

Revisiting the Causes of Russian Foreign Policy Changes

Incoherent Biographical Narrative, Recognition and Russia's Ontological Security-Seeking

Tanya Narozhna

This paper examines the relationship between international practices of recognition and state quest for ontological security, on the one hand, and Russia's most recent identity makeover as well as increasingly aggressive foreign policy, on the other. I argue that in order to understand Russia's growing belligerence in foreign and security policies we need to examine the connection between Western refusal to recognize Russia's great power self-image, the effects this refusal has had on Russia's ontological security, and a subsequent shift in Russia's self-description from pro-Western to civilizational.

Keywords: ontological security, international recognition, Russian foreign policy

Introduction

The causes and implications of Russia's increasingly assertive foreign policy have been the subject of much debate among academics and policy makers. Burgeoning literature on the subject has provided dif-

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ferent explanations that focus on a variety of individual, domestic, geopolitical and ideational factors.¹ The last set of explanations, developed by constructivist scholarship, is of central interest in this manuscript. Constructivists have scrutinised a series of Russian identity overhauls that occurred after the Soviet demise. The first overhaul took place in the early 1990s, when the ruling elites attempted to align collective identity with the liberal ideal of modern market democracy. By the mid-1990s, it was supplanted by a centrist vision of identity built on an eclectic combination of liberal and conservative values. A decade later, yet another identity change was prompted by the Eurasianist vision of civilisational identity built on an antithetical commitment to Orthodox Christianity and conservative values, on the one hand, and glorification of Stalin and Soviet great power status, on the other. According to constructivists, the shift from liberal to civilisational identity has been directly implicated in Russia's increasingly assertive foreign policy and changing relations with the West, i.e., from partnership and cooperation in the wake of the Cold war to conflict and competition in the course of the last decade.

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Narozhna*

Constructivist scholarship has offered valuable insights into the changing nature of Russian foreign policy by drawing attention to Russia's history and culture as the repository of competing collective identities - Westernist, centrist and civilisational - and by demonstrating how the ruling elites have utilised divergent identity discourses to guide different foreign policies intended to help Russia maintain, or regain, great power status.² However, a constructivist line of argument is not without analytical blind spots. While accepting that domestic drivers, such as history and culture, matter in determining both identity and foreign policy, critics have pointed out that constructivist analyses are generally lacking 'a good theory to explain the persuasiveness of any normative claim over others'.³ In other words, the question of identity *change*, or what drives the rise of one vision of identity over another, has not been systematically addressed. This leaves open some important questions: If elite-driven identity discourse determines the direction and character of Russian foreign policy, then why is it that the liberal vision of identity, actively promoted by the ruling elites in the early 1990s, has fallen by the wayside? Or why was the centrist vision of identity, which has been so influential since the mid-1990s, eventually displaced by civilisational identity discourse, a fringe discourse throughout the 1990s? Equally baffling is the constructivist argument

about Russia's quest for status. Constructivist scholars generally agree that the West, and the US in particular, is an essential external other in Russia's pursuit of great power status and that Western recognition, or lack thereof, plays a key role in determining the character of Russia's international behavior. In the context of this argument, however, it is unfathomable why Russian ruling elites have opted for the strategy of pursuing great power status by antagonising the West, while simultaneously seeking Western recognition of Russia's greatness.

This paper takes the above criticisms seriously and seeks to contribute to existing constructivist scholarship by turning analytical attention to the background factors, i.e., ontological security and international recognition. It argues that the explanations produced by the bulk of research on Russian identity, quest for status and foreign policy are inevitably incomplete because they overlook 'the ontological [security] costs'⁴ of international politics of recognition for Russia. Attention to ontological security and international dynamics of recognition can help us understand in a more nuanced way a full pendulum swing in Russia's identity and foreign policy in a span of three decades. More specifically, the paper investigates the linkages between collective identity and collective perceptions of ontological (in)security, state foreign policy and ontological security-seeking, and international 'recognition games',⁵ arguing that the underlying impetus behind the changes in Russian identity and foreign policy is the need for ontological security.⁶ The latter requires both a coherent biographical narrative *and* an international recognition of the prevalent collective self-image.⁷ Recognition ensures that reflexively formed self-identity is aligned with how external others view the state and society in question. This alignment is essential to the collective sense of ontological security.⁸ Conversely, refusal to recognise a given state and society under their self-description will generate incongruence between reflexive and social aspects of collective identity threatening to undercut the collective sense of ontological security. In this situation, a state will face a serious foreign policy challenge of how to maintain, and achieve international recognition of, the prevalent collective self-image in order to mitigate the collective perceptions of ontological insecurity.⁹

The proposed theoretical framework helps us understand Russia's growing foreign policy assertiveness by bringing to the forefront the importance of Russia's great power self-description for the collec-

tive sense of ontological security and the effects of Western refusal to recognise this particular self-description on Russian identity and foreign policy.¹⁰ Admittedly, this is not the first suggestion to turn to ontological security in an attempt to add analytical cohesion to existing constructivist analyses of Russian foreign policy. For instance, Hansen (2016) has used the ontological security lens to argue that Russia's conflictual relations with the West have strengthened the collective sense of ontological security in Russia.¹¹ Unlike Hansen, who sees Russia's ontological security-seeking as a result of domestic preferences and political manipulation, this manuscript brings into picture the influence of external recognitive dynamics on the collective sense of ontological security. Attention to international recognition suggests that a link between increasingly aggressive foreign policy towards the West and a stronger sense of ontological security is not as straightforward as Hansen's analysis implies. On the contrary, this paper maintains that, short of Western recognition, Russian ruling elites and the majority of society will remain ontologically insecure.

In examining present-day Russia's ontological security-seeking and concomitant changes in self-identity and foreign policy, the paper situates these developments within the broader historical context.¹² History matters for a few reasons. First, it is through historical reflection that we become cognisant of the continuities and changes in Russian self-identity and foreign policy in the *longue durée*, thus properly appreciating that Russia's ontological security dilemma is not unique to the current historico-political context.¹³ Second, modern-day Russia's ontological security-seeking stands in close relationship with Russian history in that the politicised constructions of Russia's past powerfully shape its present-day self-image and are deeply imbricated with Russia's ontological security-seeking and foreign policy choices. Last but not least, a *longue durée* perspective allows us to identify some deeper features of continuity and persistence, i.e., fragmented collective identity, incoherent biographical narrative, a lingering sense of ontological insecurity and international dynamics of recognition, that create underlying conditions for changes in Russian foreign policy. As such, this perspective allows us to understand Russia's ontological security-seeking as a continuum and not as a series of discrete developments.

