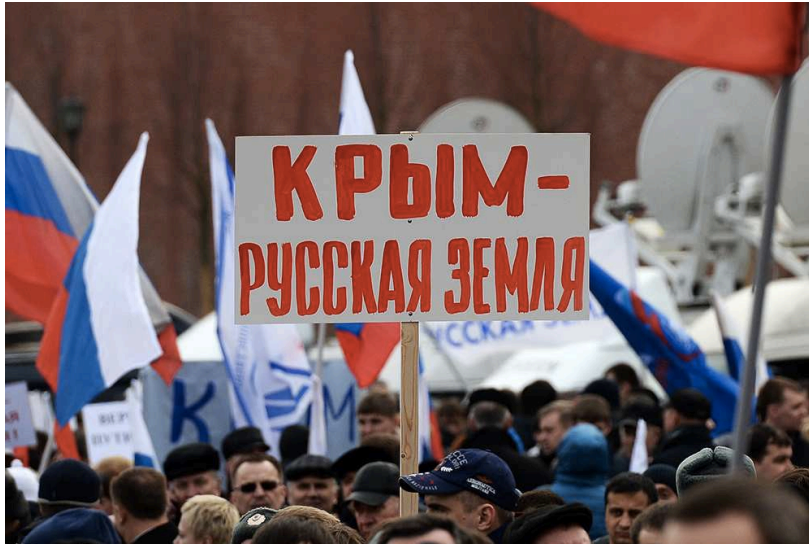# Leiden University

MA Thesis

International Relations

Securitising the Compatriots During the Annexation of Crimea

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Introduction

In 2014, the world witnessed a crisis that escalated rapidly in Ukraine: a revolution that ousted the previous pro-Russian president Yanukovych to put pro-Western Poroshenko in office in order to realign Ukrainian foreign policy to Western European standards. These developments led to insurgencies in the Donbass region and the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation.

The European Union and the United States viewed Russia critically since it undermined Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, pointing out at the breaches in international law Russia committed (Grant 2015) and accusing them of expansionist and imperialist ambitions (Kalb 2015). The Russian leadership has defended its policies consistently: the Munich Security Conference of 2008 and the Medvedev doctrine in the Russo-Georgian war show that Russia claims the right to a sphere of influence with 'privileged interests' in the near abroad on grounds of common identity and historical links (Matthews and Nemtsova 2008). The Kremlin has presented this protection of the ethnic Russian minority as a leitmotif of Russian foreign policy, but the West has dismissed these claims with scepticism, calling them a façade for the actual expansionist reasons behind Putin's words (Roberts 2017).

In the Ukrainian crisis, the Kremlin considered that the Russian diaspora was in danger since the new Ukrainian government had the support of fascist parties that passed Russophobic legislation, sowing instability in the Russian-speaking areas (Grant 2015). However, in contrast to the case of Georgia, there was no danger posed to the Crimean population (Charap et al. 2014). The West disregarded the identity aspect of the conflict and reduced it to a mere instrumental excuse (Pieper 2018) to undertake extraordinary measures to appease the popularity ratings at home and to fulfil the ambitions to rebuild its former empire on the basis of historical ties (Allison 2014).

Although much of the literature fails to engage with the Kremlin narrative and give it any credibility, some scholars (Roberts 2017) have pointed out at the lack of explanatory power of the territorial ambitions to fully understand the motives of the Russian leadership under Putin. Rather than considering military threats such as the expansion of NATO a security issue to justify interventions, the identity of the ethnic Russian community has become a central security concern despite the negative consequences such as sanctions and isolation from the international community. However, in contrast to the Georgian war, no force was used against Crimeans that could explain such a bold move. This creates a wide sense of bewilderment that the West has not been able to provide an answer for. Since the issue of the securitisation of identity in the Crimean

crisis has been largely discredited, a thorough analysis of the official Kremlin narrative will be conducted, aimed at responding the following research question:

How was the Russian diaspora securitised during the Crimea annexation despite the rejection from the international community?

Consequently, the discourse of the Russian leadership will be closely examined to determine what themes the Kremlin narrative drew from to construct this security threat following the securitisation theory from the leading School of Copenhagen. The results will be linked to the interplay between geopolitics and identity in Russia, which will be studied in detail and to the ways how this narrative fits into the broader conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Since the securitisation theory relies heavily on the analysis of speech acts, critical discourse analysis will be the focus of this study for the selected speeches and statements by the Kremlin as a primary source in Russian. This will serve as a basis to investigate recurrent topics and relate them to the broader themes of Russian foreign policy, especially in the near abroad, the West, and the implications of the securitisation act. The securitisation theory will be then applied to the case to gain a deeper understanding. In so doing, it is anticipated that this research will show to what extent identity contributed to the securitisation effort and whether identity concerns concealed the motives that led to the extraordinary measure of annexing Crimea.

Literature Review

The Securitisation of Identity: Russian identity and geopolitics

The literature review will inspect the role of Russian geopolitics and identity in the Ukrainian crisis. Regardless of popularity ratings, the alleged protection of Russophones in Crimea does not seem very coherent with the action taken as Allison (2014) and Pieper (2018) point out. Charap and Darden (2014) agree with their deconstruction of the protection of ethnic Russian rights, arguing that antagonising Ukraine and annexing a territory that contributed to a Russophile Rada was paradoxically detrimental to the interests of ethnic Russians in Ukraine. Nonetheless, authors closer to the positions of the Kremlin such as Deliagin (2015) argue that the right-wing neonazi faction posed a threat to a traditionally Russian territory like Crimea. After considering this view from the perspective of the Kremlin, Charap and Darden (2014) dismissed it, because it is unlikely given the consequences.

In order to understand the alleged threats posed to Russian identity and its diaspora communities as well as Russia's interests in the region, the close link between Russian identity and geopolitics needs further studying. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia was weak and could not define the terms of geopolitics in the region: the West expanded eastwards, recruiting former communist countries for NATO and the EU, and intervened in Kosovo, contravening Russia's interests (Roberts 2017). However, at the Munich Security Conference of 2007, Putin put forward a more assertive geopolitical strategy that concerned the West, because Russia claims to be entitled to a sphere of influence to protect its national interests (Larrabee 2010). Roberts (2017) counters it by arguing that these claims are based on common historical and cultural ties and, to a certain degree, identity. Even if the West has regarded these cultural ties as ulterior motives for imperialistic ambitions, Russia claims to consider this transnational common identity a national interest worth protecting.

Russia's foreign policy has focused both on pragmatism and ideology: whilst establishing a network of former Soviet countries in a successful bloc —the Commonwealth of Independent States, the CIS — (Trenin 2002), Russia has pursued economic growth and regional integration in a world dominated by globalisation and preserved its unity when faced with threats (Kerr 1995). Russia has seen itself as a 'land bridge' between Western Europe and Far East Asia, embodying characteristics of both, securing its borders through bureaucracy and a *cordon sanitaire* of countries within its sphere of influence (Trenin 2002). However, the school of neo-Eurasianism sees the role of Russia a counterbalance to the West to create a multipolar world whilst making irredentist claims (Bassin et

al. 2017). The frustration caused by the lack of acknowledgement by the West of Russia's power and interests has fed into the narrative of Russian politicians (Roberts 2017).

Thus, a key aspect in Russian identity is its opposition to the West as a model, sometimes defining itself in opposition to it (ibid.). It seeks to offer a model for other countries, especially the ones in its near abroad (Larrabee 2010). Its conservative Eastern Slavic worldview is based on three pillars: Orthodoxy, autarky and nationality (Roberts 2017), which finds its origins in the imperial mentality (Kohn 1953). Firstly, Russia viewed itself as a religious centre of Orthodoxy especially after Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Empire, originating in Kiev, the centre of Rus', the mother state for Belarus, Ukraine and Russia (ibid.). Secondly, in terms of the autarky, Lieven (1999) argues that Russia was portrayed as the most genuine expression of a Slavic nation with the duty to lead and unify all the Slavs, with a strong leader. Focusing on Ukraine, a "hierarchical myth" was established in regards to Ukraine —Little Russia— and Russia —Great Russia—, which continued the subjugation of the former to the latter, following the imperial philosophy (Furman 1997). Finally, nationality was cemented through the denial of the existence of nations, proclaiming just one state with a common identity and an indisputable language (Lieven 1999), although Ukrainians, for instance, largely contributed to the general Great Russian culture (Szporluk 2000). Thus, neighbouring countries are deeply embedded in the Russian identity.

Contending views on the Ukrainian crisis

The nature of the beginning of the conflict is a matter of debate. Saryusz-Wolski (2014) identifies both domestic as well as international reasons for the spark of the Euromaidan protests: he points out at the delay in the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union and the potential integration in the Eurasian Union led by Russia as well as the crackdown on the student protests as the reasons for the start of the protests. Shmelev (2018) argues that there were three factors: the relations between Russia and the West, between Ukraine and Russia and domestic problems. Charap and Darden (2014) also point out some elements within Ukrainian society which portrayed Russia as a common enemy, but their main focus was the crackdowns of late 2013. Velychenko (2007), albeit not relating it to the Euromaidan protests, identifies a broader trend with some ups and downs in the Ukrainian relations with Russia and the EU throughout its most recent history after the fall of the Soviet Union. Thus, a geopolitical alignment was at the centre of the issue, with deep connotations for identity.

