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University of Central Florida



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TURNING AWAY FROM YOUR SLAVIC BROTHER:
THE EFFECTS OF IDENTITY ON RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND BELARUS

by

MATT MATEJKA
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2006

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters in Arts
in the Department of Political Science
in the College of Sciences
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2012

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ABSTRACT

On September 24, 2011, it was announced that Putin would run for president once again in 2012. The reaction in the West was that “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” The Western conception of the post-Cold War Russia is often one of remarkable consistency since the turn of the century. This Western narrative focuses on an autocratic Putin reigning over his resurgent and confrontational Russia. Does this narrative tell the story of Russia today, or does it instead obscure it? To answer this I have elected to analyze Russian identity and how it relates to Russia’s foreign policy with Belarus, traditionally a close ally of Russia. Analyzing news articles from state-owned *Russia Today*, I look at changes in reporting and Russian identity over time. I argue that a shift in Russian identity towards a more liberal outlook between 2006 and 2010 motivated a degradation of relations with Belarus. I argue that once the simplified narrative of a resurgent Russia is peeled back, a closer look reveals competing identities and competing interest groups in Russia’s domestic arena. Finally I conclude that not only does identity play a pivotal role in Russia’s relations, but also that researching identity is important in that it gives us a window into a fairly closed regime that lies at the center of the global stage. Discovering how Russian identity reacts to and influences foreign policy can offer insight into the domestic framework of contemporary Russia, as well as offer us an understanding of how central ideas are to crafting the world around us.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Thomas Dolan and Dr. Waltraud Morales for their invaluable assistance.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABM – Anti-Ballistic Missile Defense
BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation
CES – Common Economic Space (originally Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine... though Ukraine has not been involved since the Orange Revolution)
CIA – Central Intelligence Agency
CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States (post-Soviet states excluding Ukraine, Turkmenistan, the Baltics, and Georgia)
CRRF – Collective Rapid Reaction Force (military aspect of the CSTO)
CSTO – Collective Security Treaty Organization
EAEC – Eurasian Economic Community
EU – European Union
FM – Foreign Minister
FSB – Federal Security Service (the state security agency in Russia today, Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti)
FSKN – Federal Narcotics Control Service (Russia)
GUAM – Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (its name is derived from its members: Georgia Ukraine Azerbaijan Moldova)
KGB – Committee for State Security (the state security agency in Belarus, which retained the Soviet name Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti)
KPRF – Communist Party of the Russian Federation
LDPR – Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (an ultra-nationalist party, despite the name)
MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MVD – Ministry of Internal Affairs (Russia)
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPR – National Public Radio
OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PACE – The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly
PM – Prime Minister
RT – Russia Today (state-run news agency)
START – Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UK – United Kingdom
UN – United Nations
UR – United Russia (the current dominant party of power in Russia)
US – United States

I. INTRODUCTION

A Different World

His world was different the last time he was here in Moscow. On December 26th, 1949, a reserved and servile Mao had come to Russia to celebrate Stalin's birthday and officially ally revolutionary China to the Soviet Union, expecting all the military support that came with such an action. Instead he had ended up locked up in a dacha for weeks on end as Stalin tested Mao's patience to gauge just how far he could push the Chinese leader. It could be said that Mao passed the test when he turned down the uproarious applause given to him in the Bolshoi Theater, instead deferring to Stalin. When the audience began to chant: "Stalin, Mao Zedong!" he chose to reply simply with "Long live Stalin! Glory belongs to Stalin!"¹

It was less than eight years later that Mao had returned to Moscow, arriving in November of 1957. Far from the servile Mao that had appeared before, what stepped off the tarmac that night was instead an upstart intent on usurping the role of the international leader of communism. When protocol demanded that communist leaders from across the world prepare written statements for the international meeting, it was Mao who excused himself from such chores when he said: "I have no text. I want to be able to speak freely."² Whereas other leaders from across the world stood and spoke, Mao chose to give his speech while comfortably seated, blaming a headache for preventing him from standing. When the subject of a third world war was broached, Mao's speech differed from the otherwise-standard talk of an era of socialism inaugurating an era of world peace:

*"Let's contemplate this, how many people would die if war breaks out? There are 2.7 billion people in the world. One-third could be lost; or, a little more, it could be half... I say that, taking the extreme situation, half dies, half lives, but imperialism would be razed to the ground and the whole world would become socialist."*²

It was not only a speech seemingly in praise of the benefits of world war, but also of poverty in general:

*“People say that poverty is bad, but in fact poverty is good. The poorer people are, the more revolutionary they are. It is dreadful to imagine a time when everyone will be rich... from a surplus of calories people will have two heads and four legs.”*³

Reagan’s world was different the last time he was here in Berlin. A warm summer breeze was offset by the overcast, foreboding sky. Reagan stood before a throng of spectators waving American and West German flags. No doubt even within the Reagan administration there was a mix of tension (in that many believed the speech would be too provocative) and excitement to match the cacophony of the warm overcast sky, pregnant with both excitement and dread as Reagan spoke from behind bulletproof glass so as to deter East German snipers. When he spoke the four fateful words and issued his challenge to Gorbachev, “tear down this wall”⁴ and the crowd erupted in applause, it seemed as if the moment was the climax of a film just as much as a political career.

In 1987 it was a very different moment and world from when Reagan had visited Berlin nearly five years before (in June 11, 1982). In that world the Soviet Union was the “evil empire”; an empire asserting its dominance over Afghanistan, jailing dissenters and clamping down on reformists in Brezhnev’s neo-Stalinist climate, and was racing to attain parity/supremacy in terms of its nuclear arms.

The nature of Sino-Soviet relations had vastly changed from 1949 to 1957, just as the nature of the US-Soviet relations had vastly changed from 1982 to 1987 at the height of glasnost and perestroika. The reasons behind these changes are multi-faceted and depend on the point of view of the analyst. Realists would state the change in US-Soviet relations came about due to the declining power of the Soviet Union, coupled with its inability to maintain its economy, which

necessitated a withdrawal of Soviet power across the globe, and Eastern Europe in particular. Liberals would highlight the generational shift that took place when the Brezhnevs, Andropovs, and Chernenkos of the country were to be gradually replaced by reform-minded leaders belonging to Gorbachev's generation. This new liberal-minded intelligentsia had captured the state and were mobilizing to reform the system from the top-down.

While these may aid in understanding the shifts in US-Soviet policy, analysis becomes more nebulous in the case of Sino-Soviet relations. No fundamental shift in power had taken place to prompt a more assertive China, nor would there be any rational reason for China and the Soviets to split in the face of their need to balance against the United States. In fact, Mao's stance of being in favor of war and poverty (especially when China's weakness is to be taken into account) seem to not only *not* be rational pursuits of power (as measured by materialism), but they seem to be fundamentally anti-rational and to inevitably lead to the destruction of China's interests, if not to the destruction of the Chinese state itself. Likewise, while the Stalinist clique (Molotov et al) was removed by Khrushchev, if we were to take a liberal account and analyze the political clout of both countries we would see two top-heavy communist states with no interest group or coalition changes to be had, as neither had a semblance of pluralism to begin with. Furthermore, while the liberal "democratic peace" theory would state that two non-democracies like the Soviet Union and China would eventually threaten one another, it would not do much to explain *why* the Sino-Soviet split developed precisely when it did or *why* they were allied in the first place.

As alluded to in the first sentence of each introduction regarding the viewpoint of both Mao and Reagan, these instances were not just cases of shifting power or shifting leadership, but rather shifting perceptions. "The world" was not only objectively different between 1949 and

1957; it was subjectively different as well, just as the worlds of 1982 and 1987 were drastically different. What caused this change in perception however? Was it a byproduct of the power-shifts central to realist theory? Was it the outcome of shifts in ruling coalitions central to liberal theory?

To explore the answer to this question it is necessary to jump ahead in time, towards the present day. This way perceptions can be analyzed without the benefit of cherry-picking time periods, and policy can be judged in terms of both how we have arrived at the present and what may lie ahead in the immediate future. Similarly, neither realist nor liberal theories should be ignored. Also, it is best to select a representative case study and to analyze a country where interest groups are active so as to not discount liberal theories. For this reason it makes little sense to analyze a totalitarian country where domestic politics and interest groups are nonexistent. It also makes sense to analyze a country where realist conceptions of power are useful, and where crucial security and economic interests are integral to the nation's foreign policy. In this instance it makes little sense to analyze a country where power is so weak as to necessitate an entirely subservient foreign policy.

For this thesis I have analyzed the foreign policy of the Russian Federation towards Belarus from 2006 until 2010. This allows for the ability to analyze Russia, a country that is both integral in international security arrangements, in addition to being a country with a variety of interest groups, coalitions, and, importantly, national identities. It is my assertion that the perception in Russia has shifted, and I seek to explain this resulting foreign policy shift in terms of shifts in identity. Just as the Soviet rejection of its dogmatic Stalinist identity (under Khrushchev) caused a rejection of a Stalinist China and eventually led to the Sino-Soviet split, so too can shifts in identity necessitate foreign policy shifts in today's Russia.

Contemporary Russia illustrates shifting notions of foreign policy objectives peculiar to the worldview of its leaders... just as Mao's foreign policy objectives contained the inherent logic of his own worldview. For example, Mao stated he would be willing to accept being struck by American nuclear missiles ("We are willing to endure the first strike. All it is is a big pile of people dying."⁵) if it meant China was to become a military superpower with Russia's assistance in preparation for this nuclear attack. While putting your country in nuclear crosshairs may not seem rational in terms of realist analysis where the state and resources (such as the people) are concerned, it seems to make greater sense if you are to analyze the world through the lens of class conflict rather than the lens of power-maximization with the state as your center of analysis. In this instance millions of dead in China may be beneficial if a militarized China at the center of a victorious-global socialist camp is the logical conclusion. While realism posits that all state actions are based on the maximization of interest, realist theories do little to explain what actually generates interest. Surely interest is far from universal, and is largely crafted by perceptions and identities. This is why I have elected to perform a constructivist analysis of Russian identity, since Russia's identity must be assessed if Russia's foreign policy (and the interests involved in it) is to be fully understood.

The Brother States

A focus on Russian identity could be applied to any number of foreign policy decisions, from analyzing exactly what Russia views as its sphere of interest, to what it views as its main threats. This paper will focus on Russia's relations with Belarus. With great linguistic, cultural, and political similarities and shared histories Belarus seemed destined to become an ally of

Russia even before the Russian-leaning Lukashenko came to power in 1994. To analyze Russia's perception of Belarus, in some ways, reflects Russia's perception of itself... what it values, what it fears, and what it strives for.

But this was not the only reason Belarus was chosen as my focus. Unlike a country like Ukraine or Germany, where democratic turnover causes regime turnover, Belarus has been ruled since 1994 by Alexander Lukashenko, and has been dubbed by Western media as the "last dictatorship of Europe."^{6,7,8} Lukashenko has neutralized the tendency of CIS countries to be involved in clan-politics (more on this later) by ruling with an iron hand and making all political institutions reliant solely on him. With his autocratic leadership he offers a crucial control variable... the variable of domestic coalitions and governments. Whereas Russian relations with the United States or Ukraine or Germany would involve changing dynamics due to changing interest groups and governments, Belarus can be analyzed without this concern since there is little to no democracy and its autocracy provides a relatively constant and stable unit of analysis, both in the form of a more or less stable Belarusian identity (maintained through repression if need be), and in terms of a stable partner in the form of Lukashenko, helping to neutralize the impact changing governments/personalities would have on Russia's relations with the country.

The identity of the autocracy in Belarus is not terribly difficult to decipher. The weakness of Belarusian identity was based on the de-ethnicizing principles of the Soviet experience, Stalinist liquidation of cultural intellectuals, Russification policies, and rapid industrialization.⁹ Lukashenko took advantage of this weakness to replace Belarusian identity (or perhaps more appropriately, to *meld* it) with a Soviet identity. The security service is still called the KGB; the only intelligence service on the planet to retain the name following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Lukashenko grew up, like his father, as a collective farm boss. The collective farm

system has been largely kept intact. He was the only MP to oppose the Belavezha Accords in December of 1991¹⁰, which established the independence of Belarus and dissolved the Soviet Union. In 2002 he paved over the graves of victims of Stalinism. He chose to replace the Belarusian flag at the time (white-red-white in its layout) with the Soviet version of the flag once he came to power. He changed the day of independence from July 1990 (liberation from the Soviet Union) to July 1944 (liberation from Nazi occupation). The media paints Belarus as having retained the positive aspects of Soviet socialism and schools reintroduced Soviet-era textbooks and historiography. The privatization process has moved slower than in any other post-Soviet country. He regularly paints the West (and the United States in particular) as the enemy of Belarus and accuses domestic opposition groups of being funded by the CIA. He has decried the expansion of NATO and called it an “insidious and horrible monster.”¹¹ Most political scientists would agree that Belarus exhibits the most authoritarian political climate of the European states, and that it exhibits the least amount of liberalism (in the classical sense) in terms of economics. In addressing the tendency of Poland to lean towards the West on a radio address in 2001, Lukashenko stated: “Poland has become a bridgehead from which the invasion of the former Soviet Union advances.”¹² Lukashenko’s style of rule and vision of Belarus as being synonymous with the “former Soviet Union” gives insight into the neo-Soviet identity with which he controls Belarus. Consequently, Belarus has been described as a “Soviet-theme park” which “establish(es) a Soviet-type model, without a Communist party.”¹³

While European identity revolves around democracy, Lukashenko has built an identity fashioned upon Slaviness and Orthodoxy (similar to today’s Communist Party of the Russian Federation). This outlook has been likened to old notions of Slavophilia in that “in essence,

Russia has retained what the West had lost: its soul.”¹⁴ This notion was reinforced when Lukashenko, in a 2003 interview, stated:

*“Belarus’s westward drift would be tantamount to breaking away from the Eastern Slavic civilization, where the country belongs... In the West [we] would be in the subordinate, and not commanding position. Following the footsteps of the Baltic countries would be very wrong.”*¹⁵

While Lukashenko has monopolized the media and domestic politics to portray this neo-Soviet identity while repressing other identity discourses, Russian politics has shown a pluralism of competing discourses. The liberal view of Russia conceptualizes Russia as being a part of the West, as economic modernization as the key to success, and as the Soviet past as the aberration that hampered/hampers Russia’s progress. Taking this into consideration, it is safe to assume that a Russian liberal would view Belarus as the way *backwards* rather than the way forward, and this premise has been put forward by scholars in the past.¹⁶ My hypothesis is that, ***as liberal identity would increase in Russian politics, foreign relations with Belarus would grow more strained/antagonistic, with the reverse occurring if liberal identity were to decrease.*** I seek to explain a key divergence in 2010 from 2006. While the Russian government made no positive mention of protests against Lukashenko’s 2006 elections (which were largely considered fraudulent by the West) and even discredited the opposition, in the 2010 election there was a thorough cataloguing of everything from the opposition parties not being allowed the ability to set up tents, to labeling Belarus as the “last dictatorship in Europe” to, perhaps most shocking of all, actively covering and promoting opposition candidates. To understand how this drastic change took place and how it relates to Russia’s national identity, it is first necessary to discuss the methodology of this paper.