I observe that since the 18th century Russian identity has been continuously contested under antithetical Westernist, Slavophile and Eur-

asianist influences. Amidst these contestations, one trope in the Russian biographical narrative has remained unaltered, i.e., that of Russia's great power status. I argue that the great power self-description serves the collective ontological security needs as it provides continuity in Russian self-identity. This self-description is deeply sedimented and, while in theory it can be revised, such revision would come at a considerable ontological security cost to Russian society, not to mention the political cost to the elites undertaking such a task. Even in the 1990s and early 2000s, when Russia 'was a failing state by many classical indices of state capacity',¹⁴ Russia's ruling elites and the majority of Russian society insisted on Russia being recognised as a great power equal to the West, because this self-description fulfills the collective ontological security aspirations.

Nonetheless, throughout the 1990s and early 2000s Russia struggled to be recognised under the great power self-description. Against the backdrop of failing domestic socio-economic and political reforms,¹⁵ Western refusal to grant recognition, compounded by an incoherent biographical narrative, contributed to an increased sense of ontological insecurity, propelling securitisation of identity and a shift towards civilisational self-image. I argue that there is a connection between the widespread perception of ontological (in)security in Russia, an incoherent biographical narrative, the desire to be recognised as a moral and political equal of the West/US and the rise of civilisational identity and assertive foreign policy in Russia. The most recent collective identity makeover is inseparable from the collective need and the ruling elites' quest for ontological security, a pursuit that requires, alongside a coherent biographical narrative, Western recognition of Russia's great power status.

My argument proceeds in two parts. In the first part, I introduce the scholarship on ontological security and recognition demonstrating the relations between international recognition, the collective sense of ontological security and state foreign policy. In the second part, I trace the historic roots of Russia's ontological security predicament and examine the effects of Western refusal to recognise Russia's great power self-description on the collective sense of ontological security and foreign policy in the post-Soviet Russia.

Ontological security, recognition and the constitution of self-identity

Ontological security

The concept of ontological security, or security of identity, highlights the importance of a coherent sense of self in sustaining cognitive and emotional orientation in the world. Initially coined by psychiatrist R.D. Laing,¹⁶ the concept of ontological security was further developed by sociologist A. Giddens. Drawing on existential phenomenology and Wittgensteinian philosophy, Giddens premised ontological security on the idea that reflexive awareness characterises all human action 'bracketing out' existential questions about ourselves, others and the world in general.¹⁷ To be ontologically secure, individuals must possess the answers to existential questions about time, space, continuity and identity. In the absence of such answers, they become overwhelmed by the uncertainty of the modern world and succumb to deep existential anxieties. The pragmatic function of ontological security is, therefore, to make the world intelligible to the individuals, sustaining continuity of their identity. For Giddens, identity is inherently reflexive: it refers to '*the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography*'.¹⁸ That is, a relatively coherent sense of self-identity is anchored first and foremost in a continuous biographical narrative.

Giddens' conceptualisation centred on the *individual* aspirations for ontological security. IR scholars have demonstrated that the concept is also applicable to states because they, too, possess personhood and self-identity.¹⁹ No doubt, such personification of the state is problematic. However, as I have argued elsewhere, it is analytically justified to talk about *state* ontological security-seeking if we conceive of the state as a single *state-society complex* that serves as an essential ontological security referent for individuals and groups in society. This conceptualisation suggests that ontological security-seeking at the individual, societal and state levels is fundamentally intertwined.²⁰

Since its debut in IR, the ontological security scholarship has grown increasingly diverse. Two insights, in particular, are of importance here. First, many ontological security scholars underscore the importance of maintaining stability of identity, thus reducing ontological security-seeking to identity preservation.²¹ Accordingly, any changes in identity are seen as a source of ontological insecurity. This view essentialises identity and collapses ontological security into securitisation. The latter stabilises identity by highlighting fundamental enmity of

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others and rendering their very presence an existential threat to self. In practice, securitisation entails state efforts to impose a single 'true' biographical narrative, and self-identity based on such narrative, by whatever means necessary.

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An alternative understanding of ontological security - the one employed in this analysis - suggests that identities are never fixed but constantly evolving, shifting an emphasis from identity stability to reflexivity towards identity, i.e., ability to revise identity in the face of change without impairing a cohesive sense of identity.²² This understanding of ontological security calls for openness towards one's biographical narrative and perceptions of various others. In practical terms, it requires availability of discursive societal space, relatively free from state interference, where individuals and groups can deliberate on their collective self-image. This conceptualisation also suggests that ontological security is an ongoing process of seeking a coherent self-articulation in a changeable socio-historical environment.

Second, recent research on ontological security has underscored interconnections between reflexive and social dynamics in the constitution of self-identity. Accordingly, self-identity, albeit historically specific and subject to change, is continuously reproduced through the biographical narrative - a narrative open to societal contestations. However, state-society complexes are constructed not only through biographical narrative but also through social relations with external others. Therefore, an ontologically secure state-society complex is the one whose reflexively formed, historically specific self-conception is *recognised* at a particular historical juncture by significant others.

Recognition

Recognition is an inherently intersubjective phenomenon in the context of which the self reaffirms the claim to individuation.²³ It is 'an act of self-appropriation through social mediation'.²⁴ Since the desire to be recognised is one of the fundamental human aspirations, it is not surprising that the struggle for recognition can be found at the heart of many socio-political conflicts, from interpersonal to international. In Anglo-American academe there are two strands of recognition theory. A multiculturalist strand emphasises that a lack of recognition for minority groups not only forecloses group members' access to wealth and power but amounts to a form of symbolic violence that devaluates group traditions and identity.²⁵ A Marxist strand, rooted in the Critical

Theory tradition, points to the emancipatory potential of recognition as an underlying condition of individual agency and self-fulfillment.²⁶

Both currents are deeply indebted to G.W.H. Hegel's classic master-slave dialectic which foregrounds recognition as the means to social survival.²⁷ Indeed, Hegel's dialectic reveals that the struggle for social survival is fundamentally about 'who should [and does] have the right to impose what description on whom',²⁸ highlighting the interrelated issues of authority, agency and status in the struggle for recognition. The master and the slave seek recognition within historically specific context in which social inequality superimposes upon their ontological equality as persons. Effectively, Hegel's struggle for recognition is the struggle between unequals: both the master and the slave recognise not only each other's personhood but also their respective social positions within the status hierarchy that bestows dominant standing and agential capacity on the master. Crucially, social practices of recognition reaffirm not only one's self-identity but rather self-identity *in conjunction with* social status, authority and agency.