Considering the assessment of the literature of the advances by Russia during the crisis, Saryusz-Wolski (2014) sheds light on the warnings by Russian leadership of the far right-wing parties that came into power and Gusher (2014) emphasises the "Russophobic legislation". Allison (2014) suggests there was no evidence that the rights of the ethnic Russian population were in danger in Crimea or elsewhere, therefore the Russian move must be framed within falling popularity rates on a domestic level, following the protests in the previous years. However, Youngs (2017) sees rather expansionist reasons behind the Russian intervention, opportunism of political instability and a reassertion of Russian interests in the region with the desire that the West acknowledged their zone of influence and withdrew. Larabee (2010) presents the Medvedev doctrine, which seems to fit this pattern of expansionism and protection of so-called 'privileged interests' like in the Georgian war.

Theoretical framework

Securitisation theory

The leading Copenhagen School offers some valuable insights and an analytical approach to study the securitisation of identity in Crimea. The main authors of the theory of securitisation claim that a government can present any issue as an existential threat to a designated referent object requiring the use of extraordinary measures to handle it (Buzan et al. 1998). These scholars identify three elements: the securitising actor —in this case, the Russian state—, a referent object —the ethnic Russian population— and functional actors —Ukraine, the West.

Buzan et al. (1998) think the focus should be placed on the performative nature of the speech act, i.e. calling an issue a security threat makes it a security threat. However, other scholars such as Balzacq (2011) shed light on the interaction between the securitising actor and the acceptance by the audience, which is vital for securitisation to occur successfully. A failure to gather enough support and acceptance from the public can lead to an incomplete securitisation act, which has occurred in the past in Russia in regards to other policies (Renz et al. 2006).

The nature of security threats is vaguely defined because of the breadth of the concept, but Hough (2004) considers it a situation that reduces the quality of life of the population or constraints the policies of a government. Following the Copenhagen School definition of securitisation, any issue can be considered an existential threat, widening the traditional view that national security does not go much beyond military threats (Buzan et al. 1998). This might include societal security threats, i.e. a society's or a community's identity, providing a new analytical framework for security studies. Identity can work therefore as a referent object to be protected and securitised against a perceived threat despite the apparent elusiveness of the concept (ibid). These societal or identity threats arise thanks to a 'we feeling' and an exceptionalism that extends the perception that the nation is unique, which makes it susceptible to protection (Hough 2004).

In fact, there is broad consensus on the subjective nature of security threats, but they depend on the securitising actor. As Katzenstein (1996) argues, the actor tends to behave according to the expectations placed upon them by society, projecting their expected image and underpinning it through rhetorics, in a self-reinforcing manner. The well-established practices of security apparatus and threat perception are likely to repeat themselves because it matches the expected behaviour, anchored in speech acts. Therefore, discourse has an important role in shaping identity, which is key to understanding a state's foreign policy.

In the case of Russia, the state's identity is a strongly securitised issue. Themes encountered in the discourse often allude to the national identity, national pride, but also the economy. The example of territorial integrity in light of the Chechen crisis is also cited, which required the implementation of extreme measures (Renz et al. 2006). Especially compelling to this case study is the categorisation offered by Buzan et al. (1998) for societal securitisation as 'vertical competition'. This means that a larger entity (e.g. the EU, the West) may endanger one country's identity (in the case presented, the Russian diaspora) due to its perceived incompatibility of projects or identities. It must be then critically assessed what might be the reasons for an issue being elevated to the status of a security threat and through which mechanisms.

Since securitisation relies heavily on speech acts that constitute a political discourse and existential threats to a referent object, the focus placed on language and discourse is especially important (Buzan et al. 1998). A linguistic analysis is, therefore, necessary to arrive at the core of the issue and determine the discursive themes that reinforce the existing power structures. The rationalist theories of International Relations have often disregarded the linguistic aspect (Fierke 2015) and have focused instead on material resources or institutions. However, various poststructuralist authors present methodological tools to analyse the speech acts on which securitisation theory relies.

Authors such as Debrix (2015), quoting Foucault, posit that our conceptual —and discursive— representations of the world depend on labels that shape our knowledge and our understanding of the world. However, they also claim that knowledge is intrinsically tied to power structures that dominate the discourse and mainstream narrative (Debrix 2015). Through exclusion and inclusion, of dualisms such as good/bad or us/them, an identity and a subjectivity can be created. These exclusions constitute a cultural identity with all that is attached to it: policies, social norms or definitions of notions (ibid.). Language can thus be defined as 'performative' since it constructs reality through speech acts (Angermüller et al. 2014). Discourse is the main unit of analysis from a reflectivist International Relations perspective. This theoretical framework allows the scholar to analyse the political discourse and its origins as a political representation and observe the subsequent performative materialisations.

Design

This section revolves around the methodology and other formal aspects of this case study. Since this research is centred around the securitisation of the Russian-speaking diaspora by the Russian government, it is paramount to identify in the first chapter of this thesis how the diaspora fits into Russian foreign policy by taking into account its evolution since the fall of the Soviet Union and precedent cases. The second chapter will focus on a critical discourse analysis, the main methodological tool for securitisation since it is based on speech acts and utterances in discourse By breaking down this discourse into analysable components, several themes will emerge, which will be studied critically to assess how they play into the securitisation act, bearing in mind the specific target audience and the effect on legitimacy. Finally, once the discourse analysis is completed, the securitisation theory will be applied to the case study of the Russian diaspora and the Crimean annexation. This will allow to arrive at insightful findings that will provide an answer to the research question.

Case selection

Within this case study, several actors can be identified that contribute to the securitisation act in different roles: the referent object, the functional actors and the securitising actor following the terminology by the Copenhagen School. In order to conduct effective research, it is imperative to properly identify the actors and choose the discourses to be analysed accordingly. A careful selection will reduce the sheer amount of political speeches securitising the conflict in Ukraine to a manageable but yet relevant size.

According to this classification of actors, the Russian government is the securitising actor, whose identity, as embodied by the Russian diaspora in Crimea and other parts of Ukraine, is threatened by the apparent expansion of the sphere of influence of the West, clashing with the Russian near abroad. Since it is the Russian government the actor who undertakes the extraordinary measures and presents it to the public, the statements of the President, Vladimir Putin, are of utmost importance. Due to the transnational nautre of this conflict, the statements issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) will also be included. All their public appearances during the height of the crisis will be used for this analysis, which will be temporally circumscribed to the month prior to the signing of the treaty of accession between Russia and Crimea on 18 March 2014, when the protests escalated (Golts 2014). Due to the symbolic nature of this accession speech, many of the perceived threats to the referent object, i.e. the Russian diaspora of Crimea and its identity by extension, will

be alluded to engage with the audience, who ultimately completes the securitisation act (Buzan et al. 1998).

In addition to this, all legislation concerning the diaspora will be studied to determine how it has shaped discourse and contributed to the creation of the diaspora as a referent object. These sources will be analysed in their original language, Russian, for the sake of fidelity to the original discourse, providing translations and explanations of linguistic nuances if necessary.

This selection has obviously its shortcomings and limitations. Since this thesis aims to analyse the securitisation of the Russian diaspora in Crimea, the other actors will be pushed to the background and only the motivations and speech devices used by the Kremlin will be taken into account with the goal of achieving representativity. Even though the media also plays a crucial role, it presents a similar line as the Kremlin (Gaufman 2015) and it is heavily influenced by its stances, thus it will not be the focus of the discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis

As Hough (2004) explains, the Copenhagen School relies on discourse analysis for the study of securitisation. He enumerates some of the rhetorical techniques and wording used by governments in order to obtain legitimacy for extraordinary measures. Since this theory requires discourse analysis for a thorough understanding of the mechanisms involved, this tool will be used in the following chapters to dissect the texts studied and identify the texts presented.

Brown and Yule (1983) state that the goal of discourse analysis is to assess what the purposes of any speech are. Thanks to the rhetorical devices identified by these scholars that constitute discourse, this thesis can shed light on the interpretation of recurring references, assumptions and the context. Thus, critical discourse analysis will provide a better understanding of the interaction between the securitising actor —the Kremlin— and the audience —the public in Russia, the population of Crimea and the Russian-speaking diaspora—, whereby the acceptance by the latter is a necessary condition for securitisation.

By identifying the elements in the texts and speeches selected and grouping them in categories, the references linked to history, culture and identity will be carefully examined. This assessment will include othering processes, the implications of certain language uses and the legitimisation mechanisms employed. This study must be connected to the 'bigger picture', i.e. the geopolitical

interests and the motivations pursued by the power structures, in this case, the Russian government and the security apparatus.

Chapter 1: The compatriot policies

In order to fully grasp the securitisation effort, the instrumentalisation of the referent object through an existential threat needs to be closely examined. The securitisation effort is anchored in well-established discursive practices that serve as an indispensable basis to engage with the audience. These practices have been cemented over the years through the progressive embedment of the diaspora in political discourse and the legislation, with repercussions in foreign policy. This chapter will study how Russian foreign policy coalesced around the protection of the diaspora.

Firstly, three clear elements can be distinguished: the Russian diaspora, the Kremlin's security apparatus and the threat of Western influence as elucidated in the research design section. In Russian political discourse, there is a well-established discursive practice of referring to the Russian diaspora as an integral part of the Russian nation that was divided with the fall of the Soviet Union (Laruelle 2015, Solzhenitsyn 1995). There is an estimate of around 25 millions ethnic Russians who woke up on the 'wrong side of the border' (ibid.), and so they became the ethnic minority in their newly independent kin state. These minorities have entered Russian political discourse over the years and have become a political asset or instrument for the Kremlin (Pigman 2019). This discursive continuity since the establishment of the Russian Federation has allowed incorporating these minorities as part of the whole-Russian identity to articulate foreign policy.

