

**The discursive construction of Russia's national identity
within the Organization for Security and Co-operation
in Europe (OSCE) in the period 2008-2018**

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Abstract

The heightened tensions between Russia and the West, of which the ongoing crisis in and around Ukraine is a good illustration, pose a security threat to the Euro-Atlantic region. This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of Russian foreign policy within the OSCE as well as Russia's stance towards Euro-Atlantic security issues. It addresses the question how Russia discursively constructs its national identity within the OSCE in the period 2008-2018 and whether these discourses reveal any changes and/or contradictions. This thesis fills an important research gap, because no previous research has been done on Russia's national identity within the OSCE. A comprehensive understanding of a state's national identity in its foreign policy is relevant, as it provides insights into the ideological factors that drive how a state defines and pursues its national interests and subsequently foreign policy. A poststructuralist discourse analysis is conducted of the Russian statements delivered at the yearly OSCE Ministerial Council Meetings in the period 2008-2018. The discourse analysis provided insights into how Russia perceives and would like to promote itself within the OSCE. It demonstrated that Russia presents itself within the OSCE as a redeemer of OSCE unilateral actions and an advocate of multilateralism, as a leading, responsible and moral actor that wants to be perceived and treated as a great power, and lastly as a guardian of traditional values and the Russian Orthodox Church.

Keywords: Russia's national identity, Russian foreign policy, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), national identity-foreign policy nexus, post-structuralism, discourse analysis

List of Abbreviations

CIS	Commonwealth for Independent States
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
EU	European Union
HFA	Helsinki Final Act
IR	International Relations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States

Introduction

The deteriorating relations between Russia and the West reached a new low with the outbreak of the crisis in and around Ukraine in 2014. The ongoing crisis in Ukraine, which lasts for already five years, poses a serious security threat to the Euro-Atlantic region. Since the very beginning of the conflict, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) plays a vital role in managing the conflict, aimed at resolving the conflict. OSCE's responses to the crisis includes amongst others, facilitating multilateral dialogue and monitoring the security situation on the ground. The OSCE is often considered the "most appropriate"¹ organisation to help stabilize the situation. In contrast to other organisations, such as the European Union (EU), United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), or the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Russia regards the OSCE as the only impartial organisation that could act as a mediator between the conflict parties. This is due to OSCE's inclusive character and its consensus-based decision making.²

Despite's OSCE's mediation efforts, the discussions between Russia and Ukraine continue to be characterised by different interpretations of the conflict and disagreement about the necessary steps to be taken to solve the conflict. The referendum, which was held on 16 March 2014 in the Republic of Crimea, is one example that illustrates the serious disagreement between Russia and Ukraine. The referendum was about the question whether the Crimean people were in favour to join Russia or whether they favoured Crimea's independency, while remaining part of Ukraine. The outcome of the referendum, where 96.8% voted in favour of joining Russia, was and still remains disputed. Ukraine and the Western international community condemned the Crimean referendum and described it as the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea and violating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, Russia described the referendum as the "reunification"³ of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol with Russia. Russia argues that the right of self-determination applies

¹ Christian Nünlist and David Svarin, "Overcoming the East-West Divide: Perspectives on the Role of the OSCE in the Ukraine Crisis" (Centre for Security Studies, ETH Zurich and foraus – Swiss Forum on Foreign Policy, Zurich, December 2014), 7, <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/Perspectives-on-the-Role-of-the-OSCE-in-the-Ukraine-Crisis.pdf>; Stefan Lehne, "Reviving the OSCE: European Security and Ukraine Crisis" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carnegie Europe, Brussels, September 2015), 1 and 18, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_249_Lehne_OSCE.pdf.

² Nünlist and Svarin, "Overcoming the East-West Divide," 7-9; Lehne, "Reviving the OSCE," 3, 6-8 and 14-18.

³ "Laws on admitting Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation," Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia, last modified March 21, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20625>.

since the majority of the people in Crimea voted in the referendum to secede from Ukraine and join Russia.⁴ These different interpretations of the conflict indicate the dissension between Russia and Ukraine, that complicate the discussions to work towards a peaceful, political settlement of the conflict. Ultimately, the progress made in the crisis in and around Ukraine depends on the political will of the conflict parties involved.

Given the heightened tensions between Russia and the West, it is important to understand the dynamics between Russia and the West more comprehensively. This thesis is concerned with gaining more insights into these dynamics by looking at Russia's foreign policy towards the West and Russia's stance towards Euro-Atlantic security issues. Analysing Russia's foreign policy within the OSCE lends itself well for this, for the following reasons. First, the OSCE is the only European security organisation where Russia's "place and role are fully legitimate"⁵. Second, the OSCE was set up in the early 1970s with the goal to serve as a multilateral platform that facilitates dialogue and cooperation between East and West. Third, the OSCE is the world's largest regional security organisation, that comprises fifty-seven participating States from Europe, Central Asia and North America, and addresses a wide range of security issues.⁶

The existing literature on Russian foreign policy within the OSCE is limited, since it is only concerned with discussing Russia's interests in the OSCE and describing the evolution of Russian foreign policy within the OSCE. Furthermore, these scholars adopted a realist perspective when discussing Russian OSCE policy, arguing that the dynamics of Russian OSCE policy are primarily determined by its national interests. However, a realist approach provides insufficient insights into Russian OSCE policy as it does not take into account any ideological drivers.

Scholars in the identity-related literature "share the notion that identity is a source of an actor's behaviour, and therefore fundamental."⁷ In other words, when applying this notion to the state as the primary actor in this research, state identity "provides a specific

⁴ Luke Harding and Shaun Walker, "Crimea applies to be part of Russian Federation after vote to leave Ukraine," *The Guardian*, March 17, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/17/ukraine-crimea-russia-referendum-complain-result>.

⁵ Victor-Yves Ghebali, "Growing Pains at the OSCE: The Rise and Fall of Russia's Pan-European Expectations," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 18, no. 3 (2005): 375, DOI: 10.1080/09557570500237938.

⁶ "Who We Are: History," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, accessed March 21, 2019, <https://www.osce.org/history>.

⁷ Ashizawa, "When Identity Matters," 573.

value ... which in turn determines a policymaker's preference for a particular foreign policy action."⁸ Therefore, it is relevant to study national identity as it provides insights into the ideological drivers and underlying assumptions and trends of a state's foreign policy. Furthermore, it enables a more comprehensive understanding of how states define and pursue their national interests. As such, scholars in the field of International Relations (IR) argue that national identity plays a crucial role in understanding Russia's rhetoric and foreign policy.⁹ Therefore, in order to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of Russia's OSCE policy and its stance towards Euro-Atlantic security issues, this thesis analyses how Russia perceives and portrays itself within the OSCE. More specifically, this thesis addresses the following research question:

'How does Russia discursively construct its national identity within the OSCE in the period 2008-2018 and do these discourses reveal any changes and/or contradictions?'

In order to answer this research question, this thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter begins with discussing the relationship between national identity and foreign policy in general. Then, it provides an overview of the existing literature on the Russian national identity-foreign policy nexus. Subsequently, the chapter provides some necessary information about the OSCE and an overview of the academic debate about Russian foreign policy within the OSCE. The literature review reveals that research on Russia's national identity within the OSCE is missing and points to the relevance to study it. Chapter two elaborates on why post-structuralist discourse analysis is the most appropriate theoretical method to uncover the mutually constituted relationship between Russia's national identity and foreign policy. Furthermore, I lay out the framework for the discourse analysis, which draws upon the poststructuralist discourse theory developed by Laclau and Mouffe¹⁰ and the analytical dimensions developed by Lene Hansen¹¹. In chapter three the actual discourse

⁸ Ibidem, 595.

⁹ Anne L. Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity and Security Interests* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2009).

¹⁰ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985); Marianne Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips, "Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory," in *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, ed. Marianne Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849208871>.

¹¹ Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse analysis and the Bosnian War* (London: Routledge, 2013).

analysis is conducted. The Russian statements delivered at the yearly OSCE Ministerial Council meetings in the period 2008-2018 are analysed to decipher the key discourses on Russian national identity and identify possible changes and/or contradictions in Russia's national identity constructions. A total of three key identity discourses are found:

'Multilateralism', 'Great power status', and 'Guardian of the rule of law and the Russian Orthodox Church'. Together, these three discourses construct an image of Russia as a redeemer of OSCE unilateral actions and an advocate of multilateralism, as a leading, responsible and moral actor within the OSCE that wants to be perceived and treated as a great power, and lastly as a guardian of traditional values and the Russian Orthodox Church.

1. Literature review

The question of how Russia discursively constructs its national identity within the OSCE in the period 2008-2018 and whether these discourses reveal any changes and/or contradictions, is part of a broader academic debate on the relationship between national identity and foreign policy. First, this chapter discusses the national identity-foreign policy nexus in general. Secondly, this chapter provides an overview of the existing academic debate on the relationship between Russian foreign policy and national identity since the end of the Cold War. Finally, the existing body of literature on Russian foreign policy in the OSCE is reviewed. This last section reveals a gap in current research on Russia's national identity within the OSCE.

1.1 The national identity-foreign policy nexus

In the early 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, scholars in the field of IR became increasingly interested in the concept of identity. This was due to rationalists being unable to adequately explain the systemic transformation reshaping the international order.¹² The failure of material factors to account for such changes in the international system led scholars to examine the role of ideational factors on foreign policymaking and actions.¹³ Since, scholars have argued that ideas, in the broad sense of the word, play an important role in explaining fundamental change.¹⁴

Although no general consensus exists over the definition of the concept 'identity', scholars treat identity "as a *process*, an ever-evolving phenomenon that is based on a certain foundation or stable cultural attributes but open to adjustment and transformation."¹⁵

Within this process a 'Self' is constructed, as well as 'Other(s)' to differentiate itself. National

¹² Nina Tannenwald and William C. Wohlforth, "Introduction: The Role of Ideas and the End of the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, no. 2 (April 2005): 3-12, DOI: 10.1162/1520397053630574; Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 48; Rick Fawn, "Ideology and national identity in post-communist foreign policies," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 19, no. 3 (2003): 13, DOI: 10.1080/13523270300660016.

¹³ Kuniko Ashizawa, "When Identity Matters: State Identity, Regional Institution-Building, and Japanese Foreign Policy," *International Studies Review* 10, no. 3 (September 2008): 572; Tannenwald and Wohlforth, "Introduction: The Role of Ideas and the End of the Cold War," 3-12; Christian Reus-Smit, "Constructivism," in *Theories of International Relations*, ed. Scott Burchill et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 194-198.

¹⁴ Fawn, "Ideology and national identity," 10.

¹⁵ Alla Kassianova, "Russia: Still Open to the West? Evolution of the State Identity in the Foreign Policy and Security Discourse," *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 6 (2001): 824, DOI: 10.1080/09668130120078513.

identity is not only considered a prerequisite for drawing up foreign policy, but it is also shaped by foreign policy. As such, national identity and foreign policy have a mutually constitutive relationship.¹⁶ Their interrelationship is underlined by a group of scholars who have demonstrated the role identity plays in providing security, which is one of the main objectives of a state's foreign policy. Some have even argued for their inseparability: on the one hand physical borders help to develop a national identity, on the other hand national identity unites people and as such is important for providing security.¹⁷ Next, is an overview of the existing academic literature on the relationship between Russian foreign policy and national identity since the end of the Cold War.