Both currents of recognition theory have influenced IR scholarship on the subject which argues that states, too, advance claims to recognition.²⁹ The process of international recognition takes place within highly stratified international environments in which formally equal sovereign states have a differential capacity to make effective claims in regard to their biographically narrated collective identities. The entwinement of collective identity with international recognition carries far-reaching implications for the collective sense of ontological security and state foreign policy. An act of international recognition ascribes positive value to collective identity that is being recognised, indicating respect for the state and society in question. In contrast, withholding recognition amounts to symbolic devaluation and stigma.³⁰ By determining the ambit of acceptable identity, international recognition produces exclusionary dynamics that sustain international status hierarchies. Invoking the Hegelian scenario, slaves are not admitted to, and have no relative standing within, the social circle of masters. They are 'seen', but only as a commodity, rather than as autonomous, conscious and purposeful agents. Withdrawal of recognition thus amounts to the denial of agency, authority, and social standing and is detrimental to the subject's sense of ontological security.

Even though Hegel emphasises the importance of reconciliation in the struggles for recognition, the master-slave dialectic leaves open

the possibility that these struggles will never reach a positive resolution, i.e., emancipation and solidarity. In today's highly complex globalised world, a suggestion that all claims for recognition can be satisfied seems implausible. When confronted with persistent refusal of international recognition, the state will be forced to choose between, or a combination of, the assenting foreign policy - i.e., abandoning biographically narrated self-identity in favour of externally imposed image, thus accepting the authority and agency of other states to determine its collective identity and international status - and dissenting foreign policy - i.e., pushing for the international recognition of its self-identity by increasingly aggressive means.

In the remainder of the paper I illustrate the converging dynamics of international recognition, ontological security-seeking and foreign policy by examining the case of Russia.

Russia's ontological security challenges through history: Fragmented Identity, incoherent biographical narrative and wanting Western recognition

History weighs heavily on modern-day Russia's ontological security predicament. As such, history provides helpful context and the primary reference point for examining present challenges to Russia's ontological security. Although often described in imperial terms, Russia has always been 'an elusive entity'³¹ fending off numerous physical threats and, equally important, wrestling with the formidable challenges of developing a coherent biographical narrative and getting its self-image recognised by the relevant other(s). These challenges have had profound implications for Russian self-identity, the collective sense of ontological security and foreign policy.

As discussed earlier, a sense of ontological security emerges as a result of a coherent biographical narrative and external recognition of the biographically narrated self-image by a significant external other. At present, the prevalent, Kremlin-endorsed biographical narrative is fraught with ambiguities.³² It begins with the medieval period of Kyivan Rus'.³³ This point of origin is problematic: as an unstable constellation of allying and competing princedoms located on the peripheries of three empires - Byzantium, Lithuania and the Golden Horde - Kyivan Rus' cannot be analytically captured by means of modern concepts, i.e., the state, nation or empire, which muddles Russia's historical lineage and clouds its point of origin. Moreover, Kyivan Rus' has tenuous con-

nections to contemporary Russia as Kyiv is now the capital of Ukraine. The biographical story continues with the Mongol-Tatar invasion after 1237. The invasion imposed the 'Yoke' on Rus', reducing it to the periphery of the *Pax Mongolica*. The Mongol empire maintained control over far-flung places and peoples by ruling through differentiation, i.e., co-opting local elites as the intermediaries of the Chigissids' dynasty and entering into different arrangements with various subjugated communities.³⁴ In the second half of the fifteenth century, following the collapse of the Mongol empire, the state of Muscovy emerged on the lands of North-East Rus'. As it grew in both strength and territory, Muscovy's rulers embraced the imperial form of governance founded on the idea of divinely ordained authority. Having conjoined the notions of the autocratic tsar, empire and Orthodoxy into a single system of 'responsive authoritarianism',³⁵ they replicated and expanded Mongol rule through differentiation. Subsequently, this model of differential rights, privileges and responsibilities seriously undermined the search for a unifying conception of Russia and Russianness.

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Historically, Russia's ever-expanding empire faced a unique blend of interrelated physical and ontological security challenges. On the one hand, an imperative to protect its territories and subjects from treacherous frontiers drove Russia's territorial expansion. Physical security was ensured by conquering dangerous borderlands and incorporating them into Russia's sovereign domain. On the other hand, Russia's sprawling landmass and kaleidoscopic diversity presented colossal problem for the emergence of a unifying identity. To develop a self-conception that would clarify how ethnic Russians and various colonised peoples fit into a single whole was not an easy task. This task became even more challenging as Russia transitioned to modernity that was marked, among other things, by the emergence of a Europe-centred international society and the rise of nationalism.

As a political entity that pre-existed European international society, the Russian empire had for centuries sustained a social universe in which it enjoyed the normative authority to set the standards by which the centrality of Russian self and inferiority of various others were established. As Russia accepted the values of modernity, it started to emulate them within the socially stratified international environment. Russia's desire to attain a 'rightful' place in modern European international society made European recognition essential to the collective sense of ontological security. At the same time, the desire to

belong to a family of 'civilised' European states 'necessitated giving up a self-affirming position of relative privilege and accepting a self-negating position of an outsider instead'.³⁶ In the process of catching up with modern European states, Russian ruling elites and society grew acutely aware of their inferior status and were forced to cope with the stigmatising label of relative backwardness, which some perceived as a defect to be overcome and others as an asset to be exploited.

Eighteenth century Petrine's Russia is symptomatic of a deeply fragmented character of Russian identity and concomitant ontological insecurity, fuelled by real or perceived inferiority vis-à-vis Europe. Under the rule of Peter the Great (1682-1725) a series of Westernising reforms were launched with the intent of erasing the common perception of Russia as an obscure and backward Orthodox tsardom. Westernising reforms included, among other things, the introduction of the European technological innovations, the imposition of beardlessness and a Western dress code, a new European-style capital in St. Petersburg as a 'window on the West', and the rebranding of the title of tsar into emperor. In order to set Russia apart from 'barbaric' states and to bolster its European credentials, Peter instructed one of his advisors, Peter Shafirov, to produce formal justification of Russia's martial conquests in expressly European terms of the just war theory.³⁷ This move openly conveyed Russia's recognition of Europe's normative authority and its willingness to comply with European norms in order to gain Europe's recognition.

