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**The Construction of Russian State Identity in International
Relations through Discourses on Terrorism 2000-2008**

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Introduction

It has widely been acknowledged that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 prompted a crossroads not just for scholars of Russia, Russian politics or International Relations, but for international politics as such. The wide-spread failure to predict the war has led to upsurge in Russian security studies and started a process of academic revision concerning both teaching and research. While the bulk of this research understandably focusses on contemporary issues, this thesis is inspired by the conviction that current scholarship must also revise previously established claims about Russian security policy. One lesson that the war in Ukraine has taught the academic community is that ideational factors matter. While no single explanatory scheme or approach will likely resolve all the supposed 'riddles' of Russian policymaking, analyses were partially misled by a positivist rational-choice mindset.¹ Russian security policy during Vladimir Putin's first two terms as President of the Russian Federation, viewed through the geostrategic or materialist paradigm, is conventionally understood (and taught) as having undergone a period of cooperation with the West while Russian power capabilities were diminished. Russia's support of and partial partaking in the American War on Terror is a case in point. As Russia's material capabilities increased, largely due to rising world-market prices for oil and gas, the Putin administration was free to pursue a more assertive policy.² With the advent of the Crimea crisis and the 'civilisational turn' in President Putin's third term, scholars and journalists once again debated whether Russian foreign policy was

¹ For example, Professor Emeritus of War Studies at King's College London, Lawrence Freedman, wrote in a comment in which he assessed his own predictions about a potential invasion: 'Clearly, I did not make the big call, which would have been to join those who had been convinced for some time that a big war was about to start. [...] I was becoming increasingly persuaded of its possibility, *but it still seemed to be such a self-evidently stupid move that I assumed that Putin had better options.*' Eckel (2023). Emphasis added.

² Here, I am relying on the account of Elias Götz (2022), provided in the Europe-Asia Studies' special edition on Russian foreign policy in the 'near abroad'.

motivated by genuine security concerns or neo-Soviet ideology. While Russia's 2022 invasion has certainly put an end to hopes of a Russian 'return' to political accommodation with the West, it has not resolved the debate about which motivations are the driving force in its foreign policy.

The dissertation at hand does not claim, or even attempt, to provide an answer to this question. Instead, it seeks to start a process of investigation of Russian foreign policy under President Putin from its very beginnings. If we accept that ideology is a significant factor in Russia foreign policy, the first task of any thorough chronological revision of policy must be the identification of governmental discourse(s) on a given security issue. Focussing on Vladimir Putin's first two terms in office as President (2000 - 2008), this thesis seeks to show how Russian state identity has been constructed in reference to terrorism as a security issue. The constructivist approach of the work is outlined in the first section, where I establish the centrality of identity to political action and explain why this approach can be applied to large social constructs, such as states, rather than only individuals. I will also introduce my critical approach to security studies and threat construction, before pointing out some of the common pitfalls of constructivist scholarship with respect to epistemology, ontology and research ethics. Section two will then outline my discussion of methodology. In a first sub-section, I show why discourse analysis is so well suited for the analysis of identity, before developing my own approach to the method, chiefly influenced by Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's Discourse Theory, in the second sub-section. Third, I will introduce some contextual knowledge, which is essential for my discourse analytical method. Here, I am providing the reader both with knowledge about the emergence of the terrorist threat in Russia as well as highlight the particularity of diplomatic language in the analysis of discourse. My analysis proper, in section three, will then embark on the discussion of international terrorism by Russian diplomats within the United Nations. As the international forum *par excellence*,

the United Nations is particularly suited to examine the construction of threats, solutions and state identity in diplomatic terms. Again, my analysis will be divided into three subsections. Russia's construction of threats shows in which ways terrorism has been portrayed as an essential threat not just to the Russian people and the Russian state, but to the world community as a whole. Second, Russia's advocacy of certain solutions to this threat reflects the image that Russian diplomacy has and promotes of the contemporary world order. In particular, Russian diplomacy identifies a great need of international cooperation, be it politically, militarily or legally, and the advent of a changing world order, which requires more justice. Third, in highlighting Russia's evaluation of threats and world order, three narratives of Russian state identity emerge. The first narrative posits Russia as a global, reliable partner in the fight against terrorism. The second argues for the specificity of the Russian state in the international community, with certain implications for Russia's place therein. Notably, Russia is identified as exceptional both for being a victim of international terrorism and because of its unique civilisational status between East and West. The third narrative showcases Russian policy against social injustice and sustainable economic development. The contributions of this research are as follows. First, it fills the gap of current research on Russian diplomatic rhetoric. While a few studies have been put forward that analyse Russian diplomacy through the lens of discourse analysis, there is no scholarship on Russian identity construction in the forum of the United Nations. Considering the centrality of the United Nations in international and diplomatic affairs, as well as in debates in other disciplines such as International Law, this is simply startling. The analysis of discourses in this context can provide important insights into the consistency and importance of ideology for Russian policy-making. The second contribution is methodological, as I develop a theory of diplomatic discourse as a social practice. As diplomacy is the primary means of inter-state communication, it plays an incremental role in the projection of state identity. Yet,

there is very little in the way of current scholarship on Russia to make this relationship explicit. This dissertation seeks to rectify that. Lastly, the identity narratives identified in this paper can be usefully employed for further areas of research. Scholars working on Russian particularism in one of its many forms, for example, may see their own work reflected through a new prism of Russian diplomatic / security prism.

Despite the need to track the ideological development of Russian security policy under Putin with academic vigour, there is arguably a lot this dissertation would like to, but cannot, achieve. An identification of ideology can only ever be the first step in a sustained chronology, upon which other questions must follow. Constrained both by space and methodology, the work at hand can only point out further avenues of research instead of driving them to their final conclusion. These avenues lead to the investigation of the evolution of the narratives at hand before Putin's accession to the presidency as well as their development after his second term. In particular, it is necessary to understand, in concrete terms, when and why a certain narrative becomes more prominent than another. Another question that this research does not address is to what extent government ideology reflects genuine security thinking or serves as mere propaganda. I circumvent this issue through my development of a methodology that treats diplomacy as social practice constitutive of social reality. Taking Russia's diplomatic discourse at face value does not imply a blind acceptance of, at times, selectively presented information, and, at other times, blatant lies. Rather, it acknowledges the fact that any construction of state identity is necessarily contingent and performative. Any representation of reality that government officials put forward is intended not to be taken at face value — and more often than not, it is. Rather than seeking to provide a corrective of Russia's 'real' state identity, scholarship on identity — at least in its initial stages — must somewhat curtail itself to a critically distanced representation of official discourse. This is not a shortcoming

of the research, but its inevitable feature. To study these representations is valuable because it inspires and legitimises political action. By mapping Russia's official discourse on terrorism, this paper intends to be a first step for other scholars in a wider investigation of the relationship between discourse and Russian foreign policy.

A Constructivist Approach

In spite of the numerous assertions of constructivist scholars that constructivism holds the status of an alternative underdog endeavour against the more established positivist paradigms — especially in the field of International Relations — constructivism today has become a well-established mainstream approach to the study of politics.³ Especially the analysis of Russian politics has prompted significant advances in International Relations theory and helped to bring constructivism out of the shadows of interpretivist obscurity.⁴ While united in challenging the waning realist hegemony in the political sciences, individual theories and methodologies can be rather different from one another. The aim of this section, then, is to lay out the theoretical tenets that informs the research of this work before turning to their implications for its methodology.

Constructivism differs from realism and other positivist approaches to the study of politics by virtue of its distinct epistemology and ontology. Constructivist theories do not view the social world as empirically given, ready for inspection by scholars. Rather, they maintain that the social world is a realm of vast complexity which undergoes a process of constant change. While realist approaches are principally interested in material factors as the decisive constituents of political processes, such as foreign policy, constructivism favours the analysis of meaning that actors attribute to the social world.⁵ Thus, constructivism can account for actions that are devoid of material interests as well as for those

³ This can be seen by the fact that constructivism is, in fact, anything but a unified research agenda, instead incorporating several schools of thought. Throughout this paper, I employ the term in an inclusive manner, spanning what is conventionally understood ‘soft’ constructivism, ‘hard’ or ‘radical’ constructivism as well as work that is sometimes described as post-structuralist.

⁴ Feklyunina (2018), p. 5.

⁵ Lamont (2022), pp. 24-27.

processes in which material interests are important to the extent that they investigate the meaning that actors attribute to them. Material interests — or any interests — as such, constructivists maintain, do not exist. Interests are constructed based on the understanding that an actor has of herself and her social world. In consequence, a constructivist approach has to explain two processes: how is an actor's understanding of herself constructed and how is her understanding of the social world constructed. In other words, constructivist theories need to provide a concept of identity for actors.⁶ The concept of identity for most constructivist scholars comprises a model of differentiation, whereby an actor's identity is constituted and complemented by an 'other'.⁷ As opposed to social psychology, constructivism emphasises the intersubjective nature by which actors, others and social world are constituted; actors are never viewed in isolation.⁸ To the extent that actors are defined as human individuals, this seems unproblematic. Yet, the application of the concept of identity to states is not uncontested and requires further specification. Given the sheer complexity of the social world, posited by constructivist scholarship, it seems paradoxical that an abstract entity such as a state should have an identity. In the case of the Russian Federation, it is impossible to even speak of a nation state. While the Latin origin of the term, referring to 'sameness', suggests the preservation of those qualities that do not change over time, a definition of state identity from a constructivist perspective, where everything is constantly changing, prompts a more extensive explanation. States are complex constructs to which actors on different levels of analysis relate. Actors produce, share and re-produce their understanding of a given state, such as Russia, in a multitude of contexts and thereby necessitate the

⁶ McCourt (2022), pp. 30-31.

⁷ Feklyunina (2018) p. 7.

⁸ Feklyunina (2018), p. 7.

change that state identities undergo.⁹ And yet, state identities can be remarkably stable over decades and even centuries.¹⁰ In his *Social Theory of International Politics* Alexander Wendt argues that 'states are people too', making a powerful case for the view that states bear anthropomorphic identities.¹¹ According to Wendt, states are corporate social structures, based on a common understanding of individuals. The fact that they are constructed does not make them less real. Although states as such are unobservable, they exhibit constitutive and causal structures (for example the law and the institutions which enforce it) which differentiates them from both fiction or mere governments:

What matters is that individuals accept the obligation to act jointly on behalf of collective beliefs, whether or not they subscribe to them personally. Acting on this commitment is how states acquire their causal powers and get reproduced over time. The concept of state agency is not simply a useful fiction for scholars, in other words, but how the members of states constitute its *reality*.¹²

Yet, states are not only characterised by a shared idea of statehood, but also by a 'decision structure that both institutionalizes and authorizes collective action.'¹³ Institutionalisation is the process whereby individuals become authorised to speak on behalf of the collective which constitutes the state. This authorisation implies that the actions and statements of state representatives are concurrent with the actions of the state. This applies to presidents, diplomats and soldiers alike, none of which are normally

⁹ Note that the form of an actor can vary, depending on the level of analysis. An actor can be a state, an organisation, an individual, a group of individuals etc. I am employing the deliberately vague term actor here to underscore the fact that there is a vast number of contesting understandings of a term such as 'Russia'.

¹⁰ The vast constructivist literature on state identity stands testament to this. For an example, see Oskanian's (2018) discussion of Russia's ontological perspective on Central Asia.

¹¹ Wendt (1999), p. 215.

¹² Wendt (1999), p. 219. Emphasis in the original.

¹³ Wendt (1999), p. 218.

charged personally for their actions as long as these actions are conducted in the capacity of state representatives. Statehood is thus not a given datum in the positivist sense but the result of a continued performance on behalf of its representatives.

Security plays a vital role in this form of performance. This is because states continue to be the primary security providers for their citizens in the modern era. Civil rights and duties are principally justified through their relation to individual and collective security. This derives from the strong influence that the Hobbesian tradition has exerted on modern conceptions of human nature, the state and violence. Here, the condition for public security is achieved through the creation of a state monopoly on violence.¹⁴ However, security is not objectively linked to the modern nation state, but the dominant understanding of security as provided by the sovereign state is based on the latter having been the dominant form of political community in the modern era.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the Hobbesian model continues to be of importance as it has retained its hegemonic position in defining state and security for policymakers and populations alike. To the extent that states and governments justify themselves through security by ‘providing’ it to their political communities, states rely on an inimical other. Crucially, the construction of these others does not necessarily correspond to empirical facts, such as death tolls. Terrorism is a case in point here, claiming less lives in the United States per year than road accidents involving deer.¹⁶ Why is it, then, that the United States embarked on a ‘War on Terror’, rather than a ‘War on Deer’? Charlotte Heath-Kelly aptly summarises:

States “write” themselves through their conflicts with others: they perform themselves as defenders of just causes and legitimate standard bearers of civilisation against the barbarous other. This is the functionality of generational

¹⁴ Hansen (2004), p. 30.

¹⁵ Walker (1990), p. 7.

¹⁶ Heath-Kelly (2016), p. 67.

crises such as the Cold War and the war on terror – they form a matrix of understanding whereby states can assert themselves as legitimate actors and find their purpose on the world stage. Authority and legitimacy are performances that rely upon the discursive construction of threatening others.¹⁷

State identity and threat construction are therefore inherently linked as long as we understand the state as the primary institution tasked with the ensuring of security within its territory. Based on the state's responsibility for security, governments develop individual security policies where '[t]o construct something as a threat to security most often involves a mobilization of discursively important "sub-security concepts," such as "strategic interests" and "national interests"(...).'¹⁸ Within the security studies literature, researchers of the so-called Copenhagen School have devised a model whereby policy issues can become 'securitised', that is, they are designated as a matter of high priority for the state which involves the suspension of the 'normal' (read 'democratic') political process.¹⁹ The securitisation of a given issue thus often brings with itself the declaration of a state of exception which serves to justify a government's employment of extra-legal measures.²⁰ Securitisation in foreign policy is therefore intricately linked to the project of nation-building and domestic policy. Nevertheless the employment of the securitisation model in non-Western context poses a theoretical problem. How can an issue be securitised, that is, removed from the domain of democratic politics, in political communities where democracy is not the norm? In *Russian Security Policy under Putin*, Aglaya Snetkov analyses the respective securitisation and de-securitisation of Chechnya, noting that

¹⁷ Heath-Kelly (2016), p. 62. Intra-textual references deleted.