II. METHODOLOGY

Identity And Its Measurement

"I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest." – Winston Churchill¹⁷

There are a multitude of ways that identity can be measured.¹⁸ I have narrowed my focus to two methods that are particularly salient for this topic:

1. Historical inquiry (elite/mass focused) – Review histories that describe identities and group ideas. This is useful because it illustrates important meanings over time.
2. Frames (elite focused) – use discourse analysis to review and analyze political debates, memoirs of leaders, and newspaper articles that describe and/or project the ideas. This is useful in that it shows how they appeal to/mobilize the population.

I have elected to focus on framing in particular. Framing is a form of content analysis that has been used to “emphasize that reporting shapes the context and background used to comprehend and interpret the workings of government authorities, political institutions, and the policy process.”¹⁹ A focus on framing is useful for several reasons. **One** is the simple fact of accessibility in terms of an availability of information in English. **Second** is that (as I will show later) the elite level is crucial when analyzing Russian domestic politics. Russia is a society that would seem, to borrow the phrasing of Michael Mann, to have a deep tradition of despotic power and a long history of being decidedly weaker in terms of its infrastructural power. While I will delve into the nature of Russia’s domestic power later, for now I will say that Russia’s top-heavy structure necessitates special attention to elite discourse, both in terms of where power resides and in terms of how ideas are transmitted (vertically rather than horizontally) in the context of Russian politics.

With framing as my primary method, I have elected to both analyze official statements by politicians (with a healthy degree of skepticism regarding the function of these statements) and to analyze online articles by *Russia Today* (RT). While a media outlet would normally be considered a form of analysis on the mass-level, RT is in fact owned by the government (it is operated by state-owned RIA Novosti) so it is a framing-analysis of the elite level. RT's reputation among the West is often as a naked tool of Kremlin propaganda.²⁰ While shifting identity discourses may be employed by a politician simply because he intends on appealing to separate identity constituencies (for example, an American president may embrace the notions of rugged American individualism while in Texas, and not while he is campaigning in Massachusetts), shifting identity discourses on the part of Russia Today's articles could signify shifts in how the government (which owns Russia Today) wishes to present itself to the nation (or rather, "world" since RT is in English) at large, and how it filters news through a specific identity discourse over time. This is the **third** reason for taking a framing-approach with regards to news articles. Shifts in identity on this level are much more revealing than presidential speeches, in that news (or "propaganda" if one wishes to apply a word with a more cynical connotation) analysis reflects identity changes among elites over time. **Fourthly**, while presidential speeches on Belarus may reflect a use of liberal rhetoric simply to attack the decidedly illiberal Belarus (and likewise for Russia Today articles), looking at Russia Today articles that are entirely separate from Belarus (for example, day-to-day international reporting) can reflect shifts in identity that are not at all connected to foreign policy rhetoric. This is why my analysis will center on wide swathes of reporting that is entirely *unrelated* to Belarus, lest I tautologically arrive at the conclusion that liberal-rhetoric-attacking-Belarus implies that a liberal identity shift causes attacks to be made on Belarus. When analyzing framing I have chosen to

look at (non-Belarus) articles from two periods: December 2006 and then December 2010, coinciding with the presidential election in Belarus. I have selected all news stories (310 from 2006, 196 from 2010) from both periods to analyze in terms of how often statements are made that coincide with a specific discourse. If identity is merely used as a rhetorical device liberal attacks on Belarus might increase in 2010 while liberal constructs remain the same when it comes to non-Belarus reporting. If, however, liberal discursive formations either fall or rise in non-Belarus stories we can assume a fundamental shift in how Russia Today (the Russian government) presents itself to the public, and through that what discursive formations it is choosing to communicate its messages.

However, there are two publics that the Russian state is presenting itself to. The first is the diaspora and the international community (RT in English) whereas there is the domestic audience in Russia. In order to see if there is any difference between the two presentations I have also looked at Russian-language articles from RIA Novosti (93 articles from December of 2006 and 90 articles from December of 2010). Google translate was used so that the articles could be analyzed in English. RIA Novosti owns RT and of course is state-owned as well, so if there is no difference between the two mediums one can expect RT and RIA Novosti to reflect similar trends in identity statements. If, however, there is a significant deviation between the two the research can offer insight into how RT differs from articles intended for a domestic audience.

On the other hand, to qualify the nature of statements themselves, I rely on historical inquiry. In particular I have depended on notions of Russian identity discursive formations put forward by Tsygankov and Hopf.²¹ I borrow from their research about classifications of Russian identity to determine how to classify statements according to which discursive formations they fit into (if they fit into any at all that is). I have also elected to ignore certain statements that

some may be tempted to include as indicative of identity-associations. For example, one might be tempted to include anti-corruption rhetoric as an indication of liberalism. However, Hopf has shown there are a few unanimous agreements on positions across the identity spectrum: a universal opposition to corruption and favoritism, arbitrary police power, state atheism, Stalinist terror and a universal supporting of ideological heterogeneity, concern for the next generation, achieving Great Power status, and promoting mass culture.²² Since a statement in favor of attaining Great Power status or combating corruption could reflect *any* identity, it makes little sense to qualify it as indicative of any particular identity. Likewise, I have ignored other “universal” statements as they are explained above by Hopf. What I *can* use, however, are indications where there are significant differences in terms of identity. For instance, positive appraisals of the middle class and the intelligentsia are unique to liberal identities.²³ It is for this reason that I include some instances of rhetoric as an indication of more liberal identities. Below is a table of the two identities I will be analyzing in terms of their prevalence in RT articles:

Table 1: International Relations Rhetorical Focuses of the Two Dominant Identities

Identity group	National Democrats (liberal)	Statists (realist)
Rhetorical focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multipolarity in the context of international institutions • economic modernization as a method of promoting similarities with the West • domestic infrastructural development • Interdependence • mutual security • cooperation with the West 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multipolarity in the context of national interests & sovereignty • economic modernization as a method of overtaking other states • prioritization on social stability • pragmatism in politics • materialism as a determinant in foreign relations • the West as a potential competitor

In the next section I will discuss exactly what the differences are between these two identity groups, the identity formations prevalent in Russia according to Tsygankov and Hopf, and why I chose these two particular groups while omitting others from my analysis.

Identity in Russia

"Nowhere is there a defining issue or priority, something that pulls us all together, focuses our thinking, clarifies the present and the future, provides consensus on where the world goes from here. Confusion prevails. There is no new order, only disorder" – Pitzl

The above quote was given at a time (1997) when Russian identity was at a crossroads. The liberal period of the early 1990s was fading. By 1998 Westernizing liberalism had failed in the form of the economic collapse on the home front, and it diplomatically failed on the international front in the form of NATO's eastern expansion and subsequent invasion of Yugoslavia. Westernizers as a dominant discourse effectively ceased to exist by the end of the 1990s. Before this collapse individuals such as President Boris Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev could be classified as liberal Westernizers.

As a social construction, types of identity are dependent on the societies from which they emanate. In the case of Russian identity the same applies. In order to understand Russian identities it is important to understand the society they are a part of. It is for this reason that pinpointing the right set of discursive formations (to borrow a term from Foucault) for Russian identity is a crucial matter.

Table 2: Identities Groups in Russia

International school of thought	Liberals		Realists (defensive)	Realists (offensive)	Revolutionists
Identity group	Westernizers	National Democrats	Statists	National Communists	Eurasianists
Political party affiliation	Yabloko	United Russia (UR) + A Just Russia	United Russia (UR)	Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF)	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) + several smaller proto-fascist parties

Tsygankov divides Russian identity into five primary discourses and three primary groups, situating them across a spectrum of the most pro-Western (Westernizers) to the most anti-Western (Eurasianists). The most Western-friendly is that of the (aptly titled) Westernizers, to be followed by National Democrats (which Gorbachev is classified as), to be followed by Statists (which he describes Putin as), to be followed by National Communists and Eurasianists.²⁴ This categorization is similar to Ross’s use of categorizing identity based on three groups: liberal-Atlanticists, centrists like Putin, and Eurasianists where Ross oddly includes both former Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and military leaders since the latter seek to justify tension with the West in order to support the continuance of a military-trading regime with developing and undemocratic countries.²⁵

The first primary group (to which the Westernizers and National Democrats belong) is the group of integrationists/liberals. When this school peaked in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the notions of “mutual security” and “interdependence” were key themes echoed in policy statements, in addition to notions of multilateralism and cooperation.²⁶ The policies of

integrationists under Gorbachev strengthened under Yeltsin and his foreign minister, Kozyrev.

For example, Tsygankov noted that:

“Andrei Kozyrev, stated that with the end of the Cold War Russia was no longer threatened from abroad. They announced that Russia would engage in a partnership with the West based on such shared values as democracy, human rights, and a free market. The Western countries, it was claimed, were ‘natural allies of Russia’”²⁷

Under this schema, when Kozyrev said “foreign policy is a tool for advancing Russia’s reforms,”²⁷ foreign policy was essentially an exercise in exorcising the domestic Other (Soviet backwardness and non-Westerness) from the body politic of Russia. Tsygankov marked the decline of this school as being the result of challenges which liberalism could not explain. These included the military conflicts within the Russian periphery (such as Chechnya), the continuing eastward expansion of NATO despite Russia’s Western stance, and the ongoing conflicts in the Balkans. When their “grand strategy involving the development of a deep, multisided partnership with the West had turned out to be flawed” it necessitated the need for new discourses to be injected into Russian politics.²⁸ This Westernizer-deterioration process could be witnessed in Kozyrev’s eventual dismissal (to be replaced by Primakov) and the rise in prominence of those advocating a more realist-centered focus on national interests. The decline of Westernizers as an identity was connected to perceived failures in their policies. Their policy of disengagement with the periphery (Chechnya in particular) led to positions demanding stability and centrality from the statist. At the same time NATO expansion eastwards (reinforcing the Otherness of the West) tended to suggest statist responses. After all, while Russia was espousing positive-sum games in relation to the West, the West was actively taking part in zero-sum games at Russia’s expense. Westernizers became synonymous with “rolling-on-your-back-ism” under this context. At the same time the liberal agenda failed domestically (with the 1998 economic collapse) allowing

Primakov (and Putin) to come in (and replace the liberal Kozyrev) and to push the balance in favor of statist in the domestic arena. In fact it has been argued that Putin was an ideal successor simply because he was far removed from the liberal agenda, and this is one reason why Yeltsin chose him.²⁹ This shift of decreasing liberal influence in top positions of power was marked by an accompanying shift in the loss of public support on the part of liberals in general.³⁰

The statist that rose to prominence by the time of the late 1990s shared much in common with realists of the Western variety. This discourse was focused on **material capabilities, balances of power, and national interests**. Tsygankov breaks realists into two currents, defensive realists (statist) and offensive realists (national communists). While the defensive realists seek stability the offensive realists seek restoration (usually based on the Soviet Union as a template). Interestingly, the defensive realists (dominant since the end of the 1990s) have shared a terminology with some policy makers of the American variety:

“Politically, this group is neoconservative, both because they generally defend conservative principles in the post-Soviet period and because they at times apply this label to themselves. While sharing with the aggressive realists an interest in the reintegration of the former Soviet territory, defensive realists disagree that such a reintegration should be implemented by the use of force. The idea of reestablishing and consolidating Russia's exclusive sphere of influence throughout the former Soviet Union without military intervention has supplanted the recognition of the independence and sovereignty of the former Soviet republics.”³¹

In this sense statist/defensive realists (such as those found in the Putin administration) are separate entirely from offensive realists (equivalent to a party such as the KPRF). While the Western media often portrays Putin's authoritarianism as a retreat towards a new Soviet Union, this obscures a great deal of difference between the two identities, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 3: Statist and Neo-Soviet Identities Compared

	Statists (defensive realists)	National Communists (offensive realists)
Perceived zone of influence	Former Soviet Union	Former Soviet Union (ideally which will be politically restored someday)
How to establish sphere of influence	Cultural and economic partnership	Political/military dominion
Basis of Russian identity	European state (albeit unique)	Eurasian state
View of polarity in the world	Multipolar	Bipolar (Russia vs. America)
View towards Western Europe	Potential partner/pragmatic view	Alien civilization
Greatest threat/Other from within Russia	Unstable/anarchic periphery (which threatens Russian stability and power)	Western elements/liberals

As noted above, defensive realists/statists view states (including Russia) as self-interested rather than inherently good or bad. In this sense defensive realists view an anarchic/unstable periphery as the greatest threat (in that it threatens Russian power and stability), rather than the United States or the West in general.³²

The identity of the Putin regime seemed to be situated somewhere in between liberal and statist discourses, though one occasionally could see traces of discourses to the right of this spectrum. For instance, when Putin stated his intention of "continuing the civilizational role of the Russian nation in Eurasia" in 2005, this reflected an identity based on Russia as a "Eurasian" country (rather than European, a theme most of his other speeches reinforce).³³

Further than even the offensive realists in the KPRF are the Eurasianists, a fringe element embodied by parties such as the LDPR. These revolutionists seek not to restore old borders but to advocate for a "conservative revolution" both within and beyond Russia's historic boundaries.³⁴ This discourse, popular among a handful of nationalist and fascist groups, has had little to no success in today's political climate and has essentially disappeared on the national-

elite level.³⁵ Their Other is both Western elements outside and within Russian society, as well as the fascistic currents at times opposing a racial Other (immigrants from the Caucasus and Africa for instance) within Russian society.

