

Федеральное государственное бюджетное образовательное учреждение
высшего профессионального образования
Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет

Магистерская программа
«Международные отношения (на английском языке)»

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**КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНАЯ ОППОЗИЦИЯ «СВОЙ-ЧУЖОЙ» В ЕВРОПЕЙСКОМ
ДИСКУРСЕ РОССИИ**

RUSSIA'S EUROPEAN DISCOURSE: SELF-OTHER RELATIONS

Диссертация
на соискание степени магистра
по направлению 031900 «Международные отношения»

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Санкт-Петербург
2017

Abstract

This thesis is focused on the Self/Other nexus in Russia's European discourse. The narrative of Russia as "a part of the European family" has not been seriously challenged in Russian political discourse since the late 1980s, when the idea of the "Common European Home" was introduced and espoused. Ever since, Russian leaders have been referring to Russia's historical and cultural affinities with the European milieu and its alleged congruity with European political logic. Russia's self-distancing from Europe has become evident with the conservative and civilizational turn that solidified itself in Russian political discourse circa 2011-2012.

This thesis seeks to find out how the Self/Other nexus in Russia's official political discourse on EU-Russia relations is being constructed. The analysis is structured along several questions: by what means and to what end the EU and Russia recourse to Othering; how many strategies of Othering are possible; whether it is possible to deal with the ideas of "sameness" and "otherness" without falling into negative dynamics; how certain articulations reproduce narratives of Russia's distinct Self in its European discourse; what kind of narrative appears to replace the narrative of Russia's alleged belongingness to the European milieu.

The study is based on combination of constructivist and poststructuralist premises. Russia and the EU are approached from the point of view of their conflictual intersubjectivity, which refers to EU-Russia relations as interactions of two ontologically dislocated and unfixed subjects dependent on the figure of a symbolic Other. Discourses are approached as not only products of actions, but as actions themselves or as least shaping which actions are within the possible.

Keywords: international relations, intersubjectivity, discourse analysis, Othering, Russia, European Union, foreign policy.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is focused on the analysis of the Self/Other nexus in Russia's European discourse. Political identities do not appear to exist without the distinction between the Self and the external actors (the Others). Therefore, any relevant political identification of Russia is possible only through its semantic relatedness with Europe, its neighbor and one the Kremlin's most important yet intricate political and economic partners. The narrative of Russia as "a part of the European family" has not been seriously challenged in Russian political discourse since the late 1980s, when the idea of the "Common European Home"¹ was introduced and espoused. Ever since, Russian leaders have been referring to Russian historical and cultural affinities with the European milieu and its alleged congruity with European political logic. Since 2000, when Vladimir Putin was elected to his first term as President of Russia, Moscow has pursued a multi-vector foreign policy. It focused on establishing strong alliance-type relations with the Western countries and on further integration with the European Union as part of what was called the "European choice" of Russia.² However, the relations between Russia and the EU followed the up and down pattern for about ten years. Already by the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, the Kremlin had given up on joining the Western orbit and embarked upon creating its own Moscow-centered system. Nevertheless, Russia was still quite far from reformulating its subjectivity as un-European or even counter-European. Ultimately, Russia's self-distancing from Europe has become evident with the conservative and civilizational turn that solidified itself in Russian political discourse circa 2011-2012. Ever since, it has evolved into the cornerstone of Moscow's official political philosophy, and a number of new Russian discourses and narratives have emerged. Conservatism and exceptionalism at the basis of Russia's domestic and foreign policy have largely counter-distinguished Russia from its previously advocated belongingness to the European milieu, what makes discerning of new Russian narratives of paramount importance for understanding the complexities in EU-Russia relations.

¹ Gorbachev, Mikhail. "Address given by Mikhail Gorbachev to the Council of Europe." Speech, Strasbourg, July 6, 1989. CVCE. Accessed February 21, 2017 <http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/20/4c021687-98f9-4727-9e8b-836e0bc1f6fb/publishable_en.pdf>

² Trenin, Dmitry. "Vladimir Putin's Fourth Vector." *Russia in Global Affairs*, June 30, 2013. Accessed February 20, 2017 <<http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Vladimir-Putins-Fourth-Vector---16048/>>

The processes of Othering in EU-Russia relations have been increasingly studied by the academic community since the 1990s. However, previous research was largely confined to the evaluation of the Self built around the notion of Europe. Scholarly work in this field benefits from the research agenda outlined by Iver B. Neumann, who traces down the creation of collective European identity as a result of a series of redefinitions and contestations of identities among the array of “non-selves,” where Russia is presented as Europe’s constitutive Other (e.g.: Neumann, 1998; Neumann, 1996). The academia develops further regarding the question of Othering and its implications for the European identity construction by emphasizing the temporal and geographic dimensions (e.g.: Diez, 2005; Rumelili, 2004). A recent trend has substantialized itself where researchers attempt to address how Russia responds to exclusion by Europe with its own Othering practices (e.g.: Kazharski and Makarychev, 2015; Casier, 2013; Trenin, 2013; Sakwa, 2011; Kaempf 2010). The growing body of research made by Russian academics tries to identify the most contested models of interactions between Russia and the EU (e.g.: Makarychev, 2014; Morozov, 2009) and examine them from the position of conflictual intersubjectivity (e.g.: Makarychev and Sergunin, 2013). In addition to that, academia proceeds with highlighting the need for devising tools for tracing and discerning the processes Othering, where a focus is made on discursive approaches (e.g.: Tsygankov, 2007). However, it can be noted that despite quite substantial theoretical research on the issue, there is not enough research done regarding the empirical applications of Othering in EU-Russia relations against the background of the recent deterioration of bilateral relations.

In this context, a remarkable deterioration of relations between Russia and the EU unleashes the need to take rhetorical action more seriously and look at the official discursive praxis more closely. The key issue that is yet to be thoroughly researched lies at the bottom of a strong Self/Other dichotomy that has gained force in Russia’s European discourse since Russian conservative U-turn. This thesis thus seeks to fill in this gap by conducting an analysis of construction of the Self/Other narratives in Russia’s European discourse and discerning the main reasons and means of their construction. Before moving to the aim and the objectives of this thesis, it is important to note that this research is not intended to engage in a full-fledged discussion on Russian identity, which is a different scope of inquiry. Neither it seeks to discuss whether Russia can be considered a part of Europe. The proposition here is

that the whole array of opinions regarding what Europe is reveals that no single idea dominates; there are multiple perceptions of Europe, each being discursively constructed. Thereby, within the scope of this thesis, the terms identity/subjectivity and “Europe”/“the European Union” are going to be used interchangeably.

The *aim* of this thesis is to find out how the Self/Other nexus in Russia’s official political discourse on EU-Russia relations is being constructed.

In order to reach the aim of this thesis, the following *objectives* are set:

- To identify by what means and to what end the EU and Russia recourse to Othering through the concept of conflictual intersubjectivity.
- To understand how many strategies of Othering are possible; in particular, to understand if it is possible to deal with the ideas of “sameness” and “otherness” constructively, without falling into the negative dynamics.
- To devise an ad hoc approach suitable for the analysis of the Self/Other nexus in Russia’s European discourse based on the Discourse Analytical Approaches and combination of constructivist and poststructuralist premises.
- To demonstrate how certain articulations reproduce narratives of Russia’s distinct Self in its European discourse and to reveal and juxtapose the principal dichotomies within these narratives.
- To outline a contemporary Russian narrative that appears to replace a previously maintained narrative of Russia as a part of the European milieu.

The *timeframe* covers a period from 2011, when conservative and civilizational dimensions explicitly emerged in Russian discourses, and the Russian leadership began consistently juxtaposing Russia and Europe by virtue of the strong Self/Other nexus, to present day dynamics of 2017. The selected timeframe appears suitable for tracing the development of the Russian views over a manageable account of time.

The thesis employs the *methodology* of discourse analysis. The discourse analysis conducted in this study covers the speeches, statements, interviews, and articles by Russia’s key political figures, as well as regular programming sources of Russia’s foreign policy. The selection of primary sources corresponds to the following *criteria*: relevance to the scope of the research (the Self/Other nexus in Russia’s European discourse), authorship (key texts by principal Russian foreign policy actors), genre, and apparent significance.

The *theoretical framework* of this study draws upon a combination of constructivist and poststructuralist approaches. Therefore, this thesis is built around a number of guiding premises. First, it is assumed that structure and actor are mutually constituted, while language is understood as constitutive for what is brought into being as social or political. Second, regarding the discursive dimension, it is assumed that social reality is formed and articulated through discursive processes rather than existing independently.

The *structure* of this thesis is as follows. Chapter 1 focuses on assumptions on the Self/Other nexus in Russia-EU relations as discussed from the point of view of conflictual intersubjectivity. It is presumed that the concept of the conflictual intersubjectivity is instrumental in grasping the complexities of EU-Russia relations as interactions of two ontologically dislocated and unfixed subjects. Intersubjectivity in this case is not only about finding common ground on key issues, but generally about drawing lines that separate the subjects in communication. It is argued that Russia and the EU are both dependent on the symbolic Other. The normative argument is presented as one of the main sources of discursive discord between Russia and Europe; it is argued that it goes back to the EU's instrumental use of the selective normative agenda. It is further scrutinized how the way in which both actors translate the normative language of communication into practice becomes yet another source of tensions between Russia and the EU. Finally, the chapter focuses on Othering practices as a tool for constructing and maintaining subjectivities. The categorization of representations of the Other is introduced, which is distinct from common existing models in terms of being based not solely on polar oppositions but on the more nuanced mode of linking with the Self.

Chapter 2 provides an outline of the methodological framework used in this study. As the key points reveal in this section, the nature of discourses is rooted in the conflictual intersubjectivity, and language and power can be seen mutually constitutive. Hence, a discursive position reveals and deconstructs what is often perceived as common-sense and axiomatic to the political and social reality. It is argued that power structures may overflow the political milieu and conduct to formation of certain privileged narratives. In this context, it is stated that discourses are dominated by those in power, and dominant meanings can be generated or maintained, as well as challenged by counter-hegemonic practices. The chapter proceeds with the point that due to the inherent fluidity and multidimensionality of the Self/

Other relationship, a combination of discursive, constructivist and post-structuralist approaches needs to be employed over a more methodologically narrowing rationalist one, which ascribes a pre-given and fixed character to norms, values and identities. Criteria regarding selecting data for empirical sections are described, and research design of the thesis is presented in the form of a table.

Chapter 3 is focused on the analysis of the empirical findings. The findings are systematized and distinguished on the basis of the discovered dichotomies and dominant narratives. It is argued that Russian key political figures increasingly juxtaposed Russia and the EU on the basis of opposing attributes through the six dichotomizations and corresponding narratives; these dichotomizations contributed to the strong mode of Othering in EU-Russia relations. In addition, it is argued that while Europe may be still reproduced as a part of Russia's Self, the narrative is still constructed as antagonistic. Through continuously emphasizing the divergence points, Russia has moved away from its previous narrative, in which Europe was considered as a natural cultural and societal context for Russia. Therefore, through emphasis on the six dichotomies a border between Russia and the EU is articulated. These dichotomies serve for creating and propagating dominant narratives regarding the relationship between Russia's Self and its European Other; they also serve as an important tool for grasping the logic and processes behind certain Russian policy options. Finally, it is argued that while Russia's previous strategy largely consisted of attempts to make the West accept Russia's belongingness to a presumably common European milieu and to admit its alleged compatibility with the European political logic, the current idea behind Russia's European discourse is to establish itself as a distinct Self. Finally, the conclusion follows where the main findings of the conducted analysis are brought together and several important implications for understanding of dynamics in EU-Russia relations are given.

CHAPTER 1. RUSSIA AND THE EU IN THE FRAMEWORK OF CONFLICTUAL INTERSUBJECTIVITY

1.1 Introduction

The current state of EU-Russia relationship is characterized by a series of crises accompanied by multiple misunderstandings and a sense of mutual disappointment. After the Ukrainian deadlock and international condemnation of Russia's military intervention in Syria, Russia-EU relations entered a particularly difficult phase. Nevertheless, the deterioration in relations between Russia and the EU had started years before. Against the background of the expansion of NATO in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the Orange revolution in Ukraine in 2003-2004, Moscow has become increasingly suspicious of Western influence. The war in Georgia of 2008 put a grater strain on the up and down relationship. In 2009, the Eastern Partnership project addressed to six countries—Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine—was perceived by Russia with great suspicion. The Kremlin has become increasingly concerned about the EU's integrationist plans and alleged aspirations to create its own sphere of interest in the post-Soviet space, thus depriving Russia of its status of the priority partner for some of these countries. A dramatic decline in the Russia-EU relations became obvious when Ukraine was about to sign an Association Agreement with the EU. In the aftermath of the 2014 Ukrainian crisis and Russian-backed secession of the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine, virtually all co-operation between the EU and Russia was suspended. As even such tentative conflictual outline may indicate, there is an alleged lack of intersubjectivity between the two actors. However, as it will be argued in this chapter, the interpretations of intersubjectivity may be different, and at least one interpretation not only can be, but also should be applied in the analysis of the Self/Other nexus in EU-Russia relations—the one regarding their conflictual intersubjectivity. That is, notwithstanding an obvious conflictual relationship between Russia and the EU, both actors should be seen in their similarity. That said, Russia and the EU are seen as in a specific mutually constitutive identitarian relationship. This chapter sets out to examine the intersubjective nature of the problematic of Othering and self-exclusion articulated through Russia's European discourse. In the first part of this chapter the conceptual departures of the intersubjective framework will be outlined, with a focus on the idea of conflictual intersubjectivity. The second and the third parts will explain EU-Russia conflictual

intersubjectivity from the point of view of normative disconnections and dependence of both actors on the symbolic Other, respectively. The chapter will conclude with final remarks on conflictual intersubjectivity important for the subsequent sections of this study.

1.2 The Conceptual Departures of the Intersubjective Framework

The obviously conflictual trends in the Russia-EU relationship are immanently inscribed in the logic of the intersubjective relationship. In this context, intersubjectivity is not only about finding common ground on key issues, but generally about drawing lines that separate the subjects in communication. Such interpretation of intersubjectivity involves strong bordering effect, and it is the fixation of these discursive borderlines that lies at the core of Russia-EU disagreements.³ To start with, the idea of conflictual intersubjectivity is strongly linked with the constructivist and poststructuralist background. Intersubjectivity understood as mutually constitutive identitarian relationship is rather similar to the idea of identitarian interdependence that has been a major theme in constructivist school of thought on IR in general and, more specifically, in theoretical accounts of EU-Russia relations.⁴

However, insights in the process of conflictual intersubjectivity can be utilized not only exclusively with an eye on identity-related issues, but also for understanding of an ongoing processes of social construction of international spatiality. In EU-Russia relations, the territorial dimension of conflicting subjectivities can be exemplified by rivalry over attempts to gain influence in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. Conflicting subjectivities here refer to defining where the Eastern neighborhood ends and where Russia's alleged "privileged sphere of interest" begins. To a large extent, the EaP was a reaction of the EU to the growing Western concerns over Russia's potentially imperialist aspirations, while the Eurasian Union project was initiated by Moscow as a reaction to the EaP initiative. From conflictual intersubjectivity point, the key result of this Russia-EU competition for influence in the designated regions is mutually reactive or retaliatory character of policies. However, the contestation over the specific political space is also linked with the general definition of

³ Kazharski, A., Makarychev, A., "Suturing the Neighborhood? Russia and the EU in Conflictual Intersubjectivity," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 62, No. 6 (2015), pp. 328-339.

⁴ Ibid.

political subjectivities themselves. Such relations might be termed micro-structural in Wendt's vocabulary since they unfold within deeper structures of international society.⁵

As noted by Prozorov, the existing lack of strategic intersubjectivity between Russia and EU leads to issue and identity conflicts and Russia's narrative of self-exclusion.⁶ However, in spite of all disconnections, conflictual intersubjectivity of EU-Russia relationship is obvious. The concept of intersubjectivity can be applied as defining the nature of Russia's relations with Europe. While Russian discourse remains mostly Euro-centric, even its negativity, and based on European concepts (but often with infusion of its own meanings), the EU's discourse is not necessarily Russia-centric. Nevertheless, the EU seems to employ the "*Eurocentric procedure of imposing its own hegemony by means of the exclusionary discursive strategy of devaluating the Other.*"⁷ In return, Russia has attempted to discursively divide Europe into such segments as "a different Europe" and "non-western Europe." In other words, it has tried to broaden the concept of Europe and make it more vague and diffused in order to discursively fit in the European milieu.