As the Copenhagen Schools suggests, identity can be a referent object despite its elusive nature as a concept, which also makes it extremely malleable for political gain. This identity will sometimes have to compete with putatively contradicting forces (Buzan et al. 1998) such as Western influence that might erase the Russianness of a certain community and is consequently perceived as a threat in some Kremlin circles (Tsygankov 2016). Grappling with such complexity to articulate an identity in foreign and domestic policy, the term has acquired a specific meaning when alluding to this primarily Russian-speaking diasporic community: the compatriots.

Towards a definition of 'compatriots'

Before delving into the policies in place relating to the Russian diaspora, it is vital to understand the origins and the development of the concept and to undertake an approximation to its meaning, which is fraught with a calculated ambiguity for reasons that will be further described below.

Rather than refer to this community as diaspora, it is best to use the more widespread term compatriot (translated from the Russian '*sootechestvennik')*, who are also referred to as 'fellow countrymen and women' or 'Russians living abroad'. The first allusions to the diaspora date back to Yeltsin's first term (Sencerman 2018), but it was further concretised, developed and fixed as a concept through the passing of pertaining legislation relating to this group. The general definition of compatriots includes those residing outside of the Russian Federation with cultural, historical, religious, linguistic or ethnic links to Russia or even citizens born in the former Soviet Union (Zakem et al. 2015). The breadth of this definition allows flexible policy-making since it could include from only ethnic Russians who use the Russian language on a daily basis to any citizen of a post-Soviet republic of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (Shevel 2011). For example, the passportisation efforts as part of the compatriot policy in South Ossetia and Abkhazia can only be ascribed to the historical links rather than ethnic or linguistic (Grigas 2016). In Crimea, however, the public witnessed a more ethnic and linguistic reasoning behind the intervention (Shmelev 2018). This becomes particularly useful when creating a common identity thanks to this ductile imagined community, which serves as a foundation for securitisation.

Nevertheless, this definition has changed over time. Whilst it started in an ambiguous terrain, moving from the more ethnicity-centred definition to the more inclusive definition of any person born in the Soviet Union, over the years the definition coalesced around the concept of the Russian World (*Russkii Mir*) (Suslov 2017). This concept, put forward by the Russian World Foundation, rests on three pillars: the Russian language, the Slavic ethnicity and the Orthodox Christianity (ibid.). Consequently, the consolidation of this current definition of 'compatriot' has a clear scope and target. Since the Kremlin leadership has used this term in various ways, it is recommendable to bear these variations in mind when studying the discursive practices associated with this community.

The 'compatriots' and their ascription to the current conception of the Russian nation has reminiscences of past imperial policies (Kumar 2016), with Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationalism in the forefront. Russian foreign policy has been guided by very similar principles for a very long time despite occasional historical divergences (Tsygankov 2016) partly due to geopolitical constraints and opportunities. When examining the evolution of the concept during the Yeltsin and Putin administrations, the scholar can observe how competing ideologies vie for the power to define the very nature of the Russian nation and its relation to the near abroad[1].

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[1] The space comprising the former Soviet republics is commonly known in Russia as the *near abroad* as a direct translation from *blizhneye zarubezhye*.

Emergence and development of the concept

The origins of these diasporic communities beyond the Russian borders go back to imperial times, where the tsarist rule sent colonies to other territories, which became increasingly Russified (Sencerman 2018). These policies were continued by Stalin, who ethnically cleansed some regions, thus increasing the share of ethnic Russians and decreasing the number of locals and their languages (Grigas 2016). Stalin's objective was to instil a sense of belonging and to reinforce the loyalty of certain Soviet republics by replacing parts of the population by ethnic Russians, the majority in the Soviet Union, whilst displacing groups such as Chechens and Tartars, that were less friendly to the regime (ibid.). Russification policies were conducted on the population, so they would adopt the language and certain cultural aspects of the ethnic majority, for instance in Ukraine (Sencerman 2018). These policies throughout the centuries gave rise to this Russian diaspora, which has gained relevance in Russian politics over the years since the breakup of the Soviet Union. The approach of the different Russian administrations to the compatriots has varied over the years and will be studied below:

Yeltsin

In order to fully comprehend the origins of the compatriot policy, it needs to be put in the context of the *perestroika* and the Russian 'New Thinking', which meant embracing democracy, protecting human rights and opening up to the world and thus creating interdependency (Tsygankov 2016). Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the Soviet Union until its collapse, released the Cold War tensions with the West, thus enabling a rapprochement that set the stage for the next presidency in the newly formed Russian Federation. The overtures made by him were not reciprocated by the West, though he pursued these policies regardless (ibid.).

After the attempted coup d'état, Boris Yeltsin cemented his role as president and led the country into this new phase (ibid.). Following the legacy of the New Thinking (Kumar 2016), Yeltsin, together with his minister of foreign affairs, Andrei Kozyrev, sought to become a full-fledged member of the Western international community (Dawisha 1996), but neglected the articulation of a new identity formation at home in this critical phase, which, over time, undermined his support from the base (Donaldson 2000). Russia pursued an appeasement policy with the West, refraining from interferring in contentious affairs and collaborating to a certain extent (Magomedova 2016). These moves were not reciprocated, which came as a humiliation to Russia (Kumar 2016). These political 'defeats' notwithstanding, Russia succeeded in gaining a foothold in international

institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the G7 (Marantz 1997) and introducing a market economy (Donaldson 2000).

Pressures from nationalist groups ushered Yevgeni Primakov into the Foreign Office, giving way to a more Russian-centric policy (Kumar 2016). This meant a more pragmatist role towards the West whilst paying more attention to the near abroad as represented by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Dawisha 1996), where significant populations of ethnic Russians lived (Suslov 2017.). This new focus sought to undermine American unipolarity by establishing Russia as a global power, but failed to resolve the ongoing identity crisis and achieve his geopolitical goals (Tsygankov 2016).

During Yeltsin's two terms, relevant pieces of legislation introducing the term 'compatriots' into the political discourse were passed as soon as in 1993 (On Urgent Measures for Socio-cultural Cooperation between Citizens of the Russian Federation and Their Compatriots Abroad), followed by a decree in 1994 with the 'Guidelines on State Policy regarding Compatriots' to assist this diaspora without encouraging repatriation by working together with the other governments. A 1995 declaration established a broad all-purpose definition of 'compatriot' (Grigas 2016). The economic turmoil that Russia was going through at the time discouraged them from facilitating repatriations from the former republics to curb striking migration figures (ibid.). The term 'compatriots' was, however, cemented in political discourse despite the lack of actual implementation (Laruelle 2015). Seeking cooperation with the West was also incompatible with an aggressive foreign policy in the near abroad, which would have been difficult to finance (Rywkin 2003). The seemingly directionless policies by Yeltsin fuelled the identity crisis (Donaldson 2000) in a post-Soviet Russia that struggled to find its place in the global order.

Putin and Medvedev

At the turn of the century when Vladimir Putin took office, Russian foreign policy underwent more changes, also in regards to the compatriot policies. There are two defining features of Putin's approach: pragmatism with the West and a defence of Russia's interests. The former was reflected in the cooperation in areas such as counterterrorism after 9/11 in Afghanistan or oil exports. The latter became visible in the assertiveness shown by Russia when expressing its disagreements with the West and claiming its sphere of influence in the neighbouring post-Soviet countries, i.e. the near abroad, forging a distinct Russian identity (Tsygankov 2016).

Whilst pragmatism and international economic and security cooperation were achieved without naïve concessions by Russia (ibid.), Russia came under scrutiny for domestic issues —the restriction of democratic rights such as the anti-gay propaganda law, the incarceration of the feminist Pussy Riot members, etc.— as well as international issues —such as asylum for Edward Snowden, the war in Syria, election meddling, Georgia or Ukraine. Therefore, Russia no longer shied away from asserting interests that diverged from those of the West.

Some of those issues were rooted in the so-called privileged interests that Russia claims in the post-Soviet space (Tsygankov 2016). Putting the United States as an example, Russia claimed its right to exert a sphere of influence in the near abroad, thus interfering with the other nations' sovereignty (Kumar) and challenging the perceived American unipolarity in the global order as well as their unilateralism that has led to escalations of conflicts and foreign-imposed regime changes. Putin put this into words very eloquently at the 2007 Munich Security Conference, pointing out at the American double standard and signalling to the world the humiliating grievances that Russia perceived when the American view overrode Russian concerns (Roberts 2017).

Nationalist groups warmly welcomed this shift in the opposition to the West when it came to the legitimacy and primacy of Russian interests in the region (Rwykin 2003, Ziegler 2006). Nevertheless, this opposition did not go as far as many had hoped for (Laruelle 2015): in fact, Medvedev sought a non-confrontational approach with the West that would not undermine Russia's interests (Tsygankov 2016). Consistent with this attitude, as Laruelle (2015) notes, one cannot argue that nationalists have taken over the agenda despite the neo-imperialist tendencies witnessed in recent years: Russia remains a conservative power that generally complies with its international treaties. These advocates for the 'divided nation' have pushed for a supranational project that serves as a basis for a network based on common links in the post-Soviet space (Zevelev 2010). This imperial ideology has translated and made incursions into the legislation.