1.2 Russian national identity-foreign policy nexus

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, officially the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the Soviet Union ceased to exist. With the subsequent absence of a dominant school of thought that could serve as the foundation for Russian politics, nationalism and national identity became important guiding principles of Russian foreign policy.¹⁸ The Russian political elite saw restoring Russia's national identity as a requisite for solving problems.¹⁹ In this regard, in the early 1990s, Russia was faced with the prevailing question of how Russia would define its nature and role in the post-Soviet era and what direction Russia should head in the future.²⁰ Russia's desire to construct a national identity was especially strong as the fall of the communist regimes - together with the realization that Russia's territory had shrunk considerably compared to its territory during the Russian Empire - gave "a sense of defeat and failure."²¹ This sense of defeat or 'victimization' continued to influence Russia's identity and policy formation throughout the years.²²

¹⁶ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 1, 4-6, 15, 25-26 and 30.

¹⁷ Fawn, "Ideology and national identity," 13.

¹⁸ Ibidem, 4-10 and 14; Richard Sakwa, *Russian politics and society* (London: Routledge, 2008), 35-36.

¹⁹ Margot Light, "In search of an identity: Russian foreign policy and the end of ideology," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 19, no. 3 (2003): 52, DOI: 10.1080/13523270300660017.

²⁰ Bobo Lo, "The Determinants of Russian Foreign Policy," in *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking*, ed. Bobo Lo (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 12-39.

²¹ Sakwa, *Russian politics and society*, 39.

²² Ibidem, 39; Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 29.

Scholars argue that no coherent Russian national identity can be identified: there are multiple and occasionally contrasting national identities.²³ Russia's diverse history and geographical position are seen as two interrelated and important factors that have hindered the formation of a coherent identity. This has also contributed to the Russian sense that they are different and unique.²⁴ In this regard, "Russia is often interpreted as being torn between Asian and European heritage and between antipathy and awe towards the West."²⁵ Russia's identity dilemma was intensified by the major challenges faced by the country: it had to rebuild its political and economic institutions and found itself in a national crisis.²⁶ It attempted to establish a strong Russian statehood and a democratic polity as well as balance "foreign policy goals with political and economic reconstruction at home."²⁷ Furthermore, the difficulty to formulate a coherent Russian identity has been seen as being due to Russia's internal ethnic diversity and its affiliation with ethnic Russians living in the former Soviet Republics.²⁸ As a case in point: in 1989, over 25 million people living outside Russia - two thirds of whom in Ukraine and Belarus - identified themselves as ethnic Russians. This clearly illustrates the disconnection between Russia's territorial borders and its ethnosphere.²⁹

Russia's identity evolution in the post-Soviet era was a result of domestic and international developments, as well as Russia's (in)actions vis-à-vis the West.³⁰ Some scholars focus on the impact of the domestic structure³¹, whereas others focus on the impact of the domestic as well as international structure, when analysing Russia's national identity-foreign policy nexus.³² Yet others focus on the importance of Russia's interactions with the West in shaping Russia's national identity.³³

²³ Lionel Ponsard, "Bridging the gap: cooperative security as the solution to Russia-Nato relations" (Dissertation, University of Leiden, 2004), 70.

²⁴ Ponsard, "Bridging the gap," 18 and 21; Bo Petersson, *National Self-Images and Regional Identities in Russia* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001), 59-61 and 68-70.

²⁵ Fawn, "Ideology and national identity," 16.

²⁶ Sakwa, *Russian politics and society*, 35-36.

²⁷ Ibidem, 36.

²⁸ Fawn, "Ideology and national identity," 12 and 18.

²⁹ Gerard Toal, *Near Abroad: Putin the West and the Contest Over Ukraine and the Caucasus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 65-70.

³⁰ Ted Hopf, "'Crimea is ours': A discursive history," *International Relations* 30, no. 2 (2016), DOI: 10.1177/0047117816645646; Dina Moulioukova, "Dialectic Relationship between Foreign Policy and Russian National Identity," *Jean Monnet Chair* 11, no. 9 (June 2011): 16-17.

³¹ Examples of these scholars are: Hopf (2002); Clunan (2009); Tsygankov (2010); Zevelev (2016).

³² Examples of these scholars are: Prizel (1998); Fawn (2003); Tsygankov (2014).

³³ Examples of these scholars are: Wendt (1987); Neumann (1996); Urban (1998); Ringman (2002); White & Feklyunia (2014); Morozov (2015).

Katzenstein argues that the concept of Russian national identity that prevailed in the post-Soviet era “was largely a function of political struggle between competing groupings within the elite.”³⁴ The Russian political elite have been influenced by, broadly speaking, three distinct schools of foreign policy thinking in defining Russia’s national identity and the world: Westernist, Civilizationist, and Statist.³⁵ Westernizers advocate the assimilation of Russia into the West through emphasizing commonality and inclusiveness. Westernizers are in favour of a neoliberal market economy, close relationships with Western democratic states - especially with the United States (U.S.) - and active cooperation with international institutions. Furthermore, the Westernist school of thought is in favour of Russia developing into a prosperous, powerful and democratic country in line with Western standards.³⁶ Civilizationists view Russia as having a different and unique culture from those of the West and having the messianic duty to spread Russian values in the ‘near abroad’: the fourteen successor states of the Soviet Union. Russian messianism is based on the belief that Russia is the chosen nation to accomplish a certain purpose or teach other nations a lesson. In the taxonomy of Schöpflin, Russian messianism is described as a “national myth ... of redemption and suffering and a myth of election.”³⁷ Duncan argues that “Russian messianism has been a persistent phenomenon, appearing with differing strengths and different forms at various times in Russian history.”³⁸ It revived after the end of the Cold War as an alternative ideology that attempted to unite the Russian people and protect the Russian nation from perceived threats from the West.³⁹ Bouveng argues that one of the key functions of Russian messianism is to legitimize certain policy actions and that “its strength ... lies in a Self/Other dichotomy expressed in discourses of danger and Otherness”.⁴⁰

³⁴ Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 285.

³⁵ These categorizations are used by the following scholars: Bobo Lo; Andrei P. Tsygankov; Pavel A. Tsygankov and Anne L. Clunan. However, some scholars define these three main Russian schools of foreign policy thinking differently because of nuances about how to distinct the different groups. For example, Ted Hopf and Ilya Prizel define them as ‘Liberal’, ‘Conservative’, and ‘Centrist’. Margot Light defines the three schools of thought as ‘Liberal Westernist’, ‘Fundamental Nationalist’, and ‘Pragmatic Nationalist’.

³⁶ Andrei P. Tsygankov, “Contested Identity and Foreign Policy: Interpreting Russia’s International Choices,” *International Studies Perspectives* 15, no. 1 (February 2014): 29, <https://doi.org/10.1111/insp.12000>; Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 241-242; Light, “In search of an identity,” 44.

³⁷ Peter J.S. Duncan, *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After* (Routledge: London, 2000): 3. See this source for a more extensive study on Russian Messianism.

³⁸ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 1.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, 1-3.

⁴⁰ Kerstin Rebecca Bouveng, “The Role of Messianism in Contemporary Russian Identity and Statecraft” (Durham theses, Durham University, 2010), 15.

Furthermore, Civilizationists are in favour of re-establishing the Russian Empire and are closely linked to the Christian Orthodox Church. The Civilizationist school of thought believes that Russian values are often “irreconcilable” with Western ones. Finally, Statists are in favour of developing Russia into a strong independent power. Their foreign policy approach is an amalgam of several Western and Civilizationist features.⁴¹

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia moved to and fro between the Westernist, Civilizationist and Statist school of thought in order to redefine Russia’s national identity. However, the Russian political elite agreed to constitute a national self-image in line with its historical aspirations to be perceived as a modern and distinctive great power.⁴² Despite Russia’s initial positive attitude towards democratic modernization and the West, the majority of Russia’s political elite rejected the Westernist understanding of Russia. They considered this approach as placing Russia in a subordinate position to the West and as lacking a clear vision for Russia’s future. According to Clunan, this was due to the fact that this Westernist national self-image did not correspond with Russia’s historical aspirations to obtain great power status. Clunan argues that the national self-images that are historical and effective legitimate “are most likely to dominate the political discourse and come to act as ‘the’ national identity and define national interests.”⁴³ In addition, the Westernizers had lost their legitimacy because the domestic challenges faced by Russia and the ongoing eastward expansion of NATO were associated with the Westernist school of thought. At the same time, the Civilizationist discourse lost its credibility: it became associated with the failed Soviet economic model.⁴⁴

Consequently, from late 1993 onwards, the Statist national identity came to dominate the Russian political discourse. This Statist identity evolved around pragmatic nationalistic views focused on Russia’s aspiration to regain its international great power status. Russia’s identity was still balancing between the West and its ‘near abroad’. On the

⁴¹ Lo, “The Determinants of Russian Foreign Policy” 15-18; Tsygankov, “Contested Identity and Foreign Policy,” 29; Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 4-9; Andrei P. Tsygankov and Pavel A. Tsygankov, “National ideology and IR theory: Three incarnations of the ‘Russian idea’,” *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 4 (2010): 668-670, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066109356840>; Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia’s Resurgence*; Anne L. Clunan, “Historical aspirations and the domestic politics of Russia’s pursuit of international status,” *Communist and Post-communist Studies* 47 (2014): 281-290, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/48344>;

⁴² Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia’s Resurgence*, 102-106; Hopf, “‘Crimea is ours,’” 227-255.

⁴³ Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia’s Resurgence*, 102.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, 107; Hopf, “‘Crimea is ours,’” 229-230 and 247-248.

one hand, Russia's geographic aspirations were generally still directed towards Europe.⁴⁵ However, Russia's construction of Europe as the 'other' was two-fold: Europe was perceived as "admired and to be emulated, but also resented, because of perceived attempts to exclude Russia from Europe despite the repeated sacrifices Russians have made for Europe."⁴⁶ Europe was admired and emulated by Russia, for example, for its neoliberal economic model. Resentment and exclusion were reflected in Russia's "criticism of unipolarity [that] had become a persistent theme in Russian political discourse"⁴⁷. This criticism was directed at the Western countries, under leadership of the U.S., who were considered as attempting to weaken Russia. On the other hand, Russia's identity and Russia's foreign policy priorities were also defined by its vital economic and security interests in the 'near abroad'.⁴⁸ This identity part is linked to the common Russian belief that "Russia is a civilisation, rather than a nation, into which all peoples of the empire should be brought."⁴⁹ This belief is closely related to Russia's tradition of messianic thinking: Russia's mission of civilization to spread Christian Orthodox values. Scholars argue that Russia's tradition of messianism and the Orthodox Church have a vital impact on Russia's national identity formulation.⁵⁰ This sense that Russia has a unique historical mission has been identified as a recurring theme in Russia's national identity discourse.⁵¹

Russia's national identity did not change radically when Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000. Russian foreign policy was in line with its status-driven national identity, characterized by taking a cooperative stance towards the West and active involvement in the 'near abroad'.⁵² However, Russia's engagement and cooperation with the West was defined as pragmatic and dualistic: it was constantly balancing between, on the one hand,

⁴⁵ Light, "In search of an identity," 54-56.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 55.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, 50.

⁴⁸ Tsygankov, "Contested Identity and Foreign Policy," 23; Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence*, 105-111; Clunan, "Historical aspirations,"; Ted Hopf, "Identity, Foreign Policy, and IR Theory," in *Social Construction of international politics: identities & foreign policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*, ed. Ted Hopf (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 259-296; Light, "In search of an identity," 45-47; Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 247-248.