Of the five groups only two have particular salience in modern Russian politics. Westernizers in the style of Kozyrev have been sidelined since the end of the 1990s, and were being marginalized even before when Tsygankov detailed the continued marginalization of figures such as Kozyrev and Westernizing rhetoric at large.³⁶ Offensive realists/national communists have been largely absent at the national stage in terms of relevant individuals in positions of actual power, though their rhetoric has injected itself into the discursive framework at times. One example can be seen when Russia initially cooperated with the United States to build bases for the war in Afghanistan in countries such as Kyrgyzstan which are perceived to be in Russia's sphere of influence. Russia was later rebuffed by President George Walker Bush when he refused to remove those bases after the initial war stages were completed, and also refused to cooperate with Putin's agenda of using force in Chechnya. Many aggressive realists pointed to this failing as a major embarrassment for the Putin administration, stemming from his misplaced trust in the West and the United States in particular. Despite this, both national communists and revolutionists/Eurasianists are marginalized politically, both in terms of the lack of success of parties such as the KPRF and the LDPR, and in terms of the instances of rhetoric among top policy officials.

It is for this reason why analysis should be focused on the two dominant discourses within Russian politics today. These are the discourses of the more-liberal National Democrats and the more-realist Statists. In terms of clan interests, the National Democrats are often associated with the professional class or "civiliki" of Medvedev³⁷ while the statist are often

associated with the “siloviki” of the Committee for State Security (KGB) and its modern equivalent, the Federal Security Service (FSB).

The notion of what the Other entails is dependent on the identity in question. On the one hand the periphery of Russia is seen as a threat due to its distance from the center and capacity for instability by statist/realists.³⁸ On the other hand, the notion of backwardness in the Russian periphery and Russia itself, sometimes contributing to the notion of “legal nihilism”³⁹, is viewed as a chief concern among Russian liberals. The shifting foreign policies of Russia coincide with the shifting identities employed respectively by Gorbachev’s New Thinking, to Yeltsin’s integration with the West, to Primakov’s balancing-of-power, to Putin’s Great Power Pragmatism (the former two being liberal agendas, the latter two being realist in nature). Putin’s statements have been a curious mix of statism and liberalism, in that Putin states that Russia “was, is and will, of course, be a major European power” and yet insists that its development (of democracy and society at large) must operate on its own unique trajectory separate from Europe, with special attention paid to maintaining political stability to avoid any revolutionary shifts that could break the system.⁴⁰ In this sense Putin sees the destination of Russia as ultimately the same as Europe, despite crafting a very different journey to reach that destination.

Hopf’s conception of identity is fairly analogous to what has been stated above, with “liberal essentialists” maintaining an identity of Russia as a unique power that is a mix of Western, Soviet, and Eastern aspects and “New Western Russians” seeing Russia principally as a Western power that should seek integration with the West. He also includes “New Soviet Russians” who looked to the Soviet past (and are analogous to Tsygankov’s National Communists) and an odd categorization of “liberal relativists” that are nihilists that believe there

is no true Russia (though this discourse is the most rare in that it seems to be confined to post-modern intelligentsia articles for the most part).⁴¹ The important difference to Tsygankov's categorization is that Hopf's "liberal essentialists" are essentially an amalgamation of both National Democrats and Statists (and Hopf agrees that this school/these two amalgamated schools have been hegemonic since 1999).⁴² For this reason I have chosen to use Tsygankov's conception (of divorcing statist from national democrats/liberals), in order to better analyze the very real differences between factions within the nearly entirely "liberal essentialist" Putin administration.

Foreign Policy And Its Measurement

Interestingly, there are a multitude of ways scholars have defined foreign policy. In fact, it has been pointed out that a general theory of foreign policy has yet to emerge, because the general idea of exactly what foreign policy is has yet to emerge.⁴³ To simplify this study I have chosen to view foreign policy simply in terms of levels of cooperation between states. Of course, "cooperation" also must have a specific framework in how it is defined. Cooperation is defined in this paper as to how closely Russian elites support Belarusian elites in terms of maintaining their monopoly on domestic power. Mutual treaties and statements may reflect rhetorical cooperation, but rhetoric and reality are often two separate issues. After all, Putin has been said to be exceedingly difficult to read and how he presents Russian foreign policy is largely dependent on who his audience is (which is also why I have elected to focus on comprehensive Russian policy statements that try to present a unified narrative).⁴⁴

Furthermore, mutual membership in international organizations are especially dangerous to use as a tool of cooperation, since both Russia and Belarus have used organization

membership as a form of bargaining/coercion (Belarus threatening to join the anti-Russian GUAM, Russia threatening to remove Belarus from the Customs Union, etc). Instead I have focused on Russian support for Lukashenko (as the paramount leader of Belarus) in Belarusian elections. Particularly, *contrasting levels of Russian support for Lukashenko in the Belarusian presidential elections of 2006 and 2010*.

If this analysis were to simply infer foreign policy preferences from past behavior I would leave myself open to the charge of tautology. Instead a “deduced” preference⁴⁵ can be used by putting Russian policy towards Belarus on a single continuum ranging from fully supporting Lukashenko in his election to fully supporting the opposition (with the noncommittal approach applied in the late 1990s acting as a theoretical intermediary position). In the instance of full support, articles would discredit foreign attacks on Lukashenko as well as the opposition, and paint Lukashenko as the rightful leader of Belarus. In the opposite instance opposition candidates would be painted as embodying the will of the people, while Lukashenko would be portrayed as an illegitimate autocrat. This concept also reflects a concept of relative versus absolute gains. If Lukashenko is seen as an enemy then support for instability in Belarusian politics can be justified as being in Russia’s national interest. On the other hand, if Lukashenko is seen as a reliable partner supporting him would be seen as strengthening cooperation with a trusted ally.

The public statements of important figures in Russia will be taken into account regarding elections in Belarus, as will reporting done by Russia Today. As a government-owned news source, if Russia Today is either outwardly supportive of Lukashenko or his opposition it should reflect preferences within the administration, especially if drastic changes in preferences occur in a specific timeframe.

Traditional Theories Of Foreign Policy Regarding Russia

The notion that Russian history and foreign-policy in particular is geared towards a realist-centered schemata based on materialism and balance-of-power concepts is prevalent in academia.⁴⁶ It is for this reason that I have chosen this arch-realist state to test my hypothesis, precisely because its realist-history serves as a compelling test for whether ideational factors (such as identity) can play a factor in the formation of foreign policy preferences, despite the fact that materialist-based analysis is so often applied to Russia.

While useful, realism tends to only account for changes in foreign policy by looking at changes in material capacities. It is less sufficient when explaining change that comes about as the result of changes in the conception of what “national interest” fundamentally is. In this way I believe realism does not sufficiently explain the Sino-Soviet split, nor can it explain the shifts in policy that have come towards a country like Belarus, where Belarusian leadership has remained relatively constant since 1994, as well as its strategic benefit as a key periphery state. In order to explain shifts in policy toward this friendly country it may help to examine Russian identity.

Universalist in that liberal theory assumes all states are geared towards a trajectory of an inevitable liberalism, liberal theorists could not explain why a Russia striving for modernization would have to forge connections with an isolated pariah state such as Belarus. In such a case Russia’s self-interest would surely lie with the linchpins of globalization rather than a Soviet relic (and relations should be relatively stable in their negativity towards that relic). Adherents of democratic peace theory would assume the authoritarian nature of Belarus may preclude any deep relationship with a Western-leaning Russia in the 1990s. This theory would likely assume

that an increasingly authoritarian Russia would either strike a temporary truce, or eventual collision course, with Belarus. What this description omits is *why* this collision would take place, or why a partnership would take place. Finally is the liberal notion of transnational ideas crafting foreign policy, as the world is not a collection of sovereign automatons so much as an interlinked web of societies. While this notion of democracy swaying a reformist Gorbachev may be particularly salient, it seems less tenable when viewing a Russia increasingly at odds with the external world, first in gas disputes with Ukraine and later with an internationally unpopular war in southern Ossetia against Georgian troops.

The weakness of both outlooks is in their immutability and inability to explain changes in preferences. It wasn't until authors like Keohane and Nye (1989), Reiter (1996), Lamborn (1997), and Farkas (1998) that changes in preferences were explored in detail. While realists typically do well in predicting the state-heavy/security-heavy nation of Russia, they do poorly at explaining periods of liberal shifts under Gorbachev or Yeltsin when national interests based on power are exchanged for subservience to the West. Similarly, while liberals may appear correct whenever they are predicting a historically-inevitable drift towards liberal modernization (essentially monopolized in its form by the West at that) they have a difficult time explaining setbacks to that narrative such as Putin's creeping authoritarianism and focus on great-power-status which sometimes comes at the expense of international cooperation. While they may blame this retreat on an underdeveloped civil society or on shadowy factions in Russian government, this does little to explain divergences from a liberal path as anything but historical anomalies, which hardly makes sense in terms of a historiography for a country that is often described as having a richly illiberal past.

Constructivism offers a path around these traditional theories however. It is logical that a state experiencing a failure (such as the case of the collapse of the Soviet Union) would look to learn successful strategies from abroad, and at the time no society was more successful than the old nemesis of Russia and victor of the Cold War, the United States. Under such circumstances it might be easy to see the promise of integration with the West and adopting of a liberal outlook/foreign policy. This process was articulated in Goldsmith's work *Imitation in International Relations*. Constructivism can aid in not only addressing the policy shifts away from (or towards) zero-sum/positive-sum mentalities, but it can also help to explain why these turns occurred when they did. While Wendt famously stated the "anarchy is what states make of it" he never gave an explanation as to *why* states differ in what they make of it. Several authors have accounted for how states generate their preferences (Moravcsik and his subnational actors, Jervis and his institutions, Hemmer and his analogies, Goldsmith and his learning). For this analysis I seek to use the construction of national identities to illuminate additional explanations as to why Russia might have drifted away from Belarus between 2006 and 2010. This is valuable in that it sees national interest as something that is *not* immutable but as something that is malleable, and which is dependent on social constructs. It is not only based on a relation between the Self and the Other but also the synthesis of all the dynamics within a country: the relations between varying social groups, the nature of power within a society, the notions of legitimacy inherent in that culture, etc. If we were to look only at identity relations with outsider powers, then we would omit half the picture. It is for this reason why domestic interest groups and the nature of domestic politics must be taken into account when analyzing identity as it relates to foreign policy. After all, a nation is often anything but homogenous in terms of its social identity. This is certainly the case with Russia, as several identities have competed with one another, often

in tandem with competition amongst domestic interest groups. Looking at the domestic structure of Russia is helpful because it reflects that “the influence of national identity on policy outcomes is mediated by an important intervening variable: domestic structures and coalition-building processes.”⁴⁷

This focus on identity as it relates to Russia’s clan/factional/elite-dominated politics assists us in doing two things. The first is to flesh out the relationship between identity and foreign policy decisions, so as to check whether the correlation is actually causal. If liberal identity is used as a rhetorical device by illiberal personnel it could certainly cast doubt as to if the connection is spurious or not. Secondly, it not only illustrates *if* identity may matter but can elaborate as to *how* it matters by focusing on how it is transmitted on the elite level. Thus the model I have adopted is:

National identity (independent variable) → Domestic structures (intervening variable) → Foreign policy preferences (dependent variable)

A scholar such as Folker may bring up the point that since this constructivist analysis relies on institutions/the Russian domestic structure it essentially becomes a liberal analysis with constructivist window-dressing in that it replicates the same predictions.⁴⁸ While this is true to an extent, the key difference is in explaining the *why* of the predictions in addition to the *what*. That a liberal clique is more likely to embrace the West is not a shock. What is more revealing is the reason *why* a liberal clique might turn away from a trusted ally in Belarus, or *why* a leader widely described as authoritarian (Putin) might *also* turn away from a trusted authoritarian ally in Belarus. The question of *why* merits further exploration, and this is where constructivism offers insight.

Brief Notes On Organizational Learning And Its Significance

Goldsmith (2005) outlined three characteristics of organizational learning by stating:

1. Organizations are goal-based
2. Behavior is shaped by routine, designed around achieving these goals
3. Goals/routines are based on information gained from experience (in particular prior successes and failures)

Levitt and March (1996) and Larson (1994) and Glietman (1991) have underscored, along with Goldsmith, the notion that schema are more difficult to modify and abandon when they are adopted by a group (because organizations need a unified narrative to unite the disparate individuals within them). This notion was also reflected in Hopf's habituation, or the concept that norms aren't adhered to so much as they are ingrained via habit.⁴⁹ This also accounts for a certain degree of "organizational inertia" (to quote Goldsmith) slowing when policies and preferences *can* actually change. An example of organizational inertia in Russian politics would be officers in the Russian army resisting reforms, even though it was mandated from above and they ultimately know it would be in the interest of the state to reform the military and curb corruption.⁵⁰ This inertia is worsened by the fact that information that conflicts with the dominant schema is likely to be ignored in favor of information that reinforces the schema/worldview of the policy maker. This puts overwhelming emphasis on who the policy makers are and specifically what schemas are dominant among them. It is for this reason that not only discursive formations must be analyzed with regards to identity, but specifically what elite groups dominate standard-operation procedure and who monopolizes the dominant schemata at the elite level. It is for this reason why an analysis of interest groups and factions within Russian

politics is crucial. It is all the more crucial when one realizes that, rather than political party hegemony as one might expect in a Western European country, invisible networks of factions and clans are what dominate the Russian political landscape. Understanding the factions in Russian politics is necessary in order to understand the identity formations that guide Russian foreign policy.