These incursions into legislation concern a wide array of policies —from soft power such as language and cultural promotion, to extending passports in certain territories to interventions. Of all the pieces of legislation, the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation of 2013 stands out: it describes the goals of Russian foreign policy, which include the integral protection of the rights of compatriots living abroad and Russian citizens. Here, a progressive equation of the compatriots with Russians living abroad and actual Russian citizens can be attested. As citizens of Russia, these compatriots are entitled to protection of their civil rights and liberties (Vasilyeva 2017).

Abroad, this is further cemented with the myriad of agencies that have been established to defend these interests, especially the Russian World Foundation in 2007 (Skrinnik 2009) and Rossotrudnichestvo in 2008 (Rotaru 2018). These agencies initially advanced Russian soft power and fostered the bonds with the compatriots, but they progressively became geopolitical tools, attached to a state-civilisation or imperial view (Suslov 2017). Another way of improving Russia's image consisted of disseminating skewed favourable news through state-funded broadcasters such as Russia Today, filling an information void in many post-Soviet countries (Zakem et al. 2015). This serves to alienate the diasporic communities from the host state and cementing their loyalty to the Kremlin. Lastly, the Foreign Policy Concept provided room for interventions in form of humanitarian aid and extending Russian citizenship and passports to the population (Zevelev 2010).

This legislation and the links established with the compatriot communities have been instrumentalised to interfere in third countries, citing the need to protect Russian citizens, despite the lack of an actual danger for the population (Grigas 2016). The degree of involvement varies according to the country and the circumstances. The cases of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine are examples of and they shed light on the actual application of these policies on the ground whilst revealing a historical continuity in foreign policy.

Comparative analysis

Moldova

The Moldovan region of Transnistria provides us with the first case of protection of compatriots living abroad, although the historical circumstances were substantially different: its independence from the Moldovan Socialist Republic was proclaimed during the breakup of the Soviet Union (Rogstad 2018). Due to its geographically strategic position, Tiraspol, the Transnistrian capital, became the base of the Soviet 14th Army in 1956. The military was highly loyal to the Soviet Union, more than the rest of the country. Moldova was ethnically very diverse, but Transnistria differed from the rest of the country due to its Slavic ethnic majority, rather than Romanian (ibid.). When Moldova declared independence from the Soviet Union, so did Transnistria from Moldova, which was declared illegal by Gorbachev (Grigas 2016). After some skirmishes, a ceasefire was agreed in 1992 (Sánchez 2009). However, the Supreme Soviet refused to withdraw troops before Transnistria's place in Moldova was found, alleging a genocide perpetrated by Moldova (Rogstad 2018).

Even if this conflict goes back to Soviet times, it is part of the legacy inherited by the modern-day Russian Federation. The justification that co-ethnics were being killed offers an example of how the protection of a predominantly Russian-speaking region became the pretext for a refusal of the withdrawal of troops. Conversely, this protection results in detrimental living conditions for the inhabitants of Trasnistria, who live in a region with no official recognition —not even by Russia—, isolated, outside of the rule of law, where human rights violations and dubious businesses including weapon-trafficking occur (Sánchez 2009).

In this manner, the conflict has come to a stalemate, where no feasible agreement can be found. Russia wishes to maintain the status-quo in Transnistria (ibid.), the West seems to have accepted this Russian sphere of influence due to the lack of ambition to tackle this frozen conflict (Grigas 2016). As Grigas argues, this frozen status brings substantial benefits to Russia: not only does this make Moldova enter a negotiation with Russia with a certain amount of bargaining power and concessions, but it also deters potential Western allies to formalise memberships in the EU or NATO, for example, or advance in integration. The destabilisation also shakes up Moldovan domestic politics.

Georgia

The Russo-Georgian war represents another case of protection of 'Russian citizens and compatriots', where Russian authorities invoked the aforementioned 2008 Security Concept and the same argument with the compatriots to justify an intervention (Wivel et al. 2012). However, this Russian citizenry only emerged thanks to the passportisation of large swathes of the South Ossetian and Abkhazian populations (Mullins 2011). These communities had been neglected by the Georgian state (Grigas 2016), which passed legislation to favour the Georgian ethnic majority (Wivel et al. 2012). Consequently, Russia took the opportunity to ally with these communities. Secessionist groups formed in these two regions, who received protection from Moscow in the shape of a peacekeeping mission until the full escalation of war (ibid.).

This time, Moscow did recognise the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As it becomes apparent, the Russian compatriots were not present before the passportisation began. They served as an instrument for Russia to gain a foothold in these geopolitically strategic regions — Abkhazia has access to the Black Sea. Again, these regions do not enjoy the recognition of the international community, turning their unresolved status into an entrenched frozen conflict. As Grigas (2016) suggests, Russia might seek to absorb these territories in the long-run, but they currently also follow

the same pattern as Transnistria: they act as leverage against Georgia, as a deterrent for potential partnerships with the West and as a destabilising factor for domestic politics.

Ukraine

As the literature review has presented, the relation between Russia and Ukraine goes back centuries, and the submission and enmeshment of the 'little' ajd the 'big' brother have been part of an ongoing debate. Due to geopolitical interests, the historical links and the significant Russian-speaking population in Ukraine —52% use Russian as their main language, whereas 41% use Ukrainian (Maksimovtsova 2019)—, Ukraine becomes particularly exposed to the compatriot policies developed by Russia.

The defence of Russian compatriots was called into use again during the violent clashes that erupted in the course of the Euromaidan protests, mainly characterised by the non-signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union and the ousting of president Yanukovych (Saryusz-Wolski 2014). The sectors of the Ukrainian population who were less keen on a rapprochement to the West also started to rally after the altercations in predominantly ethnically Russian regions (Golts 2014). In Crimea, a large group of camouflaged men without insignia appeared took over official buildings and cut off access to the peninsula (ibid.). These men remained in Crimea until the law concerning the celebration of a referendum to access the Russian Federation was passed and the poll was held. Vladimir Putin first claimed these were self-organised defence groups, but he later admitted that they were Russian military deployed to ensure a free vote (ibid.). By so doing, Russia violated Ukraine's territorial integrity as enshrined in 1994's Budapest Memorandum (Shmelev 2018) and the Russian-Ukrainian Friendship Treaty. This move was accompanied by extensive sanctions from the West and expulsion from the G8 (Grigas 2016).

Similarly to Georgia, the breakaway regions of Luhansk and Donetsk were supplied with technical and military assistance upon their 'request' (ibid.). This support from Moscow has been decisive in the escalation of this conflict and its eventual 'freezing', paving the way for a potential annexation in the future. The international community condemned Russia for actively supporting these developments, also with troops and weaponry (Kalb 2015).

Such a costly enterprise needs to be reasoned in such a manner that the public is also convinced about taking such a drastic step. In fact, after assessing the antecedents of the compatriot policies, no such radical measures had been taken before to 'protect' compatriots like in the case of Crimea.

Thus, a deeper analysis is necessary to understand the discursive practices that are used on such occasions. As discussed above, annexation is just the tip of the iceberg in the compatriot policies, which also include passportisation, information warfare, years of soft power promotion through agencies, etc. Nevertheless, all of these practices are anchored in the foreign policy discourse and the security apparatus and can, therefore, be dissected.

Final remarks

Not only a legal framework and an ample network of institutions have been established to strengthen links with compatriot communities, but also the discursive practices and the diaspora in the near abroad have long existed. This has become the basis for the Kremlin's newfound political assertion grounded on its claim on a sphere of influence as a regional hegemon and its role as an alternative to the Western worldview. The compatriots, coupled with the corresponding hybrid warfare, have been the instruments to conduct these policies. All of these varied instruments constitute the compatriot policies, which allegedly serve to defend Russians living abroad, but the literature points out at ulterior motives.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that not all countries with significant Russian-speaking populations have been subject to these interferences. In fact, Russia has behaved opportunistically, reacting to favourable circumstances as the cases of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine show rather than follow a grand strategy. This has been important to preserve geopolitical assets in the context of an expansive West in order to form a distinct identity in a globalised world by claiming regional hegemony.

Chapter 2: Critical discourse analysis

As laid out in the design section, statements issued by the President of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the month before the annexation and the legislation regarding the compatriots living abroad will be the object of this critical discourse analysis. The aim is to study how the information is presented in the speech act, what recurring themes and frames appear and, in order to arrive at an answer to the research question, how the existential threat towards the referent object is constructed. To that end, it is best to separate the discourse analysis in two parts, depending on whether they concern the existential threat or the creation of the referent object. In the next chapter, the theoretical elements and other relevant levels of analysis for the securitising act will be applied to this specific case.

It is important to remember, as will become clear below, that the creation of such abstract entities such as the existential threat and the referent object tend to rely upon a long discursive history: the themes will resonate with the knowledge of the world of the audience (Laruelle 2015). This chapter will try to link all the dissected texts to show the continuity of the referent object and the lurking existential threat. This latter element, which is imbued with a new quality of danger, heightened at a later stage and justified the implementation of extraordinary measures.

The referent object

As presented in the literature review, there is a significant overlap between different aspects in the Russian identity: the vastness of the Russian territory, the geopolitical constraints and the opportunities have shaped not only Russian foreign policy, but also its very identity over the centuries. Through the different stages of tsarist colonial rule to the Soviet dominion, the different peoples under their control were integrated into the Russian conception of the nation (Lieven 1999).