¹⁸ Weldes in Hansen (2004), p. 30.

¹⁹ Snetkov (2014), p. 24.

²⁰ See, for a famous example in the context of terrorism, Giorgio Agamben (2005).

in order to fully comprehend and account for the nature of (de)securitization processes, it is necessary to analyse these processes in relation to the contextual reading by the (de)securitizing actors of both the relationship between these processes and wider security priorities, and the generalized nature of the divide between 'normal' and 'security' politics.²¹

Context is therefore key. Meanings presenting a departure from political 'business as usual' can only be understood in their historical context. Rather than maintaining a formalist reading of the securitisation process, this work employs a relativist approach. Even in non-democratic regimes where the public sphere can be viewed as securitised *tout court*, policymakers make decisions which issues to prioritise. The aim of this study, then, is to analyse to what extent terrorism has become a security issue with respect to Russian policymakers and how this has affected official Russian state identity. An important implication of constructivism is that its ontological assumptions preclude an assessment of these categories from a positivist point of view. In other words, this study is not interested in assessing either the 'reality' of a potential terrorist threat that Russia faced or the proportionality of this threat to her official discourse. Rather, this work is an attempt at understanding the supposed terrorist threat from the Russian perspective and analysing which functions it served in the construction of Russian state identity in the realm of diplomacy.

Constructivist scholarship views security threats such as terrorism not as objectively given, but — as with identity and policy — are interested in the way they are recognised as such. Consequently, constructivist research does not focus on 'solving' security

²¹ Snetkov (2014).

issues.²² Instead, it analyses the social processes which construct security actors, legitimise their behaviour and disassociate them from their opponents. The current literature on constructivist identity analysis sets out a number of theoretical angles from which theoretical understanding translates into methodological analysis. Valentina Feklyunina identifies three cornerstones of the debate on identity analysis on the state level:

First, while most constructivists agree that understandings of identity may change both in response to external and internal factors, their empirical analysis often privileges either the external or the internal dimension. Second, studies of Russian identity differ in where they locate the site of identity construction. While some look at Soviet or Russian official documents and statements (Light, 2003), or focus on elite debates (Clunan, 2009; Tsygankov, 2016), others emphasise the importance of popular understandings as they are articulated in popular fiction, mass media or textbooks (Hopf, 2002, 2013), or reflected in public opinion surveys and focus groups (White and Feklyunina, 2014). Finally, studies of Russian identity differ in their attention to material factors and in the ways in which they understand their role.²³

In the context of state identities, external and internal factors generally correspond to imaginary but analytically useful divide between foreign and domestic policy. The external/internal binary, the site of identity construction and the role of material factors should therefore be accounted for in an constructivist approach to the study of foreign policy. Although this work recognises the importance of domestic processes in shaping a state's view on security issues such as terrorism, I am primarily interested in the form in

²² Aradau, Huysmans, Neal & Voelkner (2015), p. 1.

²³ Feklyunina (2018), pp. 8-9.

which this understanding is projected into the international community. As Aglaya Snetkov in her study on Russian Security Policy under Putin notes, terrorism is a security issue pertaining to both the external and internal dimensions of state policy.²⁴ In other words, it is viewed as both a threat from abroad and from within. Consequently, a joint investigation of both foreign policy and domestic sources in order to reconstruct the evolving Russian understanding on her security and identity would be very fruitful. The only reason this work does not pursue this line of inquiry are restrictions of time and space. As concerns the site of identity construction, a thorough constructivist point of view must assert the importance of several sites of identity construction, simultaneously. This view, while ontologically faithful to constructivism's theoretical base, is not always analytically useful. In simple terms, constructivism posits the fundamental interdependence of meanings, their exchange and the material factors that help to shape both. However, any study of any length has to limit its analytical framework to a size that is both manageable for the researcher and intelligible for the reader. Hence, although I acknowledge the importance of universal intersubjectivity and the permanent co-constitution of meanings, I have chosen to focus on a single site of identity construction in foreign policy — the United Nations — and a very select group of identity producers — Russian diplomats — based on the lack of research in this field. I will further substantiate this choice when I discuss diplomacy as a social practice in the methodological part. Lastly, this study will also omit material factors as relevant for our understanding of Russian state identity and security in the determined timeframe. This is based on my understanding that material factors, as mentioned above, viewed for themselves do not determine an actor's identity or ontology. I will return to this in my discussion of discourse analysis. Although I acknowledge material factors to be co-constitutive of any state's

²⁴ Snetkov (2015).

understanding of self and security, the analysis of this process would require an additional methodological framework and hence overtax my capabilities here.

Lastly, two other aspects of constructivist research should be addressed in this brief overview. The first concerns the ontological position of the researcher. Since both the social world and our understanding of the social world are constantly constructed, the constructivist researcher has no claim to objective truth from her insights, when we understand objective to mean empirically given. Although epistemological positions vary within constructivism, employing both positivist and post-positivist perspectives, the fact that the social world forms a complex system of interactions into which the researcher is embedded means the constructivist researcher is not detached from her object of study.²⁵ Through the act of research and publication, the constructivist scholar penetrates her subject and is a cause of change herself. The second aspect follows from the first and concerns the ethical position of the researcher. Since constructivist scholarship is interested, among other things, in the power relations of the social world, it would do well to reflect on the interests that prompt its own research programme. Reflexivity is key. On the one hand, constructivist research must be able to subdue its ethical commitment in the interest of parsimony, while on the other hand it must avoid becoming a pseudo-objective reification of the actor-understanding it seeks to uncover. While this work seeks to re-construct what image of Russia has been constructed by her diplomats in the international arena, it does not on any account treat this image as either truthful or necessary. Such a position would not only be self-contradictory from the point of view of ontology, but also ethically uncritical. Nevertheless, I reject the recently popularised view that (especially constructivist) research on Russia *ipso facto* bestows legitimacy on a regime whose present military operations have caused great despair in Europe. Such a

²⁵ Feklyunina (2018), pp. 7-8.

view rejects the ability of individuals to gain access which is critical (in both senses of the word) to complex political processes. The spirit of this work, then, is to provide that access in as parsimonious as manner as possible, so that 'normal' politics can prevail. With these theoretical tenets in mind, we can now turn to the primary medium of social construction: language.

Constructivism and Discourse Analysis

The previous section gave an overview of constructivist approaches to the study of political processes in general and developed the theoretical implications that apply to this piece of research in particular. A central component of social construction, however, has not yet been touched on. This is the medium of language. Although neither social construction nor discourses as such need necessarily be defined as linguistic in nature, processes of identity construction are most often understood and studied as such. Like constructivism, discourse analysis does not refer to a unified theory or method, but comprises a variety of approaches. This section will briefly establish the field's core assumptions as relevant to my constructivist theoretical basis. We will do so by briefly reviewing two of the most common approaches to the study of discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse Theory as conceptualised by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, showing why the research at hand employs the latter. Finally, I will put forward my own theoretical approach to the study of discourse by showing how this work diverges from Laclau and Mouffe's model. The next section will then address how discourse theory will be employed as method.

Language is the vehicle of social construction *par excellence*. The study of social construction and definition of discourse are in principle open to extra-linguistic, semiotic approaches. Discourses need not be defined as speech or text but can be extended to include all systems of signification, for example in the form of government symbolism as emblems or memorials. Nevertheless, the majority of meaning is not conveyed through abstract symbols but human speech, be it spoken or written. Discourse analytical approaches to identity are based, in one form or another, on the Structuralist work of

Ferdinand de Saussure.²⁶ Saussure defined language as a system of signification in which signifier and signified are arbitrarily related. Sound and meaning are acquired and as such can be variously combined, as opposed to inherently connected. Thus, different languages employ different sounds to signify the same object. At the same time, Saussure explains the coherence, that is semiotic stability, of language through a model of binary differentiation. Words acquire their meaning not through a semantic essence (where the sound 'dog' signifies the object 'dog') but through their opposition to other words (where the sound 'dog' signifies the object 'dog' because it is contextually differentiated from the sounds 'cat' signifying an object that is not a dog). Constructivist conceptions of identity, positing a self that needs to be differentiated from an other, is thus intellectually indebted to Structuralist linguistics. Post-structuralist scholars of identity have distanced themselves from the Saussurian framework of binary opposites and its implied positivist ontology. While stressing the arbitrary nature of the connection between signifier and signified, Structuralist linguistics still understands language as a closed system which encompasses a fixed structure of meanings which can be uncovered through research.²⁷ Contemporary schools of discourse analysis, such as Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse Theory, have abandoned these claims as a consequence of constructivist ontological assumptions and a more nuanced view of self and other.²⁸ The production of meaning is no longer viewed as embedded in an inherent linguistic structure of binary opposites but acknowledged to undergo change through the interaction with other constructions of meaning. While Saussure sought a universal linguistic pattern that structured the use of language, conceptually closer to contemporary notions of the 'universal grammar', discourse analysis has abandoned this functionalist view through its interest in the political uses that language is put to.

²⁶ Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), pp. 8-9. Heath-Kelly (2016), p. 60.

²⁷ Heath-Kelly (2016), p. 63.

²⁸ Heath-Kelly (2016), p. 63.

Both Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse Theory seek to explain how meanings are shaped in social context and the relation they bear to power. Their principal difference lies in the role they attribute to material factors and their explicit exposition of methodology. Critical Discourse Analysis as developed by Norman Fairclough maintains a binary approach to the study of text and contextual factors. Discourses are broadly understood as instances of speech or text production that frame reality in certain way, thus reproducing reality. Texts are analysed employing close-reading techniques chiefly influenced by Systemic Functional Linguistics.²⁹ Means of text production, on the other hand, are viewed more positivistically as material factors shaping discourses, thus constraining discursive change.³⁰ As the name suggests, Critical Discourse Analysis engages in a critique of discursive practices and the power structures underlying them.³¹ This poses two problems for the researcher. First, CDA's focus on the means of text production necessitates a second methodology, in addition to the analysis of texts. In order to account for non-discursive factors, for example the institutional dynamics that have an influence on the production of a Policy Concepts within a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the researcher has to expand the focus of her research significantly. In the context of Russia, this would mean to account for the mode of recruitment in these institutions, thus potentially requiring a review of informal means of government, but also, in the last instance, knowledge about the organisation and decision-mechanisms at play in the so-called 'power ministries'. Suffice it to say that governments are naturally disinclined to share this knowledge. A second hurdle is the fact that Critical Discourse Analysis, examining both text and text production from opposing ontological premises, that is

²⁹ Fairclough (2003), p. 5.

³⁰ For a discussion of the role of non-discursive factors in discursive change vis-a-vis Discourse Theory, see Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), pp. 60-61.

³¹ Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), p. 53.

constructivist with respect to texts and positivist with respect to text-production, requires a social theory which is able to reconcile the two. I am sceptical whether this can be done — a view that is sustained by the criticism that has been levelled against Fairclough's definition of ideology.³² For both of these reasons I have opted to employ Laclau and Mouffe's approach to the analysis of discourse. Not only is their ontology more coherent — albeit no less controversial — but their analytical toolset also strikes me as more relevant to the topic at hand.

Laclau and Mouffe's ontology develops in response to the critique of Marxist materialism. Rejecting determination by the economy, they develop a model of the social realm is not characterised by objective classes but in which identities are constantly produced through articulation. Discourse Theory rejects Structuralism on the basis that logical necessity in discursive formations derives 'not from an underlying intelligible principle but from the regularity of a system of structural positions.'³³ While any discursive formation is structured in a certain way, no discursive formation is *a priori* determined by a specific structure. Thus, from Laclau and Mouffe's point of view, Structuralism's postulation of a universal linguistic structure is little more than a particular discourse itself. This has far-reaching implications for our understanding of reality. Laclau and Mouffe state unambiguously that their

analysis rejects the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices. It affirms: a) that every object is constituted as an object of discourse, insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence; and b) that any distinction between what are usually called linguistic and behavioural aspects of a social practice, is either a an incorrect distinction or ought to find its place as a

³² Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), p. 186.

³³ Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. 106.

differentiation within the social production of meaning, which is structured under the form of discursive totalities.³⁴

Note, however, that

[t]he fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of ‘natural phenomena’ or ‘expressions of the wrath of God’, depends on the structuring of a discursive field.³⁵

Laclau and Mouffe view discourses as material, and in consequence an opposition between material and non-material factors — as in other constructivist schools of thought — cannot emerge.

In Laclau and Mouffe’s terminology articulation is defined as

any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice we will call *discourse*. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call *moments*. By contrast, we will call *element* any difference that is not discursively articulated.³⁶

³⁴ Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. 107.

³⁵ Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. 108. No emphasis added.

³⁶ Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. 105. No emphasis added.

Discourses aim to give us stable representations of reality where representation in the strict sense has become unthinkable. Since agents lack essences, their identities can in fact be constructed from a variety of categories. In case of an individual, one might identify as 'white' and as 'man' because these are the elements incorporated in the contemporary identity discourse. By contrast, 'long-nailed' and 'short-sighted' are categories of less pertinence (at least in contexts conventionally understood as political). In consequence, agents are 'overdetermined' — a state referring to the fact that agents can in principle be defined by an unlimited amount of elements, which are themselves contingent. Therefore, there is a 'surplus of meaning'.³⁷ Discourses, in which identity is stipulated through articulation of moments, are distinguished from the 'field of discursivity', denoting the totality of all surplus meaning. Without the field of discursivity, identity would not be contingent, but determined. It is therefore the *conditio sine qua non* for any social construction of identity and meaning.