⁴⁹ Ponsard, "Bridging the gap," 47.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, 49, 71 and 90; Moulioukova, "Dialectic Relationship," 7.

⁵¹ Monica Hanson-Green, "Russian Foreign Policy and National Identity" (Senior Honors Thesis, University of New Orleans, 2017), 13.

⁵² Tsygankov, "Contested Identity and Foreign Policy," 23; Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence*, 105-111; Clunan, "Historical aspirations,"; Hopf, "Identity, Foreign Policy, and IR Theory," 278 and 288-289.

cooperating with the West to improve Russia's economy and, on the other hand, promoting Russia's traditional security principles of strengthening its power and influence in the world.⁵³ Russia's foreign policy from 2004 onwards, was characterized by a more independent and assertive stance towards the West. Russia felt threatened by the regime changes in Georgia in 2003 and subsequently Ukraine in 2004, as well as the eastward expansion of NATO and U.S. attempts to deploy a missile defence system. These developments were seen by Russia as threatening its identity as a great power and losing power in its sphere of influence. This resulted in further undermining Russia's assimilation with the West and increasingly acting on Russia's historical aspiration of obtaining great power status and securing the Russian sphere of influence through the protection of Russians in the 'near abroad'.⁵⁴

Hopf identifies some constant and new identity features, adopted from the Westernist and Civilizationist school of thought, in the period 2005-2014. In this period, Russia rejected its historical identity as a "raw material appendage"⁵⁵ and instead identified itself with a neoliberal, regional power, and at the same time considering itself a "developing country, developing not only economically in a neoliberal direction, but also politically, as an emerging democracy."⁵⁶ Russia's stance towards the Soviet past seemed contradictory as it portrayed the Soviet Union as a positive as well as a negative historical Other for contemporary Russia. For example, whereas Russia appreciated the social and cultural aspects of the Soviet Union, it also rejected its economic and political system.⁵⁷ Besides this, during Putin's third presidential term (2012-2018), two new features were added to the predominant Centrist identity discourse. First, a Russia "equal to the West in many aspects and superior in some"⁵⁸ and independent of Western values and standards of evaluation. Russia's identity discourse was characterized by taking a civilizational 'turn': seeing itself as culturally and politically independent from the West.⁵⁹ Secondly, it adopted

⁵³ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 20 and 28; Valerie A. Pacer, *Russian Foreign Policy under Dmitry Medvedev, 2008-2012* (London: Routledge, 2016), 6.

⁵⁴ Marcel de Haas, *Russia's Foreign Security Policy in the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2010), 17-24, 34-35, 77-80, 83 and 158; Roger E. Kanet & Rémi Piet, *Shifting Priorities in Russia's Foreign and Security Policy* (London: Routledge, 2014), 3-4; Clunan, "Historical aspirations."

⁵⁵ Hopf, "Crimea is ours," 233.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, 235.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 233-239; Petersson, *National Self-Images and Regional Identities in Russia*, 187.

⁵⁸ Hopf, "Crimea is ours," 241.

⁵⁹ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 167-182.

the concept of an authentic Russia that identifies with “Imperial Russia as a positive Historical Other”.⁶⁰ Russia’s national identity was well summarized in a speech by Putin in 2013: “Russian identity is not Soviet, not fundamentalist conservatism, and not Western ultraliberalism”⁶¹.

Russia’s conflict in and around Ukraine in 2014 is seen by scholars as a clear example of Russia’s securitization of its national identity: Russia used its identity to justify its interference in the domestic affairs of Ukraine. The year 2014 is regarded as a shift in Russia’s national identity, as from that time on Russia defined itself in its official rhetoric as a “guarantor of security for the Russian world.”⁶² This identity is linked to the Russian messianic idea of protecting ethnic Russians in the ‘near abroad’ and the need to spread Russia’s unique culture.

Having discussed the existing scholarly debate on the Russian national identity-foreign policy nexus, the next section provides some necessary background information about the OSCE and is concerned with the literature on Russian foreign policy in the OSCE.

1.3. The OSCE and Russian OSCE policy

1.3.1 The OSCE as an organisation

The OSCE was set up in the early 1970s with the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) to serve as a multilateral platform for dialogue and negotiation between East and West, stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The Conference comprised of 35 participating states. Since then, the number of participating states has grown to 57: from North America, Europe and Central Asia. In December 1975, the participating states signed the Helsinki Final Act (HFA), considered the organisation’s founding document. The HFA stated the overall goal of the CSCE, namely: “to improve and intensify their relations and to contribute in Europe to peace, security, justice and cooperation ...”⁶³ Although the principles described in the HFA seemed promising, they have become a source of dispute in time of crises. This is due to the principles’ ambivalent nature, that allow them to be interpreted in

⁶⁰ Hopf, “‘Crimea is ours,’” 236.

⁶¹ Ibidem, 233.

⁶² Igor Zevelev, “Russia’s National Identity Transformation and New Foreign Policy Doctrine,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, last modified June 7, 2014, <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The-Russian-World-Boundaries-16707>.

⁶³ Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act: Helsinki 1975* (Helsinki: CSCE, August 1975), 2, <https://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act?download=true>.

different ways. Especially the principles of “territorial integrity of states, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-intervention in internal affairs, and self-determination of peoples” are contested.⁶⁴ After the Budapest Summit in December 1994, the CSCE was renamed as the OSCE. The OSCE is characterized by its inclusive character, consensus based and politically binding decision-making processes, and its comprehensive approach to security, covering politico-military, economic and environmental, and human rights issues.⁶⁵

1.3.2 Russian foreign policy within the OSCE

The existing body of literature on Russian foreign policy in the OSCE discusses Russia’s interests in the OSCE and how Russian OSCE policy has evolved over the years.

The main reasons for the Soviet Union to join the CSCE were expanding trade opportunities and Western acceptance of the political status quo in Europe, thereby validating the status of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union hoped to consolidate the status quo, whereas the Western states aimed, on the long term, to integrate Western liberal norms and rules in Soviet foreign policy. Furthermore, the Soviet Union was mainly interested in the politico-military dimension of the CSCE, whereas the West was primarily interested in the human dimension. These different visions and conflicting expectations of the CSCE also became future sources of disputes.⁶⁶

Overall, scholars have discerned the evolution of Russian OSCE policy in roughly two phases. The focus is on Russia’s stance towards the OSCE as such and its stance towards the Western countries within the OSCE. The first period, from the early 1970s through to 1994, is characterized by Russia’s constructive engagement with a supportive and cooperative stance towards the OSCE. The second period, from the 1994 and onwards, reflected Russia’s deteriorating relations with the West. In this period, Russian OSCE policy gradually shifted towards a more critical stance and the adoption of obstructive policies.

Russia accused the OSCE of the following four claims. First of all, a “lack of clearly established institutional rules” for control and oversight of OSCE’s activities. Second,

⁶⁴ Elena Kropatcheva, “The Evolution of Russia’s OSCE Policy: From the Promises of the Helsinki Final Act and the Ukraine Crisis,” *Journal of European Studies* 23, no. 1 (2015): 9, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2014.1001823>.

⁶⁵ “Who We Are: What is the OSCE.”

⁶⁶ Wolfgang Zellner, “Russia and the OSCE: From High Hopes to Disillusionment,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 18, no. 3 (2005): 390, DOI: 10.1080/09557570500237995; Kropatcheva, “The Evolution of Russia’s OSCE Policy,” 8-10.

applying double standards to the ‘East’ and ‘West of Vienna’, regarding the geopolitical distribution of OSCE posts and field missions, monitoring elections, as well as the scale of contributions. Third, an imbalance between the three security dimensions, especially related to the hindered development of the politico-military and the economic and environmental dimension. Fourth, the “marginalization of the OSCE in the landscape of European security”. The issues mentioned by Russia continued to be important areas of attention for Russian OSCE policy in the subsequent years.⁶⁷

Consequently, Russia actively called for ambitious institutional reforms to strengthen the OSCE as a European security organisation. However, no consensus was reached on a meaningful reform agenda due to the conflicting needs and interests of the participating states and different understandings on how the OSCE should develop in the future.⁶⁸ Russia’s disappointment over the failure to get the institutional reforms off the ground, together with the Eastern enlargement of NATO and the EU, resulted in Russia’s change of course within the OSCE and a shift in focus.⁶⁹ An accumulation of political setbacks and OSCE’s criticism of Russia on human and political rights issues such as elections, the rule of law and freedom of the media, exacerbated Russia’s assertiveness and tough stance towards the OSCE.⁷⁰ Against this backdrop, Russia regarded the OSCE as a “unilateral instrument”⁷¹ to implement Western foreign and security policy and pleaded for a “two-way politics”⁷². Hence, Russia’s focus increasingly shifted away from the OSCE towards international organisations comprising Atlantic and Central-East Asia countries, such as the CIS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.⁷³

In sum, Russian OSCE policy shifted from strengthening the C/OSCE to flourish into the prominent European security organisation, towards marginalizing the role of the OSCE. At the same time Russia has tried “not to ‘demonize’ the Organization”⁷⁴. After all, certain

⁶⁷ Pacer, *Russian Foreign Policy under Dmitry Medvedev*, 46-47.

⁶⁸ Zellner, “Russia and the OSCE,” 398-400; Elena Kropatcheva, “Russia and the role of the OSCE in European security: a ‘Forum’ for dialogue or a ‘Battlefield’ of interests?,” *European Security* 21, no. 3 (2012): 377, DOI: 10.1080/09662839.2011.640323.

⁶⁹ Kropatcheva, “Russia and the role of the OSCE in European security,” 376-377; Kropatcheva, “The Evolution of Russia’s OSCE Policy,” 10-12.

⁷⁰ Pacer, *Russian Foreign Policy under Dmitry Medvedev*, 44.

⁷¹ de Haas, *Russia’s Foreign Security Policy in the 21st Century*, 100.

⁷² *Ibidem*, 101.

⁷³ Hans Hækkerup, “Russia, the OSCE and Post-Cold-War European Security,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 18, no. 3 (2005): 371-372, DOI: 10.1080/09557570500237912; Ghebali, “Growing Pains at the OSCE,” 378, 380, 384 and 387; Zellner, “Russia and the OSCE,” 398.

⁷⁴ Kropatcheva, “The Evolution of Russia’s OSCE Policy,” 18.

security issues remained of sufficient interest to Russia to seek cooperation. Russian OSCE policy shifted from emphasizing multilateral cooperation, towards gradually moving towards a realist balance-of-power approach. Accordingly, the majority of scholars describe the evolution of Russian OSCE policy as gradually evolving towards disengagement, disillusionment and lacking any sense of ownership.⁷⁵

The vast majority of scholars adopt a realist perspective when discussing the evolution of Russian OSCE policy, arguing that the dynamics of Russian OSCE policy is primarily determined by its national interests. This group of scholars perceive Russia as a realist actor, whose foreign policy is based on rational balance-of-power calculations. They distinguish two main, ongoing Russian interests in the OSCE. First, the OSCE is seen by Russia as a means to foster Russia's European integration. As the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance between the former Soviet Union and seven Central and Eastern European states, and the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, the OSCE was the only European security organisation within which Russia's "place and role [were] fully legitimate."⁷⁶ Consequently, Russia is intent on promoting the OSCE as the prominent European security organisation that would replace the Warsaw Pact and NATO and counterbalance the dominance of the EU and the UN. Russia has been aiming at strengthening the OSCE, in an attempt to exert more influence, regain control over its former allies, avoid political isolation and halt further eastward expansion of NATO. This must be seen in light of Russia's rejection of Western unilateralism and its vision of a multipolar world. Secondly, Russia perceives the OSCE as an instrument to secure its regional sphere of influence, to protect Russians in the 'near abroad' and to counter increasing Western and OSCE presence and interference in the post-Soviet states. In this way, Russia perceives the OSCE as being an instrument that can serve Russia's ultimate objective of regaining its great power status and being perceived and treated by the Western countries as an equal sovereign state.⁷⁷ It should be noted that this group of scholars mainly highlight international developments, as well as policies and actions of external actors, that shape Russia's national interests and, by extension, its foreign policy

⁷⁵ Kropatcheva (2012 and 2015); Ghebali (2005); Zellner (2005); Hopmann (2010).

