuming that Estonia would be included in the list of 'unfriendly countries' that the Kremlin compiled in May 2021. The initial list, however, contained only the US and Czechia, yet it was extended in 2022. As a clear sign of disdain for Estonia, Russia refused to send its delegation to the World Finno-Ugric Congress held in Tartu in June 2021, and Aeroflot has cancelled the previously resumed Moscow-Tallinn flights. Apart from that, Estonia became an object of a new type of information attack that employed deep fake technology to imitate Leonid Volkov, a close associate of Navalny, whose face image was used to trick a group of Estonian MPs (Wright 2021b).

Estonia's normative agenda, being a key point in its foreign policy philosophy, to a large extent is the opposite to realist geopolitics which might particularise and marginalise Estonia as a small country: 'If one can break our value base and make our cooperation only based on interests of individual countries, then we will end up exactly where we did in 1939-1940' (Brookings Institution 2019). This standpoint was particularly exemplified by this country's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council. Two countries – Ukraine and Georgia – whose territorial integrity was violated by Russia were objects of special attention (Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021b). In particular, Estonia convened a session on Crimea in the UN Security Council aimed to demonstrate an international support for human rights and discrimination of civilian populations in the Russia-occupied Ukrainian peninsula (Estonianmfa 2021). On other occasions, the Estonian foreign minister Urmas Reinsalu expressed explicit con-

cern for Russia's increasing military presence in Libya (Permanent Mission of Estonia to the UN 2020a) and condemned Russia's unwillingness to cooperate on the MH17 catastrophe (Permanent Mission of Estonia to the UN 2020b). In an Estonia-convened meeting devoted to the 75th anniversary of the Second World War, Russia was accused of using the Victory Day of the 9th of May to manipulate history through the rehabilitation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (Permanent Mission of Estonia to the UN 2020c). In October 2020, Estonia expressed public sympathies with the Georgian government that was cyber-attacked by Russia's military intelligence service 'in an attempt to sow discord and disrupt the lives of ordinary Georgian people' (Permanent Mission of Estonia to the UN 2020d). From the UN Security Council tribune, the Estonian Foreign Ministry has also condemned the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny (Permanent Mission of Estonia to the UN 2020e).

Another aspect of normativity is solidarity within the EU. Estonia's normative support for Czechia in expelling Russian diplomats in April 2021 became a matter of political debates that stretched beyond this specific case and extended to the matters of EU solidarity. Since the expulsion of diplomats was not an EU action, but rather a gesture of solidarity with another EU member state, this incident has further complicated the search for a balance between geopolitical factors shaping Estonia's relations with Russia, and Estonia's commitment to shared norms and values in its communication with the EU and its individual member states.

Estonia was definitely right in its normative conclusions about Russia as a non-democratic country detaching itself from the European values, as well as in translating these normative assessments into geopolitical by securitising Russia's distinctions from the West. However, a major challenge for Estonia is how to transform these normative and geopolitical discourses into practices of governmentality (Liik 2020) that are mostly manifested in two domains. One is the trans-border management of water resources in Lake Peipsi and the Narva River shared with Russia. Estonia's rotating presidency in the UN Water Convention that started in October 2021 has become possible largely to the previous record of successful implementation of a number of bilateral environmental programmes with its neighbours, including Russia (Aaslaid 2021). This example shows that even low-profile and underfunded programmes of Estonian-Russian trans-border cooperation might have a positive effect in a broader international context. Another terrain is cultural: as a combination of people-to-people diplomacy and soft power projection, Estonia is one of the most enthusiastic promoters of Finno-Ugric cooperation that includes fostering ties with kindred ethnic groups in Russia. Key target groups of this type of cultural governmentality are educators, students, scholars, artists and performers from Finno-Ugric regions

of Russia whose contacts with Estonian counterparts are supported by the Estonian government through a plethora of programmes.

Estonia and Russia's military intervention in Ukraine

From the outset of the war the Estonian government straightforwardly demanded a thorough investigation of war crimes committed by Russian troops in Ukraine (Estonian Foreign Affairs Committee 2022a) and the creation of an international tribunal for this purpose (Estonian Foreign Affairs Committee 2022b). Estonia is one of the countries in Europe that unequivocally assumed that the only option suitable for the West in this war is Russia's defeat.[8] Estonian prime minister Kaja Kallas called Russia the only enemy of Estonia (Mikhailov 2022), due to which her government lobbied for an enhanced military presence of NATO permanent military units all across the eastern flank.[9] In the view of the Estonian president, Russia can't be part of European security architecture.[10] Leading Estonian think tankers were highly critical of Emmanuel Macron's conciliatory approach to the Kremlin (Raik & Arjakas 2022), and suggested that the German government should more robustly distance itself from Russia (Lawrence 2022). Estonia used different regional platforms for a better coordination of regional responses to the aggression, including the Bucharest Nine, along with regular meetings of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the parliaments of the Baltic States (2022c) and the Baltic-Nordic parliamentary sessions (Estonian Foreign Affairs Committee 2022d).

The Estonian president qualified the aggression as 'Putin's war, not a war of the Russian people'.[11] However, the policy of isolation and exclusion of Russia extended to the cultural sphere. The government has banned from performing in Estonia a group of Russian artists supportive of the war in Ukraine. The University of Tartu and Tallinn University refused to accept applications from Russian citizens living in Russia, and later the Estonian government discontinued the issuance of work and study visas for Russian citizens.

Russia's intervention in Ukraine was consequential for the Estonian Russophone minority. Many local Russian speakers have publicly repudiated the aggression and expressed overt solidarity with Ukraine. In the meantime, others

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8   President Karis: Only Russia losing this war will restore peace in Europe, April 13 2022. https://president.ee/en/media/press-releases/53627

9   President Karis: Greater military deterrence is needed on NATO's eastern flank, June 10 2022. https://president.ee/en/media/press-releases/53764

10   President Karis in Davos: Russia cannot be part of the European security architecture, because it threatens it, May25 2022. https://president.ee/en/media/press-releases/53717-president-karis-davos-russia-cannot-be-part-european-security-architecture-because-it

11   President Karis: "This is not a war of the Russian people. This is President Putin's war." February 26 2022. https://president.ee/en/official-duties/speeches/53470-president-alar-karis-not-war-russian-people-president-putins-war

were unhappy with such preventive measures taken by the Estonian government as the repeal of gun licenses from non-citizens, the ban on public demonstration of war-supportive symbols, deportation to Russia war supporters and ubiquitous exposure of Ukrainian flags.

The policy of rebordering pursued towards Russia is in sharp contrast to a drastic debordering of Estonia's relations with Ukraine, a country that became, in the eyes of the Estonian government (2017), central for Euro-Atlantic security. Estonia was one of the first countries that immediately after the commencement of the war raised the issue of granting a candidate status to Ukraine (Estonian Foreign Affairs Committee 2022e). The Estonian Parliament called on speeding up the delivery of military aid to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, increasing financial support to Ukraine and to neighbouring countries hosting the war refugees, as well as planning for the long-term reconstruction of Ukraine (Estonian Foreign Affairs Committee 2022f).

Conclusion

In the concluding section we dwell upon three major points. First, our research has shown the analytical value of the three logics for explaining the three crises that shape EU-Russia relations. The three critical junctures reveal that Finland's and Estonia's policies are conditioned by different combinations of these logics. When it comes to COVID-19, the EU's reaction was shaped by a mix of biopolitical and governmental logics; in response, Russia geopoliticised the EU's stand by accusing the EU authorities of intentionally blocking the access of Sputnik V into the European markets. The drastic deterioration of bilateral ties since January 2021 was driven by the collision of EU's normative approach to the Navalny affair and Russian reaction that ascribed to Brussels' geopolitical motivations, (mis)interpreting EU's normativity as an interference into Russian domestic affairs.

Second, the three logics are instrumental for shedding light on different types of actorship in times of crises. The distinct yet simultaneous logics of geopolitics, normativity and governmentality configure a range of policy options of EU member states towards Russia. The two compared countries in consideration significantly differ from each other in this regard (Table 1).

The prevailing logic of governmentality secures *Finland*'s commitments to normativity. In this regard, the predominantly depoliticised cross-border relations may reconcile the contradiction between the priorities of member states and their commitments to the EU consensus. Finland's Russia policy is seeking a balance between normative commitments to EU solidarity and practical governmentality. More precisely, normativity is implemented through technicalities of governmental practices of managing trans-border relations. Normative

Table 1. Unfolding the logics in Finland and Estonia

Logics/ countries	**Finland**	**Estonia**
Geopolitics	Acceptance of Russia's power and cooperative relations with Moscow as a recipe for Finland's security	Membership in the EU and NATO as security warranty
Normativity	Support of EU sanctions against Putin's regime and centrality of human rights and humanitarian issues in foreign policy agenda	Normative solidarity of the trans-Atlantic West and accentuation of value-based distinctions between democracies and non-democracies
Governmentality	Technical approach to cross-border management, depoliticization of the EMA/EU approach	Environmental and cultural diplomacy, accompanied by biopolitical othering of Russia that affects local Russophones

Source: authors

politicisation and governmental depoliticisation are the two sides of the Finnish official thinking.

In the case of Estonia, normativity overlaps with and is affected by a geopolitical agenda that enhances the country's sovereignty through its association with the EU normative power and the concomitant bordering of Russia. Estonia's Russia policies are to a much greater extent embedded in normative approaches that, however, are adjusted to the other logics. Estonian geopolitical calculus considers European normative solidarity as a precondition for belonging to the Euro-Atlantic West that secures the independence of the country. As a flip side of this strategy, both geopolitical and biopolitical bordering became essential elements characterising Estonia's relations with Russia. Estonia's adherence to common regulations of vaccine registration was a good illustration of a balance between biopolitical and normative frames of reference. The geopolitical rationality made Estonia heavily rely on NATO military support as the cornerstone of national security, while avoiding closing down the bilateral track of communication with Moscow. By the same token, Estonia practiced governmentality through maintaining cultural relations with Russian Finno-Ugric communities and developing low-profile cross-border programmes.

Both Tallinn and Helsinki express solidarity with the EU position on Russia in respect of political freedoms, COVID-19 policies and the rule of law. However,

Finnish-Russian relations can be mapped at the intersection of EU normativity and practical governance, while Estonia places a stronger emphasis on blending normative power with geopolitical mechanisms of protecting the national territory. For Finland, mundane issues of direct relevance to the border communication facilities, economic growth, territorial security, and water and land pollution define the content of technical management between the neighbours. While for Estonia major concerns are measures of border security, including its military dimension.

Our study confirms that each of the three logics/rationalities is a matter of divergent interpretations not only between Russia and the EU but also between individual member states. Estonia understands the normative position as a prevalence of a common EU-wide values-based solidarity over economic gains, while Finland finds a balance between commitment to joint rules of dealing with Russia and depoliticised trans-border cooperation. The geopolitical frame of action for Estonia implies deep integration with transatlantic security infrastructure, while for Finland it is based on good-neighbour relations that, of course, need to be readjusted to Finland's NATO membership. The Finnish model of governmentality is less topical for Estonia due to a high level of securitisation of bilateral relations with Russia. In biopolitical regards, both Finland and Estonia have adequately assessed epidemiological threats coming from Russia, and adhered to the regulations provided by EMA.

One more inference from our analysis, partly supported by previous research (Raik et al. 2015), concerns important distinctions regarding connections and disconnections between the logics as put into practice by the two countries. Estonian foreign policy implies two clearly articulated linkages – between normativity and geopolitics (the values-centric security perspective), and between normative approaches and biopolitics (adherence to common policies under the auspices of EMA). In the meantime, Estonia delinks normativity as a collective frame of EU's policy towards Russia from 'islands' of trans-border governmentality that are in the hands of member states. Similarly, Estonia disconnects biopolitics as a sphere of technical policies from more politicised and confrontational geopolitics.

In the case of the Finnish foreign policy the picture appears different. Like Estonia, Finland looks at biopolitics from a normative angle adhering to the principle of EU solidarity, yet – unlike Estonia – puts a premium on liaising normative power and the force of governmentality. As for disconnections, Finland's government sees normative pronouncements towards Russia detached from and unrelated to the domain of governmentality, and is not supportive of geopoliticisation of the coronavirus crisis. The different instrumentalisation of the three logics is a powerful explanatory factor that might shed more light on

distinct policies of EU member states towards Russia beyond the two countries researched in this article.

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Andrey Makarychev is professor of regional political studies at the University of Tartu Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies. He teaches courses on 'Globalization', 'Political Systems in post-Soviet Space', 'EU-Russia Relations', 'Regional Integration in post-Soviet Space', 'Visual Politics' and 'The Essentials of Biopolitics'. He is the author of *Popular Biopolitics and Populism at Europe's Eastern Margins* (Brill, 2022), and co-authored three monographs: *Celebrating Borderlands in a Wider Europe: Nations and Identities in Ukraine, Georgia and Estonia* (Nomos, 2016), *Lotman's Cultural Semiotics and the Political* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2017) and *Critical Biopolitics of the Post-Soviet: from Populations to Nations* (Lexington Books, 2020). He has co-edited a number of academic volumes: *Mega Events in post-Soviet Eurasia: Shifting Borderlines of Inclusion and Exclusion* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), *Vocabularies of International Relations after the Crisis in Ukraine* (Routledge, 2017); *Borders in the Baltic Sea Region: Suturing the Ruptures* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). His articles have been published in such academic journals as *Geopolitics*, *Problems of Post-Communism*, *East European Politics and Societies*, *European Urban and Regional Studies,* among others.

Tatiana Romashko is a grant researcher and PhD candidate at the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her research interests include Finnish-Russian cross-border cooperation, Russian politics and cultural policy. Tatiana is currently finishing her dissertation on the emergence of state cultural policy in modern Russia. The main results of her doctoral research have been published as journal articles (in *Russian Politics*) and book chapters. In 2023-2026, Tatiana Romashko will work on the project '*Russian World' Next Door: discourses of Russian political communication and cultural diplomacy in Finland*, supported by the Kone Foundation.

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Special issue
Constructing Crises in Europe: Multifaceted Securitisation in Times of Exception

Constructing Nazis on Political Demand: Agenda-Setting and Framing in Russian State-Controlled TV Coverage of the Euromaidan, Annexation of Crimea and the War in Donbas

Alona Shestopalova
University of Hamburg, Germany, ORCiD: 0009-0008-5703-7134, corresponding address: shestopalova@ifsh.de

Abstract

The central role of mass communication in the construction of crises, threats and enemies was acknowledged decades ago. In those cases when media reporting about crises, threats and enemies is studied, it is predominately done based on the media content from Western liberal democracies. The article broadens the usual framework of research on this topic by empirically studying the securitisation and enmification campaign performed by TV channels of an autocracy through the lens of agenda-setting and framing theories. In other words, this article helps understand how the Russian regime securitises political issues and constructs enemies. In particular, eight weekly news programmes by Russian state-controlled Channel One Russia and RT (former Russia Today) covering the period of the Euromaidan, Annexation of Crimea

and the war in Donbas are studied in order to address the question of how the channels'
strategies of setting their agendas and framing the covered events contributed to the
construction of a Nazi enemy that has to be fought.

Keywords: *Russian TV, agenda-setting, framing, constructing enemies, securitisation*
in Russia, Euromaidan, Annexation of Crimea, war in Donbas

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Introduction

Eight years after the illegal Annexation of Crimea, and the beginning of the de-facto war in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, on 24 February 2022, Russia launched the full-scale war against Ukraine. The Russian regime tried to justify it by the alleged need to fight so-called 'Nazis' in the Ukrainian government (Putin 2022). Several days later, EU vs Disinformation project posted the graph with the details about references to 'Nazi' in Russian state-controlled media over time; the graph revealed that within a week before the full-scale invasion, the number of references to 'Nazi' increased more than fourfold: from fewer than 60 tags per day on 17 February 2022 to more than 240 on 24 February 2022 (EU vs Disinformation 2022). Even if one believes in the Russia-promoted false narrative about Nazi-ruled Ukraine, the dramatic increase in references to Nazis in Russian state-controlled media is hard to explain by noticeable changes happening in the Ukrainian government at least because there were no such changes during that week. At the same time, the knowledge about media performance in autocracies (Stier 2015), allows stating that authoritarian regimes have a power to shift the media agenda in the desired direction. It is the case of the Russian ruling regime that controls media agenda (including agenda about Nazis). In the light of this statement, the above-mentioned changes could rather be explained by the state-controlled information preparations of the Russian regime to the full-scale war and the regime's attempts to justify it.

After the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the Russian regime de-facto introduced war censorship, blocked remaining critical media outlets (currently those still operating are available only via virtual private network (VPN) or in the form of mobile applications), introduced charges for criticising the Russian army, etc.[1] However, the targeted assault on regime-critical media outlets has its roots in 2014, when TVRain was disconnected from most of Russian TV networks, Galina Timchenko, the then editor-in-chief of a popular online news

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1   (2022): Prezident Podpisal Zakon Ob Otvetstvennosti Za Rasprostranenie Fejkov o Dejstviyax VS RF [The President Signed the Law on Responsibility for Spreading Fakes about the Actions of the RF Armed Forces]. Duma.Gov.Ru, 3 April, <accessed online: http://duma.gov.ru/news/53632/>.

outlet Lenta.ru was fired, etc.; or even earlier, at the beginning of the 2000s, when the popular pluralistic channel NTV was taken under the control of the Gazprom media group. For years, Russian state-controlled media outlets, including those broadcasting for a non-Russian audience, have been studied in the context of fake news, disinformation, propaganda and promoting the imperial idea of the so-called 'Russian World' (O'Loughlin, Toal & Kolosov 2016; Ramsay & Robertshaw 2019; Onuch et al. 2021; Erlich & Garner 2023). The focus of the article at hand adds to that branch of literature by showing exactly how the strategic application of two communication effects allowed the Russian regime to create a perversion of reality and to build the ground for the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The case of Russia and its communication of political issues is not unique: when any autocratic elite has control over mass media (for example, through direct ownership, pressure, censorship or/and with the help of loyal figures from within the media outlets), it also has the privilege to turn public communication about (potential) crises, threats and enemies into a tool serving the elite's political goals (Dukalskis 2017; Dukalskis & Patane 2019). In other words, when performed by state-controlled media outlets of an autocracy, both construction of threats (*securitisation)* (Buzan, Wæver & Wilde 1998), and construction of enemies (*enmification)* (Rieber & Kelly 1991) reflect the real-life developments to a lesser extent than they reflect the regime's goals. The autocratic construction of threats and enemies is done with the help of the state-controlled setting of media agenda and media frames, i.e. state-controlled selection of events which are covered by media outlets, and of the particular angles of the coverage (Field et al. 2018).

