US-Russia relations post-Cold War: Russia left out in the Cold?

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Abstract

This thesis analyses why US-Russia relations failed to improve post-Cold War. Existing scholarship's explanation for the cause of this, based on offensive realist theory assumptions is insufficient because it is too focused on structural and materialist determinants. Consequently, it fails to consider the effect Russia's unique, endogenous identity and interests have on shaping the Russian worldview and Russian policy towards the US. Therefore, a different theoretical approach is needed which takes these into account. This thesis uses a Wendtian constructivist approach which recognises that states possess their own unique identity and interests, informed at a domestic and international level over time. Wendtian constructivism also enables us to consider the role of the value systems that supplement and legitimise these identities and interests. To ascertain what Russian identity and interests are and the key elements that informed their establishment, this thesis undertakes a discourse analysis to critically analyse Russian foreign policy speeches, interviews and texts from Russian leaders and high ranking officials over a thirty year period (1991-2021). As a result, this thesis illuminates the logic behind Russian behaviour and decision making based on its identity and interests to explain the fluctuations in Russian foreign policy during this time.

This thesis reveals that to a significant degree, Russian identity and interests have had a marked affect on relations, by shaping the Russian perspective and influencing Russian behaviour, and can thus help explain why US-Russia relations were impaired post-Cold War. Therefore, this thesis offers an alternative, more nuanced explanation than existing scholarship currently does, by illustrating the role Russia's identity and interests have on preventing US-Russia relations from improving post-Cold War.

Contents

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Abbreviations

BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CIS - Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO - Collective Security Treaty Organisation
EEU - Eurasian Economic Union
EU - European Union
FPC - Foreign Policy Concept
G7 - Group of Seven
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
IMF - International Monetary Fund
NACC - North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO - Non-governmental Organisation
NRC - Nato-Russia Council
NSB - National Security Blueprint
NSS - National Security Strategy
P4M - Partnership for Modernisation
PCA - Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PfP - Partnership for Peace
PJC - Permanent Joint Council
RIC - Russia-India-China
SCO - Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
UK - United Kingdom
UN - United Nations
US - United States of America
USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Introduction

The end of the Cold War brought a formal end to the bipolar international system that had characterised the second half of the 20th century. The US now stood alone as the world's sole superpower. It dominated the international system, leading the West as the authoritative centre of the global order. In contrast, the dissolution of the USSR caused Russia to lose its superpower status, leaving it severely depleted. Russia could no longer compete on material grounds with the US, whether economic or militarily. Most important to the concerns of this thesis, in the absence of communism, Russia could no longer compete against the capitalist US on ideological grounds. Not only did Russia lose its ability to project its great power status internationally according to its material capabilities, it lost the ideational underpinning to facilitate this. Refusing to accept a subordinate international position, Russia's primary foreign policy quest since the dissolution of the USSR has been to re-establish this status. There are two major issues Russia must resolve to achieve this. Russia must obtain US acknowledgement of Russia's great power status, and Russia needs to establish an ideological foundation effective enough to legitimise this rank. Russia's attempt to achieve these two feats is the focus of this thesis.

Denoted in Russian as '…derzhavnichestvo', the notion of Russia as a great power is pivotal to Russian identity (Shevtsova, 2007:3). Russia's central goal post-Cold War has been to attain great power status once more (Larson and Shevchenko, 2010:66). As Neumann (2008:128-129) succinctly explains, 'Russia has to be a great power, or it will be nothing'. It was hoped by those in Moscow that a new kind of international system would develop in the Cold War's absence (Sakwa, 2017:4-5). Although the characteristics of this envisioned international system have evolved over time, the key elements remain the same. The new system would afford Russia a leadership position akin to the US, Russia would have an influential role in international decision making, and Russian interests would be respected. Due to its dominant global position, only the US can bestow this status and facilitate these aspirations within the current international system (Oldberg, 2007:19). Russian foreign policy towards the US has consequently been motivated by the desire to attain US acknowledgement of its great power status. Thus far, however, this has not been achieved. Since 2014, in the absence of great power status acknowledgement by the US, Russia has sought alternative means to attain the position it seeks, by attempting to create a post-US led international system where it would no longer require US status

recognition. It is in this approach by Russia to dismantle the existing US led international system that we find US-Russia relations today.

The explanation for Russia's pursuit of great power status offered by the vast majority of existing scholarship is based on systemic determinants and material capabilities. According to offensive realism, the anarchical structure of the international system determines state behaviour (Mearsheimer, 2007:72). In the absence of an overarching authority to safeguard states' security, states must constantly pursue a strategy of security seeking by accumulating power to give them the best chance of survival (Mearsheimer, 2007:72). In this world, states exist in constant competition with one another, who they cannot trust (Mearsheimer, 2007:72). Moreover, according to offensive realist logic, 'power is based on the material capabilities that a state controls' (Mearsheimer, 2007:72). For example, Russia sees itself as a great power because it is the world's largest country in landmass, possesses the world's second largest arsenal of nuclear weapons after the US, has a wealth of natural resources, and inherited the Soviet Union's privileged UN Security Council seat (Oldberg, 2007:15). Based on these material capabilities, it is argued that through offensive action, Russia's primary foreign policy goal post-Cold War has been to challenge US dominance by reasserting Russia's superpower status alongside the US in the international system (Feinstein and Pirro, 2021:817-818). Behaving as a great power, Russia seeks to be at the minimum regionally dominant and maximum internationally dominant (Suny, 2007:38). This is because, it is argued, in an anarchical international system, Russia necessarily seeks security by attaining hegemony (Feinstein and Pirro, 2021:832). Operating according to a zero-sum logic, the US expands its influence closer to Russian borders primarily through NATO enlargement, marginalising Russia in the process, while Russia looks to project its power abroad through offensive action such as in the 2014 Ukraine crisis, to its benefit and the US's loss (Feinstein and Pirro, 2021:818-819).

However, this pessimistic explanation offers a limited analysis. By using catch-all assumptions, it fails to consider the autonomy of Russia. This viewpoint denies the individuality of each state, confining them all to operating according to the same logic (Mearsheimer, 2007:72). Russian foreign policy has changed over the last 30 years in ways which are not compatible with an offensive realist explanation that expects a consistent pursuit of dominance. At times Russia has sought to be the US's ally and partner. This means aligning with the US on international issues, behaviour at odds with

traditional Russian security interests and which offensive realism would be unable to explain. On other occasions, Russia seeks to directly challenge US dominance by attaining an international position akin to the US, but as its equal competitor and one that the US respects. Russia's most recent foreign policy approach towards the US has seen it be combative, undermining the US, but operating at a level that the US is still able to cooperate with Russia. In order to explain these fluctuations in policy and decipher the logic these actions are predicated on, one must consider the role of Russia's identity and interests.

Following a constructivist approach, this thesis advances the argument that Russian foreign policy is determined by the state's identity and interests (Jackson and Jones, 2017:107). At times, Russia's post-Cold War identity and interests were far from obvious even to Moscow (Mankoff, 2012a:37). Emblematic of this was the then Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev asking former US President Richard Nixon; 'If you . . . can advise us on how to define our national interests, I will be very grate-ful [sic] to you' (Mankoff, 2012a:37). This interaction illustrates the huge ideational issue that faced Moscow in the void left by communism. In the absence of communism, however, Russian leaders tended to fall back on pre-existing identity constructions. According to constructivism, identity constructions are born out of states' internal and external social interactions (Jackson and Jones, 2017:107-108). This intersubjective social interaction means that a state's identity and interests are constantly evolving, yet stable enough to be meaningful (Wendt, 1994:386). Thus, Russian identity and interests today are shaped by Russia's historical experience and previous interaction with the US, yet can be renegotiated through ongoing interaction with the US. Furthermore, the system of norms and values deriving from identity and these interests is then projected in varying ways depending on policy direction at the time (Jackson and Jones, 2017:108). Policy makers use pre-existing identity constructs, and the values system that goes with them, to legitimise the foreign policy path they have selected (Jackson and Jones, 2017:116). Therefore, to understand the behaviour of modern Russia, one must be aware of Russian history, and ongoing US-Russia interaction. Additionally, one must ascertain the values system that contextualises the identity and interests that help them make sense to the Russian public. Once the ideational construct behind Russian policy has been established, this thesis can reveal the effect this has on shaping US-Russia relations. This is at the heart of the issue this thesis seeks to address.

The argument this thesis advances is that the pursuit of US acknowledgement of Russia's great power status, a pursuit driven in turn by Russian perceptions of its own identity and interests, lies at the heart of the continued hostility between Russia and the US. To realise this, this thesis uses a constructivist analysis to analyse Russian discourse to determine how Russian identities and interests inform relations. This complements previous analysis by looking at the question from an alternative perspective by examining the Russian worldview which is widely ignored in Western academia.

As a result, this thesis' contribution to knowledge stems from its consideration of how Russia's identity and interests affect relations. While the topic is not new, the analytical approach deployed is original. By investigating the ideational side of US-Russia relations, this thesis sets itself apart from more mainstream analyses which attribute conflict to the consequences of an anarchic international system. This thesis will elucidate how Russian identity and interests have underpinned Russia's various attempts to attain US acknowledgement of Russia's great power status, and how the US's rejection of this has led to Russia pursuing alternative, unconventional means.

This study is timely because US-Russia relations have reached a dangerously low point. As Russian President Vladimir Putin said in June 2021, 'we have a bilateral relationship that has deteriorated to what is the lowest point in recent years' (Putin, 2021a). Currently, the Ukraine crisis which remains a frozen conflict, is the key flash point of US-Russia hostility. In 2014, Russian backed separatist movements took parts of eastern Ukraine while Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula following a disputed referendum (Peter, 2021). As of December 2021, 96,000 Russian troops had amassed at the Ukrainian border, with US intelligence predicting that this may rise to 175,000 in the new year (Harris and Sonne, 2021). Putin has warned of '…red lines' the US must not cross over Ukraine (Putin, 2021a). In response, US President Joe Biden said that 'I don't accept anybody's red lines' (Hunnicutt, 2021). Putin's line in the sand symbolises how far relations have deteriorated, being now at a tipping point. The immediate reason behind Russian action concerning Ukraine is to seek assurances from the US that Ukraine will not join an enlarged NATO (Harris and Sonne, 2021). However, disagreement over Ukraine did not cause relations to deteriorate. As Russian ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov explains, the problem goes back further than this:

> I am trying to find a day when Russia has become an enemy or a rival for the United States and it is rather difficult to say when it happened…It seems to me that maybe it was 10 years ago but not when the Ukrainian crisis starts (O'Connor, 2021).

However, 10 years of retrospective analysis is insufficient to determine the reason for poor US-Russia relations. In order to discern the state of current relations, one must look at Russian identity and interests at the end of the Cold War and beyond, investigating the historical informants to these. As Putin argues:

> Following the radical changes that took place in our country and globally at the turn of the 1990s, a really unique chance arose to open a truly new chapter in history. I mean the period after the Soviet Union ceased to exist. Unfortunately, after dividing up the geopolitical heritage of the Soviet Union, our Western partners became convinced of the justness of their cause and declared themselves the victors of the Cold War…The outcome was unfortunate. Two and a half decades gone to waste, a lot of missed opportunities, and a heavy burden of mutual distrust. The global imbalance has only intensified as a result (Putin, 2017a).

In order to understand why US-Russia relations failed to improve post-Cold War, one must look at the Russian perspective based on Russian identity and interests to demonstrate how this determines Russian foreign policy. To achieve this, one must look at the ideational foundation that informs Russian identity and interests. Through investigating the underlying reasons for the Russian perspective, this thesis outlines how Russian identity and interests have prevented US-Russian reconciliation post-Cold War.

This thesis will therefore analyse US-Russia relations over a thirty year period, from 1991 to 2021. During this time there have been several key international events that have polarised the US and Russia. The 2008 Russo-Georgian War, 2014 Ukraine Crisis, 2015 Russian armed intervention in the Syrian Civil War, and alleged 2016 US election meddling are the major acts of contention between the two sides. Other flash points include continuous NATO and EU enlargement, combined with the "colour revolutions" across Eastern Europe. NATO airstrikes in Yugoslavia 1995 and 1999, the 2003 Iraq War, 2011 Libyan Civil War and the 2011/2012 anti-government protests in Russia, also feature as important matters of disagreement. Popular thinking is to consider these isolated incidents, attributing them to US unipolarity or Russian revanchism driven by systemic determinants.

In doing so, existing scholarship fails to consider the ideational factors behind decision making and thus ignores Russian identity and interests. This thesis seeks to challenge popular assumptions, addressing the root cause of these issues by elucidating the Russian perspective. In doing so, this thesis will reveal the incompatibility in the Russian worldview and US policy. These acts should therefore not be viewed through a narrow balance of power calculation lens, but are born out of a contrast between what Russia seeks and how it perceives the US's action and the US's response to Russian aspirations and concerns. Therefore, the reason behind a failure to improve relations is not US/ Russian offensive action based on systemic determinants, but a fundamental incompatibility in Russian aspirations and perceived US mistreatment by failing to acknowledge Russian great power status.

Chapter Structure

Chapter One begins by exploring the theoretical framework of existing scholarship on US-Russia relations. It demonstrates that most current scholarship adopts an offensive realist framework to explain Russian behaviour, and deciphers the most common causes offered to explain why rapprochement between the former adversaries was not possible once the Cold War had concluded. To illustrate the logic behind existing work, the thesis outlines the key elements of offensive realist theorising which underpins it in detail. The chapter then goes on to provide a literature review of existing scholarships' primary explanations for why relations failed to improve post-Cold War. Current scholarship points to the actions of both parties based on materialist/systemic determinants, holding the US to account for its attempt to retain superiority and keep Russia weak while also finding Russia at fault, for being a revanchist power that seeks to be a great power once more.

Chapter Two begins by outlining the fundamental problem with this explanation, namely that it is too focused on material capabilities, on balance of power logic and the state of anarchy. This material/systemic determinant explanation is deficient because it is too structurally focused. Russian behaviour manifests itself in ways structural realism is unable to account for. Its logic of an enduring anarchical system that compels states to behave in a security seeking way (Copeland, 2000:188) attributes too much agency to the international system. In doing so, existing scholarship ignores the powerful effect Russia's identity and interests have on shaping relations. It ignores Russia's historical experience. It fails to consider how social interaction between the US and Russia affects Russian

behaviour and importantly it overlooks the value systems that underpin and legitimise Russia's varied foreign policy. Failing to account for these key elements means existing scholarship has only provided a partial explanation for Russian behaviour and thus offers an incomplete explanation for why rapprochement between the two nations post-Cold War failed to materialise.

As addressed in Chapter Two, this therefore necessities a theoretical approach that can consider the formation of Russia's endogenously formed, unique identity and interests and their affects on influencing proceedings. Separated into two sections, the first half of Chapter Two outlines the constructivist theoretical framework employed in this study. More specifically, this thesis adopts a Wendtian constructivist perspective, deriving from the work of Alexander Wendt. Wendtian constructivism challenges the offensive realist logic of a pre-determined anarchical system, by arguing that the international system's structure is intersubjectively ideationally constructed between states (Copeland, 2000:187; Kratochwil, 2006:24). Additionally, whilst Wendt acknowledges that material capabilities do exist independently from social interaction, Wendt argues that their meaning is intersubjectively, ideationally formed (Copeland, 2000:191). Thus, by challenging the fundamental assumptions of offensive realist logic through a consideration of the social formation of the international system's architecture and material capabilities, Wendtian constructivism enables this thesis to advance an alternative perspective for US-Russia relations from a different vantage point. Moreover, as a traditional constructivist approach, Wendtian constructivism is suitable because it considers the ideational formation of identity and interests, taking into account states' historical experience in informing their actions, and the belief systems used to legitimise this behaviour. A Wendtian constructivist framework thus enables this thesis to determine how Russian identity and interests are formed, and how they inform Russian foreign policy and affect US-Russia relations.

The second half of Chapter Two sketches out the methodological framework of this study. With discourse a medium through which ideas are shared, discourse analysis allows a researcher to study the written and spoken word to attain an understanding of that person's perception, which is based in wider, shared perceptions at that time (Taylor, 2013:2). The discourse in question will be key speeches, documents and texts from Russian policy makers. This group is comprised of the Russian President, fellow members of the Russian Security Council, and other prominent political figures. Their authoritative position in Russian foreign policy making makes their discourse of primary importance to

this study because it seeks to explain the logic behind these decisions. This thesis analyses their output from 1991 to 2021. Only by considering texts over the full thirty year period can this study conduct a full analysis and explain the fluctuations in Russian foreign policy post-Cold War. Having completed this, this thesis lays out its findings in the following three chapters.

Those chapters have been divided according to Russian policy direction action at the time. The three distinct foreign policy objectives towards the US identified by this thesis are as followed: Joining the West, Challenging the West, and Disrupting the West. As illustrated by the timeline below, Russian behaviour towards the US follows a clear pattern:

Each leader first attempts to join the West. For Boris Yeltsin this was 1991-1993, Putin 2000-2003 and Dmitry Medvedev 2008-2011. However, each leader is rejected by the West and subsequently relations begin to deteriorate. Under Yeltsin, this occurred from 1994-1996, Putin 2003-2004, and in 2011-2012 as the Medvedev Presidency came to an end. It is at this moment Russian leaders adopt a challenger approach towards the West. During the Yeltsin presidency this took place from 1996 until he left office in 2000, under Putin in his second Presidential term from 2004-2008, and again under Putin from 2012-2014 in his return to the Presidency following Medvedev's term. Following the 2014 Ukraine Crisis, Russia's attempt to challenge the West was replaced by a new approach, to disrupt the West, which remains ongoing.

Chapter Three begins by introducing each of these policy paths. It explains what Russia hopes to obtain from pursuing these policy courses and how, when one fails, Russia adopts a new approach. This illustrates how Russia is not wedded to a particular identity and accompanying interests, but is flexible, able to utilise several ideational constructs that can help facilitate its overarching quest for great power status. Following this, the chapter tackles how and why Russia sought to join the US led West, and why with the West being the dominant group, this is the preferred policy choice. In doing so, Russia adopts a Westernist identity in the image of the West and variously embraces the values that go with this. In doing so, Russia hopes to become the US's equal partner. However, Russia is denied admission in to the West, and it is from here we see relations begin to unravel.

Rejected by the West, Russia grows increasingly frustrated as it sees other former Soviet nations successfully doing so. Russia becomes disillusioned with the West, perceiving

Western action as threatening, designed to isolate Russia internationally. Thus, not only does the West deny Russia the great power status Moscow feels it deserves, in Russian eyes the West actively seeks to repress Russia and prevent it from rising back up to a great power position.

This perceived mistreatment manifests itself in Russia pursuing a new approach of attempting to challenge the West in the international system. Russia no longer looks to become a part of the West but instead, it seeks to offer a rival, Eurasian alternative. As outlined in Chapter Two, Russia attempts to alter the balance of power in the international system, shifting power away from the dominant West to create a multipolar system. It is in the space left by the USSR that Russia attempts to construct a Eurasian pole that is equal to the Western pole. Russia envisions itself as the head of this Eurasian pole, of equal status to the US as head of the Western pole. However, Russia's attempt to challenge the West extends beyond simplistic balance of power calculations. Instead, Russia adopts a Eurasianist identity, and with this, a non-Western, Eurasianist value system. Russia seeks to obtain Western recognition of the parity that exists between these two belief systems. However, Russia's attempt to compete against the West is affected by the 2014 Ukraine crisis. Russia's perception of Western behaviour in an area of special worth to Russia causes a shift in Russian policy. Recognising that the West will not allow Russia to join the West, nor will the West recognise Eurasia as its equal, Russia attempts to disrupt the West.

As outlined in Chapter Three, this disruptor policy course began in 2014 and continues up to the present day. No longer focused on operating within the confines of the existing international system to either integrate into the dominant West, or shift power and offer an equal Eurasian alternative, Russia attempts to undermine the ideational foundation of the US led West, liberal internationalism. In this approach, Russia attempts to remove the West and thus the US from its position of authority and erode the fundamental principles underlying the current international system, which it seeks to replace this with a non-Western centric, plural international order. To realise this, Russia adopts a conservative nationalist identity and value system to undermine the US led liberal international order.

The thesis concludes by reflecting on how the identity and interests adopted by Russia within this thirty year period identified by this paper more accurately explain the ebbs and flows of Russian policy during this time. Following careful analysis, the conclusion affirms

the argument that Russian identity and interests can help explain why relations failed to improve. Despite adopting a Westernist identity and interests, Russia's historical informants to this meant it was still too different from Western states to join the West and thus denied admission. The Eurasianist identity and interests affirmed by Russia was rejected by the West as a legitimate equal to the liberal democratic West. Russia's recently adopted conservative nationalist identity and interests has so far only been partially successful in undermining the West ideationally as at this current time the US led international order remains intact.

Chapter One

Current Theory

Whether it is done explicitly or implicitly, existing scholarship on why US-Russia relations failed to improve post-Cold War is grounded in theory. To understand existing scholarship's arguments, one must first recognise the theoretical framework these arguments are based in. This thesis posits that the overwhelming majority of this is offensive realist theory. In turn, this chapter will first lay out offensive realist assumptions and the logic that follows from these assumptions. Offensive realism is an offshoot of neorealism, offering a pessimistic, systemic explanation of international relations. Of course as with any theory, over time scholarly opinion of what defines offensive realism has diverged slightly. However, this thesis will adhere to the principles outlined by offensive realism's most prominent scholar, John J. Mearsheimer. Mearsheimer (2001:30-31) predicates his argument on five core assumptions: the international system is anarchic, all states possess some form of offensive capabilities, states can never be certain about each other's intentions, survival is the primary goal and finally, states act rationally to achieve survival. Mearsheimer (2001:31-32) argues that on their own these assumptions do not lead to offensive action but together they create '…powerful incentives for great powers to think and act offensively' against one another. This section will now outline each assumption in more detail and discuss them.

First one should outline how offensive realists believe the world works. Offensive realists argue that the international system is anarchic (Mearsheimer, 2001:30). According to Mearsheimer, this means that no higher authority exists above the state to mediate and come to states' aid should it be required (Mearsheimer, 1990:12). Consequently, in this world, it is every state for themselves. Thus, states operate according to a self-help logic (Mearsheimer, 2001:33). States must look out for their own interests as no one else will, and they have no higher authority to save them in times of need. In turn a state will treat other states as a potential adversary as they must focus on ensuring their own survival (Mearsheimer, 1990:12). For Mearsheimer (2001:31), survival means a state maintaining its territorial integrity and being in charge of its domestic political order. Essentially, states live in a world of insecurity and need to achieve security to best ensure survival. The ability to survive in this world is measured in terms of power (material capabilities). Other states

will be disinclined to attack you the more power you have (Mearsheimer, 2001:33). Consequently, Mearsheimer (2001:35-36) argues that offensive realist logic is epitomised by the security dilemma, with one state's gain another state's loss, culminating in endless security seeking behaviour. From this, Işeri, (2009:28) affirms that there is a '…direct link' between survival instincts and offensive action.

The anarchical system thus compels states to seek their own security which offensive realists argue that states do in an offensive manner (Gilpin, 1981:10; Labs, 1997:1; Lobell, 2009:169; Işeri, 2009:26; Jervis, 1978:168-169). According to this logic, to survive in this world a state must be on the offensive. By offensive action they mean a state behaving aggressively by attacking another state. Through this offensive action states accumulate more power. Thus, states believe that expansion pays (Liberman, 1996:12). Expansion equates to more power and thus more security. A state will be prepared to '…lie, cheat, and use brute force' to achieve this (Mearsheimer, 2001:35). It will do this because it needs to survive and must do what's necessary to ensure its continued existence. Additionally, as there is no overarching authority in the anarchic system, it must rely on itself to ensure this whilst there is no one to punish it for this bad behaviour. Nor is this bad behaviour judged because all states act according to the same logic.

Offensive action is favoured over defensive action because due to the anarchical system and the competition between states, a state needs to accumulate power, not retreat by defending what it has already got. A defensive stance is not advised in a world where other states are accumulating more power whilst the state in question's power plateaus. For offensive realists this is illogical and they have devoted much time to deconstructing why defensive realism's logic is faulty. Furthermore, a defensive stance would in no way decrease a state's risk of attack, as all other states would be behaving offensively. In turn, to best safeguard its survival, a state must be on the offensive. In doing so, it will acquire the attacked state's power, thus improving its chances of survival. Therefore, if a state wants to survive in this world, then it needs to be on the offensive. States thus have '…little choice but to pursue power and to seek to dominate other states in the system' (Mearsheimer, 2001:3).

This theorised state behaviour is premised on the assumption that all states possess some form of offensive capabilities (Mearsheimer, 2001:31). Offensive capabilities are the tangible entities states have at their disposal to act aggressively. These are used to hurt

other states and potentially destroy them (Mearsheimer, 2001:30). No matter how big or small, a state has the ability to be offensive towards another state, ideally with weapons but at the minimum its citizens' individual hands and feet (Mearsheimer, 2001:30-31). For offensive realists these offensive capabilities are narrowly measured in terms of material capabilities (Mearsheimer, 2001:36). These material capabilities are split into two categories. First is potential capabilities such as population size and economic wealth (Mearsheimer, 2001:43). Second and more important, is military capabilities, for example the number of military personnel, its air and naval forces' pedigree (Mearsheimer, 2001:43). Essentially, the more military capabilities a state has, the more dangerous it is (Mearsheimer, 2001:30). This is because military capabilities are the tool used by states when attacking another. Thus, the more material capabilities a state has, the better its chances of being successful when carrying out offensive action. According to this logic, power is purely based on tangible entities. These do not get their significance from any kind of ideational factors. Instead, their existence alone offers sufficient explanation for their meaning and how they should be viewed. This brutal logic characterises the international system as a survival of the most powerful. Those who possess the most material capabilities stand the best chance of survival.

Furthermore, who states perceive as a threat is based on these offensive capabilities (Mearsheimer, 2001:45). Whereby, a potential threat is based on how much material capabilities that state has, regardless of who they are or what they are going to do with them. Henceforth, intentions are not considered (Mearsheimer, 2001:45). It doesn't matter who the state is, previous history and current relations between the two, in this anarchical system the only factor considered in determining how much of a threat another state is, is what material capabilities it possesses. By this logic, the more material capabilities a state has, the more of a threat it is. This is pivotal as it encapsulates what offensive realists focus on. For offensive realists what matters is how much offensive capability another state has, not what it plans to do with it, which it considers irrelevant as ultimately a state cannot know this (Mearsheimer, 2001:45). All a state can truly be sure of is what's tangible. Thus ideational factors in threat perception are not considered. A state will not consider the ideational context. Decision making is therefore purely based on the material.

As a result, states are never content with their power (Mearsheimer, 2001:34; Labs, 1997:5; Jervis, 1978:169). States are constantly security seeking and want to be the most powerful state. Even when they have a significant military advantage over another they still

look for opportunities to expand (Mearsheimer, 2001:34; Labs, 1997:1). They want to be as powerful as possible and are constantly looking for means to achieve this (Mearsheimer, 2001:33; Işeri, 2009:27; Jervis, 1978:168). Ultimately, states can never be sure how much power is enough, especially in comparison to others (Jervis, 1978:169; Mearsheimer, 2001:34). Because they exist in a context of constant fear of attack, a state may question if double the amount of power than the next most powerful state is enough, or perhaps three times as much will be enough, and so on and so forth (Mearsheimer, 2001:34). What may be sufficient today may not be tomorrow. In turn, it is best to continue to push for hegemony now (Mearsheimer, 2001:35). Unaware of what the future holds, it is in states' interests to possess as many material capabilities as possible. It is extremely risky and not advised for a state to sit back and be content with what it has already got. For example, they may be overtaken in material capabilities by another state in the future, or another state may attain more material capabilities which re-positions them as a serious threat. Thus states operate based on a better to be safe than sorry logic. It is always better to have too power much than potentially not enough. Therefore it is almost a never-ending continuous cycle of states launching offensive action to accumulate power.

Consequently, a state not in this position at the top will want to be. This is to achieve two goals; the primary and the ultimate. The primary goal is to ensure survival. The ultimate goal is achieve hegemony (Işeri, 2009:27). As Mearsheimer (2001:3) argues, a state seeks to defend or alter this balance of power depending on their position within it and will act when an opportunity presents itself. The act being an offensive action. Every state wants the same thing, to be as powerful as possible. Therefore, for those that aren't currently but want to be at the top of the international system, they will seek to challenge the existing world order, especially if it can be done with minor repercussions (Mearsheimer, 2001:2). This is in order to reach a higher power position, which gives them a greater degree of material security. This in itself ensures the greatest chance of survival in the anarchical system (Mearsheimer, 2001:xi; Işeri (2009:27). From this, a state will ultimately hope to achieve hegemony. In this context hegemony is defined as being the single great power in the system (Mearsheimer, 2001:2). However, hegemony is extremely difficult to achieve because as mentioned earlier a state can never be sure how much power is enough and other states are constantly pushing to achieve the same ultimate goal. Therefore, states want to be at the top of the international order because at a minimum this gives them the best chance of survival and at a maximum they can achieve hegemony.

However, offensive realists do not place blame on states for this offensive action. Instead, they credit the international system for causing this (Mearsheimer, 2001:3; Gilpin, 1981:25-26; Zakaria, 1998:9; Labs, 1997:4-5; Jervis, 1978:167). State behaviour is systemically determined. This diminishes much of states agency such that states undergo no genuinely autonomous thought process when decision making. Their decision is not derived from any sense of history, either their own or others, nor state relations previous and current (Kirshner, 2010:61). Additionally, neither a state's political or economic system make it any more or less aggressive (Mearsheimer, 2001:54). This means that all states are compelled to follow the same patterns of behaviour (Mearsheimer, 2001:169; Gilpin, 1981:25-26). Whereby, as mentioned they never learn and instead operate in a constant cycle of competition for power to ensure survival. In turn, state relationships are a product of a defined anarchy and a systemic determination of behaviour. This ontological standpoint focusing almost solely on the structure (system) shapes the kinds of explanations offensive realism offers for state behaviour. Additionally, by favouring a systemic determinism of state behaviour, offensive realists separate themselves from classical realists by placing responsibility on the international system for compelling states to be aggressive, not human nature. It is not an innate sense of aggression or survival that compels states to be offensive, it is a response to the international system in which they find themselves.

Because of the anarchical, competitive system, states as power maximisers seek relative gains over absolute gains (Mearsheimer, 2001:36; Gilpin, 1981:13; Labs, 1997:15; Lobell, 2009:166). Whereby, the state considers not just its own gains but how this compares to other states who may gain (Mearsheimer, 2001:52). A state may forgo offensive action even if it was to greatly benefit from this if another state was to make a more significant benefit (Mearsheimer, 2001:36). States do not deem it justifiable to risk offensive action to gain material capabilities if another state was also to benefit (Mearsheimer, 2001:36). After all, a state is in competition with all states, not just some. All states are driven by the same logic, to achieve advantages over one another and stop others doing the same (Mearsheimer, 2001:35). A state is not content with being more powerful than some states it wants to be more powerful than all. It is this competitive edge that leads states to prevent other states improving their position to its detriment (Mearsheimer, 2001:35-36). It is a zero-sum game (Mearsheimer, 2001:34 and Jervis, 1978:170). When one state wins, another loses regardless of the benefits it may gain. Thus, states operate within a

competitive anarchical system and act according to a crude balance of power logic defined by material capabilities.

Consequently, according to offensive realists, states cannot trust each other (Işeri, 2009:28). It is not personal. They cannot trust anyone. A state can never be truly certain of other states' intentions. A state can never be sure that another state won't one day attack them (Mearsheimer, 2001:31). After all a states' intentions can change rapidly (Mearsheimer, 2001:31). If trust is given and then betrayed, a state may not be able to recover (Mearsheimer, 1990:12). Therefore, trusting another state is a risk a state cannot afford. Additionally, due to the anarchical system, states operate on a self-help basis (Mearsheimer, 2001:33). They put their own needs above the needs of others. If a state always puts itself first this ensures the greatest chance of its survival, which is as mentioned its primary goal. Thus it pays to be selfish and it is important to maintain this selfishness indefinitely to ensure future survival (Mearsheimer, 2001:33). Therefore, if every state is out for themselves and trust is not guaranteed then you cannot be sure that one won't attack you. After all, they place their own survival above yours in terms of importance. Thus, by never being certain of each other's intentions in this system, an '… irreducible fear' is created (Mearsheimer, 2001:43). Offensive realism places heavy emphasis on the assumption of this generated fear (Mearsheimer, 2001:42). For offensive realists, fear is seen as a powerful motivating force (Mearsheimer, 2001:32). It compels them to act. States fear each other and compete against one another for power (Mearsheimer, 2001:2). This inevitably causes states to clash (Mearsheimer, 2001:xi-xii). Fear is measured by power (Mearsheimer, 2001:43). The more power a state has, the more it will be feared by others (Mearsheimer, 2001:43). Therefore, as fear is measured by power and power is measured by material capabilities, ergo fear is measured by material capabilities. Ultimately, fear, mistrust and suspicion are the norm in this world according to offensive realists (Mearsheimer, 2001:43). Consequently, a state will act on a worst-case scenario basis (Mearsheimer, 2001:45). This is not unique to certain states. All states think like this.

This does not mean that offensive realists believe that co-operation between states is impossible. Co-operation can be achieved. To illustrate this point, Mearsheimer (2001:53) uses the example that during World War I, the UK, France and Russia united against a shared enemy in Germany. After all, in this case, the enemy of my enemy is a friend. Acting according to balance of power logic, they feared a dominant Germany

(Mearsheimer, 2001:52-53). This would threaten their own survival. Therefore, in extreme circumstances, cooperation within an alliance is achievable. However, co-operation is '… difficult to achieve and always difficult to sustain' (Mearsheimer, 2001:51). Thus, alliances are considered '…temporary marriages of convenience' (Mearsheimer, 2001:33). This is for three reasons. First, given the absence of trust and states' security seeking, today's friend could be tomorrow's foe (Mearsheimer, 2001:33). An example of this being the US and USSR cooperating in World War II before becoming adversaries once it had ended (Mearsheimer, 2001:53). Second, given a state's proclivity for relative gains, a state must consider how well it benefits from cooperation not just for itself, but in comparison to its co-operators (Mearsheimer, 2001:52). Third, in this world the risk of an ally cheating cannot be avoided (Mearsheimer, 2001:52). After all, there is no higher authority to punish them for this and a state can never truly trust another. This all begs the question as to how a state decides on the action it should take.

All of the above depends on an underlying premise that states can and do behave as rational actors. This is the final bedrock assumption of offensive realism, that states act rationally (Mearsheimer, 2001:31; Işeri, 2009:28). This means that states think carefully before acting. For offensive realists, this is a reasonable assumption to make from state action (Mearsheimer, 2001:30). There has to be some kind of logic to their action. This gives the offensive realist theory credibility that it is grounded in reality (Mearsheimer, 2001:30). An example of rationality may be that the weakest state in the international system (according to offensive realism's material determinant) would not declare war on a major power as it stands a high chance of being defeated and potentially not surviving. Simply put, a state will not start a conflict it does not think it can win (Mearsheimer, 2001:37). Thus, states are not mindless expansionists and act depending on the situation (Lobell, 2002:170). After all, all action is carried out with the primary goal of survival in mind (Mearsheimer, 2001:31).

This leads on to when offensive realists believe that a state will act. States act according to their external environment (the system) (Mearsheimer, 2001:31). Thus it is a result of the anarchical system in which a state finds itself that compels it to act and it acts rationally within this. When an opportunity presents itself a state will take it (Mearsheimer, 2001:37). However, due to a state's proclivity for rationality, action will only be carried out after careful deliberation, whereby states do a cost-benefit analysis before acting (Mearsheimer, 2001:37; Labs, 1997:11-12). A state will weigh up whether the pros of acting outweigh the

cons. First a state may consider if it will succeed, based on its own material capabilities and those of the potential state to be attacked (Mearsheimer, 2001:37). Then, due to their preference for relative gains, a state must decide how much it benefits and how other states will benefit. They must also consider how other states view their action and factor this into their decision making (Mearsheimer, 2001:37). A miscalculation of how others will respond can be costly (Mearsheimer, 2001:38). Mearsheimer (2001:38) points to the example of Iraq leader Saddam Hussein finding this out the hard way when he invaded Kuwait in 1990, expecting the US to stand aside. As history shows, he was mistaken. Finally, a state must also consider how other states will respond to their action not only in the short term, but in the long term (Mearsheimer, 2001:31). The consequences of upsetting the balance of power may have far reaching consequences and shape other states' future strategies.

In conclusion, as an offshoot of neorealism, offensive realism takes on a pessimistic, systemic determinant approach to international relations. Offensive realism is predicated on the argument that five bedrock assumptions coalesce to compel states to be offensive. The anarchical international system leads to states to be offensive, security seeking actors acting according to the same logic. This logic is to secure the most power possible, defined in terms of material capabilities. This is to ensure the primary goal of survival and achieve the ultimate goal of hegemony. Furthermore, due to the anarchical system making states in constant competition with one another, states are unable to trust each other and must look out for themselves. Fear is an inevitable symptom of this anarchical, competitive system. Finally, before deciding to launch offensive action, states carry out a rational cost-benefit analysis, factoring in their competitors and how they will react. In turn, ultimately, offensive realism is about '…fear, self-help and power maximization' (Mearsheimer, 2001:32). As a theory, offensive realism is seemingly coherent, easy to understand and very persuasive. Offensive realism fits well with the shift in scholarly discourse from outdated classical realism which relies too heavily on human nature shifting to a structural explanation for state behaviour. Henceforth, post-Cold War discourse on US-Russia relations has coincided with the growth of this new theoretical perspective. In turn, as will be illustrated, existing scholarship draws heavily on offensive realism to explain why the US-Russian relations failed to fully transform once they were no longer engaged in the Cold War with one another.

Literature Review

In existing scholarship there is a range of causes used to explain why US-Russia relations failed to improve post-Cold War. The major causes offered are NATO's continued existence and expansion, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the ongoing 2014 Ukraine conflict followed by Russia's annexation of Crimea, and new methods such as non-linear warfare. However, whilst there is a significant amount of scholarly literature on this topic, the vast majority of it offers the same underlying causal explanation for these developments. The explanation offered is that relations have not improved because of the US's push to maintain its unilateral position at the top of the international order whilst Russia wants to challenge this and create a more multipolar world. However, this thesis asserts that this overarching explanation and the subsequent examples given to illustrate it, are deeply rooted in offensive realist logic and assumptions. That is to say that they are all centred on the premise that these proximate causes are underpinned by the over-riding issue of each state's quest for security and power. For example, although each state respectively carries out the action, current scholarship highlights how both the US and Russia carry out their actions in response to systemic pressures. Thus, current scholarship purports that the cause of poor relations is each side's push to be one of, and ultimately the, most powerful state in the anarchical international system, due to the pressures of being two great powers in the international system where no higher authority exists. This is the epitome of offensive realist logic. To illustrate this point, this section will examine existing scholarly literature.

This will be laid out as follows. The first half will focus on the US and the second on Russia. For each nation it will begin by explaining existing scholarship's overarching explanation for the states' behaviour which acts as a catch-all. This is that both seek to be the dominant state in the international system. All of the key causes - NATO expansion, the Ukraine Crisis etc. - fall neatly into this. It will then tackle each of these key causes individually, laying out their main claims before highlighting how they all accord with offensive realist logic. In turn, the reader will see how regardless of the cause given, the overwhelming majority of current scholarship offers the same narrow explanation for why relationship failed to improve post-Cold War and in turn see how this is deeply grounded in offensive realist theory.

The US

After the fall of the USSR, the Cold War international system of US-Russia bipolarity was replaced by US unipolarity. The US was now the dominant state in the system. Its closest rival, the now Russian Federation, could no longer match it. Scholarship which identifies US action as the cause of deteriorating relations repeatedly offers the same explanation for US behaviour post-Cold War and thus why relations between the two powers have not improved. This is that the US wants to maintain its position at the top of the international system and subordinate any potential rivals who seek to challenge this (Mearsheimer, 2001:386; Işeri, 2009:26; Fouskas and Gökay, 2005:29; Layne, 2002:135, Stent, 2014a:ix; Sakwa, 2017:7; Graham Jr, 2019). In material capabilities terms, Russia is considered a great power (Karagiannis, 2013:80; Sergi, 2009:3; Lucas, 2014:270; Stent, 2014a:ix-x; Graham Jr, 2019). As one of the few great powers, Russia is a challenger to this US grand strategy (Işeri, 2009:27; Schoen and Smith, 2016:1). In response the US has developed strategies to mitigate against this challenge (Işeri, 2009:29; Sergi, 2009:235).