⁷⁶ Ghebali, "Growing Pains at the OSCE," 375.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, 375-388; Zellner, "Russia and the OSCE," 389-402; Kropatcheva, "Russia and the role of the OSCE in European security," 377. Kropatcheva, "The Evolution of Russia's OSCE Policy," 10; Heather Hurlburt, "Russia, the OSCE and European Security Architecture," *Helsinki Monitor* 6, no. 2 (1995): 5-20; Viatcheslav Morozov, "Russia's Changing Attitude toward the OSCE: Contradictions and Continuity," *Security and Peace* 23, no. 2 (2005): 69-73, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24231503>.

within the OSCE. Supporters of this realist approach regard national interests as the predominant driving force of Russian OSCE policy. They believe that Russia instrumentalizes the OSCE in order to further its national interests.

Elena Kropatcheva adopts a neoclassical realist perspective in attempting to understand the so-called 'ambivalent' Russian OSCE policy. The neoclassical realist perspective takes into account material as well as subjective factors, such as status, perceptions and role of international imperatives, as well as domestic and international developments. Kropatcheva argues that Russia adopts both constructive as well as obstructive strategies within the OSCE.⁷⁸ According to Kropatcheva, "Russia is still interested in the OSCE, but its policy has become more pragmatic, selective and instrumentalist."⁷⁹

This section has shown that research on the role of ideational factors, such as national identity, in shaping Russian foreign policy within the OSCE, is missing in existing literature. What specific characteristics does Russia ascribe itself within the OSCE? And how is its national identity constructed? These questions are important to examine because, as demonstrated in the first two sections of this chapter, studying the national identity-foreign policy nexus enables us to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of a state's foreign policy. Therefore, we cannot disregard the impact of identity on Russian foreign policy within the OSCE. An analysis of how Russia discursively constructs its national identity within the OSCE - and whether these discourses reveal any changes and/or contradictions - will further deepen our understanding of the drivers behind Russian behaviour in this organisation.

⁷⁸ Kropatcheva, "Russia and the role of the OSCE in European security"; Kropatcheva, "The Evolution of Russia's OSCE Policy"; Elena Kropatcheva, "Russian foreign policy in the realm of European security through the lens of neoclassical realism," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 2012): 30-40, DOI: 10.1016/j.euras.2011.10.004.

⁷⁹ Kropatcheva, "Russia and the role of the OSCE in European security," 370.

2. Theory and methodology

This chapter explores the theory and method appropriate to examine how Russia discursively constructs its national identity within the OSCE and to identify any changes and/or contradictions. It is argued that a poststructuralist discourse analysis is the most useful theoretical method to answer this thesis' research question. The first section of this chapter provides an overview of the scholarly literature examining the nexus between national identity and foreign policy. It examines the main ontological and epistemological assumptions that literature relies upon. Ontology is concerned with the study of the nature of entities, whereas epistemology refers to the study of how these entities are constructed. This is important to discuss, because these assumptions indicate the way in which research is conducted.⁸⁰ The second section elaborates on the characteristics and differences between the two main theoretical strands studying the national identity-foreign policy nexus and argues why this thesis is rooted in post-structuralism. The third section discusses why post-structuralist discourse analysis is the most appropriate theoretical method to reveal how Russia's national identity within the OSCE was constructed in the period 2008-2018 and to identify possible changes and/or contradictions. The final section maps out the specific research design that forms the basis of the analysis in the following chapter.

2.1 Literature on the national identity-foreign policy nexus

Scholars in the field of IR have examined the nexus between national identity and foreign policy mainly from a constructivist perspective.⁸¹ Unlike realism and liberalism (which view national identities as exogenously given and as such do not examine this nexus), constructivism argues that national identity is an explanatory variable in foreign policy analysis and is concerned with questioning how a state's national identity is constructed.⁸² Besides national identity, constructivism sheds light on the role of ideas, perceptions and values in shaping foreign policy.⁸³ Constructivists all share the same ontological assumption:

⁸⁰ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27-36.

⁸¹ Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence*, 1-8.

⁸² Reus-Smit, "Constructivism," 197-199; Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, 26.

⁸³ Christian Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's Conduct towards the West* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 22.

that reality and knowledge are socially constructed.⁸⁴ Another common feature of constructivist theories is that “they pay close attention to the prevailing discourse(s) in society because discourse reflects and shapes beliefs and interests, and establishes accepted norms of behaviour.”⁸⁵ In this thesis, “discourse is understood as the fixation of meaning within a particular domain.”⁸⁶ Multiple, and sometimes contradictory, discourses can be identified within a particular discursive domain.

Despite such shared assumptions, constructivist scholars studying the relationship between national identity and foreign policy can be subdivided into roughly two theoretical approaches: conventional constructivists and post-structuralists. While both strands share the same ontological assumption, their epistemology and methodology differ from each other.⁸⁷ An important epistemological difference between the two strands is that conventional constructivism is concerned with making causal claims, whereas post-structuralism focuses on constitutive claims. The next section elaborates on the main characteristics and differences between the two constructivist strands and sets out why this thesis applies a post-structuralist approach.⁸⁸

2.2 Constructivism

Conventional constructivists examining the national identity-foreign policy nexus are all interested in determining and understanding the causal relationship between a state’s identity, national interests and its foreign policy.⁸⁹ However, conventional constructivists differ with regard to the level of analysis used to examine the relationship between national identity and foreign policy.⁹⁰ Some scholars explain this relationship from a systemic approach, by focusing on the interactions between states within the international

⁸⁴ Stefano Guzzini, “A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations* 6, no. 2 (June 2000): 147-175. DOI: 10.1177/1354066100006002001.

⁸⁵ Stephen M. Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories,” *Foreign Policy* 110 (Spring 1998): 40-41, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1149275>.

⁸⁶ Jørgensen and Phillips, “Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory,” 26.

⁸⁷ Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 182, <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.23.1.171>.

⁸⁸ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 8-10 and 25.

⁸⁹ Alexander Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State,” *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (1994): 385 and 397, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2944711>.

⁹⁰ Reus-Smit, “Constructivism,” 199-201.

structure⁹¹, whereas others approach it from a unit-level approach by emphasizing the impact of the domestic structure.⁹²

Among the conventional constructivists, Anne Clunan offers an interesting insight for this thesis, were it not for her focus on causality. In contrast to other conventional constructivists, Clunan questions the possibility of changing identity discourses. Clunan focuses on the societal dimension and attempts to go beyond the structural and deterministic approaches of other conventional constructivists, which consider identity a stable variable. She argues that a structural approach towards the national identity-foreign policy nexus “offers limited insight into whether and how identities develop and change.”⁹³ Clunan views identity not as a fixed identity, but as being subject to change.⁹⁴ As it is concerned with how national identities develop and change over time, Clunan’s approach could offer valuable insights for analysing the second part of this thesis’ research question. However, Clunan’s theory remains limited since it is focused on the causal relationship between national identity and foreign policy. As this thesis is not concerned with the causal, but with the constituted relationship between national identity and foreign policy, conventional constructivism is unable to answer or provide sufficient insights into how Russia discursively constructs its national identity within the OSCE, and whether these discourses reveal any changes and/or contradictions over time.

Post-structuralism is more appropriate to adequately address this thesis’ research question for the following reasons. First, this research is concerned with *how* Russian national identity is shaped and formulated in order to get a deeper understanding of the origin of identity, instead of interested in the *effects* of identities on policy practices and actions.⁹⁵ Post-structuralism is suited to address this question, as it is based on the core epistemological assumption that national identity and foreign policy are based on a mutually constituted relationship, rather than causal. This means that, on the one hand, identity is

⁹¹ See the following sources for an analysis of conventional constructivists examining the national identity-foreign policy nexus from a systemic perspective: Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation,” 384-386; Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*; Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 2 and 5.

⁹² See the following sources for an analysis of conventional constructivists examining the national identity-foreign policy nexus from a unit-level approach: Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,”; Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia’s Resurgence*.

⁹³ Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia’s Resurgence*, 7.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 7-8.

⁹⁵ Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism,” 183-184.

shaped by foreign policy, while, on the other hand, identity is considered a prerequisite for drawing up foreign policy. This assumption is linked to the post-structuralist conceptualization of identity as political, discursive, relational and social. In this regard, Lene Hansen has stated that the goal of foreign policy makers is to construct a stable link between identity and foreign policy in order to underpin, legitimize and enforce its foreign policy towards its relevant public.⁹⁶ Accordingly, Hansen has argued that foreign policies are constructed by means of articulating and drawing upon “specific identities of other states, regions, peoples and institutions as well as on identity of a national, regional, or institutional Self.”⁹⁷ This implies that national identity consists of a clear construction of the ‘Self’, as well as multiple ‘Others’ to differentiate itself.⁹⁸ This is in line with considering identity as being relationally constituted: it derives its meaning “through reference to something it is not.”⁹⁹

Secondly, post-structuralists assume that “discourse constructs the social world in social meaning, and that, owing to the fundamental instability of language, meaning can never be permanently fixed.”¹⁰⁰ This is in line with the post-structuralist conceptualization of identity as political and discursive, which implies that identities cannot be regarded as an objective, fixed and stable entity, hence they are constantly rearticulated through discourse and its meaning depend on interpretation and the political context.¹⁰¹ Viewing identity as such is very relevant for this thesis’, as the second part of this thesis’ research question is interested in revealing possible discursive identity changes.

Finally, another difference between the two strands is that whereas conventional constructivism distinguishes between material and ideational factors, poststructuralism goes beyond this dichotomy. Post-structuralism takes into account both material factors and ideas when analysing foreign policy. They are discursively constructed and as such cannot be separated from each other.¹⁰² This thesis also does not differentiate between material or ideational factors, because this thesis is interested in the *discursive* construction of Russian national identity within the OSCE.

⁹⁶ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 1, 4-6, 15, 25-26 and 30.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, 5.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, 1, 5-6 and 15-21.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, 6.

¹⁰⁰ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002), 6, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849208871>.

¹⁰¹ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 4-6 and 25.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, 1, 5-6, 19-20, 22-25; Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy*, 108.

For the reasons set out above, post-structuralism is regarded the most appropriate theoretical point of view from which to answer this thesis' research question, namely: how Russia discursively constructs its national identity within the OSCE in the period 2008-2018 and whether these discourses reveal any changes and/or contradictions. Accordingly, this thesis is rooted in post-structuralism. The next section presents the methodology through which identity formation in foreign policy discourse can be systematically analysed.