According to Laclau and Mouffe,

This term [field of discursivity] indicates the form of its relation with every concrete discourse: it determines at the same time the necessarily discursive character of any object, and the impossibility of any given discourse to implement a final suture. On this point, our analysis meets up with a number of contemporary currents of thought which — from Heidegger to Wittgenstein — have insisted on the impossibility of fixing ultimate meanings.³⁸

³⁷ Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. 111.

³⁸ Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. 111.

Such a conclusion has evident consequences for any research subscribing to such an epistemology. We have already discussed them in the previous section. But if ultimate fixing of meaning is impossible, how is the partial fixing of meaning achieved? Here, Laclau and Mouffe introduce the concept of nodal-points, defined as ‘privileged discursive points’ around which other moments are organised:

*The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity. Every social practice is therefore — in one of its dimensions — articulatory.*³⁹

Discourses and practices are therefore in constant interpenetration. To the extent that a discourse represents a material thought-regime it can be political or objective. An objective discourse here does not refer to a discourse that derives its claim to universal truth from some higher, metaphysical instance, but rather because it is universally acknowledged to be true. In other words, it is hegemonic. Hegemony is thus understood as a discursive state where the realised contingency of moments is largely arrested. There is, for example, a general social consensus within Europe that children ought to be educated in schools, since the discursive structures connecting such diverse concepts as children, education, success, value, necessity and socialisation are relatively stable. Thus a ‘chain of equivalence’ lends stability to a discourse. Political discourses, on the other hand, are understood here as contested. In other words, the moments of the discourse are more likely to show diversity. The current debate on ‘gender’ should illustrate the point, where formally hegemonic constructions have recently begun to crumble. Lastly,

³⁹ Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. 113. Emphasis in the original.

we should introduce the concept of floating signifiers. As a matter of principle, floating signifiers are nodal points, but ‘whereas the term “nodal point” refers to a point of crystallisation within a specific discourse, the term “floating signifier” belongs to the ongoing struggle between different discourses to fix the meaning of important signs.’⁴⁰

Laclau and Mouffe thus present us with a comprehensive analytical toolkit as well as persuasive model for discursive change. Nevertheless, I would like to point out a couple of aspects in which my approach will differ from them, be it because I have an objection to their model or because a given aspect of the Discourse Theory is simply irrelevant for the research question at hand. First, Laclau and Mouffe’s model is a theory of social change in which the implicit unit of analysis is the individual, rather than the state. Originating in their critique of the totality of society, stipulated by Marxism, they provide an explanation for discursive social change that scrutinises the process by which individuals identify as classes and other groups. This thesis, on the other hand, is interested in the formation of state identity through social practices. In the previous section I showed that even ‘conventional’ constructivists, such as Wendt, treat states anthropomorphically and this argument can easily be extended to Discourse Theory. Where I partially depart from Laclau and Mouffe is in their conceptualisation of the subject. To the extent that Discourse Theory relies on psychological approaches to explain articulatory practices, I would like to distance myself from it.⁴¹ States, it should be evident, have no psyche. They can solely exist as discursive constructions, just like individual subject positions. What distinguishes an individual from a state is that an individual could exist extra-discursively — that is outside the social realm — whereas states are *per definitionem* conglomerates of social practices. This work seeks to show

⁴⁰ Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), p. 27.

⁴¹ For a discussion of Laclau’s importance to Discourse Theory, see Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), p. 38-41.

the elements and function of a discourse on Russian state identity in the context of terrorism, not its underlying causes. A focus on causes, let alone an explanation based on social psychology, would be in contradiction to any serious notion of contingency. While identity is necessarily constructed in relation to an other, I do not suggest that there is any foundation, psychological or otherwise, beyond the principle of discursive contingency which makes this construction possible.

Another point requiring clarification in Discourse Theory is the question of a plurality of discourses. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe treat the word discourse in two ways. First, they use it to designate a dominant mode of understanding and thus interchangeably with hegemony. In this fashion, they refer to the colonialist discourse of humanism, which linked eligibility to human rights with European identity.⁴² At the same time, however, it is evident from their theory that there can never be a single discourse at a given time. Since any act of articulation potentially modifies a given discourse, the concept of discourse can be isolated on a hierarchy of analytical levels. At the top, we would find regimes of knowledge, such as the discourse on schools just mentioned, and at the bottom, we could isolate individual speech acts, which constitute miniature discourses in themselves. And even individual speech acts must be viewed as interconnected to other discourses, since they cannot emerge in isolation. Intertextuality is thus an unavoidable consequence of intersubjectivity. Since discourses can never be 'sutured', they are, just like Laclau and Mouffe's dictum on 'society', strictly viewed 'no legitimate object of discourse.'⁴³ Is discourse analysis therefore a fruitless endeavour? Yes and no. Yes, since any characterisation of a given discourse cannot be of continuing use. Depending on the degree to which we can view a discourse as 'political' or 'objective', any discourse analysis must soon cease any claim to lasting utility for the present and serve as a historical testament. This, however, is the common fate of most

⁴² Cf. Laclau & Mouffe (1985), 116.

⁴³ Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. 103.

research in the political sciences, indeed it is the necessary consequence of all research viewed from a constructivist point of view. No, because the researcher can still claim the relative use of his research for his contemporaries. Once aware of the limitations of the concept of discourse, it remains necessary to specify which discourse exactly is examined. The discourse prompted in my research question is thus understood as a limited number of speech instances by a limited number of individuals for a specific time frame. It therefore seeks to capture only one aspect of Russian state identity. Relative discursive closure can therefore be achieved through strict delimitation of discursive parameters in terms of text, producer and timeframe. This will not give us *the* discourse on Russian state identity, but any attempt at approaching a discourse as a frame of knowledge must start by identifying a discourse. Just as with discourses themselves then, discourse-analytical research must be reproduced, viewed intertextually, re-articulated and put into context with other discourses.

Methodology

Discourse Analysis in Practice

The previous sections established a theory of constructivism as an ontological framework for the discussion, and argued for language as the primary medium through which social interaction and politics are conducted. Discourse Theory provides a theoretical account of social construction by providing a series of analytical categories which lend themselves to practical application. The aim of this section, then, is to show how this can be done. First, I will clarify the methodological choices which will inform my argument. Then, I will elaborate on the contextual factors that influence the adaptation of Laclau and Mouffe's model for the research question at hand. I will elaborate on the importance of contextual knowledge for the interpretation of texts before establishing the historical and what I will refer to as the 'practical' context of the research topic.

Discourse analysis is both theory and method. As noted before, discourse analytical approaches are employed by scholars of both the empiricist and interpretivist paradigms. It is therefore a rather flexible mode of inquiry from which either analytical techniques or ontology can be borrowed, modified and combined with other methods or theories. Thus, it would be possible to employ the analytical categories proposed by Discourse Theory (elements, empty signifiers, nodal points), without, for example, acknowledging the material character of discourses. The previous section argued that the unified approach to ontology, epistemology and the analytical toolkit proposed by Discourse Theory lends itself more easily and persuasively to the research question at hand. How exactly will this be achieved?

To establish what the Russian diplomatic discourse on state identity was, I will analyse a corpus of 44 speeches made by Russian representatives to the United Nations, delivered either in the Security Council or the General Assembly. The sources were accessed through the UN digital library throughout December 2023. The documents were found by focussing on discursive acts classified by the UN as speeches (rather than letters, petitions, etc.). Only speeches that fell into the designated time-frame and were listed under the UN agenda item 'terrorism' were analysed. Analysis itself was conducted in both English and Russian. Analysis in the Russian language was conducted for better knowledge of source content and to spot linguistic idiosyncrasies which might be lost in translation. All quotations from sources will be given in English, however, for greater clarity for the reader. They will also be taken from the English versions of my sources, that is the official UN translation, rather than be based on my own translation of the Russian text. A detailed list of sources can be found in the appendix. Analysis of texts will be conducted without the use of coding software, but through repeated rounds of close-reading. Thus, similarities and differences in the individual speeches will be noted. In my close-reading analysis, I will apply the categories for discourse analysis as proposed by Laclau and Mouffe. By means of process-tracing, I will then establish whether these categories (elements, nodal points, etc.) have remained stable or undergone change. I will thus discern the nature of the Russian diplomatic discourse on Russian identity as well as show whether it is plausible to consider the discourse stable, or whether it has changed.

The analysis of discourse necessitates the definition of clear parameters concerning the object and mode of inquiry. While this might be considered a truism, applicable to all social science, it is especially important in the context of discourse analysis due to the particular epistemological status of discourses themselves. As already discussed,

discourses can neither become fully sutured, nor viewed in isolation. How, then, can we define the discourse to be discussed here?

My analysis investigates the construction of Russian state identity in diplomatic discourse between 2000 and 2008. The discursive focus of the research is therefore defined through three parameters: temporal, spatial, and thematic. Temporally, the analysis will focus on instances of discourse produced during the first two terms of Vladimir Putin 2000-2008. This decision is closely linked with my thematic focus on terrorism. As I will argue below, the construction of terrorism as a threat to Russian security shaped Russian state identity during Putin's first two terms. By focussing on these two terms, my research seeks to establish a basis for comparison with current scholarship on current Russian security policy. As current Russian studies are in a process of revising previous findings in the light of Russian aggression in Ukraine, this paper provides a glimpse of the early security priorities of the regime. If our previous understanding of Russian security policy was flawed, where did this misunderstanding begin? While an analysis of Russian security from 2000 to the present would have been beyond the scope of my word limit, by focussing on the early policies of the current regime I hope to provide a provide a point of departure for future research by colleagues.

By the spatial limitations of this paper I am referring to discursive utterances in a specific institution (the United Nations), by a select group of people (diplomats representing Russia), who engage in a specific practice (diplomacy). As I will show below, diplomacy is a social practice in which individuals create a representation of their home country which simultaneously constructs it. My focus on diplomacy is motivated by a wide gap in the scholarly literature, where little is found that deals with the construction of national identity through diplomacy explicitly (let alone the application of Discourse Theory to diplomatic documents).⁴⁴ The United Nations serves as a model institution for the survey

⁴⁴ Naturally, this only applies to research on Russian security policy.

of diplomatic representations of statehood for a number of reasons. Through her seat on the Security Council, Russia is continuously required to take position on the agenda items of the UN. Importantly for research, these statements are publicly accessible. On the other hand, their publicity means these statements must also be catered to a variety of different audiences. Distortions of official positions, made either in the context of bilateral negotiations or with an eye to the domestic audience, are hardly possible, since the audience is virtually the world. To the extent that we can assume the existence of an ideal-type Russian identity, this is where we will find it. Thus, diplomatic speeches in the United Nations are representative of official Russian state identity in two ways: first, by virtue of being utterances who are made by authorised *representatives*, and second, through the relative parsimony of the organisation.

The third parameter limiting the scope of sources is thematic. As I will show below, terrorism was among the most important security issues for the early Putin administrations. As Aglaya Snetkov has shown, terrorism was a thematic focaliser through which Russian statehood was framed as either 'strong' or 'weak'.⁴⁵ The thematic focus on terrorism does therefore not only serve as a parametre to reduce the data to be analysed and lift the analytical focus of the research, but also because of its great salience for the construction of Russian state identity.

The fact that discourses cannot become closed means that their interpretation is dependent upon what Foucault would have called a genealogy of meaning. The condition of source texts is thus one of intertextuality. Texts, consciously or not, draw on other texts to construct their meaning. If this were not the case, coherent discourses would be an impossibility. To the extent that individuals seek to understand a message, they must

⁴⁵ See both Snetkov's (more general) article on the issue 'When the Internal and External Collide: A Social Constructivist Reading of Russia's Security Policy' (2012) as well as her more detailed monograph (2014), where the conflict in Chechnya serves as a case study.

relate the content of that message to their contextual knowledge of the world. This contextual knowledge is, of course, discursive too, as all socially constructed knowledge is. Thus, a speech on the threat of terrorism cannot be understood if I have never before encountered the concept of terrorism in alternative discourses. Phrases like ‘the tragedy of 9/11’ will be meaningless if I am not informed what 9/11 signifies. Meaning might also be misconstrued if a signifier has a different meaning in another discourse. If I were to live in a remote town that has only one grocery store, called 9/11 due to its opening hours, and I were suddenly to hear of its tragedy, I might be concerned about tomorrow’s shopping. This is a petty example of course, but it illustrates a point that is crucial to post-structuralist analysis: discourses can only be understood in their context. The parameters outlined above do therefore not only serve to limit the source material, but also as contextual focalisers in which the diplomatic discourse on state identity can be read.