The concept of intersubjectivity is instrumental in grasping the complexities of Russia-EU relations as interactions of two ontologically dislocated and unfixed subjects. In a more narrow sense, the notion of intersubjectivity points to common areas where both subjects engage with each other. That is to say, the two subjects in the conflictual intersubjectivity—Russia and the EU—are not only dependent on each other, but are reciprocally involved in shaping each other's identities. Currently, not only the EU is capable of asserting influence over Russia, as in 1990s, but Russia may exert some influence over the EU as well. However, due to asymmetries which are intrinsic to relations of the intersubjective nature, the EU's role in shaping Russian identity is stronger than Russia's role for Europe. Moreover, since the very activation of the narrative of Russia as "a part of the European family," Russia has been actively seeking to find its place within the European political, security and economic milieu. In doing so, it has reinterpreted the key terms of the

⁵ Makarychev, Andrey. *Russia and the EU in a Multipolar World: Discourses, Identities, Norms*. ed. Umland, Andreas. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2014, p. 27.

⁶ Prozorov, Sergei. *Understanding Conflict Between Russia and the EU: The Limits of Integration*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 46.

⁷ Butler, J., Laclau E., Žižek S. *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. Brooklyn: Verso, 2000, p. 231.

hegemonic discourse (such as democracy, freedom, and human rights) and infused them with the meanings corresponding to its needs. Russia questions neither of the key European norms but rather seeks to offer an alternative interpretation of them, whereas a challenge that Europe is facing is that it has to deal with a set of various visions of its advocated concepts.⁸ From the point of view of conflictual intersubjectivity, such “discursive battles” result in a normative argument with the EU. The latter will be a subject for a deeper analysis to be carried out in the next section.

1.3 Sources of Discursive Discord between Russia and the EU

This section sets out to explore sources of discursive discords between Russia and the EU. The analysis will be built around the notion of the normative argument since it is present in the majority of aspects of EU-Russia interaction. First and foremost, it is important to define what will be understood by the notion of the normative argument between Russia and the EU in this study. A considerable part of IR literature on Russia-EU relations tackles the normative argument, which presupposes that tensions between Russia and the EU mainly stem from the intrinsically diverging normative agendas or from essentially different nature of both actors, whereas the EU supposedly takes on the normative actor role, actively diffusing its norms in foreign policy, and Russia acts as either a subject driven by interest-related considerations of *realpolitik* or a non-normative actor.⁹ For example, as described by Emerson, EU-Russia relations are characterized by a clash of paradigms, in which the EU relies on a society-oriented approach and common rules and values, and Russia pursues “manifest *Realpolitik* objectives.”¹⁰ The normative basis of the EU is often taken for granted and receives little attention per se; the focus is generally on the second dimension—the EU’s intention to diffuse its norms in its foreign policy and, in particular, to pursue Russia to accept these norms. However, as was argued by Casier, an approach presenting EU-Russia relations

⁸ Makarychev, Andrey. *Russia and the EU in a Multipolar World: Discourses, Identities, Norms*. ed. Umland, Andreas. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2014, p. 29.

⁹ Casier, Tom. “The EU–Russia Strategic Partnership: Challenging the Normative Argument,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 65, No. 7 (2013), p. 1379.

¹⁰ Emerson, et al. “Synergies vs. Spheres of Influence in the Pan-European Space.” Report. April 7, 2009. Brussels: CEPS.

in terms of the normative gap has become outdated and “obfuscates the complexity at the heart of the relations between them.”¹¹

In effect, the normative objectives that had been present throughout the first decade of the Russia-EU relations, were gradually sidelined. Starting in 2000 at the Feira European Council, a pragmatic approach of “constructive engagement” in EU-Russia relations first came into sight¹², where a partnership was seen as a requirement, rather than a choice based on the shared values and norms. The pragmatic approach was reinforced in 2003, when at the St. Petersburg Summit the EU and Russia confirmed their commitment to strengthen strategic partnership with a view to creating the Four Common Spaces.¹³ Starting from the Road Maps on the Common Spaces that were agreed at the EU-Russia summit in Moscow in 2005, the general focus has clearly shifted away from the normative approach of the 1990s. In 2010, the Partnership for Modernization took the trend further. As a result, despite some remnants of the EU’s normative agenda referring to the adherence to common values, the normative objectives have largely moved to the periphery of the EU’s approach to Russia during the first decade of the 2000s.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it would be overly simplistic to presume that the pragmatic notion of the “constructive engagement” that replaced the normative agenda in the EU-Russia bilateral relations has eliminated the factor of tensions between the two actors. Quite the contrary, the EU’s strategy shifted to the differentiated normative approach towards the post-Soviet countries that has spurred new tensions between Russia and the EU in the context of growing competition over the common neighbourhood. As argued by Casier, the EU’s current selective normative agenda towards East European countries serves instrumental purposes and is increasingly used by the EU as a discursive tool of creating hierarchies among its East European neighbors.¹⁵

¹¹ Casier, Tom. “The EU–Russia Strategic Partnership: Challenging the Normative Argument,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 65, No. 7 (2013), p. 1385.

¹² Timmins, Graham. “Strategic or Pragmatic Partnership? The European Union’s Policy towards Russia since the End of the Cold War,” *European Security*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (2002), 88; Haukkala, Hiski. *The EU-Russia Strategic Partnership: The Limits of Post-Sovereignty in International Relations*. London: Routledge, 2011, pp. 122-125.

¹³ European Union, the. “EU/Russia: The four “common spaces.” Memo. The European Union. November 23, 2004. Accessed March 12, 2017 <europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-04-268_en.pdf>

¹⁴ Casier, 1380.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1379.

1.3.1 The Differentiated Normative Agenda of the EU

The EU maintains a strong normative agenda towards its eastern neighbors and, in particular, towards Ukraine, which has eventually become a deadlock in its relations with Russia. Under such circumstances, a need to critically analyze the functions that norms fulfil in the EU's current policy towards the post-Soviet space arises, in order to grasp the complexity of EU-Russia relations. First, in spite of common assumption that the foreign policy is seen to diffuse norms because it is driven by those norms, the reality is that a norm-promoter is not necessarily norm-driven; nor is a norm-driven actor necessarily promotes norms. Thereby, there is no inseparable congruence between norms at the input and output stage, which can be exemplified as follows. The EU may actively promote certain norms such as market liberalization (as output), for interest-related reasons such as creating new investment opportunities and then taking share of the market (at the input level); norm-promotion can thus be perceived as interest-driven.¹⁶ Second, following constructivist approach, interests are not given¹⁷; something needs to be defined and intersubjectively understood as an interest, whereas the framing of an interest implies values and norms. Such problematization of dichotomy between norm/interest, and input/output leads to pose a question whether the EU is promoting its norms or rather is promoting its interests. Particularly, the EU may diffuse certain norms such as democracy in a seemingly interest-neutral way. However, if a selective normative approach to a certain country fosters the adherence to the EU's normative agenda, it also creates more favourable opportunities for member states to pursue their interests. The policies of the latter are often driven by commercial, border management, or energy security interests. In other words, the normative approach may be used to include certain states such as Ukraine into a European milieu of values, whereas the EU is implicitly presented as the embodiment and the main beneficiary of these norms and values. Since Russia is quite logically akin to the EU in terms of pursuing its interests in its neighborhood, the EU's selective normative agenda in Eastern Europe cannot be considered by Moscow as a neutral policy. Rather it is one of Russia's major concerns over the EU's presence in the region. That is to say, the current normative agenda of the EU

¹⁶ Ibid., 1385.

¹⁷ Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (1992), pp. 391-425.

and its actions are understood within a context of the remarkably escalated competition over the shared neighborhood.

1.3.2 The Praxis of Inclusion and Exclusion through the Differentiated Normative Agenda

As it appears from the argued above, the instrumental use of the EU's selective normative policies can be seen in a way of either including or excluding (Othering) various actors. Under this perspective, the relations with those included are seen as a matter of course, while the relations with those excluded may appear as based on inevitability. This use of the normative praxis can be considered as a more sophisticated or a softer way of Othering Russia. As argued by Casier, the EU's normative agenda is conducive to the creation of new hierarchy of identities in its eastern neighborhood—and not so much by antagonistically Othering Russia on the basis of its alleged maladjustment or threat, but rather by explicitly including certain post-Soviet states in the international framework of “normal states.” The EU's relations with neighbours such as Ukraine have been repeatedly presented as based on common normative agendas. At the discursive level, Ukraine is thus presented as the “natural” and “more European” partner that shares the key norms and values of the EU. In the case of Russia, however, relations are no longer based on common normative agenda, but on pragmatic grounds. Relations with Russia are thus presented as “inevitable” rather than “naturally” coming from shared fundamental values. It is important to note that there the processes of reversal of hierarchies and complex prioritization in Eastern Europe are related to the internal division in the EU, in which different member states have different attitudes towards Russia and different agendas in various policy fields. The previous hierarchy, in which Russia held the top spot, has thus not been completely reversed, but replaced by a multifaceted process of differential prioritization.

At this stage of the analysis, it seems logical to address the view of Russia as a non-normative foreign policy actor. Whereas the EU's foreign policy has been widely assumed to have a normative character, and Russia's foreign policy to be a priori non-normative, the self-presentation of the latter points at quite the opposite. The most recent principal strategic document of Russia's foreign policy, the 2016 Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, as well as previous versions dating to 2013 and 2008, comprise references to

certain interests and norms, which include sovereignty, territorial integrity, democracy, “*a fair and democratic international system*,” “*the rule of international law*,” “*equal, partnership relations among States*,” multilateralism, non-interference, universal democratic values, human rights and freedoms, environmental security, and sustainable development.¹⁸ The aforementioned normative references in the Russian foreign policy have important similarities to those of the EU. Where Russia’s position clearly sets itself apart is its condemnation of double standards and “attempts to lower the role of a sovereign state as a fundamental element of international relations and to divide States into categories with different rights and responsibilities.”¹⁹ Obviously, foreign policy self-presentation may not be necessarily reflected in a de facto foreign policy, but articulations such as “preventing double standards, respecting national and historic peculiarities of each State in the process of democratic transformations without imposing borrowed value systems on anyone”²⁰ should be seen as indicative of Moscow’s concern about the differentiated normative agenda.

1.3.3 Differences in Translation of Normative Language of Communication into Practice

Another trouble spot resulting in a discursive discord between Russia and the EU can be discerned in the way both actors translate the normative language of communication into practice. The EU is mostly inclined to treat norms as intrinsically “non-controversial universals that have to be projected externally and accepted by those countries that count on European benevolence.”²¹ Gaining recognition as a normative power is one of the most effective tools for reassuring the political subjectivity of the EU; it also has an identity-

¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. “Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation.” Presidential Executive Office. November 30, 2016. Accessed March 11, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/2542248>; “Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation.” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. February 12, 2013. Accessed March 11, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/122186>; “The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation.” Presidential Executive Office. January 12, 2008. Accessed March 11, 2017 <<http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4116>>

¹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2008.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Makarychev, Andrey. “Communication and Dislocations: Normative Disagreements between Russia and the EU,” in *Constructing Identities in Europe*, ed. Krumm, R., Medvedev, S., Schröder, H. Vol. 66 (2012), pp. 45-63.

shaping capacity. The power of assessing the conduct of other actors thus becomes increasingly important for the EU, even though normativity in this case might come into conflict with political pragmatism. As noted by Makarychev, should the EU wish to act pragmatically, it might have chosen to refrain from the public assessments of election to the State Duma in 2007, but as a normative power the EU could not adopt a neutral attitude and stay on the sidelines.²² The EU had to come up with a normative appraisal that obviously irritated Moscow. Since the major breakdown of bilateral relations between the two actors following the Ukrainian deadlock, the EU's normative appraisals towards Russia have become systematic; in particular, the EU consistently condemned Russia's involvement in Eastern Ukraine²³, annexation of Crimea and "decision of the Russian authorities to give all inhabitants of Crimea Russian passports,"²⁴ and Russia's role in Syria.²⁵

Against this backdrop, Russia's instrumental use of the normative content in its discourse can be seen through the prism of the floating signifier concept. Moving closer to the language-related issues, there are important terms (e.g.: "democracy," "sovereignty," "multipolarity") that are widely used in various discourses despite differences among their ascribed meanings. Terms like these can be referred as floating signifiers. Floating signifier is a concept developed by Laclau²⁶ that basically means that the meanings of certain signifiers are changing depending on the hegemonic discourse within several positions in the discursive field. For example, the notion of sovereign democracy has been espoused in Russian

²² Makarychev, Andrey. "Communication and Dislocations: Normative Disagreements between Russia and the EU," in *Constructing Identities in Europe*, ed. Krumm, R., Medvedev, S., Schröder, H. Vol. 66 (2012), pp. 45-63.

²³ European Parliament. "Ukraine: MEPs condemn terrorist acts and say sanctions against Russia must stay." Press release. European Parliament. January 15, 2015. Accessed February 19, 2017 <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=IM-PRESS&reference=20150109IPR06321&format=XML&language=EN>>

²⁴ European Parliament. "European Parliament resolution on the Ukrainian prisoners in Russia and the situation in Crimea." Resolution. European Parliament. March 16, 2017. Accessed March 21, 2017 <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+P8-RC-2017-0190+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>>

²⁵ European Parliament. "Europe's strategy towards Russia: how Parliament sees the way forward." Article. European Parliament. October 20, 2016. Accessed March 21, 2017 <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+P8-RC-2017-0190+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>>

²⁶ Jørgensen, Marianne W., Phillips, Louise J. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: SAGE, 2002, p. 28.

discourse due to attempts to challenge “Western” understanding of democracy while presenting itself as a part of the democratic/“normal” milieu. Thus, Russia neither questions the key European norms nor acts as a norm-producer itself (or a norm-taker) but rather as a norm-exploiter. In doing so, it reinterprets the key terms of the hegemonic discourse and infuses them with its own meanings corresponding to its needs. Unlike the previous two decades, Russia nowadays conveys its own normative messages to its neighbors. Besides, as argued by Sakwa, Russia is trying to take up a role of a norm-enforcer and come up with normative appraisals of the EU’s application of its norms.

Finally, the discussed above issues of the EU’s normative power as ideational diffusion beyond its borders, as well as the use of normative praxis as a tool of inclusion and exclusion (Othering) of certain states are closely related with the conservative turn in Russia’s domestic and foreign policy. It is against this background that the Kremlin launched its own normative discourse grounded in its interpretation of social conservatism. The conservative reinterpretation and the new type of discourse have counter-distinguished Russia from the previously advocated affinity with the European milieu and a strategy of moving towards a “Wider Europe.”

1.4 Othering as a Tool of Construction and Maintenance of Subjectivity

As was assumed in the previous sections of this study, the EU’s selective normative agenda in Eastern Europe cannot be considered by Russia as a neutral policy; the reason is that such normative praxis are conducive to either inclusion of certain actors in the European milieu or, on the contrary, to their exclusion (Othering). In a similar logic, the Othering quality of a European normative power—as it has the effect of turning certain actors into Others—has been problematized by Diez. The EU builds up its identity against images of Others in the “outside world” and tends to present Europe as a “civilized island” surrounded by a disorderly neighborhood.²⁷ Against this background, representations of Europe as a normative power cannot be considered a neutral category, even if inclusion/exclusion processes do not constitute a primary objective of the EU. By framing an image of the EU as a positive force, third countries are thus excluded as Others with substantially different

²⁷ Diez, Thomas. “Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering «Normative Power Europe»,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (2005), p. 614.

identities. In his critique of the EU as a normative power Diez distinguishes between four different strategies of Othering,²⁸ which firstly entails representing the Other as an existential threat; drawing upon the concept of securitization of the Copenhagen School, Diez argues that the Other is discursively represented as an existential threat and thus requires emergency action. Secondly, the Other is constructed as inferior to the Self. Thirdly, the other violating fundamental principles is not simply inferior, but is considered not respecting the norms and values of the Self, which have universal validity. Finally, as the least axiological among the four strategies of othering, the Other can be represented as different—without the normative judgement that is intrinsic to the rest of the strategies.