2.3 Methodology: poststructuralist discourse analysis

This thesis conducts a poststructuralist discourse analysis, which is regarded the most suitable method to uncover the constituted relationship between identity and foreign policy. The reason for choosing discourse analysis, above other qualitative methodologies, such as qualitative content analysis, is that qualitative content analysis is only concerned with studying the prevalence of ideas in texts, whereas discourse analysis deconstructs an idea "into different puzzle pieces"¹⁰³. This is of relevance for this particular thesis as the research question is interested in unravelling how discourses in a particular domain, that together constitute the Russian national identity in the OSCE, come about. Furthermore, discourse analysis is a relevant method for this thesis as it is aimed at revealing the hidden meaning ascribed to language by taking into account both the social and historical context. All in all, this method provides an adequate analytical lens through which the key discourses in a particular domain, that together construct Russian national identity within the OSCE, can be systematically examined. It is a fruitful method to understand this constituted identity.¹⁰⁴

Discourse analysis predominantly relies on an inductive reasoning. This thesis relies upon a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning. An inductive approach starts with analysing empirical data from which to derive generalizable insights, in this case Russian statements delivered at the yearly OSCE Ministerial Council meetings in the period 2008-2018 are analysed to decipher the key discourses on Russian national identity. A deductive approach generally starts with deducing a hypothesis from a selected theory which is consequently tested by means of analysing empirical data.¹⁰⁵ Yet, the deductive approach in this research is limited to the point that no hypotheses are derived from the literature

¹⁰³ Niels Gheyle and Thomas Jacobs, "Content Analysis: a short overview" (working paper, Centre for EU Studies, Ghent University, Ghent, December 2017), 6, DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.33689.31841.

¹⁰⁴ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 1-2 and 46-47.

¹⁰⁵ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 24-27.

review, but the latter serves as background to place Russian OSCE statements in a broader context. The literature review enables me to establish possible themes, issues and discourses that I could possibly find in the Russian statements. Putting the statements into perspective allows me to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of Russia's constructed national identity within the OSCE. The literature review also enabled me to map out the existing literature on Russian OSCE policy and identify the research gap.

More specifically, this thesis draws upon the poststructuralist discourse theory developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in 1985¹⁰⁶, which is complemented by Marianne Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips in 2002 with analytical tools to make the theory more applicable for empirical research. First, this particular discursive method is chosen as it provides guidelines for *how* identity is constructed through foreign policy discourses. Secondly, it enables to reveals any changes and/or contradictions in Russia's identity construction and attempts to reveal how discourses can also serve other purposes, such as legitimization of certain policies.¹⁰⁷ The next section elaborates in more detail on the chosen poststructuralist discourse method and states the exact steps taken to conduct the analysis.

2.4 Research design

This section explains the research design and the analysis as rendered in the next empirical chapter. A total number of ten official statements delivered by Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the yearly Ministerial Council Meetings in the period 2008 until 2018 are the main sources of investigation. The Ministerial Council is the main decision-making and governing body of the OSCE. Here, the foreign ministers and high-level government officials of all OSCE participating states deliver national statements to present their national view on developments in the OSCE-region and beyond. The annual Ministerial Council provides a good overview of Russian OSCE policy priorities and discourses. The statements are delivered in Russian. For the purpose of this thesis, the official English translations on the OSCE online database were used. The period chosen as time frame for this research covers the presidency of Medvedev (2008-2012) and Putin (2012-2018). Furthermore, this period covers both the aftermath of Russia's two major conflicts in the OSCE region: Georgia in

¹⁰⁶ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy*

¹⁰⁷ Jørgensen and Phillips, "Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory," 8-12, 30, 33-34, 43-50.

2008 and Ukraine in 2014. It allows us to examine whether the discursive construction of Russia's national identity in the OSCE has changed within this specific period.

I analyse these statements inductively in order to find the discourses that together construct Russia's national identity within the OSCE. The discourses found tell something about how Russia presents itself or wants to be identified within the OSCE. I use the following three analytical concepts, introduced by Jørgensen and Phillips and based on Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical terms, to conduct the discourse analysis: *signs, nodal points, and chain of equivalence*. "A *nodal point* is a privileged sign around which other signs are ordered."¹⁰⁸ The nodal point is the sign most frequently articulated and can be regarded as the central theme in a particular domain that organizes a particular discourse. A *sign* is a particular word which derives its meaning from its relationship to the nodal point. The linking of these signs with the nodal point in a so-called *chain of equivalence* constitutes a certain discourse. A discourse is always established relationally, as a nodal point acquires its meaning through its relation to other signs. I will take the following steps to uncover how Russia has discursively constructed its national identity within the OSCE.¹⁰⁹

First, I identify the nodal points around which Russia's identity is organized. I do so by carefully reading the ten statements and marking recurring and central themes that Russia regards as important subjects to be promoted in the OSCE. For example, based on the literature, it is to be expected that the statements will shed light on Russia's aim for a new European security architecture. This would constitute "new European security architecture" as a nodal point. Secondly, I identify signs that equate and contrast with the nodal points. By way of linking and differentiation, meaning is given to a particular nodal point. With respect to the example given, I will look for signs that give meaning to this "new European security architecture". In the literature review "new European security architecture" is equated with "equality" and contrasted with "Western unilateralism". Thirdly, I link the nodal points to the different corresponding signs found in the statements in chains of equivalence. These chains of equivalence constitute certain discourses. Finally, I analyse what these discourses tell us about Russia's identity within the OSCE. Taking the examples of the nodal point and signs together, Russia is presented in the literature review as being disappointed in the current European security architecture - allegedly dominated by Western countries - and as

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem, 26.

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem, 26-30 and 42-48.

promoter of a new security order, free of geopolitical dividing lines and ensuring equality for all.

After I completed the abovementioned steps, I use the concepts *spatiality*, *temporality*, and *ethicality* developed by Lene Hansen. These serve as analytical dimensions to further our understanding of how identity construction takes place and how different identities relate to one another.¹¹⁰ The three dimensions allow us to reveal possible contradictions in Russia's national identity construction. Understanding identity as spatially constructed, means that identity is relationally constituted through space. Temporality refers to the idea that identity is situated in time and the possibility of being subject to "development, transformation, continuity, change, repetition, or stasis"¹¹¹. This dimension allows us to identify patterns of continuity and change in Russia's national identity construction. The ethical dimension argues that foreign policy discourse is constructed along ethical and moral lines and articulations of responsibility, in order to legitimize foreign policy towards the relevant public.¹¹² I analyse if and how the different national identity discourses found in the statements are constructed spatially, temporally, and ethically and whether they reveal any contradictions.

Finally, it is important to note it is impossible to provide a purely objective discourse analysis as the analysis itself is socially and relationally constructed, which is inherent to this theoretical approach.¹¹³ To offset this critique of discourse theory as much as possible, I use triangulation. This means that I draw upon more than one method and data source when analysing the Russian statements. The aim of using triangulation is not to ensure validity, but to shed light on Russia's national identity from different perspectives, with due consideration of any broader context.¹¹⁴ When conducting the discourse analysis, I draw upon the literature review of the first chapter. Furthermore, I integrate the insights obtained from the interviews that I conducted with two high-ranking Dutch diplomats who have first-hand knowledge of Russian foreign policy within the OSCE. Having discussed the theory and methodology on which this research is based, the next chapter concerns the discourse analysis, covering three main identity discourses found in the statements.

¹¹⁰ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 5-6, 33-37 and 41-46.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, 43.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, 45.

¹¹³ Jørgensen and Phillips, "Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory," 27-29 and 32.

¹¹⁴ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 413.

3. Discourse analysis

The discourse analysis is aimed at revealing key discourses on Russia's national identity in the ten Russian statements, delivered at the OSCE Ministerial Councils in the period 2008-2018. Together these discourses articulate key representations of Russian national identity within the OSCE. As set out in the previous chapter, I conducted a post-structuralist discourse analysis and relied upon a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning. First, the analytical framework of Laclau & Mouffe was used to decipher key discourses. This means that nodal points and signs, that equate and contrast to these nodal points, have been identified and consequently linked together in chains of equivalence. These chains of equivalence constituted certain discourses. Thereafter, the three analytical dimensions formulated by Hansen were used to see how Russia's national identity is spatially, temporally and ethically constructed and whether these identity constructions reveal any changes and/or contradictions. Having found the discourses inductively, they were analysed in their broader context by drawing insights from the literature review and the interviews conducted with two high-ranking Dutch diplomats who have first-hand knowledge of Russian foreign policy within the OSCE. Situating official foreign policy discourses in their historical context is of importance as they "might respond to key events by rearticulating their constructions of identity and the ensuing foreign policy ... or try to pass by the events in silence."¹¹⁵ It is important to recognize the context in which the statements are embedded, because taking them out of their context will change the meaning of the statements.

This analysis has found three different identity discourses in the Russian statements under investigation: 'Multilateralism', 'Great power status', and 'Guardian of traditional values and the Russian Orthodox Church'. In each of the first three sections, first the identity discourse, and subsequent construction of Russia's national identity, is discussed. Subsequently, an analysis is made as to whether and how the discourse is spatially, temporally and ethically constructed and whether any changes and/or contradictions can be found within that particular discursive identity construction. The fourth section provides concluding remarks and provides answers on the question whether the three key identity discourses found reveal any contradictions.

¹¹⁵ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, 103.

3.1: Multilateralism: Russia as a redeemer of OSCE unilateral actions and advocate of a new, unified Euro-Atlantic security architecture

The first key discourse found in Russia's Ministerial Council statements in the period 2008-2018 is 'multilateralism'. As mentioned earlier, this discourse has been identified in a so-called chain of equivalence, in which the nodal point is linked with its surrounding relational signs. The nodal point in this discourse is 'Euro-Atlantic security architecture', which is treated here as the central theme. This nodal point is equated with the following signs: equal and indivisible security, uniform standards and reform. Furthermore, it is contrasted with unilateralism, imbalance, double standards, bloc-based thinking and dividing lines. The constructed discourse 'multilateralism' presents Russia as a redeemer of the suffering that the OSCE has to endure due to unilateral actions. Furthermore, it portrays Russia as a country with good intentions and sincere interest in the fate of the OSCE through advocating multilateral initiatives and rejecting unilateral actions within the OSCE.

The clearest illustration of Russia's promotion of the principle 'multilateralism' is the recurring reference to its goal to develop a new Euro-Atlantic security community that ensures equal and indivisible security in the OSCE-region. This goal is in line with the proposal of the former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev from June 2008 to establish a legally binding Treaty on European Security. The reference to this goal is very consistent throughout all the Russian statements analysed and does not reveal any changes. For instance, the call for an equal and indivisible security community and Russia's objection to unilateral actions in the OSCE is, without exception, emphasized in all the ten Russian Ministerial Council statements delivered in the period 2008-2018. Russia's persistent criticism of unipolarity in the OSCE is consistent with the literature review that argues for the same.¹¹⁶ In the following paragraphs it is examined *how* this identity discourse of 'multilateralism' is structured along a spatial, temporal and ethical dimension. In addition, an analysis is made whether this discourse reveals any changes and/or contradictions at any particular point.