What Prompts Identity?: Individual Elites Or Broad Cultural Constructs? Can The Two Even Be Divorced?

“Liberal theory is analytically prior to both realism and institutionalism because it defines the conditions under which their assumptions hold.” – Moravcsik⁵¹

The above quote reflects that domestic matters are what shape the premises normally accepted as natural. A domestic structure of a slave society two-thousand years ago may not carry the same systemic conditions one would see in a liberal democracy today. Likewise, the domestic structure of Russian society matters theoretically as to how identity should be operationalized. I argue that in a society where infrastructural power is relatively muted, bureaucratic cliques determine access to everything from markets to political access, and where foreign policy largely does not depend on public approval, it makes little sense to gauge identity from below. While it helps to turn to historical inquiry as a frame of reference in terms of categorizations of identity, Russian society’s “power vertical” also necessitates paying closer attention to the groups which make up the elite and how they relate to Russian identities. The notion of groups vying to seize control of the state in order to enact their preferences/identities is not new in liberal theory⁵², and I have adopted such a logic in order to look at a battle for which preferences (and identities!) the state represents at the top level.

One issue that must be factored in when it comes to elite groups is the level to which

they are a representation of society as a whole. After all, “the theory determines the method.”⁵³ If we believe identity comes from below, our methodology should reflect that thought. If one is to side with Hopf in that elites (as reflections of the masses) mirror the ideological demands of the masses then we must, likewise, ensure that elites also reflect the ideological heterogeneity of the masses as well. If the elites of Russia consciously reflect only some currents (imperialism) while actively excluding others (liberalism) then the interest groups and their identities could certainly not be representative of Russian identities as a whole.

If we are to look at electoral results of communist and fascistic parties it is clear that these currents are under-represented (essentially absent) at the elite level. Indeed, the very fact that they require Potemkin parties (in the form of KPRF on the left and LDPR on the right) is an indication that the elite must mirror (in a charade) what a portion of the public feels in reality. Hopf would see this gap as a sign that the identities which are missing (for instance, Eurasianism and Soviet restorationism) at the elite level are simply discursive formations that are being actively repressed and omitted from the national dialogue. In fact, the very act of sanctioning a Potemkin party could be seen to be an admission of threat coming from the discourse symbolized by that party (particularly that it has a mass-level constituency that must be tamed). Even Hopf concedes that leaders may select “available” identities, with the caveat that it is society at large that generates what is available in the first place.⁵⁴ This caveat is important, in that Soviet elites did not choose to construct an enemy out of the United States because it serves their interests but rather because they were shaped by the identities that were available to them, and these identities presuppose that enemy status. Despite the fact that elites are products of their world *in addition* to agents working to shape it, there should be little argument that in the case of Russia today specifically it is *elites* that dictate the foreign policy preferences, fundamentally shaped in turn

by their identity. An understanding of both identity as it relates to discursive formations *and* the elite structure in Russia that is pushed by that identity is helpful in this regard.

I have chosen to use framing to analyze Russian identity portrayed by Russia Today, a government-run news source. While this elite-focus may marginalize repressed identity-discourses (such as Eurasianist and neo-Soviet identities), I am comfortable omitting these discourses in that I seek not a totality of Russian identity discourses but rather the trajectory of discourse *monopolization* at the elite level. In short, I am especially interested in which identity discourse dominates amongst the Russian elite. This is one reason why I narrowed my focus to primarily liberal versus statist phraseology.

Another reason why I have focused on elite discourse is simply that Russian society is exceptionally weak in terms of its infrastructural power. The nature of managed public opinion and managed opposition⁵⁵ illustrate the “verticality of power” in Russia, as does Putin’s 2007 notion that Russia needs to be managed from the top-down for another two decades. Putin elaborated on this concept when he described the need for a “manual society” as opposed to an “automatic society.”⁵⁶ The centrality of this concept was known to Medvedev as well, who took a subtle jab at the Putinite system in an article titled “Forward, Russia!” when he stated that Russia “unfortunately combines all the shortcomings of the Soviet system and all the difficulties of contemporary life.”⁵⁷ Even though Medvedev had reform on his agenda (some successful and some failing) it has been said that he still made sure that political life “was kept an elite affair.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, the reliance on patronage from above has been cited as a reason that Putin recruited siloviki from his history to key government posts, rather than through traditional Western avenues of elite recruitment like political parties.⁵⁹ In fact only 8.2% of deputies elected in 1994 even bothered to register with a political party.⁶⁰ Even every-day activities, such as starting a

business, may have been possible in the 1990s but by 2004 were next to impossible due to all markets being controlled/monopolized to where administrative structures set up impossibly excessive regulations so that any entry-level entrepreneur cannot hope to pass.⁶¹ This very nature of the “verticality of power” in Russia necessitates putting elite discourse under a microscope first and foremost. If Hopf is right in that elite discourse is simply a reflection of mass discourse, then we can simply assume there is no conflict between the two. If Khrushchev was simply the manifestation of a growing desire among the masses for an ideological pluralism, then we can assume today’s leaders are similar mirrors of currents from below.

This also broaches the subject of the classic agency-structure question in sociology. Though my focus on the elite and (in particular) Russia’s verticality of power necessarily lends a heavy analytical emphasis on agency, structure nevertheless plays a role as well. This is especially true in that formative events (for example, the economic and diplomatic collapse of liberalism in the late 1990s) played an important role in shaping the political landscape of Russia. In this sense a “structure versus agency” mentality communicates an unnecessary duality, and obscures a fundamentally dialectical relationship, wherein agents mold their structure and structure shapes agents.

Importantly, my theory (that the verticality of power in Russia presupposes that special attention be paid to elites-as-identity-and-power-managers) should be reflected in my methodology. **This is why I have chosen to arrive at identity specifically through elite-focused framing, and why I pay special attention to discursive formations employed by government-owned RT (the elite in other words) over time.** In order to expound on the concept of the verticality of power in Russia, a closer look must be applied to Russia’s domestic politics.

III. RUSSIA'S DOMESTIC STRUCTURE

The Clan: The Political Unit Of Russian Politics

Geert Hofstede, whose research on culture is a staple for MBA students and those researching international business practices, rated Russia as having one of the highest power distances in the world. In his terminology “power distance” is a reference to how great of a distance is put between those of different rank in society. Whereas a lower score is reflective of a more egalitarian culture (Austria being 11, Germany being 35 for instance), a higher score would be more reflective of a caste-like hierarchy (India being 77, Mexico being 81).⁶² In practical terms, how high a country’s score is can be used to gauge management strategies; in that lower-score societies may sit employees and management down and speak one-on-one (as in America with a score of 40) whereas a higher score would be reflective of a society where management may need to invoke hierarchy more to defend its position. Russia having an *extremely* high power distance score (93) could be surmised to be reflective of more than simple Russian business practices, but also reflective of views on/of the Russian societal elite in general. It is no surprise that such a society transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a communist movement that viewed the masses as having a dangerous “spontaneity” (to quote Lenin) to them if not properly educated, to a Communist Party with an entrenched nomenklatura, and finally to a democracy with an equally entrenched oligarchy/elite structure. Even within the nomenklatura-elite of the Soviet period the party was of a hierarchical nature, as the elites have been said to have been divided among 14 distinct ranks.⁶³

After the onset of perestroika allowed a new capitalist economy to take shape (with the nomenklatura acting as the beneficiaries of this new capitalism) the nomenklatura began (for the

first time) to have legitimate economic superiority rather than just personal-networking (based on the clan) superiority that was the norm in the Brezhnev era.⁶⁴ They began to use this economic and network-superiority to establish political domination. By the onset of liberal democracy in the early 1990s the Russian elite had largely grown out of the earlier nomenklatura. Yeltsin's act of dissolving the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet only further limited future elite recruitment.

Interestingly, it was the *party elite* (more than the top leadership or the business elite or parliamentary members or regional elite) that had the most continuity in terms of personnel when the Soviet Union collapsed.⁶⁵ While a single-party system gave way to a multi-party system and socialism gave way to capitalism there was nonetheless a good deal of continuity in terms of those who controlled the levers of power. The case of a high-power-distance country with an entrenched and socially-distant elite would seem to be a recipe for a top-down power structure and many Western observers have pinpointed the illiberal facets of Russian rule in the last decade on the nature of Russian society itself.

But it is not enough to simply dismiss Russia's tendency towards virtual democracy as a symptom of a deeply ingrained illiberalism of the Russian soul. A greater view can be attained when one analyzes Russia's domestic situation through the lens of clan politics. This focuses on elites (which would make sense for a society with such a high power distance) as actors and specifically on intrapersonal connections, which would make sense for the world of Russian politics where party affiliation and proper titles often take a backseat to invisible coalitions. While political parties have dominated the framework in Western communist countries (like the Baltics, Poland, etc.) it has been said that clan relations drive the political framework of CIS countries.^{66,67} In these instances even strong parties are painted as a façade for clan relations built

around powerful individuals. The situation is noticeably different from Western countries in that while it is certain that Clinton brought individuals from his immediate Arkansas circle with him to the White House, and that Bush did the same with Texas bureaucrats he had known for years, the process is amplified and crucially different in Russia. While the American system focuses mainly on parties as instruments of elite recruitment, in Russian politics parties are more the levers of power for *existing* elites, who are organized along largely clan-lines. Likewise, many American politicians receive private jobs over business ventures. The difference, however, is that in Washington insiders typically get the plum business positions *after* their government work while in Russia they get it *during* their government work. In fact, it has been stated that this may be why there is a certain fear once Russian politicians leave government. The fear is that they will lose their patronage/plum jobs, consequently “Russian officials have learned to take such posts and collect the fringes they bring while they can.”⁶⁸ This system of rewards/punishments in terms of contracts and business based on political compliance has an obvious weakness however. It has been said this system only works (economically) in boom economies like Russia, and if the state is unable to deliver the energy goods or the economy isn't strong the state can't make such promises. The issue with this form of patronage is that it can often devolve and ultimately lead to corruption and nepotism. It was under the logic of battling this tendency that was behind numerous personnel shuffles in the Putin administration.⁶⁹

By 2009 United Russia (UR) had established a virtual monopoly on power compared to other parties, with 385 out of 450 Duma seats and 111 out of 166 senators on the Federation Council.⁷⁰ The lack of importance of the actual electoral vote percentages is reflective of Russian politics and its emphasis on powerful individuals rather than parties. While United Russia was seen as the party of power since its very inception in 2001, it was only seen as such due to the

patronage of Vladimir Putin rather than because of its electoral success. Likewise, early speculation of a split before Medvedev's election came to nothing when UR aligned behind Medvedev and liberal bureaucrats were retained in a somewhat illiberal party. Political parties in Russia thus merely give the illusion of pluralism, as real power is centered on powerful individuals and clans which surround them. Electoral successes thus only reflect a very broad picture of public perceptions. Even then, after 2000 these electoral snapshots are marred by the fact that these votes are cast in a managed democracy where the monopolization of state media is centered in the hands of the Kremlin (thus closing avenues for genuine opposition candidates be they liberal, communist, or nationalist).

Putin has maintained his power by leading UR as chairman of the dominant party (importantly, he is not a member however, so while he can leverage UR, UR cannot leverage him). It is with the premiership of the dominant party and the "Putinite majority in the Federation Council" that Putin has maintained the levers of power in Russia. The 9th Congress of the UR (April 15, 2008) is when this party-to-individual subordination reportedly occurred.⁷¹

It should come as no surprise in such a managed and patronage-heavy society (with a high power-distance) that the president and his immediate allies/clan were said to be at the very pinnacle of the Russian political hierarchy.⁷² Under these circumstances it is also no surprise that in a 2004 poll of Russians, 50% of poll respondents trusted Putin personally whereas only 9% trusted "government," and an astonishingly meager 1% trusted political parties as an institution.⁷³

Belarus: A Deviation From CIS Clan Formations

Belarus initially shared much in common with other CIS countries. Clan networks were at the heart of domestic politics rather than official political parties. There were few changes in government, elections were motivated by personal patronage rather than ideology, and there was a predominance of single-mandate electoral systems. The difference, however, was while other CIS countries exhibited instances of warring clans Lukashenko managed to monopolize power around himself. One reason cited for this was in that Lukashenko specifically appealed to the masses as a populist in order to prevent elite formation of rival clans. In this CIS context “clans” are defined as being the “result of the adaptation of the former communist boss politics to the epoch of competitive elections” in which powerful individuals control networks of power.⁷⁴

It was this populism that initially drove Lukashenko to power, as Chernov put it following an “anti-bourgeois and anti-nomenklatura” platform. By 1995 Lukashenko received increased powers via a referendum and by 1996 he used the socialist tactic (used by Stalin, Khrushchev, and Mao when they depended on populism to attack party functionaries... though most scholars focused only on Gorbachev’s anti-bureaucratic campaigns) of holding a plebiscite for increased presidential powers. This strategy was framed by Lukashenko as being necessary in order to fight elites within the political framework.⁷⁵ This picture of individual consolidation in Belarus is contrasted with the clan wars in both Russia and Ukraine during the same time period. While Leonid Kuchma (Ukraine’s president) had appointed men to facilitate regional loyalty to the center, Lukashenko actually shuffled leaders around at the regional level so no power base

could consolidate itself to begin with. Indeed, the defendants in the 1996 show trials in Belarus were not liberal opposition activists, but rather elites and businessmen.⁷⁶

This monopolization of political power and the clan system is why Belarus serves as an ideal control variable for identity shifts in Russia being brought about due to primary identity shifts in Belarus. While Ukraine has shifting clan formations, shifting party monopolization, and shifting identities at the top echelon of power, the Lukashenko regime is a remarkably stable authoritarian system that has neutralized these varying conditions. Lukashenko's monopolization of domestic power goes hand-in-hand with the stability of his neo-Soviet foreign policy. In this sense, if there is a sudden shift in identity relations it can more than likely be attributed to the Russian side, rather than caused by a change in either side as one would have to account for if Ukrainian-Russian or American-Russian relations were analyzed.