However, with further development of the analysis in terms of Othering, it is necessary to address the more underlying assumptions of the Self/Other dichotomy in the EU-Russia relations. An important shift of focus that is closely related to the Self/Other relation refers to Barth's assumption that groups are reproduced through the maintenance of the boundaries between them and other groups, who are perceived as Others due to "*some features (that) are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences*" or due to lack or possession of some features.²⁹ This way, boundary between the Self and the Other is necessary for formation and articulation of the Self. Following the constructivist approach, the boundary should not be approached as a priori given and ascribed a fixed meaning; empirical research of social and political practices is the way how the establishment and maintenance of these boundaries should be analyzed.³⁰

The criticality of antagonism to construction, articulation, and reproduction of identities can be explained through the prism of the universal and the particular. According to Laclau, the very condition of the politics of difference is precisely the appeal to universal principles, while each identity seeks to represent universal in its articulation.³¹ Identity is articulated through establishing as universal and thus, on the one hand, disclaiming itself as a

²⁸ Diez, 628.

²⁹ Barth, Frederik. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. IL, Long Grove: Waveland Press. 1998, p. 14.

³⁰ Morozov, Viacheslav. *Rossiya i drugie: Identichnost' i granicy politicheskogo soobshchestva*, [Russia and the Others: Identity and the Borders of Political Society] Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe obozrenie, 2009, p. 156.

³¹ Laclau, Ernesto. *Emancipation(s) (Radical Thinkers)*. London: Verso, 2007, pp. 26-35.

particularity, but claiming its differential identity, on the other hand. That is, identity is concomitantly articulated through a difference with other identities and as representing the universal. By the same token, identities are articulated not only as different from the Others, but on the grounds of the exclusion or subordination of the Others. The latter causes identities to engage into competition in order to establish their particularity as a universal representation through antagonistic exclusion of other identities. To make a constructivist argument, identities are dependent on the Other, and relation of the Self to the Other is thus necessary to define a particular identity. In addition, identities are promoted and articulated through interactions with the Others, and identities maintain certain understanding of the world.

1.4.1 Categorizing Representations of the Other

As aforesaid, identity can only exist in relation to those that it is not. As Rumelili put it, identities are always “*constituted in relation to difference because a thing can only be known in relation to what it is not.*”³² Political identities, therefore, appear to exist in the context of the boundary between the Self and the Other. Political identities of the Self and the Other do not merely come into existence but are defined due to the perceptions other actors have of them. Consequently, they are constructed through a process of socialization—the practice of knowing.³³ However, whilst accepting these assumptions, another important dimension to the Self/Other analysis may be added. First, according to Triandafyllidou, the Self/Other nexus “*involves both self-awareness of the group and awareness of others from which the nation seeks to differentiate itself.*”³⁴ Hence, it has a dualistic character in the sense that it is both inward-looking (as defining commonality within the group) and outward-looking (as defining outer groups). Second, the relationship between the Self and the Other is liable to change. Lastly, an important aspect of the Self/Other nexus refers to possibility of distinguishing between different levels of Othering. As argued by Diez, there are “*different*

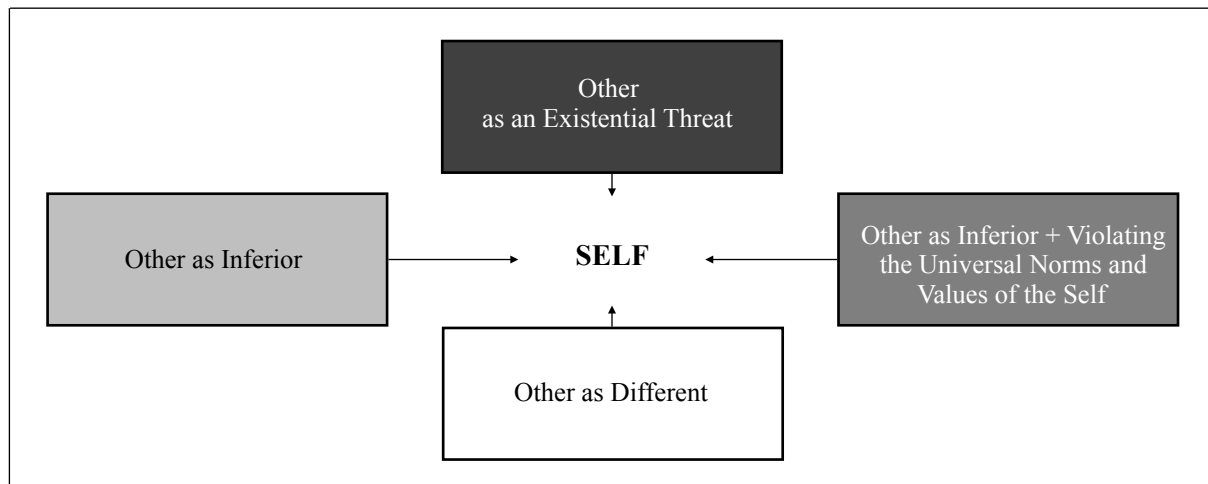
³² Rumelili, Bahar. “Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU's Mode of Differentiation,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2004), p. 29.

³³ Neumann, Iver B. *Uses of the Other: The East in European Identity Formation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 12.

³⁴ Triandafyllidou, Anna. “National Identity and the ‘Other’”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 21 No. 4 (1998), p. 599.

kinds of difference: more or less exclusive, antagonistic and violent ones.” The following figure represents the four strategies of Othering as argued by Diez³⁵:

Figure 1: Strategies of Othering (according to Diez)



First, in the least axiological manner, the Other is represented as different but neither antagonistic nor inferior to the Self. Second, the Other is constructed as inferior to the Self. Third, the Other is represented not only as inferior but also as not respecting the norms and values of the Self that are considered to have universal validity. Finally, the Other is discursively represented as an existential threat requiring emergency action that is the most antagonistic way of Othering according to Diez. Taking these propositions as a point of departure, it is possible to describe alternative ways of categorizing the Other into distinguishable groups. In doing so, the following assumptions will be taken into consideration in order to map a more nuanced categorization of representations of the Other. First, it refers to Connolly’s assumption that the Self is established not only in relation to a series of differences but also in relation to certain similarities (which have become socially recognized)³⁶. Second, White’s proposition that it is necessary to talk about Othering not as about polar opposites but as about a continuum because the Self and the Other can be constructed through different degrees of Othering, raging from a radical difference to a non-

³⁵ Diez, Thomas. “Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering «Normative Power Europe»,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. Vol. 33, No. 3 (2005), p. 628.

³⁶ Connolly, William. *Identity/Difference. Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p. 144.

radical difference.³⁷ Bringing together aforementioned propositions, my assumption here is that it is possible to present the following categorization of representations of the Other:

Table 1: Categorization of Representations of the Other

OTHER	Linking
Radical	Strong differentiation: antagonistic or threatening; dichotomies revealing relations of superiority/ inferiority, civilized/uncivilized, rational/irrational, good/evil; relationship based on “inevitability”
Non-radical	Mild differentiation: non-antagonistic and non-threatening; relationship looking toward a constructive cooperation
Allied	Strong linking: identification and association with the Self; recognition of historical and cultural affinity; cooperative relationship; possible existence of a common Other
SELF	

Such model (see *Table 1*) is distinct from the common existing categorizations as it is based not solely on polar oppositions, but on the mode of linking with the Self, which ranges within the three categories of the Other. The categorization that is suggested in this thesis takes into account not only the delimitating aspect of Othering but also includes possibility of a constructive, or non-antagonistic side to Othering processes. In such a way, the first category refers to the allied Other, which possesses a strong positive linking and association with the Self. The typical characteristics of this type of the Other include recognition of historical and cultural affinity, cooperative relationship, and possible existence of a common Other, which solidifies the link between the Other and the Self. For example, it is possible to argue that the allied Other of the US is the UK. The second category is represented by the non-radical Other, which means a mild differentiation, but that of a non-antagonistic and non-threatening nature; the relationship between the Self and the Other here can be referred as looking toward a constructive cooperation. The third category refers to the strongest degree

³⁷ White, S., Feklyunina, V. *Identities and Foreign Policies in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus: The Other Europes*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 67.

of Othering and is represented by the radical Other; the latter is perceived as antagonistic or threatening due to the clear dichotomizations in perceptions of the Self and Other; the relationship between the Self and the Other is based on “inevitability”. Such categorization may be pertinent not only to tracing dynamics of the Self/Other nexus in Russia’s European discourse; it also can be used in other particular cases of othering or as applied to a wider scope of analysis.

Finally, one more important point concerning the extent and dynamics of self-identification and association with the Other needs to be specified. As argued by Wendt, a continuum may vary from negative to positive (and vice versa) over time:

A continuum from negative to positive, that is, from conceiving the Other as anathema to the Self to conceiving it as an extension of the Self. Thus, the images of the Other might be perceived as a continuum, and a long-abandoned enemy could conceivably turn into an ally, an extension of the Self, over time.³⁸

This assumption might be illustrated by example of Germany, France, and Britain in the context of the EU. At the same time, as noted by Neumann, it is the radical difference towards the Other that plays constitutive role in the formation of the Self.³⁹ However, not only enemies but allies can outline the collective Self. As argued by Connolly, the tendency to perceive the Other as a completely radically negative entity is rather a temptation than a necessity.⁴⁰ Moreover, not only the constitutive Other is not entirely estranged from the Self, but some elements of the Self may be included into its articulation of the Other.⁴¹ For example, in spite of exclusion of the “Common European Home” narrative from the Russian European discourse, Russia still may refer to its historical ties to Europe or common goals in fighting terrorism. Thus, due to certain remaining linkages, the EU is not excluded in the Russian discourse as entirely alien. Nevertheless, at the same time, the boundary between the

³⁸ Wendt, Alexander, quoted from Neumann, Iver B. and Welsh, Jennifer M. “The Other in European Self-Definition: An Addendum to the Literature on International Society,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1991), pp. 327-348.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Connolly, William. *Identity/Difference. Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p. 144.

⁴¹ Morozov, Viacheslav. *Rossiia i drugie: Identichnost' i granicy politicheskogo soobschestva*, [Russia and the Others: Identity and the Borders of Political Society] Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe obozrenie, 2009, p. 156.

two actors has been emphasized as a result of Russia's conservative turn and new discursive practices. Discourses can be seen as based on particular constructions of issues and subjectivities, but, simultaneously, these issues and subjectivities get their articulations discursively. Put another way, identities are articulated through discourses; the discursive approach is thus as a major framework for looking at how certain ideational articulations reproduce narrative of Russia's distinctiveness from its constitutive Other—the EU.

Conclusions

This chapter examined the intersubjective nature of the Russia-EU relationship and the trends that are immanently inscribed in its logic. The concept of intersubjectivity is instrumental in grasping the complexities of Russia-EU relations as interactions of two ontologically dislocated and unfixed subjects. Intersubjectivity in this case is not only about finding common ground on key issues, but generally about drawing lines that separate the subjects in communication. As it was argued, the space of intersubjectivity may be full of disconnections and asymmetries, and the spatiality of the constitution of the two Selves may overlap. For instance, attempts to delimit the Selves in spatial terms are reflected in the contestation over the common neighborhood. Such interpretation of intersubjectivity involves strong bordering effect; the fixation of these discursive borderlines lies at the core of disagreements between Russia and the EU. In a more narrow sense, the notion of conflictual intersubjectivity refers to common areas where both subjects engage with each other. In this context, Russia and the EU are both dependent on the symbolic Other.

The second part of this chapter explained Russia and the EU in their conflictual intersubjectivity from the position of the normative argument, which is one of the main reasons of EU-Russia discursive contrarities. The normative argument was presented not in the context of tensions that stem from the intrinsically diverging normative agendas or from drastically different nature of Russia and the EU, but in the light of the EU's current differentiated normative agenda towards post-Soviet space. As was argued by Casier, the normative argument has largely moved to the periphery of the EU's approach to Russia during the first decade of the 2000s, and was replaced by the notion of the "constructive engagement." Nevertheless, the factor of tensions between the two actors was not dispelled by this shift. On the contrary, the EU's strategy focused on the selective normative approach

towards the post-Soviet countries that has spurred new tensions between Russia and the EU in the context of growing competition over the common neighborhood. As was argued by Casier, this differentiated normative agenda towards East European countries serves instrumental purposes.

First, the EU employs the selective normative agenda as a discursive tool of prioritizing and creating hierarchies among its East European neighbors, and not so much via antagonistically Othering Russia, but rather by explicitly including certain post-Soviet states in the European milieu. Such use of the normative praxis can be considered as a more sophisticated or a softer way of Othering Russia. For instance, the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours such as Ukraine have been repeatedly presented as based on common normative agendas; at the discursive level, Ukraine is thus presented as the "natural" and "more European" partner that shares the key norms and values of the EU. Relations with Russia are no longer based on common normative agenda, but on pragmatic grounds and thus presented as "inevitable". This way, the previous hierarchy where Russia was on the top spot, has not been completely reversed, but replaced by a multifaceted process of differential prioritization. The instrumental use of the EU's selective normative policies can be seen in a way of either including or excluding (Othering) various actors. The relations with those included are seen as a matter of course, while the relations with those excluded may appear as based on inevitability. Against this background, it was concluded that the EU's selective normative agenda in Eastern Europe cannot be considered by Russia as a neutral policy.

Apart from that, it was argued that, in spite of common assumption that the foreign policy is seen to diffuse norms because it is driven by those norms, the reality is that a norm-promoter is not necessarily norm-driven; nor is a norm-driven actor necessarily promotes norms. For instance, certain norms such as democracy can be diffused in a seemingly interest-neutral way. However, if a selective normative approach to a certain country fosters the adherence to the particular normative agenda, it also creates more favourable opportunities for a norm-promoter—seen as the embodiment of these values—to pursue its interests and become the main beneficiary of a wider adherence to its normative agenda.

Another important point, the view of Russia as a non-normative foreign policy actor was analyzed. While the EU's foreign policy has been widely assumed to have a normative character, and Russia's foreign policy to be a priori non-normative, the self-presentation of

the latter points at quite the opposite. The latest three versions of the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation indicate that normative references articulated in the Russian foreign policy have important similarities to those of the EU, while Russia's position clearly sets itself apart in its condemnation of double standards and imposing borrowed value systems on anyone.

It was further analyzed how the way in which both actors translate the normative language of communication into practice becomes yet another source of tensions between Russia and Europe. While the EU is generally inclined to treat its norms as non-controversial universals that have to be diffused outward, Russia's instrumental use of the normative content can be seen through the prism of the floating signifier concept—a signifier without a specific signified. Unlike the previous two decades, Russia now projects its own normative discourse grounded in its interpretation of social conservatism. In doing so, Russia has reinterpreted some of the key European norms and infused them with the meanings suitable to its needs. Besides, Russia is trying to take up a role of a norm-enforcer and come up with normative appraisals of the EU's application of its norms.

The third section of this chapter focused at Othering practices as a tool for constructing and maintaining subjectivities. Following the Diez's approach, it was argued that it is possible to distinguish between different strategies and multiple levels of Othering. Moreover, the boundary between the Self and the Other is necessary for formation and articulation of the Self. Following the constructivist approach, this boundary should not be approached as a priori given and ascribed a fixed meaning. At the same time, as was argued by Laclau, politics of difference is strongly linked with the appeal to universal principles, and each identity seeks to represent universal in its articulation. Identity is articulated through formulating as universal and thus disclaiming itself as both a particularity and a differential identity. Furthermore, subjectivity is articulated not only as distinct but on the grounds of the exclusion or subordination of the Others regarding its Self; it causes subjectivities to compete over establishing their particularity as a universal representation by antagonistic exclusion of other subjectivities.