Therefore, the concept of the Russian nation is malleable and can be extended to peoples who have once belonged to their territory and has thus contributed to Russian nation-building in different qualities, such as Ukrainians and Belarussians. This is often encountered in the discourse that dominated the Ukrainian revolution and the Crimean crisis. References can be found to Ancient Rus, which is the foundational mythical cornerstone for their common civilisation of the Slavic nations of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine (ibid.): "Kiev is the mother of all Russian cities . Ancient Rus is our common origin, we cannot do without one another" (Putin on 18/03/2014). Thus, kinship family terms are frequent in the speeches analysed.

Kinship terms serve to consolidate the view of Russia and Ukraine being fraternal nations (Shmelev 2018). Due to their common 'mother', "Ukraine is a brotherly nation" (Putin on 18/03/2014). This conception presents these nations as a family, with the underlying assumption that they must be together. Thus, the official discourse offers a vision of history and highlights a united people that were separated because of tragic event of the fall of the Soviet Union. "Millions of Russians went to bed in one country and woke up abroad […]. The Russian nation became one of the largest, if not the largest, spread nation in the world" (Putin on 18/03/2014). Thus, "in Ukraine live and will live millions of Russians, Russian-speaking citizens, and Russia will always protect their interests through political, diplomatic and legal means" (ibid.).

More historical references can be found relating exclusively to the case of Crimea, which "always remained an inseparable part of Russia in the minds and hearts of the Crimeans". These allusions seek to cement the sense of a historical injustice: "Khrushchev transferred Crimea and Sevastopol, which belonged historically to the Russian South, in a move which is hard to understand" (ibid.). Khrushchev's decision is presented with incomprehension, which legitimises Russian claims on the peninsula.

This sense of a divided family also serves as a basis for the repatriation and passportisation policies that are described in the foreign policy and seek to attract the population from the former Soviet republics and reunite them in the Russian Federation (Zevelev 2010). This legal possibility opens the door for new citizens, who might be considered equal to Russian citizens through a prior stage as compatriots residing abroad. This fuzzy division blurs the division between Russians and the compatriots, making them part of the same nation through a broad definition of 'us'. The use of terms such as "right to return" ("On the State Policy of the Russian Federation on Compatriots Abroad" 1999) and "support for repatriation" (Declaration on Support of the Compatriots Abroad 1995) as well as "resettlement" and "displacement" (Concept to Support Compatriots Abroad by the Russian Federation in the Current Age 2001) allow imagining Russia as the origin and mother of these people, where they belong such as in. This is echoed throughout all the legislation and the political texts.

In the case of the Ukrainian crisis, the political elites make references to people in the South-East of Ukraine, Crimea, Sevastopol, Russian citizens in Ukraine and compatriots. Changing the terminology used to refer to this community shows the aforementioned calculated ambiguity of the compatriot in political talk and allows the audience to understand the Russian nation as encompassing all these people (Grigas 2016). Thus, the Russian nation becomes deterritorialised

and defines itself instead on the basis of common linguistic, spiritual and cultural identity, where much importance is placed.

As holders of the Russian nationality, these citizens are granted certain rights (Vasilyeva 2005). Since "the Russian Federation takes moral and political responsibility to protect the basic human rights and liberties and the rights of compatriots to belong to national, religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities" in order to ensure "the preservation of their Russian identity" (Declaration on Support of the Compatriots Abroad 1995). The legislation also states that "in case the countries of residence allow repeated violations of these rights and freedoms, Russia will restablish justice in obediance with international law" (Concept on Support of Compatriots Abroad by the Russian Federation 2001).

This role as a guarantor of rights is further stressed by the fact that "Russia has received a great amount of requests to protect peaceful citizens" (MFA on 15/03/2014 and Putin on 04/03/2014). This seeks to further legitimise any involvement, which Putin paradoxically refutes and only considered a last resource option (Putin on 04/03/2014). This also seeks to sweep away any concerns for breaches in international law, since the Kremlin acts in strict obedience to the lawful paths set out by the compatriot protection legislation and the competences the legitimate Kremlin government has at its disposal (ibid.).

In conclusion, two main interconnected themes can be observed when defining the referent object: the separated family that will be reunited and the equality of rights that needs to be guaranteed. As a result, a deterritorialised common identity for the Russian nation is put forward, which is entitled to rights and is worthy of protection if attacks are perpetrated against it. This seeks to extend the range of individuals the state can defend —and securitise— beyond its territorial borders by including them into a general identity, which becomes the referent object.

The existential threat

Once the referent object has been accurately described, an examination of the existential threat posed to the Russian identity will be undertaken. As opposed to the definition of the referent object, which is more permanent and grounded in discourse, the existential threat is something new that requires measures to be dealt with. Even though some recurring themes can be observed over a long period of time, the threat presents a new challenge, based on recent developments, and is imbued

with a sense of urgency. In this regard, the Russian leadership presents the existential threat through two main interrelated themes: the illegitimate Ukrainian oppositional forces and the 'malign' West.

The opposition

The threat revolves around the opposition, where the more radical forces are highlighted, and the replacement of the government and the president by an interim administration until the next elections. Firstly, the Russian leadership tries to show empathy with the Maidan protesters: "I understand why people in Ukraine want change. The presidents, the premiers, the Rada deputies changed, but their relationship to the country and their people never changed" (Putin on 18/03/2014).

Secondly, Russia equates the oppositional forces with the violence and the armed perpetrators of the forceful overthrow and the constitutional upheaval, separating them from the other peaceful protesters. This constitutes an "anticonstitutional coup d'état" (Putin on 04/03/2014 and MFA on 14/08/2014):

- Disregard for constitutional means: Despite "making all sorts of concessions to the opposition" and "not commanding to use force against demonstrators", Yanukovych was removed from office unconstitutionally. Due to the violent armed skirmishes on the street, the takeover of official buildings and constitutional breaches, the Russian leadership calls Yanukovych's removal a coup d'état, which lacks any sort of legitimacy (Putin on 04/03/2014).

- Illegitimate use of violence: claims of police brutality and shooting protesters under the orders of Yanukovych are dismissed (ibid.). In this sense, they also cast doubts about the snipers that shot at protesters in the Maidan, claiming that they probably are oppositional forces (ibid.). They add that oppositional groupings possess "professional arms" (MFA on 15/03/2014) and have conducted attacks and torture that have left many injured and dead amongst peaceful civilians. Several incidents are detailed in which Russian citizens (MFA on 22/02/2014) and people in Donetsk were injured or killed (MFA on 08/03/2014), as well as the seizing buildings such as the office of the Party of Regions (Putin on 04/03/2014) and attacks on Orthodox temples (26/02/2014). Thus, a black-and-white picture is put forward in terms of the illegitimate disproportionate use of violence by the opposition, leaving little room for a more nuanced view.

- Fascism: repeated allusions are made to nationalist, neo-Nazi and fascist groups that supported the change of government and have perpetrated violent attacks during the protests. These groups are mainly represented by the Right Sector (Pravyi Sektor) and All-Ukrainian Union Svoboda, both widely reputed to be radical far-right nationalist parties (Likhachev 2016). The Kremlin drew attention to their "anti-Semitic and xenophobic stances and their calls to forbid the use of the Russian language" (MFA on 13/03/2014). Obviously, referring to fascism has a long discursive history to draw on, not only in Russia, where it is strongly associated with the struggle of the Second World War and its ultimate victory but also elsewhere in the world (Gaufman 2015).

Due to the large-scale violence, the number of incidents, the rise of the far-right, and breach of the constitution and the 21 February Agreement to solve the crisis in Ukraine, the Kiev government is considered to be fully illegitimate and incapable of bringing this conflict to an end (Putin on 04/03/2014). The failure to implement this latter agreement is seen as a lack of interest in reaching a peaceful solution and as evidence for the loss of control over their country and the violent far-right groupings (ibid.). The opposition, therefore, poses a threat to the Ukrainian population, although the Russian compatriots might be most vulnerable due to the anti-Russian slogans present at these rallies.

Linking back to the obligation of the home nations to uphold the rights of the compatriot policy, several breaches can be detected, which are explicitly mentioned: the reversal of the language policy granting official status to the Russian language in some regions (linguistic rights), the roll-back of the new constitution (political rights), the attacks on Orthodox temples (spiritual rights) as well as general civil unrest and instability (right to security).

The malign West

The other theme that characterises the Ukraine crisis is related to the malign Western influence. Russia claims the West has contributed to and encouraged this crisis, since a victory of the opposition forces might strengthen their geopolitical interests.

Russia repeatedly draws attention to the Western double standard, cynicism and hypocrisy that characterise their foreign policy and undermine their legitimacy on the international stage. To this end, Russia tries to show several examples: the "primordial place of freedom in the American constitution", but the lack of freedom people in Crimea have when it comes to self-determination. The "unrestrained and sincere support for German" reunification, but the lack of support for the unification of Crimea and Russia from the EU. Contrary to the West's hypocrisy, Asian countries

such as "China and India have acknowledged the historical and political intricacies that have dominated this crisis" without making further remarks on their recognition of the annexation (Putin on 18/03/2014). Russia tries to lay bare the flexibility of the West's principles when a new foreign regime seeks consolidation and aligns with their geopolitical interests by claiming "they would call something black today only to call it white tomorrow as long as it fits their interests".