This explanation is archetypal offensive realist logic. Whereby, the most powerful state in the anarchical international system wants to maintain its position at the top as this ensures the greatest chance of survival. As a result, other states will be very unlikely to attack the most powerful state in the system. Additionally, it is constantly seeking security as a state is never content with its power. According to this logic, a state can not be sure a more powerful state will not rise up against it in the future and therefore must accumulate as much power now, whilst it the option is available. Thus, the US would compare itself with other states in terms of material capabilities, viewing Russia as a large threat due its large material capabilities (military size, population size etc). This also contributes to why it seeks to prevent Russia from getting stronger. Russia is a great power and is therefore a significant threat and thus a challenger to US dominance. Due to this competitive nature of relations, the US and Russia have been unable to improve relations as the US is always thinking of its survival and security, pushing to be the most dominant and in turn views Russia as a threat. Existing scholarship's explanation is supported by the following key causes it proposes for why US-Russia relations failed to improve.

The main cause given by the vast majority of current scholarship for poor relations on the basis of US responsibility, is NATO's continued existence and enlargement (Dyndal and Espenes, 2016:61; Wood, 2018:7). In 1952, NATO's first secretary general said that NATO

existed ‘to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down’ (Hanson, 2017). For many scholars, this is as true then as it is now. Sakwa (2017:14) argues that post-Cold War NATO has not undergone any real ideology or norms transformation. The US had no intention of dissolving NATO once the Cold War had ended (Layne, 2000:66). NATO enlarged despite assurances given to Gorbachev in 1990 that if he were to allow a reunified Germany to join, NATO would not expand eastward (Shirfinson, 2016a:11). However, it is argued that the US never intended to honour this and therefore deceived Russia, hiding its true intentions (Shirfinson, 2016a:11). NATO enlargement is seen to be evidence that the US is pushing to maintain its position as the most powerful state in the international system. The general consensus is that NATO expansion achieves two US objectives. Firstly, it is a tool used by the US to maintain primacy in Europe (Layne, 2003; Karagiannis, 2013:83; Shirfinson, 2016a:11; Toal, 2017:6; Sakwa, 2017:18; Smith, 2019:363; Wood, 2018:120-122). This relates to its second objective, that it keeps Russia weak by isolating it (Işeri, 2009:34; Layne, 2000:68; Mearsheimer, 2001:50; Karagiannis, 2013:85; Shirfinson, 2016a:11; Toal, 2017:6; Sakwa, 2017:18; Cohen, 2019a; Wood, 2018:125). Thus, NATO enlargement is an instrument used by the US to bring Europe under US control, in order to protect US security and economic interests (Layne, 2003).

NATO enlargement is in accordance with the logic of offensive realism (Trenin, 2002,188). For offensive realists, the best solution to the insecurity caused by the anarchical international system is expansion as this generates additional security (Layne, 2000:64-65). Offensive realism assumes that states want to be as strong as possible and ultimately seek hegemony as this ensures the best chance of survival (Layne, 2000:65). This is achieved through offensive action. Hence, NATO enlargement is a tool to achieve this.

Another way to achieve hegemony is by preventing potential rivals from rising up or by destroying them (Layne, 2000:65). Since the US is unable to eliminate Russia it instead seeks to contain Russia. Post-Cold war Russia hoped for a new European security arrangement, however, the US ignored Russia’s proposal to make the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe the new focal point for European security (Mearsheimer, 2001:49). According to offensive realism, the reason for this is that it makes no sense for the US to make Russia and others an equal partner in a security arrangement. This may explain why Russia has never been seriously considered for NATO

membership. The US benefits from being the strongest member state in NATO as it can dominate the military alliance whilst simultaneously keeping Russia weak.

In addition, it is argued, as a state becomes more powerful, its strategic interests become greater (Layne, 2000:64). The US exemplifies this (Layne, 2000:71). This is because the more material capabilities it has, the more powerful it is and therefore the more options it has (Layne, 2000:64). Simply put, the more a state has the ability to do, the more it will do (Layne, 2000:64). This logic offers the strongest reasoning for NATO enlargement (Layne, 2000:64). According to offensive realists, this is what states do. In the absence of a higher authority, the dominant state does what it wants and weaker states have to accept it. NATO expansion was already decided, forced upon a weaker Russia which had to accept it (Toal, 2017:6; Goldgeier and McFaul, 2013:15; Sergi, 2009:236). This aligns with offensive realist thinking, whereby there exists no higher authority for Russia to turn to, to punish the US for this behaviour.

Additionally, offensive realists believe that states as power maximisers seek relative gains over absolute gains. Thus they operate according to zero-sum game logic. Whereby, one state's advantage is to the detriment of another state. Adhering to offensive realist logic, much of current scholarship argues that the US and Russia do not trust each other (Levgold, 2014:81; Mearsheimer, 2016:30; Klimkin, 2017; Sergi, 2009:237; Lucas, 2014:275; Suchkov, 2014:155; Stent, 2014a:x). Following this, current literature discusses relations operating in a zero-sum game (Lucas, 2014:267; Orenstein, 2019:29; Suchkov, 2015:155; Matlary and Heier, 2016:8). Therefore, states operate according to a balance of power logic. NATO enlargement typifies this. According to offensive realism, as a result of the anarchical international system and their material capabilities, as two great powers, the US and Russia are in competition with each other. When a new state joins NATO, the US makes an additional foothold in Europe whilst Russia becomes more contained.

Consequently, NATO's very existence and the fact it enlarges, inevitably creates a security dilemma for Russia (Pushkov, 1997; Orenstein, 2019:17; Kuchins, 2002:14; Salzman, 2019:8; Shirfinson, 2016b; Trenin, 2001:90-91; Sakwa, 2017:38; Cohen, 2019b). It is a classic security dilemma having an expansionist military alliance encroaching closer towards you. States in Russia's near abroad present a significant security threat to Russia should the US show interest in them, which it has done (Suchkov, 2014:154-155; Graham Jr, 2019; Wood, 2018:132-133; Service, 2019:xv). During the Cold War these areas were

under USSR control. Now independent states in close proximity to Russia, an insecure Russia is compelled to proactively conduct offensive action to ensure survival (Shirfinson, 2016b).

An offshoot of NATO and its enlargement is NATO intervention, wherein NATO uses offensive military action abroad. In current scholarship, NATO intervention is mentioned to highlight US behaviour and its damaging effect on relations (Stent, 2014a:159). After the Cold War, the US transformed NATO's role from protecting internal members from attack to meeting security challenges/opportunities outside NATO's boundaries (Layne, 2000:70-71; Stent, 2014a:160). According to its critics, NATO intervention serves the function of increasing the US's foothold in Eastern Europe and further absorbs the region into the US's sphere of influence (Fouskas and Gökay, 2005:28). The 1999 NATO intervention in Yugoslavia is the primary example given. The US, through NATO, intervened in the internal affairs of an independent state which was not a NATO member (Layne, 2000:60). The Serbian leadership was not carrying out external aggression (Layne, 2000:60). By intervening via NATO, the US repeatedly ignored Russia's concerns about NATO action (Mearsheimer, 2001:50). However, Russia was too weak to prevent NATO from acting (Smith, 2019:363). Consequently, offensive NATO intervention abroad has been a hindrance to the US and Russia amending their relationship once the Cold War had finished.

Mirroring NATO expansion, NATO intervention fits in to the offensive realist assumption that states carry out offensive action through military power to accumulate more power and thus extend their security. Through NATO intervention, the US could further consolidate its security in Eastern Europe and develop a greater foothold in the region. As the most powerful state, it possesses the ability to do so. Operating in a zero-sum game, the US's gain would be Russia's loss. As a rational actor, the US realised that Russia was too weak to prevent it happening and thus acted.

In addition to NATO's existence, expansion and intervention abroad, existing scholarship stipulates that US support of the "colour revolutions" has impaired US-Russia relations post-Cold War. According to many observers, this has damaged relations (Stent, 2014a:97; Service, 2019:44-45). Whereby, the US support of democracy promotion in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus exerts US influence into Russia's sphere of influence (Lincoln, 2012:93). These revolutions sought to transform the existing political

order in the state in question, to a more liberal democratic style of rule, similar to that of the US. This is beneficial to the US as these states become more like the US and seek a closer relationship with it. The US supports the uprisings via moral and financial backing (Mearsheimer, 2016:29). According to Rumer (2007, cited in Karagiannis, 2013:78), Russia viewed the Georgian “Rose” Revolution as instigated by the West designed to marginalise Russia and further expand US influence, with a significant proportion of Western scholarship concurring with this view (Karagiannis, 2013:78). From 1992 to 2001, the US provided Georgia with over $1 billion in financial assistance (Toal, 2017:3-4). Another example is Ukraine’s “Orange” revolution (Mearsheimer, 2016:29). Since 1991, the US has funded over $5 billion to help Ukraine achieve greater democracy (Mearsheimer, 2014b:4). During the Orange revolution, the US ambassador to Ukraine at the time described it as ‘a day for the history books’ (Mearsheimer, 2014a). Both states’ leaders were replaced by pro-Western administrations. In Russia itself, the Bolotnaya protests in Moscow from 2011-2013 were seen as US backed in an effort to remove Putin as leader (Orenstein, 2019:26). As a result, scholars argue that US support for the “colour revolutions” is deeply problematic for Russia as it presents a security threat (Orenstein, 2019:26; Stent, 2014a:101; Wood, 2018:128). This is because the change in political system in Russia’s closest neighbours causes states to pivot away from Russia and towards the US. Meanwhile, US meddling in Russia internally is an acute threat to Russia survival. This adheres to the issue of security offensive realism raises. The US seeking influence is offensive, security seeking behaviour. Consequently, Russia’s influence in its near abroad is weakened and instead the US gains a foothold where Russia previously had one (Lincoln, 2012:94-95). In addition, US support for “colour revolutions” is reminiscent of the offensive realist argument that states cannot trust each other. In the offensive realist world, suspicion and mistrust are the norm as a state can never be sure of what another state’s true intentions are. By supporting the “colour revolutions”, the US has shown itself to be untrustworthy to Russia.

Russia

On the other hand, there are many scholars who depict Russian behaviour as the primary cause for the breakdown in relations. It is argued that Russia has refused to accept its post-Cold War position. Instead, Russia has sought to reassert itself as a great power and to challenge the existing world order (Orenstein, 2019:30; Goldgeier, 2014b; Alcaro, 2015:13; Klimkin, 2017; Krastev, 2015:18; Salzman, 2019:xviii; Toal, 2017:89; Sergi,

2009:11; Lucas, 2014:xii; Trenin, 2001:86; Kagan, 2018:32-33; Tsygankov, 2019a:214; Stent, 2014a:ix, Lo, 2015:xv-xvi; Graham Jr, 2019; Schoen and Smith, 2016:ix; Stent, 2019:2-3; Service, 2019:321-323; Lo, 2017). For many, the explanation given is that Russia achieves its goals through offensive action as evidenced recently by Ukraine, Crimea and interference in the Baltics (Schoen and Smith, 2016:vi). However, existing scholarship argues that this is not a unique occurrence. On the contrary, Russia has displayed the same tendencies since the Cold War ended in numerous instances such as in Georgia. Regardless of the other state/entity in question, the explanation for Russian action remains the same, namely that Russia is acting to protect its security. This ensures it stands the greatest chance of survival in the international system offensive realists purport that states exist within. The majority of these skirmishes take place in Russia's near abroad. A significant proportion of existing scholarship argues that Russia seeks to imperialise neighbouring states to bolster its security and reclaim land it believes it lost at the fall of the USSR (Klimkin, 2017; Alcaro, 2015:12; Natsios, 2018:5; Lucas, 2014:275; Kagan, 2018:14; Stent, 2019:13). Russian neighbours are easy prey for Russian as they are weaker in material capabilities compared to Russia (Schoen and Smith, 2016:ix; Feinstein and Pirro, 2021:824). Thus, the failure to improve relations is caused by Russian expansion. Overall, the majority of existing scholarship asserts that Russia launches offensive action to make Russia more secure and thus more powerful, whilst preventing the US from growing even stronger.

In turn, this thesis argues that existing scholarship's explanation for Russian behaviour is deeply grounded in offensive realist logic. By assuming that Russian behaviour is driven by insecurity, Russia's attempt to challenge the existing world order and the US's dominance of this is archetypal offensive realist logic. In an anarchical world, Russia is constantly security seeking and wants to be as strong as possible. The primary goal of this is to ensure the best chance of survival and the ultimate goal is to achieve hegemony. In addition, other states will be less likely to attack Russia because of this. The explanation offered shows that scholars believe that Russia is behaving offensively by proactively seeking to accumulate more power and not sitting back and being content with the power it currently possesses. For some scholars, Russia's superior material capabilities allow it to launch offensive action against its neighbours. Again this conforms to the importance placed on material capabilities by offensive realism.

The main examples scholars give to illustrate Russian behaviour and support their overall explanation is the 2014 Ukraine crisis (Alcaro, 2015:12; Levgold, 2014:76; Levgold, 2016:8; Stent, 2019:12). Similarly to its overall explanation, existing scholarship offers two explanations for Russian action in the 2014 Ukraine Crisis. The first line of argument goes that the primary cause of the Ukraine crisis was Russia responding to US expansion through NATO enlargement (Mearsheimer, 2014a; Mearsheimer, 2014b:1; Toal, 2017:7; Sakwa, 2017:162; Levgold, 2014:82; Cohen, 2019b; Wood, 2018:136; Service, 2019:134-135). Following the overthrow of the democratically elected President of the Ukraine, the new administration sought to pivot away from Russia and integrate into the West by joining NATO. As a large state bordering Russia, this presented a security threat to Russia should Ukraine move away from Russia's influence and align itself with the US, thus allowing the US power and influence over it (Lincoln, 2012:93,95). Similar to its wider explanation for Russian behaviour, current scholarship's argument for how Russian action in Ukraine affected relations closely mirrors offensive realist thinking. Wherein, according to offensive realist theory, it is inevitable that Russia, as great power would intervene and constrain external (US) influence in its near abroad when it feels its security is threatened (Götz, 2016:301-302). Russia could not allow this threat to national security and therefore had to act (Mearsheimer, 2014a; Mearsheimer, 2014b:9). This is standard offensive realist behaviour (Götz, 2016:302).

The second line of argument is that Russian imperialism of Ukraine is part of its irredentist plans (Klimkin, 2017; Levgold, 2014:82; Schoen and Smith, 2016:xiv). Discussion of possible NATO membership and the overthrow of Ukraine's pro-Russian President merely provided a pretext. These scholars argue that, in order to become a major power and challenge US unipolarity, Russia seeks to imperialise weaker neighbouring states (Schoen and Smith, 2016:v). Thus, Ukraine is part of Russia's territorial expansion in Eastern Europe (Schoen and Smith, 2016:31). Key to all of this is Russia's invasion and illegal annexation of Crimea (Schoen and Smith, 2016:v). Consequently, Russia's aggressive plans for territorial expansion act as a hindrance to repairing relations between the US and Russia. This argument is based on the same principles of offensive realism. Firstly, there is no higher authority to punish Russia for its actions. Secondly, to become more powerful, Russia must go out and accumulate power offensively. Thirdly, as a more powerful state in terms of material capabilities, Russia had the ability to launch offensive action in Ukraine against a weaker state. This all serves the overall goal of seeking to be the most dominant force in the international system. Action in Ukraine will help Russia achieve this.

Similar to its involvement in the Ukraine crisis, Russia's action in the preceding 2008 Russo-Georgian war is pointed to by existing scholarship as a stumbling block to bettering relations (Stent, 2019:306). Again, opinion is split on the cause of Russian action. For some, the promise of NATO membership forced Russia to respond to a security threat (Sakwa, 2015:4-5; Mearsheimer, 2014a; Cohen, 2019a). To others, Georgia is part of Russia's revanchist plans (Karagiannis, 2013:75,87; Schoen and Smith, 2016:ix). Overall, regardless of the motivation, both sides believe that security interests led to Russian action. Additionally, Russian action revealed that the US and Russia are in competition and a threat to each other, thus having a negative effect on relations.

The motivations presented for Russian involvement in Georgia align with the basic principles of offensive realism. To begin, Russia viewing US influence as a threat adheres to offensive realist logic. States exist in competition with one another, view each other as a threat while materialist/systemic determinants impel them to offensively seek power. Behaving rationally, Russia was able to invade Georgia because it is a weaker neighbouring state in terms of material capabilities. Moreover, controlling Georgia would provide Russia with more security to ultimately serve the overall goal of challenging US dominance in the international system. To go further, Karagiannis (2013:88) argues that Russia carried out a cost-benefit analysis before acting. Despite plans for future NATO membership, the US and Georgia had not signed a security treaty, whilst the US was consumed by its Middle-Eastern wars (Karagiannis, 2013:88). The risk of American retaliation was thus limited (Karagiannis, 2013:88). Finally, the price of oil was high so Russia had a healthy economy (material power) and EU states were dependent on Russian oil which made up one in three of the EU's total imports (Karagiannis, 2013:88-89). Overall, behaving in accordance with offensive realist logic, Russia fought against a weaker opponent to become the dominant regional power, while preventing the US from doing so, to improve Russia's survival rate in the anarchical system (Karagiannis, 2013:89).

Following this is the argument in more contemporary scholarship that Russia's use of hybrid warfare prevents relations from progressing (Alcaro, 2015:12; Lucas, 2014:xxx; Tsygankov, 2019a:216). Hybrid warfare is a relatively new form of soft power used via cyber means such as hacking, intended to slyly subvert Western states' governments (Orenstein, 2019:9-10). The aim of hybrid warfare is to weaken Western resolve by

challenging US dominance (Orenstein, 2019:31; Klimkin, 2017; Schoen and Smith, 2016:44; Service, 2019:165). This is because a destabilised West presents a less united front against Russia thus making US influence or potential influence in the state less secure, whilst it becomes more exposed to Russian influence. Russia seeks to destabilise the West through a divide and rule initiative, with the end goal to '…ultimately destroy the European Union and NATO' (Orenstein, 2019:30-31). With no higher authority to punish Russia, Russia can do as it pleases (Feinstein and Pirro, 2021:825). Therefore, relations have failed improved due to Russian use of hybrid warfare against the US. This explanation for how Russian use of hybrid warfare hinders the transcendence of US-Russia relations to healthier relations is rooted in offensive realist logic. The three primary offensive realist assumptions this taps in to is that firstly states act offensively. Russia has launched aggressive, offensive action for security purposes (Orenstein, 2019:10). This relates to the second assumption that states seek relative gains because states operate based on a zero-sum game logic. When Russia gains security in Europe, the US loses some and vice-versa. Consequently, this feeds in to the third key offensive realist assumption that states can not trust each other. The US is unable to be certain of Russian intentions and thus must assume that they are malevolent.

Finally, scholars point to Russia's push to further its power abroad through international organisations as a source of contention between itself and the US. According to Lo (2015:206), Russia first attempted this through the CIS. It then moved on to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (Lucas, 2014:177; Tsygankov, 2019a:217; Schoen and Smith, 2016:26). The more recent international institutions are the Eurasian Economic Union and BRICS. In Europe, Russia has sought influence in its near abroad through the formation of the EEU (Orenstein, 2019:27-28; Lo, 2015:206; Schoen and Smith, 2016:16; Service, 2019:267). The EEU acts as a competitor to the EU in a fight for Russia to gain influence over neighbouring states (Orenstein, 2019:27-28). Meanwhile as the most powerful state in the EEU, Russia seeks to dominate those within the EEU (Orenstein, 2019:28). Globally, BRICS is the institution for Russia to challenge US unipolarity (Salzman, 2019:xviii; Lo, 2015:77-78; Sakwa, 2017:19). This was precipitated by a desire for improved economic prosperity and a distrust for US leadership on the international stage (Salzman, 2019:xviii-xix). Henceforth, Russia's pursuit of power to challenge the US led world order has hampered any repair to the relationship between the two powers once the Cold War had ended.

This reading of Russian behaviour and its influence in affecting US-Russia relations is heavily reminiscent of offensive realist logic. To begin, it speaks of Russia pursuing its own security needs to attain the most power possible. This it is hoped will allow it to stand the best chance of survival in the anarchical world. In this world, states are constantly security seeking as they are never content with their power as they cannot be sure how much power is enough. This all leads to what, according to offensive realist logic, is states' two key objectives, the primary objective to maintain survival and the ultimate objective to achieve hegemony.

Overall, this literature review has argued that there is an overwhelmingly agreed explanation prevalent in existing scholarship for why US-Russia relations failed to improve after the Cold War had ended. The US wants to maintain its unipolarity in the international system so it acts accordingly to maintain it. It has sought to achieve this through several means, the primary tool being through NATO's continued existence and enlargement. Other means include NATO intervention and support for the "colour revolutions" in former Soviet states. Meanwhile, Russia wants to challenge US dominance of the international system, instead seeking to create a more multipolar system in its place. To realise this goal, it is argued that Russia behaves by protecting its security interests to prevent itself getting weaker, and instead become more powerful. The main examples offered to illustrate this are Russian involvement in the 2014 Ukraine conflict, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, Russian use of hybrid warfare and finally its push to create new international institutions. In turn, existing scholarship comes to the conclusion that both the US and Russia have the same goals in mind. They both proactively seek security through offensive means to gain the most security possible whilst simultaneously seeking to prevent the other doing the same. As a result, because of these causes, according to this explanation, relations between the two states have failed to improve. As highlighted throughout, this chapter has demonstrated that existing scholarship's explanation of why the relationship failed to better post-Cold War is heavily embedded in offensive realist logic. It speaks of issues of competition, security, threat and power, however it confines them to being the result of materialist/systemic determinism.

The following chapter will show how the offensive realist logic existing scholarship bases its explanation on is deeply problematic. By only offering a narrow, catch-all, systemic explanation for why the US and Russia failed to transform their relationship once the Cold War ended, existing scholarship offers an insufficient explanation. Consequently, new

thinking is needed that is not confined to the narrow parameters of offensive realist logic, but one that can move past materialist/systemic determinants and catch-all behaviour to get to the root cause of the issue, and provide the specificity warranted. To achieve this, this thesis will deploy an alternative theoretical framework to demonstrate the weaknesses of offensive realism to illustrate what is missing from existing understanding and thus what this thesis offers.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

This chapter will define and outline the constructivist theoretical framework that this thesis will use. The aim of this is to illuminate why constructivism is the most appropriate framework for explaining why the US-Russia relationship did not improve post-Cold War. In doing so it will illustrate why the explanation put forward by offensive realism is unsatisfactory and how constructivism can address this. This thesis posits that the logic behind offensive realism is not only inadequate, but fundamentally flawed. Offensive realism bases the international system and the state behaviour that follows, on pre-determined, exogenously formed material/systemic determinants. The problem with this is that it assumes too much. It offers a catch-all explanation that is insufficient to adequately address the precision needed to answer the overall question. This stems from its inability to recognise the role of social interaction on shaping the international system and the states within this, combined with failing to consider that through this social interaction, each state endogenously forms its own identity and interests which then act to shape states' behaviour. Consequently, offensive realism is unable to offer a comprehensive analysis, nor the specificity needed to offer a thorough, succinct explanation. Because of this, a different theoretical framework is required which can address these shortcomings. Constructivism does this. It offers a rival interpretation to offensive realism because by considering social interaction, constructivism offers an alternative way of thinking. This has powerful implications because it fundamentally changes how one understands the international system, the states within this, their behaviour, and their relationships with one another.

The constructivism employed here is that of Alexander Wendt, its most renowned scholar. Wendtian constructivism is the most suitable interpretation of constructivism for this study to take because it relies on the same epistemology as offensive realism. Wendtian constructivism recognises that not everything in the world we inhabit is a social construction but that material reality exists independently from the mind, as opposed to more post-positivist forms of constructivism which argue that social constructions shape reality. This is important because it means that Wendtian constructivism and offensive realism can speak to each other, rather than past each other in a way that makes

Wendtian constructivism a meaningful critique of offensive realism. Further to this, Wendtian constructivism and offensive realism have the same starting point. Both are state focused, acknowledge that states have identities and interests, recognise that anarchy, self-help attitudes and the security dilemma all exist, and that states possess some fundamental needs such as survival, independent of interaction. These similarities mean that constructivism can offer a meaningful critique of offensive realism because it can show how constructivism considers the same issues, yet offers an alternative perspective.

However, from this point the two theories diverge. Constructivism offers a rival interpretation, not a bolt on or technical fix. The logic behind constructivism and offensive realism is very different. Wendtian constructivism does not accept that anarchy, self-help attitudes and the security dilemma are exogenously pre-determined by the international system as offensive realism does, but holds that they are social constructions. This is important as Wendtian constructivism's consideration of how the world is constructed socially means that contrary to offensive realist logic, states shape the world they inhabit. Wendtian constructivism's recognition that states have agential power means that states shape their behaviour based on their understanding of the international system they are simultaneously shaping. By considering the influence of states, Wendtian constructivism offers a rival interpretation to offensive realism on the structure vs agency debate because it recognises that states (agents) shape the structure, not only respond to it, as offensive realism purports.

Another important aspect of Wendtian constructivism is that it rejects the offensive realist assumption that states' identities and interests are pre-determined exogenously to social interaction. Because offensive realism assumes that all states are the same and want the same things (their primary goal is to survive, with their ultimate goal hegemony), it therefore fails to consider the unique nature of each state's identity and interests. States' identity and interests are crucial as they affect how a state understands who it is, what it wants, and therefore how it approaches relations with other states. Constructivism considers the independent, unique nature of each state's identities and interests, informed at a domestic and international level through social interaction, to be a critical factor in state behaviour. Because of this, this thesis will use a constructivist framework to uncover what Russia's unique, endogenous identity and interests are, and how they affect its relationship with the US, because this is critical to a proper understanding of Russian foreign policy, whereas offensive realism ignores these variables. Constructivism therefore

asks different questions and generates new answers that offensive realism does not or is unable to ask or explain. Further to this, constructivism illuminates influencing factors like history and culture which offensive realism fails to account for. In turn, this thesis can challenge offensive realist scholarship by reconsidering the root cause of perceptions, understandings and decision making in US-Russia relations post-Cold War. The thesis will therefore offer a necessary fresh perspective on why the relationship failed to improve during this period because it will consider the unique Russian viewpoint born out of social interaction that existing scholarship fails to.

This section will begin by laying out where constructivism positions itself epistemologically and ontologically with regards to offensive realism. While constructivism agrees that material reality exists independently from social interaction and that material elements are relevant, it offers a more holistic explanation in its consideration of the power of intersubjective meaning formed through social interaction. Having addressed the basic questions of ontology and epistemology, I will outline the main components of constructivism and where again it offers an alternative theoretical perspective to offensive realism on the structure vs agency debate. In doing so I will highlight how constructivism's contribution to knowledge lies in its understanding of the effects social interaction have on shaping states' understanding of themselves, other states, the world they inhabit, and their unique, independent identities and interests. This will illuminate why constructivism is able to address significant areas of analysis that offensive realism is unable to. The chapter will then go on to highlight the key points of Wendtian constructivism, all the while emphasising how it offers a rival interpretation to offensive realism to provide a more focused explanation for the overall question. It will culminate in a summary of why, given the factors laid out by this thesis, Wendtian constructivism is a necessary tool to reconsider the explanation why the US-Russian relationship failed to significantly improve after the Cold War.[1]

Epistemologically, neorealism uses material, systemic determinants to explain international relations and state behaviour (Adler, 1997:321). While constructivism accepts that material

[1] Offensive realism is born out of neorealism and therefore shares many of the same basic assumptions. While offensive realism came about after constructivism was first introduced, constructivism's criticism of neorealism is, to a large extent also applicable to offensive realism. Differences for the purposes of this thesis are negligible because the principles being referred to in this chapter are shared by offensive realism and neorealism. Henceforth, in this context, neorealism can be understood as offensive realism.

reality exists independently from the mind, it argues that one understands the world and the material goods in it through social interaction (Adler, 1997:322). In other words, it is through collective understanding via social interaction that people understand why things are the way they are (Adler, 1997:322). Wendt (1999:110-112) follows this constructivist epistemological perspective. Therefore, (Wendtian) constructivism shares the same epistemological position as neorealism/offensive realism because it recognises the objective reality of material goods prior to interaction, but it emphasises the role social interaction has in shaping this world and attributing meaning to material goods within this. As a result, constructivism has the same starting point as offensive realism, yet by considering the role social interaction plays, takes off in a different direction. In doing so, constructivism can consider socially constructed factors offensive realism cannot because it considers both the material and the ideational context, to provide a more comprehensive overall explanation.

Ontologically, constructivism agrees with neorealism/offensive realism that material goods exist independently of social interaction. However, constructivism emphasises the meaning behind these material goods. This is what is really important because how states' understand material goods affects states' interaction and state behaviour. Neorealism favours an '…individualist ontology' which bases international relations on the distribution of material capabilities (Wendt, 1987:335-336). Constructivism meanwhile considers the intersubjective aspect of international relations being shaped by social constructions, while not denying the existence or role of material capabilities (Adler, 1997:323). That is to say, constructivism argues that social interaction shapes the world and gives meaning to independently existing material goods. This is where Adler (1997:322) argues constructivism's main contribution to international relations theory lies. By recognising that material goods are relevant but that they get their meaning from social interaction, constructivism offers an alternative way of thinking.

Wendt (1999:371-372) adheres to this constructivist ontological standpoint. For Wendt, real power lies not in the size of material capabilities, but in how the material capabilities are perceived. Anarchy and the distribution of material capabilities are unable to explain why states may view one state as a threat but not another when they possess the same material capabilities (Wendt, 1992:397). To illustrate this, Wendt argues that 'For example, 500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons…' (Wendt 1995:73). Offensive realism would be unable to explain this

based on its logic. Consequently, neorealism cannot predict what kind of relationship states will have, whether they will be allies or adversaries (Wendt, 1992:397). Henceforth, the real question isn't how material forces matter but why they matter. Wendt would not deny that the US nuclear weapons exist or claim that they are irrelevant, however, it is how one perceives them that is crucial. Through social interaction, people give objects meanings and act towards them accordingly (Wendt, 1992:396-397). If you see something as a major threat then that is what it becomes and vice-versa. This fundamental difference of taking into account social interaction means Wendtian constructivism can share similar ontological ground as offensive realism in terms of acknowledging material reality, but go further, because it can consider the meaning attached to material capabilities, social interactions' shaping of perceptions and the implications of this, which offensive realism does not and can not.

Wendtian constructivism and offensive realism agree on some fundamental basics, but because of the opposing logic of the two theories, from this point they diverge. The primary fundamental basic assumption is that both are state centric. For Wendt (1999:14) states are the primary actors in the international system. According to Wendt (1999:246), this is important because if one is interested in how the state system works, one must accept the state as a given. Furthermore, Wendt recognises that states posses some fundamental needs, '…physical survival, autonomy, economic well-being, and collective self-esteem', independent of interaction (Copeland, 2000:192; Wendt, 1999:198). However, Wendt maintains that this does not mean states are inherently self-interested by nature, only that these essential needs provide a foundation for identities and interests (Wendt, 1999:234-235). For Wendt these fundamental needs are crucial as without them, states would have no independent entity to base their social interaction on (Copeland, 2000:197). If only ideas mattered, the agent would be purely socially conditioned and therefore lack any form of self-determination (Copeland, 2000:197). Thus, Wendtian constructivism agrees with the offensive realist assumption that states have fundamental needs independent of interaction however, importantly Wendt is able to consider social interaction. Again, therefore, while both theories start from the same basis, constructivism goes one step further than offensive realism by using this as a spring board to consider social interaction. Wendtian constructivism's contribution to knowledge therefore is its consideration of social interaction.

Wendtian constructivism shares all five of Mearsheimer's core assumptions (Wendt, 1995:72). However, Wendt does not draw the same conclusions as a result. Mearsheimer's five bedrock assumptions do not inevitably lead to offensive action (Toft, 2005:391). In fact, defensive realists hold similar assumptions but reach the opposite conclusion about state intentions (Toft, 2005:391). Therefore, to reach the conclusion that offensive realism does, offensive realism relies on a pessimistic interpretation of state behaviour which sees states as self-centred, single-minded, constant security seeking actors, existing in an almost perennial struggle (Snyder, 2002:171). Mearsheimer relies heavily on this pessimistic assumption as without it, his five bedrock assumptions may not lead to the behaviour he depicts (Pashakhanlou, 2013:205). In contrast, constructivism approaches state behaviour with an open mind, with no fixed, preconceived ideas of how it will act (Adler, 1997:323). It is analytically neutral between war and co-operation (Wendt, 1995:76). Instead, constructivism enables one to consider the social basis for decision making which could have important ramifications for theory and empirical study (Adler, 1997:323). This makes constructivism a suitable rival theoretical perspective for this thesis to take against offensive realism because this thesis seeks to ascertain the root cause of Russian behaviour, without predetermined ideological or mood proclivities affecting its explanatory ability.

Essentially, constructivism argues that international politics is a social construction (Copeland, 2000:188). That is to say that the major determinant shaping international politics is social interaction (Wendt, 1995:78). It is not universal, exogenous, pre-determined systemic pressures that shape international politics, but unique, endogenous social constructions (Copeland, 2000:188). For example, according to Wendt (1992:407), identities and interests are a social construction. Constructivist theory argues that through social interaction, identities and interests are shared and accepted over time, becoming the guiding principles that shape state behaviour (Copeland, 2000:189-190). Importantly, these concepts are not fixed and through the same process of social interaction, can be renegotiated (Wendt, 1992:406-407). Furthermore, constructivism considers the influencing factors that make up states' identity through social interaction such as nationalism, ethnicity and religion (Hopf, 1998:192). It also considers culture (Wendt, 1999:160-161). In doing so, constructivism seeks to explain the unique identity of individual states and their interests (Hopf, 1998:193). Offensive realism does not do this because it treats states' identities and interests as ontologically determined prior to interaction. Consequently, by accounting for the endogenous nature of Russia's unique

identity and interests, states' identities and interests, and the influencing factors that shape them, constructivism can better explain how these provide a powerful, underlining explanatory role for Russian behaviour towards the US.

There are two aspects to consider in this, agents and structure. Agents are individuals/ states and the structure is the international system. Offensive realism and constructivism offer rival interpretations on the structure vs agency debate. The relationship between the two, and where influence lies, is a crucial part of international relations theory. This is because whether agents and/or structure have influence determines the nature of international politics and state behaviour (Wendt, 1987:337-338). Neorealism emphasises the role of the structure, arguing that the structure is shaped by material determinants which agents cannot change but must respond to (Wendt, 1987:335). As a result, neorealism neglects any explanatory role for states in shaping the system's structure (Wendt, 1995:80). More than this, neorealism does not merely neglect the role agency has in shaping the international system, neorealism does not acknowledge agency in its theoretical model. Neorealism's ontology treats the international system as ontologically prior to interaction and determinative of that interaction. In contrast, Wendtian constructivism considers the role of both the structure and agency, arguing that structure and agents both inform and shape each other (Wendt, 1995:76-77). This is why constructivism is not an add on, but an alternative to neorealism. If social interaction is communication between agents, according to constructivism, it is through social interaction via intersubjectivity that agents share beliefs about themselves and others (Farrell, 2002:49). Through the same process of social interaction, via constitution, these ideas then become understood/accepted and taken on by the respective actor (Farrell, 2002:49-50).

In addition to shaping actors' perspectives, social interaction between actors also shapes the structure actors find themselves in. As a result, these social structures become objective, shared knowledge (Wendt, 1995:74). Wendt (1995:74) uses the example of the Cold War to demonstrate his point. For Mearsheimer (2001:49), the US and Russia did not create the Cold War, the structure was born out of systemic/materialist determinants. In contrast, according to constructivism, through adversarial social interaction, a rivalry between the US and Russia built up over time, culminating in the creation of the Cold War structure. These social structures created by actors then exist externally to actors (Wendt, 1995:75). According to Wendt (1995:75), 'the Cold War was just as real for me [as in

Wendt] as it was for Mearsheimer'. Thus, constructivism argues that states as actors, shape the structures which in turn shape how they behave through interaction (Copeland, 2000:190). Therefore, through social interaction, agents and the structure are mutually constitutive. Thus, constructivism argues that structure and agency both 'co-constitute and co-determine each other' (Copeland, 2000:190). Wendtian constructivism's model of this means that this thesis offers a fundamental rethink of how the US and Russia shape, understand, and react to the relationship they created.

Further to this, another important difference between the two theories is that neorealism argues that the structure is made up of material capabilities whereas Wendtian constructivism argues that the structure is made up of material capabilities and social relationships (Wendt, 1995:73). For Wendt (1995:71-72), structures are fundamentally socially determined rather than materially determined, and structures shape actor's identities and interests, rather than only their behaviour, thus opposing rationalist arguments. Moreover, these social structures are not static, and in the same way they are produced, can be reproduced and changed (Wendt, 1995:76). This is because these social structures exist in practice (Wendt, 1995:74). In other words, the process of acting according to a social structure reifies its existence (Wendt, 1995:74). Thus, when the US and Russia stopped the structural practice of the Cold War, the Cold War came to an end because they were no longer behaving according to the logic of the Cold War (Wendt, 1995:74). This was achieved through the agent (the USSR) changing from a policy of military armament to a policy of reassurance, thus acting to shift the structure between the US and Russia to a more peaceful one (Wendt:1995:77). However, it may be that the US and Russia did not go far enough, the changes to the Cold War structure were aesthetic, occurring at a top level, and did not go far enough down to fundamentally re-alter perceptions. Thus, whilst the Cold War may have formally ended, the perceptions beneath continued. This thesis will be able to unearth this should it be true.

This leads on to how offensive realism and constructivism disagree on where power lies in international politics. Neorealism argues that only material power matters (Hopf, 1998:177). In contrast, constructivism argues that whilst power does lie in the material, it largely lies in the discursive, that is to say the social practice of meaning generated through social interaction (Hopf, 1998:178). According to constructivism, if you control the intersubjective meaning in the social construction of states (agents) and the international system (structure), you have power (Hopf, 1998:178). This is because you can control how

yourself, others and the world you inhabit are perceived. In holding this power, a state can establish predicability/order (Hopf, 1998:178). States can then make predictions of other states' behaviour because of this. In having power, states possess the ability to '… authorize [sic], discipline, and police' their actions and the actions of other states (Hopf, 1998:179). Who holds this power is not fixed but can be renegotiated through the same process of social interaction (Hopf, 1998:180). Therefore, according to a constructivist interpretation, having power is possessing the ability to shape intersubjective meaning to suit that state's needs. This relates to Foucault's notion of power, in that Foucault argues that power is determined by who controls knowledge, as who controls knowledge, controls the rules of life (Holzscheiter, 2014:149).

To explain this point further, one can look at the logic behind offensive realism's first key assumption that the international system is anarchical and Wendt's challenge to this. Neorealism assumes that anarchy in the international system is the inevitable result of systemic determinants, meaning anarchy is caused by the structure (Wendt, 1992:392). Constructivism rejects this view of a structural cause of anarchy. As Wendt (1992:395) famously claims, '…anarchy is what states make of it'. According to this viewpoint, anarchy is not a predetermined entity, but a social construction formed through interaction and shared understanding (Wendt, 1992:394-395). In other words, the world is anarchic if states agree that it is anarchic. Two points arise from this. First, contrary to Mearsheimer's argument, anarchy is not inevitable. This leads on to the second point, if anarchy does exist in the international system, then this is because it has been created organically between individuals and thus states, not pre-determined prior to state interaction. What matters is social interaction. Through shared knowledge, individuals and by extension states, give meaning to the world (Wendt, 1992:397). Meaning does not exist independently from social interaction. Anarchy is intersubjectively constituted amongst individuals and thus states. Just as anarchy is intersubjectively produced, it has the ability to be intersubjectively reproduced or rejected. It is a fluid, negotiated construct. This leads on to the second aspect of offensive realist theory's logic that constructivism takes issue with.