Russia’s Terrorist Threat

When Vladimir Putin became President of the Russian Federation, the country was still perceived to be in a state of array. The 1990s had brought immense upheavals in Russian society concerning almost every aspect of it. Economic shock therapy and rudimentary democratisation had not brought the expected results and by the new millennium the Russian Federation was still left without a coherent sense of self. Under foreign ministers Andrei Kozyrov and Evgenii Primakov Russia had first sought to consolidate cooperation with the United States and Europe, before explicitly pursuing a multipolar foreign policy in the hope of re-establishing Russian great power status. Yet, for a great power Russia was still in turmoil. The First Chechen War had seriously undermined domestic trust in the army and continuous taking of hostages by Chechen separatists as well as the Russian

casualties of the Russian army created doubts about the state's capacity to ensure the security of its citizens. With the accession of Putin to the presidency, the political leadership began to identify a series of key weaknesses that rendered Russia vulnerable to attack both from abroad and within. During the first presidency of Vladimir Putin, the political leadership prioritised control over the federal structures of the state, an improved economy and domestic security.⁴⁶ In 2000, official national security blueprints — National Security Concept, Foreign Policy Concept and Military Doctrine — displayed an assertive attitude towards the West and emphasised more cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).⁴⁷ Yet, terrorism would soon emerge as another priority for the regime, both domestically and internationally. Terrorism assumed centre stage with the 1999 Russian apartment bombings which served as justification for the Second Chechen War. While it is not entirely clear whether bombings were committed by Chechen separatists or Russian security organs, there is little doubt about the fact that the state's military response greatly improved the popularity of the regime; especially of Vladimir Putin, who had just become Prime Minister. Further incidents took place in 2001: in March a Russian airplane was hijacked and in May 104 Russians were taken hostage in the Swiss Hotel in Istanbul. Both acts were committed by Chechen separatists and individuals sympathetic to the Chechen cause.⁴⁸ Furthermore, two major incidents occurred in 2002 and 2004 respectively. In 2002, Chechen fighters took more than 900 hostages in Moscow's Dubrovka Theatre during the staging of the musical *Nord-Ost*.⁴⁹ Described in the media as 'Russia's 9/11', the case commanded great national and international attention. Finally, in 2004 there was a number of attacks culminating in the Beslan hostage taking. Following suicide attacks on the Moscow metro and two Russian

⁴⁶ Snetkov (2014), p. 192.

⁴⁷ De Haas (2010), p. 17.

⁴⁸ Andrew (2018), p. 606.

⁴⁹ Andrew (2018), p. 606.

airlines, claiming over 100 casualties, Chechen separatists capture more than 1000 children, teachers and parents in a primary school in the North Ossetian town of Beslan, leaving 300 - 400 people dead.⁵⁰ In consequence to the attacks, internal security was increasingly acknowledged in security policy papers and authorities declared that terrorists would also be pursued outside of Russia's border by special forces.⁵¹ Irrespective of the legality of such actions, the official response to the attacks posited terrorism as a key concern for the regime both domestically and internationally.

Terrorism and State Identity

The salience of Russian discourses on terrorism lies in the fact that they bridge the internal and the external security nexus.⁵² As Aglaya Snetkov notes,

Russia's fight against terrorism was at the heart of Putin's project when he came to power in March 2000, and its concept Russia's identity as a weak state. However, the conceptualisation of terrorist threats and their place within Russia's wider narratives dramatically altered, following what the official Russian discourse portrayed as the rebuilding of Russia, and the emergence of Russia as a 'strong state'.⁵³

What makes security policy in general, and official counter-terrorism in particular, so important for Russian state identity? Domestically, the Chechen insurgency put into question key functions of the modern nation state. On the one hand, it undermined the

⁵⁰ De Haas (2010), p. 20.

⁵¹ De Haas (2010), p. 19.

⁵² Snetkov (2012), p. 523.

⁵³ Snetkov (2012), p. 523-524.

state's ability to defend its citizens. On the other hand, it questioned Russia's territorial integrity by pursuing secession. A state without a clearly defined territory and defensive capabilities risks being classified as a state at all, with obvious repercussions for the legitimacy of other governmental activities. If, with Hobbes, the state's power is justified through ensuring security — what kind of state was Russia at the end of the 1990s? These problems were exacerbated by the lack of an understanding of the constitutive elements of Russian identity after the end of the Soviet Union. While the non-Russian republics could rely on post-colonial and nationalist discourses, Russian policymakers had by now abandoned attempts to posit Russia as a 'normal' state within the Western context. At the same time, the Chechen insurgency did not only put into question the legitimacy of the Russian Federation as a state, but more pressingly also the role of her leaders. For Russian policymakers, security policy and the nature of Russian state identity were therefore not abstract concerns but issues which directly impacted on their political survival. As the 1999 Apartment Bombings showed, however, it was not so much a question of whether the life of citizens was actually at stake, but rather how official responses and a hostile environment were constructed. Vladimir Putin's presidency is illustrative of this point because under his leadership vice turned into virtue. In a classical reversal of Arendtian thought — where security is the condition to the conduct of politics, democratically understood — illiberal policy is legitimated through securitisation. The discursive function of terrorism is therefore the substitution of the development of a national identity proper. Rather than negotiating a political identity on the foundation of the state's basic functions, these same functions became part and parcel of official Russian state identity.

Diplomacy as a Discursive Practice

What warrants the analysis of diplomatic speeches to reconstruct official state identity? Diplomacy is a discursive practice that creates state identity through official representation in the conduct of international relations. Diplomacy is narrowly defined here, associated with the professional practice of civil servants who are diplomats, as opposed to wider interpretations of the term which are used synonymously with foreign policy. Although incremental for the conduct of foreign policy and a state's image as presented to other governments, diplomatic studies remain a comparatively small field in comparison to other sub-divisions of International Relations, such as Foreign Policy Analysis.⁵⁴ Despite the fact that with the growth of digital and social media diplomacy has lost some importance for the exchange of information more generally, it remains the primary site where negotiations are conducted, agreements are made and foreign policy is implemented. Diplomats therefore constitute an important group if we are to understand the making of foreign policy beyond focussing on presidents, foreign ministers and generals. While not denying the importance of discourse analytical approaches that focus on the highest echelons of policymaking, there can be little doubt that such research is inflationary in proportion to research looking at the second-level tier of civil servants. What is more, discourse analytical research focussing on select statements by the political elite is often subject to criticism for its 'pick and choose' approach, often from positivist methodological traditions which use representative samples and aim at thesis testing and reproducibility of results. Discourse analysis follows its own, no less scientific, methodological conventions which warrant 'pick and choose' approaches to the extent that they seek to grasp data that is salient. Nevertheless, by focussing on a select range of documents that cover the totality of

⁵⁴ Sharp (1999).

Russian statements under the agenda title ‘terrorism’, my research seeks to capture the diplomatic security discourse as fully as possible. The methodological criticism levelled by positivist research can thus be avoided. Hence, the sources analysed serve not only as a representative sample, but as the complete sample for the discourse at hand. By focussing on UN representatives, my research seeks to discern the reflected understanding of Russian state identity of civil servants who are generally not involved in the design of policy, yet critical for their implementation. The academic literature supports this approach. Thus, even Charles E. Ziegler, writing from a realist perspective, stresses the representative function of Russian diplomacy as opposed to an interest in actual involvement in matters of global governance.⁵⁵ Realists generally view diplomacy instrumentally: diplomacy acts as a tool for pre-defined interests, which can be subject to an actors identity. Far from being a mere tool, however, diplomacy can also be viewed as discursive practice. Taking the constructivist ontology seriously, we can no longer speak of diplomats as representing states in the narrow sense. Rather, diplomats embody the states they represent. A speech act by the Russian representative to the UN, for example, is not viewed as an individual perspective on policy matters from within the political elite. Rather, diplomats *are* the voice of the state, at least officially. Thus Costas Constantinou and Paul Sharp note:

Diplomats are explicitly engaged in creating and maintaining the ambiguous and shifting identities of the states and other entities which they are employed to represent. They are also engaged in constituting international systems through the performance of their roles. Often, top-down diplomatic practice is not as autonomous as it seems; it is revised and complemented by local practices and

⁵⁵ Ziegler (2018), p. 124.

discourses. This performative aspect of the diplomatic vocation is quite revealing.⁵⁶

And Donna Marie Oglesby affirms:

By their accreditation as representatives of sovereign states, diplomats have had the collectively recognized status to create the reality they represent. As Searle writes, “once you have the capacity to represent, you already have the capacity to create a reality by those representations, a reality that consists in part of representations.”⁵⁷

Diplomatic speeches therefore constitute state identity to the extent that they represent it. But by constituting a state’s identity, they are also involved in the realisation of its interests. Since identity and interests are co-constitutive, we cannot view either of the two as divorced from diplomatic discourse. Diplomats are therefore hardly a neutral tool for the realisation of strategic interests (even if they might assume themselves to be just that), but an active element in the creation of state identity. To the extent that diplomacy is a social practice, it entails its own conventions that influence the production of discourse. These influences are, as they must be if we are to follow Laclau and Mouffe, themselves discursive. As Iver B. Neumann, in his plea to introduce a pragmatic focus into the analysis of discourse, argues

what is at stake is not the question of whether anything exists “outside of” language. Practices are discursive, both in the sense that some practices involve speech acts (acts which in themselves gesture outside of narrative), and in the

⁵⁶ Constantinou & Sharp (2016), p. 21. In-text references deleted.

⁵⁷ Oglesby (2016), p. 248. In-text references deleted.

sense that practice cannot be thought “outside of” discourse. My concern here is a different one, namely how best to analyse social life given that social life can only play itself out in discourse.⁵⁸

The fact that diplomacy is a distinct social practice must therefore inform our analysis of diplomatic discourse. To further contextualise the analysis that is to follow and acquire the ability to interpret it as faithfully as possible, it is necessary to briefly establish the linguistic conventions of diplomatic discourse and their consequences for close-reading analysis.

Over the centuries that governments have engaged in foreign relations, diplomats have developed stylistic idiosyncrasies that reflects the conditions of their work, such as the lack of a common tongue, different cultural backgrounds and a need for clear communication.⁵⁹ These stylistic idiosyncrasies need to be taken into account if diplomatic documents are to be read faithful to their original meaning. The hallmark of diplomatic language is courtesy. Courtesy allows diplomats to continue negotiations even in moments of grave political tension. Diplomatic language thus tends to be ‘mild, euphemistic and circumlocutory’.⁶⁰ Correspondingly there is a relatively stable set of fixed expressions to convey implied meanings:

For example, a verbal or written communication to the effect that the diplomat's government “cannot remain indifferent to” an international issue, is understood to signal intervention; and the government that expresses “grave concern” over a matter is expected to adopt a strong position. If a diplomat says “my government feels obliged to express reservations with regard to ...”, it means that “my

⁵⁸ Neumann (2002), p. 628.

⁵⁹ Jönsson (2016), p. 81.

⁶⁰ Berridge in Oglesby (2016), p. 243.

government will not allow ...". In a multilateral conference setting, a phrase like "While I have deep respect for the distinguished delegate of ..., who has stated his view with intelligence and conviction, I must point out that ..." can be interpreted as "I do not agree with the delegate of ..."; and "I may have misunderstood the distinguished representative of ..." translates into "The representative of ... has been talking nonsense".⁶¹

In addition to these linguistic conventions, one must also bear in mind that the agenda in fora such as the United Nations is subject to strict protocol. Speech instances are rarely spontaneous and are often delivered in a pre-determined order. Sometimes, diplomats also assume functions not immediately connected to their role as state representatives. For instance, the member states of the UN Security Council routinely assume the presidency of the council in the running of daily affairs. Thus, they speak not only for their states, but occasionally also on behalf of the institution they are part of. In such instances, they naturally refrain from comments of a political nature. Yet, this circumstance nevertheless highlights the often extremely formulaic conventions of diplomatic discourse. The analysis of diplomatic discourse therefore requires attention to detail and the careful extrapolation of hidden meanings from often conciliatory language. This does not mean that diplomatic language is less representative of official state identity than aggressive speeches by heads of state. Rather one should keep in mind that the conventions of diplomacy prompt meaning to be expressed in a more subtle way. With these things in mind, we can now turn to the discourse itself.

⁶¹ Jönsson (2016), p. 82.

How do states construct the other to assert their identity? What David Campbell calls the discursive economy has many means at its disposal to demarcate self and thus also an other.⁶² While Campbell focusses on the healthy / pathological nexus in his analysis of American foreign policy, he acknowledges — and Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory reaffirms — that identity markers are subject to the condition of contingency. Therefore, anything can in principle become an element of alliance building or othering. How is an analysis of discourse to be structured then? Drawing on the work of Lene Hansen, this section will focus on the construction of terrorism as a threat in spatial, temporal and ethical terms. By highlighting the constitutive elements of the terrorist threat, the implicit assumptions of Russian state identity will be analysed.

In *Writing Security*, David Campbell shows that boundary-producing practices are essential to both the politics of identity as well as the politics of security. 'Danger constitutes more than a boundary that demarcates a space; to have a threat requires enforcing a closure on the community that is threatened.'⁶³ To the extent that nation states are viewed as sovereign embodiments of their populations, their spatial boundaries, that is a state's territory, demarcate the boundary of a moral community, connected by language, custom and most of all government. Hansen's model of discourse analysis elaborates on the categories of morality and space to include a third: time.⁶⁴ While discursive techniques of denigration in spatial or moral terms, conditioned through the Cold War, where East and West demarcated not only geographical proximity

⁶² See Campbell (1998).

⁶³ Campbell (1998), p. 73.

⁶⁴ Hansen (2006), p. 46.

but opposing views of a just society, are perhaps more intuitive than temporal differentiation, the latter category is no less powerful. Hansen refers to Buzan's argument of the EU as a political entity united through a temporal other — Europe before 1945.⁶⁵ A similar case can be made in the Russian context, however, where the current regime has furthered a positive image of the Russian nation today as powerful alternative to the chaotic 1990s. Why does identity construction unfold along these three axes? For Hansen, they are the most basic philosophical categories through which communities imagine themselves.⁶⁶ Campbell, more specifically, views the development of the identity categories of space and morality as linked to the history of the idea of sovereignty and 'reasoning man'.⁶⁷ In any case, the nation state, whether we view it as an objective datum or as a social construction, is a political entity that is unimaginable without the categories of territory, history and population. While the notion of territory and history manifest the spatial and temporal identity of a nation state, its population, when viewed as homogenous whole — and to do so is part and parcel of the internal logic of the nation state — embodies a moral community represented by its government. One might object here that Russia is not a nation state in the classical sense. It is, in fact, made up of many nations — a fact some authors have identified as a source of a Russian 'identity crisis' following the end of the Soviet Union.⁶⁸ Yet, contemporary discourse has noticeably shifted towards a more ethnically Russian construction of state identity, witnessed, for example, in the replacement of *rossiiskii* by *russkii* in official policy documents.⁶⁹ More importantly, however, a debate about whether a Russian nation or moral community 'genuinely' exists misses the point that it is represented as such. A state need therefore

⁶⁵ Hansen (2006), p. 49.