Indeed, the Westernising impetus of Petrine reforms, which Catherine II brought to completion, went hand-in-hand with the aspiration to recast Russia as both civilised and European. Importantly, Peter's campaign encountered fierce backlash from different quarters of Russian society, including his son Aleksei, his grandson Peter II, traditionalists, Old Believers and schismatics. Peter's opponents underscored fundamental differences between Russia and the West, stressing Russia's historic role as the centre of its own civilisation based on Orthodox spirituality, moral superiority and unique culture. This early opposition to the imitation of the West culminated in the emergence of the Slavophile and Eurasianist movements in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, respectively, when the Westernising drive accentuated the full magnitude of the collective sense of inferiority and ontological insecurity in Russia. Slavophiles and Eurasianists attempted to invert the Russian-Western relationship by presenting

Russia as superior to the 'decaying' West and by promoting assertive foreign policy towards the West. Considering the intensity of the intra-Russian rift on the issues of identity and relations with the West, one could argue that 'two rival nations were forming',³⁸ i.e., of the Westernised nobility and of the anti-Western traditionalists.

Russia's search for a cohesive identity became further complicated with the rise of nationalism in the late eighteenth century when the Russian nation and empire were forced to co-exist 'like oil and water: they appeared to blend together in a common emulsion but in fact kept their own identity and over time slipped apart'.³⁹ While Russia's monarchs began to invoke territoriality as the basis of common identity, they continued to categorise Russian subjects by religion, ethnicity and culture, sharpening distinctions between the colonising Russian core and the colonised peripheries. Such contradictory impulses of unifying and differentiating peoples and cultures sustained the deeply fragmented character of the Russian biographical narrative and self-identity.

Equally important, the rise of Russian nationalism meant that the Russian nation had to form itself in opposition to the European states which had advanced to modern nationhood earlier. In Russia's biographical narrative, Europe⁴⁰ thus emerged as a critical external referent that deeply influenced Russian self-conceptions and foreign policies. As Greenfeld put it, Europe became 'an integral indelible part of the Russian *national* consciousness. There simply would be no sense of being a nation if the West did not exist.'⁴¹

Petrine reforms and internal identity contestations point to a degree of reflexivity towards identity in Russian society, as well as the willingness to revise collective self-image and adapt to a changing international environment - all indicators of ontological security. However, a failure of the above reforms and contestations to produce a unifying identity, or to gain a 'rightful' place in Europe through international recognition, speak to the contrary. Russia's transition to modernity produced a deep, debilitating sense of ontological insecurity.⁴²

Since the 18th century, while disagreements on the issues of identity and belonging persisted, the only consistent trope in the Russian biographical narrative, a trope widely shared in Russian society, was the idea that Russia was "'naturally" destined' to be a great power.⁴³ Henceforth, the great power self-description became a constant trope in Russia's biographical narrative, regularly activated, especially in times of

crises, by the ruling elites for political purposes to justify foreign policy choices and sustain continuity of self-identity.

Crucially, Russia's self-identification against Europe - after 1945, the US/West - generated intense desire to be recognised not as any great power but as a distinctly European/Western one. This desire, however, fell on deaf ears with the West, feeding Russia's continuous 'obsession with status'.⁴⁴ Western refusal to recognise Russia under its great power self-description generated strong resentment⁴⁵ towards the West - an indication of the lingering sense of ontological insecurity. Resentment denotes a psychological state deriving from 'suppressed feelings of envy and hatred' towards an allegedly superior object of imitation.⁴⁶ Sustained by Western refusal to recognise Russia as a full-fledged Western great power, resentment toward the West became one of the key factors in the development of modern Russian identity. It fomented ongoing comparisons and contradictory self-appraisals vis-à-vis the West, deepening existential anxiety and an ambiguous sense of belonging.

Examples of resentment abound in Russian literature. In 1863, F. Dostoyevsky wrote: 'How is it that we have not been regenerated once and for all into Europeans? ...I think all will agree... that we have not grown up enough for regeneration..., and I cannot understand this fact'.⁴⁷ A baffling question of belonging was also central to Chaadaev's *Philosophical Letters* when he wrote: '[W]e have never advanced along with other people; we are not related to any of the great human families; we belong neither to the West nor to the East; and we possess the traditions of neither. ... [A] brutal barbarism, then crude superstition, after that fierce degrading foreign domination by strangers whose spirit was later inherited by the nation - that is the sad history of our youth'.⁴⁸ Chaadaev's anxiety about Russia's identity and belonging was corroborated by the German scholars, employed by the newly founded Russian Academy of Sciences and Moscow University to 'discover' Russia's history and identity. They found out that

The Russian land had not been "Russian" for very long; the Russian state and the Russian name had come from Sweden; the Russian apostle Andrew had never been to Russia; and the Russian language had been - quite recently - brought in by tribes chased out of the Danube.⁴⁹

Importantly, modern Russian perceptions about Russia's relations with Europe reveal a strong tendency towards the securitisation of identity. One of the prominent tropes in late-18th early-19th century Russia's thinking about its place in the world was a moralistic conservative notion about the existence of Anti-Russian international conspiracy 'by Western governments, Western radicals, Protestants, Jesuits, Jews, and Freemasons, among others'.⁵⁰ Rooted in the perception of Moscow as 'the beleaguered Third Rome', this notion of an anti-Russian plot emphasised inherent European enmity towards Russia. It resurged in the late 18th century when Russia embarked on aggressive expansion, i.e., the so-called Greek Project to revive the Byzantine Empire that would serve as Russia's ally. This trope accentuated the perceptions that European states were trying to stymie Russia's destiny to be a great power. The French revolution further reinforced the belief that foreign enemies, together with subversive groups in Russian society, presented an existential threat to Russia. As Martin observed, 'in various guises, such conspiracy theories continued to flourish throughout the tsarist and Soviet periods of Russian history and remain widespread even now.'⁵¹

Indeed, even the revolution of 1917, which promised radical transformation of Russia's identity and equal status with the West, failed to generate a coherent sense of identity and ontological security. Internally, the USSR remained ontologically insecure as imperial and national foci of identification competed with one another. Soviet authorities sought to forge a sense of unity by emphasising single territoriality. However, pan-national Soviet identity remained inherently Russo-centric. Russia's privileged status within the USSR prompted opposition from various ethno-national groups, sustaining Moscow's anxiety about various internal enemies, especially in the borderlands.

Externally, the USSR did not break free from the normative constraints of the international status hierarchy.⁵² The West treated the Soviet Union as a backward 'outcast'.⁵³ While in the early years the Soviet Union pursued aggressive competition in ideological, political and military-political spheres, it failed to gain Western recognition of its self-image as a socially advanced great power.⁵⁴ In the aftermath of WWII, the West reluctantly recognised the USSR as a great power in view of the Soviet contribution to the victory in war. However, instead of harnessing Western recognition to strengthen the collective sense

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of ontological security, the USSR remained ‘an insecure superpower wanna-be’.⁵⁵ A persistent sense of ontological insecurity manifested itself in deep Soviet hostility toward, and fixation with racing, the US not only in military, ideological and economic realms, but also in the areas of sports, science and culture.