By rejecting Mearsheimer's argument that anarchy is inevitable, constructivism rejects Mearsheimer's argument that the inevitable anarchical structure leads to a self-help system. According to Mearsheimer (2001:33), the anarchical system compels states to operate on a self-help basis. States must safeguard their own needs as no one else will,

and they have no higher authority to save them in times of need. Following this logic, a self-help system therefore exists independent of interaction (Wendt, 1992:392). Wendtian constructivism rejects this argument and puts forward a rival interpretation. Wendt (1992:394) argues that social interaction is the biggest influence on shaping self-help attitudes. If today's world is a self-help system, then this is down to 'process, not structure' (Wendt, 1992:394). This process of interaction can cause states to perceive other states as threatening, creating distrust amongst states (Wendt, 1992:406). Consequently, the insecurity generated from this distrust leads states to take on the same threatening characteristics (Wendt, 1992:406-407). Therefore, through social interaction, threatening characteristics are perceived then adopted, creating an atmosphere of insecurity, thus the self-help system is born. By the same token, positive interaction can generate a system of trust, as illustrated by the relationship between EU member states, for example Germany and France who cooperate extensively. Thus, it is social interaction, not a pre-determined international system that determines state behaviour. In summary, offensive realism attributes self-help behaviour to system structure, whereas constructivism attributes it to intersubjective understandings. Therefore, constructivism's consideration of the role social interaction plays offers a rival interpretation to offensive realism of the self-help systems origin.

Consequently, Wendt (1992:392) rejects the neorealist argument that the security dilemma is the result of the anarchical system and self-help behaviour. Mearsheimer places heavy emphasis on states being unsure another will attack, given the state of anarchy (Wendt, 1995:77). Mearsheimer (2001:43) argues that the anarchy of international politics, combined with uncertainty of other's intentions converge to create a pernicious fear. This leads states to make worst case scenario assumptions (Mearsheimer, 2001:45). As a result, a security dilemma is created. However, just because war can take place at any moment in anarchy, doesn't mean it will (Wendt, 1995:77). What matters is what's probable, not what is possible (Wendt, 1995:77). Anarchy is therefore '…not a structural cause of anything' (Wendt, 1995:77-78). In turn, constructivism rejects the offensive realist argument that a security dilemma is an inevitable byproduct of a pre-determined systemic structure. Wendt (1992:407) argues that the security dilemma is not born out of exogenous determinants, but the result of perceptions via social interaction. It is formed by one state seeking to enhance its security and other states' perception of how this affects their security, feeling compelled to follow suit themselves (Wendt, 1992:407). Put simply, states'

actions are only threatening if and when they are perceived as threatening. The security dilemma is not inevitable, nor are the perceptions that instigate it.

If a security dilemma does exist between the US and Russia, then this is not solely because of material, systemic determinants, but is also attributable to how the US and Russia perceive each other's actions. It may be that the key reason the US and Russia failed to improve their relationship post-Cold War is because through social interaction, they misperceived each other's actions as threatening. This calls for a radical rethink of the theoretical framework underpinning existing scholarship's key factors that NATO enlargement and Russian military action in Eastern Europe prevented relations from fully improving. It was not because they were engaged in offensive realist security seeking practices, but because they were misperceived as threatening. Furthermore, this challenges the offensive realist assumption that states act according to zero-sum logic. In actuality, the US and Russia may only care about their own security and do not always consider whether their action will be detrimental to the other's security.

How states' identities and interests are formed is key to Wendtian constructivism and its opposition to offensive realist theory. As mentioned, constructivism argues that identities and interests are socially constructed through social interaction, whereas offensive realism treats identities and interests as also ontologically prior to interaction. According to Wendt (1992:401-402), identities and interests must be based within social interaction as it is only through social interaction that they can generate their understanding of who they are, who they like and what they want. This leads constructivism to conclude that identities and interests must be endogenously constructed, not exogenously pre-determined like offensive realism argues. Crucially, this social interaction takes place both internally and externally, with state identities and interests being informed by both domestic and international societies (Wendt, 1994:385). In context, this means that Russia's identity and interests are shaped both internally between its domestic actors and externally with other states in the international system, specifically the US, and vice-versa. What is paramount is that Russia's domestic and international level identity formation mutually influence one another. Together, these culminate in shaping Russia's foreign policy, decision making and its relationship with the US. Therefore, to understand Russian behaviour towards the US, one must understand the domestic and international influences which coalesce to form Russia's understanding of itself, others and in turn, what it wants. Offensive realism cannot account for these influencing factors born out of social interaction because it assumes that

states all have the same material, systemically pre-determined identities and interests, exogenous to interaction.

Identity is how a state sees itself (Wendt, 1994:385). A contributing factor informing this identity is how other states perceive it. This is because how others see it shapes how it sees itself (Wendt, 1992:404). Thus, the perception the US creates for Russia can influence how Russia sees itself and vice-versa. The US perceiving Russia as a rival then shapes Russia's perception of itself as if it were the US's rival and vice-versa. Thus, US and Russian negative perceptions mutually affected how they saw themselves in relation to the other.

A state can possess many identities, some more prominent than others (Wendt, 1992:398). It may not enact these all at once but they can be separated and enacted according to the situation (Wendt, 1999:230). Thus, which part of its character a state invokes depends on its approach to and understanding of an issue. For example, if Russia perceives NATO enlargement as threatening it will respond with a display of strength, invoking an image of a strong state.

How a state perceives itself is important as this affects what it wants. As Wendt (1992:398) asserts, 'identities are the basis of interests'. Interests are what states seek (Wendt, 1999:231). If Russia's identity is that of a great power, then its interests will represent this in seeking to restore Russian prestige. In turn, when a situation arises, a state will determine its interests based on how it understands its identity and therefore position, in the situation (Wendt, 1992:398). Identities and interests are not static, but are fluid, able to be re-negotiated over time (Wendt, 1992:407). In turn, Wendtian constructivism leaves open the possibility of identities and interests changing. Thus, this thesis is interested in whether Russia's identity and interests did change post-Cold War to more accurately explain the fluctuations in Russian foreign policy during this time and if so/not, the reason behind this. What is important is that states' identities and interests are stable enough for this thesis to deduce understanding from them (Wendt, 1999:36). This is imperative if this thesis is to use Russia's identity and interests as an explanation for Russian behaviour towards the US.

Further to this, according to Wendt (1992:408) states have identities and interests specific to relationships. In other words, states' identities and interests alternate depending on the

other state in question. Position this in contrast to offensive realism which assumes that all states possess the same exogenously pre-determined interest to offensively seek security. As a result, offensive realism's dependence on abstract, systemic determinants does not allow one to consider states' unique identities and interests individual to each inter-state relationship or to account for any changes they may undergo whereas constructivism does. This enables constructivism to consider how Russia intersubjectively forms its identity and interests in relation to its relationship with the US, different to how it sees itself and its interests towards Ukraine.

According to Wendt (1992:397), states react differently to others based on how they understand them i.e. as a friend or foe. Thus, it is intersubjective constitution that creates collective understanding between states (Wendt, 1992:397). Some relationships may be cordial and others competitive (Wendt, 1992:409). In turn, Wendt (1994:389) argues that states may find themselves in conflicts with one another as a result of how they perceive each other. Wendt (1994:389) uses the example of the Cold War to illustrate this point. In many ways the Cold War was the result of perceptions. The US and Russia both saw each other as the enemy, an existential threat to their existence. In 1989, through a change in perception i.e. Gorbachev's policy of rapprochement with the US, the Cold War ended. The material realities didn't change. The USSR was still a major nuclear power in 1989. However, perceptions changed. Thoughts of enmity between the US and USSR diminished with healthier perceptions established. However, this thesis seeks to discover if this shift in perception did not go far enough. Although they were no longer adversarial in a Cold War state of affairs, the shift in perception fell short of fully transforming into healthy relations, ending up in a middle ground between adversaries and friends. This may be the true cause of relations failing to improve. Because offensive realism does not consider perception, it cannot consider whether perceptions have fully transformed, nor perceptions effect on relations or the extent of this. Henceforth, a new approach which can consider this (constructivism) is needed if one is to offer a specific explanation for the wider question.

This leads on to Wendtian constructivism's challenge to offensive realism on the origins of threat perception. Offensive realism argues that threat perception is based on how much material capability a state possesses, regardless of intent (Mearsheimer, 2001:45). However, Wendtian constructivism asserts that threats are socially constructed (Wendt, 1992:405). While Wendt (1992:404-405) does consider material capability in threat

perception, the real issue is not size, but how material capabilities are perceived. Perceptions, in turn, are a product of social interactions comprised of '…signalling, interpreting, and responding' (Wendt, 1992:405). This gives states a good indication of each other's 'nature, motives, interests, probable actions, attitudes, and role' in a given situation (Hopf, 1998:193). Thus, inter-state relations are formed through interaction and understanding. Over time these interactions lead each side to become aware of the other's most likely intentions (Wendt, 1992:405). This reinforces perceptions of one another (Wendt, 1992:405). This makes it difficult for states to transform relations with each other if perceptions have become entrenched in minds. Consequently, the US and Russia may not have been able to fully transform relations because perceptions of one another as the enemy and the connotations of this such as being untrustworthy, remained too strong. A microcosm example of this is that Russia could not see that US financial support post-Cold War was not a front to covertly weaken Russia, but instead to help Russia.

Historical interaction is therefore crucial to threat perception. As Wendt (1999:109) emphasises, 'history matters'. It matters because as social interaction takes place over time, states can build up an understanding or misunderstanding of each other's identities and interests (Wendt, 1999:108). Therefore, the US and Russia may misinterpret each other's actions as threatening when they are not designed to be. Not all action may be carried out with the other in mind. In contrast, offensive realism does not consider history. Offensive realism argues that states follow the same patterns of behaviour and does not consider history because offensive realism sees states' interests as ontologically prior to any sort of identity or relationship. Failure to do so means that offensive realism misses out on a potentially powerful explanatory factor. By considering historical interaction, Wendtian constructivism challenges offensive realism's worst-case scenario logic on inter-state relations. Decisions should not be based on a worst-case scenario but instead on probability, informed by interaction (Wendt, 1992:404). Worst-case scenario logic cannot adequately explain why Belgium does not seriously consider a US military attack, however a history of peaceful relations can. With the benefit of previous historical interaction, what is probable is more realistic than what is possible (Wendt, 1999:108-109). Therefore, Wendtian constructivism can go deeper than offensive realism, able to consider inter-state relations on a case by case basis, as opposed to a catch-all explanation.

Constructivism also challenges offensive realism's explanation for NATO's continued existence and enlargement, and Russian imperialism. First, the issue of NATO. Offensive

realist logic would purport that due to material/systemic determinants, the US carried out security seeking, offensive action through an institution it could continue to dominate, whilst operating according to zero-sum logic with regards to Russia. In contrast, constructivism's consideration of institutional intersubjective shared norms offers a rival explanation. According to Wendt (1992:417), even if the original goal was to constrain the behaviour of external states, by creating institutions, the states involved begin to take on the institutions' newly created collective identities and interests themselves. As these shared identities and interests become embedded over time, states can be resistant to change (Wendt, 1992:418). Whilst change is still possible, it will be small and gradual (Wendt, 1992:418). This is because it is unlikely that states will diverge from a process that works for them to pursue policies which will change this (Wendt, 1992:418). This challenges the commonly shared argument in existing scholarship that NATO and its expansion is to ensure US primacy and keep Russia weak. By considering the ideational context of NATO and its effect on the US, constructivism can look at NATO and NATO expansion from a different perspective. It can reveal if the US's failure to not only dissolve or realign NATO post-Cold War, but continue and even expand NATO, is down to institutionally informed understandings and a reluctance to change due to the potentially damaging effects if they did. Thus, the underlying reason may not be offensive, security seeking concerns, but due to pervasive, informed, collective identities and interests that shape behaviour.

This thesis will now illustrate how Wendtian constructivism can address the second key cause existing scholarship gives for explaining the cause of poor US-Russia relations, this being Russian imperialism. Constructivism considers how states' imperialist tendencies are uniquely constructed both internally and with respect to the other state in consideration (Hopf, 1998:195). Therefore, to understand why Russia behaves the way it does towards its neighbours, one must ascertain the internal and external influences that inform Russia's identity and interests. It may be that Russia did not put troops in Ukraine and annex Crimea for offensive, security seeking purposes based on material/systemic determinants as offensive realism would argue. No, it is far more complex than that. It is a thought process and decision unique to Russia's understanding of itself, its neighbours and their relationship, born out of internal and external social interaction. This refers back to the earlier discussion on the uniqueness of each individual inter-state relationship. Russia's relationship with Ukraine is different to its relationship with Georgia. They must all be treated and analysed as independent cases. They may well fit into a wider pattern of

Russian understanding but this cannot be understood until one gets to grips with Russia's perception of itself and Ukraine, and its subsequent behaviour in its near abroad, which this thesis will do.

According to Wendt (1992:412), state sovereignty is a formation of intersubjective understanding between states. The connotations of Wendt's conception of state sovereignty as intersubjective creations allows for a very different reading of the Russia-Ukraine relationship. If Russia does not see Ukraine as a sovereign state, then its actions towards it can be understood very differently. It may not be offensive action for security seeking purposes but a repatriation move. Offensive realism's ontological perspective and material/systemic determinant model of explaining state behaviour means it is unable to consider this. However, constructivism can because it considers intersubjective constitution. According to Wendt (1992:414), if states treat each other as sovereign states, then over time this idea is reinforced, reifying their existence. Thus, state sovereignty is a negotiated concept that evolves and not an ontologically pre-existing fact. For example, the US recognises the sovereignty of Kosovo but not the Republic of South Ossetia, and Russia vice-versa. This matters because the US's refusal to recognise South Ossetia's sovereignty while recognising Kosovo may negatively affect US-Russia relations. By recognising that state sovereignty is a social construction, this thesis can highlight how socially constructed perceptions affect relations while offensive realism cannot based on its ontological assumptions.

Following this line of thought, at its root, there is nothing about a certain area of land that makes it a state. Instead, it becomes a state when its entity becomes a shared and agreed concept over time. According to Wendt (1992:412), this provides the context upon which states base their '…existence, territory, and subjects'. However, because these concepts are subjective, issues can arise if they are not universally accepted. Wendt (1992:414-415) uses the example that states' territory can be contested if it is not mutually agreed upon by all. This thesis will consider this when analysing Russia's understanding of the Ukraine crisis and annexation of the Crimean peninsula. If Russia does not agree to Ukrainian territorial rights, then its understanding will highlight this. Wendt (1992:414) argues that states view protecting territorial rights through a security lens, but they may be more secure if they relinquish certain contested areas of their land (Wendt, 1992:414). Offensive realism would not consider this because its equates security with territorial integrity and material capabilities. Therefore, a constructivist perspective which can take into account

the Russian perception of certain land, enables this thesis to offer a rival interpretation by analysing whether Russian attempts to hold on to land lost in the fall of the USSR perceived as its own, has negatively affected relations.

Finally, an important aspect of Wendtian constructivism is that it considers the role of self-reflection. Self-reflection is a voluntary, self-conscious contemplation to consider one's own identity and interests (Wendt, 1992:418-419). Because identities and interests are negotiated constructions, an actor has the freedom to decide whether to take these on (Wendt, 1992:419). The concept of self-reflection still works within the boundaries of constructivism because there is a difference between the social determination of actors and an actor's personal determination (Wendt, 1992:419). Although actors are shaped by social interaction, even in the most constrained situations, they still have agency to accept roles or not (Wendt, 1992:419). Therefore, although identities and interests are born out of social interaction, through self-reflection, an actor is capable of reshaping these concepts (Wendt, 1992:419). Offensive realism does not allow for this because it assumes that states' interests are pre-determined and fixed on constant security seeking. Importantly, a reformation of identities and interests through self-reflection is only possible through either a change in social situation, rendering a new self-understanding necessary, or it must be in a state's perceived interests to change (Wendt, 1992:419). Wendt (1992:419-421) uses the example of Soviet leader Gorbachev's radical attempt to re-shape the USSR's perception of itself and the West towards the end of the Cold War. In the 1980s, the USSR needed and wanted to change due to internal and external issues (Wendt, 1992:419-420). Internally, the current political system was not working and externally, engaging in the Cold War with the US was all consuming (Wendt, 1992:419-420). Through a change in approach, Gorbachev sought to reduce tension with the US hoping this would reduce internal and external issues (Wendt, 1992:419-420). One could draw a comparison to Russia immediately following the Cold War. It underwent a monumental change, forcing it to renegotiate its identity and interests in a tumultuous period. Russia was in an unfamiliar social situation and needed to form its identities and interests to protect itself and its people. Therefore, post-Cold War Russia may have undergone self-reflection, adopting certain identities and interests which negatively affected its relationship with the US. While offensive realism does not consider this, constructivism can. By using Wendtian constructivism, this thesis will unpack the process of Russia's self-reflection and the effects of this on its relationship with the US, to more accurately explain Russia's evolving policy towards the US during this time period.

This section has outlined this thesis's theoretical challenge to offensive realism. To achieve this it has illustrated how constructivism offers a rival, superior explanation to offensive realism for the international system and state behaviour within this. It has accomplished this by highlighting how constructivism's consideration of social interaction brings additional value to the discussion. This makes constructivism not just a bolt on to offensive realism, but a competing theory, offering a different angle to analysis. This section has illuminated how Wendtian constructivism exists within the same epistemological universe as offensive realism, and shares the same basis for thinking about state behaviour. Epistemologically, Wendtian constructivism recognises that material reality exists independent from the mind, but that they get their meaning from social interaction. Following this, Wendtian constructivism recognises that material capabilities do matter, but they matter because of social interaction, with social interaction shaping the international system. This has powerful repercussions. By disagreeing with offensive realism's conception of what matters and why it matters, Wendtian constructivism offers a rival theoretical framework, asking and answering questions offensive realism does not consider, and acknowledging factors offensive realism cannot account for. In turn, Wendtian constructivism can generate additional knowledge to provide a more comprehensive explanation to the overall question, acting to fill in the gaps existing scholarship does not or cannot consider due its offensive realist theoretical framework. Similarly to offensive realism, Wendtian constructivism is also state centric, acknowledges the existence of anarchy, self-help attitudes and the security dilemma, that states possess some fundamental needs, and that material reality exists independent of interaction. Wendtian constructivism even agrees with Mearsheimer's five key assumptions. Beginning from the same starting point is key, because as this thesis has shown, it is clearly visible that Wendtian constructivism is able to surpass offensive realism, offering a more sophisticated, specific analysis on US-Russia relations, which due its materialist/systemic determinant assumptions, offensive realism cannot allow for. It does this because unlike offensive realism, Wendtian constructivism considers the co-determination of structure and agency.

In doing so, Wendtian constructivism challenges offensive realism's reliance on pre-conceived, exogenous systemic determinants to explain why anarchy, a self-help system and the security dilemma are constituted. This thesis has illuminated why this explanation is inadequate because it fails to consider the role social interaction has in which these

concepts are formed. In turn, it has outlined how Wendtian constructivism can address these shortcomings by taking into account social interaction. Thus it recognises the value of interaction which then informs perceptions, understandings and thus decision making. This leads on to the second aspect of what makes Wendtian constructivism superior in ascertaining why US-Russia relations did not improve post-Cold War. Whereby, it considers the independent, unique nature of states' identities and interests. This has substantial implications.

Offensive realism assumes that identities and interests are a pre-determined response to the international system, as opposed to being organic, endogenously formed beliefs. However, Wendtian constructivism takes into account each state's individual, unique and endogenous identities and interests. Moreover, it goes further than this, looking at the specific factors which constitutes them such as history, nationalism, ethnicity, religion and culture. Furthermore, it takes into account the internal and external influence of these identities and interests and the implications of this. It also recognises that states' identities and interests can be informed by other states' perceptions. In doing so, Wendtian constructivism can offer a deeper, more specific analysis of Russia's independent identity and interests, and the pivotal effect this may have on influencing its behaviour and actions towards the US. In addition to being more specific on each states' individual identity and interests, Wendtian constructivism can offer a more nuanced analysis of the intricacies of the US-Russia relationship than offensive realism can. Unlike offensive realism which offers a simplistic, material/systemic determined basis for inter-state relations, Wendtian constructivism can look at the specifics. It can consider the identities and interests unique to the relationship and how social interaction affects what kind of relationship they'll have i.e. adversarial, friendly. It can also consider the influence of historical social interaction and how this also affects threat perceptions. Finally, Wendtian constructivism's challenge to the theoretical logic behind existing scholarships two core arguments for poor relations i.e. NATO's continued existence and expansion, and Russian imperialism, enables this thesis to offer a theoretical challenge to existing scholarship.

By not only considering these concepts but shining a light on them, Wendtian constructivism enables this thesis to re-consider the root cause of perceptions, understandings and decision making in US-Russia relations post-Cold War. This is important because in order to a have a truly holistic understanding of why US-Russia relations did not improve once the Cold War had ended, it is imperative one considers the

role social interaction plays, through which this all takes place. Without this, one cannot get to the root cause of the issue and therefore only offer a partial explanation. Overall, it should be clear to the reader why Wendtian constructivism offers the best theoretical framework to rival offensive realism and therefore enable this thesis to challenge existing scholarship to offer a more complete explanation. This therefore necessities a new study being carried out to consider the issues raised in this chapter, which this thesis offers. The final section of this chapter will outline the methodology that will be used to carry out the empirical research necessary to achieve this.

Methodological Framework

This thesis will carry out a discourse analysis on Russian Presidential administration discourse including primary sources such as government texts, policy documents and Presidential/Prime Ministerial speeches during the post-Cold War period, primary sources in secondary sources, for example Presidential comments, and use secondary sources to understand and reveal Russia's identity and interests, their origins, the administration's perceptions of the US and how these shape policy. Together this will illustrate how and why Russia's identity and interests have continuously inhibited US-Russia relations from fully improving post-Cold War. Having established that a full understanding of post-Cold War US-Russia relations can only be achieved by taking into account social interaction, a research method is required which can consider social interaction. Discourse analysis has been chosen because as both a product of social interaction and a form of social interaction, discourse both articulates and constructs meaning and perceptions that are used to make sense of the world (Holzscheiter, 2014:144). By meaning, I am referring to how the Russian government understands Russia's identity and interests, while perceptions are how Russia views itself, the US, and its actions. In this instance, meanings and perceptions are articulated and shaped by Russian government discourse with these meanings and perceptions used to inform Russian action. In turn, I can analyse Russian government discourse to uncover the identity, interests and perceptions that explain Russian policy to reveal how they affect US-Russia relations. In doing so, this thesis will tease out the underlying factors that inform Russia's identity, interests and perceptions, those being history, ethnicity, nationalism and culture. Ultimately, by adopting a constructivist approach to discourse analysis, this thesis will establish how Russian policy-makers understand Russia's identity and interests and how those perceptions then frame policy making. This will therefore explain the influence Russian identity and interests have

had, and continue to have, on preventing US-Russia relations from improving post-Cold War.

Discourse analysis fits within a constructivist framework because the logic of discourse analysis suggests that reality's meaning does not exist independently from conceptions but that knowledge constructs reality (Dunn and Neumann, 2016:2). This construction of material reality is achieved through us attaching meaning to material objects via discourse (Dunn and Neumann, 2016:2). The method of discourse analysis therefore fits within a constructivist analysis because both discourse analysis and constructivism recognise that material reality is socially constructed through intersubjectivity and not pre-determined prior to interaction (Tonra and Christiansen, 2004:65-66). Discourse analysis' consideration of the socially constructed nature of reality means that it rejects positivist, empiricist theories that have a pre-determined view of social reality (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000:4-5), i.e. offensive realism. Indeed, because discourse can be subject to observation and analysis, it is useful for constructivist study (Holzscheiter, 2014:146).

The shortcomings of existing scholarships' methodology stems from its offensive realist theoretical underpinning. Because it relies on material/systemic determinants and catch all state behaviour assumptions, offensive realism fails to consider the role of agential discourse, unlike constructivism which recognises the agency of individual states. Offensive realism predisposes offensive realist analyses to read a situation in a way that discounts particular kinds of empirical information, because it has already determined that states will behave and interact according to the same logic which Mearsheimer outlines in his five key assumptions. Consequently, offensive realism's failure to consider social interaction causes it to miss the main value of discourse which is the formation and role of endogenously formed identities and interests within agential discourse, and how this agential discourse shapes Russian behaviour. However, taking on a constructivist theoretical framework, via discourse analysis, this thesis can consider the implications of social interaction and offer a richer perspective to existing analyses, adopting a more interpretive approach.

Discourse analysis questions not only the construction of subjects but also the construction of structures themselves, which neorealism assumes is ontologically given (Doty, 1993:305). In turn, discourse analysis shares the constructivist ontological position of recognising the '...co-constitutive relationship between agents and

structures' (Holzscheiter, 2014:155). This is important because discourse analysis is able to investigate a key question posed by constructivism regarding where power lies. According to Doty (1993:299), power lies in the ability to shape the meaning of objects. Using discourse analysis as a tool, this thesis can look at how knowledge is constructed - those who control discourse control meaning and thus have power. As Pace (2006:41) notes, 'knowledge is power…' and 'those who have knowledge have the power to fix meaning and define others'. Consequently, discourse is used by actors as a means to influence others by imposing their material reality constructions onto them (Holzscheiter, 2014:150). Discourse analysis can therefore consider the issue of power because it looks at how knowledge and thus power is used to construct meaning and perceptions (Pace, 2012:41).

As such, the empirical data considered is official state discourse, written/verbal texts from the re-birth of the Russian state in 1991 to the present day (December 2021). This time period has been chosen because this thesis needs to look at Russian discourse over an extended period of time in order to correctly identify the dominant meanings and understandings in discourse over time and to determine how Russia's identity and interests have shaped US-Russia relations in the post-Cold War period. The empirical data are made up of foreign policy/security documents, Presidential and Prime Ministerial speeches, and statements made by the administration, including discourse around major geopolitical events in the US-Russia relationship. Discourse expressed either by or associated with the Presidential administration is particularly relevant based on the President's authoritative role in Russian society, because as the official state view, this authoritative position significantly influences the construction of meanings and perceptions, while legitimising them as the dominant understanding. Being the nation's decision-making body, Russian Presidential discourse sets the Russian agenda and determines Russian policy and action towards the US, while it is the Presidential administration which interacts with its US counterparts. Indeed, as the highest point of articulation, this discourse outlines how and why Russia understands itself, perceives the US and neighbouring Eastern European counterparts, and explains why Russia behaves like it does. Therefore to understand Russian behaviour, a useful method to achieve this is to analyse the explanation for policy and the national identity, interests and perceptions that explain Russian behaviour. By analysing Russian Presidential discourse, this thesis can tease out what Russian policy makers perceive Russia's identity and interests to be, and how a self-

perception and perception of the US that stem from this shape Russian behaviour towards the US.

Hitherto there hasn't been a deep, systematic analysis of Russian discourse in the time period considered, to ascertain what inhibited US-Russia relations from improving post-Cold War. Instead, comments made by Putin have often been cherry-picked in order to support an analysis that conforms to a pre-determined (offensive realist) theoretical framework. For example, Putin's comment in 2005 that '…the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century' has been misused by some as confirmation for arguing that Russia seeks to restore the USSR through imperialist means (Toal, 2017:55-56). Comments like these can readily be used to fit a certain narrative and reinforce a preconception. The problem with this is that it has resulted in a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Russian behaviour. A constructivist discursive approach however can analyse the data in a way that considers the intersubjective construction of Russia's identity and interests and interpret this to provide an explanation for Russian behaviour. Therefore existing work only offers a certain interpretation of Russian behaviour and thus an alternate investigation is required to consider the socially constructed nature of speech acts and other forms of discursive data.

To begin, this thesis will explain the utility of discourse analysis. According to Foucault, discourse is an application of language/body of statements (Foucault, 1972:80,107). As a medium through which social interaction takes place (Adler, 2013:125), language plays a dominant role in the construction of social reality and thus serves as a useful object of study to understand the social world (Tonra and Christiansen, 2004:65). Language shapes meaning while limiting the possibility of alternative meanings being produced (Tonra and Christiansen, 2004:65). Meaning is thus constituted through language which becomes actualised (realised) in discourse (Dunn and Neumann, 2016:44-45). For Foucault (1972:44-46,49), discourse is an actualising process of meaning production shared over a collection of texts. Therefore, because discourse is a limited amount of statements, with objects/entities discussed possessing only so many possible meanings within this (Tonra and Christiansen, 2004:65), this thesis can use discourse analysis to pull out the dominant meaning to ascertain how Russia understands itself, its interests and the US.

However, discourse is more than this, and this is where discourse's value lies. Discourse not only reveals meaning, but shapes meaning (Foucault, 1972:49). This is because

discourse is a process of meaning making in itself. For example, when Yeltsin gives a speech on the First Chechnya War, he not only reveals the pre-existing meaning given to the current situation and those within this, i.e. in how he describes Russia and its military actions compared to the separatists and therefore reproduces them, but Yeltsin may alternatively impose on Russia and its combatant new meaning. By reproducing pre-existing meaning Yeltsin acts to legitimise those meanings because he is confirming them. Alternatively, in his position as speaker, Yeltsin possesses some autonomy in the ability to shape meaning how he sees fit. This is because discourse not only affirms/re-affirms meaning, but possesses the ability to construct meaning (Milliken, 1999:236). For example, Yeltsin can shift the perception of those uprising in Chechnya from separatists to terrorists. This then justifies Russian action in Chechnya. This highlights the role and power of policy makers' discourse in shaping meaning (Campbell, 1993:7,11), with subsequent discourse, meanings and perceptions informed by this (Campbell, 1993:14). This is because discourse is interlinked, with texts not existing in isolation separate from one another but as part of an informative process that learn from and inform one another. Overall, 'discourse is the social and cognitive process that reflects, creates, shapes, re-creates, and reifies meaning in the lifeworld' (Strauss and Feiz, 2014:1). Therefore, discourse is both the object of analysis but also the tool to extract meaning (van Dijk, 2004:1). While discursive meaning is not fixed, it is stable enough for one to deduce understanding from it (Dunn and Neumann, 2016:2). The crucial point being, that the role of discourse analysis isn't to categorically define meanings, but to look at the process of construction to show which ones become the dominant meaning and readily accepted (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002:25-26) and therefore inform policy.

With the role of Russia's identity and interests central to this study, discourse analysis can be used to reveal identity and interests and thus their effect on policy. Discourse is the vehicle through which states' identities and interests are articulated, whilst as a process of meaning production, discourse itself informs identity and interests (Tunsjø, 2008:120). Therefore, an analysis of policy discourse can be applied to interpret what the identity and interests are that inform policy (Tunsjø, 2008:120). While there is no set way to do discourse analysis (Holzscheiter, 2014:159), this thesis will use what Milliken (1999:240) defines as a foreign policy study. This model of discourse analysis involves elucidating how elite discourse produces policy practices (Milliken, 1999:240). To reveal this, a foreign policy study examines the structure and influences that make up this elite discourse (Milliken, 1999:240) and in turn how this shapes action (Wæver, 2005:35). In other words,

policy documents and leadership speeches are identity and interests in action. States act based on how they understand themselves and their interests. Framing policy around identity constructions legitimises and/or justifies policies because it helps people make sense of the action taken (Hansen, 2006:25). Simply put, state policy must align with the nation's identity and interests.

As Doty (1993:298) explains, it is not a question of why a state behaves the way it does, but how, how it is possible that a state acts the way it does. Simply put, discourse analysis shows how the meaning we attach to things makes certain behaviour/action possible and not others (Doty, 1993:298). Thus, we are interested in ascertaining how the pre-existing perceptions that inform policy are constructed and thus how they structure policy (Doty, 1993:299). The way to achieve this is discourse analysis. An example of how identity and interests shape policy is US involvement in Iraq following its 2003 invasion. When President Bush spoke about the decision making behind US involvement in Iraq, he justified and legitimised US policy based on an articulation of US identity and interests i.e. to protect the free, liberal US from Saddam Hussein's WMD arsenal and harbouring of terrorists. In doing so, because policy practices legitimise national identity (Campbell, 1998:8), Bush simultaneously acted to reaffirm these identity and interest constructs. As Hansen (2006:1) explains, 'foreign policies rely upon representations of identity, but it is also through the formulation of foreign policy that identities get produced and reproduced'. In this thesis, policies and public statements that revolve around security issues/US-Russia relations will be analysed because they legitimise and/or justify policies based on identity and interests. Overall, one can see that discourse is far more than articulating identity and interests, but a process in and of itself. Indeed it is a process that can be analysed to show both how meaning is constituted and how discourse shapes policy, and thus affects US-Russia relations.

A key influence informing this process is historical experience (Larsen, 1997: 23-24). Historical experience is made up of discursively constructed historical reflections (Larsen, 1997:24). No single understanding of the past is guaranteed to prevail, while how states view a shared experience is unique to them individually (Larsen, 1997:24). For example, Armenia may remember its time as a member state of the USSR differently to Azerbaijan. Certain historical experiences can be used by states to suit their own needs (Larsen, 1997:24). An example may be previous US interference in Iranian politics and US

meddling in the Middle-East cited for Iranian action to weaken US influence and further Iranian power.

This thesis will now outline how historical experience shapes Russia's identity and interest formation and will do this by separating them into internal historical experience and external historical experience.

First Russia's internal historical experience. As Anderson (2006:6) claims, a nation '…is an imagined political community…'. This imagined community is born out of a history which unites citizens under a common identity construction, with this legitimising certain policy possibilities while negating the possibility of alternatives (Campbell, 1998:91-92). For example, the UK's history as a great power e.g. possessing a powerful empire and winning both World Wars, means that it continues to see itself as a major power in international affairs, with Brexit an example of how this understanding plays out in behaviour. An example relating to Russia is that Russia's origin stems from the East Slavic state of Kievan Rus in the late 9th century, with East Slavs comprised of what is today's Russia, Ukraine and Belarus (Stone, 2006:1-2). Russia's remembrance of this and thus its discursive construction, continues to heavily influence Russian identity and interest formation. Russia's origins raise issues of ethnicity, nationalism and culture. Ethnicity is a discursive construction, born out of intersubjective understandings which people identify with (Barker and Galasińksi, 2001:122). As a fluid, negotiated construct, ethnicity can be used by a state to legitimise its identity and suit its interests (Tilley, 2002:164-165). While as a form of historical remembering, nationalism is a construct used to inform states' identities and interests, perceptions and foreign policy (Prizel, 1998:14). A strong nationalist identity can heavily influence foreign policy (Hixson, 2008:5). Finally, culture is a construct which then informs national identity, interests and thus foreign policy (Hixson, 2008:5). Thus, the question remains of how Russia's conception, in an area today defined as three separate states, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, understands the meaning those states, the land they exist within, and the people that live within this land, have for Russia. Therefore, an analysis of policy-makers' discourse will reveal the internal historical experiences used and tease out the historic, ethnic and nationalist references used or alluded too that construct Russia's dominant identity and interest formation that shape policy.

Regarding Russia's external historical experience, here this thesis is referring to Russia's relations with other states, specifically the US. External historical experiences reaffirm identity constructions, especially wars as they unite the nation behind certain identity constructions (Hixson, 2008:11). Indeed previous wars shape present day policies and can be used by leaders to justify current action (Julia, 2013:931-932). An example may be the Korean War, US involvement within this and subsequent perceived external threats have led North Korea to pursue a policy of isolationism and seek the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Similar to its internal historical experience, a state's external historical experience informs its identity formation and the construction of meaning (Kaplan, 2002:1-3). With the most recent, and highly influential, external historical experience with the US being the Cold War, Cold War perceptions continue to heavily inform Russia's post-Cold War identity and interest formation. Russia's conception of itself and its interests have been influenced by US-Soviet Cold War relations. For example, the Cold War affected how the USSR saw itself, what it stood for and what it represented. In addition, the Cold War affected the Soviet Union's interests, in so far as the USSR tried to consolidate its control internally and externally spread communist ideals, in constant opposition to the US. Further to this, the Cold War informed the USSR's perception of the US, the meaning the US and its policies had for the USSR. For 45 years the USSR perceived the US as the enemy, the greatest existential threat to its survival. Thus, the perceptions attached to the US were negative with the policies that followed perceived as threats. In turn, as Klotz and Lynch (2007:10) argue, it is in part through discourse that American and Russian perceptions of each other as adversaries are maintained. Thus, in my analysis I account for the probability that the Cold War continues to inform discursive constructions and therefore inform present day policies.

This thesis will ask five key questions of each text. The questions posed are based on Reisigl and Wodak's (2001:xiii) five research questions, but altered slightly to suit this study. While their study is focused on the key points of '…racism, antisemitism and ethnicisim' (Reisigl and Wodak (2001:xi) and this study focuses on identity and interests, both studies are interested in meaning. Reisigl and Wodak (2001:xi-xii) look at the discursive production and reproduction of key points and the meaning behind them. They do this by analysing policies to ascertain how certain discursive meanings and perceptions are produced and used to inform policy (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001:xiii). To realise this, Reisigl and Wodak (2001:xiv) look at, amongst other contextual informants, the historical context for discursive constructions used. Finally, Reisigl and Wodak's data sources vary,

comprising of numerous forms including but not limited to, political leaders' speeches (Reisigl and Wodak (2001:xiii).

In turn, the questions Reisigl and Wodak's (2001:xiii) pose translate nicely for this study, albeit undergoing some modification to fit the study. The questions work well because they look at how meanings and perceptions are used and constructed to inform policy, while remaining interested in the author's perspective. However, there are key differences in what meaning and perceptions we are looking at. While my study is concerned with foreign policy and inter-state relations, Reisigl and Wodak's looks at internal discriminatory policies. Essentially, I want to use the same tools for analysis, but use them in a different way to answer a different question. Therefore, the premise behind each question is transferable, but the exact wording requires some minor modification to enable me to fully address the research aims. The name of each strategy remains the same, as does some of the questions' wording because it does not require altering. Indeed, altering was only required to ensure complete relevance to this study. I have taken the name of each strategy and used that or a synonym of that to give each question a name. The intention behind this is to make it easier for the researcher to follow when each question is being asked of each source. Overall, the five modified questions this thesis asks enables me to deconstruct each source to reveal the identity, interests, and perceptions which inform the policy or statement and therefore prevent US-Russia relations from improving post-Cold War.

The questions are as follows:

Reference '(*referential strategies*)': 'How are persons [e.g Russia and the US] named and referred to linguistically?'
Predication '(*predicational strategies*)': 'What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to them?'
Argument '(*argumentation strategies including fallacies*)': What argument(s) does the actor use to justify and/or legitimise perceptions and/or the meaning attributed to actors/objects?
Perspective '(*perspectivation and framing strategies*)': 'From what perspective or point of view are these namings, attributions and arguments expressed?'
Emphasis '(*mitigation and intensification strategies*)': Are these references implicit or explicit? (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001:xiii).

I will now explain each question in more detail to demonstrate their relevance and purpose. In doing so, I will outline the strategies used to achieve this.

Reference:

Reference as its names suggests relates to the names used to describe Russia and the US. Referential strategy serves the purpose of categorising Russia and the US into contrasting, identifiable entities. Thus, referential strategy is the construction and representation of actors (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 45). These constructions are formed via a dichotomous categorisation of in-groups and out-groups (Hart, 2010:56), or as a Self and the Other construct (Baker and Ellece, 2011:112), e.g. what is Russia referred to in comparison to the US. Doty (1993:306) refers to this as '…subject positioning'. Subject positioning is the practice of deconstructing how one describes themselves in comparison to another i.e. the Self and Other (Freistein, 2011:171). Nouns and metaphors can can be used to distinguish between the Self and Other, to articulate either positive or negative connotations of someone (Baker and Ellece, 2011:112). Socially constructed representations of the Self and Other become accepted short-hand identifications and comparisons between them e.g developed/under-developed, modern/traditional (Doty, 1996:2). Thus, via discourse analysis, one can understand how a state constructs its Self identity vis-à-vis its construction of Other (Dunn and Neumann, 2016:4), to therefore analyse how the West (the US) is represented in Russian discourse (Dunn and Neumann, 2016:8). This is the first step in ascertaining how Russia identifies itself and the US, thus providing a glimpse into the wider issue of their relationship. Simultaneously, it will provide the foundation for how the US is perceived.