Interestingly, when trying to frame Western double standard and legitimise the annexation of Crimea, the precedent of Kosovo and the corresponding UN resolutions are often brought into the conversation (MFA on 11/03/2014). The Kosovo secession from Serbia is "absolutely analogous to the Crimean case" (Putin on 18/04/2014) and its unilateral decision by its regional parliament without the consent of the Verkhova Rada. The US supported Kosovo when it unilaterally proclaimed independence from Serbia alleging bloodshed. In the case of Ukraine, since it became patent that the anarchy that dominated the country during the violent coup d'état had led to the rise of armed groups and infringements on the rights of Russian speakers, Russia makes the case that the same precedent should apply (ibid.).

Following Russia's argument, this hypocrisy comes at the cost of connivance of the West with far-right practices: violations of democratic principles such as the inclusion of far-right parties, the breach of constitutional channels for conflict resolution, the widespread use of violence, as well as violations of citizens' rights. This connivance poses a threat that the West is not willing to tackle, but Russia shows the will to address it (MFA on 15/03/2014 and 19/03/2014).

NATO eastward expansion is a clear sign of this creeping relentless interference. In the discourse, Russia plays with the Russian collective imagination and understanding of security by painting a bleak picture of a Ukrainian accession into NATO (Putin on 18/03/2014). This would mean that Crimea and Sevastopol would be dragged into it, essentially handing over the base of the Black Sea Fleet to NATO. Russia invokes a mental picture where "the NATO fleet settled in the city of Russian military glory [Sevastopol], which would unravel a threat to the whole South of Russia. Not an ephemeral one, a permanent one", depicting this threat to be "close to our homes, to our historical territory" (ibid.). It is also worth pointing out at the identity layer when examining the role of the military in the collective imagination. The fear of NATO being at the doorstep of Russia feeds into the sense of threat and alarm, which, discursively, relates to many historical episodes in which Russia had to defend its Western border and created buffer zones for its protection (Larrabee 2010, Lieven).

Final remarks on the discursive construction of a threat

By examining the discourse produced by the Russian leadership in regards to the compatriots and the Crimean crisis, the analysis becomes twofold: the Russian leadership presents several threats and contributes to the making of a referent object—identity, as represented by the compatriots—that will suffer from this threat. Mirroring the compatriot policies, the discourse vaguely defines the referent object with historical, linguistic and cultural links, leaving room for interpretation. The insinuated collectivity that defines this '*us*' includes the Russian nation, which contains both Russians and compatriots, who are granted similar rights as citizens with a calculated ambiguity of who belongs and who does not.

The threat is not circumscribed to the physical wellbeing of the Russian citizens, but also their rights are in jeopardy. Therefore, not only physical violence accounts for the sense of a threat but also the legal infringements on the linguistic, spiritual and political rights of this community. The cohesion and existence of this community, i.e. its identity, is faced with challenges stemming from both the malign West and the illegitimate Kiev government. These outside agents try to dilute and undermine their identity and essence as a community. It is worth pointing out that identity is not confined within the geographical boundaries of a national state in the classical sense –i.e. the political borders of the Russian Federation–, but it is rather a social construct that people across the world can subscribe to. The discourse brings forward, in an equal manner, arguments for the violations of physical integrity as well as 'identity rights' for intervention.

Agency is also articulated in the discourse: the compatriots expressed their will to secede from Ukraine and they organised in self-defence groups (Putin on 04/03/2014, MFA 19/03/2014), which goes back to the self-identification condition for becoming a compatriot (Concept to Support Compatriots Abroad by the Russian Federation in the Current Age 2001). At the same time, this agency is used to request help from Russia. Only in that context, does Russia provide assistance, in utmost compliance of international law and their legislation. This level of agency also allows Russia to deny direct intervention in the organisation of the referendum or within the pro-Russian groups.

A prominent feature of the discourse used to underscore the nature of the threat are the statements seeking to legitimise and delegitimise certain actors and their actions. When third actors defy the Kremlin line, their challenges are debunked by exposing their contradictions and self-interest. The official ranks cement consistency by presenting facts that allow for little interpretation and guide the audience towards a specific reconstruction of the events. It is worth noting that the statements issued

by the Kremlin have also met challenges on their accuracy and presentation of the whole picture, but these are not included when the Kremlin constructs its argument. Many critics argue that the compatriots were actually not in danger and this policy seeks to gain support at home (Allison 2014).

As pointed out by Grigas (2016), the Kremlin discourse also appropriates the language often used by the West on the international stage to further legitimise its cause: a moral responsibility to protect compatriots, the provision of humanitarian aid, the regard for human rights and their violations, the right to self-determination as well as quoting American representatives and appealing to UN resolutions and international agreements. This seeks to legitimise the action undertaken by appropriating widely accepted terms in the international sphere.

In conclusion, the Kremlin's argument is clearly articulated: historical, cultural and linguistic links form the basis for the Russian identity and nation. Thus, the compatriots belong to Russia, which must ensure their rights when they are in danger. Not only a physical attack constitutes an act of aggression, but also an attack on those common links. These guiding principles shape legitimacy and illegitimacy and they are anchored in long discursive practices and the legislation. Nevertheless, Russia signals that the events in Ukraine are a matter of new concern that needs to be addressed.This sense of urgency instills the need to take decisive action, which served as a justification for the annexation.

Chapter 3: Securitising the compatriots in Crimea

After presenting the evolution and application of the concept of the 'compatriot' in Russian politics and laying out the threat that the recent developments in Ukraine have exposed them to, a thorough analysis will be carried out in order to understand the securitisation effort that led to the annexation of Crimea. To that end, the specific elements of the theory put forward by Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde and important contributions and additions from other scholars will be applied to this case study.

As explained in the theoretical framework, securitisation occurs when an 'issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object justifying the use of extraordinary measures to handle it' (Buzan et al. 1998). These scholars suggest that the issue is more than politicised in the public debate, it is securitised: this means that it is it coupled with a sense of urgency and requires specific action to address it. By securitising, one enters the realm of exceptionality and lack of proportionality (Bigo 2006), which disrupts the checks and balances that accompany normal political proceedings. Annexing Crimea can be considered an extraordinary measure by all accounts: not only does one encounter a sheer number of media reports around the issue, but there were many calls considering such move a breach of international law that cost Russia hefty economic and political sanctions from important political actors such as the EU (Allison 2014). Such a transcending political process could have been expected to take a considerable amount of time, but it occurred within days, evidencing the sense of urgency, which is characteristic of securitisation efforts. The consequences of such a bold political move were unpredictable, but it is evident that this decision meant a rupture with normal procedures, situating the issue in another realm of politics (Huysman et al. 2011).

Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1998) lay great emphasis on the linguistic aspect of securitisation, which means that a mere allusion to a problem as a security issue –a speech act, an utterance— suffices to label it as such and undertake unconventional measures. This refers to Austin's speech act theory (1975), which classifies speech acts in three categories according to their function. In this case, a security threat is a performative illocutionary act, i.e. the utterance itself creates and shapes reality. Therefore, threats are social constructs and not necessarily objective realities.

However, understanding security as a self-referential practice is a matter of contestation within this field of studies, with many scholars arguing that a single utterance is not enough to securitise (Balzacq 2011, Léonard and Kaunert 2011). The audience's assent is required, which constitutes the constative approach to securitisation (Emerson 2017). Balzacq (2011) maintains that securitisation

needs to be understood as an intersubjective argumentative process between the securitisation actor and the audience, in which the former needs to convince the latter. These two approaches have been intertwined to different degrees in the literature, fusing both the performative aspect of language and the role of the audience in one analytical framework that considers both necessary conditions for a successful securitising move (ibid.). This will also be the guiding principle of this chapter.

In this case study, the securitisation move targeted the compatriots, a community revolving around a specific identity, enmeshed in the Russian nation. Thus, the integrity of their collective identity was presented as endangered. The Copenhagen School widened the security agenda to include societal security as a security concern on the same level as military issues. It is a powerful tool to mobilise the audience by adducing threats to 'us', the community (Buzan et al. 1998). In such instances, it is their survival that is at stake, with their idiosyncratic markers such as language and culture, but also their locus of self-identification (Theiler 2009). In this case, a rapprochement to the West is deemed incompatible with the preservation of the autonomous identity of the compatriots, as becomes clear in the discourse. Identities are realities subject to securitisation, especially when it comes to large communities whose unity is to be protected (Neumann 2009).

Scholars such as McSweeney (1996) criticise this approach claiming that it essentialises a naturally heterogeneous concept such as identity. For him, this might erode societal cohesion by privileging the interests of a group over the collectivity. Whoever wields enough legitimacy to float a powerful narrative can essentially set the agenda and impose their worldview. Williams (2017) counters McSweeney's argument by arguing that the malleable concept of identity only becomes static for the whole society when securitised, although its exclusionary nature is not disputed. In addressing this point, it is worth remembering the ductility of the term compatriots, which allows accommodating a variety of identities whilst it consequently excludes others. From an analytical standpoint, the more pertinent question might be who securitises and for whom (Balzacq). The broad consensus in the literature coincides in considering societal security a valid method of analysis.