By the late 1980s, Gorbachev’s *Perestroika* revealed the depth of the ontological insecurity in Soviet society. Critical reassessment of the ‘glorious’ Soviet past gave rise to neo-Westernism. The prospects of becoming ‘like the West’ enjoyed widespread popular support, especially among well-educated urbanites, intellectuals and pro-capitalist elites. In their effort to rescue the collapsing Soviet economy and engender a more democratic socialist identity, Soviet authorities once again openly acknowledged that Russia was part of the West. As Gorbachev put it in 1988: ‘Russia’s trade, cultural and political links with other European nations and states have deep roots in history. We are Europeans’.⁵⁶ Late Soviet Westernism was not uncontested as various segments of Russian society and political establishment emphasised a unique Russian identity and historic destiny. Neo-Slavophiles and neo-Eurasianists included ‘imperial nationalists’ who idealised pre-revolutionary Russia, as well as ‘national communists’ who were unshaken in their belief that Soviet Russia was a great empire. Thus, the antagonism between Westernism and Slavophilism/Eurasianism reemerged in the late Soviet period shaping political and popular debates about Russian identity.

This overview demonstrates that throughout history a failure to produce a coherent biographical narrative, compounded by lack of Western recognition of Russia’s great power self-image, generated and sustained a widespread sense of ontological insecurity in Russian society influencing state foreign policy choices. Faced with persistent refusal of Western recognition, Russian society oscillated between pro-Western and civilisational identities that called for radically different foreign policies. The former prompted Russia to imitate advanced Western states encouraging cooperation with the West and seeking recognition of Russia as the European great power. The latter set Russia against the West lending support to assertive foreign policy as a means of demonstrating Russia’s superiority.

Russia's quest for ontological security and recognition in the Post-Soviet period

The breakdown of the Soviet Union brought the issue of Russian identity to the forefront, while an 'ontologically insecure relationship with the West'⁵⁷ persisted as one of the key factors in forging it. Amidst collapsed institutional structure, disintegrating societal fabric and general domestic uncertainty, Russia's complex demographic composition and contradictory attitudes towards its communist past significantly complicated the search for a coherent self-image.

In the early 1990s several contending biographical narratives promoted different visions of self-identity suggesting different foreign policy choices.⁵⁸ Importantly, all narratives shared one particular point of consensus, i.e., a belief that Russia is a great power. Yeltsin's government promoted a Westernist self-image arguing that Russia's "genuine" Western identity⁵⁹ was hijacked by the Bolsheviks but the Soviet collapse provided the opportunity to recover it. Yet many post-Soviet Westernisers shared the anxious forebodings of their 19th century counterparts and saw 'the Russian people's *own* lack of "European democratic consciousness" as perhaps the main problem'.⁶⁰ In 1991 A. Novikov asked: 'If liberal consciousness was not able to take hold during the nineteenth century, how should it be able to do so today?'⁶¹ Given irresolvable contestations of Russia's self-identity, journalist A. Kazintsev wrote: 'We have lost our identity: "The Russians" - this word has become an empty sound without any meaning'.⁶²

Russia's liberal Westernisers in the executive branch recognised Western normative authority and expected unconditional Western acceptance of Russia as a great power. Their ambition was to secure Russia's position in the West in 'the front-rank status of such countries as France, Germany, and the United States'.⁶³ Bound by the great power self-image, Russian elites desired 'proper' recognition that would re-affirm Russia's status and strengthen the collective sense of ontological security. In practice, however, expectations of Western recognition and partnership rhetoric rarely matched the reality of Western-Russian relations. In the eyes of the West 'Russia was not to be integrated into the core West, but managed by it: no NATO but the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC); no Marshall Plan, but International Monetary Fund (IMF) trenches...'⁶⁴ Western refusal to recognise Russia's great power self-image reached to the very core of the collective sense of ontological security: it threatened to create a damaging dis-

sonance between self-described and social aspects of Russian identity threatening to make Russia unrecognisable to itself.

By the end of 1992 the Westernising drive lost much of its appeal, not least because Western reluctance to recognise Russia as an equal partner significantly undermined the Westernist self-image inadvertently strengthening anti-Western voices in the discussions of Russian self-identity and foreign policy. Nationalist and communist elites recast the Western push for reforms as American attempts to lay claims to Russian identity decrying Russia's loss of agential autonomy in determining its self-conception and foreign policy.⁶⁵ They promoted an alternative vision of Russia that promised to set Russia free from the Western-centred global status hierarchy. Journalist S. Morozov captured these sentiments when he wrote: 'we can become European. But then Russia will lose its place as the first member of Russian civilization and will become the last member of Western civilization'.⁶⁶ Foreign policy pundit E. Pozdniakov agreed: 'Russia cannot return to Europe because it never belonged to it. Russia cannot join it because it is part of another type of civilization, another cultural and religious type'.⁶⁷

In response, the President Boris Yeltsin declared that Russian-Western relations had to be balanced while Foreign Minister Kozyrev voiced his disappointment with the Western lack of recognition: 'the "game of demoting" the status of a power that is historically doomed to be a great power is not only unrealistic but dangerous, since it fuels aggressive nationalism'.⁶⁸ By the mid-1990s the government-led biographical narrative shifted towards communist, Slavophile and Eurasianist self-images recasting Russia as a bridge between Europe and Asia, whose identity and values were distinct from, and superior to, those of the West. With this change in self-description the emphasis of Russia's foreign policy shifted from full-scale to limited cooperation and open competition with the US/West.⁶⁹ Increased cooperation with China and India signaled Russia's determination to achieve Western recognition of its great power status by containing American unilateralism and promoting great power balancing in what Russia saw as multipolar world order.