⁶⁶ Hansen (2006), p. 46.

⁶⁷ Campbell (1998), p. 74.

⁶⁸ For an overview of the debate, see Duncan (2005).

⁶⁹ Laruelle, Grek & Davydov (2023).

not be a nation state in the classical sense for its elites to posit it as a moral community. Rather, the fact of being united in a political community of any form routinely suffices to act as a springboard for the positing of any identity. Having thus established space, temporality and morality as the key discursive categories for identity construction, we can now turn to the construction of terrorism in Russian diplomacy.

Morality

Morally, the Russian official discourse was largely expressed through reference to objects under threat. In line with Campbell's observation about the morality-security nexus, references to objects or concepts under threat reaffirmed the security-ensuring position of the nation state vis-a-vis terrorism. At the same time, terrorism was portrayed as a threat that went beyond the posing of danger for any particular nation state, such as Russia, but was framed as a global threat.

Terrorism as a threat to the nation state was expressed through various references to the state's values, functions, institutions and constitutive elements. Central references to terrorism as a danger to values stressed democracy, stability and unity, thus implying them to be universal virtues of the international community and Russia alike. At the same time, terrorism did not only pose an ideological danger through its extremist mode of thought, but also a material danger to the population and economy of the state. Populations were viewed as under threat through the potential loss of lives of individuals in attacks, while the economic repercussions were likewise expected from the damage of bombs to buildings and infrastructure. Terrorism was therefore viewed as a paramount obstacle to the state's fulfilment of security obligations towards its citizens. In this way, it posed a threat to the proper functioning of the state. Lastly, in undermining the security-function of the state, it also encroached on the state's sovereignty, and thus undermined

a key attribute of statehood. The threat was not confined to any individual state, however. The global targets of terrorism were supposed to be peace, global stability, world order and humanity as such. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 imposed a major shift in Russian government rhetoric, as elsewhere, on global terrorism. The early address of foreign minister Ivanov at the 2000 General Debate included global terrorism as one threat under many which were to be combated under the Russian concept of 'strategic stability'. Much greater prominence was given to the issues of arms control and regional conflicts. International terrorism was subsumed as a category of extremism and thus placed along other 'contemporary threats' such as 'aggressive separatism (...), illicit arms trafficking and organized crime.'⁷⁰ This construction of equivalence supports the view that terrorism was initially viewed by Russian policymakers as a problem global in scale but of limited importance to the world community. The association of terrorism with 'aggressive separatism' is a clear reference to the ongoing Chechen conflict, while 'illicit arms trafficking and organized crime' are notoriously vague terms. While their signifieds remain unclear they have the discursive effect of reinforcing their illegitimacy by extending it to terrorism and vice-versa. Thus, Russian official discourse does hardly distinguish between terrorist acts, arms trafficking and organised crime. Their equivalence is a topos which is upheld throughout the entire duration under research. In comparison, Ivanov's 2001 General Debate speech virtually centred around the issue of terrorism. Policy items which were previously considered separately, such as global governance, the role of the UN, arms control, regional conflicts or sustainable development were now subsumed under the greater goal of counter-terrorism. In the General Debate speeches of Russian officials of 2001, 2002 and 2004, international terrorism thus became a master signifier for global security, from which all policy items derived their meaning and justification.

⁷⁰ A/55/PV.20.

At the same time, terrorism was of course not framed as a morally neutral form of action which happens to put certain objects, values or people at risk. Terrorism was viewed as the morally abject and its adherents routinely dehumanised. Rather than viewing terrorism as a violent means of achieving political goals, it was understood to be an illegitimate mode of action that had to be eradicated. Terrorism posed a ‘common evil’ whose ‘true nature’ could not be doubted anymore.⁷¹ ‘With their actions throughout the world, the terrorists have once and for all placed themselves in opposition to civilized mankind,’ Foreign Minister Lavrov affirmed in response to the Hostage Taking of Beslan in 2004.⁷² References of this kind relegate political differences between terrorist organisation to a position of inferior importance and highlight the universal sameness of all terrorist acts. This is a powerful rhetorical manoeuvre in the creation of a moral community, as it essentially mutes all contextual factors in a number of diverse instances of political violence. What is declared to be their principal characteristic is their criminality. My point here is not to criticise the implicit definition of terrorism by Foreign Minister Lavrov, but rather to highlight that he engages in a construction of the concept as he uses it. In the light of the absence of a universal definition of terrorism in international law, this is no uncontroversial act. Especially when used in conjunction with phrases such as ‘true nature’, moral characterisations of terrorism seldom follow the objectives of academic precision but serve to garner support for certain policies and promote implicit understandings of self. Terrorism thus serves as an other that is morally abject both for its criminal nature and the threat it poses to what is common to the community.

⁷¹ S/PV.4413 and A/59/PV.8, respectively.

⁷² A/59/PV.8.

Geography

In its geographic and temporal construction of terrorism, official Russian discourse pursued a two-sided strategy of presenting terrorism as both an abstract as well as immanent threat. Geographically, the origins of terrorism were located with relative precision. Afghanistan was the country mentioned most often in connection to international terrorism. Territories under the control of the Taliban were identified as ‘a prime source of terrorist activity’ and ‘country that international terrorists had transformed into their own personal lair.’⁷³ At the same time, the country was upheld as proof that a so-called international anti-terrorist coalition had ‘been established and is actively functioning’ having ‘already demonstrated its effectiveness’ there.⁷⁴ Although the Russian Federation was not part of the International Security Assistance Force, in 2002 Russian foreign minister Ivanov stressed that the coalition’s goal — counter-terrorism — was ‘the most important outcome of the coming together of States to achieve common goals — unprecedented since the Second World War (...).’⁷⁵ Afghanistan was also viewed as part of a broader geographical area, termed the terrorist arc. The arc were ‘running from the Balkans across the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia to Afghanistan (...).’⁷⁶ This also applies to Chechnya. In 2000, Chechnya was subsumed under the term ‘Northern Caucasus region’ and termed a ‘black spot’.⁷⁷ Reference to the country proper was subsequently abandoned in favour of references to ‘Chechen terrorism’, making the affiliation of crime and location equally clear.⁷⁸ Chechen terrorism was said to have ‘traces

⁷³ A/C.6/55/SR.27 and A/57/PV.5, respectively.

⁷⁴ A/57/PV.5.

⁷⁵ A/57/PV.5.

⁷⁶ A/C.6/55/SR.27.

⁷⁷ A/C.6/55/SR.27.

⁷⁸ S/PV.4688.

in a number of European and Muslim countries, [which] leave[s] no doubt that Chechen terrorism is an integral part of the world terrorist infrastructure, which includes Al Qaeda.⁷⁹ Finally, Iraq and the Middle East were mentioned as a potential source of terrorism, but overall references to the Iraq and the Palestinian conflict were related to means of conflict settlement and the Russian opposition to military intervention, rather than to terrorist activity per se.

In opposition to concrete locations such as Afghanistan, Chechnya or the slightly more elusive Terrorist Arc, which were identified as the sources of terror, its reach expanded across the entire globe. Terrorism had 'no nationality or clear territorial affiliation.'⁸⁰ It would take 'advantage of any weak link in the chain of States that fight against it', thus rendering all states vulnerable.⁸¹ Finally, terrorism was not viewed as a self-contained issue, but as spreading both within individual regions, such as Central Asia, and globally.

Temporality

The dual strategy of positing terrorism as a threat that is at once concrete and abstract was also employed in its temporal representation. One line of argument established terrorism as an immanent threat, ready to strike at any moment. Responses to terrorist attacks, such as the ones on the World Trade Center or the hostage taking in Beslan, were framed as a 'moment of truth'.⁸² The use of the temporal adjective 'unprecedented' was especially common. In the context of 9/11, official discourse routinely referred to the attacks as being of 'unprecedented' aggression or proportion.⁸³ Subsequent references

⁷⁹ S/PV.4688.

⁸⁰ S/PV.4413.

⁸¹ A/56/PV.13.

⁸² A/56/PV.56 and A/59/PV.8, respectively.

⁸³ S/PV.4370 and S/PV.4370, respectively.

elaborated on this by referring to terrorism as ‘unprecedented challenge to humanity’ (2001), posing an ‘unprecedented escalation’ (2004), reaching ‘unprecedented levels of violence’ (2005).⁸⁴ At the same time, counter-terrorist responses were also viewed in historical proportions. The Security Council were said to have adopted ‘resolutions of unprecedented scope’.⁸⁵ The Counter Terrorist Committee were engaged in the creation of an ‘unprecedented global system to combat terrorism’.⁸⁶ Multilateral cooperation in counter-terrorism was termed as the ‘coming together of States to achieve common goals — unprecedented since the Second World War’.⁸⁷ Russian officials also subsumed this cooperation under the phrase ‘anti-terrorist coalition’, which had acquired ‘unprecedented breadth’.⁸⁸ The employment of the adjective in the context of terrorism as threat has the clear effect of highlighting its danger. By framing individual acts of terrorism as an essentially novel phenomenon, terrorist attacks are viewed as undergoing constant development. Although part of a single threat, it is an evolving threat and therefore increasingly dangerous. At the same time, the framing of terrorism as a break with history reinforces its moral denigration, thus increasing the contrast between threat as other and the implied moral community. When the term is applied to the self, however, it serves to highlight the international community and its constituent states as a force of progress. Positing counterterrorist cooperation on a par with the Allied Forces of the Second World War underlines the Second World War as a historical event of outstanding importance for the cooperation of (formerly) opposing blocks, thus drawing a parallel between US-Soviet relations in the 1940s and US-Russian relations of the 2000s. At the same time, giving prominence to the breadth of the coalition reinforces the moral integrity of the

⁸⁴ A/56/PV.56, S/PV.5053, A/59/PV.91, respectively.

⁸⁵ S/PV.4413. Reference is made explicitly to Resolution 1373 (2001).

⁸⁶ S/PV.4561.

⁸⁷ A/57/PV.5.

⁸⁸ A/C.6/57/SR.7.

cooperation, placing the Russian state within the topos of the UN universal morality. Finally, the depiction of terrorism as historical crossroads constructs authority for the speaker, the Russian state. By referring to terrorism as a historical turning point, she assumes authority over the history of security. The speaker is not only able to identify past threats, but also compare them in scale to present ones. By doing so from the perspective of the state, she re-creates the moral community which she represents.

Historical turning points, imminence and moments of truth evoke terrorism as a threat that is rooted in the here and now. It is a threat of the current moment, which requires urgent solutions. For a security threat to be convincing, however, it must also transcend the category of the here and now. Solutions to constructed threats can only be coherently advocated if they are to be expected in the future. If this were not the case they would not be preventable, of course. Thus, terrorism must be constructed as a permanent threat, whereby the imminence of danger does not refer to a single moment in time, that is the contemporary present of the speech act, but to the present as such. This is paradoxical because immanence proper implies reference to a single point in time, whereby the construction of terrorism as an imminent threat as such extends this logic to a potentially open-ended future. Russian diplomatic discourse displays this line of argument through several reference to the future and permanence of terrorism, as opposed to what would be its immanence proper. Examples of this include constructing terrorism as a ‘new threat’ or ‘plague of the twenty-first century’ both of which imply terrorism as a danger that has come to stay.⁸⁹ The evolving nature of terrorism was stressed through terming it as ‘changing’, ‘constantly increasing’, ‘growing’ and acknowledging it as ‘far from being crushed’.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ A/60/PV.12, S/PV.4370

⁹⁰ S/PV.5446, S/PV.5006, A/C.6/59/SR.7, S/PV.4688.

What function does this double line of argument serve? Viewed from an analytical perspective, terrorism is a paradoxical phenomenon. Constructed as the morally abject, it is at once omnipresent and elusive. On the one hand, terrorists are acknowledged to be the bearers of an extremist ideology, while simultaneously being placed outside the murky realm of 'civilisation'. While originating from a number of relatively specific locations, such as the 'Terrorist Arc', it does not bear any real affiliation to these places. More importantly, while it remains a phenomenon of a few places of attack (mainly capitals and places within or close to regions of conflict), terrorism is viewed as global in reach. Temporally, it is a threat of permanent imminence, located both in the here and now as well as in an indefinite future. Despite 'unprecedented' progress in counter-terrorism, terrorism is equally in a constant process of reaching 'unprecedented' levels of threat. The logic of this rhetoric serves two discursive functions. On the one hand, the construction of terrorism as security threat frames it as the other. It thus creates a moral community among speaker, the state she represents, and audience. On the other hand, it necessitates and legitimises threat solutions advocated by the speaker. Threat constructions serve as a stage on which political solutions are performed, thus giving sharper contours to the image of self. Identification of an other is only a first step in sketching Russian state identity. It is to the Russian visions of threat solutions and concrete actions that we can now turn.