Despite the central role which mass communication plays in the processes of securitisation and enmification (Buzan, Wæver & Wilde 1998; Williams 2003), international relations scholars are said to pay limited attention to the achievements of the theories of mass communication (Gilboa 2008), while the construction of threats and enemies is, in general, rarely empirically studied on the basis of media content, especially in non-Western and non-democratic contexts (Schäfer, Scheffran & Penniket 2016). The article fills this gap by studying autocratic securitisation and enmification in the news coverage of the Euromaidan, the Annexation of Crimea and the first months of the war in Donbas with the help of agenda-setting and framing theories: the news coverage by Channel One Russia and RT– two Russian state-controlled TV channels – is analysed. The list of owners of Channel One Russia includes both the Russian state and regime-friendly entities, while RT is a Russian international broadcaster owned and funded by the state. Personalities associated with the analysed channels are also known for supporting the Russian regime, for example, Margarita Simonian,

the editor-in-chief of RT, is one of the figures explicitly supporting Russia's war against Ukraine in Russian public discourse.[2]

The main focus of the empirical part of the article is the construction of enemies out of Ukrainian political actors, with the main attention on constructed enemies allegedly having Nazi features. References to Nazism is a known feature of Russian state-controlled communication, and various researchers have analysed the use of the Nazi frame by the Russian regime (Gaufman 2017; Edele 2017; Shevtsova 2022). However, the central role of the Nazi frame in the attempts of the Russian regime to justify its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 creates a need for an updated conceptualisation of this frame, its origin and its transformation. In this aspect the article serves as a contextual piece showing the origin and roots of a frame receiving close attention from scholars in the post-February-2022 period (Marples 2022; Ferraro 2023; Kuzio 2023). As a whole, the article suggests an approach complementing the more widespread narrative-based research of communication about international relations and has the potential to make conclusions resulting from narrative-based research more comprehensive. For example, while Myshlovska (2022) analyses the nature and evolution of competing official narratives regarding the Russo-Ukrainian conflict (2014-2022), the article at hand offers some insights into how Russian state-controlled media outlets strengthened Russian narratives by constructing enemies out of Ukrainian political actors in the eyes of the Russian and international publics. Moreover, in addition to analysing the enemies constructed by Russian state-controlled media, the chosen empirical approach addresses the question of how exactly those enemies were created.

The methodology of the empirical part of the article is based on critical discourse analysis (CDA). News programmes broadcast after the following four turning points of the Euromaidan, the Annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions are analysed: (1) the programme from 26 January 2014 – the weekly news programme following the killings of the first Euromaidan protesters in the centre of Kyiv;[3] (2) the programme from 2 March 2014 – the weekly news programme after Russian forces took the Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula under 'effective control';[4] (3) the programme from 13 April 2014 – the weekly news programme following the seizure of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk by

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2   (2023): Head of RT Discusses Russia's Goals, <accessed online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvhHL5Cn3N8>

3   Use of Force in the Policing of Demonstrations. Prohibition of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (Article 3) (2021: 9). The European Court of Human Rights. https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Force_demonstrations_ENG.pdf

4   The European Court of Human Rights (2021): Complaints Brought by Ukraine against Russia Concerning a Pattern of Human Rights Violations in Crimea Declared Partly Admissible. Press Release Issued by the Registrar of the Court.

Russian and Russia-backed forces;[5] (4) the programme from 20 July 2014 – the weekly news programme following the downing of Flight MH-17 by the Russian Buk missile system (Toal & O'Loughlin 2018).

The CDA showed that in the case of each of the analysed programmes, Russian state-controlled TV channels applied a politically-motivated strategy of agenda-setting and framing: they silenced events that might show Russia (and its allies) in a bad light or assign Russia some responsibility or blame for the events happening in Ukraine; they turned relatively minor topics strengthening the regime-friendly framing of the covered events into 'top stories'; they framed Ukrainian actors as those causing the crisis situations even in the situations when Russia's actions against Ukraine qualified as a violation of international law; they turned information about the alleged threats coming from Ukrainian actors into one of the most salient elements of the news coverage; they portrayed Ukrainian actors as Nazis; they heavily relied on discretionary historical references in order to contextualise the covered events in a way fruitful for Russian regime. The comparison of those elements in the news coverage of Channel One Russia and RT showed that Russian state-controlled agenda-setting and framing noticeably differed in aspects allowing these channels to adjust to the information environments in which their audiences live.

The article has its roots in the author's upcoming monograph about the construction of enemies by Russian state-controlled media. The attention of this article to the role of agenda-setting and framing in the process of the state-controlled construction of crises, threats and enemies is the development of the previous research where this aspect was not the main focus. Still, due to the similarity of the topics addressed in the monograph and in the article at hand, some non-textual self-repetitions are possible.

The paper consists of a theoretical section diving into two central theoretical concepts used to develop a theoretical framework for the article – securitisation and enmification, and explaining how agenda-setting and framing can be used by autocratic regimes to construct threats and enemies. The theoretical section is followed by details on data and methods, and the findings' section gives the reader insights from topic-relevant content broadcast by Russian state-controlled TV channels. The concluding section, in its turn, offers interpretations of the findings in the context of the construction of a Nazi enemy in the news reporting about the Euromaidan, the Annexation of Crimea and the War

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5   Council Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 of 17 March 2014 Concerning Restrictive Measures in Respect of Actions Undermining or Threatening the Territorial Integrity, Sovereignty and Independence of Ukraine (2014: 20). Official Journal of the European Union. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CE-LEX%3A02014R0269-20211213.

in Donbas, and draws lines between that reporting and the current attempts of Russian regime to justify full-scale war against Ukraine.

Theoretical framework: Enemies on political demand

Theorists of securitisation argue that threats are not objective but socially constructed, and that it is not the particular circumstances that make certain situations appear threatening in the public eye, but rather the respective public communication about these situations, including the availability and salience of information about risks which these situations are causing (Buzan, Wæver & Wilde 1998). Moreover, despite the conditions (up to those endangering people's well-being or even lives), the public might feel safe unless the threats are communicated.

For example, due to the decision of the Soviet regime to silence the explosion at the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant on 26 April 1986, as well as to silence the significant health-related risks of this event, predominately citizens of the Soviet Union were not aware of the risks, did not apply any precautions and even massively took part in outdoor 'Labour Day' demonstrations on 1 May 1986 (Taylor 2013). The false feeling of being safe did not prevent the public from being exposed to radiation. In this particular case, radiation is what the critics of the Copenhagen School would call an 'objective threat' – something inherently dangerous, no matter whether the public sees it as such or not (Knudsen 2001).

Still, as this article focuses on *purposeful* construction of threats and enemies for political reasons, it is important to note that with the help of threatening framing, any *ordinary* issue has a chance to be turned into a dangerous one in the perception of the public. The same can be said about enmification, i.e. about the threatening framing of not an issue but of a political actor: despite its features and/or actions, political actors might be framed as enemies of the public with the help of respective communication, in this sense, construction of enemies could be considered as an instance of securitisation and seen as a crucial element of confrontation between international actors (Rieber & Kelly 1991; Williams 2003).

When the enmification is successful, it will influence the political process at least by making people vote or support politicians promising to protect the public and to confront the enemy. In autocratic states, those where power is concentrated in the hands of a relatively limited number of people (ruling elites), and where citizens do not enjoy the right for free elections, successful enmification performed by ruling elites also has its outcomes: it legitimises and stabilises the regime, and is likely to unite citizens in their fear and hatred towards the constructed enemy (Dukalskis 2017).

In autocracies, the ruling elites usually have influence (if not the control) over major media outlets (Stier 2015). In such conditions, the public has limited access to the alternative information about political actors which are portrayed as

enemies by state-controlled media. As a result of state-controlled information flow, in autocracies enmification has a better chance to be successful than in democracies (Oppenheimer 2006). From a communication perspective, limiting alternative information and underlining threatful features of the constructed enemy, first of all requires a strategic approach to media agenda-setting and to media frames selection.

How media agenda and frames help to construct crises, threats and enemies?
For decades after it was conceptualised, agenda-setting – one of the most known media effects – was challenged, broadened, extended and adjusted to the new communication realities; still it remains the central element of discussions about the influence of media on public opinion about politics (Perloff 2022). This influence is said to lie in the fact that by making decisions about which topic to cover and which to not, and how intense the coverage of the topic should be, media outlets 'shap[e] political reality' (McCombs & Shaw 1972: 176). Because of the above-mentioned reasons – such as the limited access to the alternative information – in autocracies the influence of state-controlled media agenda on public perception of political reality is usually stronger than in democracies (Stier 2015). The (somewhat) exaggerated explanation of the phenomena could go as follows: *when citizens of an autocracy are getting informed by state-controlled media outlets, the events which are not covered by those outlets are not known to the wide public, as if they have never happened.*

As a result, it is the politically-motivated setting of media agenda that allows media outlets (1) to draw public's attention to the securitised issue and/or to the enmified actor, as well as (2) to cover only those developments of the crisis situation and only those features of the enmified political actor which lay in line with regime's communication strategy.

The close public attention to the desired topic can, as a rule, be achieved by the intense media coverage. For example, the research by Wanta, Golan and Lee (2004) shows that media agenda influences the perceptive importance of actors and issues in the public eye. In particular, '[t]he more media coverage a [foreign] nation received, the more likely respondents were to think the nation was vitally important . . . ' (Wanta, Golan & Lee 2004: 364). As for the second aspect, the selective coverage is also achieved by the strategic control over media agenda, that includes not just the silencing of regime-critical voices but also the silencing of those developments of the crisis situation and those features of enmified political actors which contradict or blur a regime's arguments about the covered topic. The strategic control over media agenda-setting is exemplified by the autocratic communication response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic: at the beginning, state-controlled media outlets of some of the autocracies silenced

the risks of the coronavirus, while later in the course of the pandemic, the media outlets' focus shifted to glorifying the ruling regimes by intensively communicating their successes in fighting COVID-19 (Stasavage 2020; Nino et al. 2021).

Due to the interconnection of media effects, the strategic approach to setting a media agenda is usually combined with the strategic approach to media framing (Weaver 2007). While state-controlled agenda-setting is widely understood as the politically-motivated process of selecting topics which are to be covered, state-controlled framing is responsible for underlining 'desired' aspects of those topics. As Entman puts it:

> [t]o frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (1993: 52).

In situations when both media agenda and media frames serve the communication goals of the autocratic regime, state-controlled media outlets offer their audience the (somewhat) distorted reflection of political reality. Sure, even the most independent media outlet is not capable of fully reflecting 'the reality' at least because any media outlet has to make decisions about its media agenda (Pörksen, Koeck & Koeck 2011). Still, the task of the independent media outlets assigned to them by the public is to constantly aim for balance and objectivity in representing 'the reality' (Hallin & Mancini 2004), while the task of state-controlled media outlets assigned to them by the regime is to construct and strengthen a version of 'the reality' assisting the regime's goals (Dukalskis 2017; Leafstedt 2021).

In case state-controlled communication efforts are directed at the construction of enemies, the political and societal outcomes of non-free information flow tend to go beyond the stabilisation of the autocratic regime: when enmification is successful, it constructs and/or cultivates fear and hatred directed towards a particular actor (e.g. towards a country, nation, social group), which may increase the risk of violent conflict at least due to the fact that the recipients of successful enmifying messages tend to be motivated to fight the hostilely-framed actor (Ivie, 2003; Hoffmann & Hawkins 2015). Historical examples reveal that fear- and hatred-based violent conflicts may also take the form of collective (group) violence such as mass killings and genocides (Staub 2000).

Data and methods

The empirical part of the article is organised around the analysis of the news coverage of the events of the Euromaidan, the Annexation of Crimea and the

first months of the war in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. As this article is written after 24 February 2022, i.e. after the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the selection of the news coverage from 2014 for the analysis requires additional argumentation.

First and foremost, Russian public polls show that it was during 2014 when drastic changes in the attitude of Russians towards Ukraine happened. In particular, in January 2014, 66% of Russians had (predominately) positive attitude towards Ukraine, while in January 2015, 64% of Russians had (predominately) negative attitude towards Ukraine (Levada Center 2015).

In her research of Russian state-controlled TV coverage of a similar period, Khaldarova (2021) argues that around 2014 the framing of Ukrainians as 'brothers' turned into the framing of Ukrainians as (dangerous) 'others'. Khaldarova (2021: 9 –11) specifies that the Ukrainian government, army, etc. were portrayed more negatively than Ukrainian society as a whole and that there was indeed some share of positive portrayal of Ukrainians on Russian TV (such as strategic claims that fall into the imperial concept of the 'Russian World', for example, those stating that Ukrainians and Russians are an in-group with a 'common history', religious and cultural bonds); at the same time, already during 2014, the radical/fascist/Nazi frame was one of the central frames used to portray Ukrainian society.

Second, events of the Euromaidan, the Annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas are still widely referred to by the Russian regime in its attempts to justify Russian aggression against Ukraine through references to the alleged threats coming from the Postmaidan 'Nazi' Ukrainian government to Russia directly, to people living in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as to Russian-speaking Ukrainians (Putin 2022). Selective references to the events of 2014, as well as state-controlled media framing of those events remain a noticeable feature of Russia's communication strategy (Putin 2021). Therefore, close scholarly attention to the agenda-setting and framing in Russian news coverage of the events happening in Ukraine in 2014 has a potential to shed the light on the genesis of those selective references and frames which have been serving Russia's state-controlled securitisation and enmification. When looked at from this perspective, such a case-related focus doesn't only keep the relevance which it has had since before 24 February 2022 but gets more relevant in a situation when Russia has begun the full-scale attack on the 'Ukrainian Nazi enemy' that Russian state-controlled media has been constructing for years.

In addition to the increasing political and scholarly interest to the Russian information influence in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine, the analysed case is also relevant in the broader scholarly context: as examination of state-controlled agenda-setting and framing used for the securitisation and en-

mification. Along with revealing some features of Russian state-controlled communication, the analysis also touches upon the more universal features of the construction of threats and enemies by autocracies-controlled media outlets.

Together with other papers of this special issue, the article at hand deals with the construction of crises and aims at contributing to its fuller interdisciplinary comprehension. The empirical case and the theoretical phenomena analysed in this article are directly linked to several other papers of the volume, for instance, to the paper by Thomas Diez who focuses on different types of securitisation and other contributions dealing with different facets of construction of enemies or securitisation in relation to Russia or Ukraine, such as those by Māris Andžāns, Alina Jašina-Schäfer or Yulia Kurnyshova.

Methodology of the analysis

I analyse weekly news programmes from Channel One Russia and from RT. Their selection as materials for the analysis is explained by channels' relative *similarity* in a sense that both of them are major Russian state-controlled TV channels helping the Russian regime to achieve its communication goals (Hansen 2015; Unwala & Ghori 2015); and, at the same time, by the crucial *differences* between the information environments in which channels' audiences live. The latter fact makes Channel One Russia and RT adjust their communication strategies to their audiences in order to maximise the outcome fruitful for the regime.

The four weekly news programmes broadcast on the following dates on each of the channels were selected for the analysis (eight weekly news programmes altogether): 26 January 2014; 2 March 2014; 13 April 2014; and 20 July 2014. As mentioned above, these were the programmes broadcast in the weeks when (respectively): (1) the first deaths of Euromaidan protesters happened in the centre of Kyiv; (2) Russian forces took 'effective control' over Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula; (3) Russian and Russia-backed forces took control over Sloviansk and Kramatorsk; (4) the Malaysia Airlines plane MH-17 was shot down by the Russian Buk missile system. The events in focus changed the dynamic of the conflict and/or marked the beginning of its new period (as in the case of Russian preparations for the Annexation of Crimea or as with the beginning of the war in Donbas).

When being covered by widely viewed media outlets, those events could potentially shed a negative light on Russia and Russia-affiliated political actors. Therefore, it was decided to study Russian state-controlled agenda-setting and framing in the context of those events with the help of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The analysis was organised around the following research questions: First, how did channels' agenda-setting and framing contribute to the construction of enemies in the analysed crisis communication about the events of the

Euromaidan, the Annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas? Second, how did the channels' enmification-related media frames develop over time?

For the sake of higher transparency of the analysis, the detailed and nuanced section of the findings was separated from the author's generalisations and interpretations (given in the concluding section), while the procedures undertaken for the analysis of the selected news programmes were formalised and unified where possible. In particular, critical analysis of the discourse in all the studied weekly news programmes of Channel One Russia and RT included three following steps: (1) description, analysis and comparison of the channels' agenda of each of the weekly news programmes: what events that are not directly connected to the developments in Ukraine were covered in the weekly news programmes (exhaustive listing), what other events of the Euromaidan/Annexation of Crimea/war in Donbas were reported except for the above-listed four events which are in the focus of this article (deliberately non-exhaustive listing); (2) analysis and comparison of media frames used by the channels in their coverage of other events of the Euromaidan/Annexation of Crimea/war in Donbas: how analysed channels framed those events, how Ukrainian political actors involved in the covered events are portrayed; (3) analysis and comparison of channels' agenda and frames in regard to the four events in focus: what place those events have in the analysed coverage, which frames are used to report about those events and to portray political actors involved in them.