Foreign Minister Primakov, who replaced Kozyrev in 1995, saw Russia as a great Eurasian power and the former USSR, or Near Abroad, as Russia's special sphere of interests. In his own words, 'Russia has been and remains a great power, and its policy toward the outside

world should correspond to that status'.⁷⁰ This view reflected popular sentiments in Russian society and was shared by various elites across the political spectrum. Importantly, despite the revised biographical narrative and modified foreign policy, the US/West remained a key external referent for Russia's self-identity. While condemning Western unilateralism and establishing a strategic partnership with China, the ruling elites 'doggedly pursu[ed] ... Russia's "special relationship" with NATO and equal status in other Western institutions'.⁷¹

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Far from producing a unifying effect and stronger sense of ontological security in Russian society, the ambiguity of the centrist self-image generated major alienations, i.e., Westernists felt excluded from the Kremlin-endorsed self-identity, as did Eurasianists and communists. An identity crisis was visible in the search for a 'national idea' initiated by Yeltsin after his reelection in 1996. The centrist vision of identity, as Tsygankov put it, 'provided the space necessary for reformulating Russia's national identity and moving beyond the post-Soviet identity crisis. Yet that space was yet to be filled with some creatively defined national idea...'.⁷² At the same time, Primakov's foreign policy through great power balancing has had a limited effect on achieving Western recognition. Competition with the US 'only accentuat[ed] Moscow's inferiority to Washington' while cooperation with non-Western rising powers 'merely registered Russia's ... low standing' in the post-Cold war world order.⁷³

With Putin's rise to power, contradictions concerning Russian identity persisted. In the millennium article, Putin offered his view playing to both Westernist and nationalist self-conceptions: 'Soviet power did not let the country develop a flourishing society which could be developing dynamically, with free people. ...[T]he ideological approach to the economy made our country increasingly lag behind the developed states., which took us away from the main track of civilization. ...The mechanical copying of the experiences of other states will not bring progress. Every country, Russia included, has a duty to search for its own path of renewal'.⁷⁴ Strikingly, Putin acknowledged Russia's profound ontological security crisis when he juxtaposed Soviet Russia as the Other of the post-Soviet Russia, speaking 'about the state he rules as having a *discontinuous* history' and, effectively, denying Russian Self 'some degree of permanence in time and space'.⁷⁵

By 2005, Putin corrected his earlier view emphasising Russia's ongoing existence though history as a great European power:

Above all else Russia was, and of course is and will be, a major European power... For three centuries now, we - together with the other European nations - have passed hand in hand through reforms ...⁷⁶

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In matters of foreign policy, Russia continued with great power balancing engaging in a strategic partnership with the US in the global war on terror. However, as the West continued to withhold its recognition of Russia's great power self-image, Russian self-description shifted explicitly towards an anti-Western, nationalist biographical narrative.

The Russian nationalist biographical narrative is based on an anti-theoretical commitment to Orthodox Christianity and conservative values, on the one hand, and glorification of the Soviet greatness, on the other. Imperial imagery, Russian exceptionalism, the loss of superpower status after the Soviet collapse, the vilification of the godless and morally degenerate West, and securitisation of Russian spiritual-moral values emerged as the central tropes of the neo-conservative narrative that shaped Russian civilisational identity.⁷⁷ It frames the West as an existential threat to Russia, while painting the latter as the bulwark of conservatism whose historical mission is to promote paternalist authoritarianism. This biographical narrative also provides justification for aggressive foreign policies geared towards recovering Russia's great power status.⁷⁸

Drawing on a mix of political conservatism and historical revisionism, Putin and his elites institutionalised control over Russian identity, suppressing any alternative biographical narratives by means of intensifying state repressions. With the help of state-controlled media, subservient intellectuals and neo-conservative ideologues, state-sponsored identity politics produced a grand narrative that established a deceptively straightforward lineage between the 'Holy Rus' and 'Grand Russia',⁷⁹ legitimising Russia's claims to the territories and peoples in Russia's Near Abroad. The revised collective identity justifies the attempts to reconfigure the existing world order in a way that would enable Russia to act as 'the ordering power with "privileged interests"'.⁸⁰ Accordingly, the former Soviet republics represent the battleground where Russia has 'to fight for its great power status to be recognized against a large coalition of enemies'.⁸¹ Thus, a revised biographical narrative translates into increasing adherence to conflictual foreign policy.⁸²

Russia's determination to assert its great powerness was on full display in 2008 and 2014 when in response to Western recognition of Kosovo and promises of NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine, Russia went to war with the former, annexed Crimea from the latter and engaged in the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine. In particular, the annexation of Crimea was received in Russian society as the symbol of 'Russian reawakening' and 'revival'.⁸³ Putin justified this aggressive foreign policy move with references to the 'Russian World' - a concept he first mentioned in 2007 that denotes '*the living space for the many millions of people in the Russian-speaking world, a community that goes far beyond Russia itself*'.⁸⁴ The Russian World emphasises the importance of preserving Russian identity, based on spiritual and historical values, defending Russian interests, especially against the West, and asserting Russia's great power. In the wake of the annexation, V. Solovyov, a popular Russian TV personality with close links to the Kremlin, declared: 'What happened today is that Russia did not hesitate to declare openly: We will never be... a small European country, we will not choose the path that you are trying to impose on us. We are the great Russia! And Russia can either be great or not exist at all'.⁸⁵

For the West, Russia's actions ensued the biggest crisis in relations with Russia since the end of the Cold war prompting the West to impose a series of sanctions against Russia. Not only did Russia's defiance remain unabated in the face of Western sanctions but it rose to new heights. Russia's interference in the 2016 US presidential elections, malicious cyberattacks worldwide and ongoing support for the Assad regime in Syria highlighted the escalating conflictual competition between Russia and the West. This competition signals Russia's refusal to accept status differentials determined by the West and conveys Russia's determination to bolster the collective sense of ontological security by defending Russia's self-image as a great power and by pushing for its recognition by means of aggressive foreign policy.

Conclusion

This paper underscored the importance of converging dynamics between Russia's ontological security-seeking, incoherent biographical narrative and desire for international recognition in explaining changes in collective identity and state foreign policy. I argued that ontological security requires synergy between the biographically narrated self-image and social recognition. Dissonance between reflexive and

social/recognitive aspects of identity is detrimental to a collective sense of ontological security. When confronted with the refusal of recognition, the state will either revise its self-image or assert it by means of aggressive foreign policy.

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The analytical framework based on ontological security and international recognitive dynamics sheds light on the changes in Russian identity and foreign policy. Richard Sakwa once observed that 'much of the post-Cold War malaise is derived from ... Russia's civilizational self-identification as a great power...'⁸⁶ Russia's claim to parity with the West is no longer implicit. It is driven by its quest for ontological security, a quest in which Russian identity became a key stake in the struggle not only for the desired rank within the international status hierarchy, but, ultimately, for a collective sense of ontological security.