Predication:

Once the actors have been identified, they are then given predication (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001:45). Predication refers to the qualities/characteristics attributed to an actor (Doty, 1993:306). For example, to say that Canadian PM Justin Trudeau is a benevolent, democratic leader, is as Doty (1993:306) would argue, to impose these identity qualities on to him. Predication analysis therefore looks at the words one attaches to a person/object (Dunn and Neumann, 2016:111). Similar to referential strategies, Reisigl and Wodak (2001:54) stipulate that nouns, pronouns and metaphors can also be used in predicational strategies. As can adjectives, similes and acts of rhetoric such as hyperbole and

euphemisms (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001:54). Reisigl and Wodak (2001:45) note that because referential strategies and predicational strategies both use forms of labelling, the line between the two strategies can blur. However, predicational strategies can go further to provide a greater understanding of the qualities that inform Russia's identities and thus interests. While how Russia describes the US speaks volumes about its perception of them, it does not matter if these identity constructs are true to reality, what matters is that these identity constructs are propagated and used to justify policy.

Argument:

Argument as its name suggests, outlines the justification for attributions given to actors (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001:45). Thus the Argument is the explanation provided for identity, interests, and meaning constructs. The argument is therefore key to ascertaining the reason behind Russian policy and thus I can then deconstruct the identity and interests and perceptions that informed this. To show how reference, predication and argument work in practice, take for example the issue of NATO enlargement. The Russian Presidential administration may refer to Russia as the victim and the US as the oppressor. Russia being referred to as the victim is predicated on being the threatened party, whilst the US as the oppressor is predicated on it being the aggressor. The justification for these references and predication, and thus the argument which explains the speaker's point, is that NATO enlargement is for the US to gain dominance in the former Soviet states and thus weaken Russia's external security.

Perspective:

Perspective refers to the speaker's point of view (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001:45). This matters because this thesis is interested in ascertaining whether Russia's dominant understandings have remained consistent post-Cold War regardless of leader. Therefore, the perspective will allow me to expose any consistencies or change, while separating the reasons provided for policies into recurring themes.

Emphasis:

Mitigation strategies and intensifying strategies are used to control the communicative effect a proposition has by either emphasising or deemphasising it (Reisigl and Wodak,

2001:45). In other words, how much emphasis is placed on what they're saying. Mitigation strategies involve reducing the degree to which a point is raised, saying it in a less forceful or less directive manner, or as a question (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001:84). While intensifying strategies entail the adding of greater weight behind propositions, using gradable adverbs, modal and semi-modal verbs e.g. extremely, definitely, or needs to etcetera, to amplify the point (Baker and Ellece, 2011:61). Analysing points being emphasised is useful for two primary purposes. It enables me to understand how Russia conducts itself when discussing the US as this tone signifies how friendly the two nations are in general and whether the rhetoric is more belligerent or polite in tone. Second, the points emphasised may reveal the importance placed on them. In other words, the emphasised points are the most significant.

The discourse that will be analysed is that of the Russian presidential administration. The time period of 1991 to 2021 has been chosen because this thesis is concerned with US-Russia relations post-Cold War and thus the time period must begin when the Cold War ended. As the Cold War is unlike other traditional wars, there was no formal surrender. It is therefore difficult to define the official end of the Cold War. Henceforth, the unofficial end of the Cold War is the end of the USSR itself and thus the re-birth of the Russian state in 1991. Another key reason the time period considered begins with the reconstitution of the Russian Federation is because this thesis is interested in US-Russia relations and Russia's identity and interests, not US-USSR relations. With identity and interest formation taking place over time, when ascertaining what Russia's identity and interests are and the influences to these, it is perhaps inevitable that historical influences such as Soviet influences spill over into the formation of Russia's post-Cold War identity, interests and perceptions. However, this thesis is focused on Russia and thus the definitive time period considered reflects this. If and when historical influences do arise, this thesis will consider them individually.

To ascertain whether Russia's identity, interests, and perceptions have changed or remained consistent post-Cold War, there must be a starting point, otherwise there would be nothing to base continuation or change on. This thesis argues that the best starting point is the start of the reconstituted Russia. In order to understand Putin's Russia today, one needs to understand the Russia Putin inherited. Meaning, you need to place the Putin years in a broader historical context. Although on the surface Yeltsin may seem more pro-US than Putin, an analysis of the discourse may reveal that Russia's underlying identity

and interests during Yeltsin's Presidency may be the same as those under Putin. The only difference being that they have become more overtly expressed as time has gone on. In turn, this thesis will seek to determine which Russian identity and interests were formalised in the Putin years if any, which continued, which became more dominant in shaping policy, and any that were discontinued. Sandwiched between Putin's terms as President is the Medvedev Presidency. It is necessary to consider Medvedev's Presidency because if he adheres to the same interpretation of Russia's identity and interests as Yeltsin and Putin, Medvedev's presidency may be much the same as those before him and thus necessary for continuity purposes to ascertain whether the same identity and interests constructions inform Russian policy throughout the post-Cold War. The time period considered will end in December 2021. Overall, by studying this thirty year period, this thesis will seek to identify recurrent themes and consistencies, and tease out the underlying factors which constituted Russia's understanding of itself and others. In doing so, this thesis will establish how and why the identities and interests in question emerged, how they shaped Russian policy and therefore how they influenced US-Russia relations during this time period.

This thesis will begin by analysing the early discourse of the new Yeltsin administration. By using this as a starting point, this will establish the foundational identity and interests the newly constituted Russian Federation was based upon, which I can then compare with later discourse to ascertain if this was retained or if it was discontinued and replaced by an alternative set of identity and interests. To attain this information, this thesis will analyse major Russian governmental foreign policy and security blueprint/strategy documents. Their importance stems from them being official documents and representative of the official state view. As such they explicitly articulate official Russian identity and interests formations, perceptions and future aspirations. In being published years apart they provide a record to reveal any continuity or change in Russian identity and interests. They also provide a snapshot of how Russia sees itself and others, and what it wants at the time. These documents have been favoured over other policy documents because they specifically refer to the issues that this thesis is interested in.

Supplementing these documents will be Presidential and Prime Ministerial speeches. I expect that these will further reveal Russia's perception of itself, its interests, and the US. Presidential and Prime Ministerial speeches have been chosen because they are the highest point of articulation by the state. The President and Prime Minister are the most

powerful actors in Russia and consequently their discourse represents an authoritative expression of the perceptions of the Russian state (Salzman, 2019:5). Those in a position of authority hold the most influence in shaping the world through discourse (Johnstone, 2018:144-145), with Russia's identity and interests articulated through the leaders' speeches. The leaders' words help to construct the nation's identity and interests because of the privileged position of their discourse, due to the fact that it gets reported on by a state controlled media, combined with the marginalising of alternative discourses (Rojo and van Dijk, 1997:524). Meanwhile, the Presidential administration determines policy therefore the discourse that explains and/or justifies policy is most valuable (Reyes, 2011:783-784). The speeches chosen have been selected based on their high prominence. Inauguration speeches/annual addresses made at the dawn of a new Presidential term discuss the Russia the leaders have inherited or continue to preside over, while setting forth their hopes and aspirations for Russia's future. They therefore serve as useful four/six year junctures to measure continuity or change. Meanwhile, unlike statements bullet pointed on a policy document, high profile speeches are vocal, persuasive documents that articulate policy to a more general audience and are therefore usually more communicative of sentiments.

Interspersed between these speeches will be other forms of government discourse which I will take in to consideration, such as Presidential interviews given to domestic and international press in the form of sit down interviews and press conferences. The reason behind including these is that they provide a greater insight in to the leaders thinking. This is because specific, pointed questions can be posed to Russian leaders such as on key foreign policy issues or on previous leadership comments made, to attain a more expansive explanation (Maslennikova, 2009:93-95) as opposed to speeches which may lack the specificity needed. Additionally, unlike prepared speeches, interviews are less formal and allow for immediate responses, as opposed to a pre-prepared oration, and offer the chance for off-the-cuff and potentially unexpected comments (Maslennikova, 2009:95).

Alongside this, discourse of high ranking Russian officials, such as the Foreign Minister, who speak on behalf of the administration to convey government thinking will also be analysed. Its utility stems from their authoritative position to both act as a mouth-piece for government decisions, while they themselves are involved in formulating policy decisions (Savarin, 2016:129-130).

In addition, the thesis will analyse statements made by the Presidential administration before and after major geopolitical events in US-Russia relations. These events are analysed in chronological order to enable the analysis to track the development and evolution of Russian discourse over time. This will establish what explanation gets repeated, what are the dominate themes behind this, and therefore why a certain policy was favoured as opposed to another. It is important to analyse speeches/texts released at the time because one is getting the immediate perspective, instead of comments made retrospectively (Jokela, 2011:44), that may be open to issues such as misremembering, or with the benefit of hindsight (and therefore an awareness of what followed) a different explanation. The events have been chosen because they are key areas of contention between the US and Russia and because this thesis is interested in how Russia's identity and interests affect relations, it must consider Russia's identity and interests in key disputes. By looking at texts/speeches around these major events, this thesis will be able to compare discourse surrounding major events with recurring policy documents to distinguish if correlations can be made. Indeed if the discourse around the key events shares the same logic as that in the more general statements and official policy documents, this would be good evidence that Russia's understandings and perceptions have remained consistent. Thus, the discourse analysis will reveal if there is a specific Russian understanding throughout, with major events in US-Russia relations being symptoms of enduring Russian perceptions. This will be revealed by the explanation and the policy that follows being consistent, reflecting Russia's conceptions of its identity and interests.

With regards to accessing the texts/speeches used, these are electronic collections freely available online that have already been translated into English. Ultimately, the sources selected should be sufficient for this thesis to explain if and how Russia's identity and interests affected US-Russia relations fully transforming once they were no longer Cold War adversaries.

Overall, taking on a constructivist perspective, this thesis will conduct a discourse analysis on Russian Presidential administration texts/speeches from the rebirth of the Russian state to the present day. Discourse has been chosen as the object of study because discourse provides a written/spoken explanation for policies. In doing so, it shows the dominant identity and interest constructs that inform policy. Moreover, with discourse not only revealing meaning, but also acting to shape meaning's formation, discourse is identity and

interest construction in action. Therefore, discourse provides an articulation and construction of Russia's identity and interests and perceptions of the US, and how these are used to explain Russian policy. In turn, discourse analysis can be used as a tool to extract meaning and look at the construction of meaning. This thesis will consider five questions when deconstructing each source to reveal the dominant identity and interests that explain Russian behaviour and the key influences of these identity and interest constructions. This will enable this thesis to ascertain what Russia's dominant identity and interests are and how these shape Russian behaviour and therefore affect its relationship with the US.

The discourse has been chosen based on its prominence as the official state view. This thesis will look at major policy documents, Presidential and Prime Ministerial speeches, and statements made by the administration around major US-Russia geopolitical events. The intention behind this is to reveal the identity and interest constructs that inform Russian foreign policy and thus relations with the US. To achieve this, I will ask five key questions of each source to tease out these discursive formations. This method will enable me to determine whether Russia's identity and interested inhibited US-Russia relations from improving post-Cold War and the extent to which they did.

The following three chapters will outline the dominant Russian identity and interests identified by this thesis. These will be categorised in to the three different positions Russia takes towards the US.

Chapter Three

Introduction

This thesis'szanalysis has revealed that post-Cold War, Russian foreign policy is predicated on a variety of identities which have been informed by historical experience. Importantly, they all coalesce to shape Russia's overarching foreign policy goal post-Cold War which is re-capturing great power status. Russia self identifies as a great power, and based on this ideational construct, Russia seeks great power status. Status can be understood as recognition of a perceived standing in the global order (Forsberg, 2014:323). Attaining a dominant social status in the international system means enjoying the privileged rights and powers this status affords (Heller, 2018:141). In Russian eyes, great power status means having a primary position in the international system, a leading role in international decision making, and a respect for Russian interests particularly in the former Soviet space (Radin and Reach, 2017:15,17). This great power status would place Russia alongside the leading Western states in the international system, including the US, as an equal (Heller, 2014:334) and the international system should reflect this (Lo, 2003:14). This does not mean that Russia sees itself as the US's literal, material equal, but that it expects to be treated as its equal on the international stage (Radin and Reach, 2017:21).

Russia has historically been a major power, most recently during the Cold War when it shared superpower status with US. Russia has refused to accept its post-Cold War relegation and thus seeks to restore this historical position (Lo, 2003:13). To achieve great power status, Russia has sought US acknowledgement of such (Gvosdev and Marsh, 2014:80). This is because status can only be acquired by other states' recognition of it (Smith, 2014:356). The US's authoritative position in the international system means that US acknowledgement is required for Russia's great power status and thus its ability to be recognised as a global leader (Larson and Shevchenko, 2010:67). On a regional level, suffering from '…imperial syndrome…', Russia refused to accept that the former Soviet space was no longer its privileged area of influence (Lo, 2003:13). However, again this

rests on American recognition of this as a matter of fact. This desire to seek US acknowledgement of its great power status is the primary driving force in Russia's position towards the US (Larson and Shevchenko, 2014:270).

This is not the first time Russia has sought Western approval of its status. Since the time of Muscovy, Russia has sought the recognition of great European powers as an equal, according to Neumann (2007, cited in Neumann, 2008). Most recently, the USSR sought US acceptance of its great power status, being America's equal and acknowledgement of Eastern Europe as its privileged zone of influence (Ringmar, 2002:122-123,126-127). This search for status acknowledgement continues up to this day.

However, materially at least, post-Soviet Russia is no longer the power it once was. Nevertheless, even if it was, superior material power alone does not guarantee major power status recognition (Larson and Shevchenko, 2010:69). As Neumann (2008:129) argues, in:

> …1815–1848 and, arguably, also 1957–1991, Russia has met the criteria noted by realists, but full formal and informal recognition has nonetheless failed to emerge. This suggests that the realist account has failed to recognize [sic] the full gamut of preconditions for recognition.

Recognition thus takes place on a deeper, ideational level. Consequently, contrary to the logic of offensive realism, Russia's assertion of great power status is not based on material capabilities alone but informed ideationally (Heller, 2014:333-334). With ideational recognition of Russia's great power status being intersubjectively constituted between states, as opposed to being based on structural/material determinants (Neumann, 2008:130), constructivism can be used as a tool to analyse this.

Consequently, Russia's search for great power status is on a social status acknowledgement basis (Neumann, 2008:147). Social status is the rank a state is determined to have within a social group (Forsberg et al., 2014:263). However, because social status is socially constructed, social status is dependent on the acknowledgement of this rank by other members of the group (Forsberg et al., 2014:263). Importantly, while a higher social status ranking enables states to enjoy the privileges the position affords, a higher status ranking is also key to states' self-esteem (Forsberg et al., 2014:263-264).

Thus, exceeding the remit of neorealist calculations, social status recognition is also predicated on emotion in relation to Russian identity (Heller, 2014:334). Consequently, US denial of this social status causes Russia to act out verbally and physically (Heller, 2014:334).

In Russian officials' eyes, US action is understood through Russia's great power identity status recognition (Larson and Shevchenko, 2014:270). Post-Cold War, Moscow believes that not only has the West failed to acknowledge Russian great power status, but has actively sought to undermine it (Forsberg, 2014:326). This is caused by competing visions between the West and Moscow of what Russia's status is, and contrasting perceptions by them of how they view each other's actions, which then further reinforce these opposing visions (Forsberg, 2014:328). Central to this is that the US does not consider Russian interests in its decision making (Mankoff, 2012a:96). As a result, Moscow perceives US action as disrespectful of Russia's great power status for failing to consult with Russia on international issues (Heller 2014:334). This is because a great power's opinion should be considered at all times, even when the issue does not directly affect it (Neumann, 2005:15). Meanwhile, US action such as NATO expansion and support for the "colour revolutions" are understood as tools to isolate and threaten Russia in its privileged area of influence which is instrumental to its great power status (Mankoff, 2012a:220). However, the US believes that it has respected Russia's status, but that there is a limit to that status (Forsberg, 2014:324,326). This is because post-Cold War, the US has refused to consider Russia an equal, great power (Mankoff, 2012a:92). In turn, according to this reading, the fluctuations in US-Russia relations post-Cold War are the result of Russia's attempt to secure US acknowledgement of its great power status and the US's refusal to grant that acknowledgement (Larson and Shevchenko, 2014:277).

The US's informative role for Russia goes beyond status recognition and intrinsically shapes Russian identity. This is because a key informative to Russian identity is having the US as its comparative "Other" (Petersson, 2013:13).[2] Having its identity construct formed vis-à-vis the West, means that Russian discourse outlines its similarities and differences to the West. Which one of those two Russia chooses depends on policy direction at the time. This Westernist/non-Westernist identity construct is one of the contrasting and overlapping identities Russia possesses. To understand Russian foreign policy post-Cold War, one

[2] Alternatively, Neumann (1996:1) characterises Europe as Russia's "Other", while Tsygankov (2019:17) claims it to be Europe and the West. Secondary scholarship variously defines the US, Europe and the West as Russia's "Other", grouping them together as one.

must understand the historically constructed identity it is based on. This historical experience is informed by Russia's size, location, ethnic and socio-cultural make-up and above all, by internal and external social interaction. These experiences are then used by leaders to legitimise foreign policy action (Lo, 2003:17). This is because Russia's size and location enables it to shift between various identities, such as '…European, Asian, Eurasian, a regional power, a global power, one of the poles in the emerging multipolar world' depending on policy direction at the time (Lo, 2003:4). These coalesce to form contrasting policy practices, yet make sense because they remain true to some part of Russia's self identity construct. Thus, Russian policy-makers are influenced by these pre-existing identity constructs, but they also simultaneously use them and thus reinforce these identity constructs in their actions. All of which become utilised for the ultimate goal of realising Russia's great power status.

Informed by its diverse identities, Russia has employed various methods towards the US to attain US acknowledgement of its desired status. Larson and Shevchenko (2010:70-71) outline three ways a state can improve its social standing; join the dominant group, compete against it, or pursue alternative means to realise the same goal. Accordingly, under each Russian President, a pattern emerges. It begins with optimistic rapprochement on both sides. This Westernist policy is of Russia seeking to join the dominant West, with the discourse a reflection of this, speaking of the commonality that exists between them with Russia a part of Europe. This takes place under Yeltsin 1991-1993, Putin 2000-2003 and Medvedev 2008-2011. However, as the years progress, each Presidential administration becomes increasingly frustrated that its conciliatory gestures are not reciprocated. Instead of facilitating Russian interests, the US pursues unilateralism, sidelining Russia in key global decisions and most troubling for Russia, in the former Soviet space. This takes place under the respective leaders between 1994-1996, 2003-2004 and 2011-2012. This perceived disrespect and rejection causes Russia to pursue a more belligerent tone towards the US.

Russia moves away from its Westernist policy to a competitive, multipolar disposition that emphasises Russia's Eurasian uniqueness. The West's marginalisation of Russia leads to discourse critical of the West that in turn emphasises Russia's Slavic-Asian heritage and traditional Eurasian values, and thus its distinction from the West. This is reflected in policy discourse from 1996-2000, 2004-2008 and 2012-2014. Alternatively, since the 2014 Ukraine Crisis to the present day, Putin has looked to other means to achieve Russia's

great power status goals, by adopting a disruptor approach. Russia attempts to undermine the liberal international order that bolsters and justifies US dominance with the intention behind this to remove the US from its privileged international position to thus no longer require US great power status acknowledgement. To facilitate this, Russia has embraced a conservative nationalist identity and interests which it uses to reject liberal internationalism, the doctrine that characterises the US led international system. The following chapters will reveal that the failure of the US to acknowledge Russia as an equal, give it a role in international decision making, and respect its interests, and thus this contradiction with Russia's perceived status, has inhibited relations from improving.

Join the dominant group

This thesis's discourse analysis of key primary documents, primary sources from secondary sources, and aid of secondary sources centred around the time frames of 1991-1993, 2000-2003, and 2008-2011 has illustrated that upon coming to power, each Russian Presidential leader has pursued an initial policy of seeking to join the dominant group, the West. Led by the US, the West, or the Western community, is a congregation of the most powerful states in the international system. Alongside his Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, Yeltsin's primary policy goal from 1991-1993 was to integrate in to the Western community (Donaldson et al., 2014:254); Kozyrev said that 'our aim is to enter the community of civilized [sic] nations of the northern hemisphere' (Stent, 1998:188). Similarly, Putin's initial primary foreign policy objective from 2000 until 2003 was to become a fully-fledged member of the West (Tsygankov, 2019a:19; Shevtsova, 2010:47-48); 'Today Russia is a country whose integration in the community of free and democratic countries has become irreversible' (Putin, 2001a). By his time as leader, Medvedev no longer looked to fully "join the West", but pursue a half way house, being both a part of the West and work alongside it (Mankoff, 2012a:24,63); 'Russia calls for building a truly unified Europe without divisive lines through equal interaction between Russia, the European Union and the United States' (FPC, 2008). This goal consumed much of Medvedev's single presidential term, being the primary policy goal from 2008 to 2011.

Russian leaders prioritise joining the West because of its status. The West has an asymmetrical degree of international decision making power, able to extend its influence across the globe, enjoying privileges ill afforded to outsider states. Therefore, being a

member of the Western community would provide Russia with Western status recognition of being an equally internationally significant power, granted a role in collective decision making (Stent, 2007:394,417,420), and having its interests factored in to any decisions made (Gvosdev and Marsh, 2014:80). Therefore, Russia could influence key policy decisions and ensure its own needs were met.

Despite Russia being a weakened power post-Cold War (Stent, 2007:420), Yeltsin expected Russia to be welcomed into the Western community with open arms as a full member, and thus be accredited equal membership status (Baranovsky, 2000:447). Continuing this, Putin was seen as making strides in attaining Yeltsin's elusive goal of Western respect, with Russia being a major international power involved in international collective decision making (Lo, 2003:113). For both Yeltsin and Putin, because the Western community makes all of the important global decisions, equal membership status meant having an equal say in the exclusive, international security decision making community (Hill, 2018:115; Šleivytė, 2010:2). For Yeltsin, great power status would come from being accepted in to the West and thus attaining the idealised political-economic system (Clunan, 2009:94); Kozyrev explained that Russia would '…join the club of recognized [sic] democratic states with market economies, on a basis of equality' (Sergunin, 2016:85). For his part, Putin believed that the West would accept Russia in to its club because it was a former great power, and an increasingly strong economic power (Clunan, 2009:65-66); 'We must always remember the people who created the Russian state, defended its honor [sic] and made it a great, powerful and mighty state' (Putin, 2000a). Medvedev, meanwhile, did not believe that Russia should be granted great power status because of its history, but would become a great power by becoming a strong economic power thanks to Western assistance (Mankoff, 2012a:24); 'To confirm Russia's status as a modern world power whose success is based on innovation' (Medvedev, 2010a).

This leads on to the rank each leader envisioned Russia taking in this Western community. For Yeltsin, Russia would recapture the great power status alongside the US it had during the Cold War but on a different basis, becoming part of the Western community as an equal (Lo, 2003:13), attaining a position similar to Japan or Germany (Clunan, 2009:87,99). Meanwhile, Putin sought to join the West but as a non-Western country, in that sense envisioning Russia too as similar to Japan or Turkey (Clunan, 2009:92-93). Being more ambitious than Yeltsin, Putin imagined Russia would eclipse other European

great powers, possessing a privileged position alongside the US at the top of this Western community (Clunan, 2009:92). Medvedev aspired to attain a leading position for Russia not so much in the Western community, but in the international system, being a first tier power alongside the US, conducting international decision making between themselves (Petersson, 2013:19); '…such powerful states as the United States of America and the Russian Federation have special responsibility for everything that is happening on our planet' (Medvedev, 2009a; Petersson, 2013:20).

Russia's attempts to join the West are normalised through the European strand of Russian identity. When it suits, Moscow draws upon this identity to rationalise Russia's status as a European nation. Yeltsin remarked that 'Europe without Russia is not Europe at all. Only with Russia can it be a Greater Europe…' (Bershidsky, 2014). Putin (2003a) said '…that Russia, historically and culturally, is an inalienable part of Europe'. While in 2009, Medvedev stipulated that 'We too are part of Europe…' (Medvedev, 2009b). Moscow is able to draw on Russia's European identity because of Russia's historical experience.

There are a number of components to Russia's "Europeanness". Firstly, Russia can be considered European based on its geographical position. The definition of Europe and where it geographically ends remains fluid and open to interpretation (White and Feklyunina, 2014:1-2). It is this elasticity that enables Russia to be at once European and non-European. Geographically, the ability to describe Russia as a European power was facilitated by Peter the Great. While Europe's western border is clear cut, being the Atlantic Ocean (White and Feklyunina, 2014:1), it was during Peter's reign that Europe's eastern perimeter became geographically determined as ending at Russia's Ural Mountains, in an attempt to solidify Russia's position as a European power (Neumann, 1996:12; Bassin, 1991:6-7). This demarcation point meant that the most densely populated part of Russia was included in Europe (Neumann, 1996:12). Today, while 75% of Russia's total land mass is situated east of the Urals, 80% of Russians live on the western, European side (Kolossov and Van Well, 2016:95). Russia's west is also home to its two largest cities, the capital Moscow and former capital St. Petersburg. Therefore, with Russia closely aligned with wider Europe, the Kremlin is able to draw on these geographical realities to rationalise its attempt to be seen as European.

Russia also identifies ethnically with Europe. Russia traces its roots back to the 882 AD state of Kievan Rus which was comprised of the ethnic group East Slavs (Bova,

2003a:12). Ethnic Slavic people were divided pre-7th century in to three separate groups, West, North and East Slavs (Curtis and Leighton, 1998:173). The West Slavs were comprised of what we know today as '...Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks; the South Slavs divided into the Bulgarians, Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes' (Curtis and Leighton, 1998:173). East Slavs are made up of today's Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians (Kohut and Goldfrank, 1998:3). In the 1990s, 85% of Russia's population identified as Slavic (Curtis and Leighton, 1998:172), and four-fifths of Russians in the 2010s (Colton, 2016:3). With these originally West Slavic, Central European states considered European nations (Sakwa, 2015:27), Russians can rationalise their own place within this European identity frame by drawing from this shared ethnic background. Additionally, the majority of these originally Slavic nations have since joined, or are in the process of joining the West and thus now recognised as Western. This can be extrapolated to Russia.

Linguistically, these Slavic nations all share a common Slavic language, which itself belongs to the larger Indo-European language group, a group which includes the Germanic languages such as English (Bova, 2003a:12). Today, Russia's variant East Slavic language is its official state language, spoken by 99.4% of Russians (Colton, 2016:3). Thus, ethnically and linguistically, Russian's can identify with Europe.

Russia also shares a religious identity with the West, with this creating a powerful cultural link (Tsygankov, 2012:41). Russia's relationship with the West has its origins in Prince Vladimir embracing Orthodox Christianity from the Byzantine Empire (Tsygankov, 2012:41). In the year 998, Prince Vladimir made Christianity the official state religion (Kumar, 2017:216), with Christianity at the same time extending into Ukraine and Belarus (Riasanovsky, 2005:21). Prince Vladimir's decision to look West, towards Christian Europe, instead of South-East towards the Islamic South, meant that Russia became the eastern pillar of Christian Europe (Riasanovsky, 2005:20). This established a cultural affiliation with wider Europe, while Christianity became a core component of Russian identity (Riasanovsky, 2005:20). Therefore, being part of a shared Christian civilisation, even if it is an Eastern variant, made Russia a part of Europe (Baranovsky, 2000:444). This was symbolised by Prince Vladimir's son, ruler Yaroslav the Wise, constructing the St. Sophia cathedral in Kiev in homage to its namesake in Constantinople, the Byzantine Empire's capital, while Russia also emulated aspects of Byzantine culture, law, and style of rule (Kumar, 2017:216). Bound by a shared religion, the Kievan state (which was on the Russian plain) could be considered a part of Europe (Riasanovsky, 2005:22).

Orthodox Christianity has been an enduring part of Russian identity despite difficulties it has faced which have threatened its role. Perhaps its greatest obstacle was Mongol rule over Russia in the 13th-15th century. Over a century of Mongol rule cut off Russia from the rest of Europe (Riasanovsky, 2005:34). Yet despite this isolation from Europe, Russia retained its religious and cultural practices during this time (Riasanovsky, 2005:33). In turn, after Mongol rule, when the Byzantine Empire fell in 1453, giving way to the Ottoman Empire, those in Russia constructed Muscovy as the "Third Rome" (Neumann, 1996:7). In being the "Third Rome", Moscow succeeded the previous two Romes, the Roman Empire's Rome itself and the Byzantine Empire's Constantinople, both of which were now gone (Neumann, 1996:7). Thus, Moscow now lay claim to being the centre of Christendom (Neumann, 1996:7-8), and therefore a crucial part of Europe.

More recently, having been effectively banned by the Soviet Union in favour of atheism, religious freedom in Russia was restored by Yeltsin following the end of Soviet rule. According to data, from 1991 to 2008, the number of Russians identifying as Orthodox Christians grew continuously from 31% to 72% (Pew Research Center, 2014). The evidence shows that Russian leaders have sought to legitimise Russia's sense of belonging to the West through this shared religion with Europe. During his Westernising attempt, Yeltsin became a practising Christian once more; 'I am acquiring a different world outlook which is probably connected with my psychological state and the situation in society' (Parks, 1992). Bridging a link to European civilisation, in 2000, Putin said that '… Orthodoxy in many respects has determined the character of Russian civilization [sic]' with 'the monumental values of Christianity formulated two thousand years ago have retained their deep meaning right up to the present day' (Putin, 2000b). Similarly, in 2008, Medvedev spoke of how '…the adoption of Christianity did much to help our forefathers become part of the processes taking place in Europe and the world and amounted in essence to a choice of civilisation' (Medvedev, 2008a). Consequently, when attempting to join the West, Russian leaders can be understood as having made a choice to join Western civilisation (Baranovsky, 2000:447; Lo, 2003:102).

This notion of a Western civilisation relates to a key factor informing each leader's decision to join the West, and that is Russia's perception of the West. Russia's identity and perceived interests are largely constructed through a comparison to the West, with the West constituted as Russia's primary "Other" (Kassianova, 2001:822). After first measuring

itself against European great powers, the US later became Russia's benchmark given the latter's rise to international dominance in the 20th century, which has continued in to the 21st century. The West is Russia's "Other" because Russia perceives the West as being at a greater level of development (Stent, 2007:398-399). This has led Russian leaders to seek to emulate the West and follow a Western development path, and others to reject the West to pursue a path unique to Russia (Neumann, 1996:1-2). As Tsygankov (2019a:2) explains, 'to many Russians, the West represented a superior civilization [sic] whose influences were to be emulated or contained, but never ignored'.

This has been the case since the time of Peter the Great. Since Peter, the question of Russian identity vis-à-vis the West has been a subject of serious discussion for Russian leaders (Tsygankov, 2005:135). Peter was Russia's first Westerniser (Bova, 2003a:3). Using the West as a modernisation reference point, Peter sought to emulate key tenets of the West politically, economically and culturally to modernise Russia (Stent, 2007:393,397). Consequently, since Peter, modernisation has come to be synonymous with Westernisation (Grier, 2003:32).

Peter's key practical changes were as follows. Politically, Peter transitioned Russia from a Tsardom to a European monarchical style of rule (Bushkovitch, 2012:79), creating a distinction between ruler and government and thus making Russia a modern state (Kort, 2008:46). Economically, Peter focused on the West's technological advancements (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:33-34) to facilitate his ambition of Russia becoming a major power (Stent, 2007:401). To realise this, Peter introduced wide-ranging reforms in Russia, intended to raise Russia up to Europe's level (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:24). Culturally, Peter opened up institutions to reflect those of the West, such as libraries, museums and academies (Kumar, 2017:223). In a symbolic act, Peter created a new city, St. Petersburg and made this Russia's new capital, which he designed to reflect the cities of Western Europe (Bova, 2003a:14). The city was titled the "window on the West", meaning Russia would now look to the West for influence (Bova, 2003a:14; Grier, 2003:32). By constantly looking at the West as the benchmark of superior living, Peter's lasting legacy was to make the West Russia's enduring primary point of comparison, with the latter assessing its success in relation to the West (Grier, 2003:32). Peter's cultural legacy was continued by his daughter, Elizabeth, who endorsed further Western influence, creating the Moscow University in 1755 and the Academy of Fine Arts in 1757 (Kohut and Goldfrank, 1998:23-24). Today, Russia's cultural transition has been so successful that

Russian cultural icons such as Tolstoy and Tchaikovsky are thought of as Western (Bova, 2003a:4,15).

This look westward continued in post-Communist Russia, which has been searching for its own identity. Similarly to Peter, each leader has looked to the West for guidance. The Western political and economic models today are parliamentary democracy and an open market economy (Bova, 2003a:5). As Fukuyama (1989:3-4) famously argued in his article “The End of History?”, after the Cold War Western democracy and capitalism were seen as superior practices to communism and a state controlled economy, and could therefore be understood as the pinnacle of governance. Importantly, liberal democratic values would not only be confined to the West, but would be understood as the universal form of political rule (Fukuyama, 1989:4). With the Soviet Union the antithesis of the Western models, Russia’s attempted transition post-Cold War epitomised Fukuyama’s argument (Bova, 2003b:243). Yeltsin adopted these models upon coming to power, which Putin and Medvedev have continued.

These models are premised on certain values. The primary contemporary Western values are liberal democratic principles. These ideals emphasise the importance of the individual, their freedom and civil liberties, political pluralism, the rule of law and neutral institutions (Shevtsova, 2005:104; Bova, 2003b:248). In comparison, Russia’s has historically emphasised the role of the powerful state, predisposed to strong, autocratic leadership, while favouring order and stability over individual freedoms, and a population that has little trust for institutions (Bova, 2003b:248). Leaders such as Peter have sought to emulate the West’s models, yet refused to adopt Western values (Stent, 2007:398), believing they were incompatible with Russia’s historic, autocratic style of rule (Ziegler, 1999:42). In Peter’s mind, Russia could adopt the Western model, tailoring it to Russia’s specific case (Stent, 2007:399). This selective approach to the Western template has continued under each Russian leader. There is no one size that fits all. Each leader picks from the West depending on Russia’s needs at the time.

Yeltsin was the most committed Westerniser of Russia’s recent leaders (Clunan, 2009:64). The liberal norms and values the Western model is founded on have historically only been endorsed in Russia by a select few, confined to the liberal intelligentsia (Stent, 2014a:35). Yeltsin endorsed both (Stent, 2007:417); ‘Our principles are clear and simple: supremacy of democracy, human rights and freedoms, legal and moral standards’ (Yeltsin, 1992).

Russia would therefore reject Russia's traditional values, committing to the West's perceived superior democratic values to enable Russia's complete transition in to a Western country (Clunan, 2009:87-88). In contrast, while Putin would adhere to Western economic standards and accept the universalism of some Western ideals, under his leadership Russia would retain its non-Western, Russian traditions (Clunan, 2009:92-93); Russia will follow a policy of '…combining the universal principles of a market economy and democracy with Russian realities' (Putin, 1999). Thus, Putin recognised the universalism of Western values, but unlike Yeltsin who committed Russia to a wholehearted adoption of them, sought to tailor them to Russia's individual circumstances;

> **Our people have begun to perceive and accept supra-national universal values which are above social, group or ethnic interests**. Our people have accepted such values as freedom of expression, freedom to travel abroad and other fundamental political rights and human liberties (Putin, 1999 emphasis in original).

Meanwhile, in his 2009 "go Russia!" article, Medvedev spoke of '…the modernisation of the political system, as well as measures to strengthen the judiciary and fight corruption' (Medvedev, 2009c). The required values needed to achieve these goals are Western liberal democratic in nature (Tsygankov, 2019a:5-6). Learning from Yeltsin's attempt, Medvedev (2009c) said that unlike under Yeltsin, 'We will not rush. Hasty and ill-considered political reforms have led to tragic consequences more than once in our history'. In committing themselves to a liberal Westernist approach, both Yeltsin and Medvedev accepted the perceived backwardness of Russia in comparison to the West (Tsygankov, 2019a:5-6).

Each leader has attempted to attain Western recognition of Russia as a similar Western power. Yeltsin sought to secure Russia's major power status by looking to gain recognition as the US's democratic ally and one with shared values (Leichtova, 2014:96,103-104); US-Russia relations '…will be characterized [sic] by friendship and partnership founded On [sic] mutual trust and respect and a common commitment to democracy and economic freedom' (Presidents Bush and Yeltsin, 1992). The West would now no longer see Russia as an adversary, but a similar state that it could cooperate with (Leichtova, 2014:104). Putin also wanted the West to see Russia as an ally, and someone to cooperate with (Lo, 2003:110). Both Kozyrev and Putin sought to convince the West of Russia being a similar nation (Shevtsova, 2010:16; Lo, 2003:99):

> Above all else Russia was, is and will, of course, be a major European power. Achieved through much suffering by European culture, the ideals of freedom, human rights, justice and democracy have for many centuries been our society's determining values (Putin, 2005a).

Medvedev too portrayed Russia as a similar country to Western powers. In 2008 he said that having ‘come in from the Cold’ and ‘by overthrowing the Soviet system and rejecting its restoration, Russia has laid a basis for forming a state compatible with the rest of Europe’ (Schedrov, 2008).

Despite refusing to adopt Western values totally, when Putin claimed that Russia was a democracy, albeit a “sovereign democracy”, he was implicitly recognising the universalism of the Western model of liberal democracy (Leichtova, 2014:82-83,87). The reason Putin goes to such lengths to insist Russia is a democracy is because he hopes that this will enable him to attain Western acknowledgment of Russia’s international status as an elite Western power, giving Russia the international role it seeks (Leichtova, 2014:87). Medvedev’s assertion that Russia is a democracy can also be understood as recognising the universalism of liberal democracy as the only legitimate form of rule:

> But I categorically disagree with those who say that Russia isn’t a democracy and that authoritarian tendencies reign. There is no doubt that Russia is a democracy. There is democracy in Russia. Yes, it is young, immature, incomplete and inexperienced, but it's a democracy nevertheless (Medvedev, 2010b).

In addition to Medvedev endorsing Western technological advancements as part of his modernisation programme, he remained rhetorically committed to economic and political liberalisation to modernise Russia (Black, 2015:213); ‘This will be our first ever experience of modernisation based on democratic values and institutions’ (Medvedev, 2009c).

The reason each leader attempts to emulate the West is to attain entry in to the Western “club” and thus achieve the status recognition they seek. The dominant group’s criteria for admission in to its club and thus recognition as one of the elite international powers, is predicated on potential joiners attaining the same model of governance as the dominant group (Neumann, 2008:147). The West’s litmus test for accession into this community is

being a democracy with an open market economy and a commitment to strong democratic values, such as human rights (Baranovsky, 2000:448). Importantly, membership and thus status recognition is only possible if Russia adopts not just the Western models, but attains the liberal democratic values that underpin these models (Shevtsova, 2005:105). As Kozyrev explained in 1992:

> Our choice is—to progress according to the generally ac-cepted [sic] rules. They were invented by the West, and I'm a Westernizer [sic] in this respect—the West is rich, we need to be friends with it—It's the club of first-rate states Russia must rightfully belong to (Stent, 2007:419).

In attempting to join the West, each leader looks to join or at the minimum establish a close partnership with, the Western community's leading international organisations. NATO is the primary pan-European security organisation, while the EU is the dominant political and economic actor in Europe. To become part of the pre-eminent group, a prospective state will '…adopt the political and economic norms of the dominant powers to be admitted to more prestigious institutions or clubs', with membership of these organisations a signifier of higher status (Larson and Shevchenko, 2010:71). Both NATO and the EU are normative Western actors, based on liberal democratic values (Schimmelfenig, 2003:4). Thus, external states adopt the normative framework of the clubs, as evidenced by Central European members democratic transitions joining NATO which in turn means they are accepted in to the Western community (Bova, 2003a:11). Therefore, Russia joining Western institutions is a key means of attaining Western acknowledgement of Russia's great power status (Radin and Reach, 2017:44). This is given further impetus because on behalf of the Western community, NATO and the EU have become the primary Euro-Atlantic decision making and policy making bodies (Schimmelfennig, 2003:1). Thus, attaining admission into these institutions would give Russia the institutional credence of authoritative international decision making power and ensure its interests were respected. The Yeltsin administration launched itself in an ambitious programme of joining the Western led community's institutions (Donaldson et al., 2014:254), and to a lesser extent Putin (Lo, 2003:110) and Medvedev.