Russia employs a spatial dimension of identity by articulating a 'Self' that is constructed against spatial 'Others'. As mentioned above, Russia has articulated a 'Self' as an advocate of multilateral initiatives, such as the Treaty on European Security, aiming to create

¹¹⁶ See page 14 of the literature review.

a truly indivisible space for equal security and eliminate the current dividing lines in the OSCE. A group of countries in the OSCE that - according to Russia - dominate the OSCE, pursue unilateral actions and impose their will on others, are constituted in this discourse as the 'Others'. An example of this spatial identity construction is apparent in Russia's speech of 2012, in which Russia presents itself as a country in favour of multilateralism and blames the "persistence of unilateral approaches" for the inability of the OSCE "to build a common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok."¹¹⁷ Russia's objection to unilateralism is also clearly articulated in the following statement of 2015: "The question is what today's political figures will choose – the continued pursuit of one-sided opportunistic advantages or a decisive change or course towards serious and sincere partnership in the interests of countering common challenges."¹¹⁸ With this statement, Russia portrays itself as being politically isolated from the OSCE decision-making process and being marginalized regarding the course the Organization will follow in the future. "[T]oday's political figures" are constituted as the negative 'Others', because of perceived attempts to isolate Russia from political decision-making.

Russia's criticism of unipolarity is repeated throughout the statements analysed, albeit not always explicitly mentioning towards what countries this critique is directed. However, what exactly is meant by the term 'unilateralism' and with what countries it is linked, is more clearly articulated in the following statement, delivered in 2014:

the construction of this "European House" has been consistently undermined by unilateral actions: NATO expansion, the creation of United States anti-missile defence facilities in Europe, the aggressive promotion of the concept of Eastern Partnership while refusing to even recognize Eurasian integration, and the erection of artificial barriers to contacts between people. We believe that attempts to show that only

¹¹⁷ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the Nineteenth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Dublin, 6 December 2012, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the Twenty-Second Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Belgrade, 3 December 2015, p. 1.

NATO and the European Union have a monopoly on the truth and that it is only possible to achieve security and prosperity within their ranks are harmful.¹¹⁹

In this quote, it becomes apparent that Russia links the unilateral actions in the OSCE with NATO, the U.S. and the EU, whom Russia blames for undermining unity in the OSCE. Russia's aversion towards the belief that NATO and the EU have a monopoly on the truth, is consistent with Hopf's argument that from 2012 onwards Russia distanced itself from pursuing Western values and standards of evaluation. This quote illustrates Russia's increasingly assertive and independent foreign policy course towards the West. However, Russia contradicts itself in this spatial identity construction when linking the actions of NATO, the U.S. and the EU with unilateralism: unilateralism is usually referred to policy actions taken by a single state¹²⁰, whereas the countries that Russia associates with these unilateral actions obviously consist of more than one state. Another example in which Russia explicitly criticises NATO for its unilateral actions, that according to Russia intensifies the existing dividing lines, is the following: "Instead of eliminating dividing lines, a choice was made in favour of a closed NATO-centric system. NATO has adopted a policy of moving its borders, forces, and military infrastructure eastwards and changing the military balance in its favour."¹²¹

In the following Russian statement, delivered at the Ministerial Council in 2008, it becomes apparent how Russia discursively constructs its identity: implicitly along a spatial, and, more explicitly, along a temporal and ethical dimension:

There are those who wish to preserve everything as it was in the 1990s. In other words, a group of countries that claim to be the most advanced in terms of civilization determine and control the parameters of movement for the others. For this reason, they demand that all institutions and mechanisms of the Organization remain untouched as a

¹¹⁹ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the Twenty-First Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Basel, 4 December 2014, p. 2.

¹²⁰ Atsushi Tago, *Multilateralism, Bilateralism, and Unilateralism in Foreign Policy* (USA: Oxford University Press, Augustus 2017), 1-3, DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.44.

¹²¹ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the Twenty-Third Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Hamburg, 8 December 2016, p. 1.

kind of gold standard. ... It is clear to us that the OSCE in its present form is not dealing with its principle task namely that of ensuring equal and indivisible security for all.¹²²

Although Russia again does not make explicit which countries are referred to, ‘those’, ‘a group of countries’ and ‘they’ seem to be implicitly directed to the Western-orientated countries within the OSCE. Russia constructs its national identity by contrasting itself with this spatial ‘Other’. This quote exemplifies Russia’s objection to the West, dominating and determining the direction of the OSCE. In terms of spatiality, Russia seems to illuminate the East-West divide within the OSCE in the above citation by employing the technique of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. Russia often uses this technique in its statements when constructing its national identity along the spatial dimension. This technique is employed to emphasize the two different sides of the debate and it simplifies issues, as it pays little attention to any nuances. In terms of temporality, the West is depicted in this official rhetoric as being stuck in the past and wishing to preserve the status-quo of the OSCE. In contrast to the West, Russia portrays itself as a forward-looking actor, willing to reform the OSCE to ensure present and future prosperity for all countries in the OSCE region. Russia’s foresight, ethically constructed along articulations of responsibility, is also emphasized in the following quote, in which Russia argues that OSCE standards have to be transformed to retain their relevance in accordance “with the requirements of the time ... [a]nd this is not a question of someone’s desires or will – this is an objective process.”¹²³

Another example that reveals Russia’s identity construction along a temporal ‘Other’ and an ethical dimension is clearly expressed in the following statement: “The difficult situation as regards ‘hard security’ has been triggered by a regression into bloc-based thinking and attempts, in violation of existing commitments, to ensure individual security at the expense of the security of others. We have for a long time been firmly advocating the meticulous observance of the principle of the indivisibility of security”¹²⁴ With this quote, Russia rejects a regression into the old dynamics of the Cold War, when the global order was

¹²² Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the Sixteenth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Helsinki, 5 December 2008, p. 1.

¹²³ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Helsinki, 5 December 2008, p. 1.

¹²⁴ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the Twentieth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Kyiv, 5 December 2013, p. 2.

divided into West and East, and unilateral attempts that disregard others' interests. Instead, Russia positions itself as a responsible actor in the OSCE.

The self-image that Russia promotes in this discourse can be linked with Russia's tradition of messianic thinking. The Russia messianic myth of election, leading to a sense of responsibility and having a higher mission, become apparent in the ethical identity constructions, as mentioned in the two paragraphs above. This feeling of responsibility is also illustrated by the multiple initiatives Russia puts forward in the statements, including the initiative to establish a legally binding Treaty on European Security. After all, Russia positions itself as a responsible and progressive actor by repeatedly referring to the need to transform the OSCE and have "uniform standards"¹²⁵, ensure equal and indivisible security for all¹²⁶, eliminate imbalance¹²⁷, and overcome the "dividing lines"¹²⁸ without applying "double standards"¹²⁹. Russia contrasts this 'Self' with the Western-orientated countries in the OSCE as the 'Others': by positioning them as solely pursuing their own interests when implementing unilateral actions, as being stuck in the past and hindering the OSCE from flourishing. Russian messianism is also closely linked to the idea that "through suffering and adherence to Christian orthodoxy, the Russian people will redeem the errors of humanity."¹³⁰ This element of 'suffering' becomes apparent in statements where Russia positions itself - as well as the OSCE as a whole - as a victim who is forced to endure the suffering of unilateral actions by the West.

To conclude, this section analysed how Russia discursively constructed its identity around the discourse 'multilateralism'. This discourse presents Russia as a redeemer of the suffering that the OSCE has to endure due to Western unilateral actions and as an advocate of multilateral initiatives to create equal and indivisible security for all in a new, unified

¹²⁵ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Helsinki, 5 December 2008, p. 4.; Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the Eighteenth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Vilnius, 6 December 2011, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Statements by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the Meetings of the OSCE Ministerial Council in the period 2008-2018.

¹²⁷ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Helsinki, 5 December 2008, p. 1.; Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Dublin, 6 December 2012, p. 4.

¹²⁸ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, 1 December 2009, p. 1.; Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Kyiv, 5 December 2013, p. 1-2.; Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Basel, 4 December 2014, p. 2.; Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Hamburg, 8 December 2016, p. 1-2.

¹²⁹ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, 6 December 2012, p. 2; Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Hamburg, 8 December 2016, p. 4; Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at the 24th OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting, Vienna, December 7, 2017, p. 1-2.

¹³⁰ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 1.

European security architecture. This discourse is consistent throughout all the ten Russian OSCE statements analysed and as such does not reveal any changes. However, when situating the statements in their broader context, the following contradiction is found: Russia's credibility in the OSCE is questioned since this discourse of promoting multilateral initiatives in the interests of all, is often at odds with its policy in practice. For example, Russia's promotion to create equal and indivisible security for all is incompatible with its obstructive policy actions during the crisis in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, that undermined the security in the Euro-Atlantic region and OSCE principles. The Dutch diplomat interviewed, with first-hand knowledge of Russian foreign policy within the OSCE, argued that this discourse should also be seen in light of the Bucharest NATO Summit in April 2008.¹³¹ During the Bucharest Summit, NATO supported Georgia's application for the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP), which is considered the next step towards becoming a member.¹³² However, one of the prerequisites for countries to become a NATO member is to have good neighbouring relations.¹³³ This Dutch diplomat argues that Russia's involvement in Georgia was a strategic step, as the consequent political tensions between Russia and Georgia hindered good neighbouring relations and as such would form an obstacle for Georgia to join NATO. This insight further questions Russia's credibility of pursuing equal and indivisible security in the OSCE-region. Accordingly, this Dutch diplomat regards Russia's pursuit to establish a legally binding Treaty on European Security "as an attempt to take the moral high ground, in the absolute sure knowledge that it would never be accepted."¹³⁴ The next section analyses how the second discourse of 'great power status' is constructed in the Russian Ministerial Council statements.

3.2: Great power status

The second discourse, 'great power status', is built upon the nodal point 'leadership'. Leadership is seen as the common denominator and central theme in this discourse. This

¹³¹ Telephone interview with a high-ranking Dutch diplomat who has first-hand knowledge of Russian foreign policy within the OSCE, conducted on July 12th, 2019 (interview 1).

¹³² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Bucharest Summit Declaration: Issued by the Heads of State and Governments participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008," last modified April 3, 2008, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm.

¹³³ U.S. Department of State, "Minimum requirements for NATO Membership," last modified June 30, 1997, https://1997-2001.state.gov/regions/eur/fs_members.html.

¹³⁴ Interview 1.

nodal point derives its meaning from the following relational signs: Russian proposal, rule of law and OSCE principles and commitments, ethnic Russians, and anniversary of the end of the Second World War. This nodal point is contrasted with the following signs: imbalance, double standards, selective approach, dividing lines, use of force and glorifying Nazism. By linking the nodal point with the signs, the 'great power status' discourse is established. This discourse presents Russia as a state that wants to be perceived and treated as a great power. Russia presents itself as a leading, responsible and moral actor within the OSCE, submitting multiple proposals with the goal to strengthen the OSCE. This great power status manifests itself in the following four themes. These are repeatedly articulated throughout the analysed statements. First, multiple Russian proposals to reform and strengthen the OSCE in all three security dimensions. Secondly, Russia as an advocate of the rule of law and OSCE principles and commitments. Thirdly, signs that point towards Russia's sense of responsibility to protect the rights and culture of ethnic Russians. Fourthly, the anniversary of the end of the Second World War. These four themes will be elaborated on in the next paragraphs. Furthermore, it is discussed how this great power status is constructed along spatial, temporal and ethical dimensions. Russia's great power status is especially constructed along ethical and moral lines and articulations of responsibility towards the OSCE.