The analysed weekly news programme of Channel One Russia – *Voskresnoe Vremja* – is broadcast on Sundays at 9 pm Moscow Time. *The Weekly* – an analysed news programme on the international TV channel of RT – is also broadcast on Sundays but several times a day, the version of the programme broadcast at 9 pm Central European Time was selected for the analysis. Hosts of the analysed weekly news programmes on RT were changing, as for Channel One Russia, Irada Zeynalova was the host of all four analysed weekly programmes. Weekly news programmes of Channel One Russia (COR) were accessed on the website of the channel, while the weekly news programmes of RT were accessed on the Internet Archive website. For links to the analysed weekly news programmes, see Annex.

Findings of the analysis: Russia-friendly combination of silencing and underlining

26 January 2014
The first news stories to be covered by both channels in the weekly news programmes broadcast on that date were about the Euromaidan protests. 'The most discussed and hot events are happening in Kiev' (00:00-00:04, COR1, 26 January

2014). Slightly more than a fourth of the airtime of the weekly news programme broadcast on that day on Channel One Russia was devoted to the protests, while on RT the share of the news programme about the protests was slightly more than a third. The rest of the weekly programmes broadcast on that date was organised around other topics: on Channel One Russia, other news stories of this weekly news programme were about such topics as the anniversary of the end of the Nazi-blockade of Leningrad during WWII, the attention of Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, to the education and healthcare in Russia, state support of inventions for the Russian military, the collaboration of the military with Russian educational and scientific institutions, preparations for the Winter Olympics that were planned to take place in Russia in February 2014. As for RT, except for the Euromaidan protests, two topics were closely covered by RT in the channel's weekly news programme broadcast on that date: a preliminary agreement between the Syrian government and opposition about the evacuation of civilians from the 'besieged city of Homs', as well as a 'deadly bombing in Egypt' on the third anniversary of the revolution and the riots in this country.

While covering the events of the Euromaidan, on 26 January 2014, both of the channels paid intensive attention to so-called concessions of the then pro-Russian Ukrainian authorities that were said to be trying to solve the conflict peacefully and '[were] trying hard to appease the opposition' (03:06:44, RT, 26 January 2014), but underlined that it did not help to stop the clashes between the protesters and the police because protesters and the opposition did not want to accept the proposed terms and demanded more and more concessions. Both of the channels intensively covered the violence on the side of the protesters, Channel One Russia even reported that the policemen were the *first* victims of the violence and did not even mention any violence coming *from* police. In contrast, the journalist of RT mentioned that the violence was displayed on both sides, but in general this channel's coverage of the violence did not differ much from the coverage of Channel One Russia and was rather another illustration of the channels' general frame about 'people beating police on the ground' (03:10:18, RT, 26 January 2014).

In their weekly news programmes, none of the analysed channels paid attention to the first deaths of the Euromaidan protesters, among them Serhii Nihoian and Mikhail Zhyznevski (ethnic Armenian and ethnic Belarusian respectively) killed that week in the centre of Kyiv. So, the first of the four events that should have been in focus of the empirical part of the article was not covered by the analysed channels. Despite deadly events happening in Ukraine in the course of the week, channels built their Ukraine-related agenda around other events. For example, the anchorperson of RT framed the news about three wounded policemen as RT's top story of the hour, it came about the following events:

'police say three security personnel were attacked by radical protesters earlier this week . . . all three are now being treated in the hospital' (03:07:33-03:07:44, RT, 26 January 2014), later, the channel interviewed the wounded policemen (i.e. at the worst, they were conscious and able to talk). When the analysed channels talked about protests, they said that 'there are nationalists there, there are neo-Nazis there' (03:10:36 03:10:41, RT, 26 January 2014), that the protesters were having talks about 'the racial hygiene' (*chistote nacii*) (00:21, COR1, 26 January 2014), that they are extremists, radicals and terrorists, and that their real leader is 'the leader (*vozhd*) of Ukrainian Nazis – Stepan Bandera' (11:32-11:34, COR1, 26 January 2014).

2 March 2014

On that date, both of the analysed channels made events happening in Crimea and in the context of Crimea the number one topic of their weekly news programmes. The share of the airtime devoted to the coverage of the situation in Ukraine on 2 March on Channel One Russia was slightly more than two-thirds of the channels' weekly news programmes broadcast, while on RT – about three-fourths. The only other topics covered by Channel One Russia on that date were the Winter Olympics and the Paralympics that took place in Russia in 2014. The news stories about this topic were, for example, about the 'extraordinary' victory of the Russian team that was said to have become possible due to such factors as state support, the newest technologies and Putin's leading role, not to forget about (how the invited Russian expert put it) 'the extraordinary will to victory, to something that is in our genes, it is our traditions since the USSR sport . . . ' (4:38-4:46, COR8, 2 March 2014). The channel also paid attention to the motivation of Russian Paralympians saying that the competitions 'are our Stalingrad, we are ready to die for it' (05:42-05:44, COR14, 2 March 2014). In contrast, RT's agenda was less positive and achievement-oriented: when not covering events happening in Ukraine, this channel more or less closely covered deadly clashes in Venezuela underlying that 'Washington is accused of fuelling the trouble' there (03:00:51-03:00:55, RT, 2 March 2014), bombings in Nigeria killing dozens of people, anti-governmental protests in Turkey, damage caused by 'the race for green energy' in Germany (03:30:37-3:30:38, RT, 2 March 2014), and 'a controversial' Christian groups patrolling the streets of London claiming that they 'want to counter aggressive islamification' (03:00:56-03:01:02, RT, 2 March 2014), etc.

As mentioned above, on 2 March 2014, the top stories of both of the analysed weekly news programmes were about the situation in Crimea. However, they were not about armed Russian forces taking control over Crimean Parliament and taking the whole territory of Ukraine's peninsula under their 'effective con-

trol'. These events that were planned to be in focus of the empirical part of the article were also not covered by the analysed channels, similarly to the killings of the first Euromaidan protesters in the centre of Kyiv in January 2014.

Instead of covering Russian intervention, Channel One Russia's first news story was about Putin getting permission from Russian Parliament to *theoretically* use Russian forces in Ukraine *in the future* in case Russians living there 'continue' facing threats. RT's first news story was about the Head of Ukrainian Naval Forces pledging allegiance to 'Crimean people' (03:00:17, RT, 2 March 2014). Who was meant by 'Crimean people' was not specified but the officer pledged allegiance standing near Serhii Aksonov. The channels called Aksonov 'Prime Minister of Crimea' but did not explain that he was 'appointed' as such after Russian Special Operations Forces took control over Crimean Parliament. The channels let Aksonov call himself a head of the 'legitimate authorities' (03:03:48, RT, 2 March 2014) and claim that the situation in Crimea was under the control of *local self-defence groups*. The channels framed the need for self-defence groups in Crimea and in other places in Ukraine, especially in Ukraine's Southern and Eastern regions, by the threats allegedly coming from 'Nazis that came to power [in Kyiv]', the situation in Postmaidan Ukraine was said to be as bad as in Germany in 1933 (05:01-05:05, COR2, 2 March 2014). RT was slightly less outspoken in its comparisons but, in general, the expert invited by RT to comment the topic put the events happening in Ukraine into the similar context: 'axis of evil that is ranged against Russia that combines neo-conservatives in Washington and in Britain, and in France and elsewhere with radical neo-Nazis in Ukraine and radical Islamists in Chechnya' (03:14:39-03:14:50, RT, 2 March 2014). In contrast to the hostile portrayal of Ukrainian actors, Russia was framed as an innocent peace-maker: 'Russia has never attacked anyone. Since the times of Minin and Pozharsky, Russia has always won the wars and has defended Russia and peace-loving countries' (01:48-02:02, COR19, 2 March 2014).

13 April 2014

Both of the analysed channels made events happening in Ukraine the number one topic of their weekly news programmes broadcast on 13 April 2014. RT devoted more than 50% of the weekly news' airtime to the events in Ukraine, while on Channel One Russia, reporting about those events took almost 80% of the weekly news' airtime. Except for those events, Channel One Russia reported that Putin took part in the meeting of 'Folk's Front', (the main topic of the event was said to be the Russian authorities' fight against corruption), and that Putin prepared for 'Direct Line' – annual Q&A event with Russian President – as he wanted to get to know about the situation in a country from people, not from bureaucrats, is how the channel's anchorperson explained. The channel also did

an interview with the French politician Marine Le Pen criticising the EU for sanctions against Russia, as well as prepared the news story about the risks of obesity. As for RT, except for events happening in Ukraine, this channel covered protests in Rome motivated by Italy's 'stagnant economy', numerous protestors had flags with hammers and sickles on them (03:10:40, RT, 13 April 2014). RT also reported similar protests in Greece, told the story of a wounded Afghan girl who received treatment in the US and then was sent back to the war zone, and reported that western companies funded Formula One competitions in Bahrain despite Bahrain's regime being engaged in human rights violations.

While covering the situation in Ukraine, both of the analysed channels made events happening in Sloviansk their top news stories. However, none of the channels reported the central role played by Russian military commanders (first of all by Igor Girkin) in the capture of administrative buildings in Sloviansk or in the city of Kramatorsk. Instead, both of the channels tried to frame the events in these and other cities of the Southern and Eastern regions of Ukraine purely as the initiative of locals protesting and fighting against Kyiv authorities: 'we defend our motherland from the fascist army that is going to kill us' (03:05:15-03:05:19, RT, 13 April 2014), and devoted a noticeable part of the airtime to strengthen this framing: 'there is no single Russian officer or soldier from the Russian Federation, no single citizen of Russian Federation. There are exclusively citizens of Ukraine' (14:12-14:23, COR1, 13 April 2014). Therefore, it can be said that Channel One Russia and RT included the events in Sloviansk to the agenda of their weekly news programmes but framed them in a way silencing the origin of people behind those events. RT also reported the statements of Western politicians saying that 'Russian agents are behind the havoc that's being unfolding in Ukraine's East', adding that 'Russia must clear off South-Eastern Ukraine!' (03:07:42-03:07:47, RT, 13 April 2014). However, RT accompanied this statement with the following comment: 'the protesters are simply locals who are fed up and do not want to live in a country ruled by oligarchs and neo-Nazis. Claims that Russian agents are steering up unrest on the ground are absurd' (03:08:11-03:08:22, RT, 13 April 2014). In comparison to RT, Channel One Russia was less outspoken in criticising Russia. Still, in general, the framing of the origin of Sloviansk's events on both of the channels was similar.

Except for covering unrest in Sloviansk, the channels also reported anti-government protests in other Ukrainian cities, including in Donetsk, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia. The difference in channels' framing of those events is illustrated by the fact that while RT's journalist made a report from the headquarters of the then recently self-proclaimed 'Donetsk people's republic' ('DNR'), the journalists of Channel One Russia prepared a news story about features and advantages of a federal model of government as well as another news story with the address to

Ukrainians by Russia-based Viktor Yanukovych saying that Ukrainians wish to protect themselves from nationalists coming to power in Kyiv after Maidan; in that news story Yanukovych was called 'the president of Ukraine'.

20 July 2014

As in the three previously analysed weekly news programmes, the events happening in Ukraine were the number one topic covered by Channel One Russia and RT, the share of the airtime devoted to those events was slightly more than 75% on the former channel and slightly more than 70% on the latter. Except for the events happening in Ukraine, Channel One Russia made a detailed coverage of four other topics: the technical details of the crash in the Moscow metro and the heroic behaviour of workers of Russian emergency services helping people, Vladimir Putin visiting BRICS's meeting happening on 'the initial phase of the creation of "the non-American world"' (02:13-02:20, COR6, 20 July 2014); the channel also reported the 'bloody Sunday' (00:04, COR10, 20 July 2014) – the beginning of an Israeli military operation in Gaza, as well as the tens of thousands in a religious procession in Russia; Putin reportedly took part in that religious event, the channel broadcast parts of his speech – those about love and about the unity of Russian lands, while the head of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill underlined that 'there is no military threat coming from Russia as well as no other threats' (04:08-04:14, COR11, 20 July 2014). Speaking of the agenda of RT, except for converging events in Ukraine, this channel reported the Israeli military operation in Gaza, for example, by including detailed video footage of a screaming Palestinian man who was said to have died because of Israeli fire while looking for his family.

Despite some attention to other above-described topics, the downing of Flight MH-17 was the first and the most closely covered topic in the weekly news programmes of Channel One Russia and RT. The channels prepared several news stories about the tragedy: both of the channels positively portrayed the self-proclaimed 'Donetsk people's republic' based on the claims that it no longer limited access of the international experts to the crash site, both channels framed the tragedy as an unclear and complicated event and blamed Ukrainian and Western politicians for assigning the responsibility to Russia and Russia-backed forces: 'before investigators made it to the crash site, the US announced to the world where the deadly missile shot came from' (03:12:53-03:13:01, RT, 20 July 2014). The focus on the unclarity of the event was more noticeable on RT. As for Channel One Russia, on the one hand, it broadcast appeals to restrain from any kinds of accusations, and, on the other hand, offered channel's viewers various versions of how exactly Ukraine shot down the plane: 'they [Ukrainians] did not correctly identify whose plane it was . . . they reported to the president

[Poroshenko] that the plane is going towards Russia and, who knows, it might be an intelligence (razvedyvatelnyi) aircraft. He, as a chief commander gave the order to shoot down the plane. It is a certain version' (11:46-11:58, COR2, 20 July 2014). Vladimir Putin's stance about the downing of MH-17 was reported by both of the channels, both portraying the Russian president positively for offering his condolences and for, as channels framed it, his readiness to help with the investigation: 'President Putin has declared the need for a thorough and impartial investigation, to which Russia will assist in every possible way' (00:00-00:06, COR3, 20 July 2014). Both of the channels also prepared news stories about the victims of the crash. Journalists of RT even went to the Netherlands to talk to friends and neighbours of some of the victims. Importantly, Channel One Russia's news story about the victims of the crash was finished by the fragment comparing the number of casualties due to the crash with the number of local civilians killed during the reported week, the latter number was said to be significantly higher.

Except for covering the crash, both of the channels reported the shelling of the Luhansk region. The shelling was framed in a way that the channels unequivocally assigned the responsibility for it and for killing civilians to Ukraine. Moreover, the crash of Flight MH-17 was put into the broader context of the violent conflict in Donbas, for example, Channel One Russia framed the tragedy as the provocation by Ukrainian authorities aimed at discrediting the self-proclaimed republics. It was said that after such a provocation Ukraine 'can continue conducting punitive operation [in Donbas] ignoring the laws of war and the accusations of demolishing its own people' (02:18-02:24, COR2, 20 July 2014). The analysed weekly news programmes did not include any reports about the involvement of Russians in the tragedy, including the involvement of Igor Girkin – the FSB officer and the then 'Defence Minister' of the self-proclaimed 'DNR', the information about his involvement was available in the very first days after the crash and was later confirmed by international investigators.[6][7]

Conclusion: Regime-friendly construction of enemies

The media agenda of Channel One Russia and framing of events happening in Ukraine by this channel were more or less similar to those by RT. In contrast, when not covering news from Ukraine, the two channels focused on very different events happening in Russia and/or elsewhere. As can be seen from the general agenda of the eight analysed weekly news programmes, Channel One Russia's non-

6   van Huis, P. (2020): The MH17 Trial Part 1: New Material from the Four Defendants. Bellingcat.
7   Bellingcat Investigation Team (2022): Donbas Doubles: The Search for Girkin and Plotnitsky's Cover Identities.

Ukraine-related news was mostly positive reports about Russian authorities caring about medicine, education, sport, moral, etc. Importantly, Vladimir Putin was repeatedly said to have the leading role in the reported positive developments in those and other spheres of life. RT's non-Ukraine-related news stories were of a different nature: they were mostly about anti-government protests, violence, sufferings, human rights violations, deaths, killings, etc; many of those undesirable events and processes were said to happen because of 'the West', especially the US. In other words, Channel One Russia and RT put the same events happening in Ukraine into very different media agendas. The former channel made events happening in Ukraine serve as a contrast to the positive Russian agenda. In its turn, RT made events happening in Ukraine appear as just another illustration of violent international agenda. Such differences in approaches applied by Channel One Russia (Russian TV channel predominately broadcasting for an internal audience), and RT (Russia's international broadcaster) lay in line with earlier studies of state-controlled mass communication of autocracies showing that when communicating with its citizens, autocracies tend to combine negative information about the regime's enemies with positive information about the regime itself and its leaders, while the international mass communication of autocracies does not necessarily include a noticeably positive portrayal of the regime and its leaders (Dukalskis 2017; Dukalskis & Patane 2019; Nino et al. 2021).

As for the channels' coverage of the events happening in Ukraine, the news stories about those events were the predominant part of the analysed coverage (timewise) in three out of four analysed weeks. It shows the channels' close attention to the situation in Ukraine and implies the channels' wish to position those events as the topic of extreme priority for their audiences (Wanta, Golan & Lee 2004). As the reported events happening in Ukraine were those about clashes, protests, violence, threats, etc, the negativity of those events had the potential to attract additional attention of viewers to the analysed weekly news programmes and serve as a suitable general frame for the construction of crisis (Buzan, Wæver & Wilde 1998).

Importantly, the only analysed week when the events happening in Ukraine were not the predominant part of the analysed weekly news programme was the week during the Euromaidan protests. This is rather unexpected given the repeated references to the events of the Euromaidan by Russian authorities, including the Russian president Putin. Those events are still kept in the Russian public agenda almost a decade after they happened but they were not the predominant part of the media agenda on Russian state-controlled TV channels as they were unfolding.

The analysis showed that two out of the four events that were planned to be in focus of the analysis were not covered by Channel One Russia and RT. It

comes about the first killings of Euromaidan protesters in the centre of Kyiv and the taking the Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula under 'effective control' by Russian forces. In other words, the channels silenced events that might have shed the negative light on Russia and/or its allies (e.g. pro-Russian Ukrainian authorities of the Euromaidan period) and proved the Russian invasion of Crimea several weeks before the so-called referendum in Crimea.