The categorization of representations of the Other was suggested (*Table 1*) that is distinct from common existing models in terms of being based not solely on polar oppositions, but on the more nuanced mode of linking with the Self, ranging within the three

categories of the Other. Based on the mode of linking with the Self, the categorization included three categories of the Other: the allied, non-radical and radical Other. The proposed categorization took into account not only the delimitating aspect of Othering but also a possibility of the constructive, or non-antagonistic side to Othering processes.

Finally, it was argued there is a temporal dimension to the Self/Other continuum, which may vary from negative to positive (and vice versa) over time, and that some elements of the Self may be included into its articulation of the Other. Discourses can be seen as based on particular constructions of issues and subjectivities but, at the same times, these issues and subjectivities get their articulations discursively; the discursive approach is thus as a major framework for looking at how particular articulations constitute narrative of Russia's distinctiveness from its constitutive Other—the EU.

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY

This chapter functions as an outline of the methodological framework used in this study. First, the essential assumptions of discourse analysis are described. Second, the reasons for employing discursive approach are explained in greater detail, as well as its benefits for the study. Finally, research design of the empirical sections is presented.

2.1 The Assumptions of Discourse Analysis in Constructivist and Poststructuralist Approaches

The theoretical framework of this study draws upon a combination of constructivist and poststructuralist approaches. Constructivism is defined by its focus on socially constructed nature of interests and identities and, therefore, society's susceptibility to change.⁴² Accordingly, the main constructivist assertion is that in social reality nothing is either constant or fixed. As Delanty notes, everything is a result of a process of continuous becoming.⁴³ This position puts emphasis on a discursive dimension presupposing that social reality is formed and articulated through discursive processes rather than existing independently. At the same time, poststructuralism's discursive dimension is closely linked with understanding of language as constitutive for what is brought into being as social or political. Thus, it does not seem possible to draw a line between an "objective" reality and its language articulations since all the meanings are created and articulated through language practices.⁴⁴ Therefore, the research method used in this thesis is discourse analysis as it provides necessary tools for generating an analytic cut into the Self/Other nexus as it is articulated in Russia's European discourse.

Discourse Analytical Approaches (DAAs) posit that "objects, subjects, states, living beings, and material structures are given meaning and endowed with a particular identity" through language.⁴⁵ The aim of DAAs is to reveal the ontological and epistemological

⁴² Griffiths, Martin. *International Relations Theory for Twenty-First Century*. London: Routledge, 2012, p. 60.

⁴³ Delanty, G., Rumford, C. *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanization*. London: Routledge, 2005, p. 12.

⁴⁴ Hansen, Lene. *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 132.

⁴⁵ Hansen, Lene. *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 18.

premises that are embedded in language and that allow a statement to be understood as rational or interpreted as meaningful.⁴⁶ DAAs investigate whether—in statements or texts—it is possible to disclose regularities in the discussed objects; the subjects are designated as actors, and the causal relations are designated as existing between objects and subjects.⁴⁷ There is no mainstream definition of discourse analysis even within one particular school of thought, but it may be defined as an “approach to the analysis of language that looks at patterns of language across texts as well as the social and cultural contexts in which the texts occur.”⁴⁸ Accordingly, it is strongly tangled with a view of reality as socially constructed. An external reality is thus seen as a series of interpretations; social reality is not dependent on perceptions of it and becomes only accessible via the manner in which it is organized and placed into categories.⁴⁹ Through investigation into these categories it is possible to reveal representations which are utilized within particular attempts of imposing a reality and why some representations are more successful than others.

The essence of DAAs is rooted in the investigation of both spoken and written language because the language we employ in description of “reality” endows it with a meaning. An important remark should be made here regarding the existing volatility of language, which, however, does not preclude a study of it. First, this peculiarity refers to the concept of nodal points developed by Laclau and Mouffe. Laclau and Mouffe argued the existence of nodal points which are “*privileged signifiers or reference points ... in a discourse that bind together a particular system of meaning or ‘chain of signification’.*”⁵⁰ Hence, the process of articulation contains the production of nodal points partially fixing

⁴⁶ Pedersen, Ove K. “Discourse Analysis.” Working paper no 65, 2009. International Center for Business and Politics Copenhagen Business School. Accessed March 21, 2017 <<http://openarchive.cbs.dk/bitstream/handle/10398/7792/WP%20CBP%202009-65.pdf?sequence=1>>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Paltridge, Brian. *Discourse Analysis: An Introduction*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Larsen, Henrik. *Discourse Analysis in the Study of European Foreign Policy*, in *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy*, ed. Tonra, Ben. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, p. 63.

⁵⁰ Howarth, D., Stavrakakis, Y. “Introducing Discourse Theory and Political Analysis” in *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemony and Social Change*, ed. Howarth, D., Norval, A. J. & Stavrakakis, Y., Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 8.

meaning, which makes a structural reading of language possible.⁵¹ Secondly, it is possible to distinguish between differential/referential approaches to language. According to Wæver, a referential approach is “where words and concepts are names used in order to make reference to objects out there in reality.”⁵² A differential understanding of language incorporates a more systemic approach as “...*meaning is located in the differences among concepts.*”⁵³ Therefore, through seeing language as a system of linking and differentiation, elements of stability may be identified.

The research programme of discourse approach is highlighted in the following three assumptions that were put forward by Milliken.⁵⁴ First, discourses function as systems of signification within which meaning occurs via the relationships between objects placed within the sign system. The second assumption is that by defining the actors and their practices towards the acted upon, discourses identify how some actors and actions are engaged (included) while others are excluded. Hence, discourses construct and reproduce certain realities that become common-sense. The third assumption is that through discourses meanings can become dominant, hegemonic and fixed; simultaneously, their stabilization can be challenged due to the overflowing nature of discourses “that opens up space for change, discontinuity, and variation.”⁵⁵ Again, the focus on change and continuity emphasizes the intrinsically changing nature of discourses. Drawing upon the Saussurean semiotic theory⁵⁶ and concepts of the signifier and the signified, it may be assumed that as meaning resides in the signs, manipulation of these signs determines who speaks and about what they speak. Therefore, dominant meanings can be generated or maintained. As such, signifiers can be

⁵¹ Laclau, E., Mouffe, C. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso, 2011, p. 113.

⁵² Wæver, Ole. “Identities, Community and Foreign Policy” in *European Integration and National Identity: The Challenge of the Nordic States*, ed. Hansen, L., Wæver, O. New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 28.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Milliken, Jennifer. “The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1999), pp. 228- 230.

⁵⁵ Doty, Roxanne L. *Imperial Encounters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, 6. Cited in Milliken, Jennifer, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1999), p. 230.

⁵⁶ Innis, Robert E. *Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, pp. 24-47.

seen through the prism of Laclau's concept of floating signifiers. Reiterating the definition from the previous sections of this study, floating signifier basically means that the meanings of certain signifiers are changing depending on the hegemonic discourse within several positions in the discursive field.⁵⁷ This kind of intrinsic instability of meanings has been elaborated by Laclau and Mouffe in the framework of a social ontology termed as "absent totality."⁵⁸ Absent totality assumes that a social order is not structurally predetermined but its formation depends on social forces that contingently undertake hegemonic articulatory practices.⁵⁹ As put by Laclau and Mouffe, the "*dimension of structural undecidability is the very condition of hegemony.*"⁶⁰ Hence, the articulatory practices through which a certain social order is established can be referred as "hegemonic practices." At the same time, every hegemonic order is susceptible to change and being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices—the ones which seek to disarticulate the existing order and establish an alternative form of hegemony. Finally, the patency of the social is also limiting in terms of how much each articulatory practice can accomplish the fabric of the social. As such, the condition of permanent non-completion concerns the subject itself. Subjectivities are constructed through the articulatory practices but not to the extent of full stability. In a closed system, in which each meaning is absolutely fixed, hegemonic practices would not be possible whatsoever as the articulatory practices are a general field of the emergence of hegemony.⁶¹ A fully closed system of differences that excludes any floating signifier would not leave space for any meaningful articulation; every practice within this system would be dominated by the principle of repetition, and there would be nothing to hegemonize.

⁵⁷ Jørgensen, Marianne W., Phillips, Louise J. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: SAGE, 2002, p. 28.

⁵⁸ Laclau, E., Mouffe, C. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso, 2011, p. 7.

⁵⁹ Mouffe, Chantal. "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces," *Art&Research*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2007).

⁶⁰ Laclau, Mouffe, 12.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

2.2 Implications of Discourse Analysis to Self-Other Relations

As the key points revealed in the previous section, the nature of discourses is rooted in the conflictual intersubjectivity, and language and power can be seen mutually constitutive. In the words of Mouffe,

Every order is therefore political and based on some form of exclusion. There are always other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated.⁶²

The tools of discourse analysis can help reveal these “discursive battlefields.” By revealing how social reality is constructed and reconstructed, a discursive approach can trace not only the monolithic formulation of a certain subjectivity, but also a conflictual nature of competing subjectivities.⁶³ As such, discursive reasoning illuminates power structures in the social and political realm. Indeed, in lieu of power being seen as the possession of material resources and capacity, here it is “*conceived in terms of the political acts of inclusion and exclusion that shape social meanings and identities and condition the construction of social antagonism and political frontiers.*”⁶⁴ Interests are taken as not pre-given, but something that needs to be formulated and illuminated through patterns of discourses. Power structures overflowing the political milieu are conducive to formation of certain privileged narratives since discourses are dominated in the first place by those in power; the latter are capable of imposing meanings and explanations of social reality which ultimately reflects and protects their interests. Hence, a discursive position reveals and deconstructs what is often perceived as common-sense or somehow “axiomatic” to the political and social reality.

Therefore, rather than merely focusing on explanatory agenda, discursive approach contributes to a deeper critical understanding⁶⁵ of how certain policies become implemented and others become rejected. Poststructuralist discourse theory posits that there is no pre-given essence that is capable of determining and fixing other identities within a permanent and

⁶² Mouffe, Chantal. “Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces,” *Art&Research*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2007).

⁶³ Waever, Ole. “Explaining Europe by Decoding Discourses” in *Explaining European Integration*, ed. Wivel, Anders (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Political Studies Press, 1992), p. 102.

⁶⁴ Torfing, Jacob. “Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges,” in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*, ed. Howarth, D., Torfing, J. (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 23.

⁶⁵ Diez, Thomas. “Europe as a Discursive Battleground: Discourse Analysis and European Integration Studies,” *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2001), pp. 5-38.

accomplished structure.⁶⁶ Accordingly, discourse analysis is capable of providing insights into how norms, values and identities are subject to change. As this thesis focuses on the inherent fluidity and multidimensionality of the Self/Other relationship, a combination of discursive, constructivist and post-structuralist approaches is employed over a more methodologically narrowing rationalist one. The latter ascribes a pre-given and fixed character to norms, values and identities, whereas the approach chosen for this thesis allows for a study of the catalysts which construct, and re- and deconstruct them.

2.3 The Research Design

The research logic of this study is based upon the model of research proposed by Hansen.⁶⁷ According to Hansen, to produce a complete research design meeting one's needs, researcher has to make choices regarding three dimensions. First, it is necessary to decide upon the number of Selves to be examined. Basically, it means how many subjects will be analyzed. This study focuses on the single Self approach; the Self is represented by Russia. Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that it may not be as "single" as it might be presumed since different kinds of Selves can be simultaneously articulated in Russia's European discourse. Second, temporal domain needs to be defined—whether discourse refers to a particular event (usually, however, of a milestone or a turning point character), or it is a longer historical development. In this thesis, the preference is given to a synchronic analysis; the timeframe was chosen from 2011, when new narratives explicitly emerged in Russian discourse, and Russian leaders began consistently juxtaposing Russia and Europe by virtue of a strong Self/Other nexus. Third, the number of events needs to be chosen, where the term "event" has a rather broad understanding—from policy issues and wars to the continual debates on certain issues. According to Hansen, analysis of multiple events has an analytical advantage in the sense that a comparison across time makes possible identification of patterns and developments. Regarding this study, it can be said that approach of analyzing multiple events related by issue (representation of Russia's Self in its European discourse) is chosen.

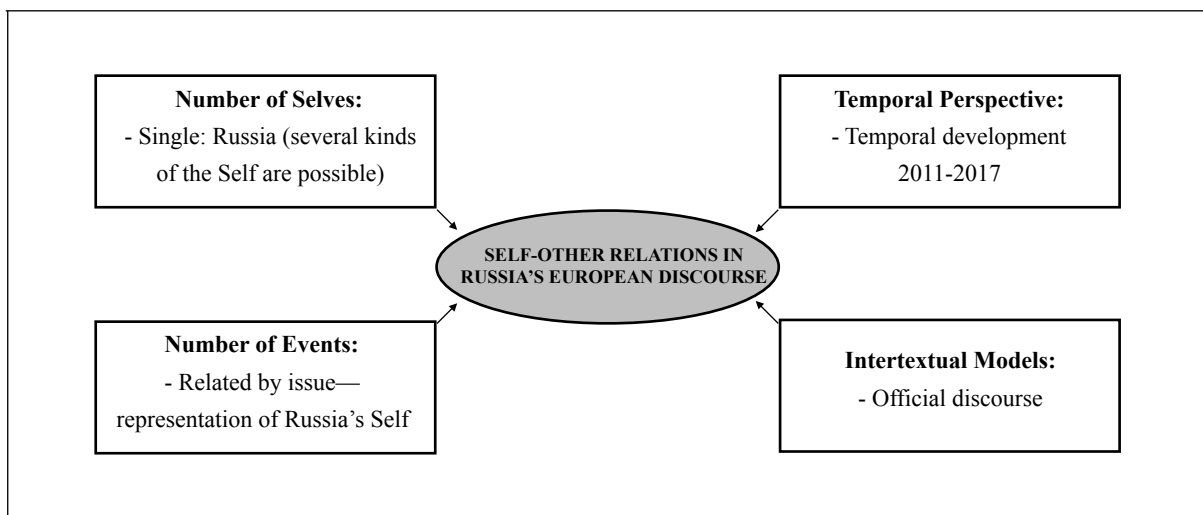
⁶⁶ Torfing, Jacob. "Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges," in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*, ed. Howarth, D., Torfing, J. (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 13.

⁶⁷ Hansen, Lene. *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 66-67.

Following Hansen’s logic, in case of multiple events approach, it is not the very events that are crucial for the study, but rather the patterns and developments rooted in their articulations. Finally, one more constituent of research design refers to the intertextual models, which basically mean what kind of discourse is under analysis.⁶⁸ In this study official discourses are analyzed.

Therefore, the research design of this thesis is based upon the discussed above premises of analysis. The figure below presents all features that were included in this model and outlines the research design of this exact study.

Figure 2: The Research Design



2.4 Data Selection Criteria

This section deals with the explanation of criteria regarding selecting texts for empirical sections, as well as how exactly to proceed with their analysis. To begin with, it is necessary to outline the main requirements, according to which the selection of documents was proceeded:

- relevance to the scope of the research;
- authorship;
- genre;
- apparent significance

⁶⁸ Hansen, Lene. *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 66-67.

Next, each of the aforementioned criteria will be specified. First, the *main requirement* for the document refers to relevance of chosen texts to the focus of this study. That is, texts should be pertinent to the Self/Other nexus in Russia's European discourse. It needs to be noted that this dichotomy may emerge in various contexts, may be articulated either explicitly or be of implicit nature. The *second requirement* refers to authorship, which means that the document should be qualified as a key text. In other words, it is texts produced by subjects who are strongly related to the issue under analysis. From this point of view, the study covers the speeches, statements, interviews, and articles by Russia's President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov, and other officials; all of them should have formal position to reproduce narratives of the Self/Other nexus. It is important to mention that the key texts should stand out as widely accessible. Due to this, some documents were analyzed but not included in the final selection of data in order to preserve the representativeness of findings. This point refers to such documents as working papers, instructions, fact sheets, and rebuttals, which are through webpages of government departments but not widely distributed or not being of wide concern for the general public. The *third requirement* touches upon genre of texts. In this case, the main sources are speeches, statements, articles, interviews, and Russian foreign policy regular programming primary sources. The *final requirement* refers to the apparent significance of texts, which is strongly linked to the first three criteria.