Will the revised identity and foreign policy strategy allow Russia to successfully overcome the Western recognition impasse and strengthen the collective sense of ontological security? On the one hand, antagonistic relations with the West may themselves become a source of a deeper sense of ontological security, making Russia more and more attached to conflict, in which case Western recognition may turn out counter-productive to Russia's sense of ontological security.⁸⁷ On the other hand, civilisational identity and aggressive foreign policy may be a poor strategy for Russia. Contrary to repeated claims to moral superiority over the West and a highly advertised 'turn to the East', Russia has not completely rejected Western normative authority. The East, as Curanović observed, is 'mostly a function of the interaction between Russia and the West.'⁸⁸

Russia finds itself in a paradoxical situation where it asserts its civilisational self-image and openly contests Western recognitive authority while continuing to seek Western recognition. Russia is torn between what Ringmar called a 'self-conscious outsider', who tries to construct an alternative status hierarchy to fulfill its status ambitions and to meet its ontological security needs, and a 'social upstart', who selectively upholds existing liberal international norms in its desire to achieve Western recognition.⁸⁹ As long as Russia continues to pursue the strategy of conflictual competition, it is highly unlikely that the West will recognise Russia under its current self-description. Short of Western recognition, collective perceptions of ontological insecurity will persist.



TANYA NAROZHNA is affiliated with the University of Winnipeg, Canada, and can be contacted at t.narozhna@uwinnipeg.ca.

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Endnotes

- 1 For overview, see Elias Götz, "Putin, The State, and War: The Causes of Russia's Near Abroad Assertion Revisited." *International Studies Review* 19 (2017): 228-53.
- 2 See Anne Clunan, "Historical Aspirations and the Domestic Politics of Russia's Pursuit of International Status." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47 (2014): 281-90; Ayse Zarakol, *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Andrei Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, 4th ed. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016); Iver Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2017).
- 3 Payne, 2001: 38 quoted in Götz, 2017: 238.
- 4 Maria Mälksoo, "The Transitional Justice and Foreign Policy Nexus: The Inefficient Causation of State Ontological Security-Seeking." *International Studies Review* (2018): 1-25 at 5 <https://doi-org.uwinnipeg.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/isr/viy006>
- 5 Erik Ringmar, "The *Recognition Game*: Soviet Russia Against the West," *Cooperation and Conflict* 37, no. 2 (2002): 115-36.
- 6 Although the questions of 'Whose ontological security needs matter in IR?' and 'What is Russia?' are beyond the scope of this manuscript, I would like to note that my take on these issues builds on Rumelili's (2015: 57) insight that '[c]ertainty and stability of identity remain a concern of states as well as of societies and individuals...'. See Bahar Rumelili (2015) "Identity and Desecuritization: The Pitfalls of Conflating Ontological and Physical Security." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 18: 52-74. Elsewhere I have argued that the ontological security-seeking at the individual, societal and state levels are deeply interconnected in IR and that a historical sociological perspective on the state, which views the state in social relational terms and transcends internal-external dichotomy, allows us to avoid both problematic personification of the state and a reduction of the state to the ruling elites. See xxx (2020), *Journal of International Relations and Development*. This means that even though I employ references such as 'the state' and 'Russia' in this paper, their use does not imply analytical state-centrism which treats the state as a unified black box.
- 7 Biographical narrative is self-referential in that it is a story one tells about oneself. Recognition points to the systemic dimension and the importance of external others in the process of identity development. Together, biographical narrative and recognition indicate that both internal and external dynamics are important for achieving a strong sense of ontological security.
- 8 Heterogeneity of modern societies suggests that external recognition of collective self-image will not strengthen a sense of ontological security for *everybody* in society. In fact, individuals and groups alienated from

the prevalent collective self-conception might feel more ontologically insecure once external recognition is granted. Still, recognition of *prevalent* collective self-identity does function as a source of ontological security for the majority of individuals and groups in society who share this particular self-image.

- CEJISS 9 It needs to be noted that a strong sense of ontological security shapes the
2/2021 perceptions of others as non-threatening. Conversely a growing sense of
ontological insecurity adversely affects the degree of trust towards, and the
perception of, others as threatening (see Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and
Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford
University Press, 1991)). After 2010, collective attitudes in Russian society
have demonstrated a growing perception of the US, the EU, Ukraine and
Georgia as threatening external others, indicating an increasing ontological
insecurity (See Tanya Narozhna (2020) "State-Society Complexes in
Ontological Security-Seeking in IR." *Journal of International Relations and
Development* 23: 559-83; Flemming Splitsboel Hansen, "Russia's Relations
with the West: Ontological Security through Conflict." *Contemporary
Politics* 22(2016): 359-75.
- 10 Other cases can illustrate the empirical validity of the proposed theoretical
framework. For instance, Turkey and Serbia have faced Western
misrecognition, Japan has been misrecognised by China, etc. The case
of Russia warrants closer investigation for a number of reasons. First,
the Soviet collapse exacerbated Russia's ontological insecurity making
Russia an exemplary case of state ontological security-seeking. Second,
ignoring Russia's ontological security may come at a cost of misjudging the
catalysts behind Russia's foreign policy choices. Third, intense academic
and policy debates highlight the importance of understanding more fully
Russia's ontological security predicament and status aspirations so as to
develop proper Western policies towards Russia.
- 11 See Hansen 2016.
- 12 The paper utilises interpretive case research methodology as it is well suited
for contextual examination that seeks to shed light on the underlying, or
'hidden' conditions and factors that influence changes in Russian foreign
policy. This methodology also allows us to draw nuanced, contextualised
inferences about Russia's ontological security-seeking.
- 13 The concept of the *longue durée*, most often associated with Fernand
Braudel, suggests that we should be cognisant of the multiple scales of
time in our analysis of social realities. See Fernand Braudel, *On History*,
translated by Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
- 14 Allen Lynch, "The Influence of Regime Type on Russian Foreign Policy
Toward 'the West', 1992-2015," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 49,
no.1 (2016): 101-11 at 106.
- 15 The role of domestic factors in shaping Russian foreign policy has been
extensively examined elsewhere. Grounded in diversionary war and
regime security theories, these explanations attribute the recent shift
in Russia's foreign policy to the stalled socio-economic and democratic
reforms. They underscore the need to prop up Putin's increasingly corrupt
authoritarian regime by diverting public attention from domestic political
failures to external crises, such as the Color Revolutions in Russia's Near
Abroad (see Lilia Shevtsova, "The Kremlin is Winning." 2015. Accessed
April 20, 2018. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-kremlin-is->