As mentioned in the theoretical part of the article, agenda-setting cannot be fully-objective, still, the decision to completely silence the killings of protesters shot dead in the centre of Kyiv and, simultaneously, to position the interviews with three wounded policemen as a top story has features of the attempt to mislead the audience and to distort its perception of the covered events (Ramsay & Robertshaw 2019). The channels' agenda-setting approach applied for the programmes broadcast on 2 March 2014 and 13 April 2014 is questionable as well. For example, it is rather unexpected to see the channels reporting that the Russian Parliament gave Vladimir Putin the permission to use Russian forces in Ukraine somewhen in the future, and ignoring the fact that Russian forces had taken 'effective control' over the Crimean Peninsula, including seizure of Crimean Parliament. Both the events in Crimea and in Sloviansk were framed by the channels as events of purely local origin – as those happening without any influence from Russia and motivated by the locals' fear of the Postmaidan 'Nazi' Ukrainian authorities. Therefore, the channels' agenda-setting was strengthening (if not enabling) the construction of enemies out of Ukrainian actors in the situation when Russian actions in Ukraine qualified for violation of international law (Cwicinskaja 2017).

Moreover, in both of those cases, Ukrainian actors were framed as Nazis threatening Russians, Russian-speaking people, as well as people residing in the Eastern and South-Eastern regions of Ukraine in general. As mentioned in the introduction of the article, the similar Nazi-frame is still used by the Russian regime to justify its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Historical recollections of the WWII period and the frequent comparison of Ukrainian actors to fascists and Nazis are known features of Russian state-controlled communication about events happening in Ukraine (Gaufman 2017; Edele 2017). The article complements the findings of the previous research and shows that back in 2014 calling Ukrainian actors 'Nazis' was not just one of many accusations against them but a general frame used by both of the analysed channels to report about events happening in Ukraine. In particular, the 'local' (as channels call them) uprisings against the Postmaidan Ukrainian government in Crimea and in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv regions of Ukraine were said to be motivated by Nazi leanings of Ukrainian authorities threatening well-being and even survival of those who do not support them.

The *Nazi frame* – the main 'problem definition' (Entman 1993) applied by the channels to report about the analysed events happening in Ukraine in 2014 – was developing over time: in the weekly news programmes broadcast on 26 January 2014, both of the channels mentioned that there are (neo-)Nazis among 'radical' and 'aggressive' Euromaidan protesters; on 2 March 2014, both of the channels reported that Nazis had come to power and were threatening 'Crimean people'; on 13 April 2014 both Channel One Russia and RT reported that Kyiv was about to begin a military crackdown against 'locals', while the 'locals' said that they were ready to die defending themselves from the Nazi army coming to kill them; on 20 July 2014, Channel One Russia relied on its reporting of previous months to frame the crash of the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 as a provocation organised by Ukrainian authorities, the channels also strengthened previous frames by reporting that Ukrainian authorities did this provocation because they were keen to further 'demolish its own people' [in Donbas].

After the prolonged state-controlled construction of a Ukrainian Nazi-enemy on Russian TV, it is a challenging task to look back and to say whether another frame would have been so successful in turning the attitude of Russians towards Ukraine from predominately positive to predominately negative within a year – from January 2014 to January 2015 (Levada Center 2015). The further possible outcomes of media framing – causal interpretation and moral evaluation – offered by the channels to their viewers also heavily relied on portraying Postmaidan Ukrainian Authorities as Nazis killing 'its own people'. Therefore, the whole Russian years-long TV framing of events happening in Ukraine would collapse in the absence of a Nazi frame; in such a situation, the remaining element of a frame – the treatment recommendation chosen by the Russian regime and explained by the alleged need to denazify Ukraine in a 'special military operation' would also be hardly seen as reliable. However, the Nazi frame was not challenged, especially for the audience of Channel One Russia, because most viewers of this channel live in the state-controlled media environment, where all the *major* media outlets transmit the framing of political reality fruitful for the autocratic regime (Becker 2014).

The analysis has shown that in some aspects, the agenda-setting and framing applied by RT appeared more balanced compared to those by Channel One Russia. For example, unlike the latter channel, RT mentioned that both the protesters *and* police were using violence during the Euromaidan. Additionally, RT included statements of Western politicians saying that Russian agents were behind the events in Sloviansk in its news stories (however, later those statements were framed as unreliable), and did not directly blame Ukraine for the crash of Flight MH-17; instead, this channel's crash-related agenda was organised around the appeal for a thorough investigation and for abstaining from assigning re-

sponsibility before the investigation was completed. In other words, being the Russian state-controlled channel broadcasting for viewers living in pluralistic media environments, RT adjusted its agenda and made it appear more reliable in the eyes of a European audience that is likely aware of some of the negative information about Russia and its allies. Still, as a whole, RT's Ukraine-related agenda-setting and framing were very similar to those of Channel One Russia. With the help of state-controlled agenda-setting and framing, both of the channels contributed to the construction of crises, threats and enemies in the context of the Euromaidan, the Annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas.

To sum up the paper, the analysis has shown that as early as in 2014, the state-controlled construction of a 'Ukrainian Nazi enemy' heavily relied on a pro-regime strategy of setting the media agenda and media frames. The empirical part of the article is based on the relatively small amount of data analysed by means of a qualitative method (which somewhat limited the ability to generalise the conclusions). Still, the available findings allow stating that in the conditions of a state-controlled information environment, the regime-friendly media agenda and frames are exactly the tools capable of constructing enemies. Therefore, there is the need for further empirical research of agenda-setting and framing applied by authoritarian countries in the processes of constructing enemies – the stage that might be the preparation for regimes' calls to fight those enemies.

The Ukrainian 'Nazi' enemy constructed by Russian state-controlled TV back in 2014 is currently being fought by hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers taking part in the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian War, while in its column for Russian state-controlled online outlet RIA Novosti, published in April 2022, Sergeytsev offered a new development of the Nazi frame by arguing that not just Ukrainian authorities but most Ukrainian civilians are Nazis and should be 'denazified', while the methods Russia is undertaking for its war against Ukrainians potentially correspond to the criteria of genocide as listed in Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (United Nations 1948). Currently, international institutions (for example, European Parliament) are considering different options for conducting an international tribunal aimed at holding Russia accountable for its 'crime of aggression against Ukraine' (European Parliament 2023).

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Alona Shestopalova is a Ukrainian researcher, she defended a dissertation about Russian state-controlled TV channels (University of Hamburg). Currently, she works as a senior researcher at the Centre for Information Resilience (London).

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Annex. Links to the analysed weekly news programmes

Date	Link to the analysed weekly news programme of Channel One Russia	Link to the analysed weekly news programme of RT
26 January 2014	https://www.1tv.ru/news/issue/2014-01-26/21:00	https://archive.org/details/RT_20140126_200000
2 March 2014	https://www.1tv.ru/news/issue/2014-03-02/21:00	https://archive.org/details/RT_20140302_180000_Interviews_Culture_Art_Documentaries_and_Sports
13 April 2014	https://www.1tv.ru/news/issue/2014-04-13/21:00	https://archive.org/details/RT_20140413_180000_Interviews_Culture_Art_Documentaries_and_Sports/start/4080/end/4140
20 July 2014	https://www.1tv.ru/news/issue/2014-07-20/21:00	https://archive.org/details/RT_20140720_190000_Headline_News/start/1200/end/1260

Source: The author

Special issue
Constructing Crises in Europe: Multifaceted Securitisation in Times of Exception

Small Powers, Geopolitical Crisis and Hypersecuritisation: Latvia and the Effects of Russia's Second War in Ukraine

Māris Andžāns

Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia, ORCiD: 0000-0002-4695-3929, corresponding address: maris.andzans@rsu.lv

Abstract

This article presents a case where securitisation of one state in another increased dramatically and exponentially. The scale and intensity of securitisation were unprecedented, as were the range of securitisation actors, and the tone of language of speech acts and nonverbal securitisation acts. This case in question is the securitisation of Russia in Latvia over Russia's war in Ukraine starting in 2022. Although Russia was securitised by its smaller neighbour before the war, the sudden explosion of securitisation in 2022 differs from any securitisation in recent decades there. Securitisation of Russia is evaluated within the margins of the hypersecuritisation subconcept that purports securitisation beyond the 'normal' level, characterised by exaggeration of threats and excessive countermeasures. This article offers a reformulation of the subconcept, omitting the negative connotation built into the initial definition, as well as addresses the transition from securitisation to hypersecuritisation.

Keywords: hypersecuritisation, securitisation, Latvia, Russia, Ukraine

Introduction

Insecurity is an intrinsic feature of almost any small power. Small powers in the vicinity of (a) hostile great power(s) tend to feel permanently insecure. Geopolitical crises, even if not directly involving small powers themselves, tend to exacerbate their insecurity. The securitisation theory of the Copenhagen School provides a set of tools to untangle and explain the formation of security issues. The original normative stance of the securitisation approach provides that a securitised issue is negative per se since, according to the approach, securitisation is the inability to solve a problem as a part of normal political practice (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998: 29). But what should small powers do in a geopolitical crisis with existential threats looming? Should they desecuritise an objective existential threat for normative reasons? Or should they securitise and hypersecuritise to invoke emergency measures to protect themselves?

Russia's war in Ukraine and its effects in Latvia, another neighbour of Russia, provide a peculiar case for analysis. Although Russia has also been (hyper)securitised in many other countries in the West since the war broke out, Russia was already a constant subject of securitisation in Latvia since the latter regained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Before Russia started the full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022, it was a common view – not only in Russia but also in the West – that Latvia was a Russophobe and paranoid, and that it unnecessarily securitised and over-securitised Russia.

Given the painful history of Latvia – the loss of independence to the Soviet Union in 1940 and the ordeals that followed during the five-decade occupation – permanent securitisation of Russia did not come without fair reasoning. Furthermore, the securitisation of Russia by Latvia interacted with consistent countersecuritisation. Over the three decades, Russia mostly securitised Latvia over the alleged abuse of Russian speakers, the supposed glorification of Nazism and revision of history, and the military threats Latvia as a member of NATO presumably poses to Russia. Thus, the securitisation following the war in Ukraine was not new, but rather a new phase of the previous securitisation. Events after 24 February 2022, when Russia started a full-scale war in Ukraine, went far above any intensity of securitisation witnessed in Latvia in recent decades.

Another aspect of the peculiarity of the Latvian case is the severe impact of the war on the Latvian state and society. This was the largest geopolitical and societal shock in the recent history of the country. If in most other countries where the war led to significant levels of securitisation, direct threat from Russia was a distant prospect, in the Latvian case it was perceived as real and existential – if Ukraine were to fall, Latvia could be among the next victims of Rus-

sia. Therefore, the following (hyper)securitisation was not only a top-down but also a grassroots process. Meanwhile, the significant number of Russian speakers in Latvia further complicated the picture since sympathies of a notable part of them remained with Russia while other Russian speakers were confused between competing loyalties.

The following research questions will guide the article. First, how did Russia's war in Ukraine change the pattern and intensity of Russia's securitisation in Latvia? Second, how did securitisation of Russia transcend the level of normal securitisation to hypersecuritisation? And third, how can this transcendence between securitisation and hypersecuritisation contribute to the development of the hypersecuritisation (sub-)concept?

To address the research questions, first, the hypersecuritisation subconcept will be explored along with the main tenets of securitisation theory. Hypersecuritisation was developed in a slightly different context – the American foreign and security policy in the wake of the 21st century (Buzan 2004). Later it was reconsidered in the context of cyber security (Hansen & Nissenbaum 2009). It has also been applied with regard to other empirical issues (for example, Saeed 2016; Lacy & Prince 2018; Tittensor, Hoffstaedter & Possamai 2020; Stivas & Sliwinski 2020; Dunn Cavelty & Egloff 2021; Liu 2021). Notwithstanding this, the subconcept provides both a useful framework in this case, as well as it leaves a space for progress in understanding large-scale securitisation processes.

From there, the analysis will immerse in the case of securitisation of Russia in Latvia over the six months from February 2022 to August 2022. This part of the article will begin with the status quo of securitisation of Russia in Latvia prior to the war, thus trying to lay ground to delineate between the 'normal' and 'hyper' securitisation. The article will then explore the escalation of securitisation acts and their reception by the securitisation audience – the domestic society. The remaining share of the empirical part will follow the requested emergency measures to counter the existential threat and their implementation. Both regarding the main securitisation processes and emergency measures, the situation before 24 February will be summarised to provide a comparative perspective of the situation before and after.

Given the scale of securitisation processes, including the large number of securitisation actors before the war and, furthermore, following it, only the main securitisation processes and actors will be excelled. To trace these, the analysis will rest on official documents, statements of authoritative politicians, sociological studies and reports from the most notable media outlets of Latvia.

To conclude the introduction, this article enriches the body of publications on the response of small countries to the war in Ukraine and more specifically on Latvia's response and the evolution of its defence and security policy. Given

the time normally needed for elaborating academic papers, most reflections of the Latvian case have so far focused purely on the empirical aspects of the events, for example Bergmane 2022, 2023; Andžāns 2022a; Djatkoviča 2023a. Latvian security and defence policy, which has been inextricably entangled with Russia, has been broadly studied. Studies since the first Russo-Ukrainian War in 2014 include Bērziņš 2014, 2018, 2022; Rostoks & Vanaga 2016; Rostoks 2018, 2022; Bērziņa 2018; Vanaga & Rostoks 2019; Andžāns & Bērziņa-Čerenkova 2021; Andžāns & Sprūds 2021; Banka & Bussmann 2022; Djatkoviča 2023b. This publication will elaborate on the developments of Latvian security and defence policy, as well as Latvia-Russia relations after the war. Thus, it will offer a comparison of the situation before and after 24 February 2022.

Also, a topic broadly studied is the issue of Russian speakers in Latvia, a notable aspect of the Latvian domestic and security policy, with both explicit and implicit linkage to Russia. The body of research include Dilāns & Zepa 2015; Cheskin 2015; Kaprāns & Saulītis 2017; Kaprāns & Mieriņa 2019; Kaprāns & Juzefovičs 2019; Andžāns 2021; Pupčenoks, Rostoks & Mieriņa 2022; Bērziņa, Krūmiņš, Šiliņš & Andžāns 2023. This article will consider the so-called Russian speakers' issue in Latvia in the post-2022 environment, in particular by comparing the responses to the war in Ukraine among Russian speakers and Latvian speakers.

Hypersecuritisation: going exponentially beyond the 'normal' levels of securitisation

A concept, or rather a subconcept, that deals with securitisation processes beyond the 'normal' levels of securitisation is hypersecuritisation. The securitisation theory itself was created by Wæver in the late 1980s and early 1990s (for example, Wæver 1989; 1995). Since then, the theory has been further advanced by Wæver and his co-authors (most notably culminating in Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998), as well as by many other scholars. Over more than three decades, the theory has been extensively debated and enriched. It has been applied in countless empirical cases covering all five security sectors of the Copenhagen School, the military, the environmental, the political, the societal and the economic.[1] The basic offer of the theory remains largely intact – a framework for tracing and analysing formation of security issues, that is, how ordinary issues are transformed in security issues, as well as the opposite process on how security issues are transformed to non-security issues.

Hypersecuritisation, ostensibly built on the main premises of securitisation theory, was coined by Buzan in 2004 as a part of his assessment of American foreign policy in the early years of the 21st century. Buzan presented this (sub-)concept as an element of the American exceptionalism, alongside unilateralism and Mani-

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1   Security sectors as defined and later advanced by Buzan (1983; 1991), and most specifically elaborated by Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde (1998).

cheanism (Buzan 2004: 177). In this context, he defined hypersecuritisation as 'a tendency both to exaggerate threats and to resort to excessive countermeasures' arising from an exaggerated sense of insecurity and anticipation of a high level of security (Buzan 2004: 172). He also went as far as to mark an equation between hypersecuritisation and 'excesses of paranoia' (Buzan 2004: 193) thus underlining the imbalance of threats and response with which the United States responded. Thus, in Buzan's formulation the (sub-)concept bears a negative connotation.

Hansen and Nissenbaum reconsidered hypersecuritisation in 2009 while assessing cyber security as a distinct sector along with the classical five sectors of the Copenhagen School. Hansen and Nissenbaum abolished the 'exaggeration' aspect from Buzan's definition to avoid the alleged 'objectivist ring' (considering securitisation 'as an essentially intersubjective process' (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998: 30)). Henceforth, they applied the (sub-)concept to the realm of cyber security 'to identify the striking manner in which cyber security discourse hinges on multi-dimensional cyber disaster scenarios that pack a long list of severe threats into a monumental cascading sequence *and* the fact that neither of these scenarios has so far taken place' (Hansen & Nissenbaum 2009: 1164). By leaving out 'exaggeration' from the definition, Hansen and Nissenbaum focused more on the extensive scale and multiple levels of securitisation processes.

Henceforth, hypersecuritisation has not received widespread attention in academic literature. It has been used in studies related to cyber security (Lacy & Prince 2018; Dunn Cavelty & Egloff 2021), religion and minorities (Saeed 2016; Tittensor, Hoffstaedter & Possamai 2020), and health (Stivas & Sliwinski 2020; Liu 2022). To a different extent in each case, these authors utilised the subconcept to explain the widespread securitisations of the respective issues to levels beyond the 'normal'. However, the issue of the borderline between the 'normal' levels of securitisation and 'hyper-securitisation' has so far been omitted.

Lack of considerable attention to hypersecuritisation is likely to be related to the normative stance of the 'classical' securitisation theory whereby 'security should be seen as negative, as a failure to deal with issues as normal politics' and 'desecuritization is the optimal long-range option . . .' (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998: 29). That in turn is related to the 'objectivist ring' invoked by Hansen and Nissenbaum as a reason for dropping 'exaggeration' from Buzan's definition of hypersecuritisation (Hansen & Nissenbaum 2009: 1164). In the words of the initial formulation of securitisation theory, 'the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat' (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998: 24). For that reason, the issue of objectivity of threats was left out of the initial approach to securitisation. In other words, the authors were not investigating whether threats

to referent object are real or not (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998: 204). With that, however, the theory did not rule out the existence of real threats; Wæver has admitted the existence of 'lots of real threats' (Wæver 2011: 472). Rather, it emphasised preference to avoid securitisation where the respective issues could have been solved as a part of the normal politics.