The Siloviki In Power And The Connection Between Factions And Identities

The notion of domestic groups aligning with specific identities and foreign policies is common in scholarship on Russian politics. Tsygankov⁷⁷ listed the constituencies of the liberal identity groups of Westernizers and National Democrats as including human rights activists, pro-capitalist businessmen, the intelligentsia, and liberal leadership from the Yeltsin era.

Interestingly coinciding with his classification of the intelligentsia as liberals, the intelligentsia were also described as being the most likely to agree that the KGB should be abolished outright, a position only held by 10% of Soviet citizens in 1990.⁷⁸ Tsygankov lists the constituency of the statist agenda as the army, military industrialists, and the security services (the *siloviki*: a term which translates as “people of force” that would include the KGB, the FSB and the Federal Narcotics Control Service); those who naturally value strength and stability on the state-level

above all else. I would venture to modify Tsygankov's model and add "neo-corporatist businessmen" to the category of statist, lest they fall into the category of liberals due to their background in business. Bremmer and Charap cited the siloviki as statist and economic nationalists who sought to restore Russia to a great power status on the world stage, and that the siloviki promoted Russia balancing against other world powers.⁷⁹ Olga Kryshtanovskaya described the siloviki worldview as follows:

*"That state is the basis of society; therefore the state should be strong. A strong state controls everything. The supports of the state are the siloviki and law enforcement agencies in general. [...] They need a special status-material and legal. [...] A strong state should also control the economy, at least its natural resources, which cannot be allowed to remain in private hands. [...] There is still an external enemy-the West-and this means that a strong army is needed, and a powerful armament industry. [...] Society should be passive and obedient, and not impede the strengthening of the state."*⁸⁰

Dawisha outlined a general foreign policy outlook for the siloviki when she stated:

*"For the siloviki, Russia's connections with Venezuela's Chavez, Syria's Assad, Iran's Ahmadinejad, Libya's Gadhafi, and, of course, Central Asian leaders and Belarus's Lukashenka, plus, they hope, Ukraine's Yanukovich, are key to recreating a worldwide network of authoritarian leaders who support each other not only in military/intelligence advice, but also in offshore banking, money laundering, and other illicit activities."*⁸¹

This statist-identity and its representation through a security-based foreign policy may not only be strong but exceedingly difficult to change among some Russian elites. Larson catalogued instances⁸² of foreign policy establishment officials in Reagan's administration being more difficult to sway than Reagan himself (who was a foreign policy novice) as to the changed nature of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. While Reagan believed Gorbachev based on repeated instances of Gorbachev caving to American demands, some in his administration (who had more deeply internalized the schema that the Soviet Union would always be hostile) found it more difficult to accept. This same process could be at work among the siloviki, who had a lifetime of experience working for the KGB and operating under Cold-War mentalities that the

United States and Russia are locked in a zero-sum realist struggle for power (especially when this schema was confirmed in 2002 when American policies were directed against Russian interests despite Russian cooperation in the War on Terror). This is especially true if we take into account Johnston's assertion that persuasion to change is less likely when the persuader originates from a separate identity group.⁸³ This would entail siloviki reinforcing their statist worldview through habit/socialization amongst themselves, and not being easily swayed by outside sources.

While it may be doubtful whether the siloviki were able to create a "militocracy" (to borrow a term from Kryshchanovskaya & White, 2003), they did exert increasing influence as the Putin administration wore on. By 2003, the amount of siloviki had more than doubled in terms of percentages when compared with the amount of siloviki personnel employed by Yeltsin in 1993. In 2003 the siloviki made up to 58.3% of the personnel in terms of national leadership positions. As one scaled the pyramid of political power, the prevalence of siloviki dominance only increased.⁸⁴

The siloviki were instrumental in definitive policy changes. The March 27, 2007 report "A Review of the Russian Federation's Foreign Policy" is a Kremlin document that spoke of "great power pragmatism."⁸⁵ It reflected a change from the previous 2000 foreign policy concept, the chief of which was a stronger emphasis on multipolarity. This time period also coincided with the new Russian assertiveness voiced by Putin when, in Munich, he famously spoke out in favor of a zero-sum-style multipolarity as being key to Russian foreign policy.⁸⁶ It has been argued that these foreign policy changes occurred due to the direct support of the siloviki.⁸⁷

Cracks In The Illusion Of Elite Unity

The heyday of siloviki power came to an abrupt end in 2007 and underscored the nature of Putin not as siloviki godfather, nor liberal Judas, but as a faction manager balancing rival clans against one another... and at times losing control. In fact, Putin has been highlighted multiple times not as a dictator who has a country dance to his tune, but rather as a political mediator between rival political clans.⁸⁸ In fact, while Putin is often painted as an autocrat in the Western media, it has been put forward that he remained in Russian politics simply because he had to in order to make sure the system did not fall apart without him as a mediator.⁸⁹ There has been evidence that Putin, after all, had intended to leave the political scene had the system not required him to stay on.⁹⁰ That Putin could not stay on for a third successive term in 2008 has been seen as a defeat for the siloviki.⁹¹

In this sense Putin is not merely Prime Minister (PM) officially but also faction manager unofficially. He is given this role⁹² because Medvedev has no base of power from which to operate, unlike Putin. Interestingly, Putin himself has stated that he stayed on as PM “because I know what my friends the siloviki are planning for the country if I leave completely.”⁹³ Likewise, the Medvedev regime has been viewed as a middle-ground between contending currents of liberal openness and siloviki isolationism.⁹⁴

The notion of clans independent of the president is a common one. In regards to foreign policy specifically, it has been said that stability is the key to maintaining domestic power and that it is instabilities (such as an Iranian war creating a flood of refugees, NATO expansion or the ABM creating instabilities in security outlooks, etc.) that “may provide ammunition to those

inside Russia's political class who resent Russia's great-power pragmatism and want to push an assertive style toward radically different anti-Western politics.”⁹⁵ In other words this “political class” (implied to be separate from the president) might be susceptible to identity-shifts, in that while the “great-power” pragmatists may currently be in control (analogous to statist/siloviki) there are more explicitly anti-Western currents bubbling beneath the surface. It is noteworthy that the “political class” here is illustrated as the engine of policy and change.

The clan around Igor Sechin, one of the most powerful of the siloviki (described as their leader by Dawisha),⁹⁶ in particular has been described as being responsible for the death of Rodina (a government-sponsored opposition party). The siloviki was also credited with moves to create Just Russia; a center-left opposition party that replaced Rodina as the favored opposition party, retaining the economic nationalism/protectionism valued by the siloviki but not the cultural nationalism that Rodina was characterized by that was supported by many of the siloviki.⁹⁷ Just Russia tapped into the protest vote by attacking clan politics and bureaucratism on the local level (while also avoiding criticism on the federal, and especially presidential, levels of course) and as portraying itself as a party of the working man disconnected from the elite interests that actually powered Just Russia behind the scenes.⁹⁸ There have even been suggestions that Medvedev may have been overseeing Just Russia in mid-2008 when Just Russia supported a drift away from the cultural nationalism and the centralism of United Russia (and, by extension, the siloviki).⁹⁹

Further changes unfolded in 2007 when two siloviki clans brought their war to the public. In October of 2007 a fissure erupted in the world of Russian politics. While the realm of the clans of Russia is a murky one at best, with shifting alliances and ebbs and flows that are often not reflected at all by official titles, occasionally what happens behind the scenes will spill into

the public view. This happened when Viktor Cherkesov, the head of a major siloviki clan and a major Putin ally, published an open letter in Kommersant that was critical of the FSB (led by Nikolai Patrushev) and warned that a war between clans could collapse the Putinite system itself. Cherkesov was the head of the Federal Drug Control Service of Russia (FSKN), which had expanded to become a rival in power to the FSB itself. Despite the narrow-focus of its title the FSKN had power over fighting organized crime and drug trafficking, as well as being essentially the tax police of Russia and more. Cherkesov was in open conflict with FSB head Patrushev and his Kremlin allies led by Sechin (another major Putin ally). In the article Cherkesov warned that the clan fighting would result in the destruction of both clans, similar to how warring clans in the late Yeltsin era led to an implosion of the tenuous alliance of oligarchs that ran Russia at the time. The fact Cherkesov was attacking Sechin in the Russian media showed that Putin had already lost control to a certain extent in his role as faction manager.

The 2007 clan war was not the only instance of Putin's lack of control as faction-manager. In March of 2005 Alexei Miller (the CEO of Gazprom) appeared with Sergei Bogdanchikov (the CEO of Rosneft). Just a day after Gazprom said it was merging with Rosneft the CEO of Rosneft publicly denied it was true, which was followed by the Gazprom press office calling their statement "a technical mistake." The Kremlin then issued a statement saying that Rosneft had retracted its statement, while Rosneft stated that it never made the statement in the first place. This comical process, for all its twists and turns, shows that bureaucratic fighting behind the scenes occasionally spills out in public.¹⁰⁰ This temporary lapse of control reflects a lack of control on Putin's part over the various factions. Interestingly, in the end Rosneft did in fact remain separate from Gazprom. While Rosneft's public divergence from the Kremlin was as egregious as anything Yukos showed, the difference was that Rosneft is closely aligned with the

siloviki. Rosneft's chairman is Sechin and its vice chairman is Sergei Naryshkin. Both of these individuals are ex-KGB men from Saint Petersburg. Interestingly, Sechin has been reassigned to being deputy Prime Minister (seen as a demotion) by Medvedev in 2008, while Naryshkin has become Medvedev's chief of staff. Likewise, Cherkosov was demoted in 2008 by Medvedev as well, when he was sacked as Head of the State Committee for the Control of the Circulation of Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances.

Also in 2007 a siloviki by the name of Vladimir Kumarin was arrested (presumably by the rival Sechin clan). Whether it was Kumarin against Sechin or Sechin against Cherkosov, the nature of intra-siloviki warfare cannot be dismissed. This was summarized nicely by Goldman when he stated:

*“Undoubtedly some of this jockeying for control reflected a deep concern that Putin's successor would relocate some of the country's assets and strip the new siloviki oligarchs of their assets just as Putin stripped the original oligarchs.”*¹⁰¹

The popular notion was that if someone as politically well-equipped as Putin couldn't stop the feuding it was doubtful that Medvedev would be able to do so. This is cited as one reason why Putin never leaves the political scene-- the concept that without him the faction-wars would get out of hand. In this sense one can view the fact that Medvedev held Putin on as a Prime Minister to be as much a ploy to protect himself from the siloviki as it is a method for Putin to retain power in some form.¹⁰²

The pivotal moment in the ocean of shifting Russian clan politics was the open war between Sechin and Cherkosov. Putin wasted no time in cleaning up the aftermath of that specific outburst, and then proceeded to downgrade the power of the siloviki in general:

*“The system of attaching security officials from the MVD, FSB and the defence ministry to the presidential administration and the government, which had been in full flood between 2001 and 2005, was ended by a presidential decree of 16 Jan 2008.” – Sakwa*¹⁰³

This decree at the beginning of 2008 was preceded by the declaration of Medvedev as Putin's preferred successor (December 10, 2007) and his endorsement by the four major pro-Kremlin parties (United Russia, Fair Russia, Agrarian Party of Russia, and Civilian Power) occurred on December 17, 2007. The demotions of both Sechin and Cherkosov (two of the most powerful siloviki) at the hands of Medvedev along with Putin's approval of Medvedev as his successor (instead of Viktor Zubkov or Sergei Ivanov, both siloviki that many observers assumed could be nominated as successor to Putin), would indicate an ebb in the power of the siloviki, to be replaced by the more liberal "civiliki" of Medvedev (and ultimately, liberals patronized by Putin). Medvedev's rise coincided with the demotion of four siloviki in the Sechin clan and many in Cherkosov's St. Petersburg-based siloviki clan.

The Transferring Of Power From The Siloviki To The Civiliki

"Associated with Medvedev, but clearly also enjoying the support of Putin, are economic neo-liberals like Anatoly Chubais and Aleksey Kudrin, who advocate for a 'liberal empire' in which Russia uses its overweening economic position vis-à-vis the so-called 'near abroad' to gain economic and therefore political leverage." – Dawisha¹⁰⁴

From 2007 to 2010 a shuffling of elites seemed to indicate a transfer of power from the siloviki towards the civiliki. This shift is important in that **it reinforces causality between identity and foreign policy preferences**. If illiberal officials employ liberal rhetoric/identities the correlation may be spurious in that there is a shift towards liberal identity but away from liberal individuals. The table below is a categorization of major politicians by their faction. The names and categorizations were given in 2005 by Kryshtanovskaya and White.¹⁰⁵ I have since researched what has happened to these individuals since that time period (2005).