NATO is Moscow's preferred organisation to attain admission to over the EU. Membership would give Russia a seat in the leading security organisation, having a genuine say in decision making. Furthermore, with the most powerful actor, the US a member of NATO

and not the EU, Russia would be working alongside the US as an equal. Symbolically, the significance of Russia joining the military alliance which was created in response to the Soviet threat would show the extent of Russia's commitment to joining the West and thus how far US-Russia relations have come since the Cold War.

Successive leaders have sought to join NATO. Gorbachev said to US Secretary of State James Baker; 'You say that NATO is not directed against us, that it is simply a security structure that is adapting to new realities, therefore, we propose to join NATO' (Sarotte, 2014:95). In 1991, Yeltsin wrote NATO a letter '…raising a question of Russia's membership in NATO…regarding it as a long-term political aim' (Friedman, 1991). Kozyrev said that '…we see NATO nations as our natural friends and in future as allies' (Forsberg, 2005:334), refusing to rule out Russia joining NATO in the future '…we do not exclude the possibility that at some point Rus-sia [sic] itself may become a member of the alliance (Kozyrev, 1994:11-12). While Putin, when asked in a 2000 BBC interview if NATO membership was a possibility for Russia, replied; 'I don't see why not. I would not rule out such a possibility - but I repeat - if [sic] and when Russia's views are taken into account as those of an equal partner' (Putin, 2000c). In his first meeting with NATO Secretary General George Robertson in 2000, it is claimed Putin had the following conversation with Robertson about Russia joining NATO:

> "Putin said: 'When are you going to invite us to join Nato?' And [Robertson] said: 'Well, we don't invite people to join Nato, they apply to join Nato.' And he said: 'Well, we're not standing in line with a lot of countries that don't matter.'" (Rankin, 2021).

Under Medvedev, in 2010, Alexander Kramarenko, the Foreign Ministry's director of policy planning, wrote that following the US-Russia "reset", '…Russia's future membership in NATO has become part of the political discussion', and therefore '…Russia will never knock at the alliance's door, but if NATO invites Russia to join, it will be difficult to decline' (Kramarenko, 2010).

However, the West has thus far refused to grant Russia an equal membership status of NATO. Instead, Russia has had to make do with NATO-Russia agreements. These are intended to placate Russia over NATO expansion and show that it is considered in US thinking (Forsberg, 2014:327). For example, during the Yeltsin presidency, NATO-Russia initiatives such as the 1991 North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), the 1994

Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act were agreed (Leichtova, 2014:112). However, crucially they fail to offer Moscow any genuine role in policy making, only offering a space for consultation on external Western decisions (Leichtova, 2014:112). For example, within both the NACC and the PfP, Yeltsin sought an equal status with NATO members on decision making, yet all NATO offered was a space for dialogue (Ponsard, 2007:65; Gallis et al., 1995:400). Similarly, although an improvement on those that had come before it, the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act was designed to still only give Russia a place to offer its opinion, while not giving Russia any say in NATO decision making (Webber, 2000:51). While the agreement outlined key areas of cooperation, the purpose of the agreement was to pacify Russia over NATO expansion yet ensure the West retained its ability to conduct independent policy making as it pleased (Hill, 2018:136-137).

Both the 1991 NACC and the initial 1994 PfP agreement were considered particularly detrimental to Russia's status concerns, because they placed Russia on the same level as ex-Soviet satellite states (Ponsard, 2007:65; Forsberg, 2014:327). Learning from the initial experience of the NACC, Russia sought greater assurances from NATO in the PfP of Russia's superiority compared to fellow ex-Soviet states (Webber, 1996:198). Eventually, Russia did achieve the special status through the PfP it had searched for, awarded an honorary "16+1 status" within NATO's decision making and consultation bodies, a prestige not afforded to other PfP states (Smith, 2008:3). While this did not mean Russia had decision making authority, it meant that Russia could now consult with NATO in 'Ad hoc "16 + 1" discussions in the North Atlantic Council, Political Committee or other appropriate Alliance fora (timing and topic(s) to be agreed in advance)' (NATO, 1995). This meant that Russia could sit at both tables as a guest. It would now be privy to NATO discussions and could have its opinion heard. However, NATO did not have to act on Russian interests. Crucially, it was not afforded equal rights, unable to have a say on all issues, only those NATO allowed it to have one on, much less a role in decision making.

Unsatisfied with this arrangement, Russia achieved greater equality with NATO members through the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) established within the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act (Smith, 2010:101). The PJC's purpose was to offer a place for consultancy (Smith, 2010:102). No longer a +1, Russia would be considered an equal in this institution alongside NATO members such as the UK and France, at least according to protocol (Smith, 2010:102). Russia would now be on par with NATO members at

consultation level, as opposed to in the “16+1” format where NATO members conducted prior consultation amongst themselves before presenting this to Russia as a fait accompli (Smith, 2010:101). Russia would now have the ability to share its interests and opinions from the offset and feel more included in security discussions. However, Russia wanted more than just equality in consultation, it wanted equal decision making power.

Putin moved closer to achieving this goal through the 2002 NATO-Russia Council (NRC). The Council gave Russia the decision making equality it wanted, albeit symbolically; ‘The 30 individual Allies and Russia are equal partners in the NRC…' (NATO, 2020a). However, while Russia was now given an equal say in decision making within the confines of the agreement, crucially it was not afforded a veto over external NATO action (Shevtsova, 2003:241). Thus, although it was an improvement on the previous agreement it still did not give Moscow the position it craved (Shevtsova, 2003:241). Russia could now have an equal role in decision making. However, the decisions it could have a role in were those that NATO agreed to share. The real, significant decisions could still be made within NATO, independent of the NATO-Russia Council and thus without Russian input.

This issue with the NATO-Russia Council proved to be a stumbling block for Medvedev. Following the Russo-Georgia war where NATO-Russia relations fell to a low ebb, and as part of the Obama “reset”, Medvedev re-engaged Russia in the NATO-Russia Council (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:218). However, despite goodwill, Medvedev encountered the same issue regarding NATO decisions as his predecessor. At the 2010 NATO summit in Lisbon, against Medvedev’s wish, NATO refused to allow Russia a veto in any decisions regarding the use of an anti-missile defence system in Europe (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:219). This decision would be made independently by NATO members. This was not the equal decision making role Medvedev wanted. Ultimately, although Russia moves a step closer each time a new agreement is made, it remains that NATO is unwilling to facilitate Russia’s ambition of having a full, equal say in all its decisions.

Unable to attain the role it seeks within NATO, Russia has sought to achieve a similar objective via EU membership. With the EU being Europe’s most powerful political and economic actor, joining the EU would enable Russia to have a leading role in European decision making. Similarly to NATO, Yeltsin’s preferred method to achieve this was to join the organisation. Yeltsin made two attempts at this. Kozyrev displayed early interest in Russia joining the EU’s predecessor, the European Community (Saradzhyan, 2019). In

1997, refusing to give up the goal of joining the EU, Yeltsin said that Russia was 'working towards final recognition as a fully European state and we are also prepared to join the European Union' (Martin, 1997). Yeltsin envisioned Russia's post-Cold War European institutional integration would be similar to West Germany's European institutional integration post-WW2 (Mankoff, 2012a:139-140). With the EU built on pooling members' sovereignty together and reducing state autonomy through interdependent, group decision making, joining the EU would mean relinquishing a part of state sovereignty and autonomy (Schimmelfenig, 2003:87).

While Putin did not seek to join the EU, he wanted to ensure that the EU recognised Russia as an equal (Lynch, 2005:16); '…it is not our aim today to become a member of the EU. But we must seek to make our cooperation much more effective and improve its quality' (Putin, 2001b). Putin envisioned a position alongside EU powers such as France and Germany as having an equal decision making and policy making role in European affairs (Lynch, 2005:28). Having greater aspirations, similar to his thoughts on Russia's leading international position akin to the US, through his new pan-European security treaty proposal, Medvedev sought to create a '…whole euro-Atlantic space from Vancouver to Vladivostok' which would establish '…truly equal cooperation between Russia, the European Union and North America -- three branches of European civilization' (Schedrov, 2008). However, similarly to NATO, the EU would not allow Russia to join or grant it an equal position to members or the EU as a whole. As implied by the EU agreeing with Russia the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in 1994 (introduced in 1997), instead of an association agreement which led to future EU membership that other states received, EU membership for Russia was not considered a possibility from the start (Gower, 2009:119).

Instead, Russia must again make do with partnership agreements. There have been three major EU-Russia agreements since the end of the Cold War. The 1994 PCA, 2003 Four-Common Spaces and the 2011 EU-Russia Partnership for Modernisation (P4M). The PCA established the legal foundation for EU-Russia economic and political partnership (Gower, 2002:328). The Four Common Spaces (Economic; Freedom, Security and Justice; External Security; Research, Education and Culture) outlined four areas of cooperation between the EU and Russia (European Commission, 2005). While the P4M looked to '… promote harmonious economic relations between the Parties…' (EU, 2012:1).

Similarly to NATO agreements, an issue Russia ran into with the PCA and Common Spaces agreements was that they did not meet Russia's status concerns. On the one hand, Russia was afforded some privileges in comparison to other ex-Soviet states (Petrova, 2016:149). Economically, to facilitate a greater level of trade, the PCA specifically accorded Russia '…most-favoured nation status' (Lynch, 2005:18). Politically, Russia's PCA included greater political consultation with the EU, with Russia granted bi-annual summits with the EU while Ukraine was only given one and nations such as Georgia and Azerbaijan not granted one at all (Petrova, 2016:149). However, this only offered greater space for dialogue, not a space for equal decision making. Meanwhile, the Common Spaces agreement reached under Putin came about because Putin considered the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood Policy, which was offered to other ex-Soviet states amongst others at the time, not special enough for Russia's status, believing that it was more than just a neighbour of the EU (White and Light, 2009:41; Bacon, 2017:40). For status reasons it was very important that an agreement was reached with the EU that specifically placed Russia as a partner (Marsh and Rees, 2012:82). This concept of Russia searching for any form of status certification by the West that places it amongst the upper echelons of world powers shows how much value Russia placed on this.

The primary issue Russia encountered with these EU agreements is that they failed to give Russia the decision making role in European affairs it wants. Unable to join the EU, Yeltsin viewed the PCA as an alternate means to achieve the European political integration he hoped for, envisioning an equal decision making role for Russia, attaining the same parity as EU members such as the UK and France (Herrberg, 1998:95). In 1994, Yeltsin declared that 'our country has made a strategic choice in favor [sic] of integration into the world community, and, in the first instance, with the European Union' (Herrberg, 1998:95). However, the EU refused to grant Russia the position within this that Yeltsin wanted (Herrberg, 1998:95). Internal issues in Russia caused by its transition meant that Russia was too unstable to be considered reliable by Western powers (Marsh and Rees, 2012:81). Similarly, the Common Spaces agreement did not establish the partnership envisioned by Putin because Russia was denied a seat at the decision making top table (Gower and Timmins, 2009:289-290). Moscow wanted a European institutional set-up similar to the 2002 NATO-Russia Council that would ensure equality between Russia and EU members at a policy making level (Massari, 2007:4). Instead, the Kremlin could only watch on from the sidelines, with major decisions continuing to be conducted in Brussels without Russian involvement (Šleivytė, 2010:88). Only when these decisions had been

agreed were they then put to Russia (Massari, 2007:4), which was the same issue Moscow had previously faced with NATO.

Both Putin and Medvedev desired a partnership with the EU for economic purposes to facilitate their great power status recognition aspirations. Putin realised that he needed Western expertise and support (Šleivytė, 2010:45) for his economic modernisation reforms to ensure Russia became a powerful state, and thus looked to establish closer ties with the EU to facilitate this (Massari, 2007:3); 'Russia is taking part in the building of the Greater Europe…' (Putin, 2001c), and is interested in '…developing a new model of economic relations between Russia and the European Union. In essence, a model of a common European space with the participation of Russia' (Putin, 2003b). Providing added impetus was that the EU was Russia's primary trading partner (Lynch, 2005:18). Thus the Common Spaces agreement was born. Largely due to a rise in oil and gas prices, when Putin left office in 2008, according to some estimates, Russia had become the world's sixth biggest economy (Stoner, 2021:8).

Medvedev's sought to build on this, establishing '…Russia's entry, in the medium term, into the ranks of the top five countries by size of GDP…' (NSS, 2009:point 53). However, while Medvedev enjoyed initial economic success, given the increasing value of oil, the international, 2008 financial crash put an end to this, with Russia paying the price for failing to diversify its economy in to other sectors other than the sale of oil and gas (Stent, 2014a:183-184). Hence, a year later, Medvedev (2009d) stated '…that Russia can and must become a global power on a completely new basis. Our country's prestige and national prosperity cannot rest forever on past achievements', therefore Russia must become '…a modern and forward-looking young nation able to take a worthy place in the global economy'. Given its expertise, Europe looked to be the perfect partner for this (Moshes, 2012:17). Medvedev's equal partnership with the EU was to be achieved through the EU-Russia Partnership for Modernisation (Moshes, 2012:20; Headley, 2015:217). Medvedev sought to create '…special modernisation alliances with our main international partners…such as Germany, France, Italy, the European Union in general, and the United States' (Medvedev, 2010c).

However, due to an incompatibility of norms and values between Russia and these institutions, Russia has failed to achieve the position within, and failing that, the partnership it seeks with both NATO and the EU. Admission into NATO and the EU, and

their relations with external states are predicated on prospective states meeting the same liberal-democratic criteria and thus adopting the same liberal values as existing members (Schimmelfennig, 2003:4); 'NATO's "open door policy" is based on Article 10 of its founding treaty', with this '…aimed at promoting stability and cooperation, at building a Europe whole and free, united in peace, democracy and common values' (NATO, 2020b). Similarly, as set out in the "Copenhagen Criteria", EU membership of the the EU is based on prospective states having '…a free-market economy, a stable democracy and the rule of law, and the acceptance of all EU legislation…' (EU, no date). Moreover, an external country's ability to be considered Western is measured by their involvement with this institution and the extent to which their values align with these institutions (Schimmelfennig, 2003:1). Consequently, Russia's failure to successfully transition to a complete, democratic state in the image of the West, meant that Russia was unable to join these institutions, or establish the equitable position with Western powers Moscow sought to develop.

This can be highlighted through EU-Russia agreements and the discrepancy in what the EU wanted, what Russia promised, and what was actually delivered. Although the PCA was primarily economically focused, it was grounded on shared liberal values (Gower, 2009:119). For Yeltsin, a commitment to adopting EU democratic values was not considered an issue because at this time Yeltsin still sought to emulate the West (Klitsounova, 2005:34). However, despite being agreed in 1994, the PCA was not ratified until 1997 with the EU taking issue with the increasing power of the Presidency under Yeltsin following the 1993 constitutional crisis and most acutely Russian action in Chechnya, which was viewed by the EU as a violation of shared democratic values the PCA was built upon (Forsberg and Haukkala, 2016:17,20-21). Similarly, despite applying in 1992, Russia was not granted Council of Europe membership until 1996, despite other ex-Soviet states being admitted before (Donaldson et al., 2014:262-263). This was because Russia's style of government was incompatible with the institution's democratic values as was its military campaign in Chechnya (Donaldson et al., 2014:262-263). Even when Russia was finally granted membership it was criticised for failing to have the necessary democratic attributes and thus forced to commit itself to making greater democratic progression (Donaldson et al., 2014:263). However, it was hoped that Russian accession in to the Council of Europe would encourage Russia's democratic transition (Trenin, 2006:90).

Putin and Medvedev failed on the same grounds. The Putin regime's growing autocratic nature, including increasing state control in the economic realm pushed the EU and Russia further apart at the same time Moscow sought greater integration (Antonenko and Pinnick, 2005:2-3). The Common Spaces agreement is formed 'on the basis of common values…' (European Commission, 2005). For example, in the Freedom, Security and Justice space, 'the EU underlines the centrality of common values (democracy, human rights and rule of law)…' (European Commission, 2005). However, Russia's continuance down this undemocratic path prevented the development of a close relationship, making this a partnership in name only.

From the EU perspective, a key part of the P4M with the Medvedev administration was to encourage liberal reforms in Russia (David and Romanova, 2016:4). In 2010, a joint statement by the EU and Russia spoke of a commitment to shared values within the P4M (Council of the European Union, 2010, 10546/10:1):

> The European Union and Russia, as long-standing strategic partners in a changing multipolar world, are committed to working together…based on democracy and the rule of law, both at the national and international level. The New European Union - Russia Agreement, which is currently under negotiation, will also provide the basis for achieving these objectives.

However, while the EU prioritised politically liberal reforms in this modernisation policy, Russia was only interested in the economics, with the promise of political reforms necessary to gain EU support (David and Romanova, 2016:5-6). Despite initial optimism, the agreement failed to provide any tangible results, bar a few declarations of intent (Moshes, 2012:20). This was for a variety of reasons, including a difference in understanding of what each party hoped to achieve through the agreement, with the EU finding it difficult to work with Russia which did not share the same democratic system or values (Moshes, 2012:20-21).

Ultimately, because NATO and the EU are seen as core Western institutions, Russia's rejection from them means that Russia has been denied entry in to the Western community (Mankoff, 2012b:53). Consequently, Russia must make do with partial involvement as an outsider. This is insufficient for Russia's great power status recognition aspiration and thus leaves Russia frustrated and marginalised.

With the US the authoritative figure in the dominant group, much of Moscow's energy expended on attempting to join the West involves rapprochement with the US. Yeltsin's personal rapport with President Clinton was the focal point of his Westernist policy drive (Stent, 2007:419). Clinton made Russia's Western development his primary foreign policy task (Shevtsova, 2007:20). However, because Yeltsin sought to construct a role for Russia in the international community as America's equal partner (Lo, 2003:24), much of his focus on attaining US recognition was predicated on being accepted in to international organisations. The role the US played in this was acting as the primary legitimator of Russian admission and the extent of this.

In contrast, Putin's Westernist approach placed the US front and centre of his attempt to join the dominant group. In his early days as President, Putin seemed to lack policy direction, embarking on a world tour of diplomatic meetings with foreign leaders while casting off the outgoing U.S. President Clinton (Levgold, 2007:6-7). However, this policy ambiguity changed following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America, with Putin committing Russia to rapprochement with the US (Levgold, 2007:7) as part of his wider Westernist policy drive. Through a joint campaign against terrorism, Putin hoped that the US would acknowledge Russia as an equal partner (Götz, 2019:817). Putin was one of the first world leaders to contact President Bush following the attacks, and ostensibly against the opinion of his advisors promised Russian support (Neumann, 2005:15). This is because when 9/11 happened, Putin sensed that an opportunity had presented itself to be considered America's equal partner in a joint fight against a common enemy (Shevtsova, 2007:230); This '…calls for a new level of interaction between the leading powers, for a full-fledged and efficient alliance' (Putin, 2001a).

By committing itself to the US's cause, and implicitly aligning itself with Western values, Putin envisioned Russia achieving a privileged position as America's key ally, with fellow Western powers following a US-Russia joint lead (Godzimirski, 2005:69-70); 'I am absolutely sure that in the face of common threats and challenges co-sponsorship on regional issues should become the dominant form of Russian-American cooperation' (Putin, 2001a). Putin hoped that this partnership would act as a vehicle facilitating Russia's Western integration, and thus give Russia the role in international security decision making it desired (Godzimirski, 2005:71-72):

> It is very important that the interaction between our countries in fighting terrorism does not become a mere episode in the history of Russian-American relations, but marks the start of long-term partnership and cooperation (Putin, 2001a).

However, Putin's hopes for a strategic partnership fighting terrorism and thus improve Russia's international standing were not realised. The US continued to act unilaterally, ignored Russian interests and failed to treat Russia as its partner (Shevtsova, 2007:230). The subsequent US invasion of Iraq in 2003 without UN approval showed that America was not concerned with Russia's opinion or allowing it a decision making role in security actions (Larson and Shevchenko, 2010:90).

Similarly to Putin, Medvedev too sought a partnership with the US. When Medvedev first assumed power, optimism about improved US-Russia relations was high (Shevtsova, 2010:79). Despite the negative side of Russian action in Georgia, in 2008, Russia's economic success combined with new international assertiveness, and a change in leader, led to the Obama administration's 2009, Russia "reset", which looked to finally permit Russia the greater international status it had long strived for (Moshes, 2012:17-18,28). Russia would therefore become America's equal (Larson and Shevchenko, 2014:274), and thus, '…transform the Russian-US relations into [the] strategic partnership…' Russia envisioned (FPC, 2008). In Medvedev's mind, the US and Russia are the most influential, dominant international actors (Petersson, 2013:19). In turn, Medvedev found in Obama a US President willing to agree to a new nuclear weapon treaty, which they achieved with the New START Treaty (Pacer, 2016:137). This facilitated Russia's great power status claims, because it was a one-on-one agreement with the US, while it proved practical in destroying nuclear weapons no longer fit for purpose (Pacer, 2016:137).

According to Russia, parity with the US would mean that Russia is considered a major power, akin to the US on the international stage, while its opinion and interests would be taken into account (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:216-217). Optimism was high during the "reset", for reasons such as the US cancelling a planned European missile defence system and momentarily stopping NATO enlargement (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:217). In addition, the Obama-Medvedev partnership agreed on UN Security Council Resolution 1929, which mandated extensive sanctions on Iran due to its nuclear programme, while Medvedev abstained from voting on UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973, concerning Western led action in Libya ostensibly for non-violent purposes

(Stoner, 2021:9-10). To Russia it looked as if the US was respecting Russian interests and the involving Russia in Western decision making. It appeared that Russia was finally gaining US acknowledgment of Russia's great power status.

However, the reset ultimately failed because by focusing efforts on signing new agreements, it failed to address the root cause of poor US-Russia relations, which was failing to accredit Russia the status it felt it deserved (Larson and Shevchenko, 2014:275). Obama did not recognise Russia as an equal major power but a 'regional power', who the US could work with on a junior partner basis in areas of mutual interest (Haddad and Polyakova, 2018). Additionally, Obama sought to make the "reset" separate from Russia attaining the democratic standards necessary to join the West, focusing on areas of shared interest (Mankoff, 2012a:115). However, this underlying incompatibility between the US's Western democratic values and Russia's illiberal norms proved too much of a barrier and prevented a close partnership from forming (Rojansky and Collins, 2010:1).

Russia's attempt to join the West also had significant implications for its regional policy concerning the former Soviet space. A lingering perception remains in Russia of the former Soviet space as more than just a congregation of independent, sovereign states, but as a sphere of influence (Mankoff, 2012a:8-9). A zone it has special privileges over based on historical experience. However, despite these feelings towards ex-Soviet states, when attempting to join or become a partner to the West, Moscow adopts a conciliatory, flexible approach to the region (Mankoff, 2012a:220).

In prioritising Western integration, Yeltsin and Kozyrev downgraded the importance of regional relations (Clunan, 2009:111). Their attempt to construct Russia as a normal, Western country meant that Russia could not claim authority over the ex-Soviet space (Clunan, 2009:111). Russia would treat these states as it did any other, as sovereign, autonomous states (Trenin, 2009:7). In turn, when conflict arose such as in 1992 in Moldova and Tajikistan, the administration's response was to abide by international law and act through the correct channels (international organisations), and thus work in cooperation with the international community to prevent human rights abuses (Allison, 2013:3,122-123). In doing so, Russia welcomed Western conflict resolution assistance in the region (Levgold, 2007:6) for humanitarian purposes (Tsygankov, 2019a:59). Therefore, when seeking to join the West, Moscow recognises the independence of former Soviet

states, and accepts Western interference in external states' domestic affairs based on liberal values.

Similarly, through his optimistic War on Terror partnership push, Putin allowed the US to establish military bases in Central Asia, while Russia and the US signed an agreement recognising the South Caucasus and Central Asia as a shared area of interest (Shevtsova, 2010:50). Furthermore, following the EU-Russia common spaces agreement, Putin accepted a '…"common neighbourhood" (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Caucasus)' existed with the EU (Massari, 2007:8), although Moscow would not specifically call it as such, eventually agreeing to the name '…'regions adjacent to the EU and Russia'…' (Frellesen and Rontoyanni, 2009:235), Meanwhile, during the "reset", in 2010 Medvedev and Obama worked jointly on conflict resolution in Kyrgyzstan following the Kyrgyz Revolution (Stoner, 2021:9). In addition, Medvedev increased US supply routes through '…Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia…' for its operations in Afghanistan (Stoner, 2021:9).

Despite NATO enlargement within this region being a key area of concern for Russia, each leader is more accepting of NATO enlargement during their Westernist approach. In 1993, Yeltsin seemingly accepted NATO enlargement, with Polish President Lech Walesa stipulating that Yeltsin was 'understanding' of Poland's desire to join NATO, while Kozyrev said that 'it's up to Poland to decide and up to NATO to decide' (Perlez, 1993). In 2002, when NATO opened up membership to more members, Moscow reacted mildly, especially when compared to how it received 1998 NATO enlargement (Godzimirski, 2005:58). In 2002, Putin said that '…I think it would be a tactical and strategic mistake to obstruct Estonia's entry into Nato [sic]. If Estonia wants to join, then let it…I don't see it as any kind of tragedy', adding that 'Estonia's entitled to do it' (BBC News, 2002). Furthermore, Putin's then Foreign Affairs Deputy Minister, Vladimir Chizhov (2002) said that while:

> …we consider the decision on expansion, regardless of the circle of states being invited, profoundly erroneous…Of course, we recognize [sic] each state's right and that of NATO to make a mistake, but this does not change our negative attitude.

The only NATO enlargement during the time of Medvedev was '…Croatia and Albania in 2009, two countries far from Russia…' and thus did not spur a reaction by Moscow (Stoner, 2021:10). As Stoner (2021:10) explains '…during the "reset" years, neither President Medvedev nor Prime Minister Putin ever objected to NATO expansion' because

they didn't need to (Stoner, 2021:10). The "reset" had done much to calm Russian fears and reduce tension (Tsygankov, 2019a:203).

However, ultimately the US and West has denied Russia admission into the West. According to this reading, the West has not granted Russia the status it craves because the latter has failed to attain the same level of liberal democratic governance and unsuccessfully adopted the liberal values that underpin this necessary to be accepted in to the Western community (Neumann, 2008:147-148). Each Russian leader has failed to achieve the acceptance they sought. Although Yeltsin adopted the West's political and economic model, political corruption, powerful oligarchs, and Yeltsin becoming increasingly authoritarian (Bova, 2003a:17-18), meant that Yeltsin's democratic reforms were inadequate, falling short of the benchmark required (Clunan, 2009:107). On the surface, Putin would imitate all the hallmarks of the Western model, yet underneath this veneer, incompatible traditional Russian values and state rule remained (Shevtsova, 2005:104). Putin's state controlled, "managed democracy" is by its very nature illiberal, and thus incompatible with the West's status recognition criteria (Neumann, 2008:146). For his part, upon coming to power, Medvedev seemed to go further than Putin's "sovereign democracy", promising genuine change in Russia's political system and institutions based on liberal democratic, modernisation reforms (Gill, 2012:30). However, despite the promising rhetoric, no genuine change occurred (Gill, 2012:30). Ultimately, it appears that regardless of the leader or their policies, democracy and democratic values are fundamentally incompatible with Russia due to its imbedded, historical traditions (Bova, 2003b:244). Therefore, Russia has been refused admission in to the Western community and thus failed to attain the favoured status recognition it seeks.

Rejected by the West

This thesis' discourse analysis of primary documents, primary sources in secondary texts primary focused between the years of 1994-1996, 2003-2004 and 2011-2012, and wider use of secondary sources has revealed that despite its best endeavours Russia has been rejected by the West. Only offered partial acceptance as a +1 and never full integration, Russia has been marginalised from the major decision making group. When rebuffed by the West, Russia adopts a challenger approach towards the West. However, this shift in policy is not immediate. Between the two is a period of Russian disillusionment with the West. Typically, the proximate cause is Western action. This takes the form of either NATO

enlargement and EU enlargement to a lesser extent, or Western intervention abroad. The decision making that produces these policies takes place within the Western community, without Russian involvement and despite Russian objections or consideration of Russian interests, leaving Russia feeling disrespected and marginalised. The subsequent action taken often further isolates Russia, as the West extends its sphere of influence by taking in other Eastern European states while excluding Russia, creating anxiety in Moscow and allowing a threat perception of the West to grow.

The spread of Western democratic values through Western action presents a normative challenge for Russia. Unable to join the West itself because it fails to meet the democratic requirements necessary, Russia must look on as ex-Soviet states, satellite states and former allies adopt these values and thus attain admission into the Western community. Enlargement of the Western community eastward moves the values gap incrementally closer to Russian borders. Russia thus becomes increasingly isolated politically, economically and ideationally. In addition, Western intervention abroad is carried out to safeguard human rights. Worryingly for Russia, this liberal intervention is carried out in sovereign states external to the Western community, that the West can interfere in should it see fit, creating a fear in Moscow of potential Western interference in Russia itself.

A key issue is NATO enlargement, as it invokes a Russian threat perception. First proposed in late 1993 by the US before being formally agreed to by NATO in early 1994, NATO's PfP programme was understood as a preparatory step for future NATO admission (Driscoll and Macfarlane, 2003:239). Clinton (1994:2) referred to it as a '…track that will lead to NATO membership'. Thus, former Soviet states were now on a path to joining NATO. However, despite Russia signing up to this initiative, future NATO membership was not considered a possibility within Russia's PfP agreement (Donaldson et al., 2014:251-252). In response to this development, Yeltsin rhetorically asked, 'why sow the seeds of mistrust? After all, we are no longer enemies. We are all partners' (Williams, 1994). Previously accepting of the Baltic states joining NATO in 2002 when it itself was seeking to join the West, by 2004 when the Baltic states became official NATO members, Russia's reaction was more animated. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov questioned the value of NATO enlargement there, saying that 'Those Baltic countries are consumers of security, not producers' (Shanker, 2004). While Foreign Minister Lavrov said that 'the presence of American soldiers on our border has created a kind of paranoia in

Russia' (Myers, 2004). Thus, in Russian eyes, NATO expansion was considered unnecessary, causing a shift in perception.

Russia consistently warns the West that NATO enlargement creates a split in Europe. With Russia unable to join the alliance while it expands ever closer to its borders, Yeltsin cautioned that 'Europe…is in danger of plunging into a cold peace' (Williams, 1994). Indeed, NATO enlargement looked to be creating a new form of "Iron Curtain" in Europe (Mandlebaum, 2016:70). Similarly, in 2006, Lavrov warned NATO, 'Let's not erect new dividing lines' (BBC News, 2006). Being a non NATO member, Yeltsin had little choice but to accept NATO enlargement because Russia was too politically and economically weak to prevent it from happening (Mandelbaum, 2016:69); As Clinton declared: '…no country outside [NATO] will be allowed to veto expansion' (Sciolino, 1994). By 2003, Putin had all but relinquished his goal of Russia having a key role in the existing Euro-Atlantic security system (Sauer, 2017:88). Similarly to Yeltsin, having also been denied a veto over NATO action, Putin was unable to prevent the 2004 NATO enlargement (Gvosdev and Marsh, 2014:100). Using the same reference as Yeltsin of a 'cold peace' being formed, Ivanov exclaimed that Moscow has 'no illusions about the reasons why the Baltic states were admitted into NATO and why NATO airplanes…are being deployed there', 'it has nothing to do with a fight against terrorism and proliferation' (Boese, 2004).

On both occasions this has led Russia to conclude that the only legitimate reason for NATO enlargement is to protect against a future Russian threat (Mandelbaum, 2016:68; Myers, 2004). Yeltsin said that 'we hear explanations to the effect that this is allegedly the expansion of stability -- just in case there are undesirable developments in Russia' (Williams, 1994). Adding that 'if on those grounds ... the intentions are to move the responsibilities of NATO up to Russia's borders, let me say one thing: It's too early to bury democracy in Russia' (Williams, 1994). Similarly, in 2004, the Russian Foreign Ministry's spokesman Aleksandr V. Yakovenko said that 'in admitting the Baltic states and arranging guarantees for their security, many in NATO apparently proceeded from previous perceptions that a war is possible in Europe' (Myers, 2004). Thus, Moscow is questioning if a Western Cold War threat perception of Russia remains, as exemplified by then Director of Russia's Intelligence Service Yevgeny Primakov in 1993 saying that 'this psychological mind-set cannot be broken painlessly' (Donaldson et al., 2014:251).

This language of a possible “cold peace” and a threat perception is intended to evoke sentiments of the past. It calls on the West to recognise that its action is leading to a new breakdown in relations comparable to the Cold War. Russia is warning that an international system characterised by competition and conflict may re-emerge if the West fails to afford Russia an acceptable role in the international community while allowing other ex-Soviet states to become part of the exclusive club.

Particularly hurtful for Russia was that Moscow felt it had been deceived by the US regarding NATO enlargement. Despite accounts varying (Shirfinson, 2016:7), it is generally agreed that NATO enlargement took place despite previous assurances to Gorbachev that if the Soviet Union did allow Germany to reunify in 1990, NATO would not expand any further east (Sauer, 2017:86). US Secretary of State, James Baker assured Gorbachev that, ‘there would be no extension of NATO’s jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east’ (Goldgeier, 2016). Putin and Medvedev have since repeated this claim (Shirfinson, 2016:13); ‘…what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them’ (Putin, 2007a). While Medvedev said that Russia has received ‘none of the things that we were assured, namely that NATO would not expand endlessly eastwards and our interests would be continuously taken into consideration’ (Klussmann et al., 2009). Therefore, it can be considered a broken promise by the US, agreed in good faith by Gorbachev, making the US untrustworthy in Russian eyes (Shirfinson, 2016:7,9).

In conjunction with enlargement of the Western security system that omits Russia, there have been several Western interventions abroad which have been decided upon without Russian input. This includes the 1994-1995 NATO bombing in Yugoslavia, 2003-2005 Western support for the “colour revolutions” in Eastern Europe, Western support for the 2010 “Arab Spring” and the 2011-2013 anti-government protests in Russia. These foreign interventions all share key similarities and each time the West fails to consider Russian interests. The first two took place within Russia’s historic sphere of influence against Russian allies, moving gradually closer to Russian borders, while the final act took place in Russia, being an attack on the Russian government itself.

When NATO conducted the bombing of Bosnian Serbs in Yugoslavia, NATO did not consider Russian interests or its opinion on intervention in an area of traditional interest to Moscow (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:184). Russian Deputy Prime Minister Sergei

Shakhrai remonstrated that ‘the unilateral way in which this decision was made is indicative of the approach to Russia. I think it is a blow to the prestige of Russia’ (Hockstader, 1994). When the US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott attempted to convince Kozyrev that it was beneficial for Russia to stop Serbian government actions, Kozyrev responded:

> It’s bad enough hav-ing [sic] you people tell us what you’re going to do whether we like it or not. Don’t add insult to injury by also telling us that it’s *in our interests* to obey your orders (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:184).

Thus, NATO’s refusal to grant Russian membership, combined with NATO enlargement and NATO intervention in 1994, left Russia feeling excluded and marginalised from decision making (Larson and Shevchenko, 2010:79-80).

NATO airstrikes in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Operation Deliberate Force) was based on the institution’s values, conducted to protect human rights and democratic ideals (Burton, 2018:43-44). The NATO airstrikes can be seen as an extension of NATO enlargement because Washington felt that if the West used democracy promotion to entice Eastern European states to adopt democracy and join the West, for credibility reasons it needed to promote democracy by safeguarding democratic norms in conflict zones (Burton, 2018:55). Therefore, not only were democratic values required to join the West, but the West was now acting out of zone, actively imposing its value system in external states the West felt were undermining its value system.

Similarly, Western support for the “colour revolutions” in Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2005, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 was perceived by Moscow as Western powers, and Western supported NGOs, launching illegal intervention in Russia’s near abroad (Allison, 2013:135) that were historical Russian allies (D’Anieri, 2019:14), and acting against Russian interests (Oliker et al., 2015:6). Putin (2004a) explained his fears thus:

> …as far as all post-Soviet space is concerned, I am concerned above all about attempts to resolve legal issues by illegal means. That is the most dangerous thing. It is the most dangerous to think up a system of permanent revolutions – now the Rose Revolution, or the Blue Revolution. One should get used to living according to the law, rather than according to political expediency defined elsewhere for some

> or other nation – that is what worries me most. Certain rules and procedures should mature within society. Of course, we should pay attention to, support and help democracies, but, if we embark on the road of permanent revolutions, nothing good will come from this for these countries, and for these peoples. We will plunge all the post-Soviet space into a series of never-ending conflicts, which will have extremely serious consequences.

Moscow understood Western support through a threat perception lens. It is not the actual liberal democratic values Western democracy promotion is predicated on that Russia finds threatening, but how they are used by the West to further its policies to Russia's detriment (Diesen, 2016:73). Moscow understood Western support for the revolutions as a means to expand NATO and the EU, further isolating Russia (Diesen, 2016:74). Russian fears were realised by the new leaders of these states seeking to join NATO and the EU, with support from the West, through a process of attaining the necessary democratic criteria (Mankoff, 2012a:110; Lane, 2009:115). This would marginalise Russia from wider Europe leaving it isolated (Mankoff, 2012a:110). This is because joining the Western clubs forces ex-Soviet states to make a choice between joining the liberal democratic West or to remain aligned with the non-democratic Russia (D'Anieri, 2019:15). When these states choose to join the West, Russia becomes more isolated (D'Anieri, 2019:15). Most concerning for Moscow was the perception that if the West continued seeking to overthrow regimes that failed to share its democratic values, then the Putin administration could be its next target (Shlapentokh, 2009:314-315).

Western support or the "Arab Spring" was also perceived as a threat by Russian officials and contributed to a new breakdown in relations. Following Medvedev abstaining from voting on UN resolution to authorise military action against the Libyan regime, the NATO airstrikes that quickly followed under the auspices of the resolution left Putin, Prime Minister at the time, to believe that the West had overstepped the mark, deceiving Russia to pursue regime change (Myers, 2015). As articulated by Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich:

> We strongly believe that it is unacceptable to use the mandate derived from UN SC resolution 1973, the adoption of which was quite an ambiguous step, in order to achieve goals that go far beyond its provisions… (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011).

Putin remarked that Western action '…resembles medieval calls for crusades' (Bryanski, 2011). Again it appeared to Russia that the West had sidelined Russian interests and taken advantage of Russian goodwill (Myers, 2015). In a failed attempt to re-assert his authority, Medvedev condemned Putin's words; '…we need to be very careful in our choice of words. It is inadmissible to say anything that could lead to a clash of civilizations [sic], talk of 'crusades' and so on. This is unacceptable' (Myers, 2015). Medvedev's conduct contributed to ruling him out of a second presidential term, while Putin's understanding of Western behaviour in Libya brought an end to the Obama-Medvedev "reset" (Myers, 2015).

Similarly to the "colour revolutions", the West possessing the ability to conduct democracy promotion in the Arab Spring by overthrowing regimes that had an incompatible value system was seen as threatening to Moscow, concerned for its own well being (D'Anieri, 2019:16). Following Western intervention in the Arab Spring, Medvedev warned that Russia was next (Elder, 2011a); 'They have prepared such a scenario for us before, and now more than ever they will try and realize [sic] it' (Elder, 2011a). The Kremlin's fears were realised with the 2011-2013 Russian election protests, perceived by Moscow as Western intervention. The protests were characterised as a continuation of the "colour revolutions", with Russia's the "white revolution" (Elder, 2011b). To highlight this, protestors wore a symbolic white ribbon. Putin derided this act in a crude fashion (Elder, 2011b):

> Frankly, when I looked at the television screen and saw something hanging from someone's chest, honestly, it's indecent, but I decided that it was propaganda to fight Aids – that they were wearing, pardon me, a condom.