- winning/; Thomas Ambrosio, *Authoritarian Backlash: Russian Resistance to Democratization in the Former Soviet Union* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).
- 16 Ronald Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960).
 - 17 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 37.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, 53 (emphasis in the original).
 - 19 See Zarakol, *After Defeat*; Jennifer Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma," *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 341-70.
 - 20 Tanya Narozhna, "State-Society Complexes in Ontological Security-Seeking in IR", *Journal of International Relations and Development* 23 (2020): 559-83 (the article appeared online first in 2018 but since then has been published in vol 23 in 2020).
 - 21 See Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics"; Brent Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
 - 22 Tanya Narozhna, "State-Society Complexes in Ontological Security-Seeking in IR", *Journal of International Relations and Development* 23 (2020): 559-83 (the article appeared online first in 2018 but since then has been published in vol 23 in 2020); Chris Browning and Pertti Joenniemi, "Ontological Security, Self-Articulation and the Securitization of Identity," *Cooperation and Conflict* 52, no.1 (2017): 31-47.
 - 23 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), 69.
 - 24 Victoria Fareld, "The re- in Recognition: Hegelian Returns," *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 13 no.1 (2012): 125-138 at 125.
 - 25 See Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition" In *Multiculturalism*, edited by A. Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25-74.
 - 26 See Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*.
 - 27 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
 - 28 Ringmar, "The Recognition Game," 120.
 - 29 See Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Thomas Lindemann and Erik Ringmar, eds., *The International Struggle for Recognition*, (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2012).
 - 30 See Thomas Lindemann, "Interest, Passion, (Non)recognition, and Wars: A Conceptual Essay," *Global Discourse* 4, no.4 (2014): 483-96; Zarakol, *After Defeat*.
 - 31 Valerie Kivelson and R.G. Suny, *Russia's Empires* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.
 - 32 Since Russia's current biographical narrative received significant attention in the literature, in this discussion I draw on the secondary sources to highlight the challenges of articulating and sustaining a coherent biographical narrative and a clear sense of identity, on the one hand, and attain external recognition of its self-image, on the other. On Russia's biographical narrative see Marielle Wijermars, *Memory Politics in Contemporary Russia: Television, Cinema and the State* (London: Routledge, 2019); Kathleen Smith, *Mythmaking in the New Russia: Politics and Memory during the Yeltsin Era* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2002); Thomas Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*

- (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Iver Newmann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).
- 33 The historical timeframe in this analysis follows Russia's prevalent biographical narrative which insists on Russia's origin in the Kyivan Rus'.
- 34 Donald Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304-1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- 35 Kivelson and R.G. Suny, *Russia's Empires*, 8.
- 36 Zarakol, *After Defeat*, 10.
- 37 Kivelson and R.G. Suny, *Russia's Empires*, 94.
- 38 Roman Szporluk, "Nationalism After Communism: Reflections on Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Poland," *Nations and Nationalism* 4, no. 3 (1998): 301-20 at 306.
- 39 Kivelson and R.G. Suny, *Russia's Empires*, 116.
- 40 This is not to suggest that modern Europe had a single stable identity. As European states evolved from monarchist into liberal democratic polities, Europe was torn between progressive and conservative camps. Russia's self-identification against Europe often required a choice between 'old' and 'new' Europe.
- 41 Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 254.
- 42 Zarakol, *After Defeat*, 30.
- 43 Olga Malinova, "Obsession with Status and Ressentiment: Historical Backgrounds of the Russian Discursive Identity Construction," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47, no. 3-4 (2014): 291-303.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Greenfeld, *Nationalism*; Malinova, "Obsession with Status and Ressentiment."
- 46 Malinova, 292.
- 47 Quoted in Zarakol, *After Defeat*, iiiv.
- 48 Quoted in Yuri Glazov, "Chaadaev and Russia's Destiny," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 32, no.4 (1986): 281-301 at 284-5.
- 49 Yuri Slezkine, "Naturalists Versus Nations: Eighteenth Century Russian Scholars Confront Ethnic Diversity." In *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, edited by Brower, D., and E. Lazzerini (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 48.
- 50 Alexander Martin, "The Invention of "Russianness" in the Late 18th-Early 19th Century" *Ab Imperio* 3 (2003): 119-34 at 132.
- 51 Ibid., 133.
- 52 Zarakol, *After Defeat*, 213.
- 53 Ringmar, "Recognition Game," 123.
- 54 Ibid.; Malinova "Obsession with Status and Ressentiment".
- 55 Ringmar, "Recognition Game," 128.
- 56 Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, 143.
- 57 Zarakol, *After Defeat*, 30.
- 58 See Vera Tolz "Forging the Nation: National Identity and Nation Building in Post-Communist Russia." *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no.6 (1998): 993-1022.
- 59 Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 61.
- 60 Shevtsova quoted in Neumann *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, 147, emphasis in the original.

- 61 Quoted in Neumann, 148.
- 62 Quoted in Tolz "Forging the Nation," 966.
- 63 Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 62.
- 64 Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, not Influence." *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no.4 (2009): 3-22 at 8.
- 65 Clunan, "Historical Aspirations," 283.
- 66 Quoted in Tolz, "Forging the Nation," 998.
- 67 Quoted in Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, 154.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 159.
- 69 Deborah Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Russia Says No: Power, Status and Emotions in Foreign Policy," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47 (2014): 269-79; Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*.
- 70 Quoted in Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 97.
- 71 Clunan, "Historical Aspirations," 286.
- 72 Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 170.
- 73 Larson and Shevchenko, "Russia Says No," 273.
- 74 Quoted in Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, 172.
- 75 *Ibid.*, emphasis added.
- 76 Quoted in Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, 172-3.
- 77 Jardar Østbo "Securitizing 'Spiritual-Moral Values' in Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 33, no. 3 (2017): 200-16.
- 78 Miguel Vázquez-Liñán, "Historical Memory and Political Propaganda in the Russian Federation." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 50, no. 2 (2017): 77-86.
- 79 Natalia Naydenova "Holy Rus: (Re)construction of Russia's Civilizational Identity," *Slavonica* 21, no.1-2 (2017): 37-48.
- 80 Quoted in Richard Sakwa "Russia's Identity: Between the 'Domestic' and the 'International.'" *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 6 (2011): 957-75 at 957.
- 81 Marlene Laruelle, "The Three Colors of Novorossiia, or the Russian Nationalist Mythmaking of the Ukrainian Crisis." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32, no. 1 (2016): 55-74 at 55.
- 82 Admittedly, the 'reset' policy of the Obama administration temporarily improved Russian-US relations but was ultimately unsuccessful in assuaging Russia's status anxiety and bolstering its sense of ontological security.
- 83 Yuri Teper, "Official Russian Identity Discourse in Light of the Annexation of Crimea: National or Imperial?" *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32, no.4 (2016): 378-96 at 388.
- 84 Russkiy Mir Foundation at <https://ruskiymir.ru/en/fund>
- 85 Quoted in Teper "Official Russian Identity Discourse", 389.
- 86 Sakwa "Russia's Identity," 957.
- 87 Hansen 2016.
- 88 Alicja Curanović "Why Don't Russians Fear the Chinese? The Chinese Factor in the Self-identification Process of Russia" *Nationalities Papers* 40, no. 2 (2012): 221-39 at 221.
- 89 Ringmar "The Recognition Game".

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