The previous section has shown how Russian diplomatic discourse engaged in othering terrorism by constructing it as a threat of outstanding importance. This implied the construction of a moral community in which Russia, both as an individual state and member of the international community, was placed. Yet, the identification of a threat can only partially serve — as an illustration of political identity. What is crucial is not only identifying a threat, but determining what measures are necessary, legitimate or desirable in countering it. The Russian discourse on counter-terrorism can be grouped into six narratives. These are the need for more multilateralism, the central position of the UN in global governance, the need for more regionalism, the importance of international law, the importance of non-proliferation of weapons and the need for a new world order. The policy strategies suggested therein overlap and can be viewed as part of a larger meta-narrative that advocates more governmental cooperation or even be subsumed under the last point. What justifies their individual analysis is their discursive prominence as individual elements. While it would lead us too far to track the changes that the individual elements undergo from 2000 to 2008, their selective use and emphasis sheds light on the strategic use of threat construction in policy advocacy. As a brief example, one might note that, in Foreign Minister Ivanov's 2000 General Debate speech, non-proliferation of weapons, social injustice and new world order were largely viewed as separate problems. They were only marginally linked through the concept of 'strategic stability' which Russia viewed as policy to ensure mutual security in the new millennium. Implicit in this construction of security were threats viewed as state-actors, hence the majority of space in the speech was given to disarmament issues. In comparison, the speech delivered for the 2001 General Debate, held shortly after 9/11, constructed terrorism as a master

signifier for global security. Here, as well as in subsequent speeches, previously unrelated problems were linked to terrorism in manifold ways. Thus, Russian diplomats argued for disarmament not, as previously, on the basis of strategic stability, but out of the possibility that weapons of mass destruction could 'fall into the hands of terrorists'.⁹¹ This suggests that threat perception and policy-adaption do not follow simple cause and effect mechanism, but rather that they stand in a complex, complimentary relationship to one another. Russian diplomatic discourse on (counter-)terrorism in particular engages in a strategy of linking divergent policy objectives towards the creation of a new world order. We shall now examine these objectives in more detail.

New World Order

The Russian discourse on terrorism emphasises repeatedly the need for a 'genuinely just and democratic world order'.⁹² The current world order was both viewed as under threat by terrorism, as well as furthering terrorism through social injustice. The latter development was exacerbated by the fact of globalisation, a condition which further necessitated closer cooperation within the international community. Should the international community fail to build this new, just world order, the threats would prevail. At the same time, the construction of a new world order was prompted by the fact that the 'international landscape is changing, due to newly emerging centres of global growth.'⁹³ 'Today, nobody can cope with global challenges single-handedly. Neither diktat nor bipolar dominance can fulfil the task of world governance.'⁹⁴ Thus spoke Foreign Minister Lavrov in 2007. Already in 2006, this trend had been postulated to be 'based on

⁹¹ Cf., for example, A/58/PV.11.

⁹² A/56/PV.56.

⁹³ A/62/PV.11.

⁹⁴ A/62/PV.11.

objective facts'.⁹⁵ Apart from multipolar governance, the hallmark on the new world order would be democracy, security and justice, with the United Nations as operational headquarters.⁹⁶

Multilateralism

Multilateralism as defined here refers to cooperation among states. Multilateralism in counter-terrorism was necessitated by the global reach of terrorism which 'takes advantage of any weak link in the chain of States that fight against it'.⁹⁷ Russian diplomats constantly stressed that counter-terrorism could only be effective if the international community worked together. This made explicit the moral community as implied in the construction of terrorism as other. Counter-terrorism were necessitated by the solidarity for the victims of terrorism. Foreign Minister Ivanov noted that

[i]n response to the evil deeds of the terrorists, there is a growing awareness of a simple truth: solidarity and mutual support in combating a common evil help to protect one's own country and its citizens from it. It is now time for us to discard the hesitations and stereotypes of the past and clearly outline a strategy for future steps in the common struggle against international terrorism.⁹⁸

Multilateralism was viewed both as rational response to the dangers and realities of contemporary global governance, as well as a moral imperative. The international community had been hindered in effective threat prevention through 'hesitations and stereotypes', although there is no concrete reference in the discourse which hesitations or

⁹⁵ A/61/PV.15.

⁹⁶ A/57/PV.5.

⁹⁷ A/56/PV.13.

⁹⁸ S/PV.4413.

stereotypes in particular were at play. Necessitated by globalisation, terrorism and the indivisibility of security (a term previously employed in disarmament negotiations), intensive multilateral work was seen as panacea for a number of issues facing mankind. Regional conflicts and social injustice could be fought through closer cooperation, thus annihilating terrorism's breeding ground. Again, the United Nations and its leading institutions such as the Security Council would play a coordinating role in these cooperative endeavours, attributing global governance its required 'universality'. A positive example that such cooperation was possible and effective was the already mentioned 'anti-terrorist coalition'. Foreign Minister Ivanov noted in 2002 that

[o]ur common objective is not only to preserve the experience of interaction acquired within the framework of the coalition — avoiding such unilateral actions as might undermine it — but also to transform the anti-terrorist alliance into a supportive mechanism of effective security and cooperation for the new millennium.⁹⁹

Although the precise shape and form of the 'anti-terrorist coalition' remains an implicit understanding in the official discourse, it serves here to delegitimise unilateral action. Multilateralism's flip-side is discipline of individual states in their foreign policy. On the other hand, multilateralism, when organised through the UN, ought to be transformed into a permanent mechanism for the millennium's new world order. An implicit, but by no means evident assumption of this line of argument is, of course, that the UN are an equitable and just institution, despite the prevailing power imbalance posed by the Security Council. Further evidence is seen in Russia's view of the UN more generally.

⁹⁹ A/57/PV.5.

The United Nations

The United Nations were seen as the institution to coordinate multilateral cooperation in general and counter-terrorist measure in particular. The institution was particularly praised for its ‘universal’ character, thus imbuing it with a special authority on global governance and the formation of a new, ‘more just’, world order.¹⁰⁰ The UN should be steadily enhanced while its values remained ‘irreplaceable’.¹⁰¹ Due to its ‘key coordinating role’, the United Nations were viewed as needing to ‘step up counter-terrorism’.¹⁰² The UN’s counter-terrorist work were to be based on the Russian-sponsored Security Council Resolution 1269 (1999) which condemned terrorism as a threat against international peace and security and put forward a number of measures (including increased multilateralism) for governments to counter it. This task did not only apply to the United Nations as a forum for intergovernmental cooperation, but also to the UN’s individual organs and committees. First and foremost the Security Council was seen as the leading organ of the UN, which ought to discuss terrorism and ‘play an active part’ in fighting it.¹⁰³ The Security Council’s resolutions were seen as an important part of creation of a new legal framework, which would put counter-terrorism on a ‘solid foundation of international law’.¹⁰⁴ In particular, the Security Council’s resolution 1373 (2001) was stressed for its potential to supervise global efforts in counter-terrorism and hold national governments accountable for their non-compliance.¹⁰⁵ Much attention was also devoted to the counter-

¹⁰⁰ S/PV.4561.

¹⁰¹ A/57/PV.5.

¹⁰² A/C.6/55/SR.27.

¹⁰³ A/56/PV.13.

¹⁰⁴ S/PV.4688.

¹⁰⁵ Through the resolution, the UN Security Council, for the first time, brought into force a piece of legislation which would directly impinge on sovereign legislation. This was a qualitatively new development in UN governance.

terrorism committees established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1373 (2001) and 1540 (2004) – the Sanctions Committee, the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and the 1540-Committee, respectively. Despite the possibility of enforcing compliance with resolution 1373, Russian diplomats continuously affirmed that the CTC would not act as a ‘repressive organ’, but rather as a supporting mechanism for national governments in their counter-terrorist efforts.¹⁰⁶ The potential of the committee to further other counter-terrorist measures favoured in the Russian discourse, such as close cooperation with regional organisations like the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), was highlighted. Russian diplomats equally often affirmed conventional truths of the functions of the Sanctions Committee, which are to be attributed to the bureaucratic conventions of the United Nations as a diplomatic institution. In the same vein, references about the 1540 Committee highlighted its potential for non-proliferation legislation. It must be stressed, however, that the majority of the discourse referring to the committees was less concerned with concrete policy measures as with routine matters to institutional oversight and bureaucratic reporting. A general recommendation applied to all committees is that they ought to cooperate closer with other UN organs.

Another aspect which was suggested by Russian diplomats was the possibility to host a forum, under the auspices of the UN, to ‘discuss contributions from Civil Society and the Mass Media’ to counter-terrorism.¹⁰⁷ The UN were also praised for their humanitarian work, seen as counter-terrorism insofar as it eliminated social injustice and thus one of terrorism’s causes. Similarly, the UN peace-building capabilities ought to be strengthened, in order to block the ‘fuelling’ of regional conflicts – another cause of terrorism.¹⁰⁸ The pre-eminence of the UN in the diplomatic resolution was highlighted especially in the context of the Iraq war in 2003, guaranteeing sovereign equality. At the

¹⁰⁶ S/PV.4512.

¹⁰⁷ A/56/PV.56.

¹⁰⁸ A/56/PV.56.

same time, the United Nations were to assume a number of counter-terrorist tasks, such as the indemnification of terrorist victims, the elimination of 'double standards' in the international community as well as oversee the extradition of terrorists.¹⁰⁹ Finally, the organisation ought to be led by the Security Council under the 'collective leadership' of 'major states'.¹¹⁰

International Law

A key counter-terrorism strategy in the discourse was the creation of 'new legal instruments'.¹¹¹ The United Nations were viewed as the 'guarantor' of international law.¹¹² The abiding of it would be the 'condition' for 'universal cooperation', thus aiding the UN coordinating role in the multilateral cooperation.¹¹³ On one hand, Russian diplomats stressed the importance of current legislation and demanded unconditional respect for it. Highlighted were the responsibility of states to deny terrorists a haven anywhere in the world and enact concrete measures such as asylum checks. On the other, Foreign Minister Lavrov noted that 'international law is no inalterable dogma' which needed to be expanded and adapted to contemporary challenges, to provide 'a better legal basis'.¹¹⁴ In this context, several counter-terrorist conventions and resolutions were mentioned. Among them were the convention on the prevention of financing terrorism, the convention for the suppression of nuclear terrorism, the convention against organised crime, the convention against corruption and the comprehensive convention on international

¹⁰⁹ S/PV.4688.

¹¹⁰ A/62/PV.11.

¹¹¹ A/59/PV.8.

¹¹² A/55/PV.20.

¹¹³ S/PV.4242.

¹¹⁴ A/59/PV.8.

terrorism; as well as resolutions 1267, 1368, 1455, 1526, 1535, 1540, 1566 and 1624. Routine reference was made to Russian disappointment about the stalled progress on the India draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism. Russian diplomats furthermore called for the legal protection of human rights against terrorism and demanded decisive action against terrorists and their accomplices. This implied the 'harshest possible punishment' for terrorists and, once again, the elimination of double standards in counter-terrorism.¹¹⁵ Russian officials advocated that this included legal action against those 'inciting terrorist attacks' and 'the spread of extremist ideas'.¹¹⁶ The right to self-defence was affirmed and a discussion of the criteria for the use of force encouraged. Russian diplomats viewed the use of force as legitimate 'in case of [...] attack or immanent threat of [...] attack', stressing that the use of force could uphold 'the rule of law in emergencies'.¹¹⁷

Arms Trade and Weapons of Mass Destruction

Russian diplomatic discourse identifies unregulated and illegal arms trade as one of the key sources of international terrorism, often linked with drug trafficking and organised crime. Consequently, diplomats advocated for current regime of arms control to remain in place. At the same time, they called for the 'universalization' of non-proliferation regimes as part of higher levels of multilateral cooperation.¹¹⁸ Particular attention was given to nuclear weapons which could fall 'into the hands of terrorists'.¹¹⁹ The UN, through its

¹¹⁵ S/PV.5053.

¹¹⁶ S/PV.5375.

¹¹⁷ A/60/PV.12.

¹¹⁸ A/58/PV.11.

¹¹⁹ A/58/PV.11.

relevant committees, was called upon to control this development.¹²⁰ At the same time, with reference to the problem of social inequality among states, the international community would have to find a way to permit every country access to the benefits of nuclear energy. Here, too, the UN would have a coordinating role. At the same time, other international fora, such as the G8 and Russia-NATO consultations, were welcomed to the extent that they permitted arms control and ensure mutual security. NATO expansion was criticised in this context. The Russia-US initiative of Presidents Putin and Bush, on the other hand, were treated as an example of effective bilateral cooperation of two leading nations taking 'proactive measures' against the uncontrolled spread of weapons of mass destruction.

Regional Cooperation

Finally, regional cooperation was viewed as an effective strategy to counter international terrorism. Similar to call for more multilateralism, regional cooperation could counter many sources of terrorism, such as social injustice and regional conflicts as well as strengthen intelligence cooperation. Most references highlighted the CIS as an area of legal, intelligence and policy cooperation. This would serve as the foundation for counter-terrorism and showcase that the region attributed 'the utmost importance' to the issue.¹²¹ The organisation had established a counter-terrorism centre in Bishkek and provided an effective forum for conflict settlement. Closer cooperation between the CTC and regional organisations in general and the CIS in particular were further encouraged. At the same time, the CIS was presented as an institution that also cooperated with other international

¹²⁰ The committees mentioned in this context were the CTC, Sanctions Committee and 1540 Committee, as well as the committees pursuant to resolutions 1673 and 1810. The latter three were deemed 'key'.

¹²¹ S/PV.4512.

organisations, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC). Further cooperation of the CIS with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was 'potentially fruitful' while initiatives by the G8 were termed 'particularly promising'.¹²² Similar to its positive outlook on multilateral cooperation more widely, regionalism ought to play a key role in counter-terrorism.