Similarly to the previous "colour revolutions", Putin understood the protests as Western intervention; 'Regarding 'colour revolutions', everything is clear – this is a developed scheme to destabilise society that did not rise up on its own' (Elder, 2011b). This was because the EU and the US, and specifically the US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, had challenged the fairness of Russia's 2011 legislative election (Gutterman and Bryanski, 2011). Hilary Clinton said that Russian citizens '…deserve fair, free transparent elections and leaders who are accountable to them' (Crowley and Ioffe, 2016). Condemning Clinton's words, Putin claimed that 'She set the tone for some opposition activists, gave them a signal, they heard this signal and started active work' (Gutterman and Bryanski, 2011). Putin also accused the West of trying to influence the election; 'Pouring foreign

money into electoral processes is particularly unacceptable' with 'hundreds of millions are being invested in this work' (Gutterman and Bryanski, 2011). Once this had failed, Putin claimed that, similarly to the Western funded NGOs in the "colour revolutions", protesters received financial support from the West; 'I know that young people were paid for coming' (Abbakumova and Birnbaum, 2011).

The outcome of Western intervention on each occasion led Russia to substitute its attempt to join the West with a policy of competing against the dominant group. NATO's 1994-1995 airstrikes in Yugoslavia damaged Russia's perception of the West, while internally, the Yeltsin administration's failure to protect Russian interests led to calls by Russia's parliamentary assembly the State Duma that Kozyrev be removed from his Foreign Ministry post (Huntington, 1996:285). The result of Western support for the 2003-2005 "colour revolutions" led Putin to reestablish Russia's authoritative international position in a more assertive way, a policy understood in Russia as Russia pushing back against perceived injustices at the hands of the West (Mankoff, 2012a:31). While Western support for the 2011-2013 anti-government protests in Russia showed Putin that Russia would never be accorded equal partnership status by the West (Hill, 2018:9).

Chapter Four

Challenging the West

A discourse analysis of primary sources, primary sources in secondary sources based around the years of 1996-2000, 2004-2008, and 2012-2014 and the use of secondary sources reveals that Russia begins to adopt a “challenger” approach to the West when it is unable to join the Western community, and then has to watch as the West increasingly expands closer to its borders, fuelling Russian anxiety and disillusionment with the West. This means that Russia then pursues a policy of open competition against the West in the existing international system, with the intention to replace perceived US unipolarity with multipolarity (Lukyanov, 2010:28). Yeltsin’s shift toward a challenger approach began during his second term as President. This was symbolised in his change of Foreign Minister in 1996, with the pro-Western Kozyrev replaced by Yevgeny Primakov. Similarly, after his failed Westernist approach upon coming to power, the West’s perceived role in the “colour revolutions” crystallised Putin’s change in tack, in his second term adopting this challenger approach, as he did again in his return to the Presidency in 2012, following Medvedev’s “reset” which did not bring the change in relations envisioned.

In this approach, Russia works in parallel to the West, but no longer seeks to integrate into its community (Stent, 2014a:26). Meaning, it no longer intends to adopt Western values to suit the West but be seen and respected by the West as a powerful entity on its own terms (Solovyev, 2008:297-298). Moscow believes that the best way to do this is to improve its own level of power to compete against the dominant West, enabling it to be the West’s comparable equal (Lukyanov, 2010:27): ‘And our place in the modern world, I wish to particularly emphasize this, will only depend on how strong and successful we are’ (Putin, 2005a). Russia’s overarching goal remains the same of wishing to be part of an inclusive pan-European security architecture with a genuine role in international decision making, but this time it would be as a non-Western, independent actor (Solovyev, 2008:295-296). Thus, Russia wishes to be part of the existing international system, but seeks to alter the balance of power, to redistribute power away from the Western community, to establish a more equal playing field between the West and Russia (Ambrosio, 2005:1-2,4). To facilitate this, Russia seeks to reconstruct a Eurasian bloc in

the void left by the Soviet Union, placing itself as the centre and leader of this bloc, to challenge the US led dominant West (Roberts, 2017:30-31).

To alter the balance of power, Moscow rejects perceived US unipolarity (Lukyanov, 2010:23). In 1996, Primakov said that Russian policy would be to ‘defend Russia's national interests’ against ‘a unipolar world under U.S. command’ (Goble, 1996), with ‘… the establishment of a unipolar world…unacceptable today to the overwhelming majority of the international community’ (Primakov, 1996:14). Similarly, in his famous 2007 Munich Security Conference speech, Putin said that ‘I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today’s world’ (Putin, 2007a). In his repeated attempt at a challenger approach during his post-Medvedev presidency, Putin (2013a) notes how this system left Russia devoid of the international decision making role it seeks:

> …we see attempts to somehow revive a standardised model of a unipolar world… Russia agrees with those who believe that key decisions should be worked out on a collective basis, rather than at the discretion of and in the interests of certain countries or groups of countries.

Consequently, the primary goal within this challenger approach is to construct a multipolar world (Lukyanov, 2010:23). This vision of a multipolar international system means in practice that Russia would no longer seek to join the Western community and become a Western great power, but instead challenge US unipolarity by becoming an independent great power as a non-Western independent pole in the international system (Ambrosio, 2001:46). At the start of this new policy drive, each leader has spoken of the formation of a multipolar world, with this their intended goal. As Yeltsin explained in 1997:

> We are for a multipolar world...where there is no *diktat* by any single country. Let the United States be one pole, Russia — another, Asia, Europe and so on- still other poles. This is the base for the world to stand on and ensure common security (Ambrosio, 2001:47).

In 2004, Putin set out his vision; ‘As in the political and in the security sphere, the world must be multi-polar’ (Putin, 2004b). While in 2012, Putin spoke of ‘….establishing [a] new architecture of multipolar world order’ (Putin, 2012a).

However, Russian policy is deeper than shifting the balance of power, it is also about challenging the universalism of Western ideas and beliefs. Russian action is fuelled by an ideational underpinning which legitimises its position as an alternative Eurasian pole to the US led West. As Primakov in 1997 explains:

> Initially, Russia's policy was one of 'strategic partner-ship' with the United States . . . a structure in which one country (the US) led the others was gradually created . . . This is not what Russia wants. We want equitable co-operation even though we realize [sic] that we are now weaker than the United States. I think we have secured such an objective . . . The world is becoming accus-tomed [sic] to the fact that *we have our distinct identity*. This is very important (Smith, 1999:491).

To achieve this, Russia challenges Western liberal democracy by providing an equal competitive, non-Western value system, one based on historic traditional values, offering regional states a safe-haven against supposed universal Western values they see as alien (Roberts, 2017:37-38). Moscow then binds these regional states together as a bloc through ethnic and cultural links (Roberts, 2017:39). Moscow hopes that through this rival regional bloc which has a rival value system, Russia can challenge the Western community's dominance of the international system (Roberts, 2017:31,37-38). Thus, Moscow challenges the dominance of the Western liberal pole by developing a comparative Eurasian pole in the existing international system which has a different form of governance and belief system to the Western pole (Barma et al., 2007:23-24).

A significant part of this challenger value system is the importance of national sovereignty. Having been rejected by the West, Moscow attempts to paint joining the West as incompatible with Russia's Eurasian great power status because this would mean subordinating its sovereignty for group conformity (Kaczmarska, 2016:443). In 1996, Primakov posited that 'Russia's foreign policy cannot be the foreign policy of a second-rate state. We must pursue the foreign policy of a great state…' (Blank, 2012:139). Additionally, Putin spoke of how 'It is our values that determine our desire to see Russia's state independence grow, and its sovereignty strengthened. Ours is a free nation' (Putin, 2005a). Russia's proposed alternative system places a heavy emphasis on state sovereignty which respects states' alternative forms of governance and thus rejects Western interventionism based on Western norms and values (Barma et al., 2007:27).

> …the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies it imposes on other nations. Well, who likes this? Who is happy about this? (Putin, 2007a).

Key to Russian plans is attaining Western acceptance that not all states must conform to Western liberal democratic values, must respect alternative value systems and importantly, recognise that they are of equal worth (Barma et al., 2007:27-28):

> And we believe that every country, every nation is not exceptional, but unique, original and benefits from equal rights, including the right to independently choose their own development path (Putin, 2013a).

Further illustrating this is Putin's response to Obama's claim that US intervention abroad on the basis of liberal democratic values is '…what makes us exceptional' (Abcarian, 2013):

> I would rather disagree with a case he made on American exceptionalism. ... It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation. There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor, those with long democratic traditions and those still finding their way to democracy….We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord's blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal (Abcarian, 2013).

Ultimately, Russia hopes that attaining Western acceptance of an alternative Eurasian civilisation with an equal value system, would in turn mean gaining Western acceptance of an equitable multipolar world order (Kazcmarska, 2016:448). Therefore, Russia's challenger approach can be considered similar to that of the Soviet Union and the Cold War, but less hostile, more about seeking respect and equality from the West than seeking world domination and the universalism of communism.

Russia still requires Western acknowledgement of its status because the West is the dominant force in the international system. But in this case, this means attaining Western acknowledgement as a competitor (Clunan, 2009:97,127). It is not that Russia wants to the US to see it as a nemesis (Birgerson, 2002:67), but that it wants to create a multipolar world where the US must consider Russia, where Russia matters, and thus the US treats

and respects Russia accordingly as a great power (Mankoff, 2012a:131). For example, when Putin (2005a) famously said '…the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century', he was alluding to the problem of Russia's loss of first-tier status equal to the US, which meant that Russia was no longer considered by the US in decision making out of respect for its status (Taylor, 2018:167-168). Putin's comments are emblematic of this challenger approaches' premise, which is to restore Russia's position as the West's competitor at the top of the international system, and re-establish some form of authority over the Eurasian space (Lukyanov, 2010:19-20).

Accordingly, Russia seeks a level of parity with the Western great powers, but this time on its own terms rather than theirs. Under Primakov, Moscow sought 'the development of equal partnership[s] with the other great powers…' (NSB, 1997). Meaning, Russia would compel the West to respect it through the establishment and exercise of power rather than hope to achieve acknowledgement by conformism, treated with equal consideration to those of the other major powers, such as in international decision making (Ambrosio, 2005:118). Thus, Primakov's policy of being an equal major power followed the belief that Russia would be one of the major world powers alongside the US, Germany, France, China and Japan (Tsygankov, 2019a:102). In his first challenger approach, Putin claimed that 'Russia is ready to become part of this multipolar world…not as a superpower with special rights, but rather as an equal among equals' (Putin, 2007b). By the end of his second term, Putin believed that he had achieved his goal of attaining a place alongside the other great powers, the EU, China and Japan, with only the US attaining a higher ranking above this of superpower status (Godzimirski, 2008:22). In his second challenger approach, recognising the rise of China, Putin aspired for Russia to attain recognition as an equal, first-tier power alongside the US and China (Lo, 2012:39-40); 'Our goal is to have as many equal partners as possible, both in the West and in the East' (Putin, 2014a).

Whereas the Westerniser approach draws heavily on Russia's Western identity construct, this challenger approach draws on Russia's Eurasian identity construct as a rationalisation. Russia's elite repeatedly assert Russia's Eurasian-ness in this context. This goes beyond an acknowledgement of geographical reality, speaking to a deeper form of identity that Moscow uses when needed to legitimise Russia's great power status as an independent major power in its own unique way, and not meeting criteria imposed by the West (Rangsimaporn, 2006:371-372,385-386). Primakov said that 'Russia is both Europe

and Asia…' (Tsygankov, 2019a:95). Under Yeltsin, Russia's 1997 National Security Blueprint defined Russia as '…an influential European-Asian power…' which '…occupies a unique strategic position on the Eurasian continent…' (NSB, 1997). Similarly, in 2000, Putin stipulated that '…Russia is both a European and an Asian country' (Putin, 2000d), 'Russia has always felt itself to be a Eurasian country' (Putin, 2000e) and again in 2004, '…Russia is a Eurasian country…' (Putin, 2004b). As did Medvedev in 2008; 'we frequently call Russia a Eurasian country.…' (Medvedev, 2008b). The 2008 Foreign Policy Construct defines '….Russia as the largest EuroAsian power' (FPC, 2008). Finally, in 2012, Medvedev said that '…Russia is an integral part of the vast and forward-reaching Asia-Pacific region…' (Medvedev, 2012a). This makes sense because similarly to Russia's European identity, Russia has a Eurasian identity it can use to normalise its balanced approach to the West and East when it feels sidelined by the West (Rangsimaporn, 2006:374). It also justifies on a deeper level, why joining the West is not a suitable fit for Russia because it is not another European country but a unique Eurasian one. Russia's unique Eurasian historical experience of the West meant that Russia was too different to other Western states to join the Western community that had incompatible norms, and therefore Russia had to pursue a path to great power status outside of this bloc as a Eurasian power (Mankoff, 2017:340).

Similarly to its Westernist approach, in this Eurasianist challenger approach the West remains Russia's "Other", but in this case the "Other" is something Russia rejects (Leichtova, 2014:25-26,29) rather than something it seeks to emulate. Russia should not attempt to mirror the West but repudiate this in favour of pursuing its own unique Eurasian path (Smith, 1999:482). Instead of outlining why Russia belongs to the West, Eurasianism lays out how Russia is different to the West. This can be explained by Eurasianism having its roots in the 19th century ideational doctrine Slavophilism (Smith, 1999:482). As one side of the great 1830s, Western/non-Western debate between Westernisers and Slavophiles (Laruelle, 2016:278), Slavophiles condemned Peter the Great's attempt to Westernise Russia (McDaniel, 1996:10). They repudiated Western values believing they were incompatible with Russia's unique character (Leichtova, 2014:31). Instead, they used Russia's historical experience to articulate an alternative value system, one which emphasised Russia's unique culture and traditions (McDaniel, 1996:10-11,25).

Following this line of thought, Eurasianists argue that Russia is neither European nor Asian, and therefore not a part of Western civilisation but a distinct Eurasian civilisation in

its own right (Laruelle, 2007:10), unlike Westernisers who see Russia as European only (Laruelle, 2016:279). Eurasia is therefore an alternative civilisation which spans the former Soviet spatial region (Smith, 1999:482,493). Eurasianism rejects wholesale adoption of Western values, and instead contends that Russia has a value system that reflects its unique historical experience (Leichtova, 2014:32-33): 'Russia, as a Eurasian country, is a unique example where the dialogue of cultural civilisations has become a centuries-old tradition of state and public life' (Putin, 2003c). Moscow therefore challenges US unipolarity as the head of the Western community by creating a multipolar world that recognises Russia as the leader of a Eurasian pole (Leichtova, 2014:19). Ideationally, Moscow rejects the perceived dominance of Western values and how these are forced on Eurasian states that do not conform to these standards (Leichtova, 2014:24-25). In turn, Russia hopes that its legitimate, alternative Eurasianist values system will be respected by the West and thus enable it to establish a multipolar world based on Western recognition of the equality that exists between these different civilisations and their values (Leichtova, 2014:32-33).

> We must admit that there are several civilizations [sic] in this world…And to remain a leader you must be competitive. We all must be competitive. It's only together that we can be competitive. And in competing with other civilizations [sic], we can only prove -- we can only find out who is the leader (Lavrov, 2008).

With Eurasian civilisation informed by its Asian side (Pizzolo, 2020:3), Moscow uses the Asian influences of Eurasianism to emphasise Russia's distinctness from the rest of Europe (Birgerson, 2002:67). This renders Russia unable to take its place among Western states in the Western community because it is not one:

> Of course Russia's history shows that its cultural identity evolved from a European base, but at the same time, if we think about more ancient history or ordinary concerns, then a great deal links us to Asian states (Medvedev, 2008c).

The primary reason for this is Russia's time spent under Asian Mongol rule. Cut off from Europe, subordination under Mongol rule made Russia distinct from the rest of Europe (Graney, 2019:144) and unlike its European counterparts, grow close to Asia (Baranovsky, 2000:444). In contrast to Westernists, Eurasianists perceive Mongol rule over Russia in a positive light, recognising its instrumental role in informing the Asian side to this unique

Eurasian civilisation (Bassin and Pozo, 2017:5), meaning Russia cannot simply join the West because it is not a Western state and should therefore stand independently of it.

As an independent Eurasian power, Russia looks to pursue a balanced foreign policy with the West and the East, with this normalised by Eurasianism (Rangsimaporn, 2006:372). On a basic level, Eurasianism rationalises this policy because Russia's geographical position as both a European and Asian power mandates a balanced approach to work with both poles (Rangsimaporn, 2006:375). On a deeper level, Eurasianism enables Moscow to legitimise an ideational affinity with Asia and thus a sense of belonging to East Asia, and with this comes the right of involvement in the region (Rangsimaporn, 2006:371-372). As Primakov explains:

> Russia is both Europe and Asia, and this geopolitical location continues to play a tremendous role in formulation of its foreign policy … . Geopolitical values are constants that cannot be abolished by historical developments (Tsygankov, 2019a:95).

In practice, this means Moscow uses Eurasianism to legitimise its right to stand independently from the West, and instead pursue a multilateral foreign policy as a Eurasian power by looking eastward to Asia (Leichtova, 2014:34-35); 'as an influential Eurasian power, it will support relations of partnership with all interested world community countries' (NSB, 1997); 'We respect both European pragmatism and Oriental wisdom. So, Russia will pursue a balanced foreign policy' (Putin, 2000d); 'Russia, as a unique Eurasian power, has always played a special role in building relations between the East and the West' (Putin, 2003d); 'For Russia, as a Eurasian country, it is natural to be highly interested in the Asia-Pacific region' (Putin, 2014b).

This independent foreign policy is predicated on retaining sovereign autonomy, and a transition away from focusing on improving relations with the West and US, to strengthening Russia's relationship with China, the dominant power in the East and leader of the Asian pole. This is because Eurasianism argues that Russia's focus should be on forming alliances with its Asian partners (Clover, 1999:13). Primakov attempted to attain great power status through a strategic three-way partnership with China and India to create a multipolar system (Götz, 2019:817). Similarly to Yeltsin, when Putin was unable to join the West on his terms, he switched to prioritising relations with China to help realise

his multipolar world aspiration (Wilson, 2019:782). In his repeat challenger phase following the failed “reset”, Putin again looked to China to help establish the formation of a multipolar world (Bolt, 2014:49); ‘…Beijing shares our vision of the emerging equitable world order’ (Putin, 2012b).

Moscow’s relationship with Beijing extends beyond balance of power calculations, but is grounded on Beijing sharing Moscow’s rejection of the supposed universalism of Western liberal democratic values which subordinate their sovereignty because these values are not in keeping with traditional Russian and Chinese civilisational values (Bolt, 2014:49):

> Indeed, Russia and China are not simply close neighbors [sic] and trustworthy partners, but are two great civilisations, the history and culture of which carry an immense power of mutual cultural and spiritual attraction (Putin, 2007c).

As non-Western, non-liberal states, Russia and China are aligned in their challenge of Western ideological primacy, to create an equitable multipolar world order, as heads of the respective Eurasian and Asian poles (Kaczmarski, 2015:135).

Russia’s non-Westernist identity was not only informed by exposure to Asia, but Russian imperial expansion into Muslim regions makes Russia different to Europe and forms a key part of its Eurasian identity. Eurasianists use Russia’s Muslim population to further justify the incompatibility of Western liberal values with multi-ethnic Russia (Laruelle, 2016:281). Ivan the Terrible’s expansion into central Eurasia by taking Kazan, Astrakhan and western Siberia made Russia a recognisable Eurasian empire (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:25; LeDonne, 2020:198-199). By incorporating Muslims into the Russian empire (Bushkovitch, 2012:49; Kort, 2008:35), Ivan the Terrible is credited as creating the first truly multi-ethnic Russian state (Plokhy, 2006:123). As Putin (2005b) explains; As ‘…one of the most ancient centres of Eurasian civilization’, ‘Kazan played a unique historical role in the creation of a united Russian nation…’. Since Ivan the Terrible’s taking of Kazan in 1556, Russia enjoyed near continuous expansion into Islamic, Central Asia until 1920 when it took Bukhara (modern day Uzbekistan) (Roy, 2007:25). Importantly, Russia sought to assimilate the captured Muslim populations into the Russian empire as opposed to expelling them from the land (Roy, 2007:26). This had lasting implications for Russia’s Eurasian identity.

Today, Islam is Russia's second largest religion, with around 15-20 million Russians identifying as Muslims (Dannreuther and March, 2010:1). In 2003, speaking at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Summit, Putin said that 'over many centuries, Russia, as a Eurasian country, has been connected with the Islamic world by traditional, natural ties. Our country is historically home to millions of Muslims…', indeed '…Russian Muslims are an integral, full and complete part of the multi-ethnic people of Russia' (Putin, 2003d). Speaking of Putin's involvement in the summit, Mikhail Margelov, a '…member of the pro-Putin party United Russia noted: 'Russia is an Islamic country just as much as it is Christian, Buddhist or Jewish. Mr Putin's [OIC] trip was therefore a perfectly logical step'…' (Rangsimaporn, 2006:379-380). It is Eurasian Russia's expanse over these Muslim regions that makes Russia distinct from Europe; '…one can say that Russia is a part of the Islamic world' (Putin, 2003e).

Eurasianism further draws on Russia's multiethnic make-up to distinguish Russia from Europe. According to Eurasianism, while Russia's East Slavic ethnic group form Russia's Eurasian foundation, the incorporation of Muslims and non-Slavic groups are what make Eurasian Russia distinct (Laruelle, 2007:14-15). In turn, when pushing this Eurasia narrative, Putin (2006a) said that:

> It is here, on the huge Eurasian continent, that a unique variety of religions and nationalities have developed. Cooperation between them has played a systematic role in developing and strengthening Russian statehood.

While in 2014, Putin said that 'Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and other religions are an integral part of Russia's identity, its historical heritage and the present-day lives of its citizens' (Putin, 2014b)

In addition, while Russia's religious, Christian affiliation to Europe is much emphasised in its Westernist approach, Russia's Orthodox Christianity is different to Western Christianity. Central to Eurasianism is Orthodox Christianity because this separates the region from the Roman Christianity of the West, and Islam of the south (Baranovsky, 2000:444). From the start, Russia's Orthodox Christianity's leaning on Greek culture put it at odds with the Latin West, with Russia's adoption of the Cyrillic script (Pulcini, 2003:79) making Russian literature foreign to the West (Bova, 2003a:4). Most importantly, Prince Vladimir's decision to adopt the Byzantine empire's Eastern Orthodox Christianity meant that as a result of the

1054 East-West Schism between the Western Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church, Russia found itself marginalised from much of Europe (Riasanovsky, 2005:20). This split led to an all but ceasing of contact between the Churches and created a cultural split between Russia and the West (Bova, 2003a:13). According to this reading, by aligning itself with the Byzantine Empire, which itself was already different from the rest of Europe, the 1054 schism acted as a clear religious break between Europe and Russia (Baranovsky, 2000:444). In addition, over time, Moscow's positioning of itself as the "Third Rome" consistently put it at odds with Rome's Catholic Church and the Pope, who also claimed to be Christianity's true representative and leader on earth (Grier, 2003:30).

Eurasianism emphasises the distinction between the Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic church, affirming the importance of the Orthodox Church in shaping Russia's unique Eurasian identity and value system, with Putin in 2013 saying that 'There was a spiritual vacuum after the fall of the Soviet Union... true values are religious values... the return to religion marks the natural revival of the Russian people' (Eltsov, 2013). Moscow works closely with the Orthodox Church to provide ideological legitimacy to its rejection of foreign Western liberal values in favour of upholding unique, Eurasian values of equal worth (Coyer, 2015):

> The moral foundations of the Orthodox faith played a major role in the formation of our national character and the mentality of Russia's peoples…helping Russia holda [sic] dignified place among the European and global civilisations (Putin, 2013b).

In addition to having a separate religious experience to the West, another core element informing Russia's Eurasian identity is the influential Western socio-cultural historical experiences that largely bypassed Russia, such as the Reformation, Renaissance and the Enlightenment Russia (Bova, 2003a:4). The predominant factors for this include Mongol occupation, its adherence to the Byzantine variant of Orthodox Christianity and finally its physical distance from Western Europe where these ideas began (Rieber, 2007:210). In addition, as Russia moved forward in to the nineteenth century, it chose not to modernise like the West (Neumann, 2005:26), which was shaped by the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution (Kohut and Goldfrank, 1998:27-28). Instead, Russia maintained an '… *ancien régime*…' (Neumann, 2005:26), remaining a Tsardom (Bova, 2003a:4). As the West pursued a democratic path from the nineteenth century into the twentieth century, Russia

moved from being ruled by an authoritative Tsar, to a repressive communist system (Bova, 2003a:4) which directly opposed the West's liberal democratic model. These events were instrumental in shaping the West and its values. By missing out on these experiences, Russia was noticeably different in comparison to the West.

As a result, unlike Westernists, Eurasianists reject Peter the Great's attempt to Westernise Russia, seeing it as an attempt to place an alien model on Russia (Pizzolo, 2020:47). This is because, they argue, as part of the Eurasian civilisation, Russia has its own unique values, which whilst informed by the West, are not Western (Pizzolo, 2020:8). These distinct values include the preference of a strong, authoritative state as opposed to Western liberal individualism (Pizzolo, 2020:8). In turn, under Primakov and Putin, Russia rejected the Western development path because Russia was on its own unique path, but still adopted some Western values, albeit in a way that works for Russia according to its uniqueness (Kuchins and Zevelev, 2012:199-200; Stent, 2008:1090-1091). As Kazcmarska (2016:449) explains:

> Bewildered by admiration, fear and contempt for Western structures and values, Russia emulated the standard of civilisation and modified it, adjusting it to specific circumstances and its own needs. Making use of certain Western ideas, however, has not meant Russia subscribed to their normative underpinnings.

For example, in 1998, addressing Russia's failing economy following its difficulties transitioning to a Western economic model, Primakov said 'the state must interfere in and regulate many processes in the economy' (Williams, 1998). Defending this policy, Primakov said that while 'this is not a return to the command system', Russia should not make the same mistakes it did initially post-USSR, saying that '…we do not have to copy some wild capitalism from the past' (Williams, 1998). Putin proceeded in a similar vein: 'The democratic road we have chosen is independent in nature, a road along which we move ahead, all the while taking into account our own specific internal circumstances' (Putin, 2005a). In his second challenger phase, Putin maintained the line that Russia would adhere to democratic principles whilst remaining true to Russian uniqueness: 'Russia's democracy means the power of the Russian people with their own traditions of self-rule and not the fulfilment of standards imposed on us from the outside' (Putin 2012c).

Russia's regional policy is key to its challenger approach. Moscow has sought to use Eurasianism to legitimise Russia's position as the authoritative head of the Eurasian pole (Mankoff, 2017:340-341). In contrast to Westernists, Eurasianists believe that Russia's primary foreign policy objective should be regional based, focused on retaining authority over the former Soviet space as opposed to attempting to join the West (Birgerson, 2002:67). This is because Eurasianists believe that Russia should have some form of authoritative position over the former Soviet space, with the extent of this ranging from exerting influence to complete control (Birgerson, 2002:67). Russian leaders share this assumption that Eurasia is Russia's privileged sphere of interest, given these states' deep interconnectedness such as a shared history and culture (Laruelle and Radvanyi, 2019:101). Both Primakov and Putin believe that Russia has an authoritative, privileged position in the former Soviet space (Clunan, 2009:91; Levgold, 2007:10), or as Medvedev (2008b) described it, Russia enjoys '…privileged interests'. While this contradicts Moscow's argument of respecting sovereignty, Moscow justifies this by using Eurasianism to normalise Russia's privileged status, with smaller ex-Soviet states lacking full sovereignty given their historical experience of being subordinate to the Russian centre (Kaczmarska, 2016:445-446).

Eurasianists cite former Soviet states' lack of historical independence to rationalise their argument that these states belong to a larger Eurasian bloc (Birgerson, 2002:67). Exemplifying this is modern day Ukraine and Belarus. Eurasianists believe that alongside Russia, its fellow East Slavic brothers Belarus and Ukraine form what Eurasianists perceive as Eurasia's core (Shkaratan, 2015:31). As Putin said to US President George W. Bush about Ukraine in 2008, 'you have to understand, George, that Ukraine is not even a country. Part of its territory is in Eastern Europe and the greater part was given to us' (Stent, 2014b). In support of this claim, Ukraine and Belarus are relatively new entities, with their current geographical boundaries decided by Soviet leaders post-WWII, with the Crimean peninsula given to Ukraine for administrative purposes in 1954 (Batalden and Batalden, 1997:45). The post-Soviet era was the first time Ukraine and Belarus had complete, genuine independence with previous claims of Ukrainian independence during times of armed trouble, while 1991 was the first time Belarus had real, lasting independence, free of foreign intervention (Kort, 1997:58,64).

Eurasianists favour the formation of a Eurasian empire to encompass this Eurasian civilisation (Pizzolo, 2020:4). The region's shared history and culture serves as a basis for

the creation of this entity and in turn challenges the Western community. Primakov sought to re-construct a Soviet Union type model in the former Soviet space to reassert Russian authority over the region (Tsygankov, 2019a:7,98). Putin in contrast did not want to restore the Soviet Union, with the possible exception of Belarus (Rich, 2009:277). As Putin said in 1999 about the end of the Cold War:

> I only regretted that the Soviet Union had lost its place in Europe, although intellectually I under-stood [sic] that a position based on walls and dividers cannot last. But I wanted something different to rise in its place. And nothing different was proposed. That's what hurt (Stent, 2007:424).

In turn, 'people in Russia say that those who do not regret the collapse of the Soviet Union have no heart, and those that do regret it have no brain' (Putin, 2005c). Regarding Belarus, in December 1998, Yeltsin and the Belorussian President Alexander Lukashenko signed a declaration stating 'Russia and Belarus have taken a historic step on the path of unifying the two fraternal countries', with the Treaty on the Creation of a Union State signed in December 1999 (Donaldson et al., 2014:183). However, while Lukashenko envisioned an equal union, Putin favoured Belarus being absorbed in to the Russian Federation as one of its Federal subjects (Donaldson et al., 2014:184).

Although Primakov denied restoring a Eurasian union in the USSR's image was his plan; 'of course, here we are not talking about the revival of the Soviet Union in its previous form', he simultaneously called for 'strengthening the centripetal tendencies among the countries of the former USSR' (Laurenzo, 1996). This would be achieved via the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which is just one of the regional institutions Moscow has used to facilitate the establishment of its envisioned multipolar system (Salzman, 2019:12-13).

When it was denied access to NATO and the EU, Moscow's response was to claim that joining these institutions would not be a good fit for Russia anyway because to join these institutions would be to accept a loss of sovereignty and subsume its unique identity to ensure group consensus and unanimity which these clubs are based upon (Jowitt, 2010:15). Russia responded by creating its own challenger Eurasian institutions (Salzman, 2019:1-2). These regional clubs in contrast would enable Russia to behave according to its true, Eurasian identity and interests. Thus, instead of seeking to join the Western

institutions, Russia attempts to make them share power in the international system. This is partly about shifting the balance of power and ending unipolarity (Stronski and Sokolsky, 2020:3), but is to a large extent about challenging the primacy of the Western values these organisations are built upon by offering an equal competitor. Regional organisations such as the CIS, the EEU, CSTO and SCO legitimise the rejection of liberal democratic values in favour of Eurasian integration (Obydenkova and Libman, 2016:19-20), where cooperation takes places in accordance with shared Eurasian historical and cultural norms, while justifying Russia's position at the top of these organisations, to be of equal parity with the US, EU and China (Penkova, 2019:46-47). Eurasianism in turn normalises these organisations' values, making them a valid alternative to Western organisations.

Announced in 1991, the CIS was a substitute for the Soviet Union, a loose confederation in the former Soviet space made up by the majority of ex-Soviet states (Donaldson et al., 2014:159-160). At this time, the CIS was used more as a stepping stone to facilitate members' orderly transition from interdependent to independent given the complexity of this process (Nygren, 2010:13). However, the CIS was also a tool Russia had its disposal to retain authority over its neighbours and thus the former Soviet space should it need to (Donaldson et al., 2014:160). When its attempt to join the West failed, Moscow turned to the CIS to facilitate its formation of a Eurasian bloc (Smith, 1999:488-489). To evidence this shift in thinking, in 1991, Yeltsin described Russia in the CIS as being '…an equal among equals' (Dobbs, 1991) yet in 1994, Yeltsin now claimed Russia was a '…'first among equals'…' (Allison, 2013:122).

In late 1995, Yeltsin laid out his plans to make the CIS 'an economicallyand [sic] politically integrated alliance of states capable of achievinga [sic] worthy place in world society', with Russia becoming '*the leading power in the formationof* [sic] *a new system of inter-state political and economic relationsover* [sic] *the territory of the post-Soviet expanse*' (Mihalisko, 1995). In support of this, Primakov (1996:13-14) said that:

> We stand for the voluntary integration and unification of the members of the Commonwealth…and we shall ensure, that the CIS will become an important centre of world economic development and international stability.

Additionally, in 1997, Andrei Koshokin, a prominent figure in Russia's Defence and Security ministries proclaimed:

> Russia's security will be decided to a great extent by the process of the reintegration of the former Soviet Union. The social, cultural, geopolitical, and even historical prerequisites for the strengthening of this process already exist (Blank, 1999:705).

As a formal institution, the CIS would insulate Eurasian states from the West imposing perceived universal values on to them, by endorsing Eurasian ideational values, that in turn best ensure state sovereignty and non-interference (Podberezkin and Podberezkina, 2015:47). Primakov used the example of CIS Central Asian member states to illustrate how forcing liberal democracy on these states was unsuitable, which he then extrapolated to other ex-Soviet states; 'democratic process is taking place in Central Asia too. Maybe not at such a rapid pace, but that, it seems to me, is only natural', however 'forcing the pace does not always lead to good results, even in other parts of the former Soviet Union' (Bransten, 1996).

Putin also sought to stop ex-Soviet states in its sphere of interest adopting liberal democratic values and thus joining the West by consolidating Russian authority of this region based on traditional values and thus prevent external Western influence (Suny, 2007:67-70). Putin looked to achieve this through the CIS. In 2004, Putin said that the CIS states 'are now working to restore what was lost with the fall of the Soviet Union but are doing it on a new, modern basis', with Putin later proclaiming that 'Russia is the very center of Eurasia' (Torbakov, 2004). Consequently, with '…Russia, bound to the former Soviet republics – now independent countries – through a common history, and through the Russian language and the great culture that we share', '…Russia should continue its civilising mission on the Eurasian continent' (Putin, 2005a).

Ultimately, the CIS was not the success Putin had wanted it to be. The reasons for this include it being too structurally inefficient, members increasingly pursuing independent, asymmetrical policies, while the gravitational pull of the Western institutions EU and NATO proved strong (Šleivytė, 2010:52,64-66). Recognising this, Putin (2005d) said:

> All the disappointments come from having had too high expectations. If someone was expecting some particular achievements from the CIS in, say, the economy, in political or military cooperation and so on, it is clear that this was not going to happen because it could not happen. The stated aims were one thing, but in reality

> the CIS was formed in order to make the Soviet Union's collapse as civilised and smooth as possible and to minimise the economic and humanitarian losses it entailed…

In turn, Putin channeled his efforts into the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). The EEU was founded by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, with Armenia and Kyrgyzstan later joining (Kirkham, 2016:111). The transition from the CIS to the EEU was a long time in the making. Using Eurasianism, Putin (2011) explains Russia's path from the failed CIS to the EEU:

> The road to this milestone was difficult and often torturous. It began two decades ago when the Commonwealth of Independent States was established after the Soviet Union's collapse. To all intents and purposes, the selected model helped preserve the myriad of ties, both of civilisation and culture, which unite our peoples…

Similarly to the CIS, Putin hoped that Russia would become the centre of this leading, regional, integrated bloc (Vasilyeva and Lagutina, 2016:139-140); Russia was '… to become a leader and centre of gravity for the whole of Eurasia' (Putin, 2012d). To challenge the West, Putin attempted to construct the Russian led EEU as Russia's answer, and equivalent to the US led West and China led Asia (Mankoff, 2017:340):

> Eurasian integration is a chance for the entire post-Soviet space to become an independent centre for global development, rather than remaining on the outskirts of Europe and Asia (Putin, 2013a).

In turn the EEU was designed to challenge the EU's dominance in the former Soviet space, with Putin hopeful that the EEU, which Russia could be a full member of, would become the EU's equal (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:223). Envisioning the EEU as '…a powerful supranational association capable of becoming one of the poles in the modern world…' Putin sought '…a partnership between the Eurasian Union and EU', '…the two largest associations on our continent – the European Union and the Eurasian Union currently under construction' (Putin, 2011).

When formulating the ideational basis of the EEU, Putin rejected Western liberal democratic values in favour of making the EEU a protector of traditional, Eurasian values

(Piet, 2014; Yılmaz, 2020:215): '…none of this entails any kind of revival of the Soviet Union…these times call for close integration based on new values and a new political and economic foundation' (Putin, 2011). In turn, Putin hoped that the EEU would counter the EU's value system that it was ever increasingly imposing on former Soviet states (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:223):

> The Eurasian Union is a project for maintaining the identity of nations in the historical Eurasian space in a new century and in a new world…I want to stress that Eurasian integration will also be built on the principle of diversity. This is a union where everyone maintains their identity, their distinctive character and their political independence (Putin, 2013a).

This is part of Moscow's policy to promote a Eurasianist civilisational discourse to legitimise its challenge to the supposed universalism of Western democratic values and thus compete against Western dominance of the international system (Silvius, 2017:1-2). To achieve this, Putin lays out the civilisational differences between Russia and the West to facilitate the necessity of a multipolar world through the EEU to defend the unique Eurasian civilisation and Eurasian states' sovereignty, against Western encroachment which attempts to force upon them foreign cultural beliefs and practices (Silvius, 2017:85).

To compete against NATO, the West's dominant military alliance, Russia formed a Eurasian military alliance, the CSTO (Cooley, 2012:57,72). Eurasian identity informs various dimensions of the CSTO such as its geographical scope and its stated values. The Collective Security Treaty was established via the CIS in 1992, before becoming a military organisation under Putin in 2002 (Van Herpen, 2015:68). The CSTO's founding members were '…Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan…Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Arme-nia [sic]. Uzbekistan joined in 2006' (Van Herpen, 2015:68).

Eurasianism shapes CSTO values through civilisational affinity (Allison, 2018:312). Comprised of non-Western, non-liberal states, CSTO members share a rejection of Western liberal values, using the CSTO's collective security pact to protect against this threat militarily (Allison, 2018:298-299). While ideationally, the CSTO:

> …is used explicitly to support norms deemed in opposition or at least in tension with liberalism, including sovereignty and non-interference, regime security, civilizational [sic] diversity, and "traditional values" (Cooley and Nexon, 2020:52).

Thus, in contrast to NATO which pools states' sovereignty together, the CSTO reinforces state sovereignty, and unlike the interdependent nature of NATO decision making, the CSTO supports members' autonomy (Allison, 2018:309).

Russia has sought to construct the CSTO as a leading international organisation that can play a key role alongside NATO in pan-European security architecture (Mankoff, 2012a:257). In 2005, Putin said that the CSTO '…has established itself at the highest level as an organisation that plays an independent stabilising role in the global, and above all regional, security system', using the '…CSTO being granted observer status in the UN General Assembly…' to justify this (Putin, 2005e). Furthermore, in 2008, Medvedev outlined '…the main organisations in Europe…that is to say, NATO, the European Union, the CIS and the CSTO' (Medvedev, 2008d). While officially each member has a role at the decision making table, Russia is the authoritative figure in the organisation (Torjesen, 2009:184). Indeed, Moscow envisions the CSTO as NATO's equal, with Russia obtaining an unofficial leadership role in the CSTO, comparable to that of the US in NATO (Bugajski, 2010:98). To illustrate the parity between the CSTO and NATO, Medvedev compared the CSTO Rapid-Reaction Force as 'adequate in size, effective, armed with the most modern weapons, and…on a par with NATO forces' (Felgenhauer, 2009).