Table 4: The Changing Fortunes of the Elite

Position of power	Siloviki	Liberals
Presidential administration	<i>Sechin</i> , <u>Viktor Ivanov</u>	<u>Medvedev</u> , Surkov , Illarionov*
Government	<i>Fradkov</i> , <i>Sergei Ivanov</i> , Lavrov , <i>Patrushev</i> , Nurgaliev , <i>Lebedev</i> , <i>Cherkesov</i> , Shoigu	Gref , Kudrin*, Zubarov, Trutnev , Gordeev, <u>Reiman</u> , <u>Naryshkin</u>
Presidential envoys	Poltavchenko, Latyshev*, Kvashnin, Pulikovsky, Klebanov	<u>Kozak</u> , Kirienko
Other institutions	<i>Ustinov</i> , Stepashin, Primakov*	
Party leaders	<i>Gudkov</i>	Gryzlov , <u>Rogozin</u>

* Unchanged names are those that I could not retrieve information on (or could not verify if their current position has been a promotion, demotion, or simply a plum job to ease them into a consensual retirement)

* Italicized names are those that have been demoted, almost all of which in 2008 (the exception being Gennady Gudkov, whose party in 2007 was merged with Just Russia, where he no longer maintains any meaningful leadership position).

* Underlined names are those that have been promoted, all of which in 2008

* Bolded names are those who have maintained their position from 2005 onwards

* Bolded and underlined names have transferred to positions of economic power and away from politics

* Bolded and italicized names have transferred from one political position to another without a discernable increase or decrease in power

* The asterisks denote special cases that could not be categorized. On the siloviki side, Pyotr Latyshev has died of a heart failure, and Primakov has resigned from active politics due to old age. On the liberal side, Andrei Illarionov in late 2005 defected from government to join the opposition against Putin. Alexei Kudrin maintained his power up until 2011, when he publicly stated that he would refuse to serve under Putin if Putin was running for president again in 2012 and would prefer to serve under Medvedev only, after which Medvedev asked him to resign.

The important point to note is the only post-Medvedev *promotion* among the siloviki is

Viktor Ivanov (who replaced the disgraced Cherkesov as head of the powerful Federal Drug Control Service of Russia). The only post-Medvedev *demotion* among the liberals was Kudrin's exceptional case just recently. It certainly appears that since 2008 the power of the liberal faction has grown relative to the siloviki. While this analysis of a handful of names and their fortunes since 2005 is not conclusive as a gauge in the decline and rise of factions, it does provide a valuable insight into the non-transparent world of factions, by comparing the relative fortunes of individuals and factions. This supports the notions advanced by other sources of a power transfer from the siloviki to the liberals surrounding Medvedev.¹⁰⁶

This methodology of classification-by-faction is not uncontested however. I disagreed with Kryshtanovskaya's notion of categorizing Stepashin as being subsumed under a monolithic siloviki/statist ideology (or Surkov as a liberal!). It seems the reasoning behind categorizing Stepashin as one of the siloviki is merely his occupational background as being a Colonel-General in the army. It ignores the fact that he investigated the KGB as a potential coup plotter against Gorbachev, and also that he ran for office under the liberal party Yabloko in 1999. While there seems to be some correlation between occupational background and political worldviews, it certainly isn't a perfect predictor and one cannot assume a military rank can be equated with either an affiliation with the KGB or an embracing of force structure/statist ideology in general. This fact is certainly reflected in the liberal-leaning Colonel-General Stepashin.

Medvedev: Not Quite A Puppet After All

Sakwa defined the onset of the Medvedev era as a restoration "with a more stable liberal-statist configuration" after the balance of factions was upset during the Yukos scandals.

Interestingly, he states it is pointless to wonder who the dominant partner in the Medvedev-Putin

duumvirate is since “the constitutional position was clear, while political practice would be a matter of experimentation, there was little reason to believe that the relationship in normal circumstances would not work well.” Even when it was tested in the Georgian war the division was still clear. For example, Medvedev negotiated with Sarkozy (who was representing the EU) while Putin focused on practical matters like incoming refugees and rebuilding southern Ossetia.¹⁰⁷

One of Medvedev’s chief concerns has been his call to overcome “legal nihilism”, and this has essentially been viewed as a jab at the siloviki structures, worded in a way to reflect his legal/St. Petersburg background.¹⁰⁸ His massive reshuffling of personnel came mostly at the expense of the increasingly weakened siloviki¹⁰⁹ as Medvedev infused his own “civiliki” into positions of power. Sakwa outlined this process by stating “Medvedev planned a mass rotation of regional heads to implant businessmen under 55 years of age who could break up clan loyalties.”¹¹⁰ Medvedev’s policy was also separate from Putin’s, as he took the lead on multiple reform initiatives in the party system, fighting “legal nihilism” by combatting both corruption and the prevalent bureaucratism that spawned it, and modernizing the economy.¹¹¹ Not only were attempts made, but Medvedev realized some accomplishments in terms of reforming the domestic system in various ways. Under Medvedev there was a greater emphasis on property rights, the rule of law, seeking consensus in international politics (but not at the expense of Russia’s perceived interests), and greater pluralism in the public sphere.¹¹² In his “Forward, Russia!” article Medvedev even attacked elements of the Putinite system (though he didn’t criticize Putin as an individual). The issue with this, however, has been Medvedev’s inability to reform a system from above without a real constituency for political change (among elites) *and* without adequate infrastructural power from below to either generate new elites or mitigate their

influence.¹¹³ Some have even argued¹¹⁴ that threatening opposition from the regime comes not from the United Opposition, a hodge-podge of elite-groups consisting of everything from liberals to fascists whose effectiveness is nearly nonexistent because they only stand for overthrowing the regime, but rather that true opposition comes from below. This reinforces the notion of even Medvedev fearing a genuine revolution-from-below while paradoxically at the same time wanting to increase the power of Russian civil society. In particular this “from below” opposition includes militant trade unions, exacerbated by the fact that in 2005 many social safety nets were abolished with the rationalization that these features were no longer necessary in a relatively stabilized economy.

Dual Power In Russia From 2008 Onwards

Much has been written about the nature of dual power (*dvoevlastie*) during the Russian revolutions of 1917. In that historical instance it was a case of the monarchy being replaced by two separate sources of competing power: the liberal/bourgeois provisional government and the socialist/proletarian Soviets led by the Bolsheviks. This dualistic framework held the tenuous Russian state together from the liberal revolution in February until it was undone by the Bolshevik revolution in October (or more appropriately November, if one is to use the Gregorian calendar).

Importantly, a new form of dual power has arisen in modern-day Russia. While the circumstances are different from 1917, in obvious ways they share certain similarities, particularly in that both periods illustrate an effort to fill a power vacuum. Sakwa labeled what formed under the Medvedev presidency a “tandemocracy.”¹¹⁵ Under this arrangement the position (as given by Russian law) of the president (Medvedev) focuses on security and foreign

policy concerns whereas the position of Prime Minister (Putin) focuses on economic and social concerns.

Another form of dual power was (in the words of Sakwa) between the “prerogative state” (clan/non-law-based) and the “constitutional state” (law-based). These two elements merged in the first decade of the twenty-first century since the Putin administration derived much of its legitimacy from the constitution/democracy. The democratic source of legitimacy was viewed as important for the regime, as Putin’s approval ratings rarely dipped below 70 percent. Sakwa even reflected a notion that Putin’s course was synonymous with Russian desires at large:

*“Putin reflected the policy preferences of the population, with just under half supporting the continuation of reforms but with a stronger state role and ensuring popular welfare, while only 10 percent called for the continuation of reforms with a decreased role for the state, while another 11 percent supported the swift and decisive implementation of reform. Only 22 percent favored a return to the Soviet system.”*¹¹⁶

The same mass-level focus (as a legitimization tool) can be seen in terms of Putin’s foreign policy agenda as well. A 2008 poll reflected the view that Ukraine joining NATO was a threat to Russian national security (74%) and that Georgia doing the same was also a threat (77%).¹¹⁷ By early 2009 (after the Georgian war) the views of the average Russian towards NATO were even worse, with only 8% of those polled viewing the organization positively.¹¹⁸ In fact, in March of 2007, incidentally at the height of Russian assertiveness and talk of multipolarity, a poll reflected a wide consensus on foreign policy: 61% stated that the Kremlin’s policy was “well considered and well balanced” while 16% thought it was too pro-Western and only 8% said it was too uncompromising with the West (perhaps the same 8% of liberals who held a positive view of NATO in later polls).¹¹⁹

Of course, there were instances of when the prerogative state won out as well: one example being the Yukos dismemberment.¹²⁰ Similarly, Putin was not just a constituency-

appeaser to the Russian public for the sake of retaining a high approval rating. Both his post-9/11 alliance with America and his monetization of social benefits in 2005 faced little public support.

While Putin's focus on civil peace ameliorated much of the conflictual politics of the 1990s, it did introduce a technocratic "court system" type of rule where vying interests/factions within an administration constantly struggle for power. This conflict between prerogative and constitutional states was highlighted when strengthening the rule of law was said to be Medvedev's top priority. Meanwhile, Putin's managerialism has been compared to Singapore's "trustee democracy",¹²¹ and his style of government has reflected that top-down management. He displayed this management style economically when he made efforts to ensure that business ran business (not politics as in the 1990s) and when he supported the idea of "national champions" in energy, manufacturing, etc. He displayed this management style politically in the form of a political managerialism that exerted a peculiar form of "political guardianship" over democratic processes and gave birth to the notion of Putin's reign as one of "sovereign democracy" as outlined in his 2005 speech to the Federal Assembly.

The Meaning Of The New Centrism In Context

"Different identity coalitions form to promote their visions. Promoted by various identity groups in both public and private spaces, identity contestation is especially intense until one of the available visions becomes predominant." [...] "Foreign policy then is a highly political phenomenon. It evolves with the rise and fall of various identity visions, as advocated by different social and political groups." – Tsygankov¹²²

That foreign policy shifts have occurred is clear, as is the fact that shifts have occurred amongst the dominance of those at the top of the pyramid of Russia's power structure. At first glance it may be simple to individualize this change as simply the whim of the leader (and change coming in the form of leadership changes) under an authoritarian system. In reality

however, the process reaches beyond the individual level-- even an individual as dominant as Putin has been over the last decade. While Putin may have never retreated from the scene, his dynamic role as faction manager may reveal when factions are in the ascent or descent from a position of dominance. In fact, rather than managing factions Putin could just as accurately be described as a gauge of factions. In this sense Putin is not merely the agent but also the subject, not only shaping the dominance of certain factions but also being shaped by them. Putin's endorsement of the siloviki in his first term and then clear acts to disenfranchise elements of the siloviki just before the end of his second term in order to facilitate a transition to Medvedev shows either a sense of factional schizophrenia on the part of Putin or a confirmation of the fact that Putin, indeed, is not an autocrat but rather a cog in a machine (despite being the single most important individual cog).

The factional and systemic stalemate of the Medvedev era (and the foreign-policy middle ground it necessitated) is as much a reflection of the identity stale-mate makeup at the elite level (and perhaps mass-level if we are to infer that elites are reflections of the masses as Hopf might argue) as it is a case of simply an elite change towards a centrist in the form of Medvedev. In fact, some authors have even questioned the intensity/salience of Putin's own silovik identity, arguing that he did not hold a leading position in the KGB (where his rank was lieutenant-colonel) and finished his career in a small sub-unit in the GDR. By 1990 Putin was said to be more focused on his doctoral dissertation in international law than he was on the KGB, which he left the next year. Furthermore, he was only officially appointed as director of the FSB (and remained in that position for less than a year) after seven or eight years holding an earlier civilian post.¹²³

Similar shifts in identity-group dominance have been catalogued in the past, as Putin's first-term adoption of a synthesis of statism and liberalism (adopting balance of power tactics, while discarding Primakov's anti-Westernism) have been portrayed as the result of an administration split between liberal and statist factions.¹²⁴ The declining aspects of liberalism in Putin's foreign policy could be witnessed in the increasing preponderance of siloviki personnel at roughly the end of Putin's first term. Similarly, with the decline of the siloviki at the end of Putin's second term and the rise of "civiliki" National Democrats/liberals such as Medvedev, we could expect a similar rise of foreign policy liberalism under the Medvedev administration. The factional stalemate of the Medvedev administration should reflect a tempering of Russia's previous statist foreign policy objectives with increasingly liberal policies. Stalemates in faction domination would lead theoretically to centrism in terms of foreign policy.

This case was summarized by Sakwa when he referenced a November 5, 2008 speech where Medvedev "wove a careful balance between liberal and silovik positions, reflecting the continued stalemate."¹²⁵ In fact, it was not merely this speech that reflected a synthesis of liberal and silovik positions which necessitated a form of centrism-- it also appeared in terms of Medvedev's foreign policy. Medvedev has been described as "both hawk and liberal."¹²⁶ He has swung from talks of deploying nuclear missiles in Kaliningrad (on the day Obama was inaugurated as president) in order to counteract the American ballistic-missile-defense, to retracting those statements (once Obama sought to discontinue the missile shield and "reset" relations) and calling for a non-confrontational foreign policy where "there is no point us puffing up our chests" in his 2009 address to the Federal Assembly.¹²⁷ Dual power in contemporary Russia appears to be able to describe not only a balance between the prerogative and constitutional states, but also between civiliki/liberal and siloviki/statist worldviews.

IV. RUSSIAN-BELARUSIAN RELATIONS

The Trajectory Of Russian Foreign Policy Since The Collapse Of The Soviet Union

It is typical that most policy in an established state is the product of “standard operating procedure,” rather than individual foreign policy decisions. This reliance on standard operating procedure, however, was not the case in Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union, which had no standard operating procedure all the sudden. It’s been stated that the “division of responsibility between government institutions was unclear and often contentious, and channels of communication had yet to be established.”¹²⁸ While at first the Russian constitution was murky as to how foreign policy would be created, it gave the legislative branch the right to formulate a general framework for foreign policy and the executive branch (particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/MFA) responsibility for implementing it. By 1993 however the new constitution switched foreign policy almost entirely to the executive, and the president especially. By 1995 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs were made directly subordinate to the president.