Additionally, it should be stated due to coding rather complex phenomena such as floating signifiers and implicit meanings, the study largely employs qualitative content analysis, defined as “a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data by assigning successive parts of the material to the categories of a coding frame.”⁶⁹

There are 47 texts that were included in the final selection of data and served as a basis for analysis of the Self/Other nexus in Russia's European discourse. Analyzed texts are either official translations of original documents into English language or translations made by the author of this thesis; the latter case refers to data with no official translations available. Each text is thoroughly read focusing on how the key dichotomies—based upon constitutive differences and similarities—are being constructed and articulated in Russia's narratives

⁶⁹ Schreier, Margrit. “Qualitative Content Analysis” in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, ed. Flick Uwe, London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2013, p. 170.

regarding the relationship between its “Self” and the European “Other.” The dominant narratives and language tools utilized for their construction are analyzed. Special focus is on Russia’s shift from the narrative of being “a part of the European family,” which has not been seriously challenged in Russian political discourse since the late 1980s, to the narrative of voluntary counter-distinguishing itself from the European milieu, to which Russia previously aspired to belong. The findings are systematized and distinguished on the basis of the discovered dichotomies.

CHAPTER 3. RUSSIA'S SELF-OTHER NARRATIVE: ARTICULATIONS THROUGH THE SIX DICHOTOMIES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is focused on the analysis and the results of the research. The chapter is structured along the objectives that were presented in the *Introduction* of this thesis:

- To demonstrate how certain articulations reproduce narratives of Russia's distinct Self in its European discourse and to reveal and juxtapose the principal dichotomies within these narratives.
- To outline a contemporary Russian narrative that appears to replace a previously maintained narrative of Russia as a part of the European milieu.

The primary sources used in revealing the main narratives and subsequent categorization of Othering are listed in *Empirical Data* section of *Literature and Primary Sources*. It should be noted that the quotes may belong to an individual or a group cited within the text but they are not necessarily stated by the author of the source. The primary sources can be categorized broadly into six groups. Firstly, the Russian foreign policy regular programming primary sources such as Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation and President's annual addresses to the Federal Assembly are utilized. As they are widely distributed and read, they belong to the key documents conveying particular ideas of Russia's Self to the general public at the domestic level as well as outward. The second group of documents is represented by transcripts of conferences and working meetings of key political figures. These actors are featured within the echelons of government and hold formal position to create and reproduce particular narratives of Russia. The third group takes the form of statements on major issues, messages and addresses from political figures and groups. The fourth group includes press releases, press statements and information notes; answers to journalists' questions following working meetings are also included in this section. The fifth and the sixth groups are represented by interviews and articles of Russian principal political actors, respectively.

As it was previously mentioned, while performing the discourse analysis, mapping of the key dichotomies which are used for construction and articulation of the Self/Other nexus was done. These dichotomies serve for creating and propagating dominant narratives

regarding the relationship between Russia’s “Self” and the European “Other.” Based on these dichotomies, it is possible to divide the discourse on the Self/Other nexus from the perspective of the Russian leadership into six broad groups as presented in *Table 2*:

Table 2: Self/Other Dichotomies in Russia’s European Discourse

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION	THE EUROPEAN UNION
Normative foreign policy actor	Foreign policy actor disregarding international norms
Pragmatic and rational	Politicizing common issues
Sovereign decision-making capacity	Dependence on the external actors
Global power	Divided and weak entity
Promoting stability and peace	Instigating conflicts
Defending “traditional values”	Being in moral decay
SELF	OTHER

It is argued that through emphasis on the six identified dichotomies the border between Russia and the EU is articulated, and a wide scope of contemporary Russian political discourses and cultural narratives is built around them. However, it is important to note that these dichotomies should not be treated as a subject per se but rather as a tool important for grasping the logic and processes behind certain policy options.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, each of the dichotomies is discussed in greater detail so as to provide descriptive explanations of the key Self/Other narratives in Russia’s European discourse. The opening of each section provides background information leading up to the appearance of a particular narrative. It is necessary to note that it is not designed to examine all recent developments in Russian domestic and foreign policy and all international developments that affected the relationship between Russia and the EU, but to highlight the main actors and the environment within which the narratives are produced. The second part of each section provides a qualitative account of the Self/Other dichotomies in Russia’s European discourse. After that, the discussed narratives are brought together to identify the mode of Othering within the model of categorization presented in *Table 1*.

Finally, the analysis of discourse and background information provide a deeper analytical cut and enable a contemporary “Russian narrative” to be formulated.

3.2 “Normative Foreign Policy Actor” Narrative

This section sets out to explore the use of the first dichotomy (*Table 2*). This type of dichotomy refers to Russia as a normative foreign policy actor and the EU as a foreign policy actor disregarding international norms.

3.2.1 Background

As argued in *Chapter 1* of this thesis, the normative argument has largely moved to the periphery of the EU’s approach to Russia during the first decade of the 2000s. It was then replaced by the notion of the “constructive engagement” with Moscow and differentiated normative agenda towards the post-Soviet countries. However, the EU’s selective normative agenda and the EaP policies have spurred new tensions and antagonized Russia and the EU over the common neighborhood. Since 2012-2014, the EU has been increasingly accusing Russia of violation of human rights, freedom of expression, international law, treaties, and borders. In the aftermath of Russia’s involvement in eastern Ukraine and incorporation of Crimea the normative argument in the EU-Russia relationship has been reiterated. Counter to being widely referred as a non-normative or a *realpolitik* foreign policy actor, Russia has launched its own normative agenda projected outward, in which it presented itself as conducting an ethical and norms-based foreign policy while referring to the EU as disregarding international norms, resorting to double standards and dividing states into categories.

3.2.2 Discourse of Russian Key Political Figures on the Issue

As it was mentioned above, the discourse of Russian key political figures and groups on the normative agenda of Russia and the EU largely described the latter as disregarding international norms, while Russia was portrayed as an international actor whose foreign policy is based on legal norms and contributes to unity. Before moving to the analysis, it should be mentioned that references might not be explicitly made to the EU but context made it clear that the EU was either particularly addressed or was one of the addressees.

It is reasonable to start from analysis of the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation since it is a strategic document of Russia’s foreign policy that gives an

explanation of Russia's self-representation and its perceptions of other international actors. Russia's Foreign Policy Concept comprises references to certain interests and norms, which include sovereignty, territorial integrity, democracy, "*a fair and democratic international system*," "*the rule of international law*," "*equal, partnership relations among States*," multilateralism, non-interference, universal democratic values, human rights and freedoms, environmental security, and sustainable development.⁷⁰ Such normative references of the Russian foreign policy are indicative of important similarities to those of the EU. Where Russia's position clearly sets itself apart is its condemnation of double standards and imposing borrowed values systems on anyone (Western countries are implied):

[the competition] has been increasingly gaining a civilizational dimension in the form of dueling values. Against this backdrop, attempts to impose values on others can stoke xenophobia, intolerance and conflict in international affairs, leading ultimately to chaos and an uncontrolled situation in international relations.⁷¹

Clearly, the accusations of adherence to double standards "*that deal a blow to the universal values underlying modern civilization*"⁷² and unethical conduct peaked between 2012-2016. For example, referring to the debate on the impossibility of Ukraine's membership in the Eurasian Customs Union on the one hand and signing a free-trade agreement with the EU on the other hand, Lavrov condemned the EU for resorting to double standards:

Brussels is rather insistently trying to further liberalize trade with Russia <... >, and nobody is embarrassed by our membership in the Customs Union. It is important to avoid double standards, creation of ideological barriers on the

⁷⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation." Presidential Executive Office. November 30, 2016. Accessed March 11, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/2542248>; "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation." The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. February 12, 2013. Accessed March 11, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186>

⁷¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016.

⁷² Lavrov, Sergey. "Statement by Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the Twenty-third Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council." Speech. Hamburg, December 8, 2016. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<http://www.osce.org/cio/288611?download=true>>

way to extending and developing mutually beneficial trade and economic links.⁷³

In a similar manner, at the 2014 Munich Security Conference Lavrov accused the EU of engaging in double standards in its support of the opposition in Ukraine. As Lavrov claimed, “*Many prominent EU politicians are actually encouraging such actions although back home they are quick to severely punish any violations of the law.*”⁷⁴ On the contrary, the image of Russia as pursuing a norms-based and ethical foreign policy has been referred repeatedly. According to Lavrov, in its foreign policy “*Russia stably abides exactly such an approach which is based on strict observance of principles and norms of international law.*”⁷⁵ The normative argument was mostly used to contrast Russia as a powerful international actor that contributes to development of legal norms and unity, and the EU as an entity based on “*personal exclusiveness, use of double standards and the aspiration to find unilateral geopolitical outcomes from crisis situations widely used not only in Europe, but also in other regions.*”⁷⁶ The following statement made by Putin quite explicitly directs to unilateralism of the EU and its gain-seeking approach towards Russia:

We have never viewed Europe as a mistress... We have always proposed a serious relationship. But now I have the impression that Europe has actually been trying to establish material based relations with us, and solely for its own gain.⁷⁷

⁷³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. “Article of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov «Russia-France, Russia-Europe: partnership horizons» in a special Russian-French edition of the magazine «Russia in Global Affairs».” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. March 23, 2013. Accessed March 22, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/rso/-/asset_publisher/0vP3hQoCPRg5/content/id/108766>

⁷⁴ Lavrov, Sergey. “Speech by the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, at the 50th Munich Security Conference.” Munich, 1 February 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/obsie-voprosy-mezdunarodnoj-bezopasnosti-i-kontrola-nad-vooruzeniami/-/asset_publisher/6sN03cZTYZOC/content/id/78502>

⁷⁵ Lavrov, Sergey. “Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s speech at 49th Munich security conference.” Speech. Munich, February 2, 2013. Accessed March 22, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/obsie-voprosy-mezdunarodnoj-bezopasnosti-i-kontrola-nad-vooruzeniami/-/asset_publisher/6sN03cZTYZOC/content/id/124658>

⁷⁶ Lavrov, Sergey. “Speech by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the III Moscow International Security Conference.” Speech. Moscow, May 23, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <http://eng.mil.ru/files/MCIS_report_catalogue_final_ENG_21_10_preview.pdf>

⁷⁷ Fontana, L., Valentino, P. “Vladimir Putin, Interview to the Italian newspaper «Il Corriere della Sera».” Interview. *Il Corriere della Sera*. June 7, 2015. Accessed March 22, 2017 <http://www.corriere.it/english/15_giugno_07/vladimir-putin-interview-to-the-italian-newspaper-corriere-sera-44c5a66c-0d12-11e5-8612-1eda5b996824.shtml>

While the EU's unilateralism in its relations with Russia is clearly denounced in the statement quoted above, the EU's aspirations to obtain unilateral geopolitical outcomes are even more explicitly condemned in the following statement:

Because it is all right when integration takes place in Europe, but if we do the same in the territory of the former Soviet Union, they try to explain it by Russia's desire to restore an empire. I don't understand the reasons for such an approach.⁷⁸

In regard to the statement quoted above, it is also important to note that appeals to the actions of the EU (particularly, its activity in the field of European integration) are aimed at explaining Russia's incentives and justifying its own actions. A similar logic of ethical and normative equivalency can be traced when Russia refers to similarity between the precedent of Kosovo's secession from Serbia in 2008 and secession of the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. According to Putin, Kosovo was a precedent "*western colleagues created with their own hands in a very similar situation.*"⁷⁹ That said, the European policies are again depicted through a lens of strong emphasis on its engagement in double standards. Disregard for international norms and selective approach towards international legal principles were emphasized by Lavrov at the 2015 Munich Security Conference: "*If you want to talk, then let's sit down and reaffirm all of the Helsinki principles and see why you think they were violated in some cases and not in others,*"⁸⁰ and further reiterated in his letter to Secretary General of the Council of Europe:

In the present challenging situation in our continent we consider it important for the Council of Europe to carry out its activities without double standards

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Putin, Vladimir. "Address by President of the Russian Federation to the State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives in the Kremlin." Speech. Moscow, March 18, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>>

⁸⁰ Lavrov, Sergey. "Speech by Sergey Lavrov at the 51st Munich Security Conference." Speech. Munich, February 7, 2015. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<http://www.voltairenet.org/article186844.html>>

and selective attitudes that undermine its underlying principles and to contribute to overcoming lack of mutual trust.⁸¹

Thereby, Russia's narrative of normative agenda mainly consisted of juxtaposing Russia as conducting an ethical, norms-based foreign policy sticking to international rules, and contributing to unity, and the EU as based on personal exclusiveness, disregarding international norms, actively resorting to double standards and adhering to selective approaches. The aforementioned dichotomizations can be considered indicative of Russia's attempts to establish itself as monitor of the EU's application of its advocated norms, as well as to project its own normative power outward. At the same time, through reinterpreting some of the key European values and norms, Russia infused them with the meanings corresponding to its needs. For example, what Russia presented as reunification regarding the 2014 incorporation of Crimea, was perceived by the EU as annexation in legal terms.

3.3 “Pragmatic and Rational Actor” Narrative

The discourse of Russian key political figures and groups has frequently invoked a second dichotomy (*Table 2*). It refers to Russia as a pragmatic and rational actor, while the EU is perceived as an irrational actor that unnecessarily politicizes issues.

3.3.1 Background

The Russian authorities repeatedly blamed the Western governments for choosing political approaches towards Russia. In particular, Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) that formally took almost twenty years became an important benchmark for solidifying the Kremlin's narrative accusatory of the EU as unnecessarily politicizing issues. Despite that the major bilateral negotiations regarding Russia's accession to the WTO were completed in 2004, in 2009 the accession stalled in the light of creation of the Customs Union, with Russia and the EU signing a memorandum regarding remaining issues of particular concern to the EU in 2010. However, already in 2011 the new tensions rose, and the EU demanded protection from transferring the jobs in the car industry to Russia against the backdrop of a new Russian decree, according to which foreign car producers building

⁸¹ Lavrov, Sergey. “The letter of Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjorn Jagland on the 20th Anniversary of Russia's accession to the Council of Europe.” February 24, 2016. Accessed March 22, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2106003>

production plants in the country would be given trade preferences in terms of reduced import duties for components.⁸² Ultimately, in October 2011 Brussels and Moscow agreed terms for Russia's eventual accession to the WTO, but the narrative of the EU as politicizing bilateral relations explicitly gathered force in Russia's political discourse. In a similar manner, Russia approached the EU's Third Energy Package of 2011, which was considered as hostile act militating Russia's South Stream pipeline project. Since the deterioration of Russia-EU relations in 2012-2014 the Russian leaders have been systematically characterizing Russia as a pragmatic and work-oriented actor while the EU has been depicted as politicizing common issues.