First, the great power status Russia assigns itself is illustrated by systematically reiterating various proposals initiated by Russia and its "added value"¹³⁵, as well as clearly stating the steps needed, aimed at strengthening and improving the effectiveness of the OSCE in all three dimensions. The Russian statements delivered at the OSCE Ministerial Council in the period 2008-2018 all refer to the need to reform the OSCE. By doing so, Russia shows leadership and interest in the fate of the OSCE. This identity discourse is constructed along a spatial, temporal as well as ethical dimension. The following quotes illustrate how this identity is temporally and ethically constructed: "Russia has long been putting forward proposals to redress the thematic and geographical imbalances in the work of the institutions."¹³⁶ The temporal dimension demonstrates that this discourse is situated in time and that Russia is consistent in putting forward proposals for the OSCE. Furthermore, when Russia refers to a self-initiated proposal in the OSCE statements, it is often formulated in

¹³⁵ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Helsinki, 5 December 2008, p. 2-3.

¹³⁶ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Hamburg, 8 December 2016, p. 4.

relation to the urgent need to be reviewed as it concerns a proposal presented a longer time ago, that has been neglected or rejected: “For several years now, our proposals regarding the implementation of the commitments to ensure freedom of movement have been rejected in the OSCE.”¹³⁷ Another quote that illustrates this, is the following: “Back in the 1990s, Russia proposed making the fight against terrorism one of the main thrusts of the OSCE’s work. At that time, many received this idea without enthusiasm ...”¹³⁸. In terms of temporality, these quotes portray Russia as a pro-active and forward-looking actor that responds forehanded to problems or security threats the OSCE faces. The way these quotes are formulated along temporal lines, as well as quotes that refer to the “double standards”¹³⁹ applied and “the selective approach to the initiatives of the participating States”¹⁴⁰, suggest that Russia does not feel heard and feels disadvantaged compared to other OSCE participating states. This can be linked with that part of the literature review that talks about Russia’s sense of victimization that has been influential on Russia’s identity formation. In terms of ethicality, Russia is constituted as an actor with moral responsibilities towards the OSCE. Furthermore, Russia employs a spatial construction of identity when Russia states that “Russia is in favour of discussing concerns not through a ‘megaphone’ but professionally.”¹⁴¹ In this quote, Russia proclaims itself as a professional actor, by contrasting itself with other OSCE states who are implicitly portrayed as imposing their will on others aiming to push a certain topic in the desired position.

Secondly, this great power status manifests itself in statements wherein Russia ethically constructs an image of itself as a guardian of the rule of law and OSCE principles and commitments. Russia repeatedly refers to the importance to adhere to the rule of law and criticizes acts or laws that Russia believes are unlawful or discriminatory. For example, a legal basis for the OSCE and respect for the rule of law are articulated as two interrelated key conditions to ensure equal and indivisible security in the OSCE.¹⁴² The importance of the rule of law and to respect OSCE commitments and principles, as described in the HFA, are

¹³⁷ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Dublin, 6 December 2012, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Belgrade, 3 December 2015, p. 3.

¹³⁹ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Hamburg, 8 December 2016, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁴¹ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Milan, 6 December 2018, p. 1.

¹⁴² Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Milan, 6 December 2018, p. 2; Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Vilnius, 6 December 2011, p. 1-3; Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Belgrade, 3 December 2015, p. 4.

also mentioned in relation to the OSCE human dimension. For example, Russia stresses the need to improve the relevant legal basis to ensure the security of journalists is met. Furthermore, Russia “propose[s] conducting an analysis within the framework of ODIHR regarding the conformity of the visa laws of all participating States and EU legislation within OSCE commitments.”¹⁴³ Remarkable is that references to the rule of law are absent in the Russian OSCE in the years 2014-2016. Furthermore, references to the principle of ‘non-intervention/interference in internal affairs’ are absent in the Russian OSCE statements in the years 2008-2013, whereas from 2014 onwards, this principle is mentioned in every subsequent Russian OSCE statement.

However, when positioning Russia’s constructed image as a guardian of the rule of law and OSCE principles and commitments in relation to Russia’s policy actions in the OSCE-region, some contradictions arise. Prominent examples are Russia’s engagement and actions in Georgia and Ukraine. These actions, that have been justified under the pretext of protecting Russians in the ‘near abroad’, are in stark contrast with Russia’s emphasis in its OSCE Ministerial Council statements on respect for non-intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states. To illustrate, Russia argues in its statement in 2008 that “[u]nsanctioned use of force — in clear violation of the basic principles of the Helsinki Final Act — is something that many are not ashamed of. We might recall the 78-bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 or the military attack on South Ossetia.” This statement is very contradictory given Russia’s own unsanctioned use of force against Georgia. The legal arguments Russia has put forward to legitimize its military attack on Georgia in August 2008, mainly revolved around the argument to act out of self-defense, are undermined by the international community as it is in violation with international law and Russian national legislation.¹⁴⁴ This undermines the credibility of Russia’s legal claims in the OSCE, in particularly its respect for non-intervention in the internal affairs of other sovereign states. In 2014, Russia put forward another argument that further questions the credibility of Russia’s legal claims, when considering Russia’s actions in practice: “What is happening in Ukraine is the result of a systemic crisis in the OSCE region that has been brewing for a long time. Its roots lie in an inability to ensure [...] non-intervention in internal affairs.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Kyiv, 5 December 2013, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ Roy Allison, “The Russian case for military intervention in Georgia: international law, norms and political calculation,” *European Security* 18, no. 2 (2009): 173-182, DOI: 10.1080/09662830903468734.

¹⁴⁵ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Basel, 4 December 2014, p. 2.

According to the Dutch diplomat interviewed, who has first-hand knowledge of Russian foreign policy within the OSCE, Russia's meddling in the internal affairs of other countries must be seen in light of "a general underlying continuum in Russian foreign policy, which is based on the idea that you take back what you lost during a moment of weakness."¹⁴⁶ Related to this, Russia's interference in Georgia and Ukraine can be understood against the background of the difficulties Russia faced at the end of the Cold War. As the world order transitioned from a bipolar towards a multipolar world, Russia found it difficult to accept that the republics of the former Soviet Union could make their own choices without Russian consent.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, this can be linked to the Russian sense of 'defeat' after the end of the Cold War and Russia's historical and cultural affiliation with the 'near abroad' that resonated in Russia's identity and foreign policy formation in the subsequent years.

Thirdly, the protection of ethnic Russians is a persistent theme within this 'great power status' discourse. This discourse is spatially and temporally constructed as Russia's identity is constituted in relation to the 'near abroad', which is a spatial Other as well as a temporal Other of its own past. Furthermore, this discourse is ethically constructed as it articulates a sense of responsibility towards national minorities, and ethnic Russians in the 'near abroad' more specifically. Russia emphasizes the relevance of the "protection of the rights of national minorities"¹⁴⁸ and criticizes attempts or acts that point towards marginalization of the rights and culture of ethnic Russians. For example, Russia criticizes the Ukrainian Law on Education, signed in September 2017, for being discriminatory towards the Russian language, "that is a native tongue for millions of Ukrainian citizens."¹⁴⁹ This demonstrates that Russia's feeling of responsibility is not only limited to its territorial borders, but also includes the Russian ethnosphere beyond its borders. This theme within the great power discourse is in line with the Civilizationist school of thought: viewing Russia as having the messianic duty to protect ethnic Russians in the 'near abroad'.

Fourthly, the frequent references to the anniversary of the end of the Second World War indicate that Russia positively identifies itself with that part of its Soviet Union past that

¹⁴⁶ Interview 1.

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁸ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Helsinki, 5 December 2008, p. 1. References to the protection of national minorities are made in the Russian statements in the years 2008, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018.

¹⁴⁹ Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks, Vienna, December 7, 2017, p. 2.

liberated Europe from fascism and Nazism. Commemorating the end of the Second World War is a priority for Russia in the OSCE, as “[m]ore than half of its victims – 27 million people – were citizens of the Soviet Union.”¹⁵⁰ The aim of commemorating the anniversary of the end of the Second World War is “to pay tribute to the memory of the heroic deed of those who defeated fascism and Nazism and to prevent a revival of hateful ideologies.”¹⁵¹ In this quote, Russia implicitly identifies itself with the heroic Soviet Union; a temporal Other of its own past. Related to this, Russia’s identity is also constructed along discourses of danger: the danger of attempts to rewrite the history of the Second World War and glorification of Nazism.¹⁵²

To conclude, Russia discursively constructed an image of itself as a great power through reiterating Russian proposals aimed at strengthening the OSCE, advocating itself as a guardian of the rule of law and OSCE principles and commitments, identifying itself with the Russian larger ethnosphere in the ‘near abroad’ as well as identifying itself with the heroic Soviet Union as a temporal Other of its own past. This particular discursive identity construction does not reveal any changes. Furthermore, this ‘great power status’ discourse found in the OSCE statements is consistent with the scholarly literature, which argues that Russia’s predominant national identity after the end of the Cold War aspired to regain its international great power status. The next section discusses the third discourse found in the Russian OSCE Ministerial Council statements in the period 2008-2018: ‘Guardian of traditional values and the Russian Orthodox Church’.

3.3 Guardian of traditional values and the Russian Orthodox Church

The third and last discourse that Russia reveals in its OSCE statements in the Ministerial Councils is ‘Guardian of traditional values and the Russian Orthodox Church’. This discourse is structured by a chain of equivalence around the nodal point ‘values’. This nodal point derives its meaning from its relational signs: ‘traditional’, ‘Christianity’, and ‘Orthodox church’. The chain of equivalence, connecting the nodal point with its relational signs, creates an identity that presents Russia as authentic and as a guardian of traditional values

¹⁵⁰ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Athens, 1 December 2009, p. 4.

¹⁵¹ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Basel, 4 December 2014, p. 3.

¹⁵² Russia references to this danger in the statements of the following years: 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2018.

and the Russian Orthodox Church. In the following paragraphs it is discussed how this identity discourse is constructed along an ethical and spatial dimension.

Russia employs an ethical dimension of identity, focusing on ethical and moral lines and articulations of responsibility: “it is important that human rights discussions take into account the fact that these rights are based on traditional human values and cultural and civilizational diversity, diversity which must of course be respected.”¹⁵³ Furthermore, Russia states that the OSCE should pay greater attention to phenomena, such as trafficking in human beings, that challenge the “moral foundations and the foundations of Christianity and other world religions.”¹⁵⁴ With these quotes, Russia portrays itself as a moral responsible actor, making sure that traditional values and Christianity are taken into account in OSCE discussions regarding the human dimension.

Russia also employs a spatial construction of identity, in which Russia’s identity is constructed against multiple ‘Others’ that are considered a danger to Russian traditional values, the Russian Orthodox Church as well as European civilization, with which it identifies. First, Russia considers “the mentoring tone and attempts to impose values without considering the specific features of the various countries and regions of Europe”¹⁵⁵, as a danger to traditional values. Secondly, neoliberal values are constituted as the Other that endanger traditional values and moral norms: “Attempts to adapt the OSCE area to the interests of a single group of countries through the aggressive imposition of neoliberal interpretations of human rights will ruin European civilization. An arrogant disregard for traditional values and moral norms – common to all of us and characteristic of every nation – is unacceptable.”¹⁵⁶ In this quote, traditional values are defined in contrast to neoliberal values: Russia portrays neoliberal values, dominating the OSCE, as a danger for European civilization and seems to promote traditional values and moral norms through emphasizing its commonality among all OSCE states. Thirdly, technocratic, modern societies are constituted as the Other that pose a threat to the traditional values that Russia adheres to: “we must not allow the terrorists to win the battle for people’s minds by using some young

¹⁵³ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Athens, 1 December 2009, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Kyiv, 5 December 2013, p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Hamburg, 8 December 2016, p. 4.