The approach of this article omits the negative connotation built into the definition, that is, that hypersecuritisation as such is negative. Rather, securitisation and hypersecuritisation might be necessary in certain cases.[2] Similarly to Hansen & Nissenbaum (2009: 1164), this approach drops 'exaggeration' from the definition, though for a different reason. Hypersecuritisation can indeed be a result of an exaggerated sense of insecurity and thus can result in exaggeration of threats, but it should not be taken as a rule. Similarly, the 'excessive' is also dropped from Buzan's definition since response in exaggerated situations can indeed be excessive but in other situations seemingly excessive measures can be in fact proportional to the threats. Thus, the definition of hypersecuritisation proposed here: (a) securitisation process(es) advancing significantly beyond the previous levels of securitisation in terms of securitisation intensity and the number of securitising actors.

The adjusted definition does not yet touch the issue of the borderline between the 'normal' levels of securitisation and 'hyper-securitisation'. This gap will be further addressed following the review of the empirical issues central to this article.

From securitisation of hypersecuritisation of Russia in Latvia in 2022

Russia was already a permanent subject of securitisation in Latvia prior to 24 February 2022. Since the renewal of Latvia's independence in 1991 securitisation of Russia has gone through ups and downs, despite Russia being permanently seen as the main source of risks to the national security.

Over the three decades securitisation actors from Latvia securitised Russia as a source of existing and potential existential threats – as a potential military invader, as a cyber threat, as an unreliable economic & energy partner, as a threat to the societal cohesiveness, political system and sovereignty. The main surges of securitisation of Russia in Latvia were in 2008 (Russia invaded Georgia), in 2012 (a (failed) referendum on assigning the Russian language a state language status held in Latvia) and 2014 (Russia occupied Crimea and started the first war in Ukraine).

Major securitisations of Russia also intertwined with periods of desecuritisation and nonsecuritisation: the latter included the early 2000s as Latvia sought

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2   As Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde themselves put it, '[i]n some cases securitization of issues is unavoidable, as when states are faced with an implacable or barbarian aggressor' (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998: 29).

membership to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), while Russia was relatively weak domestically and internationally, and seen as a partner in the West; also, starting in 2009 when the United States and Russia tried to reset their relations, in that light Latvia tried to pragmatise and economise its ties to its eastern neighbour.[3]

The pre-2022 perception of Russia and its securitisation is well characterised by the basic national security and defence documents (Saeima 2019, 2020). They clearly earmarked Russia as the main source of risks to Latvia. According to the National Security Concept which mentions Russia by name on 65 occasions, Russia's 'employed aggressive security policy in the Baltic region is considered the main source of threats to the national security of Latvia'. Russia was securitised in the document over military threats, intelligence activities, cyber-threats, internal security risks as well as its challenges in the information space (Saeima 2019).

Escalation in quantity and language of securitisation acts

Securitisation of Russia in Latvia was already heightened from the autumn and winter of 2021, when Russia started to amass its armed forces near the Ukrainian border. Nevertheless, from 24 February 2022 onward, the securitisation acts of Russia increased exponentially to the level that it is not possible to trace them all. Also, the number of non-state securitising actors and their securitisation efficiency rose sharply. For this reason, the selection of securitising acts and actors henceforth is partly arbitrary, nonetheless striving to identify the most significant ones.

Institutions and politicians led the securitisation of Russia immediately. On that day, the Latvian Parliament adopted a resolution in which it 'strongly condemns the military aggression of the Russian Federation and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine' (Saeima 2022a: 1). The president of Latvia used similar words and demanded 'the harshest possible sanctions to punish Russia and send it into isolation' (Levits 2022a).

In an escalation of atrocities committed by Russia, Latvia raised the tone. In April, the Parliament adopted a statement in which it 'acknowledges that the Russian Federation is currently committing genocide against the people of Ukraine' (Saeima 2022b: 2). In August, the Parliament went further and denoted Russia 'a state sponsor of terrorism' and asked other like-minded states to follow suit (Saeima 2022c: 2). Though these declarations were of limited practical impact, the stigmatised connotation of both genocide and terrorism were strong signals in the escalation of security speech. Politicians and civil servants consistently amplified these messages in domestic and international formats.

3   For a more detailed analysis of Latvia-Russia securitisation and desecuritisation processes see, for example, analysis of Andžāns & Bērziņa-Čerenkova (2021).

Russia's aggression became the dominant story in the media. Extra editions and special broadcasts were devoted to the war in Ukraine, and the same topic occupied large parts of ordinary broadcasts. The media themselves became co-securitising and securitising actors. They themselves set the agenda and not through requests or persuasion of state institutions. What was also different from previous surges of Russia's securitisation was that the most prominent and influential media went beyond rather neutral designations of Russia like 'aggressor' or 'invader' to denote Russia and Russians regularly as 'occupiers', 'Russia occupiers' and 'Russian occupiers' (for example, Delfi (2022a), LSM.lv (2022a), tv3.lv (2022), TVNET (2022a)). Though the intensity of securitisation of Russia in media decreased towards the end of the first six months of the war, the issue remained permanently high in the media agenda.

While it is difficult to quantify the extent of securitisation of Russia in society, it was endemic across the society, bar parts of the Russian speaking communities (see the next subchapter for the ethnolinguistic divisions in this regard), in everyday interactions in the physical space and online. The most visible and widespread acts of defiance and support for Ukraine became Ukrainian flags flying from windows, balconies and flagpoles, along with virtual Ukrainian flags displayed on social networks. Although there is no study to validate it, possibly in Riga and elsewhere in Latvia Ukrainian flags outnumbered those of Latvia. This became the most visible way of visual securitisation, whereby support to Ukraine is seen as defiance to Russia.

Reception of securitisation by the audience
From the widespread securitisation of Russia by members of the society, it is quite clear that the acceptance of Russia's securitisation was largely successful. Countless members of the society became minisecuritising actors themselves by expressing their views in the physical and electronic information space domestically and internationally.

That securitisation of Russia has been largely successful was also demonstrated by studies of the societal opinion. In July 2022, only 20% of respondents of a nationally representative survey held a positive view of Russia while 66% had a negative view of it, compared to 48% positive and 37% negative a year earlier (Kaktiņš 2022).[4] In a comparative perspective among different countries, results from two other consecutive nationally representative sociological surveys in May and July 2022 identified Russia as the unfriendliest country among respondents in Latvia (Andžāns 2022b).

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4   The same study offers data on Russia since 2008. The peak of positive attitudes towards Russia in Latvia was in 2010/2011: 64%/63% positive and 25%/24% negative. Even in July 2014, after the first war in Ukraine, the views of Russia were balanced: 45% positive and 43% negative (Kaktiņš 2022).

However, given the ethnic composition of Latvia, the picture in Latvia is more complex. Predominantly resulting from the Soviet occupation, a significant portion of Latvia's population is of Eastern Slavic background (i.e. 24.2% Russians, 3.1% Belarussians and 2.2% Ukrainians) (National Statistical System of Latvia 2022).[5] A significant portion of Russian speakers, also including Russified non-Russians, have maintained close links to the so-called 'Russian world' by following Russian state media (Bērziņa & Zupa 2020: 19-20) where the image of Latvia and the West at large has been negative and even hostile. Thus, also their views on foreign and security policy issues have often differed from the Latvian official and mainstream societal discourse.

The differences are also visible in other sociological surveys conducted during the first six months of the war. A nationally representative survey in February found that 76.3% of all respondents do not support Russia's action in Ukraine, although this number was only 51.6% among Russian speakers, compared to 92.6% among Latvian speakers (Factum 2022). In June, another poll delivered similar findings, according to which 73% of all respondents condemned Russia; however, only 40% of Russian speakers condemned it, while the number was much higher among Latvian speakers – 93% (LSM.lv 2022b). These data support the claim that acceptance of Russia as an existential threat and the respective emergency measures can be safely attributed to a convincing majority of Latvian speakers but ostensibly not to most of Latvia's Russian speakers.

Remaining on the same issue, one should also note incidents of vandalising Ukrainian flags and cars with Ukrainian numberplates, attacking supporters of Ukraine as well as openly supporting Russia's war and alike. During the first five months of the war, Latvian police initiated 112 criminal proceedings and at least 250 administrative cases over such incidents (Delfi 2022b). Presumably, these incidents were mainly caused by Russian speakers. Such incidents demonstrate the enduring affection of a significant portion of Russian speakers to the narratives of Russia. This is despite Latvia having blocked all television channels registered in Russia, along with scores of websites related to Russia (National Electronic Mass Media Council 2022a, 2022b). Therefore, these incidents cannot be credibly attributed to influence operations of Russia after the war because Russia's influence in the Latvian information space was significantly curtailed by the aforementioned bans.

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5   Non-Latvians are commonly referred to as Russian speakers. While this category cannot be treated in black and white categories, it is widely referred to as such in political science and sociology studies (for example, Bērziņa and Zupa 2020; Factum 2022; LSM 2022b).

Emergency measures demanded and executed to address the existential threat

As Russia was a frequent object of securitisation before 2022, so were various measures to counter the threats emanating from Russia. The most notable were, however, aimed at lessening the vulnerabilities of Latvia itself: by increasing defence expenditure (from less than 1% of the gross domestic product in 2014 to 2% and more since 2018 (NATO 2022a: 8)) and thus laying ground for improved defence capabilities; similarly by reducing risks to the national security in various non-military national security sectors, especially the border security, counter-intelligence and the safeguarding of information space; by requesting NATO to, first, deploy allied forces to Latvia (the Canadian-led multi-national NATO battlegroup was inaugurated in 2017) and then for expanding the allied presence. Also on the international stage, Latvian officials and politicians advocated continuation of sanctions imposed on Russia following the first war in Ukraine in 2014.

The scale and intensity of emergency measures demanded after 24 February 2022 significantly escalated. Although typically state institutions take the lead role in demanding legitimisation of emergency measures to tackle an existential threat, Latvian society and private sector representatives acted not only as securitising and functional actors but also as responders and executers of the measures. Many measures went beyond what would normally be at stake when another country is invaded.

Measures to support Ukraine and Ukrainians

Immediately after the war broke out, Latvia securitised Russia (and advocated Ukraine) in different international formats, including NATO, the EU, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. In all these organisations, Latvia along with Lithuania, Estonia and Poland were among the lead securitisers.[6] In NATO, it was condemnation of Russia and advocacy of military support to Ukraine ('as Russian aggression continues we must double down our efforts to provide more assistance to Ukraine' (Rinkēvičs 2022a)). At the margins of the EU, it was the condemnation and sanctions, and material support to Ukraine ('We should not give in to Russian blackmail but double down our support to Ukraine and sanctions against Russia' (Rinkēvičs 2022b)). In the Council of Europe, it was condemnation of Russia and a demand of the eventual exclusion from the organisation ('Aggressive and revanchist #Russia that violates human rights and international law does not have [a] place in the Council of Europe or any other international organisation' (Rinkēvičs 2022c)). In the United Nations, it was condemnation of Russia ('If Russia hates this organisation so much, maybe it should leave or be expelled' (Rinkēvičs 2022d)).

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6   The Latvian minister of foreign affairs is henceforth quoted to illustrate the language and emergency measures requested on the international stage.

During the period discussed in this article, Latvia also provided direct military support to Ukraine worth at least 200 million euros and an additional 0.9 million euros worth of assistance in responding to Ukrainian requests (Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia 2022), being one of the leading contributors to Ukraine measured against its gross domestic product (Trebesch, Antezza, Bushnell et al. 2023: 31). Although Latvia itself is a small military power and thus highly vulnerable to Russia, it donated military helicopters, self-propelled howitzers and portable air defence systems, among other military equipment. The assistance was not purely a sign of compassion and solidarity but also self-defence. Effective Ukrainian resistance and eventual victory in the war are seen as a precondition to deter Russia from aggression toward Latvia.

Finally, it was support for Ukrainians both in Ukraine and refugees that had reached Latvia. In the first weeks of the war, ordinary people organised transport from the Ukrainian/Polish border and brought humanitarian aid to the border. While Latvia had no recent history of taking in significant numbers of refugees and the general reluctance to admit predominantly economic migrants from the more distant parts of the globe was well known (for example, United Nations Refugee Agency 2018), the war in Ukraine changed this overnight.[7] More than 36 thousand Ukrainian refugees were registered in Latvia in August (Delfi 2022c); the de facto number was probably even higher. For comparison, slightly less than 42 thousand Ukrainians lived in Latvia prior to the war (National Statistical System of Latvia 2022). At least a third of them were provided shelter by the government (Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia 2022), along with many other forms of basic assistance.

Measures to improve national self-defence capabilities
Many emergency measures requested were related to the national defence. In April, the Latvian Parliament approved the increase in defence expenditure to 2.5% of the gross domestic product (or more than 1.1 billion euros) from 2025, up from the current minimum target of 2% (Saeima 2022d). The reason was clearly articulated by the Parliament – it was the 'military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the growing geopolitical risks' (Saeima 2022e). Among military upgrades, Latvia announced the construction of a new military base (shooting range) and the intention to acquire advanced American-made multiple rocket launchers.

The most polarising and most debated proposal presented was to gradually reinstate conscription from 2023, named as the State Defence Service: 'each citi-

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7   This change, though, has been questioned by Amnesty International (2022), which has accused Latvia of being hostile toward migrants from other regions of the world who tried to cross the border from Belarus where they were lured in by Belarussian authorities.

zen must take part in the defence of the state because this involvement is one of the most significant guarantees that Latvia would not face Russia's aggression' (Ministry of Defence of Latvia 2022a). Conscription in Latvia was abolished in 2007 and was not reinstated after the first Russian war against Ukraine in 2014, as Lithuania did in 2015. The polarisation lies in the fact that conscription pertained to negative associations with the Soviet model of conscription – such as violence among and against conscripts and a 'lost year of the life'. Also, the State Defence Service will essentially introduce a new social contract between the state and the society, whereas most male citizens will have to devote a year to the state defence.

Being a small power and a member of NATO, Latvia is highly dependent on the military support of allies. Increasing the number of allied troops and armament deployed to Latvia became another priority. Although part of NATO since 2004, only the first war in Ukraine in 2014 pushed NATO allies to establish a modest military presence in the Baltic states. Now, the task was to convince allies of a more formidable and long-term military presence to deter Russia. In the words of the president of Latvia, 'Russian invasion of Ukraine has drastically changed the security environment in Europe. . . . NATO must significantly reinforce its presence in the Eastern Flank, especially the Baltics' (Levits 2022b). Subsequently, at the NATO Madrid Summit in June 2022, NATO leaders agreed, among other things, to expand the NATO-led battalion unit to a brigade level (NATO 2022b). Even before that decision, several NATO allies sent reinforcements to the Baltics. Denmark, for example, had already deployed around 750 soldiers to Latvia starting in April 2022 (Ministry of Defence of Latvia 2022b).

Measures to improve the non-military aspects of national security
Latvia proceeded with numerous other measures that were intended both to punish Russia and to limit its influence in Latvia. On the diplomatic front, in April, Latvia decided to close two Russian Federation consulates in the country (in Liepāja and Daugavpils), as well as to expel its employees thus standing 'in solidarity with Ukraine in its fight against the unprovoked and unjustified military aggression and war started by Russia' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia 2022). In August, Latvia stopped issuing visas to most citizens of the Russian Federation (Embassy of Latvia in Russia 2022), although visa issuing had already been significantly scaled down earlier. Additionally, Russian citizens who entered Latvia with valid visas were subjected to increased scrutiny.

On the basis of risks to the national security, Latvia blocked all television channels registered in Russia (80 in total), along with scores of websites related to Russia (131 in total) (National Electronic Mass Media Council 2022a, 2022b). At the same time, Latvia became a hub of Russian independent media in exile and

Western media offices previously based in Russia, for example, the best known Russian independent station TV Rain started broadcasting from Riga in July 2022[8] and 247 foreign journalists, including those from Russia, received Latvian visas up to August 2022 (Delfi 2022d).

State security authorities, most notably the State Security Service, investigated domestic cases of, presumably Russian speakers', hate speech against Ukraine and Ukrainians (26 criminal proceedings by the beginning of August) (State Security Service of Latvia 2022a). The service also detained a person accused of 'acting in the interests of Russia' (State Security Service of Latvia 2022b).

Another target for countermeasures was the historical heritage of the Soviet Union and the 'Russian World', mainly associated with almost five decades of occupation. In June, a new law 'On prohibition and demolition of objects glorifying Soviet and Nazi regimes on the territory of the Republic of Latvia' was adopted. In particular, it ordered the demolition by November 15 of the most controversial Soviet era monument in Riga: 'It was easier to live alongside such objects until February of this year but not any more. . . . Russia's image as liberator in the world has been ruined and transformed as aggressor' (Saeima 2022f). In addition, local governments renamed streets carrying names related to the Soviet occupation. Additionally, a section of the street that hosts the Russian embassy was renamed 'Ukraine's independence street'.

To limit Russia's soft power, in April the Latvian Parliament banned Latvian sportsmen and sportswomen from participating in any sport competition in Russia and Belarus (the latter allowed Russia to use its territory and provided support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine), partly because 'one of the directions of Russia's use of "soft power" is sport' (Saeima 2022g). Subsequently, uproars emerged in the news that some sportsmen prefer to represent Russian sports clubs at the expense of being barred from representing Latvia henceforth.

Finally, on a more practical note, Latvia strived to accelerate its energy independence from Russia, one of the last sectors where the role of Russia remained meaningful. Latvia was largely dependent on natural gas deliveries from Russia. Although already conceptually agreed earlier, in July the Latvian Parliament banned the import of natural gas from Russia as of 1 January 2023 (Saeima 2022h).[9] Among measures to ensure alternative supplies, the intention to construct a liquified natural gas terminal in Latvia was approved (Saeima 2022i). Meanwhile, the increase in prices of natural gas and electricity and dependent commodities and services became one of the main factors of concern for most members of society.

8   Later, in December 2022, the broadcasting licence of TV Rain was revoked since the media outlet did not distance from the narratives of the Russian state sufficiently (National Electronic Mass Media Council 2022c), and the channel ceased its operations from Latvia.