3.3.2 Discourse of Russian Key Political Figures on the Issue

To start with, the Russian leaders' discourse frequently made references to the issue of politicization of economic and business ties between the EU and Russia. This discourse mainly focused on Russia as a pragmatic actor open for cooperation, while the EU was presented as politicizing cooperation. According to the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, promotion of "*pragmatism*," "*transparency*" and "*predictability*" are among key objectives of Russia's foreign policy within bilateral and multilateral frameworks.⁸³ As stated by Putin, during Russia's accession to the WTO, the Russian authorities "*at times during this <...> arduous journey <...> wanted to turn [their] backs on the talks and slam the door*," but "*did not succumb to emotion*."⁸⁴ In a similar manner, in spite of indicating the alleged EU's "*unfair demands*" to Russia made within the WTO and the EU's application of anti-dumping procedures, Putin assured that "*these are all technical matters*," and "*trade continues to grow with every year*."⁸⁵ Even against the background of Western economic sanctions imposed on

⁸² European Commission. "EU and Russia agree terms for Moscow's eventual WTO accession." Press-release. Brussels, October 21, 2011. Accessed April 3, 2017 <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-11-1231_en.htm?locale=en>

⁸³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation." Presidential Executive Office. November 30, 2016. Accessed March 11, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/2542248>

⁸⁴ Putin, Vladimir. "Russia and the changing world." *Russia Today*. February 27, 2012. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<https://www.rt.com/politics/official-word/putin-russia-changing-world-263/>>

⁸⁵ Putin, Vladimir. "Press statement and answers to journalists' questions following Russia-EU summit." Brussels, January 28, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20113>>

Russia, Putin kept returning to articulations of Russia as rational, business-minded and open for cooperation:

There are interests in relations between states, and European countries are interested in cooperating in economic, political and counterterrorism spheres; in cooperating with Russia. We are ready for this work, we are open to it. We are not going to shoot out the lip because of these sanctions. We're just waiting, waiting for everyone.⁸⁶

The idiomatic expression “to shoot out the lip” used by Putin in the aforementioned statement indicates that Russia did not take offence or shut itself off from the outside world, while repetitive constructions such as “*we're just waiting, waiting for everyone*” are indicative that it is not Russia who is impeding cooperation. Notably, Putin frequently resorted to metaphorical articulations such as “*we are not wiggling on things* [Russian: “*не виляем хвостом*”=do not wag our tail] *and do not change our position.* <...> *We have formulated our position on common and agreeable grounds. We do not have to jump around like a flea in a bottle*”⁸⁷ to indicate that Russia is pragmatic and easy to deal with. A similar picture of Russian pragmatism is presented in the field of energy cooperation, where “*Russia and the EU are natural partners in the energy sphere,*” and Russia is “*ready to boost cooperation* <...> *that benefits both sides.*”⁸⁸ Moreover, Russia’s foreign policy was also articulated as transparent and rational. For instance, referring to the EaP program that has been one of the major sources of tensions between Russia and the EU during the last years, Lavrov described Russia’s approach as “*sincere, straight from the mouth*” and since the outset open “*for dialogue, transparency and consideration of each other’s interests in relations between Russia, the EU and all our neighbours.*”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Tass. “Putin: beda Yevropy v tom, chto ona otdala chast’ suvereniteta SShA.” [Putin: Europe’s problem is that it signed away a part of its sovereignty to the United States] *Tass*. December 20, 2015. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<http://tass.ru/politika/2543649>>

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Sputnik. “Lavrov: Russia Ready to Boost Energy Cooperation With EU.” *Sputnik*. October 14, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<https://sputniknews.com/world/20141014194055525-Lavrov-Russia-Ready-to-Boost-Energy-Cooperation-With-EU/>>

⁸⁹ Lavrov, Sergey. “Speech by the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, at the 50th Munich Security Conference.” Munich, 1 February 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/obsie-voprosy-mezdunarodnoj-bezopasnosti-i-kontrola-nad-vooruzheniami/-/asset_publisher/6sN03cZTYZOC/content/id/78502>

On the contrary, the EU has been frequently juxtaposed with a pragmatic Russia and characterized as politicizing issues and irrational. In contrast to the narrative of Russia's pragmatism in the field of economic and business cooperation, the EU has been criticized for "*politicization of economic and business ties*," when Moscow wanted to see a trade area between the EU and Eurasian zones.⁹⁰ Remarkably, between 2011-2013, the Russian leadership repeatedly referred to the EU's politicizing of humanitarian matters:

We call for reduction of confrontation in inter-state cooperation in the human rights field. Politicized decisions on the human rights situation in individual countries is not conducive to building constructive dialogue with them.⁹¹

In a similar manner, it was claimed by Matvienko that human rights have become a subject of "unfounded extreme politicization"⁹² by the West, which caused rising global tensions. Politicized approach of the EU towards Russia was also highlighted in the light of decisions made by the European Court of Human Rights: "*When a real politicization of the court's decisions takes place, we want to be protected from outright politicization.*"⁹³ Finally, it is worth to mention that the Russian leaders frequently resorted to criticizing Europe for being stuck in a Cold War mindset: "*Our partners had better think about becoming moral leaders in the newly established global relations. But they have been acting and thinking in the same old way—a Cold War cliché.*"⁹⁴ That is, such articulation of the Western conduct

⁹⁰ Baczynska, G., Hudson, A. "Russia accuses EU of seeking Ukraine «sphere of influence»." *Reuters*. February 14, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-russia-eu-idUSBREA1D0PT20140214>>

⁹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. "On Russia's position at 67th Session of the UN General Assembly." The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. June 19, 2012. Accessed March 27, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/web/guest/general_assembly/-/asset_publisher/lrzZMhfoyrUj/content/id/152294>

⁹² Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the. "Matvienko: Zakonodatelnoye obespecheniye prav cheloveka – odin iz postoyannykh prioritetov Soveta Federatsii." [Matvienko: Legislative support of human rights is one of the permanent priorities of the Council of the Federation] The Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. December 5, 2016. Accessed March 27, 2017 <<http://www.council.gov.ru/events/news/74584/>>

⁹³ Sputnik. "Russia Wants to Be Protected From Politicized ECHR Decisions – Lavrov." *Sputnik*. December 6, 2016. Accessed March 27, 2017 <<https://sputniknews.com/politics/201612061048222710-echr-russia-decisions/>>

⁹⁴ Usov, Ilya. "Putin zayavil ob otkaze Yevropy ot suvereniteta v polzu SShA." [Putin claimed Europe's refusal of sovereignty in favor of the United States] *Vedomosti*. December 20, 2015. Accessed March 27, 2017 <<https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2015/12/20/621746-putin>>

indicates its irrationality and depicts it as an actor that is driven by cliches and is out of synch with reality.

3.4 “Sovereign Decision-maker” Narrative

The third dichotomy (*Table 2*) remarkably articulated in Russia’s European discourse is linked to representation of Russia as an international actor that has a sovereign decision-making capacity. In contrast, the EU is represented as an actor whose foreign policy almost completely dependent on the external actors or even led by them.

3.4.1 Background

Independence and sovereignty were proclaimed one of the key values in the new Russian ideological discourse determined by conservative agenda. After 2012-2014 the new national identity articulations became strongly interlaced with Russia’s national security agenda and foreign policy. The question of identity was securitized during the 2011-2013 mass protests in Russia and the 2014 Ukrainian revolution. A special emphasis was placed on the uniqueness of Russia as an identity-civilization determined by its longer than thousand year history as a political entity, vast territories, necessity to protect borders, and the sense of being a great power. Such articulation of identity unraveled specific interests and the attachment of particular value to independence and sovereignty. From this perspective, on the one hand, the narrative of Russia as an independent decision-maker has been reinforced, while the EU has been increasingly represented as an actor who needs external backing to hold its own on the world stage. The EU has been frequently described as relying on the US or even led by the States due to multiple factors such as transatlantic military and trade cooperation, influence of the US on the European Commission and lobbyism of American companies in the EU.

3.4.2 Discourse of Russian Key Political Figures on the Issue

It reasonable to start discerning the narrative of sovereign/dependent decision-making from articulations of Russia’s national identity. The latter, as was mentioned above, attaches a significant weight to Russia’s independence and sovereignty. The Russian leaders’ rhetorics has consistently emphasized strong relation between Russia’s sovereignty and preservation of national identity. In 2013, Putin claimed that “*The desire for independence and sovereignty in spiritual, ideological and foreign policy spheres is an integral part of our national*

character.”⁹⁵ A year later, Putin stated that remaining a sovereign nation was critically important for Russia, which was otherwise destined to “*dissolve without a trace and lose its identity*.”⁹⁶ It is thus implied that Russia must be a strong and independent power. In the process of discursive construction of such conception, Russia not only depicts itself as possessing the features of a strong and independent decision-maker but gives reversed characteristics to its constitutive Other, the EU. In 2014, Putin openly denied Europe’s independence by claiming that the “*Western partners, led by the United States of America, prefer not to be guided by international law but by the rule of the gun*”.⁹⁷ A similar articulation of the EU as the “*U.S.-led Western alliance*”⁹⁸ was made by Lavrov in the same year. Dependence of the EU on the US, alleged absence of its own foreign policy agenda and deficiency of decision-making capacity was even more explicitly articulated by Putin in 2015:

Europe does not pursue its own foreign policy agenda. In substance, Europe totally gave up on it and transferred a part of its sovereignty to NATO, or, maybe, one of the most important parts of its sovereignty. <...> In my opinion, our European partners should not sign away their sovereignty and should at least take part in decision-making process, not just snap salutes to directives coming from across the ocean.⁹⁹

As it follows from the statement quoted above, Russia negatively depicts Europe as excessively reliant on the Euro-Atlantic partnership and, therefore, constructs a dichotomization between its own sovereign decision-making and the EU’s dependence on the US. However, Russia usually perceives the EU as a more convenient partner than the US, and

⁹⁵ Putin, Vladimir. “Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.” Speech. Novgorod Region, September 19, 2013. Accessed March 27, 2017 <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>>

⁹⁶ Putin, Vladimir. “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly.” Speech. Moscow, December 4, 2014. Accessed March 27, 2017 <<http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173>>

⁹⁷ Putin, Vladimir. “Address by President of the Russian Federation to the State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives in the Kremlin.” Speech. Moscow, March 18, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>>

⁹⁸ Lavrov, Sergey. “Address by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to the 69th session of the UN General Assembly.” Speech. New York, September 27, 2014. Accessed March 27, 2017 <http://russiaun.ru/en/news/ga_69sn>

⁹⁹ Tass. “Putin: beda Yevropy v tom, chto ona otdala chast’ suvereniteta SShA.” [Putin: Europe’s problem is that it signed away a part of its sovereignty to the United States] *Tass*. December 20, 2015. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<http://tass.ru/politika/2543649>>

Russian leaders thus often developed an idea that Europe “*may become a pole in the new international system only through the development of its partnership with Russia.*”¹⁰⁰

3.5 “Global Power” Narrative

The fourth type of narrative (*Table 2*) is closely connected with the previously discussed narrative of sovereignty and independent decision-making. The fifth narrative either depicts Russia as an already globally powerful actor, or it is articulative of Russia’s aspirations to be perceived as a global power. In a dichotomous manner, the EU is represented as a divided and weak construction susceptible to destabilizing inner and outer developments.

3.5.1 Background

By contrast to a weak state of the first decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, since 2000s Russia’s assertiveness in the international arena and desire to reclaim its status as a great power have been evolving. Under Putin’s third presidency foreign policy of Russia has become even more inclined towards *realpolitik* terms, with the state asserting its interests contrary to other great powers. Primary, the rise of Russia as an international actor and desire to manifest its strength in its relations with the EU and to be perceived as an equal partner provoked a narrative of Russia as the influential center of the modern world. The articulations of Russia as an economic, political, energy, and military power gained position in Russia’s discourse already by the middle of the first decade of 2000s. After the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 Russia repeatedly expressed its readiness to help the EU overcoming the financial difficulties through direct assistance. However, the narrative of a strong and reliable partner willing to render assistance was soon replaced by a more antagonistic characterization. Since the beginning of the EaP initiative and following the profound negative developments in the EU-Russia relationship, Russia began consistently juxtaposing itself and the EU in terms of a “powerful and united actor” and “a weak and disunited entity” dichotomy. The political crisis within the EU and the UK’s withdrawal opened up space for

¹⁰⁰ Lavrov, Sergey. “Speech by the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, at the 50th Munich Security Conference.” Munich, 1 February 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/obsie-voprosy-mezdunarodnoj-bezopasnosti-i-kontrola-nad-vooruzheniami/-/asset_publisher/6sN03cZTYZOC/content/id/78502>

Russia's narratives of a powerful and consolidated Self, while the EU has been increasingly depicted as a profoundly destabilized structure.

3.5.2 Discourse of Russian Key Political Figures on the Issue

Although the focus of this study covers a period from 2011 to 2017, regarding this particular narrative it seems reasonable to note that already in 2000 Russia was presented in the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation as a “*great power, one of the most influential centers of the modern world.*”¹⁰¹ However, the Russian leadership's discourse on the global power issue may shift across two narratives—the first one depicts Russia as an ***already powerful global actor***, while the second narrative presents Russia as ***a rising global actor***. The most recent versions of the Concept of the Foreign Policy dating to 2013 and 2016 pointed at diminishing ability of “*the West to dominate world economy and politics*” and proclaimed that “*the global power and development potential <...> is shifting to the East,*” while “*the emergence of new global economic and political actors*” led to “*eroding the global economic and political dominance of the traditional western powers.*”¹⁰² That is, it is presumed that the West and the EU are facing difficulties holding its grounds against both Russia and the Asian powers; the Russian leaders connect Russia's rise as a ***political power*** and international actor to new balance of powers on the global arena. In a similar manner, in the foreign policy part of the 2013 Address to the Federal Assembly Putin stated that Russia will strive to be a global leader:

We do not claim to be any sort of superpower with a claim to global or regional hegemony; we do not encroach on anyone's interests, impose our patronage onto anyone, or try to teach others how to live their lives. But we will strive to be leaders.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. “Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation.” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. June 28, 2000. Accessed March 11, 2017 <<https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>>

¹⁰² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. “Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation.” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. February 12, 2013. Accessed March 11, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/122186>

¹⁰³ Putin, Vladimir. “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly.” Speech. Moscow, December 12, 2013. Accessed March 11, 2017 <<http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19825>>

According to Putin, quest for a leader status “*is absolutely objective and understandable for a state like Russia, with its great history and culture.*”¹⁰⁴ The articulations of Russia as **historical** and **united power** are particularly significant in Russia’s European discourse. According to Lavrov, it is clear that “*Russia has a special role in European and global history*” and that Russia for centuries “*has been deeply involved in the process of political arrangement of Europe, its geopolitical identification.*”¹⁰⁵ Regarding **united power** articulations, in the 2014 Address to the Federal Assembly Putin claimed that firmness of Russia’s foreign policy position on Crimea stems from “*the will of millions of our people.*”¹⁰⁶ Thereby, the Crimea crisis substantiated the consolidated image of Russia, whereas people of Russia “*need to continue and maintain this kind of consolidation.*”¹⁰⁷ Besides, Russia has been often described as **a military power**. For instance, in 2014 Putin stated:

I assure you that we are talking about the most sophisticated arms, such offensive and defensive systems that are as yet unavailable to other armies of the world. We are yet to cheer up our partners with ideas and their implementation—in terms of the systems I have just mentioned.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, the Russian leaders did not stop characterizing Russia as an **economic power** even after the Russian economy suffered a major setback in 2014 due to low global oil prices and sanctions imposed by the West. As claimed by Lavrov, Russia’s economy is “*standing strong*” and “*has adapted both to the restrictions [sanctions] and low oil prices*”

¹⁰⁴ Putin, Vladimir. “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly.” Speech. Moscow, December 12, 2013. Accessed March 11, 2017 <<http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19825>>

¹⁰⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. “Article of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov «Russia-France, Russia-Europe: partnership horizons» in a special Russian-French edition of the magazine «Russia in Global Affairs».” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. March 23, 2013. Accessed March 22, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/rso/-/asset_publisher/0vP3hQoCPRg5/content/id/108766>

¹⁰⁶ Putin, Vladimir. “Address by President of the Russian Federation to the State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives in the Kremlin.” Speech. Moscow, March 18, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>>

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Putin, Vladimir. “Meeting with members of political parties represented in the State Duma.” Speech. Yalta, August 14, 2014. Accessed March 29, 2017 <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46451>>

largely by virtue of the successful import substitution program.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, it is articulated that Russia is able to easily adapt itself to new conditions and develop tools for overcoming economic difficulties. Along with that, Russia has been often described as an *energy power*. Again, even against the backdrop of tightening restrictions on major Russian energy companies and oil and gas industry executives, the rhetoric of the Russian leadership continues to be indicative of Russia's energy might:

If we continue in the same way and without any reduction in intensity, which is, frankly speaking, a little bit surprising to me, Russia, without any doubt, not only will be able to become, but will become the biggest liquefied natural gas producer in the world.¹¹⁰

Remarkably, the narrative of Russia as an already powerful or a rising global power actor was often opposed to the narrative of a divided or weak EU. On the one hand, Russia recognized “*the significant role the European Union plays in international affairs,*” and intended to “*maintain intensive and mutually beneficial dialogue with the EU partners on the key issues*” and create cooperation mechanisms in political and security areas.¹¹¹ However, at the same time, the Russian leadership often referred to the EU as transferring “*a part of its sovereignty to NATO*”¹¹² or openly claimed that the EU was “*led by the United States of America.*”¹¹³ Moreover, the withdrawal of the UK from the EU strengthened Russian

¹⁰⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. “Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s interview with Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera.” December 1, 2016. Accessed March 29, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/ckNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2541168>

¹¹⁰ Nazarova, Alina. “Putin: Rossiya stanet krupneyshim mirovym proizvoditelem SPG.” [Putin: Russia will become the world’s largest producer of LNG] *Delovaya gazeta «Vzglyad»*. March 30, 2017. Accessed April 3, 2017 <<https://vz.ru/news/2017/3/30/864180.html>>

¹¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. “Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation.” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. February 12, 2013. Accessed March 11, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/122186>

¹¹² Tass. “Putin: beda Yevropy v tom, chto ona otdala chast’ suvereniteta SShA.” [Putin: Europe’s problem is that it signed away a part of its sovereignty to the United States] *Tass*. December 20, 2015. Accessed March 22, 2017. <<http://tass.ru/politika/2543649>>

¹¹³ Putin, Vladimir. “Address by President of the Russian Federation to the State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives in the Kremlin.” Speech. Moscow, March 18, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 < <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>>

articulations of Europe as a divided and destabilized construct. As stated by Dvorkovich, the withdrawal of the EU weakened the EU and created “uncertainties.”¹¹⁴

3.6 “Promoter of Stability and Peace” Narrative

The fifth narrative (*Table 2*) depicts Russia as a promoter and guarantor of stability and peace. The EU, on the contrary, is articulated as stoking chaos and meddling into other states’ affairs.