So while foreign policy was directed by Yeltsin as proscribed by the constitution, the uneasy clan politics and shifting power bases of Russia directly conflicted with his (and FM Kozyrev’s) liberal agenda. Aides were sent to make policy statements abroad, sometimes conflicting with the MFA or the Security Council. Sometimes the Ministry of Defense made statements that conflicted with Yeltsin statements (often made off the cuff and surprising even his staff). This schizophrenic foreign policy was based on a schizophrenic/shifting clan base and an anarchic “Byzantine factionalism”¹²⁹ that was based on “shifts of power and allegiance among the individuals and groups participating in a fierce and at times violent political struggle.”¹³⁰

It wasn't until Primakov became Foreign Minister in 1996 (who then became Prime Minister in 1998) that a degree of stability was introduced. The hardening-realist position of Primakov sought to counter-balance the United States with a Russian-Chinese-Indian alliance, and this position was solidified when Putin became president. Importantly, however, Putin did *not* see the United States as a chief rival at first, unlike Primakov. A new national security concept was released in 2000, followed by a new foreign policy concept in June of 2000 which promoted a "new world order."¹³¹ Both of these documents seemed to "indicate a significant hardening" from the Yeltsin era.¹³² It was with Putin that the power of the presidency stabilized, the open-conflict with the Duma faded, the warring clans were pacified, and cooperation rose in tandem with the power of the MFA. The statist identity in statements arose in that "pragmatism is the recurring theme of the foreign policy statements of Putin and his government"¹³³ in tandem with an infusion of siloviki personnel into government positions.¹³⁴ The infusion of siloviki into positions such as the Foreign Ministry (like Vyacheslav Trubnikov)¹³⁵ and at both the national and regional-levels is well-documented.¹³⁶

The Putin era's theme was one of immediate "securitization"¹³⁷ and one where even economic means were ultimately used towards security-based ends.¹³⁸ Despite lip-service to economic matters while abroad the actual Foreign Policy Concept of 2000 shifted its major focus towards issues relating to security.¹³⁹ This focus held throughout Putin's first-term as concerns mostly focused on terrorism and the US Anti-Ballistic Missile Shield. But while security and stability (above all else) was at the core of Putin's worldview, in the end Putin's worldview was not devoid of liberal ideas. Putin's sense of centrism was summarized by Gorodetsky when he stated that:

*“His is not a classical realist, confrontational view of the world, since he accepts interdependency and globalization as part of today’s realities. Nevertheless, his view is informed as much by notions of competition as by cooperation”*¹⁴⁰

Indeed, if we are to use Larson’s idea that a core belief system (in this case Putin’s desire for law and order) may be surrounded by “organized but atomized schemas about politics” it is easier to see how Putin’s policy has been centered on security and yet departs from its premises in key areas (especially in context of cooperation with Western Europe). This is why an individual like Putin, who may have complexities within himself, in addition to balancing factional complexities in the real world, may carry with him schemas that are “therefore more comprehensive; they include belief systems as well as isolated knowledge structures.”¹⁴¹

Shifts occurred with a new foreign policy again in 2008 after the election of Medvedev. This foreign policy introduced a new priority in that, whereas in 2000 five priorities were listed for foreign policy, in 2008 there was now a sixth priority listed: “the primacy of law in international relations.”¹⁴² This priority was listed in second place, just after a “new world order.” The majority of the focus here (and elsewhere) was centered on multilateral cooperation under the aegis of the UN on one hand, and using this cooperation to promote a multipolar world on the other hand.

A History Of The Russia-Belarus Relationship

Belarus and Russia have maintained a close political bond since their independence from the Soviet Union. While a more thorough look at Russian-Belarusian relations is available (see appendix A), here I have elected to focus specifically on relations from the start of the first Putin administration (2000) until the end of 2010. The first Belarusian elections to be held in the Putin-era occurred in September of 2001. This election, which Europeans regarded as “unfair and

fraudulent,” was supported by Putin when, after the election, he personally called to congratulate Lukashenko on his “convincing victory.”¹⁴³ Unlike previous Belarusian elections in the pre-Putin era, in 2001 Lukashenko was bolstered by visits from Kremlin officials while Russian media covered him favorably on a consistent basis.¹⁴⁴

This did not mean that Belarus was immune to conflict with Russia, however. Putin’s first term marked significant diplomatic overtures towards America in addition to conflicts with Belarus. In August of 2002 Putin suggested that Belarus join Russia in a single political unit made up of six different regions, which effectively undermined the idea of the equal confederacy promoted by Lukashenko. Throughout 2003 and 2004 Russia pushed Belarus to privatize industries in the petrochemical/gas transit sectors, and threats were issued to hike prices if state-companies were not privatized.

However, this period was not devoid of cooperation. In February of 2003 Russia proposed creating a Common Economic Space (CES) consisting of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan with a goal of eliminating trade barriers and having shared energy transport policies.¹⁴⁵ In military matters, Russia joined with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Armenia to form the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in April 2003.

The precedent for future gas wars was set in February 2004, when Gazprom cut off supplies for a single day. Belarus agreed months later to a price hike from \$27 to \$46 per thousand cubic meters. Lukashenko actually turned the situation to his benefit however, when he portrayed himself as an independence fighter against Russian oligarchs (a code word for liberal businessmen in Russian politics).¹⁴⁶ A deal was reached stipulating that subsidization prices would continue, but Gazprom must have a greater stake in the Belarusian pipeline company Beltransgaz. In September of 2004 Lukashenko also used the Beslan crisis to his advantage when

he stated that his term limits must be removed in order to keep Belarus peaceful and free from such terrorism. At this pivotal moment the Kremlin silenced critics of Belarus throughout the media, and later congratulated Lukashenko on his victory for passing the referendum on removing his term limits.

In October of 2004 another election occurred in Belarus, this time in regards to a referendum which essentially gave Lukashenko unlimited power. Putin again called to congratulate Lukashenko on his electoral victory.¹⁴⁷ Sergei Ivanov stated, in response to Condoleezza Rice meeting with opposition Belarusian candidates, that: “we would not, of course, be advocating what some people call regime changes anywhere [...] We think the democratic process, the process of reform cannot be imposed from the outside.”¹⁴⁸

Putin’s second term marked the high-point of Russian-Belarusian relations (and incidentally the apex of siloviki factional power). After being put on the defensive by Ukraine’s Orange Revolution in late 2004, Russia from 2005 to 2007 actively tried to undermine OSCE observer missions in order to support its “authoritarian axis.” Media spin supported these governments as well, usually under the guise of anti-terrorism. In May 2005 siloviki strongman and FSB leader Patrushev (allied with the Sechin clan) “unmasked” a plot by the West to use terrorist organizations to finance Belarusian opposition.¹⁴⁹ In addition to this, FSB officers aided their Belarusian counterparts (the KGB) in getting leads on opposition activists who smuggled banned literature during the previous election, while Russian media actively discredited the Belarusian opposition.¹⁵⁰

Despite this deepening political cooperation between the two countries, gas wars broke out in 2006 when Gazprom stated it needed much more than the \$46 Belarus was paying at the time. This was not the first time that Gazprom had threatened to raise prices, as it occurred in

2002 and 2004 as well. The earlier deal signed in 2004 stated that Gazprom would have a stake in Beltransgaz and that this stake would expire in 2006. Once 2006 had arrived Gazprom offered to extend subsidy-level prices in exchange for ownership of Beltransgaz, which Belarus refused.¹⁵¹ Lukashenko consequently threatened a “breakup of all relations.”

Despite this posturing, in December of 2006 Belarus reached a deal with Gazprom just hours before Gazprom would have cut off the gas supply. Despite the deal, Russia then imposed a tariff on oil exports, to which Belarus responded with a transit tax being put on Russian oil moving westwards. Belarus then agreed to pay \$100 (rather than a price “three times” the original \$46), in exchange for Gazprom receiving a 50% stake in Belarus’s gas company Beltransgaz at the price of \$2.5 billion.¹⁵²

Just as in the 2004 Belarusian elections, Belarusian and Russian political cooperation in 2006 continues in the form of positive media coverage despite the economic arguments between the two countries. Belarusian elections in December of 2006 were similar to 2004, in that Russian media worked to sing the praises of Lukashenko while ignoring or discrediting the opposition. Just as in previous economic disagreements, relations eventually stabilized after a bargaining process, and by April of 2007 Russia spoke of a \$1.5 billion “stabilization loan” that was to be given to Belarus.¹⁵³ Lukashenko responded by stating that Belarus and “the brotherly Russian people” would stand together and face their mutual threats. By the end of 2007 subsidy-level prices were still maintained. Just as in previous instances, economic disagreements were eventually pushed aside in order to focus on political and cultural cooperation.

In 2009 the first Belarusian diplomatic row in the Medvedev-era occurred. June marked the outbreak of the “milk war,” where Russia banned dairy products coming from Belarus. Lukashenko claimed that the ban was political in retaliation for Belarus not recognizing the

independence of southern Ossetia and Abkhazia following the 2008 Georgian war. To add to this, yet another round of the gas war started in July of 2009 when Belarus cut Latvia off from Russian oil. In August Lukashenko travels to Moscow “to restore ties”¹⁵⁴ though later RT articles show this attempt largely failed in that RT states that Lukashenko “jeopardises” [sic] any breakthroughs or talks.¹⁵⁵ Unlike the gas wars of 2004 and 2006 the gas wars of 2009 do *not* mend shortly after their outbreak. In May 2010 RT stated that Belarus is “thought” to pay \$150 per 1000 cubic meters of gas (though this is projected/threatened to rise in the near future).¹⁵⁶ By the end of May Belarus offered for Gazprom to fully control Beltransgaz, in hopes of receiving domestic-level-prices on gas coming from Russia.

Despite this gesture on the part of Lukashenko, in early July of 2010 state-owned NTV in Russia showed a highly critical documentary about Lukashenko, accusing him of fostering a dictatorship. In the same month three Belarusian opposition candidates visited Moscow and met with liberals such as Kudrin and Chubais.¹⁵⁷ With the high-point of Belarusian-Russian relations during the 2004 Belarusian elections now a distant memory, by December of 2010 relations had reached their nadir as Russian media decried the results of the election and lent a voice for Belarusian opposition candidates.

Gazprom: The State, Inc.

It is difficult to assess any policy while omitting clear economic variables. Likewise, it is difficult to discuss Russian economic variables towards the CIS in general (and Ukraine and Belarus in particular) without a strong focus on Gazprom as a key economic interest group. Gazprom is a state-dominated joint stock corporation that (until 1992) was the Soviet Ministry of

the Gas Industry. When touting its economic achievements as “the third biggest company in the world in terms of capitalization” Putin wasted no time in underlining the reasoning behind this success when he said its success “did not just come about all on its own, but is the result of carefully planned action by the state.”¹⁵⁸

Indeed, the Russian government, until recently, owned the majority (50.002%) of the company and the Board of Directors read as a veritable “who’s who” of Russian politics.

Table 5: Gazprom in Government

Board Director member	Role in government
Alexei Miller (CEO)	Deputy Minister of Energy of Russia (former)
Viktor Zubkov (chairman of the board)	Prime-Minister (former), First Deputy Prime Minister
Elvira Nabiullina	Minister of Economic Development
Viktor Khristenko	First Deputy Prime Minister (former), Minister of Industry

In addition to these former board members, one could include current President Medvedev and the fact that Gazprom was founded by former Prime Minister/Acting President Viktor Chernomyrdin (later demoted in 2009 to a presidential advisor until his death late in 2010). A simple explanation underlies the weaving of state interest with petroleum interest in that the importance of petroleum to Russia is hard to overstate. Russia was leading the world in the production of petroleum at the onset of the 20th century, after which the United States took over, after which by 1975 Russia again took the lead.¹⁵⁹ Saudi Arabia took the lead in 1992 following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and has held it until 2007 when Russia again took the

lead with Gazprom at the forefront. At the time that this lead was taken oil made up 30% of the GDP and 65% of the export total.¹⁶⁰

Gazprom was the poster-company of the drive to nationalize major Russian industries. While a few companies (like Rosneft) have always been state owned others followed Gazprom's suit to become "national champions" in the words of Putin. Gazprom is recognized as the leader of the national champions, and the trajectory towards Russian energy dominance coincides with the rise of the Russian state's dominance over its own economy. While in 2000 the share of nationally-produced oil that was produced by state-enterprises was as low as 10%, by 2007 this figure had risen to nearly 50%.¹⁶¹

That this shift occurred under the watch of Putin is unlikely to be a coincidence.

Goldman stated¹⁶² that

"Putin's first priority was to purge the self-dealers and asset-strippers from Gazprom. He seems instinctively to have recognized that Gazprom would make an ideal flagship, on the assumption, of course, that he could find managers who would place the interests of the state above their own" and "that is why almost immediately after his election as president, Putin sought to put managers in place who would no longer strip off producing assets into their privately held empires."

Gazprom is important in that it reflects the need to analyze foreign policy autonomy. Here "autonomy" is defined by Tsygankov's methodology: one can compare proclaimed foreign policy goals to actual foreign policy implementation, in order to identify any gaps, and then see if any of these gaps would benefit a key interest group.¹⁶³ If hostile rhetoric towards Belarus increases but foreign policy is increasingly cooperative this gap merits scrutiny. Considering the importance of Gazprom as a key economic variable, I propose to look at gas prices for Belarus to be used as a key control variable. It is in Gazprom's interest to get as much financial benefit as possible, therefore to charge the highest possible gas prices. If liberal identity is on the retreat

and yet if relative prices continue to rise and the situation with Belarus grows more unforgiving and antagonistic, then Gazprom's economic dominance can offer a key alternate hypothesis pertaining to Russian foreign policy.