9   In the same month, Russia's Gazprom announced that it terminated natural gas export to Latvia, similar to other EU countries.

Measures initiated and taken by the private sector and society

Private companies came up with their own initiatives in support of Ukraine and in defiance of Russia. A day after the invasion of Ukraine started, the largest grocery chains announced that they would withdraw products made in Russia from the shelves (Delfi 2022e). A platform called 'Entrepreneurs for Peace' raised almost 3 million euros for assistance to Ukraine (Entrepreneurs for Peace 2022). In addition, Ukrainian flags were a common sight on flagpoles and buildings, as well as in temporary logos of private companies.

Although public demonstrations are generally atypical for Latvia, the war altered this trend. In the early weeks of the war, frequent protests were held at the Russian Embassy, while support was expressed at the nearby Ukrainian Embassy. Among the highlights, in March, the largest march in recent decades called 'Together with Ukraine! Together against Putin!' gathered around 30 thousand people (Delfi 2022f). In May, several thousand people joined a march in Riga and the following concert 'On abolishing the Soviet heritage', organised by members of civil society. The organisers of the event, among other things, demanded to 'demolish all monuments and memorial signs of USSR or Russia's occupation rule' and, controversially, 'the expulsion from Latvia and stripping of citizenship of non-loyal persons to the Latvian state' (TVNET 2022b).

Various other donation campaigns were launched to help Ukraine and Ukrainians. More than 5 million euros was donated by members of society to the defence of Ukraine and a similar amount in humanitarian assistance, including more than 400 sport utility vehicles delivered by the so-called 'Twitter convoy' (Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia 2022).

A notable donation campaign aimed at Latvia was also launched. 'Demolition of the occupation monument', aimed at financing the demolition of the best-known Soviet-era monument in Riga, collected more than a quarter million euros consisting of almost 18 thousand separate donations (Ziedot.lv 2022). Subsequently, the Parliament decided to demolish the monument. It was torn down in August 2022.

Finally, Latvian volunteers also went to fight for Ukraine, including a member of the Latvian Parliament. There was also a surge in interest in joining the National Guard, a voluntary force formally part of the National Armed Forces. In March, 1.8 thousand people applied to join the organisation, almost ten times more than the month before (LSM.lv 2022c).

Conclusions: from securitisation to hypersecuritisation

Although before the second Russian war on Ukraine, Russia was rather often securitised in Latvia, it was mostly done so by security-related and other state institutions and politicians at a low or moderate intensity. Since February 2022,

the range of securitising actors has widened significantly to include a variety of both state-related actors and nonstate actors, from media and private companies to members of the civil society. Russia was securitised as an existential threat across various security sectors. The escalation of language in securitisation acts went beyond what had been normally applied to other countries to include 'genocide', 'terrorism', and 'occupiers' in everyday public deliberations. As a result, Russia was securitised and perceived as a predominant existential threat to the Latvian state and society, although some parts of the Russian-speaking community did not share this perception.

In an external constellation, the Latvian case was also part of the regional and global securitisation of Russia. Latvia, as a state, through its formal representatives and ordinary people, became part of the securitisation of Russia at the international level. Latvia and the other two Baltic states were among the most belligerent and active in this regard.

Countermeasures to deal with Russia as an existential threat went beyond what was previously seen. These measures included, first, targeting Russia and its citizens: requesting sanctions and international isolation; designating Russia a state sponsor of terrorism and complicit in genocide; closing two Russian consulates and expelling their staff; limiting entry of Russian citizens to Latvia. Second, it included measures aimed at protecting the national security of Latvia: banning television channels registered in Russia and websites of Russian media and institutions; investigations and detentions related to support for Russia; banning import of Russian natural gas and looking for alternatives; increasing the national defence budget and restoring conscription. Third, it included measures aimed at supporting Ukraine and thus preventing Russia from future military adventures possibly in the Baltics: military and humanitarian support to Ukraine and Ukrainians; international advocation of Ukraine via international organisations, especially the EU and NATO. Finally, countermeasures, clearly initiated and referred to Russia's war in Ukraine, but not of imminent and existential character, were the de-Sovietisation and de-Russification initiatives. The most well-known were the demolition of Soviet-era monuments and renaming of streets.

In terms of hypersecuritisation, there is no doubt about the exponential increase of Russia's securitisation in Latvia, in other words, going beyond the 'normal' levels of securitisation. The number and intensity of securitisation acts and modes, as well as the number and intensity of securitisation actors was dazzling. Looking from the specific case study addressed in this article, it would be completely illogical for Latvia (or Lithuania, Estonia, Poland and others) not to (hyper-)securitise Russia in the respective circumstances: a much larger and mightier country has launched a brutal war on another neighbour; the invader

has previously invaded and occupied the smaller country (the referent object), along with others; the invader levelled similar accusations to the recently invaded country as it did against the smaller country.

Similarly, the countermeasures were also largely appropriate since they were proportional to the potential existential threat to the state and the population, and the benefits largely outweighed minuses. Some measures might raise questions of the direct link with existential threats to the national security, for example, restricting Russian television channels and websites, de-Sovietisation and de-Russification initiatives. These were presented as a direct reaction to the actions of Russia in Ukraine and as a continuation of previous efforts. What previously stood out of the margins of acceptance became possible under the new circumstances. Although seemingly directly unrelated to the war in Ukraine, they were predominantly aimed at short- and long-term prevention of destabilisation of the Russian speaking community in Latvia.

In the beginning of this article, a reformulation of hypersecuritisation was proposed. This version omits the negative connotation built into the initial definition, that is, that hypersecuritisation per se is negative, since hypersecuritisation might be a necessity when a state faces threats of scale. The proposed redefinition is the following: a securitisation process(es) advancing significantly beyond the previous levels of securitisation in terms of securitisation intensity and the number of securitising actors. Depending on the specific case, the margin between 'normal' and 'hyper' will depend. In the case of Russia's securitisation in Latvia, the watershed moment was 24 February 2022 when the securitisation expanded immediately and exponentially. Before the war, Russia was securitised often but mostly by institutions and politicians with low or moderate intensity. After the war broke out, the range of securitising actors and securitised issues widened significantly. Russia was securitised as an existential and immediate threat in multiple security sectors. The language used in the securitisation acts became unprecedently emotional and strong.

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Māris Andžāns is an Associate Professor at Riga Stradins University, as well as the Director of the Center for Geopolitical Studies Riga.

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Agents of Social Change: Cultural Work, Institutions, and the (De)securitisation of Minorities

Alina Jašina-Schäfer

Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz & Federal Institute for Culture and History of the Germans in Eastern Europe (BKGE), Germany, ORCiD: 0000-0001-5671-2363, corresponding address: ajasinas@uni-mainz.de

Abstract

This paper combines anthropological and other critical security studies with research on cultural work to better understand the impact cultural institutions may have on the (de)securitisation of minority groups. Today minority issues represent a recurrent theme in various national and European contexts. Often perceived as a threat to social cohesion and linked to multiple successive crises, minorities and migrants have been the focus of security measures at different times. This paper focuses on the EU-funded project 'Agents of Change: Mediating Minorities' and explores how cultural work aimed at diversity and inclusion interacts with the dynamics of securitisation. Zooming in and out between the project goals and definitions, mundane local practices, institutional work and the broader (trans)national contexts, this paper discusses its intervening effects while also acknowledging numerous contradictions that make any straightforward narrative of minority desecuritisation difficult. With the help of empirical examples, this paper demonstrates a way to widen research beyond typical securitising and securitised actors and it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the contexts of securitisation. Although the countermoves initiated by cultural work are never guaranteed to succeed, studying them opens new pathways to reflect

upon the ambiguity of (de)securitisation as an open-ended process involving different actors, power relations and operating at multiple interdependent scales. These countermoves also indicate the shifts taking place in the current ways of thinking about and approaching minorities, challenging dominant constructions driving securitisation.

Keywords: *minority, (de)securitisation, cultural work, inclusion, Estonia, Finland*

Introduction

In the past decades multiple successive crises of public order, national identity, health and global relations have clearly skewed the uneasy balance between two competing discourses about justice and security. Despite efforts to create a more fair and inclusive society, a focus on threats from a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural composition of states has become prevalent in everyday discourses. This perspective influences social relations, urban development and state institutions, constantly conflating new securitised needs and concerns. But more than anything else this affects negatively minority and migrant communities, frequently portrayed by the states as centres of political uncertainty and insecurity for the majority population.

The role of minorities in shaping crisis-ridden perceptions and narratives has been widely discussed before (Al & Byrd 2018; Jaskulowski 2017; Innes 2015). Since the 1990s, the increased political interest in questions around minorities and their integration into societies has occurred alongside a shift in security priorities, with emphasis moving from geopolitical to biopolitical concerns, that is focusing on the population and its collective resilience against the undesired Others (Duffield 2005). This emphasis on human differences as a problem consequently leads to increased vilification of minorities and migrants in various spaces and times, while extraordinary circumstances, such as most recently the COVID-19 pandemic, 'tip the scales' and pave the ground for their securitisation in institutions and among citizens (Carlà & Djolai 2022: 122).

To date, much scholarly attention has been devoted to studying state securitisation practices, including how political elites perform security and the ways in which people experience these practices in their daily lives. In this paper, however, I look sideways at the intermediary social agents and examine the intervening practices of cultural organisations within the dynamics of securitisation. Although cultural organisations are rarely the focus of security studies, they are a part of wider 'societal, political, and cultural networks of interdependencies which are directly involved in the emergence and the changing balances of pow-

er' (Langenohl 2019: 51). They can thus provide new insights into minority securitisation, particularly how certain discourses and practices become entrenched or challenged. I acknowledge that the term 'minority' is a fluid, contingent signifier, neither an entity nor a specific social or ethnic category. However, for the analytical purposes of this paper, I focus on two etic designations applied to people from outside the community: the old or national minorities and the new minorities, often referred to as immigrants (see Malloy 2013). This is done to better understand the socio-political landscape and the narratives that the cultural project and institutions I studied were working against.

My perspective on securitisation is informed by critical approaches in anthropology and IR, where securitisation is predominantly seen as an ambiguous and open-ended process. This processual and performative nature highlights the simultaneity of moves and countermoves and is crucial for our understanding of how changes in hegemonic discourses arise, are challenged or come to a halt at multiple scales, ranging from global to the interpersonal. Based on this, I investigate how cultural work solutions to diversity and inclusion interact with the (de)securitisation process, providing insights into its dynamics. I focus on the subversive practices of the transnational project 'Agents of Change: Mediating Minorities' (MeM).[1] The project (2020–2022), which was developed by partner institutions in Estonia, Latvia, Finland and Sweden, received financial support from the Creative Europe programme and aimed to promote cultural diversity and social inclusion of minorities through art mediation.

In the past, programmes aimed at improving the social inclusion of minority populations have been criticised for being 'little more than token measures' (Kóczé 2019: 186) or even contributing to further societal marginalisation and securitisation. However, by examining the strategic function of MeM through a scalar perspective – that is, looking at what the programme stated, what it did, how it was adopted by the partner institutions and its impact in specific socio-political contexts – I provide evidence of the project's potential to transform hegemonic social discourses about security. I demonstrate how alternative approaches to minorities, power-sharing and audience engagement fostered within the project helped to include marginalised voices and cultivate spaces for dialogue. They also raised awareness of obstacles, strengthening local communities' capacities to critically reflect on dominant discourses and creating possibilities for future social change. At the same time, zooming in on two participating institutions, the Russian Museum in Estonia and the Cultura Foundation in Finland, and their local work with Russian-speaking minorities, I highlight several contradictions, grounded in institutional differences, divergent viewpoints or broader national discourses, which presented challenges to the project's transformative

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1   For more information on the project, see https://memagents.eu/.

visions. As this paper therefore argues, with the emergence of countermoves, the old language of security does not simply fade away but enters a field of tension between competing ways of thinking and speaking about minorities. This tension gradually transforms, taking new meanings over time.

To analyse the MeM project, its local and wider impacts, I first delve into the notion of 'stranger making', as discussed by Sarah Ahmed (2000, 2012). I aim to elaborate on the process through which minorities become securitised and why challenging the existing notions of threats can be a difficult task. The following section then combines the research on cultural work with studies on securitisation and, with help of an empirical discussion, seeks to offer a more nuanced approach to (de)securitisation, moving beyond a one-dimensional interpretation and towards a non-binary framework that takes into account multiple actors, practices and contexts at play.

'Stranger making' or how minorities become securitised

The post-Cold-War era has seen a significant change in the focus of security concerns. New violent conflicts, changes in population movements and reshuffling existing populations set the stage for current security policies and expanded the concept of security beyond the territorialised national states to include the protection of basic human needs – survival, development, freedom and identity (Wæver 1995). Some scholars argue, however, that this new framework for security has been problematically driven by a zero-sum mentality (van Baar et al. 2019; Bourbeau 2011; Langenohl & Kreide 2019). It is used to reproduce, intentionally or sometimes unintentionally, forms of non-belonging while portraying certain communities as potentially threatening and on this basis excluding them from access to territories, citizenship, public services and human rights at large. As a result, the formation of security may not necessarily lead to a more secure world, but instead perpetuates insecurity and precarity for certain groups, particularly minorities and migrants (van Baar et al. 2019: 2).

The idea that minorities and migrant populations might pose a threat to the existence of a fragile nation has long been a prevalent societal issue (Canetti-Nisim et al. 2008; Djolai 2021; Duffield 2005; Malloy 2013). Throughout history, different minority groups were envisioned as disloyal, prone to conflict and secessionism, and at times they were seen as a 'fifth column' that causes anxieties and apprehension (Pedersen & Holbraad 2013). Today, media and political discourse on migration and integration often highlight the deficits and socio-structural problems of immigrant minorities, producing distorted images of their criminal behaviour, religious radicalism, ethnic isolation as well as lack of integration into the 'receiving societies'. Only rarely are minorities seen as crucial social actors, while their supposed socio-political and cultural differences

are depicted as a potential source of destabilisation in need of discipline through assimilation and securitised responses, such as enhanced surveillance and coercion (see Glick-Schiller & Faist 2009: 4; Demossier 2014; Smith & Holmes 2014 for discussion).

As Jef Huysmans rightfully remarks (2019: vi), the question is not whether minorities and migrants are objectively threatening to the nation-state, but rather why they are perceived a security issue and by whom. By drawing attention to security practices and their involvement in the production of insecurities, he argues, it is possible to shift responsibility for security policy consequences 'to those claiming to defend and protect' (*ibid*.). Following this line, several scholars note how subjectification and categorisation of certain people as threatening 'strangers' within the framework of security is always contingent upon specific material, historical and socio-economic conditions (Ahmed 2000; Maguire et al. 2014). To understand then why minorities continue to be posed as threats we must consider the dominant political regimes within which minorities live and which continue to divide the world into the nation states (Apostolov 2018: 9).

Despite globalised developments and the movement of people, old ideas of territorially fixed communities and stable, localised cultures still dominate Western thought and politics about nations (Demossier 2014: 27; Jutila 2006; Malkki 1992). Such cultural fundamentalism and essentialism are grounded in the idea that cultures are internally homogenous – they are 'gardens separated by boundary-maintaining values' (Malkki 1992: 28). This perspective creates essentially antagonistic relationships between groups, further tainted by colonialism and racism (Kóczé 2019), situated in the 'nesting orientalisms' (Bakić-Hayden 1995) and Euro-centrism (Mignolo 2014), incentivising some countries to reassert their own 'Europeanness' at the expense of undesired Others and undesired pasts. Although rigid national imaginaries have been frequently contested, in the face of exceptional events and crisis they become 'powerful tropes of national reification' (Demossier 2014: 28), whereas immigrant minorities become 'foils' against which nation-states come to assert their own identity and ontological existence (Feldman 2005: 238).

In this context, attempts to rehabilitate nation-state sovereignty against other groups of people could be regarded as securitising moves (Browning 2017; Feldman 2005). The process of securitisation then occurs by fostering an insider-outsider distinction and by delimiting a potentially threatening group as requiring 'emergency measures' (Buzan et al. 1998: 24; Carlà & Djolai 2022). In that sense, the 'quest for homogeneity as a form of safety' (Djolai 2021: 3) always securitises; by ordering and othering it necessarily brings more insecurities into the world (Huysmans 2006, 2014). One dramatic effect of such ontological securitisation, as Christopher Browning (2017: 50) observers, is that it places minorities 'in the

almost impossible position of constantly having to prove their belonging', while remaining subject to particular levels of scrutiny and the assimilationist tendencies. The ordering principle through which securitisation takes place fosters furthermore alienation and aggravates access to resources and freedoms in the society at large.

The academic literature on the daily lives of migrants and minorities often perpetuates this 'language of difference' and reinforces national identities and borders (see Çağlar & Glick-Schiller 2018: 12 for critique). Surprisingly, this occurs alongside the emergence of voluminous ethnographic and historical work that aims to challenge homogenous portrayals of individuals as having only one identity, one country and culture. Nina Glick-Schiller and Ayse Çağlar (2016), for example, argue that even when scholars stress multiple intersecting and fluid identities of people, they do not necessarily challenge the notion of the 'foreigner' as separate from the 'majority' or 'natives' in a nation-state. In fact, the emphasis on difference, even in a positive sense, only reinforces – albeit unwittingly – images of people as belonging to distinctive communities divided in terms of backgrounds, aspirations and values.

All these different layers – medial, political, academic – necessarily feed securitisation, explaining consequently why it is so tempting to securitise minorities and so difficult to challenge the stranger figure who always lurks as a potential threat. In this light, some authors argue that it is logically impossible to desecuritise minority rights and to move security issues back into the ordinary public sphere of discussion (Roe 2004). At the same time, the spectrum of possibility for transformative action, and its visibility, depends increasingly on the approach to securitisation one takes. Instead of assuming coherence of securitisation, below I discuss its ever changing relational landscape which could open up prospects for change in the precarious situation of the marginalised groups.