3.6.1 Background

The EU’s involvement in the common neighborhood and, in particular, the EaP project made Russia increasingly suspicious of Western influence and the EU’s attempts to find geopolitical outcomes in the post-Soviet states. The Kremlin repeatedly argued Western interference, such as supporting the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia, the 2004 Orange revolution Ukraine, and the 2014 Ukrainian revolution. Russia’s stance on the 2004 presidential election in Ukraine was clearly articulated as standing upon the third round of elections as unconstitutional and orchestrated under the EU pressure.¹¹⁵ The 2014 Ukrainian crisis became of grave concern for Moscow; Russia again stressed that the interference of the US and the EU in Ukraine was unacceptable. According to the official Kremlin’s position, Russia sought to promote stabilization in Ukraine, while the West was destabilizing the situation by trying to enforce its will on Ukraine. Russia criticized the pro-Western government in Kiev for using force against the rebels and condemned participation of the officials from the US and the EU in the Maidan protests. At the same time, the Russian leadership denied violation of international law regarding incorporation of Crimea and claimed that it was fulfilling Crimea’s right to self-determination. To a large extent, the aforementioned circumstances have reinforced the narrative of Russia as a protector and promoter of peace and the EU as an instigator of conflicts and actor interfering in affairs of other countries.

¹¹⁴ Urban, Mark. “Brexit has weakened Europe, says Russia's deputy PM.” *BBC News*. September 2, 2016. Accessed April 3, 2017 <<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-37261388>>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/07/sergei-lavrov-russia-stabilise-ukraine-west>

3.6.2 Discourse of Russian Key Political Figures on the Issue

First of all, it is necessary to note that throughout the whole period under the study the Russian leadership promoted the narrative of Russia as an international actor trying to stabilize chaos instigated by the Western countries and, in particular, by the EU during the Ukrainian crisis. Remarkably, the Russian leaders's discourse employing this narrative has been marked by rather emotional articulations, involving frequent use of rhetorical questions and appeal to common sense. For instance, in 2014 Lavrov asked: "*What does incitement of increasingly violent street protests have to do with promoting democracy?*"¹¹⁶ By posing a rhetorical question, Lavrov apparently presumed that the only possible answer is that promoting of democracy had nothing to do with encouraging street protests in Ukraine. Along with articulations of the EU as stoking violence in Ukraine, the Russian leaders frequently invoked the issue of Western meddling into the domestic affairs of other countries, an "*itch for military intervention*,"¹¹⁷ and adherence to double standards. In one of the key texts on the issue, Lavrov's article with a self-explanatory title "It's not Russia that is destabilising Ukraine," it is explicitly stated that "*attempts by those who staged the secession of Kosovo from Serbia <...> to question the free will of Crimeans cannot be viewed as anything but a flagrant display of double standards.*"¹¹⁸ In his 2014 speech at a Security Council meeting on global terrorism during the UN General Assembly Lavrov delivered a harsh critique of the EU's handling of conflicts and illegitimately intervening in the internal affairs of its neighbors:

The U.S.-led Western alliance [that] portrays itself as a champion of democracy, rule of law and human rights within individual countries, acts from directly opposite positions in the international arena, rejecting the democratic principle of sovereign equality of states enshrined the UN Charter and trying to decide for everyone what is good or evil. (Lavrov 2014)¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/02/01/world/politics-diplomacy-world/u-s-and-eu-slug-it-out-with-russia-over-ukraines-political-crisis/#.WSMg61JePVp>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.rt.com/politics/official-word/putin-russia-changing-world-263/>

¹¹⁸ Lavrov, Sergey. "It's not Russia that is destabilising Ukraine." *The Guardian*. April 7, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/07/sergei-lavrov-russia-stabilise-ukraine-west>>

¹¹⁹ Lavrov, Sergey. "Address by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to the 69th session of the UN General Assembly." Speech. New York, September 27, 2014. Accessed March 27, 2017 <http://russiaun.ru/en/news/ga_69sn>

As follows from the quote cited above, Lavrov not only referred to the arbitrary manner in which the EU intervened in the Ukrainian conflict but once again gave characterization of the bloc's conduct as administered by the US. On the contrary, the Russian leaders frequently claimed that Russia tried to do its best to end the conflict in Ukraine. According to Putin, while Russia "*always respected the territorial integrity of the Ukrainian state*" and did not want to harm its neighbor anyway, the West caused a civil standoff, "*sacrificed Ukraine's unity for their political ambitions*" and "*did everything to divide the nation.*"¹²⁰ Additionally, it has been repeatedly highlighted that the EU's interferences in the inner affairs of other states are "*based on the protection of personal exclusiveness <...> and the aspiration to find unilateral geopolitical outcomes.*"¹²¹ Inversely, the Russian leaders referred to Crimea's secession from Ukraine against the backdrop of a plea by Crimea and Sevastopol residents to the Russian Federation to defend "*their rights and lives,*" which Russia "*naturally could not leave unheeded.*" As claimed by Putin, "*abandoning Crimea and its residents in distress <...> would have been betrayal on our part.*"¹²² The Russian leadership frequently put emphasis on close relations with Ukraine that were notably expressed through kinship terms (e.g.: "*relations with the **fraternal** Ukrainian people have always been and will remain of foremost importance for us*").¹²³ According to Lavrov, it was Russia that "*has done more than any other country to support the independent Ukrainian state.*" In a similar logic of depicting a strong affinity between Russia and Ukraine, Putin claimed that Crimea "*was and remains a Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean-Tatar land.*"¹²⁴ Moreover, Russia's role of promoter of stability in Europe was articulated as historically proven:

We have been an integral part of the European culture and politics for at least the last three centuries, and the periods of Russia's active participation in

¹²⁰ Putin, Vladimir. "Address by President of the Russian Federation to the State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives in the Kremlin." Speech. Moscow, March 18, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 < <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>>

¹²¹ Lavrov, Sergey. "Speech by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the III Moscow International Security Conference." Speech. Moscow, May 23, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2017 <http://eng.mil.ru/files/MCIS_report_catalogue_final_ENG_21_10_preview.pdf>

¹²² Putin, 2014.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

general European affairs were characterised by stability and peace in the continent.¹²⁵

Therefore, given such articulations, Russia has been characterized as a promoter of stability and a peacemaker, whereas the EU's line has been reflected as unproductive and dangerous.

3.7 “Defender of Traditional Values” Narrative

The sixth narrative (*Table 2*) emphasizes Russia's higher moral or traditional values in contrast to moral decay of Europe. Defining this narrative more broadly, it may be argued that within this interpretation Russia articulates itself as a traditional anti-liberal *civilization*. What is particularly remarkable about this narrative, is that Russia may be articulated either as a *distinct* civilization or a *specific, alternative*, or, even *true* (i.e.: the last one who still adheres to the “true” European values) European civilization; in the latter case the conceptions of Russia as responsible for saving common European cultural and spiritual heritage may be implied.

3.7.1 Background

Between 2012-2016 Russian foreign policy and national identity discourse became increasingly interconnected. The Russian leadership began to look for a place in the international system to a great extent by drawing upon domestic discourses and “big ideas” deeply rooted in history and tradition. “Traditional values” have become an integral part of Russia's new social conservatism; its emergence, first of all, has to be understood against the background of the volatile pre- and post-election political environment in Russia of 2011-2012 and Russia's strong concerns about the EaP project. Moreover, a Western-influenced and -supported opposition movement in Ukraine that ousted a leader who preferred Russia over the EU pushed Moscow against the threat of being not only politically encircled abroad but, more than that, “culturally encircled” by Western values. Remarkably, 2014 was declared the Year of Culture in Russia and “*intended to be a year of enlightenment*,

¹²⁵ Lavrov, Sergey. “Speech by the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, at the meeting with members of the Russian International Affairs Council.” Speech. Moscow, June 9, 2014. Accessed April 3, 2017 <<http://russiancouncil.ru/en/news/sergey-lavrov-meets-riac-members/>>

emphasis on cultural roots, patriotism, values and ethics.”¹²⁶ The Kremlin has directed much effort in constructing and maintaining its vision of “Russian civilization” domestically as abroad, and recent pronouncements of the Russian leadership have increasingly invoked warnings about the destruction of traditional values. Europe has thus been frequently referred as being in moral decay, while Russia has been presented as a moral compass of the world.

3.7.2 Discourse of Russian Key Political Figures on the Issue

As it was mentioned above, this type of narrative is markedly multidimensional and is closely interlaced with the civilizational turn in Russia’s political discourse. Remarkably, in 2000 Putin stated that Russia was, indeed, “*part of European culture*” and it was impossible to imagine Russia “*in isolation from Europe and what we often call the civilised world.*”¹²⁷ This fixation explicitly articulated Europe as a better part of the world that Russia considered exemplary and aspired to belong. Nowadays, such articulations vanished from the discourse of the Russian political leadership. Quite the opposite, Europe is increasingly presented as inferior to high moral values and culture of Russia. In order to understand underlying bases of such articulations, it seems reasonable to draw upon a direct quote from Lavrov’s article dedicated to historical background of Russia’s Foreign Policy published in 2016:

Numerous scientific investigations bear witness to the high cultural and spiritual level of Rus of those days, a level that was frequently higher than in western European states. Many prominent Western thinkers recognized that Rus was part of the European context. At the same time, Russian people possessed a cultural matrix of their own and an original type of spirituality and never merged with the West.¹²⁸

Thus, in spite of stating that Russia was a part of the European context, the uniqueness of Russia’s culture and spirituality existing independently from the Western influence was emphasized. This implies that Russia is rather a distinct civilization than a part of the European civilization. It may be argued that the word choice in the articulation

¹²⁶ Putin, Vladimir. “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly.” Speech. Moscow, December 12, 2013. Accessed March 11, 2017 <<http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19825>>

¹²⁷ Frost, David. “Interview: Vladimir Putin.” *BBC*. March 5, 2000. Accessed March 11, 2017 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/audio_video/programmes/breakfast_with_frost/transcripts/putin5.mar.txt>

¹²⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. “Sergey Lavrov’s article «Russia’s Foreign Policy: Historical Background» for «Russia in Global Affairs» magazine.” March 3, 2016. Accessed April 3, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2124391>

“European context” is quite purposeful and supports this conception by pointing at Russia’s involvement in the European developments, but deliberately not ascribing Russia to the European civilization. At the same time, mentioning evidence of Russia’s higher “cultural and spiritual level” establishes a framework for presenting today’s Russia as moral compass of the world—the articulation which became increasingly widespread in Russia’s political discourse and contrasted to the moral decay of the EU. Notably, in another article by Lavrov dating to 2013 the focus is made on the “*fact that we all belong to the European culture, European civilization in its broad sense unite Russia and the European Union.*”¹²⁹ In this case, Russia is depicted not as a distinct civilization but as a part of the European civilization, even if it is specified as in its “broad sense.” Moreover, as claimed by Lavrov, it is a “*historical achievement*” of Russia that “*area of distribution of the European culture spreads to the coast of the Pacific Ocean.*”¹³⁰ Therefore, as follows from the aforementioned examples, at first Russia constructed a narrative within which it may be perceived either as distinct or as a specific part of the European civilization. Second, Russia discursively laid the groundwork for presenting itself as an actor adhering to traditional values, which can be considered not only conservative but **true European** values. Third, due to such logic Russia is able to promote the traditional values not only domestically, but condemn Europe for preferring new liberal values over them. This is where the main part of the analysis of this narrative begins.

Notably, while Europe may be reproduced as a part of Russia’s Self, the relationship with the West is constructed as antagonistic. For instance, in 2013 Address to the Federal Assembly Putin presented Russia as a defender of conservative values against the Western tolerance that leads to equating good and evil:

Many nations are revising their moral values and ethical norms. <...> Society is now required not only to recognise everyone’s right to the freedom of consciousness, political views and privacy, but also to accept without question the equality of good and evil. This destruction of traditional values from above leads to negative consequences for society <...> it is carried out

¹²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. “Article of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov «Russia-France, Russia-Europe: partnership horizons» in a special Russian-French edition of the magazine «Russia in Global Affairs».” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. March 23, 2013. Accessed March 22, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/rso/-/asset_publisher/0vP3hQoCPRg5/content/id/108766>

¹³⁰ Ibid.

on the basis of abstract, speculative ideas, contrary to the will of the majority, which does not accept the changes occurring or the proposed revision of values.¹³¹

While antagonism between higher traditional values of Russia and moral decay of the West is explicitly articulated in the statement quoted above, it is highlighted that the traditional values are not becoming obsolescent by themselves but are being deliberately destructed from above, which adversely affects the majority of society that is still seen as sharing traditional morality. Remarkably, there are no specific references to particular international actors but it is clear from the context that this is the Western societies that are being drawn into moral decay by their governments, while Russia comes up against the destruction of traditional values domestically as abroad. The general opposition between the West and Russia is articulated in terms of depicting Russia as something better and more genuine. In the same year, at the anniversary meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, Putin presented a more explicit articulation of the Kremlin's vision of traditional values:

We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilisation. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious and even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan.¹³²

In spite of several references to moral aspects and what is considered true Western values, the axis of the statement cited above is basically constructed around the notion of traditional Christian values. Such articulations correspond with the role that once suppressed but again encouraged by Putin Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) plays in maintaining Russia's increasingly conservative national identity that heavily depends on "*spiritual, cultural and national self-determination*."¹³³ During the third presidency of Putin, the ROC has not only become a symbol of traditional values but one of the most visible supporters of Russian nation-building project. According to Putin, the importance of Orthodoxy

¹³¹ Putin, Vladimir. "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly." Speech. Moscow, December 12, 2013. Accessed March 11, 2017 <<http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19825>>

¹³² Putin, Vladimir. "Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club." Speech. Novgorod Region, September 19, 2013. Accessed March 27, 2017 <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>>

¹³³ Ibid.