However, the CSTO is not the success Russia hoped it would be. Russia failed to attain NATO recognition of the CSTO as its equal (Bugajski, 2008:139), with the West unwilling to grant this level of parity (Mankoff, 2012a:257). For example, following NATO's refusal to consider CSTO its co-equal regarding operations in Afghanistan, Lavrov (2012) exclaimed that 'I think the point is that they do not want to consider CSTO as an equal to North Atlantic Treaty Organization'. Problematic for Russian ambitions for the CSTO is that members such as Belarus are reluctant to fully engage with the organisation as they are concerned about the degree of Russian dominance of the organisation (Mankoff, 2012a:259). Moreover, fundamental to the organisation is Article 4 (similar to NATO's Article 5) which says that an attack on one is an attack on all (Collective Security Treaty, 1992, 2005:10). Deeply damaging to the organisation's credibility was in 2010 when Russia refused to send CSTO troops to Kyrgyzstan despite being called upon by the

Kyrgyz leader to help quell ethnic conflict in the country, calling in to question Russia's commitment to the CSTO's Article 4 (Mankoff, 2012a:259).

Another overtly Eurasianist organisation is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

> …Founded in Shanghai on 15 June 2001. The SCO currently comprises eight Member States (China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), four Observer States interested in acceding to full membership (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia) and…In 2021, the decision was made to start the accession process of Iran to the SCO as a full member… (UN, no date).

The SCO is emblematic of Moscow's rejection of the Western civilisational model and Western intervention based on liberal norms, with Moscow using Eurasianism to legitimise the formation of the SCO in the Eurasian space to counter the West (Šleivytė, 2010:83-84). The SCO is predicated on challenging Western liberal values and the policies this manifests itself in Eurasia, such as democracy promotion in the former Soviet states, with the SCO legitimising non-Western, traditional values as a valid alternative (Allison, 2018:309-310). As Uzbekistan President Karimov said at the 2006 SCO summit, 'we have common aims to counter resolutely external attempts to impose Western methods of democratisation and public development on our countries' (Allison, 2018:321). Consequently, the SCO attempts to normalise respect for member states' sovereignty and traditional civilisational values (Jackson, 2012:112-113):

> …the organisation has already earned itself an influential place and speaks with a confident voice on the international stage…it offers a partnership model based on genuine equality between all participants, mutual trust, mutual respect for each people's sovereign and independent choice, and for each country's culture, values, traditions, and desire for common development. This philosophy best embodies what I consider to be the only viable principles for international relations in a multipolar world (Putin, 2012e).

The SCO is thus emblematic of the international system Russia seeks to create. A multipolar system, with two equally respected value systems. For status purposes, the SCO is used by Russia to promote its concept of a multipolar world, prevent US and NATO

influence in Central Asia and symbolically show Russia to be a major international power on the world stage (Stronski and Sokolsky, 2020:15-16,20).

The SCO overlaps with BRICS, with Russia, China and India members of both (Stronski and Sokolsky, 2020:15). BRICS gets its name from the first letter of each member state; Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. BRICS legitimises Russia's great power status claims because it places itself as an equal alongside major powers such as the increasingly powerful China and India, giving Russia a role in shaping the future international order whilst counteracting US unipolarity (Sergunin, 2017:64). Putin called BRICS '…a striking symbol of the transition from a unipolar world to a more just world order' (Putin, 2012b). BRICS is also built on the principles of this Eurasianist challenger approach. BRICS is designed to challenge the primacy of Western values to demonstrate that there are alternative civilisations which have alternative values that are of equal worth to the West's and thus should be acknowledged as such by the West (Bianchini and Fiori, 2020:7); 'Russia believes that BRICS must be positioned as a new model of relations…' (Medvedev, 2012b).

A key institution Russia highly values during its challenger approach is the UN, because of its UN Security Council seat it inherited from the Soviet Union. This authoritative position gives Russia a primary role in international collective decision making (Levgold, 2009:27). This legitimises Russia's equal status amongst the major powers at the top of the international system (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:233). As the Security Council format is predicated on a small group of top ranking states governing the international order amongst themselves (Larson and Shevchenko, 2019:5), the Security Council embodies Russia's vision of multipolarity (Tsygankov, 2019a:104); 'The Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace' (Primakov, 1996:16). Ideationally, this UN Security Council seat is so important because it gives China and Russia equality with the major Western powers even though they are non-Western powers and have non-Western values.

Crucially, with this seat comes the ability to veto any decisions Russia does not like (Smith, 2012:57). This is important because it provides a legitimate means for Russia to restrict US foreign intervention (Tsygankov, 2019a:104). Many times Moscow utilises this veto tool alongside Beijing to push back against Western interference abroad, which they see as a violation of state sovereignty based on liberal norms (Cox, 2018:335); 'Russia and China

attach great importance to cooperation within multilateral formats, including the UN, G20, BRICS, the SCO and the Russia-India-China trilateral format (RIC)…' (Lavrov, 2014).

This is why Moscow feels so aggrieved when the West circumvents the UN and therefore sidelines Russia to conduct unilateral foreign intervention. Following NATO intervention in Yugoslavia, Yeltsin (1995:18) said that 'Russia is concerned at the situation in which, as has recently been the case in Bosnia, the Security Council was relegated to the sidelines of events', with it being '…inadmissible for a regional organization [sic] to take decisions on the massive use of force, bypassing the Security Council'. Primakov followed this stating 'we believe that actions involving force should be carried out solely when authorized [sic] by the Security Council and under its direct supervision…' (Primakov, 1997:19). In 2005, Putin criticised the US's decision to invade Iraq without UN approval, saying that '….it is the United Nations and its Security Council that must be the main centre for coordinating international cooperation in the fight against terrorism…' (Putin, 2005f:4). Following the 2011 NATO airstrikes in Libya against the Gaddafi regime and fearing a similar Western response to Moscow's Syrian ally the Assad regime, Putin warned the West not to repeat their decision:

> I very much hope the United States and other countries take this sad experience into account and do not try to set a military scenario in motion in Syria without sanction from the U.N. Security Council (Gutterman, 2012).

A key part of Moscow's challenger approach is to push back against Western liberal intervention in its near aboard, which it counters with Eurasianism. The primary examples being 1999 Yugoslavia, 2008 Georgia and 2014 Ukraine. Regarding Yugoslavia, having learned from its experiences of NATO's airstrikes in 1995, in 1998 Russia vetoed a UN resolution on action against the Serbian Milošević regime while it rejected any NATO intervention in Kosovo (Heller, 2014:336). However, the West would go ahead regardless of Russian objections. As US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said, 'if force is required, then we will not be deterred by the fact that the Russians do not agree with that' (Simes, 1998). In 1999, NATO began a bombing campaign in Yugoslavia without UN approval (Heller, 2014:337). The West's actions showed Moscow that Washington did not consider it an equal (Heller, 2014:334). Russia was excluded from the decision making process before hand, while during the intervention itself Russia was not afforded its own peacekeeping area of Kosovo to manage but could only work under NATO command

(Forsberg, 2014:327). So desperate was Russia to have some form of role in the conflict resolution that Yeltsin sent a troop contingent to Kosovo's Pristina airport a day before NATO troops had arrived (Wintour and Traynor, 1999). As explained by Russian General Leonid Ivashov, military representative to NATO who played a role in the operation, Russian action was 'first and foremost for the prestige of the country [...] We defended our right and our interests' (Heller, 2014:340). The action forced the West to consider Russia, with President Clinton and his officials having little choice but to negotiate with Yeltsin and his team to resolve the issue (Whitehouse and Black, 1999). However, ultimately, by the West bypassing the UN and thus Russia's opinion, Moscow believed that the US had rejected Russia's major power status assertion (Allison, 2013:69; Heller, 2014:341).

Russian intervention was normalised by Eurasianism. While Primakov never publicly declared his support of Eurasianism, his policies heavily align with Eurasianist beliefs (Clover, 1999:10). In Yugoslavia, Primakov sought to defend '…one of Russia's historical allies and co-religionists in Serbia' (Ambrosio, 2001:50). As famous political thinker Aleksandr Dugin (cited in Clover, 1999:13) explains:

> Primakov's policy is Eurasianist policy…orientation towards the East, helping traditional friends like Serbia, strengthening the integration of the former Soviet Union. This is Eurasianism, the policy of the heartland.

Looking through a Eurasianist lens, Moscow rejected the liberal democratic basis of NATO air strikes by challenging the ideational basis of forcing foreign Western values on a non-Western, Slavic, Orthodox state and a historical ally of Russia, calling for non-interference and respect for Serbian sovereignty (Medvedev, 1999). Yeltsin described NATO air strikes as having '…trampled upon the foundations of international law and the United Nations charter', 'the world has seen another attempt to establish the dictatorship of force. Russia resolutely rejects such an approach' (Myre, 1999).

In a similar manner to Yugoslavia, Russian action in Georgia can be understood as Russia both protecting and illustrating its great power status. NATO enlargement is seen by Russian officials as undermining Russia's perceived great power status (Forsberg, 2014:326). Consequently, with the "colour revolutions" still fresh in Russian minds, the promise of future NATO and potential EU membership for Georgia, in an area of Russia's perceived sphere of influence proved too much for Russia (Asmus, 2010:217-218); 'as the

saying goes, if there is a gun hanging on the wall in scene one in a theatrical play, it is bound to shoot in the final act' (Medvedev 2013). Understood as part of the West's '… political and psychological policy of "containing" [sic] Russia…' (FPC, 2008), Russia would now push back against perceived Western containment (Asmus, 2010:218). As Medvedev said; '[W]e will not tolerate any more humiliation, and we are not joking' (Tsygankov, 2012:236). In turn, Russian action in Georgia was seen as Russia being forced to respond to protect its major power status (March, 2011:202), against a belligerent Georgia, being used as a tool by the West (March, 2011:194). Russian success in the war was seen as Russia reasserting its great power-ness (Forsberg, 2014:328).

The identity construct Medvedev and Putin used to legitimise Russian involvement in Georgia and Ukraine is Eurasianism. Eurasianist civilisational discourse had been building domestically in Russia prior to Medvedev's Presidency, with Russian action in Georgia demonstrating that it had spilled over to the foreign policy realm (March, 2011:188-189). Russian discourse constructed the Russian response to Georgia through civilisational language, with Georgia part of a single Eurasian space, with Lavrov speaking of a 'civilisational unity' existing between ex-Soviet states (Trenin, 2009:3-4). The West did little to discourage this civilisational rhetoric. The EU constructed its Eastern Partnership Program as a "civilisational choice" for ex-Soviet states, between joining either European civilisation or Eurasian civilisation (Larson and Shevchenko, 2014:276). Recognising this, Russia's 2008 Foreign Policy Concept claimed:

> …global competition is acquiring a civilizational [sic] dimension which suggests competition between different value systems and development models within the framework of universal democratic and market economy principles (FPC, 2008).

Indeed, 'as the constraints of the bipolar confrontation are being overcome, the cultural and civilizational [sic] diversity of the modern world is increasingly in evidence' (FPC, 2008). This civilisational narrative was used by Russian officials to rationalise their pursuit of Russia's great power status (Zevelev, 2015:145).

Following the same premise as Yugoslavia and Georgia, Russian action in the 2014 Ukraine Crisis and in Crimea should not be misunderstood as Russian revanchism, but instead, Russia seeking to ensure that its ability to project great power status remains intact (Larson and Shevchenko, 2014:270), because Ukraine is pivotal to Russia's great

power identity (Clunan, 2014:289). Russian action in Ukraine is considered a response to the US's failure to treat Russia as a great power, with Russian action seen as reasserting its power and authority in its sphere of influence against the perceived threat of NATO expansion (Roberts, 2017:38-39,41). According to Putin (2015a), '…the post-Soviet states were forced to face a false choice between joining the West and carrying on with the East. Sooner or later, this logic of confrontation was bound to spark off a major geopolitical crisis'. Putin used historical experience to position this as a recurring historical theme (Zevelev, 2016:10); 'We have every reason to assume that the infamous policy of containment, led in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, continues today' (Putin, 2014c). In Russian eyes, this was a policy designed to prevent Russia from realising its great power aspirations (Oliker et al., 2015:6).

Similarly to Georgia in 2008, Russian involvement in Ukraine can be seen as Russia, having failed through diplomatic means to receive US respect for its great power status, resorting to military force to achieve its objectives (Roberts, 2017:42); 'Russia found itself in a position it could not retreat from. If you compress the spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard' (Putin, 2014c). Russia achieved its goal in preventing Georgia and Ukraine being admitted into NATO for the time being, while Russia stood up to the West, and asserted its power (Roberts, 2017:42). For example, when discussing Russian action in Georgia, in 2011 Medvedev told Russian troops that 'If you...had faltered back in 2008, the geopolitical situation would be different now', 'and a number of countries which (NATO) tried to deliberately drag into the alliance, would have most likely already been part of it now' (Dyomkin, 2011).

Using historical memory, Putin tapped into Eurasianism to legitimise Russian foreign policy in Ukraine (Galeotti and Bowen, 2014; Ziegler, 2016:556,560). Eurasianism is heavily informed by Slavic ideologies, emphasising the importance of ethnic Slavs to Eurasia, with their distinctness needed to be protected against Western influence (Pizzolo, 2020:46). With Ukraine a key part of Eurasian civilisation, the prospect of Ukraine no longer being a part of this presented a significant threat to Russian identity and status (Clunan, 2014:289). Putin described Russians and Ukrainians as '…one people. Kiev is the mother of Russian cities. Ancient Rus is our common source and we cannot live without each other' (Putin, 2014c). In the same speech, Putin spoke of '…the culture, civilisation and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus' (Putin, 2014c). With Ukraine so intrinsic to Eurasia, the anti-Western discursive response exhibited by

Moscow to Western influence in Ukraine is considered a natural reaction, regurgitating a pre-existing perception of a Western threat against Russia (Urnov, 2014:312); ‘We understand that these actions were aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integration’, ‘…NATO remains a military alliance, and we are against having a military alliance making itself at home right in our backyard or in our historic territory’, ‘And with Ukraine, our western partners have crossed the line, playing the bear and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally’ (Putin, 2014c). Overall, Russia’s response to Ukraine can be understood as Putin using Eurasianism to justify Russian intervention in its sphere of influence (Ziegler, 2016:555-556).

Russian discourse legitimised the annexation of Crimea by using historical memory of Crimea previously belonging to Russia, tapping in to a civilisational identity construct of both belonging to the same group (Freire, 2018:799-800); ‘In people’s hearts and minds, Crimea has always been an inseparable part of Russia’ (Putin, 2014c). Russia understands Crimea as being ethnically and culturally Russian, momentarily detached from its homeland which Russia needs to restore (Roberts, 2017:40); ‘It was only when Crimea ended up as part of a different country that Russia realised that it was not simply robbed, it was plundered’ (Putin, 2014c).

In conclusion, on three separate occasions Russia has sought to challenge the West. This involves challenging the Western pole’s dominant position in the existing international system by creating an equal, Eurasian alternative. To normalise this approach, Russia adopts a Eurasian identity and interests. Russia draws upon its unique Slavic-Asian heritage to distance itself from the West, highlighting that as a unique Eurasian state, Russia is the centre, and leader of a Eurasian pole. In this authoritative position, Russia assumes the former Soviet space as its sphere of influence. To legitimise this identity and interests construct, Russia outlines a Eurasian value system it seeks to obtain Western recognition of as equal worth to the Western liberal value system. However, Russia fails to attain Western acknowledgment of Eurasia as the West’s equal with an equal value system, or that Russia has a privileged, authoritative role of the former Soviet space. The first two challenger approaches ended with a change in Russian leader, and Russia reverting back to an attempt to join the West.

However, the 2014 Ukraine crisis signalled an all but breakdown of the Euro-Atlantic post-Cold War order (Sakwa, 2017:1). The West failed to accord Russia the equal status in

pan-European and international decision making it sought, and in its place Putin begun a qualitatively new approach towards the West (Sakwa, 2017:1,16-18), a disruptor approach.

Chapter Five

Disrupting the West

A discourse analysis of Russian primary sources and primary sources in secondary texts, supported by secondary sources illustrates that from 2014 onwards, in comparison to joining the West or competing against it, Moscow now pursues a disruptor approach targeted at the West (Stoner, 2021:4). Joining the West involves becoming part of the international system's pre-existing authoritative group by accepting the rules of the club to attain admission. This means adopting Western liberal democratic norms, sacrificing national identity, sovereignty and self-determination to be a part of an elevated, privileged group that conducts decision making amongst itself. Challenging the West concerns shifting the balance of power away from the West to create an equitable, multipolar system with Russia head of the Eurasian pole in line with the US at the head of the Western pole. Doing so means ideationally challenging the primacy of Western liberal values in Russia's sphere of influence by installing a competing value system of equal worth which the West must recognise. The key difference between this disruptor approach and the challenging approach is that whereas challenging is about focusing on offering a suitable alternative to compete against the West, the disruptor approach is fixated on undermining the West itself by attacking the West at its liberal democratic foundation.

Russia can thus be understood as a revisionist power focused on dismantling the Western led liberal internationalist order (Kirchick, 2017). Russia no longer seeks to work within the existing international system to either join or challenge the West but instead seeks to destabilise the existing international system (Fish et al., 2017:96) to not only destroy the US led Western international order (Jasper, 2018:95), but undermine the ideational values this order is built on (Eltchaninoff, 2019). As Vladislav Surkov, Putin's advisor and chief ideological architect explains:

> Foreign politicians talk about Russia's interference in elections and referendums around the world. In fact, the matter is even more serious: Russia interferes in your brains, we change your conscience, and there is nothing you can do about it (Maza, 2019).

This has been the dominant Russian policy since 2014 and continues to the present day. Putin has remained as President throughout this time, with his most recent election win coming in 2018 meaning he remains in power until at least 2024.

Russia's status aspirations in this approach comes in two stages. In the short term, while the disruption is taking place, Russia continues to seek acknowledgement of its great power status from the dominant West as an influential power (Shevtsova, 2021; Stoner, 2021:4-5). By disrupting the international system, Moscow shows the West that it can have just as much of an influence in international issues, giving Russia a global reach comparable to the US and China (Lo, 2020:315). Russia forces its way into international decision making discussions through a bold, unpredictable foreign policy that upends Western policy and does not conform to the typical "rules of the game", giving the West little option but to involve Russia in international conflict resolutions (Shevtsova, 2021). As Apps (2021) explains, '…Russia's misbehaviour in recent years has achieved exactly what Moscow wanted: to be treated as a "great power", equal on its own terms with the United States and China'. In other words, Russia recognises that it cannot be the US's equal in terms of power, yet it can still be treated as a major international actor by disrupting Western policy (Lo, 2020:310,315,318). Thus, the short term goal remains the desire to be involved in global decision making and have Russian interests considered (Bolt and Cross, 2018:39-40):

> …we have a sincere desire to take part in resolving global and regional problems… unlike some of our colleagues abroad, who consider Russia an adversary, we do not seek and never have sought enemies. We need friends. But we will not allow our interests to be infringed upon or ignored (Putin, 2016a).

The ultimate status aspiration is what comes when the liberal international order is destroyed. With its liberal democratic values system demolished, the once privileged West will be broken apart, no longer the united community it was and no longer the dominant force in the international system (Kirchick, 2017). Russia will therefore no longer require Western acknowledgement of great power status as the latter will no longer be in a privileged position, able to award status to others. The world will return to a system of pluralistic values, unique to each state, safe from Western interference (Kirchick, 2017). States will now interact according to common security interests and not "universal" liberal

democratic values (Kirchick, 2017). Consequently, Russian action will be unconstrained from external liberal democratic criteria once unilaterally imposed by the West (Kirchick, 2017):

> Leaders with a sense of responsibility must now make their choice. I hope that this choice will be made in favour of building a democratic and fair world order, a post-West world order, if you will, in which each country, on the basis of its sovereignty in the framework of international law, will strive to balance their own national interests with those of their partners, with respect for each country's cultural, historical and civilisational identity (Lavrov, 2017a).

At times this policy can seem chaotic and disjointed. This is because this policy is based on opportunism, with Russia pouncing on openings created by international situations and hesitation by the West to undermine the West, catching it off-guard (Gurganus and Rumer, 2019:2); 'Fifty years ago, I learnt one rule in the streets of Leningrad: if the fight is inevitable, be the first to strike' (Putin, 2015b). This disruptor approach is a low-cost affair, using a variety of unconventional tools such as disinformation campaigns to undermine Western powers, all for the overarching goal of attaining great power status recognition (Galeotti, 2017:8-9). As one former Russian diplomat is claimed to have said:

> Listen: we engage in foreign policy the way we engage in war, with every means, every weapon, every drop of blood. But like in war, we depend on both the strategy of the general in the High Command, and the bravery and initiative of the soldier in the trench (Galeotti, 2017:1).

Due to the nature of this work, Moscow does not readily admit responsibility for these actions (Galeotti, 2017:9):

> …they [the US] continue to churn out threats, imaginary and mythical threats such as the 'Russian military threat'. This is a profitable business that can be used to pump new money into defence budgets at home, get allies to bend to a single superpower's interests, expand NATO and bring its infrastructure, military units and arms closer to our borders. Of course, it can be a pleasing and even profitable task to portray oneself as the defender of civilisation against the new barbarians. The only thing is

> that Russia has no intention of attacking anyone. This is all quite absurd (Putin, 2016b).

However, there is enough evidence to corroborate the argument that Russia uses subversion which operates at one remove from the President, yet follows Putin's guidance (Galeotti, 2017:9-10). The closest we come from official Presidential discourse is Putin asserting that '…Russia will always find a way to defend its stance' (Putin, 2021b), yet does not get drawn into the specifics. This is because whilst using these tactics, for his policy plan to be successful, Putin does not want to isolate Russia completely. Instead, in the short term, Putin is careful to toe a line between a destabilising action yet pursue a counter rhetoric of seeking cooperation in conflict resolution and thus attain a seat at the decision making table when resolving these issues (Lo, 2018).

The primary target of the disruptor approach is liberal internationalism. Liberal internationalism is the doctrine underpinning the US led liberal order (Ikenberry, 2011:xi). It can be defined as '…U.S. power plus international cooperation…' (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2007:7). Prior to 1945, the US acted according to either power calculations or multilateralism, though never together (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2007:10). Post-World War II, through liberal internationalism the US would now do both, combining US power and partnership with the wider Western community (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2007:8,10). Liberal internationalism incorporates principles and norms from both realism and liberalism (Ikenberry, 2020a:137). As an evolving doctrine, what liberal internationalism represents has shifted over time (Ikenberry, 2020a:137). Liberal internationalism's progressiveness means that it adapts to new social norms over time by incorporating modern views, for example the protection of civil liberties and minority rights (Ikenberry, 2020b:xiii,18). The international order created by liberal internationalism was built on the principles of the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia (Ikenberry, 2011:xii). The key elements of this Westphalian order were state sovereignty and autonomy, non-interference and sovereign equality (Harris, 2015). Importantly, this order accepted plural value systems (Harris, 2015).

However, liberal internationalism was built on this Westphalian system to construct a liberal order, transcending the norms of this system (Ikenberry, 2011:xi-xiii). Informed by its unique historical experience (Ikenberry, 2020a:139), the West mitigated Westphalian principles with liberal values it placed on top of them (Harris, 2015). Western domestic liberal values were extrapolated internationally, to become the global system's ordering

principles, espoused by, and led by, the dominant US (Ikenberry, 2011:7; Hoffman, 1995:160). Principle amongst these values were ‘free trade, democratic government, national self-determination, adherence to international law, respect for human rights…’ (Harris, 2015). To facilitate the spread of these values, the US constructed a normative, rule-based, liberal democratic international order, which it would preside over (Ikenberry, 2011:2). These rules concern states behaving according to perceived “universal”, liberal democratic principles, both internationally and domestically (Ikenberry, 2020a:138). This altered international norms of what is deemed acceptable international and domestic state behaviour (Harris, 2015). This includes a respect for human rights, abiding by international law and having liberal democratic governance (Jahn, 2018:48).

With liberal internationalism a combination of US power and liberal beliefs (Ikenberry, 2011:7), it is here we find the tension inherent in the ideology between realism and liberalism (Ikenberry, 2011:xiv). The realist side of liberal internationalism is found in US power being instrumental in securing and enforcing the system, thus making it the ordering principle of the international system (Ikenberry, 2011:7,35). The liberal aspect is the norms and regulatory rules the US created to check its behaviour and provide the ideological framework to cooperate with others (Ikenberry, 2011:7). In other words, the US voluntarily constrains itself, while working with fellow liberal nations to problem solve through negotiation and compromise as opposed to using brute force (Ikenberry, 2011:37). Together, US power and liberal rule-based norms are mutually constitutive because they legitimise and support one another (Ikenberry, 2011:xv).

The key features of the liberal internationalist order are ‘…co-binding security institutions, penetrated American hegemony, semi-sovereign great powers, economic openness, and civic identity (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999:179);

In terms of its security structure, liberal internationalism is characterised by mutual interdependence, collective security and decision making, conducted predominantly within international organisations such as NATO (Ikenberry, 2011:100). When forming organisations such as NATO, member states voluntarily commit themselves to legally binding obligations and a loss of autonomy (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999:183). A key component of liberal internationalism is collective security (Smith, 2017:12). This is the willingness of states to come to each other’s defence in times of need, with NATO’s Article 5 the primary example (Smith, 2017:12). NATO embodies liberal internationalism because

as a US led Western alliance (Ikenberry, 2011:111), NATO policy reflects and thus legitimises US foreign policy (Humpal, 2020).

As liberal internationalism's chief architect, leader and arbiter, the US enjoys a unique privileged status in this international order and the reason this system functions so successfully is because of US power (Ikenberry, 2011:2). Western nations consent to US primacy because the US provides them with military and economic security by stabilising the international system (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2007:8; Ikenberry, 2011:2-3). In this trade off, the US attains Western nations' support for its leadership and foreign policy (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2007:8). However, while the US retains ultimate control, US hegemony is diluted to an extent by the US accepting constraints on its autonomy, being bound by rules, and sharing decision making power, which in turn fosters greater legitimacy of this order (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999:185-186). As evidenced during the Cold War, the Western community under the leadership of the US cooperated successfully against the external Soviet threat (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2007:15). Post-Cold war, in the absence of an external communist USSR counterpoint, liberal internationalism expanded from a US led Western system to a US led global order (Ikenberry, 2011:3,8).

Liberal internationalism is characterised by the readiness of subordinate states to surrender a degree of sovereignty to attain US support. Following the Allies' defeat of the Axis alliance in WWII, the victorious powers allocated Germany and Japan semi-sovereignty, denying them the full attributes that come with full sovereignty (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999:187-188). For example they were forced to adopt a defensive foreign policy (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999:188-189). Instead of punishing them, with US support these states were integrated into '…political, security, and economic institutions' (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999:188). For example, the IMF and World Bank. Based on geographical proximity to fellow liberal nations, German institutional integration has been more extensive than Japanese (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999:189). In Europe, through the EU, Germany and other members such as France subsume national sovereignty to an autonomous supranational organisation (Ikenberry, 2011:18). US approved organisations such as this facilitate extensive cooperation between members, creating state interdependence (Ikenberry, 2011:185).

Economically, liberal internationalism follows a policy of an open market (Jean, 2013:1,3). Core to the liberal internationalist economic model is economic interdependence between

states, with this fostered and managed by a select few, elite quasi-autonomous economic institutions such as the IMF (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2007:16). Intertwined with liberal internationalism is globalisation (Kundnani, 2017). Globalisation has led to Western nations becoming increasingly intertwined, fusing societies together, diluting nationalism in the process to form a shared Western identity (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999:194). Financially, liberal internationalism is built on the global capitalist order, with the US economy at its core and the US dollar the global reserve currency (Ikenberry, 2020b:184).

Instrumental to the endurance and extension of liberal internationalism is its shared liberal value system, as this enables extensive cooperation and unity between these nations (Ikenberry, 2020b:18). This value system being predicated on member states' democratic political systems and virtuous democratic principles, and members agreeing also to be bound by the rules they impose on others, makes the liberal internationalist rule based international order and institutions sustainable and legitimate (Ikenberry, 2011:81; Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999:182,193).

Liberal internationalism's primary objective is best explained in US President Woodrow Wilson's famous words 'the world must be made safe for democracy' (Ikenberry, 2020b:xi; Wilson, 1917). Wilson's concept is understood as the US promoting liberal values as the only legitimate model, so that the global system becomes made up of only like-minded, democratic states (Ikenberry, 2020b:xi-xii). In other words, the US perceive their values as universal, and want everyone to be like them and share these values (Griffiths, 2011:26). According to this line of thought, the more democratic states there are, the less likelihood of war, because democracies do not go to war with each other (Smith, 2017:10). Instead, they resolve their differences through peaceful means on the basis of shared values (Smith, 2017:10). Foreign states would be inclined to abandon any form of undemocratic style of rule, and adopt a liberal democratic system of governance, one that serves the people (Hoffmann, 1995:160-161).

Liberal internationalism's evolving norms have shifted its position on the inviolability of state sovereignty. This is due to liberal internationalism's honouring the existence of a social contract, whereby the state rules on behalf of the people's interests who consent to their governance through self-determination (Jönsson, 2014:113). While recognising state sovereignty, liberal internationalism's adherence to the social contract means that liberal internationalism contains a tension, because non-Western, illiberal states who fail to meet

this social contract can have their sovereignty breached (Barnett, 2017:332-333). This is because sovereignty can be infringed upon, should it fail to meet Western status recognition criteria such as ruling by legitimate consent on behalf of the citizen (Barnett, 2017:333).

In being concerned with the individual over the collective, liberal internationalism privileges the protection of individuals' human rights, with this the primary responsibility of both state and international institutions (Griffiths, 2011:19-20). As enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights charter, human rights in this sense extends far beyond the basic concept that all citizens are born free and equal, but determines the conduct of nations, how their people should be treated, and therefore enables the West to decide what foreign states' behaviour is right and wrong (Griffiths, 2011:20-24). The protection of inalienable human rights is a key motivation behind Western foreign intervention (Humpal, 2020). As leader of this values driven group, the US understands it as its responsibility to lead foreign intervention abroad (Humpal, 2020), which it carries out through regulatory institutions such as NATO (Smith, 2017:11). This is because if a state breaks the "rules", and thus fails to safeguard its citizens' human rights, the West understands it as its obligation to step in (Harris, 2015). Liberal internationalism legitimises Western intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states which have their own independent set of values, imposing on them Western values the West understands as universal and thus the only acceptable values system (Smith, 2017:1-2). From the Western perspective, this is about ensuring universal, democratic values such as the protection of human rights are upheld (Smith, 2017:1).

In opposition to the universalising principles of liberal internationalism, Russia in its disruptor mode emphasises the principles of conservative nationalism. In place of Eurasianism which had served its purpose as an alternative pole to the US's liberalism international influence, since 2014, Moscow has adopted a conservative nationalism as its primary identity tool to legitimise this disruption policy (Clunan, 2018:56, Lo, 2018); 'I am the biggest nationalist in Russia' (Putin, 2014b), '…I am the most proper and true nationalist and a most effective one too' (Putin, 2018a). When asked by an interviewer to corroborate his comment about being the strongest nationalist; 'if there is only you, then this is not enough. Do you have like-minded people, the same kind of nationalists?', Putin replied 'Yes. Almost 146 million of them' (Putin, 2018a). To identify how Moscow uses

nationalism, one must first understand what nationalism is. As defined by Spencer and Wollman (2002:2-3):

> *nationalism* is an ideology which imagines the community in a particular way (as national), asserts the primacy of this collective identity over others, and seeks political power in its name, ideally (if not exclusively or everywhere) in the form of a state for the nation (or a nation-state)…nationalism is also of crucial import in the genesis and reproduction of *national identity*…

In other words, nationalism privileges national sovereignty and national autonomy (Sutherland, 2012:7). Thus, 'the key to nationalism…[is] the nation-state' (Holmes, 2019). Nationalism concerns itself with national identity and interests, refusing to subjugate this for greater interdependence between states (Jönsson, 2014:105). Furthermore, nationalism rejects international cooperation in favour of unilateralism and autonomous decision making (Bieber, 2018:525). Importantly, nationalism rejects the idea of universal values, arguing that a nation can choose any form of governance (Holmes, 2019). Further to this, Putin (2021c) exclaims that '…we will be guided by a healthy conservatism'.

Conservative nationalism, the dominant form of nationalism in contemporary Europe, is state centric, emphasising national sovereignty and national interests, while committed to upholding historic national values in the face of external pressures (Holbraad, 2003:97,99). Conservative nationalism argues that each state is entitled to its own, unique system of values, with no value system superior to another (Robinson, 2019:8-9). In accordance with this, the conservative nationalism advanced by Moscow repudiates the concept of universalism embraced by the West, upholding the importance of unique historical, national values (Laruelle, 2020:121). Conservative nationalism argues that the only absolute values in the world are religious values, which exist an unassailable step beyond any man-made norms (Robinson, 2019:8-9). The closest the ideology comes to universal norms is its belief in organically formed traditional values which underpin society (Robinson, 2019:8-9). Accordingly, the foundation of Russia's traditional values evoked by Moscow is heavily informed by the religious values avowed by the Russian Orthodox Church, for example marriage being between a man and woman only (Laruelle, 2020:118-119,121).

The conservative nationalism Moscow advances is constructed around tradition and patriotism (Laruelle, 2017a:95-96); ‘Our people have united around patriotic values’ (Putin, 2016a); ‘…I believe that in today’s democratic society there can be only one ideology: patriotism in a broad, positive sense of the word’ (Putin, 2019a). Putin has attempted to use patriotism as part of his plans to reject alleged universal democratic values (Loftus, 2018:2-3,66). In turn, Putin claims it is the Russian people’s ‘sacred duty’, ‘to be faithful to the great values of patriotism’, ‘we don't have and there can't be any other unifying idea, apart from patriotism’, ‘and that is a national idea’ (The Moscow Times, 2016).

Fundamentally, conservative nationalism rejects liberal internationalism (Holbraad, 2003:97,119). Committed to protecting Russia’s national identity (Laruelle, 2020:123), the conservative nationalism Moscow advances is anti-Western and anti-liberal, privileging long-established Russian values (Laruelle, 2017b:2); ‘Our national identity is what makes us who we are. It is our culture and history’ (Putin, 2018a). In contrast to the liberal nature of liberal internationalism, informed by Russia’s historical experience of powerful leaders, the conservative nationalism promoted by Moscow is predicated on a strong centralised state and privileging the state over the individual (Laruelle, 2020:117). Moscow points to Russia’s failed attempt to democratise in the 1990s in the image of the West and the associated chaos that ensued at this time, to legitimise to the Russian public a rejection of “universal” liberal values and push for a return to Russia’s historical values (Laruelle, 2020:116). Some non-Western countries such as Russia reject the universalism of the liberal internationalist conception of human rights, perceiving human rights as Western centric construct, internal to the West, lacking the same prevalence in their own historical experience (Griffiths, 2011:22-23). Thus, in Russian eyes these are not universal values and should therefore exert no influence in international affairs, and certainly do not provide justification for foreign intervention in violation of state sovereignty (Clunan, 2018:50):

> …it is impossible to impose anything on anyone, be it the principles underlying the sociopolitical structure or values that someone, for their own reasons, has called universal. After all, it is clear that when a real crisis strikes, there is only one universal value left and that is human life, which each state decides for itself how best to protect based on its abilities, culture and traditions (Putin, 2021c).

In contrast to Woodrow Wilson’s desired international system, Putin ‘…seeks to invert Woodrow Wilson’s famous call to arms and instead “make the world safe for

autocracy"' (Diamond, 2016). Having witnessed the spread of liberal democracy post-Cold War, most pertinently in the former Soviet space, Moscow perceives this ideological practice as a threat, and thus Putin seeks to discredit this belief system at every opportunity to undermine its legitimacy (Diamond, 2016). It is not that Moscow wants to see an anti-liberal international order in its place, but rather have a system where state sovereignty is inviolable, free to govern how they like without external ideological criteria being imposed and fear of intervention on this ideological basis (Clunan, 2018:52). Non-Western states such as Russia do not agree to there being a singular value system for the entire world, with mandated rules governed by the US (Harris, 2015; Kundnani, 2017). Instead, they prefer to emphasise the principles outlined in the 1945 UN Charter, which constructed a global system in the image of the Treaty of Westphalia (Kundnani, 2017). It is here we find the incompatibility in worldview between the West and Russia (Harris, 2015):

> Attempts to invent one's own "rules" and impose them on all others as the absolute truth should be stopped. From now on, all parties should strictly comply with the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, starting with respect for the sovereign equality of states regardless of their size, system of government or development model (Lavrov, 2017b:15).

Rejecting liberal internationalist logic concerning sovereignty, Russia sees sovereignty as inviolable, using the UN's Charter version of a system made up of equal, independent, autonomous states and non-intervention according to international law and not external Western norms (Clunan, 2018:46):

> I am convinced that peaceful progress in international relations can be guaranteed only through ensuring the existence of states with different political and social systems, their own national interests and spiritual and moral values, but with mandatory observance of the fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter, including non-interference in internal affairs and respect for sovereignty (Putin, 2021d).

This Russian viewpoint finds support in the wider non-Western, international community who favour the UN Charter definition of sovereignty such as China and India, and also therefore do not subscribe to an alternative Western definition (Clunan, 2018:46):

> We have no doubt that sovereignty is the central notion of the entire system of international relations. Respect for it and its consolidation will help underwrite peace and stability both at the national and international levels. There are many countries that can rely on a history stretching back a thousand years, like Russia, and we have come to appreciate our identity, freedom and independence (Putin, 2016b).

Rejecting the pooling of national sovereignty, Russian conservative nationalism repudiates both European interdependence and the EU as a non-state, normative actor having autonomy to the detriment of member states' independent power (Holbraad, 2003:119; Laruelle, 2020:122-123, Clunan, 2018:46,49; Liik, 2018:3); 'If for some European countries national pride is a long-forgotten concept and sovereignty is too much of a luxury, true sovereignty for Russia is absolutely necessary for survival' (Putin, 2014a).

Russia rejects NATO on similar grounds, however most acute to Russian interests regarding the NATO and to an extent the EU is Western interference abroad. Conservative nationalism opposes how liberal norms inform international institutions' decision making (Holbraad, 2003:119). The EU and NATO have been accused of over-extending their reach, at times acting out of zone (Smith, 2017:2-3): 'Neither NATO nor the EU intend to divert from their policy of subjugating other regions of the world, proclaiming a self-designated global messianic mission' (Lavrov, 2021). Russian rejection of NATO interference abroad extends beyond the former Soviet space, with the universalism of its value system is in question and thus the legitimacy of US leadership.

In opposition to liberal internationalism's progressiveness, nationalism on the other hand is the opposite of progressive, using historical memory to look backward to historical tradition to determine its current values (Holbraad, 2003:99). Moscow's conservative nationalism is seen as a rejection of progressive policies of contemporary liberalism such as migrant rights and LGBT rights to protect conventional values (Laruelle, 2020:126).

Repudiating the liberal internationalist economic order, the conservative nationalism advanced by Moscow rejects an open market and globalisation to the detriment of the state, favouring protectionism and state control of the economy (Bieber, 2018:534; Laruelle, 2020:121,124):

> …it is clear that the Western liberal development model that, among other things, implied ceding part of national sovereignty (it is in this vein that our Western colleagues planned what they called “globalisation”) is losing its appeal and has long ceased to be a model to follow. Moreover, even many people in the West are skeptical about it – you can see many examples of this (Lavrov, 2019).

Liberal internationalist institutions such as the IMF have been accused of being used to promote Western interests (Kundnani, 2017). Similarly to with the EU, Russia’s conservative nationalism rejects the principle of supranational economic organisations such as the IMF possessing the ability to unilaterally impose diktats on sovereign states (Laruelle, 2020:124). Since the imposition of the 2013 Western sanctions, Russia has attempted to reduce its dependency on the US dollar, while encouraging other nations such as China but also Western nations to do the same (Foy, 2018). In doing so, Russia has sought to undermine the financial arm of US dominance, which if successful, would remove the US from its hegemonic position as the global economic centre and thus lose the privileges that come with this role (Norrlöf, 2021).

In line with this, a key element to Russian rejection of liberal internationalism is its renunciation of the liberal internationalist hierarchical order. While the Western community may have previously agreed to the US led order, powers such as Russia and China did not, and it is here we find the increasing rejection of the US’s privileged status (Ikenberry, 2011:9-10); ‘…the world simply cannot have a unipolar structure, with a single centre that governs the entire international community’ (Putin, 2019a).