¹⁵⁶ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Kyiv, 5 December 2013, p. 5.

people's discontent with the technocratic primitivism of modern societies, in which the traditional values inherent in all the world religions are being destroyed."¹⁵⁷

These quotes reflect Russia's consistent critical stance towards the OSCE human dimension: since the creation of the CSCE, Russia is not in favour of expanding the human dimension.¹⁵⁸ Russia's conservative stance towards the human dimension can be linked with the previous Russian discourse found, which demonstrated that Russia would like to be seen as committed to OSCE commitments. In another quote, Ukraine is accused of forming a threat to the Russian Orthodox church: "We have repeatedly noted the tacit support of the Ukrainian authorities for the radicals that are capturing and desecrating Russian Orthodox churches. Now Kiev has decided to consolidate by law its "right" to interfere in religious life."¹⁵⁹ The messianic sense of election and responsibility, as well as the sense of victimization and "Russia's adherence to Christian orthodoxy" – two elements closely linked to Russian messianism – are all visible in this identity discourse.¹⁶⁰

All in all, this discourse demonstrates that Russia attaches great importance to traditional values and the Russian Orthodox Church, that need to be respected and taken into account in the OSCE. This identity discourse did not reveal any changes over the period 2008-2018. In this discourse, traditional values are constituted as the common denominator among the OSCE participating states. Russia's promotion of traditional values by means of criticizing neoliberal values is in line with the scholarly literature that talks about the civilizational 'tun' in Russian political discourse. This presents Russia as a unique civilization and culturally distinct from the West.¹⁶¹ However, it must be noted that contrasting Russia's traditional values with those of Western neoliberalism does not necessarily mean that Russia resists European values. On the contrary, Russia's reference to European civilization presents Russia as a defender of European values and demonstrates that Russia's identification with Europe is not fully absent. This civilizational identity that Russia constructs is also harmonious with Russia's historical aspiration to obtain great power status.

¹⁵⁷ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Belgrade, 3 December 2015, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ Kropatcheva, "The Evolution of Russia's OSCE Policy," 13.

¹⁵⁹ Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks, Vienna, December 7, 2017, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 2.

¹⁶¹ Tsygankov, "Russia's Foreign Policy," 233-259.

3.4 Concluding remarks

Together, these three key identity discourses construct an image of Russia as a redeemer of the suffering of unilateral actions within the OSCE and advocate of multilateralism, a great power and a guardian of traditional values and the Russian Orthodox Church. A persistent theme in how Russia discursively constructed its national identity within the OSCE in the period 2008-2018 is formulating multiple 'Others', frequently directed towards the Western-orientated countries within the OSCE, which Russia regards as posing a threat. In light of the above, ambassador Paul Bekkers states in this personal capacity that the West plays an important role in Russia's perception of the West, as posing a threat to Russia. Bekkers emphasizes the two sides of the story in the deteriorating relations between Russia and the West. Bekkers, speaking in his personal capacity, believes that the West allows Russia to interpret Western actions as a danger for them. In this regard, Bekkers advocates that the West should not allow Russia, or give them reasons, to be in our words 'aggressive', and in their words 'defensive'.¹⁶²

As has been argued, the three identity discourses did not reveal any clear changes over the period investigated. However, a change is identified in *how* Russia discursively constructed its national identity in the period 2008-2018, by means of adopting a different rhetoric. It is remarkable that up until 2014, Russia was implicit in criticizing certain countries for their (in)actions, whereas from 2014 onwards Russia explicitly specified towards who its criticism was directed. For instance, this changed rhetoric is reflected in Russia's wording towards the two major OSCE crises in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014. In 2008, Russia expressed its discontent about the fact that "[Russia's] proposal to convene the NATO-Russia Council to discuss [the] situation made at the height of the war unleashed by Georgia was blocked – essentially by *one delegation*"¹⁶³ and that "*some OSCE countries* [are] in favour of providing massive military assistance to Georgia and re-establishing its military potential as soon as possible."¹⁶⁴ In 2014, Russia stated that "the Ukrainian drama could have been prevented ..., however, *Brussels* flatly rejected a trilateral process involving Ukraine, the European Union and Russia ..."¹⁶⁵ Another example, in which Russia explicitly mentions the

¹⁶² Telephone interview with ambassador Paul Bekkers, who has first-hand knowledge of Russian foreign policy within the OSCE, conducted on July 23rd, 2019 (interview 2).

¹⁶³ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Helsinki, 5 December 2008, p. 3.

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁵ Statement by Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Basel, 4 December 2014, p. 1.

countries' names in its criticism, is the following: "the Swiss Chairmanship proposed translating the Geneva Joint Statement, [in which Kyiv committed to immediately begin 'inclusive, transparent and accountable' constitutional reform], but the *United States of America*, the *European Union* and *Ukraine* refused."¹⁶⁶ This change in rhetoric is in line with the increasingly assertive foreign policy that Russia pursued vis-à-vis the Western-orientated countries in the OSCE. Besides this change in *how* Russia discursively constructed its national identity in the period 2008-2018, did the three identity discourses also reveal any further contradictions?

When situating Russia's national identity discourses in their broader context, among other things by drawing upon the literature review and the insights obtained from the conducted interviews with two Dutch diplomats, the following two contradictions can be revealed.

First, on the one hand, Russia portrays itself in the first two identity discourses as a progressive actor in the OSCE, by showing willingness to reform the OSCE and advocating multiple proposals aimed at strengthening and improving the effectiveness of the OSCE. On the other, the third identity discourse reveals that Russia clings to traditional values of the Russian Orthodox Church and opposes neoliberal values of the West. Russia's identification with a progressive as well as a conservative actor within the OSCE seem contradictory.

Second, another contradiction in Russia's identity discourses is Russia's two-fold identification with the Soviet Union. On the one hand, Russia presents the Soviet Union as a positive historical Other as it is associated with its heroic deeds during the Second World War as well as with its large former territory, that included the 'near abroad'. On the other hand, Russia presents the Soviet Union as a negative historical Other. This is illustrated when Russia criticises attempts or actions in the OSCE that remind of the old dividing lines of the Soviet Union.

¹⁶⁶ Ibidem.

4. Conclusion

This thesis has examined the following research question: “How does Russia discursively construct its national identity within the OSCE in the period 2008-2018 and do these discourses reveal any changes and/or contradictions?” A total number of ten official statements, delivered by Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the yearly Ministerial Council Meetings in the period 2008 until 2018, have been examined by means of conducting a post-structuralist discourse analysis. The discourse analysis revealed three main identity discourses in the Russian OSCE statements: ‘Multilateralism’, ‘Great power status’, and ‘Guardian of traditional values and the Russian Orthodox Church’. These three discourses construct a national identity of Russia as a redeemer of OSCE unilateral actions and an advocate of multilateralism, as a leading, responsible and moral actor within the OSCE that wants to be perceived and treated as a great power, and lastly as a guardian of traditional values and the Russian Orthodox Church. What became apparent in *how* Russia discursively constructed its national identity within the OSCE is Russia’s reliance on multiple ‘Others’ to differentiate itself and as such construct a national ‘Self’. Furthermore, Russia’s national identity is constructed along spatial, temporal and ethical dimensions.

The three identity discourses complement each other well as they all present Russia as a unique country with great power aspirations within the OSCE. This is all in line with Russia’s tradition of messianism. Furthermore, it demonstrated that Russia wants to be recognized and heard by the other OSCE participating states. The discourse analysis did not reveal any fundamental changes in Russia’s identity discourses, but it did reveal that from 2014 onwards Russia’s rhetoric towards the OSCE became more direct and assertive. This change in rhetoric is in line with the literature review that talks about the increasingly assertive foreign policy that Russia pursued vis-à-vis the Western-orientated countries in the OSCE. In addition, several contradictions have been identified within as well as between the three separate identity discourses. Most contradictions have been revealed when situating them against the background of Russia’s policy actions in the OSCE-region and situating them in their broader context. The two most prominent contradictions are Russia’s identification with a progressive as well as a conservative actor within the OSCE and Russia’s identification with the Soviet Union as a positive as well as negative historical Other.

Studying Russia's national identity within the OSCE proved to be of great relevance. First of all, because up until now such research was missing in the existing literature. The existing body of literature on Russian OSCE policy is limited, since it solely focuses on Russia's interests in the OSCE and how Russian OSCE policy has evolved over the years. Scholars have explained Russian policy within the OSCE from a realist perspective, without taking into account the role of Russia's national identity in shaping its foreign policy within the OSCE. Examining Russian national identity within the OSCE provided insights into the ideological factors that drive how Russia defines and pursues its national interests, and subsequently its foreign policy. As such, this thesis contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of Russian foreign policy within the OSCE. Furthermore, it provided insights into the dynamics between Russia and the West and Russia's stance towards Euro-Atlantic security issues.

For future research, it would be interesting to look at a broader timeframe, that might reveal possible discursive changes. Future research would also benefit from incorporating a wider field of sources, such as studying statements of Russian parliamentarians, or look at other ideational factors that might play a role in shaping Russian OSCE policy. Finally, to gain further insights into the dynamics between Russia and the West, it would be interesting for future research to conduct a discourse analysis of the national identity-foreign policy nexus of the U.S., or another prominent Western country within the OSCE.

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Appendix

Telephone interview with Dutch Ambassador Paul Bekkers – Director of the Office of the Secretary General at the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE)

Topic of interview: Russia's foreign policy and national identity within the OSCE

Name interviewee: Mr. Paul Bekkers
Contact details: paul.bekkers@osce.org

Name interviewer: Vita van Hall
Contact details interviewer: vita@vanhall.amsterdam

Date: July 23rd, 2019

First of all, I would like to thank you for your willingness and time to take part in this qualitative interview. It is an honor to have the opportunity to interview you, being an expert with first-hand knowledge of Russian foreign policy within the OSCE.

My name is Vita van Hall and I conduct this interview for my thesis of the master's degree programme International Relations: Global Conflict in the Modern Era at the University of Leiden, the Netherlands. The research question of my master thesis is the following: 'How does Russia discursively construct its national identity within the OSCE in the period 2008-2018 and do these discourses reveal any changes and/or contradictions?' To answer this research question, I have conducted a post-structuralist discourse analysis of the English translations of the official statements delivered by Sergey Lavrov at the yearly Ministerial Council Meetings in the years 2008 until 2018.

The aim of this interview is to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of Russia's foreign policy and national identity within the OSCE. This interview is very valuable for this research as it will complement the discourse analysis carried out by providing insights into the context in which these statements are situated. The intention of this interview is to integrate the information gathered from this interview into the conducted discourse analysis. As such, the interview data will play a supportive role in the research and help to better interpret and enrich the findings of this research. The interview data will be used as a source to provide more in-depth context to the statements and possibly as quotes to illustrate findings from the discourse analysis.

The interview consists of 11 open-ended questions. The answers to the interview questions will only be used for this particular research project and will not be shared or used for other purposes. Political sensitivities and ethical considerations are taken into account when carrying out the interview. It must be clearly noted that Mr. Paul Bekkers provides answers to the interview questions in his personal capacity. All interview information will remain confidentially stored and will be deleted as soon as it is no longer needed.