Russian official discourse synthesises these six demands into a coherent narrative of counter-terrorist strategy. Terrorism serves as a master signifier which endows individual demands with coherence, rationality, urgency and legitimacy. Though separate in themselves, they are linked in a chain of equivalence in their focus on their function within counter-terrorism. I have chosen to highlight these six demands because they are the most prominent and enduring examples of Russian policy recommendations. Yet, they are neither necessarily interlinked nor emerged in response to terrorism as external problem. Rather, they reflect long-standing interests that have become framed in a new way to imbue them with legitimacy. The tracking of this process is beyond the scope of this paper. We shall now turn analyse what vision of the Russian state emerges from the processes of threat construction and policy promotion.

¹²² S/PV.4792.

Having identified Russia's construction of terrorism as a barbarous other as well as the measures which Russian diplomats have suggested in countering it, we can now turn to an analysis of the Russian self in this context. Three narratives stand out. First, Russia as a responsible global partner in the fight against terrorism; second, Russia's distinctness in the fight against terrorism; and third, Russia as a power committed to the elimination of social injustice. These three narratives reflect the interests that form part and parcel of Russia's proposed counter-terrorist measures. Although they are largely framed through the prism of counter-terrorist necessity in the present corpus, it is important to note that their prominence undergoes change in the period under observation. This suggests that they are part of a foreign policy strategy which supersedes individual measures against international terrorism. In this way, counter-terrorism provides a canvas for the framing of Russian interests in terms deemed meaningful to the international community.

In line with its demands for more international cooperation among the international community, Russia's first narrative stresses her qualities as a global partner. This image comprises several aspects of counter-terrorist measures which link the Russian state to the moral community in opposition to international terrorism and its roots. These measures comprise membership in the anti-terrorism coalition, the promotion of legal mechanisms to counter terrorism, participation in the CTC and cooperation with powers such as the G8 or the United States. The formation of a 'universal anti-terrorist coalition' was seen as a first step towards the creation of a 'global system to new threats and challenges, first and foremost among which is international terrorism'.¹²³ Russia was

¹²³ A/56/PV.56.

highlighted as a ‘responsible participant’ in the coalition, which comprised military and intelligence cooperation, but no Russian troops on the ground.¹²⁴ Cooperation with the United States was attributed great importance in this respect. President Putin was among the first to send his condolences to President Bush following the 9/11 attacks, as cited by Permanent Representative Lavrov in the Security Council on 12 September 2001.¹²⁵ The meetings between Presidents Bush and Putin in Washington D.C. and Crawford after 9/11 were stressed, suggesting that the coalition was termed ‘universal’ at least partially due to renewed US-Russian cooperation.¹²⁶ The signing of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty by both presidents in Moscow was termed a ‘specific, major contribution by the leading nuclear Powers [...]’.¹²⁷ In a later speech, discussing nuclear energy, Presidents Putin and Bush were again mentioned in tandem, noting that proposals by both leaders have found support among G8 leaders.¹²⁸ Russia and the US were therefore shown to be on a par in global governance. Russia was furthermore portrayed as a power promoting the legal framework of counter-terrorism. She was highlighted as the initiator of Resolutions 1269 (1999), 1540 (2004), 1673 (2006) and 1810 (2008).¹²⁹ Russia also pressed for the adoption of new legal instruments, showing that ‘[f]or its part, Russia is doing its best to ensure that a sound international legal system is in place for fighting terrorism.’¹³⁰ Importance was also attributed to Russia’s ratification of international legal instruments. In 2000, Ambassador Karev noted that ‘[t]he Russian Federation, for its part, had ratified the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, and intended to ratify the International Convention for the Suppression of the

¹²⁴ A/56/PV.56.

¹²⁵ S/PV.4370.

¹²⁶ A/56/PV.56.

¹²⁷ A/57/PV.5.

¹²⁸ A/61/PV.15.

¹²⁹ A/56/PV.13 and S/PV.5886, respectively.

¹³⁰ A/56/PV.13.

Financing of Terrorism' while '[t]he State Duma was also considering ratification of [...] the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings.'¹³¹ In 2001, Foreign Minister Ivanov said that 'Russia has involved itself very actively in the work of countering terrorism' being 'with those who have involved themselves in this work, and who will definitely finish the job.'¹³² In 2002, Permanent Representative Lavrov said that 'Russia in future will take an active part in the work of the [Counter-Terrorist] Committee.'¹³³ Foreign Minister Ivanov stressed that following its ratification of the 1999 Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, 'Russia is now completing the process of accession to those international instruments.'¹³⁴ It was furthermore 'continuing to make resolute efforts to achieve that objective [of creating a legal basis for counter-terrorism]'.¹³⁵ Russia also pursued this goal within the framework of regional organisations such as the CIS. Ivanov saw 'a great deal of potential in the new partnership between Russia and the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.'¹³⁶ At the same time '[t]he field of anti-terrorism is an integral part of our continuous dialogue and cooperation with the leading countries of the world, including the United States, China, India and the States members of the European Union.'¹³⁷

Russia's status within the international community is thus one of being a reliable partner. This status reflects Russian calls for more international cooperation, but also implies that the Russian government is already immersed in the process. This places the Russian state at the head of nations engaged in counter-terrorism. It has not only recognised the severity of the threat and suggesting measures to counter it, but can be observed to be

¹³¹ A/C.6/55/SR.27.

¹³² S/PV.4413.

¹³³ S/PV.4561.

¹³⁴ A/57/PV.5.

¹³⁵ A/57/PV.5.

¹³⁶ A/57/PV.5.

¹³⁷ A/57/PV.5.

acting upon its own recommendations. In so doing, Russia acts as a central point of contact within the international community. It combines regional expertise of the CIS with enthusiasm for cooperation with Western powers and organisations, such as the United States, the G8 and NATO.

The second narrative highlights Russia's special status within the international community. Here, the stress lies less on the qualities that make Russia stand out as a partner, but rather on Russia's unique historical experiences and civilisational status which set her apart from other states. This discourse consists of three arguments. First Russia's special position in the war on terror; second, its unique position as a state between East and West; and third, its claim to being a major power.

Russia has a unique position in the fight against terrorism. This is due to the fact that Russia was one of the first targets of international terrorism — its victim status — and the fact that it was consequently among the first to promote international counter-terrorism. Russia's position within counter-terrorism overlaps with its status as global partner, hence I will focus on Russia's victim status here. Especially in the context of 9/11, Russian diplomats and President Putin have emphasised in their condolences to the American public that 'Russia knows very well what terror is and so we understand better than most the feelings of the American people.'¹³⁸ Its victim status — knowing what terror is — therefore gives the Russian state a privileged capability to empathise, based on concrete historical experience. This was further elaborated in President Putin's speech at the 2003 General Debate:

It is clear that, in recent years, the United Nations has increasingly been obliged to carry out fundamentally new tasks and to tackle threats that are different from, but

¹³⁸ S/PV.4370.

just as serious as, those it faced before. Three years ago, at the 2000 Millennium Summit, I said here that the common enemy of the United Nations was terrorism. Was Russia's voice heeded then? Did everyone understand the seriousness of the threat, and were our joint actions adequate? The events of 11 September proved that, unfortunately, they were not. To us in Russia, however, the style of the murderers who committed terrorist acts in Moscow, in Chechnya and elsewhere in Russia and in New York, as well as against United Nations staff in Baghdad, has long been painfully familiar. That style is identical everywhere, and the fact that the inciters of terror are easily recognizable — with regard to both the events of August this year and the terrorist attacks of previous years — only attests to the global nature of this threat. It is true that now we are listening to one another.¹³⁹

In this excerpt, Russia emerges as a sinister prophet, whose voice — literally — has not been heeded. The voice of Russia, it is made clear, is the voice of President Putin himself, emphasised through the emphasis on 'I said here' in conjunction to 'Russia's voice'. This link is even more explicit in the Russian (*'ia govori'*), where the verb also denotes speaking, rather than merely saying something. The order in which events are structured suggests a causal relationship between Russia's voice not being heeded and the 9/11 attacks. Had people listened, had people understood (what Russia knew, one is tempted to infer), 9/11 might have been avoidable. The accusatory tone in this passage is well-tempered. On the one hand, it is unmistakably noticeable, on the other, it is curbed by the reference to 'our joint actions', thereby expressing a degree of solidarity with the victims of the attack. Yet, Russia's superior knowledge of and experience with terrorism is once again stressed as having 'long been familiar.' In this context 9/11 emerges as a turning point for counter-terrorist cooperation. Only now — after the attacks in Baghdad and New

¹³⁹ A/58/PV.11.

York — has the international community begun to cooperate with Russia. ‘Listening’ in this context works both as a metonymy for cooperation as well as literal reference which continues the previously established semantic field of speaking and heeding Russia’s voice.

In the High-Panel Meeting of the Security Council for Combating Terrorism in 2003, Foreign Minister Ivanov cited President Putin that ‘our country is living in a virtual state of war declared by international terrorism.’¹⁴⁰ And as early as 2001, following the 9/11 attacks, Ivanov reminded the international community in the Security Council that ‘in 1999 — on the initiative of Russia, which had suffered massive attacks by international terrorists — the Council began to comprehensively consider the problem of terrorism as a threat to international peace and security.’¹⁴¹ Russia thus emerges as one of the principle targets of international terrorism, once again solidifying Russia’s expertise and moral authority. In response to the Beslan Hostage Taking in 2004, newly appointed Foreign Minister Lavrov employed the discourse of civilisational differentiation already analysed in the previous sections. He stated that ‘[w]ith their actions throughout the world, the terrorists have once and for all placed themselves in opposition to civilized mankind.’¹⁴² Yet, from his speech also emerges a second civilisational dialogue, positing Russia as uniquely open to East and West:

Sixth, international terrorists have neither nationality nor religion. In fact, it is specifically religion and national culture that, today as never before, require protection from the devastating impact of extremism of any kind. There is a need for respectful dialogue among various religions and civilizations. Russia, which is

¹⁴⁰ S/PV.4688.

¹⁴¹ S/PV.4413.

¹⁴² A/59/PV.8.

open both to the West and to the East, is ready to play its part in that process, which is intended to prevent a split in civilization.¹⁴³

The Russian concept of 'civilization' is addressed on two levels. On the one hand, the international community forms a uniform civilisation, which derives its meaning from the opposition to 'uncivilised' or 'barbarous' behaviour such as terrorism. On the other hand, the idea of a dialogue of civilisations implies that civilisation as such can be compartmentalised into various individual civilisations. In this context, Russia's being open to East and West is not simply to be understood as further affirmation to cooperate internationally, but as a specific civilisational quality. Russia's willingness to 'play its part' thus denotes the taking on of a responsibility ordained by virtue of its civilisational status. While arguably only Lavrov's sixth point in his short speech, continuous reference to the need for a 'dialogue of civilisations' as well as the need to prevent a 'split' or 'schism' in civilisations shows that civilisational discourse is a latent feature of Russian diplomacy.¹⁴⁴ In 2007, this civilisational status was explicitly linked to the Russian vision of global governance, as Lavrov remarked that

[t]he international landscape is changing, due to newly emerging centres of global growth. Today, nobody can cope with global challenges single-handedly. Neither diktat nor bipolar dominance can fulfil the task of world governance. What is needed is collective leadership by major States; this should be representative both geographically and in terms of civilizations.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ A/59/PV.8.

¹⁴⁴ To be sure, the idea of a dialogue among civilisations did not originate in Russian policy-making circles. It was introduced by former Iranian president Sayed Mohammed Khatami and as early as 2001 the UN marked the Year of the Dialogue of Civilisations. What I am trying to show, however, is that the term was employed and partially redefined in the Russian discourse to highlight Russia uniqueness.

¹⁴⁵ A/62/PV.11.

Political leadership of 'major states' is justified in geographical and civilisational terms. Russia's unique civilisational (and geographical) status presents an implicit claim to a leading role in global governance. The argument is further sustained through a discourse of economic rationality, where 'new centres of global growth' prompt a change in the current world order. In the same speech, Russia's civilisational status was linked to religious values and the 'resurgence of Neo-nazi trends'.¹⁴⁶ As the official Russian discourse refers to both terrorism and neo-nazism as 'extremism', this reinforces the claim to Russian uniqueness through the merging of counter-terrorist and Soviet discourses, where the latter are defined through references to Russia's fight against fascism and neo-nazism.

Lastly, I would like to draw closer attention to Russia's discourse of social injustice. This discourse incorporates aspects of economic rationality and frames Russia as an evolving economic power. As seen in the previous section, fighting social injustice was also framed by Russian diplomats as a counter-terrorist strategy. In his 2006 speech to the General Assembly, Sergei Lavrov said that

The 2005 World Summit unanimously reaffirmed that peace, security and development are inseparable. [...] The Russian Federation realizes its responsibility as one of the fastest growing economies of the world, and is devoting increasing attention to development assistance. Thus far, Russia has written off or has undertaken to write off \$11.3 billion of the debt of African countries, including more than \$2.2 billion within the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. New

¹⁴⁶ A/62/PV.11.

steps are planned in that area. Russia now ranks third in absolute figures of debt relief and first in terms of the ratio of debt relief to gross domestic product.¹⁴⁷

Debt relief serves multiple discursive functions. First, Lavrov highlights Russia's responsibility to ensure development assistance as one of the 'fastest growing economies in the world.' Russia is thus not only a country of exceptional economic power, but also one that acts in moral accord with it. Second, the excerpt highlights Russia's cooperation with the global south, in particular African countries. This balances Russian claims to global governance with other 'major states' as seen before, showing that Russia can act as a bridging power between rich and poor countries. This claim is underscored by the reference to Russia ranking 'first in terms of the ratio of debt relief to gross domestic product.' Elsewhere in the speech, Lavrov makes this link explicit:

During Russia's presidency of the Group of Eight (G-8), there was greater interaction between the G-8 and other leading countries and international organizations. A new and genuinely collaborative type of interaction between the G-8 and Africa is now emerging in this era of globalization, as the needs of the continent are reflected in the mainstream of world development rather than being viewed as issues divorced from overall trends.