Thus, actors with enough authority can make the case that the societal security is under threat. The ontology of this threat is determined by two factors and preconditions as explained above: the speech act and the acceptance by the audience. Wæver (2001) posits three conditions for successful securitisation based on the speech act theory put forward by Austin, the felicity conditions. These conditions are no guarantee of success, but they increase the likelihood that the speech act will be accepted by the audience:

- The first condition is to follow the grammatical rules of the language to construct a narrative about an existential threat that needs to be repelled. As the discourse analysis has laid out, it is patent that there is a narrative about an outside violent interference from the West and the opposition forces of Ukraine that menaces the security of the state and its citizens, including the compatriots.

- The second felicity condition demands that an actor has sufficient authority and uses the appropriate circumstances to perform the speech act. This has also been the case, as the discourse analysis has focused on the speeches and texts produced by the highest ranks of authority in the Kremlin, the president himself and the statements issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who have communicated through the expected channels during a crisis.

- Finally, the third felicity condition requires historically loaded connotations that reinforce the argument. Here, many themes that have a long discursive history in Russia and are deeply entrenched in the collective identity have come to the fore in the analysed texts. The most prominent theme has been the association of the opposition forces with fascism due to the rather minoritary Right Sector and Svoboda parties (Likhachev 2016). This connects well with the audience due to the importance of the victory of Russia over fascism in the post-Soviet Russian identity, linking to the glorified understanding of Russia as a liberator of the region and its status of great power (Gaufman 2015). Other occurrences of significant historical moments can be found such as the colour revolutions, the antecedent of Kosovo, West-led regime changes and NATO expansions as well as appeals to common historical roots.

These three felicity conditions pave the way for a successful securitisation act, but they are not necessarily conducive to the audience's acquiescence. In fact, Balzacq (2011) points out that the audience needs to be presented something tangible which reflects their knowledge of the world. The audience can then identify this as a threat before giving their assent. This will centre the discourse by highlighting its consistent and plausible elements whilst concealing the more contested or counterproductive ones (ibid.). Thus, the securitising actor merely puts forward their representation of an already existing state of affairs that the audience can back (Emerson 2017). The audience engages then in an 'explaining-understanding' process (Suganami 1999) and accepts a narrative of the events. The discourse will be modulated to accommodate broad audiences (Balzacq 2011), but also different groups with different logics.

Obviously, the media plays a significant role when it comes to the shaping of the knowledge of the world that the audience possesses, which is the basis for their acquiescence. Even if this is not a part

of the securitisation move, it can be decisive in certain instances. Favourable media outlets such as Russia Today or Pervy Kanal magnified the role of far-right groupings in the Ukrainian crisis (Gaufman 2015), which prepared the audience for acceptance. William posits that not just the utterance of the word 'security' is important, but the entire context and combination of rhetorical, institutional and symbolic events. He rightly claims that the role of images is crucial for securitisation: they transmit powerful pictures that might condition the way the audience perceives the world. Grigas (2016) also makes the case that disinformation campaigns through state-sponsored media outlets are part of Russia's revisionist ambitions. All these elements combined influenced the audience and made it more prone to accepting the securitisation of the compatriots.

Identifying and partly contributing to the prior knowledge of the audience is important for the securitisation move. If the discourse enunciated by the actors resonates with the audience in light of external circumstances and recent developments (Balzacq 2011), it is likely to be accepted. If the actor fails to understand how the audience feels and sees the world, it will be more difficult to hit the right note. Other than the socio-cultural environment, it is crucial to deploy a degree of semantic regularity that helps the audience to identify the themes and pigeonhole them into well-established categories. To this end, there are several strategies to connect with the audience linguistically such as the 'heuristic artefacts', which include appeals to emotion, metaphors and analogies (ibid.). In the discourse analysis section, many occurrences of appeals to a family are made to awake emotions of close bonds as well as presenting an analogy between familiar and international relations within the near abroad. At the same time, instead of delving into the complexity of the Ukrainian crisis, a simplified version is offered in which the opposition is equated with fascism and the far-right. These mechanisms facilitate an understanding of a specific version of the events that justify the implementation of customised policies.

Balzacq (2011, 2019) also introduces two other concepts to explain how these policies are developed and implemented: Foucault's dispositif and Bourdieu's habitus. The dispositif refers to the regimes of security practices that enable and constraint the actors to undertake a specific course of action, i.e. the dispositif shapes the nature of the extraordinary measures. Since national security relies on a defined set of practices (Huysman), the dispositif determines the structure and environment where policy-makers conceive security, based on their backgrounds and capacities. This becomes the expected behaviour through manifold interactions. This constitutes the habitus, a set of routinised practices that are deeply entrenched and limit the scope for variation in the decision-making. These approaches are worth exploring to determine how the securitizing actor arrived at the extraordinary measures.

In this case study, it is necessary to investigate the role of the security apparatus in Russia involving the decision-making process on the Ukrainian crisis. The Federal Security Service or FSB, amongst other security agencies, wields enormous power on Russian foreign policy (Skak 2016). The FSB is considered to be the successor to the KGB (Illarionov 2009) and its staff has a background in military, security and law enforcement and are known as 'siloviki' (Taylor 2017). They have inherited structures –or dispositif— from the Soviet regime despite the splitting and reshuffling into various agencies, accounting for 77% of the top jobs (Illarionov 2009). There is a debate on whether this division and competition for competences and resources actually lead to a restriction of their power (Taylor 2017, Meakins 2018) or not (Skak 2016). However, there is broad consensus on their pursuit for the conservative values and the status-quo that the siloviki embody (Ostrovsky 2004, Skak 2016, Taylor 2017), which replicates itself today due to the force of the habitus (Renz et al. 2006). The siloviki are a key factor to understanding the security practices that were adopted in light of the Ukrainian crisis.

Dean offers an analytical framework to understand the security apparatus and the decision-making process with four categories:

1. Ways of seeing and perceiving: This refers to how governments and the governed problematise a specific issue. In this case, the unrest in Ukraine was attributed to an invasive West that spurs far-right groupings and seeks to undermine Russia's multipolar global order, endangering the compatriot community by extension.

2. Ways of thinking: This relates to the ways in which knowledge and truth are produced and articulated in discourse. Other than the themes explored in Chapter 2, the siloviki are characterised by a bellicose zero-sum mentality in their competition against the West (Görtz 2016, Meakins 2018, Skak 2016) and by their search for precedents and conspiracies related to a possible foreign-led regime change –such as the colour revolutions, Kosovo independence— or even insurgencies –such as the Hungarian Uprising of 1956— that might spread through the domino effect (Skak 2016, Taylor 2017).

3. Ways of acting: This means the mechanisms, strategies and other technologies that are employed and how authority is constituted and upheld. Analysing the siloviki, brinkmanship is one of the main strategic tool (Skak 2016) combined with a variety of military and non-military means –the so-called hybrid warfare (Grigas 2016). Authority and intra-group relations are cemented through loyalty and corruption (Meakins 2018), but the links to the

Kremlin are often cited in the literature (Skak 2016) as well as their support for the conservative status-quo (Taylor 2017).

4. Ways of forming identities: othering processes can be attested in the discourse analysis (Russia and the compatriots needing protection on one side, the Ukrainian opposition and the West on the other side) (Görtz 2016). Identity-formation also occurred through the compatriot legislation, creating a deterritorialised Russian identity.

This regime of security practices is held together thanks to legitimacy by the public (Balzacq 2019). Three elements account for the perception of the legitimacy of the securitisation move. Firstly, it needs to be lawful. Despite the multiple voices calling the annexation a breach of international law, Vladimir Putin alluded to the Russian legislation –such as the compatriot laws—, the Kosovo precedent and the failure of the Ukrainian leadership to uphold the rule of law. Secondly, it needs to be justified. This was not only done by presenting precedent cases of Western interventionism and calls of fascism, but also by appealing to a moral responsibility of Russia. Instances of violence and brutality by the opposition were reported as further legitimisation. Thirdly and lastly, consent is also necessary. The wider public seemed to consent to the move due to the increased approval ratings (Allison 2014), but in this case, it is particularly interesting to refer to the requests for help from the local population of the affected areas as well as the Crimean population (Golts 2014). These three elements contributed to the construction of the narrative put forward by the Kremlin.

Another aspect worth analysing, which is not widely explored in securitisation studies, is the link between securitisation and the motivations (Theiler 2009). There are certainly different accounts about the issue, ranging from revisionist territorial ambitions to a reactive Russia to West expansion (Görtz 2016), but also including group psychology in decision-making. Instead of elaborating a general theory to understand the motivations, Theiler (2009) urges to focus on who securitises, for what purpose and when. The security apparatus, also echoed through the statements made by the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is the securitising actor with a very specific set of capacities and backgrounds as discussed above. The self-proclaimed goal of ensuring the rights of the Russian compatriot population and their integrity as a community is widely questioned (Charap et al. 2014). The moment the securitisation move took place coincided with a time of heightened instability in Ukraine, which was tactically advantageous for the annexation. Léonard and Kaunert (2011) put forward the Kingdon's model to elucidate the moment chosen for securitisation: when a political consensus is formed —politics stream— around the socially constructed perception of a specific threat —problem stream— and this consensus coalesces around a policy —policy stream

—, available from a wide array of different policy alternatives, securitisation will occur. Thus, these three elements or streams need to converge, which is dependent on several actors.