Thus, in this approach, Russia continues to see the West as its “Other”, but this time not as a value system to compete against, but a set of norms to reject and undermine (Ambrosetti, 2018:133-134). Russia sees liberal internationalism and the “rules” liberal internationalism structures the international system around not as universal values but an alien, Western created concept (Liik, 2017). While the “Othering” in this case is normative, based on a rejection of values, the authority and beneficiary behind this system is the US. Moscow therefore rejects the ideational validity of the Western system because it perceives liberal internationalism as normative justification for US dominance (Ambrosetti, 2018:141). Thus, Russia rejects the US led liberal order (Liik, 2017) and seeks to demonstrate the superiority and legitimacy of traditional conservative values as the

foundation of a more sustainable, plural system (Ambrosetti, 2018:142). With liberal democratic values seen as the enemy during this time, Moscow aims to erode their role as the foundation of the international system (Diamond, 2016) by placing conservative nationalism in opposition to Western liberal internationalism as an alternative value system (Lo, 2018):

> Let me repeat: it is only natural that each state has its own political, economic and other interests. The question is the means by which they are protected and promoted. In the modern world, it is impossible to make a strategic gain at the expense of others. Such a policy based on self-assurance, egotism and claims to exceptionalism will not bring any respect or true greatness. It will evoke natural and justified rejection and resistance (Putin, 2017a).

> With regard to the world in general, since all nations are obviously different, uniformity and universalisation are impossible by default. A system is required whereby different values, ideas and traditions can co-exist, interact and mutually enrich one another while retaining and highlighting their peculiarities and differences (Putin, 2019b).

This is necessary to protect against the Western liberal threat:

> …they implant ideological ideas that, in my opinion, are destructive to cultural and national identity. And in certain cases, in some countries they subvert national interests and renounce sovereignty in exchange for the favour of the suzerain (Putin, 2016b).

Moscow's use of conservative nationalism is designed to appeal to a wider, international audience beyond the Eurasian sphere of influence. Speaking from a conservative nationalist platform enables Putin to use this as a calling card to conservative nationalists in the Western community, such as the US President Donald Trump, UK Brexiteer Nigel Farage and French National Front leader Marine Le Pen (Brownstein, 2017). As Putin (2021c) outlines, 'the conservative views we hold are an optimistic conservatism, which is what matters the most…Of course, we are ready to work with our partners on common noble causes'. These politicians see in Putin a fellow defender of these traditional values (Ambrosetti, 2018:145). For example, Le Pen praised Putin for 'looking after the interests

of his own country and defending its identity' (Chhor, 2016). Fundamentally, they agree with his core message of rejecting liberal internationalism (Wesslau, 2016). For example, they align in supporting US isolationism, rejecting interdependence through the EU, fearing immigration, and disliking progressive liberal values such as LGBT rights (Brownstein, 2017). Moscow is able to work with these Western actors as they are useful in undermining the West from within, watching on from the sidelines as they facilitate Russia's goal (Liik, 2018:3):

> You know, there is an old joke, but some people may not know it. They might find it amusing. It sounds like that. Question: "How do you relax?" [sic] Answer: "I am relaxed." [sic] The same goes for tensions in international affairs…For me it is clear, and I have said this: this is the result of the internal political struggle in the Western world as a whole. Now they are fighting over the conditions for Britain's exit from the EU; the Democrats and the Republicans are fighting in the United States, and there is controversy among the Republicans themselves (Putin, 2018a).

If Russia wants to return to a plural value system, it must discredit the West's commitment to liberal values in order to delegitimise liberal internationalism. To realise this, Moscow looks to find holes in liberal internationalism which it can expose. Russia operates numerous methods to achieve this. Firstly, Russia attempts to expose the hypocrisy and double standards of the West. A consistent criticism of liberal internationalism is that liberal democratic states don't behave according to the principles they claim to support and are therefore open to claims of being duplicitous, hypocritical and self-serving actors (Ikenberry, 2020b:xiv). For example, the 1999 NATO airstrikes in Yugoslavia and the 2003 Iraq War can both be viewed as the West breaking its own rules such as the international law it holds Russia to account for (Kundnani, 2017). If Russia can demonstrate this and therefore show liberal internationalism as hollow, used to benefit a select few, the liberal order can no longer be maintained and by extension, US superiority is called into question. Russia also attempts to undermine liberal internationalism through its rejection of the universalism of human rights and thus Western intervention abroad by demonstrating that it does not work. Russia uses examples to highlight how Western attempts to impose its value system on non-Western states has failed and only caused greater instability in these states. Russia's third means to undermine liberal internationalism is to undermine its operations by trying to stop it functioning. To achieve this, Russia seeks to discredit the value system liberal internationalism is built upon. This finds itself in key acts such as

alleged US election meddling to undermine US democracy and attempts to weaken the transatlantic alliance by subverting NATO unity. Finally, Russia uses the progressive nature of liberal internationalism to highlight that it does not work. Russia illustrates how the enforcement of minority rights, and LGBT rights are to the detriment of society.

To demonstrate the hypocrisy in Western action and thus illegitimacy in liberal internationalism, Russia draws on the contrast between realism and liberalism inherent in the doctrine. For example, sovereignty and self-determination are the foundation of this system, unless a state does not conform to democratic governance in which case a state can have their sovereignty infringed upon (Kundnani, 2017):

> The rules-based order is the embodiment of double standards. The right to self-determination is recognized as an absolute “rule” whenever it can be used to an advantage. This applies to the Malvinas Islands, or the Falklands, some 12,000 kilometers from Great Britain, to the remote former colonial territories Paris and London retain despite multiple UN resolutions and rulings by the International Court of Justice, as well as Kosovo, which obtained its “independence” in violation of a UN Security Council resolution. However, if self-determination runs counter to the Western geopolitical interests, as it happened when the people of Crimea voted for reunification with Russia, this principle is cast aside, while condemning the free choice made by the people and punishing them with sanctions (Lavrov, 2021:235).

In addition, the West has been accused of being selective when it chooses to recognise which regions’ right to independence such as Kosovo in 2008 (Harris, 2015):

> We keep hearing from the United States and Western Europe that Kosovo is some special case. What makes it so special in the eyes of our colleagues? It turns out that it is the fact that the conflict in Kosovo resulted in so many human casualties. Is this a legal argument? The ruling of the International Court says nothing about this. This is not even double standards; this is amazing, primitive, blunt cynicism. One should not try so crudely to make everything suit their interests, calling the same thing white today and black tomorrow (Putin, 2014c).

Russia perceives human rights as a legitimisation tool the West uses when it suits to intervene in non-Western powers to further Western self interests (Griffiths, 2011:23). This

opens the West up to claims of double standards for example in America and Britain's friendship with alleged human rights abuser Saudi Arabia (Griffiths, 2011:23):

> If the powers that be today find some standard or norm to their advantage, they force everyone else to comply. But if tomorrow these same standards get in their way, they are swift to throw them in the bin, declare them obsolete, and set or try to set new rules (Putin, 2016b).

> Or take human rights. Listen, Guantanamo is still open. This is contrary to all imaginable rules, to international law or American laws, but it is still functioning (Putin, 2021a).

By exposing the double standards in Western behaviour, Russia seeks to undermine the West's legitimacy and therefore its ability to impose these values on others.

Accordingly, Russia undermines the supposed universalism of liberal values by using examples of failed Western intervention abroad in an attempt to foster liberal democracy in non-Western societies. For Russia, Western intervention abroad in the Balkans, Middle East and North Africa to remodel nations in the West's own image failed not due to lack of Western resolve, but because the ideals they were trying to install were fundamentally incompatible with these nations' own values who had their own identity and interests, causing greater instability (Mandelbaum, 2016:11-12,311-312). For example, the failure of Western intervention in Bosnia 1995 to enable a healthy democratic society developing based on liberal internationalism demonstrates the incompatibility between imposing alien Western values on a non-Western state and expecting Bosnia to naturally adopt them (Holbraad, 2003:64):

> Genuine democracy and civil society cannot be "imported." I have said so many times. They cannot be a product of the activities of foreign "well-wishers," even if they "want the best for us." In theory, this is probably possible. But, frankly, I have not yet seen such a thing and do not believe much in it. We see how such imported democracy models function. They are nothing more than a shell or a front with nothing behind them, even a semblance of sovereignty. People in the countries where such schemes have been implemented were never asked for their opinion, and their respective leaders are mere vassals. As is known, the overlord decides

> everything for the vassal. To reiterate, only the citizens of a particular country can determine their public interest (Putin, 2020a).

Moscow used the 2021 US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan followed its failed to attempt to export democracy to the nation to justify its viewpoint:

> …the crisis in Afghanistan is a direct consequence of irresponsible extraneous attempts to impose someone else's values on the country and to build "democratic structures" using socio-political engineering techniques, ignoring the historical and national specifics of other nations and the traditions by which they live (Putin, 2021d).

In an attempt to stop this practice continuing, Putin intervened in Syria having been invited to do so by the recognised Syrian leadership, on the basis of protecting Syrian sovereignty and its right to non-interference against Western liberal democratic intervention (Liik, 2018:3):

> It is only up to the Syrian people living in Syria to determine who, how and based on what principles should rule their country, and any external advice of such kind would be absolutely inappropriate, harmful and against international law (Putin, 2015c).

Similarly, Moscow's support for the beleaguered Venezuelan government can be understood as Russia intervening to protect Venezuelan sovereignty in the face of US interference (Berls Jr, 2021). As outlined by Lavrov in 2020:

> We have firmly expressed our support to Venezuela's sovereignty, our solidarity with the Venezuelan leadership and nation in their battle against illegal pressure which is being imposed by the US and its allies (BBC News, 2020).

Russian intervention thus achieves two objectives. It gives Russia a role in any conflict resolution, but more importantly, it inhibits the main function of liberalism internationalism, the promotion of liberal values abroad.

Russia's third means to undermine liberal internationalism is to cripple its operations by undermining the Euro-Atlantic partnership through targeting the liberal values this relationship is built upon. With the US the figurehead of liberal internationalism, Moscow seeks to remove the US from this dominant position by undermining Western powers' trust in the US's ability to fulfil this role by illustrating its unreliability. For example, when Trump placed tariffs on the EU, Putin spoke of this as a pattern of US behaviour, of not playing by the rules but doing as it wishes and its allies are now seeing this; 'it appears our partners thought that this would never affect them…Well, there you go, you've been hit. Dinner is served … please sit down and eat' (Osborn and Nikolskaya, 2018). To the wider international community, Russia has attempted to portray liberal internationalism as a danger to the entire international system by showing its leader the US as an ideologically driven threat that instead of being revered, should be demonised for its destructive, interventionist behaviour (Clunan, 2018:51-52):

> The measures taken against those who refuse to submit are well-known and have been tried and tested many times. They include use of force, economic and propaganda pressure, meddling in domestic affairs, and appeals to a kind of 'supra-legal' legitimacy when they need to justify illegal intervention in this or that conflict or toppling inconvenient regimes…Let's ask ourselves, how comfortable are we with this, how safe are we, how happy living in this world, and how fair and rational has it become?…A unilateral diktat and imposing one's own models produces the opposite result. Instead of settling conflicts it leads to their escalation, instead of sovereign and stable states we see the growing spread of chaos, and instead of democracy there is support for a very dubious public ranging from open neo-fascists to Islamic radicals (Putin, 2014d).

The centrepiece of Russia's attempt to undermine the US led order was through apparent Russian interference in the 2016 US Presidential election, designed to attack the beacon of liberal democracy at its democratic core (Stoner, 2021:13). US election meddling was intended to weaken the democratic values the US is founded on, with free and fair elections a central pillar of a liberal democracy (Munro, 2016). To influence the public, Russia used the US's very liberal democratic values against it such as freedom of speech, both of the national press and on social media platforms to spread disinformation (Jamieson, 2020:6,11). Targeting those at the top, Russian linked hackers intercepted the emails of Democratic Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton to undermine the integrity of

her campaign and her credibility should she win (Jamieson, 2020:1-2). This was part of an ambitious wider Russian goal of meddling to ensure a Trump win (Baev, 2019:5). Putin later admitted as such, 'Yes, I wanted him to win, because he talked about the normalization [sic] of Russian–American relations' (Friedman, 2018). Ideationally, this was because during his Presidential campaign, Trump ran on a nationalist, isolationist platform, seeking to remove America from its leadership position of the liberal internationalist order (Tsygankov, 2019b:210).

Once in power, President Trump helped facilitate Russian goals in this disruptor approach (Rucker and Harris, 2020). Trump's illiberal Presidency actively undermined the US led international order, damaging the stability of the Western community, its institutions and the liberal democratic values these are built upon (Taussig, 2018; Rucker and Harris, 2020). On a personal level, Trump displayed a proclivity for strong leaders such as Putin (Taussig, 2018), praising him as '…very, very strong' (Mercer, 2018). In comparison, Trump said of Theresa May and Angela Merkel, the then leaders of traditional liberal European allies the UK and Germany that 'They are losers' (Adkins, 2021). This helps Russian aspirations in the short term, with Trump calling for Russia to be brought out of international isolation and returned to the top international top decision making table, as symbolised by Trump repeatedly calling for Russia to regain admission in to the G7, following its suspension in 2014 due to its intervention in Ukraine (Popyk, 2020). On a deeper, long term level, Trump's affinity for Putin undermines the US's leadership position of liberal internationalism and weakens Western unity.

Additionally, Trump damaged the US led international order by shaking the US's previously assured status as the leading power in this Euro-Atlantic community by questioning the validity of NATO and the EU (Beauchamp, 2017). On the campaign trail, Trump called in to question the credibility of NATO by refusing to commit the US to comply with a core component of NATO, its famed Article 5 (Munro, 2016). In 2018, Trump said 'that he did not see the point of the military alliance' (Bergmann et al., 2019) and threatened that if other members do not increase their financial contribution to NATO's defence, America 'would have to look to go its own way' and therefore leave the alliance (Emmott et al., 2018). Similarly to NATO, Trump repeatedly attacked the EU, claiming that 'the European Union, of course, was set up to take advantage of the United States' (Bergmann et al., 2019), also saying 'I don't really care whether it's separate or together' (Beauchamp, 2017). Trump also called Brexit 'smart', and '…reportedly asked French President

Emmanuel Macron, “Why don’t you leave the EU?”…’ (Bergmann et al., 2019). Trump’s behaviour led German leader Angela Merkel to say that ‘the times in which we could rely fully on others—they are somewhat over…We Europeans truly have to take our fate into our own hands’ (Bergmann et al., 2019). Trump’s words have undermined the ideational foundation of the transatlantic partnership, and destabilised these Western institutions.

Similarly to in 2016, it is believed Russia interfered in the US 2020 Presidential election by spreading disinformation (Herb, 2020). Russian linked hackers attempted to intercept the emails of Democratic Presidential candidate Joe Biden (Marineau, 2020) and Russia was allegedly involved in a smear campaign to promote allegations of corruption by Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden regarding Ukraine (Bing et al., 2021). The outcome of the election night was a disputed Biden win, with Trump’s condemnation of alleged fraudulent voting system saying that ‘It’s a corrupt system’ is considered a success for Russia by further undermining faith in US democracy (Shuster, 2020). Trump’s refusal to accept a peaceful transition of power undermined the pinnacle of US liberal democracy, its electoral system (Beauchamp, 2021). Exploiting this, Moscow initially refused to recognise Biden as President until all of Trump’s ambitious legal challenges had been completed, with the intention behind this to further undermine US democracy (Bodner, 2020). Putin said that ‘we will work with anyone who has the confidence of the American people’, ‘but that confidence can only be given to a candidate whose victory has been recognized [sic] by the opposing party, or after the results are confirmed in a legitimate, legal way’ (Doff, 2020).

The ensuing riots that followed Trump’s claims of a rigged election on Capitol Hill, Washington D.C., the very heart of US democracy were symbolic of its decline in democratic values, with speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi describing Trump’s support of the protests as ‘the biggest of all of his many gifts’ to Putin (Smith and Smith, 2021). Following the capitol riots in 2020, the Russian parliament’s foreign affairs committee Chairman Konstantin Kosachyov remarked that ‘the celebration of democracy is over…America no longer charts the course and therefore has lost all right to set it. And even more so to impose on others’ (Eckel, 2021). Putin used the protests to reinforce his argument of Western hypocrisy, remarking that ‘this [election process in the US] certainly gives no one the right to point the finger at the flaws in other political systems, including in election legislation’ (Al Jazeera, 2021). Meaning, the US has lost its right to insist on democratic standards in Russia (Walker et al., 2021). Furthermore, Putin

accused the US of double standards in its treatment of the protests in comparison to how it viewed protests in Belarus:

> You are well aware of what happened at the beginning of the year, when protesters stormed the Congress. Is this good or bad? There is nothing good in this. But they were not just looters or rioters. They had political demands, right? Right. As many as 450 people have been detained; criminal action has been initiated against them. Seventy people were detained immediately, and 31 of them remain under arrest to this day. On what grounds? Has anyone told us anything about this? No. But this is part of politics…Belarus, too, has many internal problems….But the same things there are viewed from a different angle, while what is happening in the States is assessed differently. Double standards. Those should be eliminated (Putin, 2021e).

Moscow has allegedly continued its disruptive tool of US election meddling, this time in the 2022 midterms, with President Biden calling out ‘what Russia's doing already about the 2022 election and misinformation’ (Williams et al., 2021).

Regarding the EU and NATO, unlike in its challenger approach, Moscow no longer seeks to challenge these organisations through creating equal, competitor organisations. Instead, it has sought to cripple them from within (Eisen and Kirchick, 2018). In doing so Russia hopes that these privileged institutions will become so destabilised they are unable to operate as a cohesive group and dissolve (Kirchick, 2017).

Russia’s normative war with the EU makes the latter a primary target of Russian meddling given the EU is emblematic of the liberal internationalist value system Russia wants to destroy (Liik, 2018:3). Thus, Russia actively seeks to undermine the EU and erode its democratic values through subversion such as disinformation campaigns and support for illiberal parties across Europe (Gerodimos, 2017) such as a €9 million loan to France Presidential candidate Marine Le Pen’s anti-EU, National Front party (Kirchick, 2017). This disruption policy appears to be working, with these Kremlin backed anti-EU, illiberal conservative populists growing stronger across Europe (Kirchick, 2017). In 2019, Putin used the rise of European illiberal populist parties to criticise the fallibility of Western values saying that ‘the liberal idea has become obsolete’, ‘[Liberals] cannot simply dictate anything to anyone just like they have been attempting to do over the recent decades’ (Barber et al., 2019). In contrast, Russia has ‘…ever stronger immunity against

populism and demagogy, and values highly the importance of solidarity, closeness and unity' (Putin, 2016a).

Meanwhile, to illustrate the EU's double standards and how it violates its own values, Putin compared EU condemnation of Russia's handling of domestic protestors with the French police's use of guns with rubber bullets against political protestors the "Yellow Vests" (BBC News, 2021):

> …they say Russian law enforcement officers act too harshly during some street rallies. Now, what about shooting protesters with rubber bullets in European countries, knocking out people's eyes, killing people on the streets, using water cannons, or tear gas – is this normal?…So a rubber bullet knocks out a person's eye, and you just tell the victim – it is okay, this is a democratic rubber bullet, it is all right. But this does not make people feel any better, does it? (Putin, 2021e).

Moscow has also capitalised on the covid-19 pandemic to destabilise the EU. The EU accused Russia of spreading misinformation in EU states about the EU's covid response in an attempt to subvert and undermine the West and its ability to tackle the pandemic (Emmott, 2020). Upon vaccines being developed and then administered, the EU then claimed Russia pushed false stories in the West questioning the safety of Western vaccines, whilst simultaneously endorsing the safety of Russian vaccines (Sky News, 2021):

> I have heard many times how it goes: citizens from European countries come here and get a Sputnik jab and then buy a certificate that they got Pfizer. I am serious. This is what doctors from European countries say. They believe that Sputnik is more reliable and safer (Putin, 2021e).

The slow nature of the EU's rollout of Western produced vaccines led EU member state Hungary to weaken EU solidarity by purchasing the Russian Sputnik V vaccine independently (Walker, 2021). Putin used this to undermine EU interdependency in comparison to Hungary pursuing its own national course:

> Different European countries behave differently, and not necessarily for political reasons, but because some of them have the appropriate national agencies, labs that

> evaluate pharmaceuticals, while others don't, and they have to wait for the European regulator's decision. Those who have labs, they make their own decision like Hungary, for example. Hungary has certified and is rolling out Sputnik V. I know a political agenda is always present, to some extent, but in this case, I would say we are mostly dealing with economic, commercial interests that are hurting the interests of the citizens of European countries (Putin, 2021e).

Putin also used EU sanctions against the Assad regime to undermine EU liberal values in the face of the pandemic:

> I would say we need to be more honest with each other and abandon double standards…What does Assad even have to do with this when it is ordinary people who suffer? At least, give them medicines, give them technology, at least a small, targeted loan for medicine. No (Putin, 2020a).

> We are talking about the need to counter the coronavirus infection together. But nothing changes…the sanctions that remain in place against those states that badly need international assistance. Where are the humanitarian fundamentals of Western political thought? (Putin, 2021c).

Similarly to the EU, Moscow has sown divisions in NATO by championing the rise of illiberal European leaders who are also NATO members, with their regimes undermining the alliance's credibility as the bastion of liberal democracy (Katz and Taussig, 2018). Russia has deliberately supported anti-NATO political leaders, for example, 'Russian media lavishly praised the successful campaign for Labour Party leadership of the far-left candidate Jeremy Corbyn, a NATO and EU skeptic…' (Diamond, 2016). Similarly, hackers associated with Russia have pushed disinformation in Western media outlets, designed to weaken NATO unity (Sabbagh, 2020). Moscow has capitalised on other events to destabilise NATO. Due to its geopolitical position and military size, Turkey is a pivotal member of NATO, however, following a failed coup against him, Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has pursued an increasingly illiberal rule, facing criticism from the US, while establishing a greater friendship with Russia, who Turkey has purchased military equipment from, fostering division in NATO and creating the potential threat of Turkey leaving NATO (Stavridis, 2019).

To undermine NATO members' confidence in NATO's liberal ideational foundation, Putin said that 'NATO is a mere instrument of U.S. foreign policy. It has no allies, it has only vassals. Once a country becomes a NATO member, it is hard to resist the pressures of the United States' (Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 2017). To the wider international community, Putin says that with NATO '…a relic of the Cold War', its expansion is '… effectively dashing hopes for a continent without dividing lines', consequently 'the whole system of European security has now degraded significantly' (Putin, 2021f). Thus, far from making international security safer, NATO is making it worse:

> It is enough to see what has happened in the Middle East, which some players have tried to reshape and reformat to their liking and to impose on it a foreign development model through externally orchestrated coups or simply by force of arms. Instead of working together to redress the situation and deal a real blow to terrorism rather than simulating a struggle against it, some of our colleagues are doing everything they can to make the chaos in this region permanent (Putin, 2017a).

Unable to prevent NATO expansion, Russia seeks to disrupt and split NATO from within by undermining collective security to weaken the alliance and prevent a coordinated response to any potential Russian action (Edwards, 2019). When asked if NATO divisions benefit Russia, Putin replied that 'Disputes over NATO? Do they help Russia? Well, in the sense that NATO may fall apart, yes, this may help' (Putin 2017b). If Moscow can demonstrate that the US will not come to an ally's aid, the core foundation of NATO will become hollow and thus Moscow can bring down the Western dominant international security club from within. An example of this is Russian subversion in the Baltic states, with the intended target not these countries but to test US resolve for protecting these distant powers through NATO's Article 5 in the face of Russian aggression (Galeotti, 2019). Russia seeks to sow division in NATO by pitting the Baltic states against other NATO members, leading other members to consider the value the Baltic states add to security compared to what it takes to protect them from a potential Russian attack (Galeotti, 2019). Informing this are statements made by Trump. Trump has previously said of NATO that 'We're protecting countries that most of the people in this room have never even heard of and we end up in world war three … Give me a break' (Jacobs, 2016). While in 2018, Trump confused the Baltics with the Balkans (Pengelly and Beckett, 2018). Russia has used other methods to weaken NATO in the Baltics and across Europe:

> At the same time, Russia threatens with military force, us- ing [sic] large-scale military exercises on NATO's borders, mili- tary [sic] build-up in critical regions on land or at sea; violation of Allies' airspace in the Baltic region; patrolling of strate- gic [sic] bombers in certain regions; and/or deployment of nu- clear [sic] missiles close to NATO's borders, for example in the Kaliningrad Oblast, and even nuclear threats against indi- vidual [sic] NATO members. This list of actions is designed to re- main [sic] below the threshold of direct military confrontation with NATO, thus avoiding triggering military response, but achieving similar effects to military action by blurring the boundaries between peace and conflict. This blurring can create insecurity, intimidation and fear, while impeding NA- TO [sic] decision-making (Brauß and Rácz, 2021:7).

Finally, Moscow has sought to discredit liberal internationalism by emphasising and exaggerating polarising aspects of liberal progressivism, linking this to a decline in morality (Petersson, 2020:88). To illustrate this, Russia uses issues such as the European migrant crisis and LGBT rights/gender fluidity to show the fallibility of liberalism (Petersson, 2020:88,90). In doing so, Moscow finds allies across Europe in conservative populists who share a dislike for multiculturalism and cultural changes that migration and LGBT issues bring (Ambrosetti, 2018:145).

To exploit the migrant crisis, Russia piggybacks on stories that involve migrants conducting criminal behaviour such as assault by magnifying this and pushing it to the wider European narrative as part of its disinformation campaign to undermine confidence in liberal Western leaders who welcomed migrants based on humanitarian values (Tasch, 2017). As Putin explains; 'This liberal idea presupposes that nothing needs to be done. That migrants can kill, plunder and rape with impunity because their rights as migrants have to be protected' (Barber and Foy, 2019). Following EU sanctions against Belarus for illiberal behaviour, with Moscow's permission, Minsk facilitated migrant crossings in to bordering EU nations to manufacture a migrant crisis (Bendern, 2021). However, Putin places the blame on the West for this: 'We should not forget the roots of these migration crises. Was it Belarus that unleashed these problems? No, the problems were caused by the West, by the European countries' (Putin, 2021g). Russian backed Belarussian action increases anti-migrant sentiment in the EU, a key issue polarising Europe, bolstering anti-migrant conservative populists and thus denigrating EU solidarity (Bendern, 2021):

> It is natural that people are heading there. Why should they work in turbulent conditions when basic safety rules are not observed when they can live idly with their families and get twice or three times as much? Because these benefits cover both adults and children, free education and, as a rule, free medical care. Let me reiterate, this is the policy of Europe's leading nations (Putin, 2021g).

The migrant crisis also further undermines EU solidarity because neighbouring states to Belarus such as Poland have taken measures to prevent migrants entering their countries, in contravention of EU humanitarianism, while it makes Europe seem hypocritical having previously criticised Trump for similar action to stop migrants (Bendern, 2021):

> …we kept hearing that humanitarian issues must be given top priority. However, when Polish border guards and army troops on the Belarus-Poland border beat up potential migrants and fire combat weapons over their heads, blast sirens and spotlights onto their camps at night, where there are children and women in the final weeks of pregnancy, all that does not go well with the ideas of humanism which supposedly underlie all policies of our Western neighbours (Putin, 2021g).

In addition to its handling of migrants, Moscow criticises the progressiveness of liberal internationalism regarding LGBT rights and gender issues;

> Apart from encroaching on international law, the "rules" concept also manifests itself in attempts to encroach on the very human nature. In a number of Western countries, students learn at school that Jesus Christ was bisexual. Attempts by reasonable politicians to shield the younger generation from aggressive LGBT propaganda are met with bellicose protests from an "enlightened europe." All world religions, the genetic code of the planet's key civilizations [sic] are under attack. The United States is at the forefront of state interference in church affairs, openly seeking to drive a wedge into the Orthodox world, whose values are viewed as a powerful spiritual obstacle for the liberal concept of boundless permissiveness (Lavrov, 2021:235-236).

Consequently, Moscow looks to replace liberal internationalism with conservative nationalism, calling on the Russian people to protect traditional Russian values which are more enduring and more powerful than temporary, declining liberal values (Petersson, 2020:88,90). Putin says that Russia must adhere to 'spiritual values and historical

traditions' and thus avoid Western 'sociocultural disturbances' (Cheng, 2021). When the liberal order does fall, Putin envisions traditional values reconvening their place as the ideational foundation of international relations (Petersson, 2020:87,90):

> Deep inside, there must be some fundamental human rules and moral values. In this sense, traditional values are more stable and more important for millions of people than this liberal idea, which, in my opinion, is really ceasing to exist (The Moscow Times, 2019).

In conclusion, Russia has conducted a prolonged, disruption campaign against the West, designed to counter, undermine, and frustrate Western liberal internationalism. The short term goal of this disruptor approach is to be considered an influential international actor involved in global decision making, with the ultimate goal to create a post-Western order with a plural, value system. In this new international order, Russia will be able to operate without being held up to a liberal values criteria imposed by the West. Importantly, with the US removed from its privileged international position, Russia will no longer require US acknowledgment of Russian great power status.

To disrupt liberal internationalism, Russia proactively attempts to denigrate the ideational values liberal internationalism is built upon. Russia uses a conservative nationalist identity construct to reject liberal internationalist values, primarily the perceived universalism of these values, offering conservative nationalism as an alternative ordering system. To undermine liberal internationalism, Russia illustrates the hypocrisy and double standards of the West who Russia argues acts through liberal internationalism on the alleged basis of liberal values to further its own selfish interests. Additionally, to support its rejection of liberal values universalism, Russia uses Western intervention abroad and the failure to impose liberal values on these states as justification for its argument. An alternative means Russia uses to undermine liberal internationalism is to disrupt its operations, preventing it functioning successfully by undermining the liberal values it is built upon, with the intended target of this US leadership and the Euro-Atlantic partnership. Finally, Russia uses the progressiveness of liberal internationalism to attack the doctrine, highlighting for example that the protection of minority rights can adversely affect wider society.

Conclusion

This thesis investigated why US-Russia relations failed to improve post-Cold War. In the absence of the competitive Cold War system fought between the two rival blocs, the capitalist, liberal West and communist USSR, it was hoped that a new era of healthy US-Russia relations would develop. However, despite goodwill from both sides, the US and Russia have been unable to transform relations. This thesis sought to uncover the reason behind this by analysing the Russian perspective which has been widely ignored in Western scholarship. In order to analyse the Russian worldview, this thesis examined Russian identities and interests, considering them key informants to Russian foreign policy. Thus, they can help explain Russian policy towards the US because they offer explanatory logic behind Russian policy decision making and how Russia understands reciprocal US action. Therefore, this thesis's contribution to knowledge has been to consider the affect Russian identities and interests have had on preventing US-Russia relations repairing from 1991 onwards.

This thesis has determined that Russian identity and interests are an important, contributory factor in explaining why the US and Russia were unable to repair their relationship once they were no longer Cold War adversaries. Russia's self-identification as a great power and the attainment of US acknowledgement of this status was the driving force behind Russian policy and thus instrumental in affecting Russia's relationship with the US. To realise this great power status aspiration, Russian leaders employed different approaches which were, in turn, informed and shaped by different aspects of Russian identity and interests. However, these same identities and interests inhibited Russia's pursuit of great power status because Russian foreign policy has prevented relations from improving and thus with the various approaches adopted in their image unsuccessful, they can help explain why US-Russia relations failed to improve.

This is because the US has been unwilling and unable to attribute Russia the status it craves. Russia has not been granted an equal role to the US in the international system, nor has it been sufficiently included in international decision making, while Russian

interests, in Russian eyes, have been ignored by the West. This has led Russia to feel marginalised, disrespected and mistreated, causing it to respond as it sees fit. Thus, the US and Russia have been unable to repair relations post-Cold War because Russia sees itself as great power, yet the US has refused to acknowledge Russian great power status. Unable to obtain this, Russia has pursued alternative means to realise its policy goals by using a conservative nationalist identity and interests to legitimise its rejection of the US led order by undermining the privileged US and dominant West liberal international order, to thus no longer require US acknowledgment of great power status. However, this has seen US-Russia relations take a more dangerous turn, such as 2015 Russian military intervention in Syria and 2016 US election meddling, with the recent development in Ukraine emblematic of a new low in relations.

This thesis has illustrated the problem with existing scholarship's explanation for poor US-Russia relations post-Cold War, by highlighting the flaws in the offensive realist logic underpinning this. Offensive realism can only offer a partial explanation for the failure to improve US-Russia relations post-Cold War because of its theoretical assumptions. Offensive realist accounts attribute the failure to improve relations to systemic and materialist determinants. However, offensive realist logic is too structurally focused, with its pessimistic logic of enduring anarchy omitting the possibility of systemic change while denying the autonomy of individual states. An anarchical system is not an inevitability, but is only one possible style of system. The US and Russia were not condemned to operating in an anarchical system and thus compelled to respond to the implications of this. In replace of the bipolar Cold War international system, a new type of architectural international system was achievable, for example one characterised by harmony and healthy relations between the US and Russia. However, being structurally focused, offensive realism is unable to account for an international system being open to change because this would undermine its explanatory logic. Additionally, to argue that the US and Russia were compelled to launch offensive action based on an anarchical system denies Russia autonomy over its own action, failing to consider Russia’s independent thinking behind policy making. For example, to explain Russian action in the 2014 Ukraine crisis as revanchist security seeking action, intended to restore imperial land lost by Russia in the fall of the USSR, ignores the importance this land has for Russia based on a shared, historical experience between Russia and Ukraine. Failing to do so means offensive realism can only offer a partial, systemic explanation for US-Russia relations and Russian behaviour. Having outlined the fundamental problem with offensive realism’s over reliance

on systemic determinant logic, this thesis also illustrated the flaws in offensive realism's other core arguments.

A key argument advanced by offensive realism is that states exist in constant competition with one another in a fight for, at a minimum survival and at a maximum hegemony, while operating in a world devoid of trust. However, this catch all explanation for state behaviour based on constant competition for survival and hegemony ignores the fluctuations in Russian policy towards the US which at times was conciliatory to the US in contravention of traditional Russian security interests. For example, when attempting to join the West, NATO enlargement and US intervention abroad in the former Soviet space is viewed differently than when challenging or disrupting the West, being accepted and even encouraged. Moreover, offensive realism's argument of material capabilities equating to power is too simplistic because it ignores the importance of perspective. US material capabilities have a very different meaning for Russia depending on if Russia is looking to become the US's Western partner and thus they are viewed in a positive light, than compared to when Russia is seeking to challenge or disrupt the US and thus they are seen as a target Russia looks to compete against or undermine. Ultimately, offensive realism's failure to consider the Russian worldview means that existing scholarship omits an important element informing Russian decision making. Consequently, existing work has failed to consider Russia's unique, endogenously formed identity and interests and the impact they have on affecting relations. Therefore, a new approach to the topic was necessary which could account for the Russian perspective by observing the influence of Russian identity and interests, to help more accurately explain the fluctuations in Russian foreign policy over the thirty year period and thus more sufficiently explain the failure to improve US-Russia relations.

Using a Wendtian constructivist approach, this thesis has considered the ideational side of Russian identity and interests and how they inform the Russian worldview. Considering them social constructs intersubjectively formed over time, this thesis was able to determine what Russian identity and interests were used in determining and informing Russia's pursuit of great power status. This thesis analysed Russia's historical experience in order to determine how these various identities and interests originated and how their key elements shape Russian identities and interests. Additionally, this thesis considered the influence historical and ongoing US-Russian interaction has on informing these identities and interests and thus affecting relations. Moreover, it considered the value system

attributed to these ideational constructs required to justify foreign policy direction and help legitimise great power status. Finally, this thesis was able to analyse Russia's evolving perspective on US material capabilities depending on policy and the Russian viewpoint at the time. In doing so, this thesis was able to take into account the Russian worldview. To reveal this, this thesis analysed thirty years of Russian discourse administered by Russian foreign policy makers. As a result, this thesis identified three key policy directions by Russia during this time period, all of which are geared towards the US and West.

Initially, Russia's approach was to seek to join the West. With the West providing a reference point, Russia used a Westernist identity construct to characterise itself as a fellow Western power, historically, culturally, ethnically and religiously a part of the West and therefore legitimise its integration into the Western community. To institutionalise this, Russia sought to join the West's dominant organisations, the EU and NATO. In the Western community, admission and thus great power status acknowledgment is bestowed on those who obtain the necessary Western liberal democratic value system. However, despite Russian attempts to construct the Westernist identity around Western values, it was insufficient. The Western liberal values system was fundamentally incompatible with Russia's historical experience and thus the US was unwilling and unable to accredit Russia membership of the Western community because it could not meet the liberal values criteria required for admission. Unable to join the West itself, while looking on from the sidelines as fellow ex-Soviet states were able to obtain the necessary admission criteria and become a member of the West caused Russia to become disillusioned with the West. Key acts such as NATO enlargement and intervention, the "colour revolutions" in former Soviet states, and Western support for the 2011-2013 anti-government protests in Russia led Moscow to switch tactic towards obtaining status recognition by embracing a contrasting identity and interests.

In Russian minds, if the US would not accept Russia as a Western partner, it would now pivot towards re-ordering the international system in a Cold War balance of power style, to attain US acknowledgment of Russia as an equal, independent great power. To achieve this, Russia affirmed a Eurasianist identity construct informed by the theoretical doctrine Eurasianism which emphasised Russian distinctness from the West. Moscow used Russia's historical experience as a Eurasian power to underpin the argument that it is not a part of the West but is part of a separate, distinct Eurasian pole, accrediting itself a leadership position of this pole. This provided the justification for Russian dominance over

the former Soviet space which in turn helped its status aspirations. To illustrate its Eurasian-ness, Moscow draws from Russia's history, such as its time spent under Mongol rule, its multiethnic population, and religious differences to the West. To solidify this identity construct, Russia proposes a Eurasian value system. Premised around traditional Eurasian values and respect for a difference in governance, this system uses the West as a reference point to show that it is non-Western and non-liberal. Russia used this value system to legitimise the alternative clubs it created such as the CSTO and EEU, to challenge NATO and the EU for their privileged international position. However, the US refused to recognise Russia as an equal independent great power and acknowledge a level of parity between the West and Eurasia. This is because the West refused to recognise Eurasian values as equal to Western liberal values. This came to ahead in the 2014 Ukraine crisis. Russia felt the West had marginalised and disrespected Russia, refusing to acknowledge its great power status. With Ukraine a key part of Russia's Eurasian identity and interests, Russian defence of this caused a new breakdown in relations. This status denial caused Russia to operate out of the confines of the existing international system.

Since 2014, Russia has adopted a disruptor approach tactic designed to undermine and frustrate the existing US led international order. Using a conservative nationalist identity framework, Russia has sought to destabilise the liberal value system that underpins the existing international order. It juxtaposes a version of conservative nationalism with liberal internationalism, the ideational doctrine the current international order is founded upon, to demonstrate the fallibility, hypocrisy and inherent weaknesses found in this doctrine and the practises used on account of liberal internationalism. Principally, Russia rejects the claimed universalism of liberal values. Moscow uses Russia's recent historical experience of its attempt to democracy in the 1990s, alongside examples of Western intervention abroad to demonstrate that liberal values are not universal. Accordingly, Russia rejects the supposed superiority of these values, how they legitimise Western intervention abroad, and ultimately, how they facilitate the US's dominant international position. In turn, Russia uses a conservative nationalism to reject liberal internationalist principles by privileging national sovereignty and autonomy, non-interference and a respect for plural value systems. Russia attempts to use conservative nationalism to remove the US from its privileged international position. This disruptor approach has been partially successful in undermining liberal internationalism, for example weakening NATO and EU unity and undermining trust in US democracy. However, while conservative nationalism has been

useful in facilitating the destabilisation of liberal internationalism, this disruptor approach and the tactics used with this identity construct in mind has had a detrimental affect on US-Russia relations. The US led international order has survived while Russia remains more isolated than ever.

Therefore, this thesis has illustrated that by informing and shaping the Russian worldview and Russian foreign policy, Russian identity and interests has had an influential role in negatively affecting relations, and thus preventing relations from improving. Thus, in order to understand Russian behaviour and ascertain why US-Russia relations are in their current state, a consideration of Russia's independently formed identity and interests is imperative, because this determines the Russian worldview and therefore more accurately explains Russian foreign policy.

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