(De)securitisation through cultural work

Drawing from literatures on the anthropology of security (Glück & Low 2017; Goldstein 2010; Maguire et al. 2014; van Baar et al. 2019) and other critical approaches (Huysmans 2014; Langenohl & Kreide 2019), this article raises questions about the possibility for desecuritisation to occur (see also Donnelly 2015; Dimari 2021; Fridolfsson & Elander 2021; Skleparis 2017). In other words, I seek to explore whether and how discussing security questions and issues in relation to minorities could be made possible 'without reifying them as existential dangers' (Huyusmans 2006: 127).

To date different views of securitisation exist and could be broadly delineated into two frameworks. The Copenhagen School emphasises, for example, the power of the 'speech acts', arguing that by calling to secure against insecuri-

ties actors (i.e. political leaders, governments, lobbyists) undertake a 'securitis-ing move', whereas successful securitisation depends on an audience's readiness to endorse these security utterances (Buzan et al. 1998). Others, whom Faye Donnelly (2017) terms as 'second-generation scholars', work primarily with the so-called sociological approach, which refers to securitisation in terms of prac-tices, context and power relations that define the construction of threat images (Balzacq 2011). Both frameworks should not be seen as mutually exclusive and when taken together point to a more complex understanding of securitisation as fractured and multifaceted 'regimes of practices' (Fridolfsson & Elander 2021: 41). Such an approach to securitisation is built upon the understanding that se-curity itself is not a straightforward modality of constructing enemies but rather 'a site of social struggles in and through which power relations are continually enforced, contested and in need of being produced and re-produced' (Glück & Low 2017: 287). It introduces then a space for contestation or desecuritising moves to occur.

Unlike securitisation, relatively little is known about desecuritisation, espe-cially how it unfolds in practice (Donnelly 2015). Across security studies, dese-curitisation has often been viewed as a 'conceptual twin to securitisation', its positive supplement that can follow after (Hansen 2012: 526; Austin & Beaulieu-Brossard 2018). In very basic terms, as described by the Copenhagen School, desecuritisation involves a return from an emergency mode to the area of nor-mal political negotiations which occurs in the absence of security speech acts (Buzan et al. 1998: 4). In contrast, others highlight relational simultaneity of two processes (Austin & Beaulieu-Brossard 2018; Djolai 2021). Donnelly (2017: 250), for example, usefully suggests seeing securitisation as a 'game' defined by moves and countermoves, and structured by divergent viewpoints, silences and emo-tions. As it is a game, 'the beginning and ending of (de)securitization process-es are not clear-cut; instead, such processes can unfold without a fixed script, sound or rhythm' (Donnelly 2017: 251). The intricate nature of (de)securitisation is thus the result of complex social interactions that are formed and informed by discourses and practices of ordinary citizens, social organisations and the politi-cal institutions (Demossier 2014: 39).

In this article, I draw on this understanding and suggest that a more nu-anced analysis of countermoves is still necessary to understand how the dis-abling boundaries could be implicitly offset or explicitly challenged. Since coun-termoves can take different shapes and forms, 'some of which fall outside our current understanding of what security means and does' (Donnelly 2015: 926), a more 'sideways' approach is necessary (van Baar et al. 2019). By sideways I un-derstand practices which are not intrinsically seen as security practices or were not intended to be such, but which become political 'by adopting or resisting

normalised discourses and practices of security' (Zembylas 2020: 5). Approaching (de)securitisation sideways could help uncover connections between security and other social issues, leading towards a more complex understanding of how exclusions are negotiated more generally.

Taking this sideways approach, I concentrate on cultural institutions and projects, which David Carr (2003: 1) regards as 'a mind producing system', but which only rarely make the focus of security studies. The dominant interest is still on state measures, authorised persons and institutions as well as their discursive acts, with growing attention to the effects of the policies on human lives more recently. Meanwhile, cultural institutions constitute a dominant part of our cultural landscape, they frame our most basic assumptions about the past, the present and about ourselves. As booming research on cultural work demonstrates, they are vital socio-spatial spheres where discourses and practices meet and clash (Cohen 2015; Comunian & England 2020).

When we think about social change that cultural work might pursue we must be critically aware of the complex background of expectations, institutional interdependencies as well as asymmetrical relationships that define the lives of cultural institutions and their individual workers. Often seen as beacons of diversity that could potentially undermine the settled understanding of difference as a threat, cultural institutions are themselves not neutral: they are sites of forgetfulness, fantasy, and a particular gaze that could often lead to further marginalisation of different minorities. While examining museological work, Richard Sandell (1998), for example, demonstrates how cultural institutions are involved in institutionalised exclusions. They operate a host of mechanisms which may serve to hinder or prevent access to their services by a range of groups. They are furthermore confined in the subjectivities of their own workers, who are key agents in interpreting, using and understanding wide-ranging policy expectations towards inclusivity (McCall & Gray 2013). This often leads to a valid critique that cultural institutions can hardly serve as active sights of resistance to hegemonic and often exclusionary discourses (Kassim 2018). In the article tellingly titled 'Good for you, but I don't care', Bernadette Lynch (2016: 258) thus deems practices of cultural institutions as 'shallow political gestures' that by trying to promote 'empowerment-lite' actually disempower people and overlook racism and other inequalities.

At the same time, cultural institutions too experience exclusions shaped by internal dynamics and the laws of its labour market. They are expected to rework global inequalities in times when the precarious nature of creative and cultural work remains largely invisible in the eyes of policy makers (Comunian & England 2020). Unstable working conditions (i.e. temporary work, freelancing), low earnings, excessive working hours as well as the fragmented and individualised

nature of the work have resulted in precarious livelihoods to the extent that the majority of creative and cultural workers constitute now 'the middle-class working poor' (Krätke 2011: 144). These experiences underscore the ambivalence of chances for transformative acts, while the process of going against the current of established exclusionary visions remains interwoven with practices of securitisation (van Baar et al. 2019: 5). This leads sometimes to perceptions of cultural work as a one-man or, by extension, one-project struggle which does not always bring the desirable change.

It is against this background that the empirical section sets out to analyse the work of the international cultural project and participating institutions in their attempt to reframe previous exclusionary understandings about minorities. Arguably, the case offers ample opportunities to reflect upon different ways through which cultural work on diversity and inclusivity interact with the (de)securitisation process, affording more insights into the specific dynamics through which it unfolds.

Methodology

The data for this article derives from a two-year ethnographic study of the international cultural project, MeM, between October 2020 and 2022. MeM was a multi-layered project that consisted of five cultural and civic society organisations, their representatives and forty mediation volunteers (ten in each country). The organisations included the Foundation for an Open Society Dots and the Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA) in Latvia, Tensta Konsthall in Sweden, Tallinn City Museum/Russian Museum Branch from Estonia and the Cultura Foundation in Finland. According to the project description, the main goal was to enhance the inclusion of underrepresented groups by involving them in dialogue with art and cultural institutions through an innovative art mediation approach.

The MeM mediation programme was a unique and innovative model that constantly adapted to the needs of the participants and contexts. This flexibility resulted in a more locally-based understandings of the excluded communities and approaches to them. For example, the Finnish and Estonian teams worked with Russian-speaking populations, whose presence is often linked with the potential for conflict, while the Swedish team focused on the declining public space in the underprivileged area of Tensta. In Latvia, the programme centred on the topic of dementia that affects the ageing population society but is often ignored. These different approaches reflected the broader calls within the cultural sector to work 'with' people, rather than 'for' or 'on behalf of' them (Lynch 2016: 255).

Through the focus on MeM, the current study aims to broaden the perspectives on securitisation by examining the intervening practices of social and

cultural parties beyond the typical securitising and securitised actors. Methodologically, it was designed to map the production of alternative narratives about minorities, analysing how these narratives were constituted within the project, how they were transmitted across different scales and what impact they had. To understand MeM's indirect involvement in the (de)securitisation process, a scalar gaze was adopted (Fraser 2005; Green 2005), which looked at the relationships between different agents (their personal and social identities), practices (discursive and non-discursive) and contexts (local, national and global) while employing different methods of data collection (Balzacq 2011). The detailed dataset is presented in Table 1, and in this article, I offer an overview of the practices within the project and the two local partners – Estonia and Finland – that I followed in more detail, drawing mostly from observational notes, interview data and questionnaires.[2]

By combining different layers of analysis, I address recent criticisms of the discursive bias in securitisation studies, which often overlook the affective, social and political complexities of the process by prioritising 'speech acts' alone (Färber 2018; Zembylas 2020). In contrast, I explore how the narratives and practices within MeM are contextually situated. Specifically, the empirical sections below describe three interrelated strategies that could be broadly considered as MeM's counter interventions: (i) attempts to rearticulate the local meanings of minority by appealing to global discourses on diversity; (ii) contestation of established power dynamics through inclusion; (iii) and a rethinking of the importance of audiences and their emotions. These strategies, I argue, are socially transformative as they provide space for marginalised voices, facilitate dialogue and exchange, and uncover difference in experiences. Yet, while they seem successful on the surface, they encounter conflicting interests and values in the contested national and institutional landscapes. The discussion that follows is therefore not about a straightforward desecuritisation, but rather reflects the ambiguity of the (de)securitisation process and its open-ended and contested nature.

Cultural institutions, counterstrategies and social change
Rearticulating the notion of minority
In one of our initial conversations, Daria, the curator of MeM's educational programme, referred to her cultural work as 'partisaning'. This is a type of work that aims to challenge and transform social realities and traditional ways of knowing

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2   For the analysis of the qualitative data the software NVivo was used. The results stem from a narrative thematic analysis of participants' interview accounts, surveys with open-ended questions as well as data from MeM communication channels (Facebook, MeM Web-Site and HowSpace). Furthermore, interactional analysis was used to approach selected meetings, focus group as well as ethnographic observations of localities in focus.

Table 1: Overview of the Dataset

Types of Data	Details
Interviews	10 with representatives of partner organisations around their individual backgrounds, their perception of the institutions they work for, personal involvement with the current project, hopes and potential difficulties. 11 with project volunteers/mediators about their backgrounds, the motives for joining MeM, and their opinion about international and local dynamics.
Surveys (conducted by project evaluator Sadjad Shokoohi).	26 baseline and 20 final with volunteers/mediators about conceptual understandings, experiences & perceptions of diversity, inclusion/exclusion. 15 with partner institutions about the key project terms.
Focus Group	1 with representatives of partner organisations. The partners were asked to reflect back on their past projects, organisational policies and practices of diversity, make-up of organisations and ways of reaching out to the audiences.
Observations from partner meetings	20 hours
Observations from international educational programme meetings	16 hours

Source: The author

about minorities established within national and EU visions. 'What can Otherness bring to the society?', Daria asked and explained that this Otherness encompasses the complex identities and intersectional experiences of individuals, so the focus is no longer on integrating specific groups into the society, but on integrating society based on diversity. Daria recognised from the start, however, that challenging settled views would not be easy, as this topic, in her words, 'is a territory of conflict'. In this section, I will discuss the attempts by MeM members like Daria to reframe the concept of minority beyond the view of a threatening Other through engagement. Although successful in theory, these efforts face complex political, socio-economic, ideological and cultural challenges in practice.

According to Lene Hansen (2012: 543), rearticulation, meaning a fundamental transformation in thinking about the identities and interests of Selves and Others beyond the friend-enemy distinction, is one of the four forms that offers a solution against securitisations (the other being changes induced through sta-

bilisation, replacement and silencing). Although rearticulation is desired, Hansen acknowledges that it is never a straightforward process, but rather a product of power dynamics and conflicting perspectives. Concepts, ideas and big social issues are often fraught with numerous controversies, which partially explains the entangled complexities of (de)securitisation.

The approach of the EU towards the protection of minority rights is a good case in point, which remains highly fragmented and lacks coherence, despite some positive developments (Ahmed 2015). Additionally, it is objectivating and often suffers from groupism. For example, the European Commission's 'Migration and Home Affair' website defines minority as a 'non-dominant group which is usually numerically less than the majority population of a State or region regarding their ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics and who (if only implicitly) maintain solidarity with their own culture, traditions, religion or language' (Sironi, Bauloz & Emmanuel 2019). Within another international organisation, the Council of Europe, the minority rights appear as something to be 'granted' to individuals who need to be 'enabled to participate fully and equally in society' (Advisory Committee 2016: 4, 5). These definitions exemplify how the authors in authority (i.e. state actors) continue to speak on behalf of the cumulative Other, perpetuating power hierarchies between providers and the objects of responsibility and reinforcing the distinction between the Selves and Others.

It is against these understandings anchored in (supra)national discourses that MeM set itself to work against. Two major premises were then laid out by the project members. The first was a definition of minority that went beyond groupism, which is at the heart of the 'stranger making' process. In contrast, MeM proposed to approach minorities through the lens of 'exclusion', which allowed for a broader definition of them as 'individuals and groups who are not included in the socio-cultural life of a community, neighbourhood, city, society for different reasons (e.g. intersectionality)'. The second premise was about agency, and the view that minorities should be seen as 'actors and agents' capable to challenge these exclusions.

In an effort to legitimise these viewpoints and transform rigid national cultural-political understandings, the MeM project referenced global discourses on diversity as a 'common heritage of mankind'[3] while also exposing the inherent critiques of such discourses through its three-month educational programme. The international educational programme was developed collaboratively by MeM partners to convey diversity to future art-mediators. With the help of international cultural activists, curators and educators, it sought to explore topics such as decolonisation, intercultural competencies, self-reflexivity, anti-oppres-

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3   See the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity formulated in 2001.

sion and social justice. The programme also incorporated several widely recognised mediation methods, including nonviolent communication, visual thinking strategies, participatory walks and story circles, to encourage participants' peer-to-peer exchange and create shared knowledge spaces.

Although not its primary goal, the positive and trusting relationships that formed between individuals from different countries and social backgrounds as a result of their interactions actively counterposed what Browning (2017: 43) calls a 'zero-sum understanding of the interdependent nature of security', where the security of one relies inherently on the insecurity of another. Situated firmly within global frameworks on justice and diversity, the process of unlearning previous ways of knowing about each other within the MeM project fostered a cooperative approach to life. Some MeM participants commented on their experiences in the project as transformative, fostering a sense of belonging, and being heard: 'We have created a micro-society, a community, and it worked wonders. I felt constant support at these uneasy times.' Or 'After-effect of the project – a feeling of happiness, belonging, even euphoria'.

At the same time, while the project helped to create a 'micro-community' with a strong sense of agency, its broader consequences in terms of rearticulation through engagement and exchange are worth considering. This becomes particularly complex when viewed in the context of specific local historico-political and symbolic contexts, and different perspectives and sensitivities. To address these issues, I will examine the recent transformations of the Russian Museum in Tallinn.

Estonian Russian Museum: Rearticulating Russian speakers

Despite facing numerous challenges, the process of reconceptualising static ideas of communities did occur locally, as evidenced by the Tallinn Russian Museum. Being severely underfunded and dependent on local political structures, the museum has transformed, at least in some ways, into a space for exploring and expressing different conflicting interpretations of belonging, Russianness and home in recent years.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Estonia has been engaged in a project of national revival, reconfiguring its national identity, viability, safety and security (Jašina-Schäfer 2022: 42). By imposing certain cultural and political narratives, and implementing a restrictive design of political membership through citizenship policies and language laws, Estonia's political elites neatly drew the contours of legitimate national membership (*ibid.*).[4] This came

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4   The 1992 citizenship law refused citizenship rights to the majority of Soviet-era immigrants and their offspring unless they could provide evidence of their familial ties to the pre-war Estonian Republic. Those who could not prove their historical connection were left with three choices: apply for citizenship in another country, accept

along the announcement of Estonia's 'return to the western world' (Lauristin et al. 1997) and the subjectification of Russian speakers as 'logical opposites' to Estonians (Feldman 2005: 224). According to Merje Kuus (2004: 199), today it is commonplace in both Estonia and the western media 'to presuppose deep-seated civilisational difference between Estonia and Russia' and by extension between Estonians and Russian speakers who constitute about 25 percent of the population and are marked by high levels of ethnic and cultural heterogeneity.[5] This civilisational divide is reflected in the earlier academic representations of Russian speakers as 'industrial people, [who] more than others, had been integrated into the Soviet ideological system' and, therefore, need special adaptation and integration 'before they can become equal members of the legal-political system and the common civic culture and ideology' (Kirch & Kirch 1995: 439, 441).

Being perceived as civilisationally and culturally distinct, it is not surprising that Russian speakers emerged as a potential threat to Estonia's stability and its national identity. Since independence, this has resulted in Russian speakers being excluded from the decision-making process, leaving them with virtually no room to express their own perspectives on the past, present and future. Despite some changes in official approaches to belonging and national identity over the last thirty years, recurrent instances of politicians and non-state actors slipping into ethno-nationalist narratives of difference continue to marginalise many Russian speakers (Jašina-Schäfer 2022: 42).

In this context, the Russian Museum can be seen as a reminder of the uncomfortable Otherness that Estonian politicians would rather ignore. However, it is worth noting that until recently, the museum itself perpetuated a very static and artificially purified story of local Russian speakers. Between 2010 and 2020, the exhibitions focused solely on specific themes such as the history of the Russian language and education, and local historical figures such as Peter the Great. According to current employees, a lack of clarity about the museum's mission and place in society led to growing detachment from the actual concerns of people whose histories it sought to purify and neatly portray. In fact, several people I spoke to outside the museum were not even aware of its existence and associated it with numerous stereotypes.

Change in leadership and engagement with MeM, which the new head clearly prioritised, marked a new chapter in the museum's history. It presented an opportunity to address its growing irrelevance, which was caused by a failure to

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their legal status as resident 'aliens', or undergo the naturalisation process. For more on everyday life of Russian speakers in Estonia see, for example, Jašina-Schäfer (2021).

5　The term 'Russian speakers' refers to different ethnicities – Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Tatars, Poles and others – who during the tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union became heavily Russified and who had migrated to the non-Russian regions.