Russia is portrayed as playing an active part in the creation of a more equitable, multipolar world order, rather than as a defender of the status-quo. Finally, debt relief functions as evidence of Russia's global-partner narrative. Debt relief not only benefits poor countries, but — as development and security are inseparable — it is viewed as a counter-terrorist measure from which rich nations implicitly benefit, too. Two years earlier,

¹⁴⁷ A/61/PV.15.

Lavrov had already stressed Russia's developmental assistance, stating that 'between 1998 and 2002 it wrote off the debt of African countries equivalent to \$11.2 billion.'¹⁴⁸ Russia was also granting '1,000 scholarships to students from African countries.'¹⁴⁹ And finally, Russia had 'contributed \$7.5 million to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and has provided bilateral humanitarian assistance to a number of African countries.'¹⁵⁰ In 2007, it was again Foreign Minister Lavrov who affirmed that '[w]e are confident that concrete steps to ensure sustainable socio-economic development in all regions are a sure remedy against threats to peace and security.'¹⁵¹ He once stressed Russia's position as a donor country again. Russia's narrative of social justice thus partially draws on the two previous narratives. On the one hand, it represents Russia as a global partner, actively involved in global governance and the forging of new coalitions in a changing world order. On the other, analogous to Russia's unique position between East and West, Russia acts as a bridge between the global south and the affluent countries. As an economically powerful country, it considers itself as a 'major state', yet one that acts responsibly and in the mutual interest of the international community.

In highlighting Russia's relations to the global south, its special civilisational status and reliable partnership, one might criticise, I have slowly, but steadily, moved away from my initial focus on international terrorism. In answering the question 'How does Russian state identity been constructed with regards to terrorism between 2000 and 2008?', what relevance do economic figures and civilisational claims have? Secondly, one might object to my identification of three separate narratives. Since I explicitly pointed out the overlap between these three narratives, would it not be more reasonable to speak of a single

¹⁴⁸ A/59/PV.8.

¹⁴⁹ A/59/PV.8.

¹⁵⁰ A/59/PV.8.

¹⁵¹ A/62/PV.11.

narrative, rather than three? What these objections fail to recognise, however, is that a) discourses can never be fully separated from each other; b) different aspects of Russia's counter-terrorist narrative are prioritised depending on the diplomatic context; and c) economic and civilisational status are part and parcel of the identity politics that influences a given state's construction of and response to security threats. My approach in this paper has been to treat terrorism as a prism for the construction of Russian state identity. Above I argued why this is plausible. This means, however, that the image of a state's identity will always exceed the prism itself. This is not a shortcoming of the research, but its purpose. This argument also applies to my identification of narratives. They derive their coherence through their collective reference to the problem of terrorism, its place in the world of foreign policy and the Russian state. In so doing, they naturally incorporate discursive moments that are not strictly linked to terrorism. Any idea of the state and the international system will precede the construction of a new threat. In drawing attention to three separate aspects of Russia's official discourse terrorism, the selective and strategic use of narratives become transparent. I have abstained from tracing the chronological development of these three discursive aspects. At a first glance, one could say that Russia's narrative of global partnership gained coin with the general rise in attention towards terrorism after 9/11. From 2004 onwards, it became partially superseded by Russia's fight against social injustice. Russia civilisational discourse has been latent throughout the period of analysis. However, its emphasis underwent change from an initial focus on counter-terrorist expertise and moral authority towards being a uniquely fitted partner for East-West as well as North-South relations. Here, it aligns with the social-injustice narrative.

Conclusion

This thesis has given a detailed account of Russian state identity in the years 2000 to 2008. With terrorism being the dominant security issue during President Putin's first two terms in office, Russian state identity was discursively constructed through three narratives: Russia as a reliable partner in counter-terrorism, Russian distinctness from other nations due to its special victim and civilisational status, and Russia as a country at the forefront of eliminating social injustice. Although these narratives partially overlap and could be subsumed by one another, their differing prominence justifies their analytical separation. The construction of Russia's identity narratives has been embedded in an elaborate argumentative structure. This structure comprised the construction of a threat — terrorism — as well as its antidote in the form of a moral community — the United Nations and the community of states, of which Russia is naturally a part. The construction of threat and moral community was shown to unfold along a moral, geographical and spatial axis. In a second step, terrorism was further characterised through the call for concrete measures to effectively eliminate it, even though the discursive construction of terrorism as a permanent and evolving threat rendered these attempts partially contradictory. In a third step, Russian state identity could be projected in reference to terrorism and counter-terrorism. The identification of threat and solution provided a narrative within which the Russian state could be inserted as protagonist. As such, Russia was constructed with a number of inherent and voluntary qualities, reflected in the three identity narratives mentioned above. Employing Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory, it was shown that state identity must always be understood as discursively constructed. Any construction of state identity is necessarily organised along a number of particular, partially fixed signifiers, or moments. At the same time, state identity, like any other form

of discourse, always remains contingent. Thus, Russian official discourse, through purportedly objective reference to threats and solutions, sought to naturalise a tendentious construction of Russian identity. The medium of identity construction analysed here was diplomatic speech. Diplomacy was shown to be the social practice of state identity construction *par excellence*. Diplomats are authorised speakers for their home countries who embody their country's identity in international relations. Thus, they are not only neutral tools of strategic communication by governments but also representatives and co-creators of policy. Their statements are therefore inherently performative and co-constitutive of official state identity.

While these insights do not lend themselves to hypothesis testing or further generalisation, they help fill a number of gaps in our knowledge of Russian security studies. First of all, they have provided us with an overview of the dominant identity narratives which were used to explain and justify Russian domestic and foreign policy in the period under scrutiny. While state identity is a frequently evoked concept in the Russian studies literature, it is often viewed as either the collective beliefs of the population or an inherent quality, located somewhere between elites and history. Instead, state identity must be viewed as a construction that owes its existence to certain practices and that is linked to specific interests. While this paper has provided a chronology and mechanism for identity construction in international relations, it has largely avoided to investigate the relationship between narratives and policy interests. One must not conclude that changes in discourse necessarily reflect changes in genuine threat perception by governments. By focussing on the performance of state identity through diplomacy, I sought to avoid the question of whether any of the three narratives genuinely reflects the understanding of Russian state identity by policymakers. Nevertheless, the question remains pertinent. Are narratives mere propaganda constructions to justify interests they are supposed to cover? Or are interests and

narratives co-constitutive, so that a given narrative, once hegemonic, can exert pressure on the conception of interests?

Another avenue of research could build on the findings of this paper and track the development and changing prominence of identity narratives up to the present. Why are certain narratives preferred over others and how stable has Russian state identity been between 2000 and 2024? In particular, how warranted are claims of a civilisational turn in Russian policy after 2012, when Russian particularism had already been a hallmark of Russian security policy between 2000 and 2008?

At the same time, the performance of state identity through diplomacy also lends itself to further research. While this paper has introduced diplomacy as a social practice constitutive of foreign policy from the ontological perspective of Discourse Theory, it has done so in a rather compressed manner. When viewing diplomacy as a predominantly linguistic exercise, more remains to be said about the particularities of diplomatic speech both in the context of the UN and more broadly. What are the characteristics of diplomatic speech beyond courtesy? How effective is diplomatic communication and to what extent is it taken at face value by other nations? Is there cross-fertilisation of narratives from one delegation to the next? And of course, while diplomacy remains the official way of communication between governments, what role do other means of communication, such as the media, play in the re-construction of narratives between states?

Lastly, one might note that more than 20 years after the wars in Chechnya and Iraq, threat construction and moral communities are not only a latent feature of any political body, but also remain an appallingly effective political technology. Any community that conceives itself as such must necessarily be constructed against an other. However, the form this other takes need not necessarily be inimical. Others need not be neighbouring states, minority groups, nor even located in the present. And yet, construction of inimical others

that are contemporary and geographically close — in the case of terrorism allegedly omnipresent — seem far to outweigh the construction of, say, temporal others, such as pre-war Europe. While this work has focussed on the discursive construction of others, critical security studies provides an avenue to investigate the dynamics that incentivise the construction of what one might call ‘immediate’ others over ‘potential’ others. Finally, if one wanted to pursue this critical approach further, with an eye to narrowing the gap between research and public policy, one might want to investigate strategies to promote the construction of selves and others that are conducive to peaceful coexistence as opposed to ones that easily lend themselves to inciting conflict.

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Appendix — Primary Sources

This table provides an overview of this thesis's corpus. All documents have been retrieved from the UN Digital Library (Dag Hammarskjöld Library) available at <https://www.un.org/library>. Where documents are marked 'verbatim', reports summarise speeches verbatim without providing the original text.

List of Primary Sources

Year	Document	Agenda Item	Speaker	Position	Verbatim
2000	A/55/PV.20	General Debate	Igor Ivanov	Minister of Foreign Affairs	
2000	A/C.6/55/SR.27	Measures to eliminate international terrorism	Sergei Karev	Ambassador	X
2000	S/PV.4242	The responsibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security	Sergei Lavrov	Permanent Representative	
2001	S/PV.4370	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Sergei Lavrov	Permanent Representative	
2001	A/56/PV.13	Measures to eliminate international terrorism	Sergei Ordzhonikidze	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs	
2001	S/PV.4413	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Igor Ivanov	Minister of Foreign Affairs	
2001	A/56/PV.56	General Debate	Igor Ivanov	Minister of Foreign Affairs	

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Year	Document	Agenda Item	Speaker	Position	Verbatim
2002	S/PV.4512	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Sergei Lavrov	Permanent Representative	
2002	S/PV.4561	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Sergei Lavrov	Permanent Representative	
2002	A/57/PV.5	General Debate	Igor Ivanov	Minister Foreign Affairs	
2002	A/C.6/57/SR.7	Measures to eliminate international terrorism	Dmitri Lobach	Ambassador	X
2002	S/PV.4618	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Sergei Karev	Ambassador	
2003	S/PV.4688	High-level meeting of the Security Council: combating terrorism	Igor Ivanov	Minister Foreign Affairs	
2003	S/PV.4734	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Sergei Lavrov	Permanent Representative	
2003	S/PV.4752	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Sergei Lavrov	Permanent Representative	
2003	S/PV.4792	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Sergei Karev	Ambassador	
2003	A/58/PV.11	General Debate	Vladimir Putin	President	
2003	A/C.6/58/SR.8	Measures to eliminate international terrorism	Alexander Gappoev	Ambassador	X

List of Primary Sources

Year	Document	Agenda Item	Speaker	Position	Verbatim
2004	S/PV.4892	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Alexander Konuzin	Ambassador	
2004	S/PV.4921	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Sergei Lavrov	Permanent Representative	
2004	S/PV.4976	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Alexander Konuzin	Ambassador	
2004	S/PV.5006	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Alexander Konuzin	Ambassador / Chair of 1373 Committee	
2004	A/59/PV.8	General Debate	Sergei Lavrov	Minister of Foreign Affairs	
2004	S/PV.5053	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Andrei Denisov	Permanent Representative	
2004	A/C.6/59/SR.7	Measures to eliminate international terrorism	Andrei Denisov	Permanent Representative	X
2004	S/PV.5059 (Resumption 1)	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Andrei Denisov	Permanent Representative	
2004	A/C.6/59/SR.27	Measures to eliminate international terrorism	Dmitri Lobach	Ambassador	X
2005	A/59/PV.91	Measures to eliminate international terrorism	Alexander Konuzin	Ambassador	

List of Primary Sources

Year	Document	Agenda Item	Speaker	Position	Verbatim
2005	S/PV.5168	Briefings by Chairmen of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council [1267, 1373, 1540]	Andrei Denisov	Permanent Representative	
2005	S/PV.5229	Briefings by Chairmen of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council [1267, 1373, 1540]	Alexander Konuzin	Ambassador	
2005	S/PV.5246	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Alexander Konuzin	Ambassador	
2005	A/60/PV.12	General Debate	Sergei Lavrov	Minister of Foreign Affairs	
2005	A/C.6/60/SR.5	Measures to eliminate international terrorism	Dmitri Lobach	Ambassador	X
2005	S/PV.5293	Briefings by Chairmen of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council [1267, 1373, 1540]	Andrei Denisov	Permanent Representative	
2006	S/PV.5375	Briefings by Chairmen of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council [1267, 1373, 1540]	Ilya Rogachev	Deputy Permanent Representative	
2006	S/PV.5446	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Vitali Churkin	Permanent Representative	
2006	A/61/PV.15	General Debate	Sergei Lavrov	Minister Foreign Affairs	

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Year	Document	Agenda Item	Speaker	Position	Verbatim
2006	S/PV.5538	Briefings by Chairmen of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council [1267, 1373, 1540]	Ilya Rogachev	Deputy Permanent Representative	
2007	S/PV.5679	Briefings by Chairmen of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council [1267, 1373, 1540]	Vitali Churkin	Permanent Representative	
2007	A/62/PV.11	General Debate	Sergei Lavrov	Minister Foreign Affairs	
2007	A/C.6/62/SR.3	Measures to eliminate international terrorism	Ilya Rogachev	Deputy Permanent Representative	X
2007	S/PV.5779	Briefings by Chairmen of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council [1267, 1373, 1540]	Vitali Churkin	Permanent Representative	
2008	S/PV.5855	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Vitali Churkin	Permanent Representative	
2008	S/PV.5863	The situation in the Middle East	Ilya Rogachev	Deputy Permanent Representative	
2008	S/PV.5886	Briefings by Chairmen of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council [1267, 1373, 1540]	Vitali Churkin	Permanent Representative	