Securitisation is a rupture with normal politics. It relies on the confluence of different elements that have been dissected in this chapter: the dispositif, often embodied by the President in public appearances, follows routinised practices of security and threat identification, based on a well established repetitive discourse: the recurring theme of a West-backed regime change and intrusiveness in Russia's historical sphere of influence. By accommodating the language of civil rights and freedoms for Russian-speakers as well as their protection, a moral justification is presented. This discourse resonates with the audience and their previous cultural knowledge, which is further cemented due to the mass media coverage of the issue. This interplay becomes a mutually constitutive process, where the Kremlin provides a widespread discourse familiar to the audience and the audience rewards it with the corresponding legitimacy for the implementation of contentious policies. The annexation of Crimea breached the Budapest Memorandum (Shmelev 2018), which enshrined Ukraine's territorial integrity and political independence, since the central government had no say in the sovereignty of Crimea. This constituted a breach in the normal conduct of politics in which Russia, as a conservative power, abides by its international treaties (Laruelle 2015). This chapter has shed light into how this rupture with normal politics was conducted and what elements played a role in it.

This analysis has also described the role of collective identity in national security and how it is deployed. Discursively, great emphasis is placed on it, but its socially constructed nature becomes evident: the perceptions of danger to the integrity of the Russian compatriot community are arbitrary. Therefore, the subsequent risk assessment and the exact nature of the extraordinary security policies are dependent on perceptions rather than a fait accompli and proven threats. In this particular case, the study of securitisation has allowed to lay out the different elements and perceptions that need to converge in order to securitise the compatriots in Crimea, who symbolise and are an extension to the Russian nation in its sphere of influence.

Findings and conclusions

Thanks to the different methodological lenses explored in each chapter, a thorough explanation has been provided for the securitisation effort that led to the annexation of Crimea into the Russian Federation. Going back to the research question of how the Russian-speaking diaspora was securitised despite the rejection of the international, the analysis has demonstrated that it was through a discourse that constructed a referent object and a threat that would resonate with the audience.

The referent object was created through the legislation on compatriots that began at the end of the previous century but continued and intensified in recent years. The compatriot laws designated who belongs to this category and what rights they are entitled to, progressively equating them to the same rights as a Russian citizen that was born in the Russian Federation and holds the corresponding passport. This equation gained weight in foreign policy, making them more susceptible to any threat, due to the extensive protection they are offered: recognition of their political and linguistic rights as well as self-identification as a distinct community. The legislation has successfully consolidated the term compatriot in Russian foreign policy.

However, securitisation only occurs when the normal rules of politics are infringed. The legislative efforts do not constitute in and of itself a breach with normal political life. But the violation of Ukrainian territorial integrity as set out in the Budapest Memorandum and, more broadly, in international law represents a rupture with ordinary politics. In fact, Russia tends to comply with its international treaties (Laruelle 2015), which makes this exception even more unique. Thus, as a justification for this action —which included deploying troops despite the initial denial (Golts 2014) —, extraordinary circumstances needed to be adduced. It is a matter of debate to what extent the Russian leadership considered the situation in Crimea to be untenable. But a definite threat to the Russian identity in Ukraine was presented, with the revocation of linguistic rights and the new constitution, the unconstitutional change of administration, the presence of far-right groups such as the Right Sector and Svoboda and the violent clashes on the streets, spurred by the West.

Many believe that this did not endanger the Crimean population, rendering the Russian involvement unnecessary (Allison 2014). However, this threat to the identity of the compatriots managed to resonate with the broader Russian population, as the increased popularity ratings show. The compatriots' identity markers such as language, religion or ethnicity are readily recognisable by the broader Russian population, which becomes more prone to interpret external circumstances to be a threat to their common identity, galvanising their support. The audience's acquiescance proves that

the Russian leadership succeeded in capitalising on the public's previous knowledge of the world by presenting a narrative with recurring themes: the fraternal bonds that unite Russia and Ukraine and the view of an ever-expanding West, ready to champion insurgencies or "colour revolutions" and characterised by its double standard as long as it fits their geopolitical goals. This discourse has been long present in Russian politics, which makes it more acceptable to the audience despite exaggerations or imprecisions.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to determine whether or not or to what extent the West meddled in the Ukrainian crisis, but Russia defied Ukraine's sovereignty and called out on the West for interfering in Ukraine's sovereignty (Roberts 2017). Williams (2017) claims that sovereignty is central for state security, and so is identity for societal survival. The compatriots have succeeded in converging these two types of security into one, turning the compatriots into an extension of national security in the near abroad. Any threats to this group constitute an attack to the state and societal security, so it becomes a matter of survival. Russia acted with great severity as if this attack had been perpetrated against Russia itself.

The study of the security apparatus of Russia has given powerful insights to understand what the inside perspective of the Kremlin is and what recurring themes are most consistent with their ideology. Skak (2016) alludes to how the siloviki's background and groupthink shape Russia's approach to security: their defining features are a hysteria surrounding a potential West-led regime-change that might spread to Russia through a domino effect and a strong desire for maintaining a conservative status-quo. Thus, the officials in charge of decision-making assessed the situation in Ukraine through this lens, searching for a link between the Maidan protests, the overthrow of Yanukovych and the West's involvement. Their conclusion, according to this view, is that the West sought a friendlier administration consistent with their expansionist goals by illegitimately replacing the pro-Russian leadership by supporting the protests, with the risk of the unrest spreading to Russia with the same outcome.

The siloviki can provide a different analysis of the motivation for securitisation other than the popularity ratings and Putin's imperial ambitions that much of the literature refers to. On the one hand, the zero-sum mentality of the siloviki purports that a gain for Russia, i.e. the annexation of Crimea, is a loss for the West, following a cold war mindset. This also means pursuing a revanchist policy of punishing those countries in the near abroad that decide to align with the West (Nalbandov 2009), such as the cases of Ukraine and Georgia. On the other hand, the siloviki engage in calculated brinkmanship when deterring an adversary and they are ready to escalate the situation with the knowledge of where the boundaries lie (Skak 2016). Balzacq (2011) signals how the

routinisation of certain regimes of security practices influence the securitisation of specific issues: the siloviki approach has been anchored in the security agencies.

This attitude has influenced Russian foreign policy in only a few occasions in face of a dominating pragmatism with the international community (Laruelle 2015). Maintaining loyalty from other countries within the Russian sphere of influence has been equated with imperial ambitions rather than a fear of a domino effect leading to a Russian spring or a colour revolution in Moscow. There are certainly radical imperialist ideologists close to the Kremlin such as Dugin (Clover 2016, Görtz 2016), who consider Ukraine's existence a geopolitical threat to Eurasia. However, their impact on foreign policy has been limited (Laruelle 2015). The aforementioned Kingdon's model could explain how these seemingly imperialist policies are accommodated in the overwhelming pragmatic Russian foreign policy.

According to this framework, securitisation occurs when the problem, the policy and the politics streams coincide. The pragmatic approach in Russian foreign policy wants to prevent regime change at home and perceives a problem when there is a minimal risk of contagion. This problem was certainly detected by the security apparatus since it occurred in very close vicinity of Russia. This constitutes the problem stream. The Russian government has a wide array of possible policy options at its disposal, with different ideologies represented including the imperialist-civilisational one, with irredentist claims over Crimea. All these options configure the policy stream. Lastly, the politics stream encompasses the public mood, focused on the unrest in Ukraine, and the exceptionalism of the situation and the coalition of forces. Under this constellation of circumstances, the imperialist and the pragmatic view converged in this policy. Under this analysis, it would be erroneous to think that the pragmatic approach has been eschewed completely, but it partly coincided with the imperialist worldview in this precise case.

It would be a faulty argument to dismiss all concerns that Russia expressed in regards to the Ukrainian crisis as self-interested. It is reasonable to fear a rise of fascist parties and, to a certain degree, the restrictions on civil rights and liberties of a very closely related minority in light of the uncertainty and the violence, even if this was overplayed and magnified in the discourse. Russia probably considered other geopolitical interests in its risk calculations such as maintaining the base of the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, a potential Ukraine accession to NATO, or the failure of the Eurasian Union to win over Ukraine. The results of their actions give the Kremlin leverage in any future negotiation. Despite the gravity of the situation and the risks involved, the annexation exceeded the realm of ordinary modern-day international relations and was met with sanctions.

It is discourse which serves as a cosmetic device to conceal all these geopolitical considerations as well as regime security under the mask of protecting the compatriots. Therefore, critical discourse analysis becomes paramount to deconstruct who is going to undertake extraordinary measures and break normal politics, what or who is going to be securitised and under which circumstances. The linguistic aspect of securitisation is important not only because of the performative nature of language but also because of its intersubjective side. This means how the audiences and the authorities come to a common understanding of threats, which rhetorical devices authorities use to convince the audience that they can escape the normal checks and balances that accompany day-to-day politics. This also elucidates how politicians eschew accountability when justifying measures that might be damaging to the wider population by drawing from discourses that have long been present.

In the case of Russian foreign policy, it is conceivable that these themes will continue to dominate the relations of Russia with the former Soviet countries in the near abroad: fraternal links, common history, culture or language. Russia has been consistent in its defence of a multipolar global order, which would make its political system appear legitimate if the comparisons with the West as the only referent are abandoned. The success of this narrative lies in its continuation and mainstreamisation, which facilitates the acquiescence of the public. Identity is paramount not because it is necessarily under increased danger, but because it resonates well with audiences. It is through identity that the link was established between the compatriots and the Russian public and how securitisation became successful.

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