“*transcends the borders of the present Russian Federation*”¹³⁴ and “*helps establish relations with peoples of other states, which, above all, refers to the post-Soviet space.*”¹³⁵ Therefore, such fixations articulate that traditional values backed by Orthodoxy have the potential for integration at least among the post-Soviet states. It is worth to mention the following articulation of Russia’s role in defending the traditional values not only at home, but on a wider scale:

Russia here is not opposed to the Western world in terms of values but, on the contrary, is presented as a part of its civilization—basically, included in internal Western discussions, Russia to a certain extent understands itself as an equally legitimate protector of common European spiritual heritage. Drawing upon a technical analogy, our state offers itself as a kind of “backup server,” “boot CD” with all the key programs (values) in case, when main server or computer is attacked by “virus” and it will be needed to restore it in its original form. (Kosachev 2013)¹³⁶

Once again, inclusiveness of Russia into Western developments and, therefore, reasonability of its aspirations to become a moral compass for Europe is highlighted. At the same time, of particular importance is the metaphor through which modern Western liberal values are articulated as malware, while Russia is compared with backup server, where genuine European values are safely stored awaiting to be invoked. That is, in a temporal perspective it is either implied that it is possible to restrict dispersion of non-traditional values which are, as it was previously mentioned, seen in Russia’s official discourse as not naturally coming from societies’ development but forced from above, or that the Western countries will admit their mistake and return to traditional values themselves. Since the latter is unlikely, it is understood that Russia feels morally obliged to take on the role of savior of traditional values. At the same time, as claimed by Putin, Russia does not “*encroach on anyone’s*

¹³⁴ Presidential Executive Office. “Intervyu k filmu «Vtoroye kreshcheniye Rusi»” [Interview to the film “The Second Baptism of Russia”] Interview. Presidential Executive Office. July 23, 2012. Accessed April 3, 2017 <<http://special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/18872>>

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Kosachev, Konstantin. “Neofitsialno o glavnom. Ot Sirii k evropeyskim tsennostyam: naglyadnye uroki rossyskoy «myagkoy sily» v zerkale zarubezhnykh SMI.” [Unofficially about main issues. From Syria to European values: practical lessons of Russian “soft power” in the mirror of foreign media] Blog of Konstantin Kosachev. October 3, 2013. Accessed April 3, 2017 <<https://web.archive.org/web/20140213101148/http://blog.rs.gov.ru/node/54>>

interests, impose patronage onto anyone, or try to teach others how to live their lives".¹³⁷ In a similar manner, it was stated by Lavrov that the times demanded "*integration based on different values*."¹³⁸

3.8 Bringing the Narratives Together

This final section brings together the array of Russia's Self/Other articulations in its European discourse. That is, as a means of summarizing how contemporary Russian narrative replaced previously maintained narrative of Russia as a part of the European milieu, this section seeks to highlight patterns of convergences and divergencies between the various articulations of Russian and European subjectivities.

To begin with, arguably, unpreparedness for increased deterioration in bilateral relations between Russia and the EU to a great extent relates to the lack of common understanding about Russian views on its relations with the bloc. A conducted analysis of the six narratives in Russia's European discourse has been indicative of views of the Russian political leaders on Russia-EU relations between 2011 and 2017. At first sight, even the recent discourse of the Russian leadership may draw upon optimistic articulations of relations between the two actors. However, through closer discerning of rhetorical action, it becomes evident that the discourse has been basically constructed around particular dichotomies; such dichotomous approach points towards a more confrontational tone. The Russian key political figures increasingly juxtaposed Russia and the EU on the basis of opposing attributes. In short, Russia has been articulated as a global actor with a pragmatic, norms-based foreign policy that promotes stability and peace in its neighborhood as in the wider international arena. Besides, Russia has been remarkably characterized as a moral compass for the Western world and defender of traditional values. Reversely, the EU has been frequently articulated as a divided construct that tends to politicize cooperation and disregards international norms, continuously resorting to double standards and thus instigating chaos; the EU's liberal values

¹³⁷ Putin, Vladimir. "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly." Speech. Moscow, December 12, 2013. Accessed March 11, 2017 <<http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19825>>

¹³⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the. "Article of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov «Russia–EU: Prospects for Partnership in the Changing World», published in «Journal of Common Market Studies Annual Review»." The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. August 13, 2013. Accessed April 3, 2017 <http://www.mid.ru/en/press_service/minister_speeches/-/asset_publisher/7OvQR5KJWVmR/content/id/99770>

have been referred to as destructive and opposing to true European values. Therefore, when a border with the EU is constructed, challenging liberal values that are usually associated with the West plays important role in it. However, it is important to mention here that while Russia explicitly set itself apart from the EU in five out of six identified dichotomies and corresponding narratives, the value aspect may be also referred to as a liaison between Russian and European subjectivities. That is, through appealing to particular values that Russia deems traditional or *true European* values, it may depict itself as a specific part of the European civilization. However, while Europe here is reproduced as a part of Russia's Self, the narrative is still constructed as antagonistic since the Russian leaders criticize European states for abandoning their roots and traditional values.

Through emphasizing divergence points mentioned above, Russia moves from its previous narrative, in which Europe was considered as a natural cultural and societal context for Russia, and moves towards further Othering of the EU. Such constructions of subjectivity point at Russia's dependence on its symbolical Other presented by the EU. Drawing upon the categorization of representations of the Other that was introduced in the previous sections of this study (*Table 1*), it may be argued that currently the EU represents Russia's radical Other. First, as an analysis of the Self/Other articulations in Russia's European discourse has shown, the mode of differentiation between Russia and the EU is depicted as strong. That is, the discourse includes such indicators of radical Othering as exertion of dichotomies revealing relations of **superiority/inferiority** (*Russia as a global power / the EU as a divided construct; Russia as a sovereign decision-maker / the EU as having transferred a part of its sovereignty to NATO*); **civilized/uncivilized** (*Russia as having high moral values / the EU being in moral decay; Russia as a norms-based foreign policy actor / the EU as disregarding international norms and adhering to double standards*); **rational/irrational** (*Russia as business-minded and pragmatic / the EU as politicizing common issues*); **good/evil** (*Russia as a promoter of stability and peace / the EU as an instigator of chaos*). Second, as it follows from the previous point, the Other is represented as antagonistic and threatening to the Self's subjectivity. Finally, the relationship between the Self and the Other is seen as not naturally coming from shared fundamental values but as based on inevitability. It can be identified in articulations of the Russian leadership when they refer to necessity of constructive dialogue with the EU in spite of different values and opinions.

It should be noted that broad discourse on Russia-EU relations is not limited to the six dichotomies and narratives that were presented in this study. Through emphasis on the six identified dichotomies a border between Russia and the EU is articulated; they serve for creating and propagating dominant narratives regarding the relationship between Russia's Self and its European Other; they also serve as an important tool for grasping the logic and processes behind certain policy options. However, a wide scope of contemporary Russian political discourses and cultural narratives is also built around them. Thus, while summing up the six narratives, it seems reasonable to include several additional articulations in this analysis to finalize the study of Self/Other relations in Russia's European discourse.

First, it is worth to mention a series of articulations based on the idea that Russian position has been downplayed by other international actors and that it should be perceived at the level it deserves. Besides, these articulations may include the idea of being forcefully displaced from the "European family" and facing with the unwillingness on the part of the West to listen to Russia's concerns. Second, the civilizational articulations of Russia are especially significant. This aspect has been already mentioned in the section discussing the narrative of Russia as a defender of traditional values, but some further specifications are needed. Today, Russian domestic and foreign policy has become increasingly dependent on the ideas of conservatism and Russian exceptionalism, which presuppose the uniqueness of Russia as an identity-civilization determined by its history, vast territories, necessity to protect borders, and the sense of being a great power. It is assumed that Russia has a special civilizational and spiritual mission regarding the neighboring peoples of Eurasia. Moreover, it implies that Russia must act as an anchor for all conservative forces that oppose liberal ideas and chaos imposed by the Western world. Such articulations point at existence of a greater Russian World that transcends state borders of Russia, and of a distinct Russian civilization.

Finally, drawing upon the results of the conducted analysis—discerned in a form of patterns of convergences and divergencies in various articulations of Russian and European subjectivities—it is possible to outline a contemporary Russian narrative that replaced a narrative of Russia as a "part of the European family" that was maintained in the discourse of the Russian political leadership since the late 1980s. The conservative and civilizational turn in the Kremlin's official discourse that solidified itself during the third presidential term of Vladimir Putin to a large extent has influenced framing of Russia's internal and international

priorities. Substantially, conservatism and exceptionalism at the core of Russian domestic and foreign policy has largely counter-distinguished Russia from the liberal EU. However, the ascending of new narratives in Russia's European discourse remains overwhelmingly Western-centric. That is, the discourse is constructed on the basis of Russia's semantic relatedness with Europe and it frequently appeals to terms borrowed from the West. Most importantly, it involves a number of the Self/Other dichotomies. Through continually reproducing the articulations of these dichotomies, the key political figures of Russia thus contribute to creating of hegemonic discourse on EU-Russia relations. In this discourse Russia has been substantially distanced from the previous articulations in which Russia aspired to belong to the European milieu and, reversely, has been increasingly presented as a distinct system of cultural values or civilization. Remarkably, it is assumed that Russia has always been and continues to be involved in shaping the European reality in political, economic and cultural dimensions, at the same time preserves its distinct subjectivity. The latter is frequently seen as more complex or even more genuine than the European one in terms of its moral values. It should be noted that the discourses are not flat and are subject to change, and various articulations of the Self/Other relations are thus possible. However, the contemporary dominant narrative in Russia's European discourse is based upon clear dichotomizations and strategies of Othering.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to find out how the Self/Other nexus in Russia's official political discourse on EU-Russia relations is being constructed. The questions were raised: by what means and to what end the EU and Russia recourse to Othering; how many strategies of Othering are possible, and whether it is possible to deal with the ideas of "sameness" and "otherness" without falling into negative dynamics; how certain articulations reproduce narratives of Russia's distinct Self in its European discourse, and what kind of narrative appears to replace the narrative of Russia's alleged belongingness to the European milieu. It was argued that the Self/Other nexus can be approached from the point of view of conflictual intersubjectivity, which presents EU-Russia relations as interactions of two ontologically dislocated and unfixed subjects.

As this thesis has proven, both Russia and the EU are dependent on the figure of a symbolic Other, and the Othering practices are strongly embedded in constructing and maintaining political subjectivities. It was argued that the Self is established not only in relation to a series of differences but also in relation to certain similarities, and the Self and the Other can be constructed through various degrees of Othering. Furthermore, discourses can be seen as based on particular constructions of issues and subjectivities, but, simultaneously, these issues and subjectivities get their articulations discursively. To put in other words, subjectivities are constructed and articulated through discourses. Discourses are thus not merely products of actions, but they can be referred to as actions themselves, or at least shape which actions are within the possible.

As analysis has shown, in contemporary Russia's European discourse there is a trend towards a dichotomous articulation of Russian and European subjectivities. That is, the Russian leadership increasingly juxtaposed Russia and the EU on the basis of opposing attributes under the whole period of study. The conducted analysis allowed to deduce the six dichotomies and corresponding narratives, through which Russia has been increasingly distanced from Europe. Firstly, it has been shown that the Russian leaders were resorting to the normative argument. The narrative regarding the normative agenda mainly consisted of juxtaposing Russia as conducting an ethical, norms-based foreign policy sticking to international rules, and contributing to unity, while the EU was depicted as based on personal

exclusiveness, disregarding international norms, actively resorting to double standards and adhering to selective approaches. Such dichotomizations can be considered indicative of Russia's attempts to establish itself as the monitor of the EU's application of its advocated norms, as well of attempts to project its own normative power outward. Secondly, the discourse of Russian key political figures and groups has frequently invoked a dichotomy referring to Russia as a pragmatic and work-oriented actor, and the EU as an irrational actor unnecessarily politicizing issues. Therefore, the Russian authorities repeatedly blamed the Western governments for choosing political approaches towards Russia. The third dichotomy invoked representations of Russia as an international actor that has a sovereign decision-making capacity, while the EU has been referred to as an actor that needs external backing to hold its own on the world and thus does not pursue its own foreign policy agenda. From this perspective, the Russian leadership frequently blamed the EU for excessively relying on the US or even being led by the States due to multiple factors such as transatlantic military and trade cooperation, influence of the US on the European Commission and lobbyism of American companies in the EU. The fourth narrative that was analyzed either depicted Russia as an already globally powerful actor, or was articulative of Russia's aspirations to be perceived as a global power. In a dichotomous manner, the EU was represented as a divided and weak construction susceptible to destabilizing inner and outer developments. Remarkably, the withdrawal of the UK from the EU strengthened Russian articulations of Europe as a divided and destabilized construct. The fifth dichotomy referred to Russia as a protector and promoter of peace and stability, while the EU, on the contrary, was articulated as stoking chaos and meddling into other states' affairs. The EU's line has been reflected as unproductive and dangerous especially in the light of the 2014 Ukrainian crisis. The final sixth narrative emphasized Russia's higher moral or traditional values in contrast to moral decay of Europe. Defining this narrative more broadly, it was argued that within this interpretation Russia may articulate itself as a traditional anti-liberal civilization. What is particularly remarkable about this narrative, is that Russia may be articulated either as a distinct civilization or a specific, alternative, or, even true (i.e.: the last one who still adheres to the "true" European values) European civilization, which allegedly empowers Russia to present itself as responsible for saving common European cultural and spiritual heritage. Therefore, this thesis has demonstrated that Russia has been articulated as a global actor with

a pragmatic, norms-based foreign policy that promotes stability and peace in its neighborhood as in the wider international arena; Russia has also been remarkably characterized as a moral compass for the Western world and defender of traditional values. Reversely, the EU has been frequently articulated as a divided construct that tends to politicize cooperation and disregards international norms, continuously resorting to double standards and thus instigating chaos. The conducted analysis additionally allowed to identify factors that, according to the Russian leadership, were conducive to the deterioration of EU-Russia relations. It was argued that unpreparedness for increased deterioration in bilateral relations between Russia and the EU to a great extent relates to the lack of common understanding about Russian views on its relations with the bloc, which makes highlighting patterns of convergences and divergencies between the various articulations of Russian and European subjectivities of special significance.

Furthermore, it was argued that through emphasizing divergence points Russia moved away from its previous narrative, in which Europe had been considered as a natural cultural and societal context for Russia, and moved towards radical Othering of the EU based on the strong mode of differentiation. However, while Russia explicitly set itself apart from the EU in five out of six identified dichotomies and corresponding narratives, the value aspect could be also referred to as a liaison between Russian and European subjectivities. That is, through appealing to particular values that Russia deems traditional or *true European* values, it may depict itself as a specific part of the European civilization. However, while Europe here was reproduced as a part of Russia's Self, the narrative was still constructed as antagonistic since the Russian leaders criticize European states for abandoning their roots and traditional values.

This study has shown that through emphasis on the six dichotomies a border between Russia and the EU is articulated; they serve for creating and propagating dominant narratives regarding the relationship between Russia's Self and its European Other; they also serve as an important tool for grasping the logic and processes behind certain policy options. Furthermore, additional articulations were added in the analysis to finalize the study of Self/Other relations in Russia's European discourse. A series of articulations referred to the idea that Russian position has been downplayed by other international actors and that it should be perceived at the level it deserves. These articulations also included the idea of being excluded from the "European family" and facing with the unwillingness on the part of the West to

listen to Russia's concerns. Then, the civilizational articulations of Russia were deemed significant and discerned on the basis of Russia's narrative as a defender of traditional values. It was argued that the conservative and civilizational turn in the Kremlin's official discourse solidified itself during the third presidential term of Vladimir Putin and to a large extent influenced framing of Russia's internal and international priorities. Russian domestic and foreign policy has thus become increasingly dependent on the concepts of conservatism and Russian exceptionalism, while corresponding articulations depicted a greater Russian World, transcending state borders of Russia.

Finally, based on the results of the conducted analysis, which were discerned in a form of patterns of convergences and divergencies in various articulations of Russian and European subjectivities, a contemporary Russian narrative that replaced a narrative of Russia as a "part of the European family" was outlined in this thesis. It was argued that while conservatism and exceptionalism have largely counter-distinguished Russia from the liberal EU and presented it as a distinct system of cultural values or civilization, the ascending of new narratives in Russia's discourse remained overwhelmingly Western-centric, which points at the dependence on the symbolic Other. At the same time, while Russia's previous strategy largely consisted of attempts to make the West accept Russia's belongingness to a presumably common European milieu and to admit its alleged compatibility with the European political logic, the current idea behind Russia's European discourse is to establish itself as a distinct and unique Self challenging the EU's political subjectivity.

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List of Abbreviations

CEES	Central Eastern European countries
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DAAs	Discourse Analytical Approaches
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EU	European Union
IR	International Relations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ROC	Russian Orthodox Church
UN	United Nations
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organization

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