Figure 1. The Laboratory
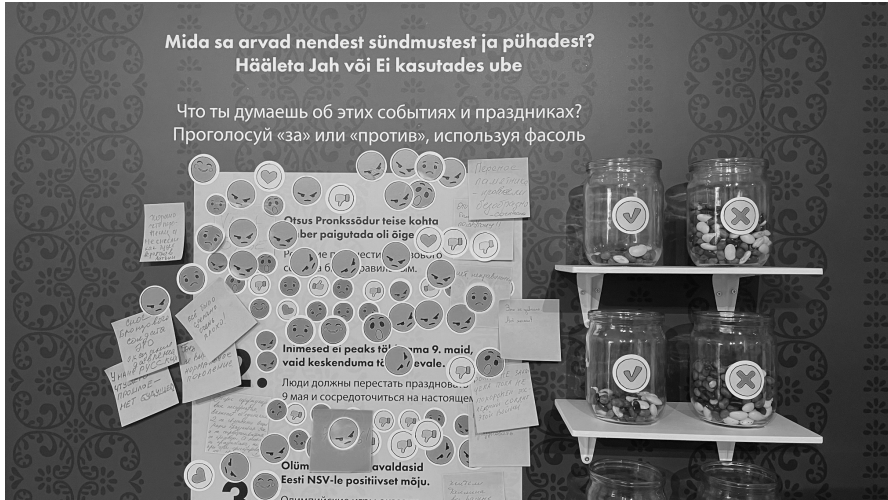
Source: Meeli Küttim, courtesy of the museum and reproduced with its permission

review its colonising museological practices and to effectively engage with its audiences. As a first step, the museum conducted interviews with Russian speakers, the results of which challenged the idea of a cohesive 'Russian-speaking community' that the museum as well as other political and academic figures had been reconstructing for years. Beyond a shared language, the only commonality among Russian speakers was a sense of alienation rooted in non-acceptance by society at large. This alienation was not experienced universally, but varied across generations, genders, place of residence and class. In light of this fragmentation, the central question became how to depict local Russian speakers without perpetuating narrow images.

Trying to break away from the linear reproduction of culture, the employees recall being inspired by MeM's educational programme and becoming eager to join a widespread move towards a collaborative museology based on equal participation. The project, in turn, provided crucial support, ideologically, thematically and financially, allowing the creation of the interactive exhibition 'Museum's laboratory: the story of Estonian Russians'. The exhibition placed a special focus on individual stories and was divided into four parts: identity and its diversity beyond national origin; the intertwined history of Estonian society; the everyday experiences where personal stories, emotions and life intersect; and the Russian language as a bridge connecting spaces, times and scales. Through provocative statements from politicians and everyday stories from people, the laboratory invited visitors to 'watch, talk, discuss, share! Don't criticize, but respond with your personal story. This is an opportunity to leave your mark on the exhibition space of the museum' (Figure 1).

The engagement was clearly palpable, as evidenced by the sticky notes that covered the walls, with visitors commenting, arguing with each other and starting new conversations. Lena, who has been a driving force behind the museum's redefinition, stated that 'the museum became a safe space, where people can share their feelings openly. People have a lot to say, but do not have space where to speak'. The dialogue between different segments of Estonian society has been long overdue and there is a pressing need for a platform for those whose opinions are at odds with the mainstream. This includes those who still celebrate the 9th May as Victory Day, those who mourn the removal of the T-34 tank monument in Narva and those people who speak the Russian language and consider themselves Estonian.[6]

In contrast, the laboratory became a space for contestation, where different hegemonic political projects could be usefully confronted (Mouffe 2005: 5); a space where the civilisational Otherness of Russianness was challenged and reconstructed as a polyphony of historically grounded social experiences, relationships and senses of belonging. When engaged properly, these alternative visions of community can go beyond the reductive and divisive images of identities promoted by nation-builders. However, as Lena admitted with disappointment, the government still does not understand the importance of the laboratory, and its impact is lost in the dominant Estonianised narratives about the nation, which dominate regardless of elite circulation and exclude alternative views as unimportant or even threatening.[7] Attempting to support people's rights as active agents, the museum has undergone drastic changes, but has yet to reach beyond and influence the Estonian nation state-building process, which is primarily designed for and in the name of ethnic Estonians (Feldman 2005).

Overall, this discussion highlights two key points. On the one hand, it shows how the museum, by actively engaging people whose opinions remain marginalised from the Estonian mainstream, became an architect(ure) of new sociability filled with new and complex meanings about the lives of Russian speakers. In this process, MeM and its 'micro-community' played a crucial role of ideological, financial and moral support for these transformations to occur. At the same time, the museum is severely understaffed and lacks the interest of the general public and political elites to compete with broader national discourses around Estonianness and other actors shaping those discourses. A collaborative museology requires substantial resources of time and personnel, which the museum currently lacks. As a result, employees often mention feelings of ex-

6   The war in Ukraine has brought along heated public discussions about the place of Soviet monuments in Estonian public space. Since for the majority population these monuments serve as symbols of Soviet occupation which remained dormant until recent events, the resolution was signed for their removal. For more on the removal of Tank T-34 see Michael Cole (2022).

7   For a similar discussion on Latvia, see Kudaibergenova (2017).

haustion and burnout, which has limited their ability to take a more proactive stance. This is especially apparent in light of the ongoing war in Ukraine, where the museum is often left out of the discussions surrounding the position of Russian speakers.

Power-sharing and inclusion of minority voices

The example of the Russian Museum mentioned above illustrates well the difficulties in rearticulating and institutionalising a non-threatening identity of constructed Otherness, which involves challenging previous power dynamics and discussing power-sharing. Power-sharing, seen by its proponents as a forward-looking method for managing deep societal divisions and promoting democratic accommodation of difference, has recently been criticised for its unclear conceptualisation, leading to questions about its implementation and governance (McCulloch 2017: 7; Binningsbø 2013). Feminist and post-colonial scholars have also criticised power-sharing practices as a guise for progressive politics that reinforces Othering in the name of inclusion (Ahmed 2012: 51; Guenther 2011; hooks 2015). As a result, power inequalities and asymmetrical relationships persist across political, social, symbolic and material realms, while discourses about the Other continue to silence those whose Otherness they intend to celebrate and protect. As bell hooks (2015: 233) states, there is 'no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself'.

The discussion of power dynamics, which plays a crucial role in the securitisation process (Langenohl & Kreide 2019), became a central focus for the MeM project and its efforts to reconfigure the approaches to minorities. Criticising the way power is often viewed as a 'possession', the participants aimed to operationalise a relational approach to power through a focus on different forms of 'inclusion'. Inclusion was collaboratively defined as transparent dialogue and relational engagement among different levels of society and was pursued through mechanisms of participatory art work. Based on survey responses at the end of the project, the external evaluator later deemed these mechanisms a 'success', showing how the programme significantly changed participants' attitudes towards inclusion to 'a great' or 'very great extent'.

While the power-sharing approach through inclusion brought about some transformative changes, it was not an easy process. For instance, the understandings reached within the MeM Finnish local team that focused on the experiences of Russian speakers did not transfer smoothly into the institutional practices of Cultura Foundation, leading to clashes with the discourses promoted by some of its other members. This highlights the ambiguity of the (de)securitisation process, where multiple securitising practices and countermoves coexist and occur relationally 'between different actors, across different discourses and between

different scales of power figurations' (Langenohl & Kreide 2019: 20). Let us take a closer look at this.

Finland's Cultura: Moving towards inclusion?

In contrast to Estonia, the Russian-speaking population in Finland is significantly smaller, and the securitising moves have not resulted in exceptional measures within the political-legal framework. Altogether they comprise around 1.6 percent of the populations, a share that has steadily increased since 1991, from fewer than 10,000 to around 88,000 (Statistics Finland 2021). Their history of arrival in Finland, which is relatively ethnically homogenous, is also different. While Estonian Russian speakers were displaced as a result of geopolitical reconfigurations that moved the borders over them, the majority of Finland's Russian speakers migrated after the collapse of the Soviet Union, choosing to move to Finland for a better life or other reasons. These differences in origins and outlooks also explain their different status. Borrowing a term from Darja Klingenberg (2019), their position could be described as 'conspicuously inconspicuous' migrants: Finland's Russian speakers are rarely visible in public debates and are predominantly viewed as well-adjusted people who 'cherish ties to both Finnish society and Russian culture, and have a positive outlook on their future in Finland' (Renvik et al. 2020: 465).

This being said, discourses that depict their lack of integration (Tiido 2019) can quickly resurface, particularly when the media portrays Russian speakers as a collective susceptible to Russia's propaganda. This has become increasingly feasible in recent years, following the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing war in Ukraine, where Russian migrants' involvement in the crimes of Russia's government is widely discussed. In general, several scholars note how due to historical conflicts between Finland and Russia, Russian speakers often face mistrust and experience discrimination in the labour market and other spheres of life, which can lead to growing detachment from Finnish society (Renvik et al. 2018). To address these negative experiences, the Ministry of Education and Culture established the Cultura Foundation in 2013, with the goal of promoting two-way integration. This entails collecting and providing information to institutions to improve their interactions with minorities and creating a better understanding for Russian speakers of how Finnish society works.

The MeM project, which was primarily conceptualised by several employees of the Cultura Foundation, did not necessarily share the institution's visions of integration and attempted to challenge it in some ways. During my conversation with Daria, who moved to Finland from Russia about a decade ago, she explained that MeM prioritises 'inclusion' because 'integration' has a frequently misused discriminatory connotation. 'It means that some people are already

good enough to be a part of the society, and some are not', Daria said. The discourse of integration reinforces the idea that people 'need to change themselves to be able to join the society in full sense, so to learn the language, learn new social rules or habits, and so on, and they should somehow adjust themselves to this already existing unity which is the society'. Daria considered this particularly problematic as members of the Finnish society are rarely scrutinised through the prism of integration. Inclusion, as she explained to me, is, in turn, not about making everybody an average Finn (which is by default a desired outcome) but about enabling people to join on their own terms and acknowledging their agency to decide whether and how they want to change.

The concept of integration, which was seen by some employees of Cultura as a top-down and objectifying process, continued to be a desirable outcome for others. This led to a 'clash of meanings' (as put by one respondent) and emotional tensions within the organisation, causing initially the neglect of the MeM project. There was even a question whether MeM belonged within the framework of the organisation that prioritises integration. Although Cultura's director later acknowledged how MeM and the method of art mediation for inclusion became a 'game-changer' for him personally and the institution as a whole, the tensions between meanings still prevail and were resurfaced with new ferocity after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

On the one hand, Cultura has adopted the central principles of MeM and actively promotes diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) in all its documents and annual programmes. This is visible in other projects that the organisation initiated, such as 'Dialogues in times of crisis', which emphasises the importance of discussing experiences of fear, despair and misunderstanding in small groups in times of war. Recently, employees also drafted a letter to Turku county election candidates proposing DEI measures to make social and health services more accessible.

On the other hand, however, there still remain numerous reservations about actually empowering Russian speakers, promoting their agency or engaging in dialogue with them. The view that minorities must adjust to the new realities in Finland continues to dominate everyday narratives. During a panel discussion at Cultura's conference on 'The future of the sense of belonging' in September 2022, I witnessed, for instance, how a Russian-speaking woman from the audience who came forward to express her feelings of marginalisation in Finland was disregarded by Cultura employee who preferred to cite survey results showing that the majority of Russian speakers claimed not to have experienced discrimination.

This incident, and the overall atmosphere at Cultura, serve as a reminder that the terrain in which initiatives like MeM operate is shaped by previous hege-

monic practices and other ways of knowing (Mouffe 2005: 33). As it is a contested field, transformative processes cannot simply be achieved through abstract negation. The disarticulation of existing practices, which MeM members saw as exclusionary, caused discomfort and revealed personal and institutional differences. However, it can also be argued that these differences were crucial in creating new understandings and practices that challenge hegemonic constructions driving securitisation. One Cultura employee noted that, over time, the open confrontation that was evident at the start of the project evolved into discussion and, at least, sparked some interest in each other's perspectives.

Engaging audiences and their emotions
In addition to countering the objectifying perspectives towards minorities and striving to shift power dynamics, MeM was strongly dedicated to changing the general attitudes towards audience engagement. As described by the project, MeM regarded both its mediators and members of the public as active 'makers and experts by experience'. The focus of this approach was on individual emotions and bodies, which were seen as important avenues through which people understand and interpret social worlds around them. MeM aimed to explore the emotional and cultural reserves that are inherent to a local social imaginary, and the thoughts and feelings that are evoked by art and interactions with others. This section will briefly examine how MeM sought to tap into individual emotions and what could be considered the political implications of these emotional practices.

With the use of art as a form of creative communication, MeM sought to foster inter- and intra-communal exchange and dialogue, through which the change in perceptions of the Self and the Other could take place. The objective was to incorporate the affective and social intricacies that form the political landscape and make up audiences (see also Morrow 2018; Van Rythoven 2015; Zembylas 2020), but also to challenge the traditional notion of audiences as 'passive vessels waiting for emotions to be authoritatively spoken into them' (Van Rythoven 2015: 463).

Above, I already discussed in detail the case of the Tallinn Russian Museum, which itself became a platform for listening to and exhibiting different stories of Russian speakers. Some people attempted to confront feelings of being unwanted elements from the Soviet past, others spoke of discovering their own sense of belonging to Estonia through a sense of nonbelonging to Russia, and still others spoke of their hard work and deservingness to be a part of Estonian community. The Finnish local team, in turn, decided to move their exhibition 'Connected' entirely online in order to avoid social backlash while trying to convey the emotional labour of Russian speakers in understanding the notions

of home and identity in the midst of the devastating consequences of war for Ukrainians.[8]

In the stories shared through 'Connected', the quest for belonging was defined by personal experiences such as divorce, parenthood and limited living space. For example, one participant, Evgenii, wrote in a letter about home where he did not always feel accepted and found security only in his own body and through dance: 'Regardless of the weather outside or the crises that shake the world and me personally, when I dance, everything becomes distant and illusory. Dance is the guardian of a fortress where I live.' Another participant, Hermanni, said that he always felt like something was missing: 'It's hard to feel like you belong somewhere if you can't be fully physically present there.' When later a local mediator, Nadezhda, engaged audiences around this exhibition and around these letters, she noted the diverse range of emotions expressed by the audience, 'from genuine tears to joyful revelations'. The discussion uncovered many shared painful experiences among Russian speakers in Finland, but it also provided participating individuals an opportunity to better understand themselves, their pasts and presents.

These various artistic venues help to reveal 'the liveliness, disruption, and tension that affect and emotion create' (Morrow 2018: 18). Just like the differences in thinking about inclusion discussed earlier, making previously unknown experiences and emotions of marginalised people visible through exhibitions of personal stories, photographs or other material objects has the potential to reorient, interrupt and transform previous power structures. The progression from the unknown to briefly known inspires the motivation to reevaluate and reconsider the practices of subjectivation and securitisation.

But the practices within MeM must also be viewed in a broader context. Two major events – the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine – had significant impacts on the project's interactions with audiences. The pandemic caused significant disruptions, especially in the early stages, as nearly all cultural and art venues were closed, making public exhibitions and real-life art mediation practices difficult. For some participants, the shift towards online platforms was physically and mentally challenging, with one mediator stating that 'MeM was very demanding on my well-being and actually it was taking a lot of resources from me'. The war added a new dimension, affecting teams and organisations on all levels. While one participant from Latvia expressed feeling an existential threat from Russia: 'there is no point in doing any project if the next thing is the war with Russia', others from Estonia and Finland experienced an existential

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8   The exhibition 'Connected' was a product of collaboration between the Finnish artist Sanni Saarinen and MeM art mediators. It represented a collection of different stories of home, perception of identity and one's place at the intersection of different cultures. For more visit: https://www.kytkoksissa.com/kytkoksissa.

crisis of identity as Russian speakers, questioning their relationship to Russia and to their Russian-speaking friends and family. In a new world where Russian-ness has acquired a negative connotation, their role as cultural workers was too called into question. As one mediator from Finland put it, 'everything connected to Russia raised negative emotions and it was risky to do any public dialogue around it'.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to demonstrate the impact of the cultural project and its constituent institutions on the dynamics of securitisation. Although cultural work is often not the focus of security studies, it plays a significant role in challenging power balances, creating or disrupting understandings of difference. By exploring the relationship between critical security studies and cultural work, this paper has laid the foundation for a more nuanced approach towards exclusions and how they are negotiated in society more generally, which may be beneficial to theories and empirical research on (de)securitisation in several ways.

First, the alternative approaches to minorities, power-sharing and audience engagement developed within MeM can be considered as valid countermoves to dominant representations of minorities as threats, as passive subjects or collectives. Through creating new spaces for minority voices, promoting dialogue and exchange between speakers and audiences, and revealing previously unknown stories and differences in perspectives, MeM has disrupted the status quo of things and highlighted areas in need of change. This critical orientation has not only made people aware of what recedes from the view, but has also strengthened local communities' ability to differentiate themselves from dominant discourses and become more resilient to crises in which minorities are often securitised.

Second, by using a scalar gaze, we were able to see the socio-political field as one of antagonisms, balancing the relationship between different actors, contexts and geographies (see also Mouffe 2005). This perspective helps explain, at least in part, the ambiguity of any (de)securitisation practices, including the ones discussed in this papers, where creative cultural work coexists uneasily with other national or local institutional discourses, as well as global events. As there is always a risk of 'reinforcing rather than disrupting securitisation discourses' (Zembylas 2020: 15), it is important to carefully balance new interventions with potential pushbacks that are the result of previous practices and ways of knowing. While many institutions, including cultural ones, remain unaware of how they contribute to the process of 'stranger-making' (Ahmed 2012), engaging them can only benefit future studies of (de)securitisation. Future research should therefore pay more attention to the efforts of cultural organ-

isations to transform, tracing the connection between knowledge production, transformation, and their link to securitisation.

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ALINA JAŠINA-SCHÄFER is a post-doctoral researcher at the department of Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology, University of Mainz. She studied Central and East European Studies at the University of Glasgow, International Relations at the Central European University in Budapest and holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from the Justus Liebig University Giessen. In the past Alina has published on topics such as exclusion, belonging and home, horizontal citizenship, gendered experiences of work, epistemic biases and knowledge production. In her current research project, she is exploring the changing systems of value around human worth in the context of migration.

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