Gazprom's history is one of a company that started as a personal goldmine for its owners. The transitory period from 2000 onwards was sparked by Putin cleaning house. In particular, he sought to remove members of the board and replace them with more loyal members from the siloviki and his clan circle in St. Petersburg. 2000 marked the removal of Chernomyrdin from the board and his replacement with Medvedev. In 2001 the notoriously corrupt Rem Vyakhirev was replaced with Miller (who, like Putin, also worked for the mayor of St. Petersburg). Putin was not the first to try to clean house at Gazprom. Before him Fedorov (the Minister of Finance) tried and failed. The aforementioned Vyakhirev went so far as to send the mafia to harass Boris Fedorov (and they eventually poisoned his dog supposedly) and paid for Moscow newspapers to smear his character.¹⁶⁴ When Putin replaced Vyakhirev with Miller, one of Miller's first acts was to separate Gazprom from ITERA, a Florida-based partner that acted as a middleman dealing with Ukraine, the Caucasus countries, and others. By 2006 ITERA was forced to sell their stake (51 percent) in Sibneftegaz to Gazprom for the bargain price of \$130 million. When Miller became the CEO for Gazprom nearly two-thirds of the property acquired by ITERA was seized by Gazprom, presumably with Putin's blessing.¹⁶⁵

There have been numerous incidents of institutional corruption being a part of the landscape of Russian politics. Often, companies have huge sums of money essentially vanish, as was the case when Transneft paid \$530 million to unnamed/unknown charities in 2007-2008, a sum larger than what was spent on repairing its pipeline. Gazprom also exhibited this phenomenon of seemingly irrational financial behavior by selecting an intermediary named

Transinvestgas to deal with Novatek, when Novatek offered a deal that cut out the middleman of Transinvestgas for a cost which would have been 70 percent *less* for Gazprom.¹⁶⁶ In spring 2011 Medvedev signed a decree preventing government ministers from simultaneously holding positions on boards of major companies. Despite his intentions to curb corruption, ministers chose their own replacements and Rosneft even released a defiant statement saying “Sechin will keep control and [...] will even strengthen it.”¹⁶⁷ In this sense even a “national champion” in the form of Gazprom is not immune to factional struggles.

The Case Of Gazprom: Marketization Or Blackmail?

“Russia grudgingly accepts the Atlanticist choices of its neighbors but refuses to subsidize them.” – Dmitri Simes

The notion of Russia/Gazprom using gas prices as a neo-imperialist economic club over the heads of non-compliant CIS members is prevalent among the Western media and scholars.¹⁶⁸ Under this scenario Russia uses its monopolization of energy reserves to advance its policies. This realist focus on material power is contrasted with the Russian narrative on why gas prices have fluctuated in the first decade of the twenty-first century, with the exact prices depending on the country in question. While realists have portrayed the price to be reflective of how loyal the client state is to Russia (with disobedience being punished in the form of higher gas prices), Russia has taken a liberal approach (in terms of its rhetoric) in saying that rising prices are more a reflection of the fact that all countries have to pay fair market prices as Russia abandons the neo-Soviet subsidization-level pricing for client states. In February of 2007 Putin refuted the Western conception of a neo-imperialist energy blackmailing process, stating that:

“We are constantly being fed the argument that Russia is using its current and emerging economic levers to achieve its foreign policy goals. [...] This is not the case. The Russian

Federation has always abided by all of its obligations fully and completely, and it will continue to do so."¹⁶⁹

While this is essentially true of Russia's relations with **NATO countries** going back to the Soviet Union up until the present-day, the same cannot be said of the USSR's relations with its allies/republics of the USSR itself, as there are nearly a dozen instances of the Soviet Union (and later Russia) using gas as a political/economic tool towards republics within their sphere of influence.¹⁷⁰ The gas wars of the 2000s certainly lend the appearance of similar tactics.

In fact this tactic has been used as a rationalization for why bilateral relations have been used more frequently (and with greater success) than multilateral arrangements, despite Russia's inclination to rhetorically praise multilateralism and the fact it belongs to multiple organizations that are built on a multilateral framework. This point was underscored when White stated that "given the dependence of the former Soviet states on Russian energy, achieving economic influence by forgiving debts in return for shares in local businesses has proved a more cost-effective way of fulfilling Russia's economic and political aims" when compared to multilateral arrangements.¹⁷¹

The practical application of this rising-price policy could be witnessed right away. In 2007 Georgia agreed to pay the same price that Europe paid (\$235 per 1000 cubic meters). As a result, by that same year Georgia managed to import 80% of its natural gas from non-Russian sources.¹⁷² The openly conflictual country of Georgia getting "market" prices could be compared with a close ally like Belarus at first being asked to pay \$200 (in January of 2007) but eventually Gazprom allowed them to pay a mere \$100. Even this price was more than double what it was in 2006, when the price was bargain-level \$46 for Belarus. In addition to this price increase at the start of 2007, Belarus was also asked to pay an export duty of \$180 for each ton of petroleum.¹⁷³

This price difference isn't simply a matter of discretionary income at the hands of the leaders of Belarus, but it is a source of legitimacy for Belarus. It has been put forward that Belarus's populism has had to become *result-based* in terms of its economy in order to refute an internationally hostile climate. Under these circumstances Lukashenko often depends on making direct economic comparisons to other CIS countries in order to justify his legitimacy. Belarus ranked fourth among rates of development compared to other post-Soviet countries, as only the Baltics have fared better.¹⁷⁴ This "superiority through comparison" logic is crucial to the regime's legitimacy.

Under these circumstances price differences are crucial in that Belarus has depended on receiving subsidy-priced-petroleum that it can then resell (at an inflated price) to Western countries and use the profits to boost its economy.¹⁷⁵ These economic boosts are a source of legitimacy for the Lukashenko regime as much as they are rational choices in boosting the economy, underlying how critical the subsidy-level prices are to the Lukashenko regime.

The Russian export duty was counteracted with the imposition of a \$45-per-ton transit fee on the petroleum Russia was sending to Western Europe (which up until recently had to go through either the Ukraine or Belarus). Since half the petroleum went through Belarus, this would have been quite costly for Russia. A week after this threat from Belarus was made, Russia lowered the \$180 export duty to \$53 and, in return, Belarus abandoned talk of their transit fee entirely. Even temporary lulls in conflict eventually would give way to new conflicts, however. Even though Lukashenko had agreed to pay higher prices by the middle of 2007 Belarus then began to fall behind on payments, and Russia was again threatening to cut off deliveries around this time.¹⁷⁶ Belarus, again, paid the bill and gas flows resumed once again. This back-and-forth

illustrates that the market relations between Belarus and Gazprom (and by extension, Russia) were anything but stable.

It has been asserted that by the mid-2000s the moves to change Ukraine's prices were reflective of an effort to give Ukraine *market* (instead of bargain) prices in addition to punish the political insubordination of the Orange Revolution.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, Gazprom cancelled the bargain price towards Belarus in 2006-2007, instead doubling the price to \$100 per 1000 cubic meters and later getting a 50% stake in Belarus's state oil company Beltransgaz.¹⁷⁸ The net gain from the Ukraine and Belarus deals was \$4 billion, or 2% of the budget.

By late 2008 arguments erupted over whether Ukraine had siphoned off gas from the Russian pipelines leading to Western Europe. This caused the supply of natural gas to be cut off in January of 2009, causing a shortage in Western Europe for a brief period during the winter. This incident was not without precedent... gas supplies were cut off to the Ukraine in the winter of 2005-2006 and the winter of 2006-2007. The difference in the cut-off of 2009 was that in this instance it was ordered by Prime Minister Putin himself,

*“not the head of Gazprom, which suggested that the cutoff may have been motivated by foreign policy goals – to further weaken Ukraine as it struggled through its own financial and economic crisis and to punish it for its pro-Western orientation.”*¹⁷⁹

Gazprom and the Kremlin here seem to be intertwined to the point where it is difficult to separate the two. Whether Gazprom is in control of Russia's foreign policy can only be answered by looking at the answers given by the data. Did identity shifts occur to accompany the factional shifts at the pinnacle of power in 2008-2009? Were the liberal attacks on Belarus in Russia Today simply rhetorical justifications for Russia waging a war to extract as much profit as possible from Belarus? Or were they more reflective of a genuine shift in Russia's foreign policy brought about by a shift in Russian identity?

V. DATA ANALYSIS

A Look At The Framing Of The Split With Belarus

Before analyzing general RT stories which shed light on whether liberal rhetoric is systemic in Russian media or whether it is simply a rhetorical device to criticize an illiberal state, attention must first be focused on the change in reporting towards Belarus itself. **This is important, since changes in foreign policy in this study have been measured in terms of endorsements made publicly about the perceived legitimacy of the Lukashenko regime.** The focus of this research catalogues RT stories from the span of 2006 to 2010. The start date of reporting (July 2006) was chosen for two reasons: one reason of necessity and one of theory. Necessity was due to the fact that RT stories before July 2006 could not be retrieved, and in terms of theory 2006 was ideal in that it preceded the siloviki split of 2007 and the subsequent siloviki fall from grace in 2008-2009 under Medvedev. Thus this period captures how rhetoric was used at the height of siloviki power, and presumably the dominance of the statist identity that accompanied the elite with backgrounds in the security services.

The end date of 2010 was chosen for several reasons as well. **First** it captures a period in which liberal rhetoric should be more prevalent relative to earlier time periods. **Secondly**, choosing 2010 as an end date is helpful in that it was a time before key liberal leaders were reined in following the 2011 announcement of Putin's upcoming presidential run in 2012. In 2011 several events occurred that have indicated that civiliki (and possibly liberal identity) personnel were being scaled back. More on this will be discussed in the conclusion.

The majority of 2010 news stories intimated that Medvedev would likely run for a second term or that no decision had yet been made regarding the tandemocracy. This changed on

September 24th of 2011 when Medvedev announced that Putin would run for president in 2012, with Medvedev planning to take up Putin's current position as Prime Minister. Two days after this announcement was made, Alexei Kudrin (the Minister of Finance and a well-known liberal who worked in St. Petersburg with Mayor Anatoly Sobchak) said he would only serve under a Medvedev presidency and would not serve under Putin, after which he was promptly asked to resign by Medvedev. This incident was not the last sign of a possible shift suddenly in favor of the siloviki at the expense of the civiliki. In December of 2011 formerly demoted Sergei Ivanov (a well-known representative of the siloviki) had his fortunes reversed and was suddenly promoted as Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of Russia. Simultaneously, the now ousted Kudrin joined the liberal Illarionov (who resigned from government in protest in 2005) in embracing the opposition. Kudrin joined protesters against parliamentary elections seen as fraudulent by the West in December of 2011.¹⁸⁰ Focusing on 2010 avoids the upcoming factional turbulence among the elite in the transition to a hypothetical third Putin term.

The **third** reason 2010 was chosen was to analyze a period congruent with Belarusian elections. If the rhetoric in non-Belarus stories is significantly different in terms of identity from Belarusian stories, then it suggests that identities are being used simply as a rhetorical device in reporting on Belarus. The elections of 2010 serve as an ideal comparison between the two types of news stories (Belarus-centered and non-Belarus-centered).

The **fourth** reason 2010 was chosen was to overcome organizational inertia. Since I have adopted Goldsmith's notion¹⁸¹ that schema are more difficult to change when adopted by a group (also echoed by Hampton et al, 1987), as well as Abdelal's notion of norms and habits being inseparable,¹⁸² it makes sense to pick a timeframe in which organizational inertia could be overcome over time and the resulting changes in rhetoric could be implemented. After all, elite

predominance is in a constant state of flux, as we can see above in reference to both Alexei Kudrin and Sergei Ivanov following Putin's recent announcement, and many of the top liberal personnel were not fully situated in their current positions of power until 2009. If there was indeed a connection between liberal rhetoric in a state-owned outlet such as RT and factional dominance at top levels in the Kremlin, it would presumably take time for the new liberal personnel to consolidate their positions, new liberal personnel to gain dominance over RT personnel, and RT personnel to modify their reporting to reflect new preferences on the part of the state. This uncertain timeframe can be mitigated by fast-forwarding through a year with such organizational inertia (such as 2008 or 2009 for instance) towards one where these contradictions have been largely resolved in 2010.

The first thing one notices when looking at RT articles is the consistency in positive coverage of Belarus, even during periods of diplomatic strife. In late 2006 gas wars between Belarus and Russia erupted, and diplomacy became especially strained. Despite this, coverage was kept quite civil. Despite a report that acknowledged the existence of an opposition (a December 12, 2006 story was written on an Belarusian opposition member receiving a human rights prize from the European Union, perhaps not coincidentally during the gas wars) none of the critiques levied against Belarus in 2006 were of a political nature. The majority of the coverage was based on economic concerns (Belarus wanting subsidy level pricing while Russia wanted market-level prices) between the two countries. In January of 2007 Russia and Belarus were defined as being jointly criticized by the international organization PACE. However, in March of 2007 the existence of a Belarusian opposition was covered and then in April it was noted that during the 10th anniversary of talks of a Union State, the gas wars had "poured cold water" on the idea to dampen its enthusiasm.¹⁸³ This negative coverage was followed by a

“Russians rate their friends” poll¹⁸⁴ which asked Russians which country they viewed as the friendliest with Russia. The leader was Kazakhstan (at 39%) followed closely by Belarus (at 38%, down from 46% in 2005). Shortly afterwards positive coverage was demonstrated in that a story on the independence day of Belarus was reported¹⁸⁵ as well as announcements that a Polish-linked spy ring had been uncovered operating in Belarus. It was reported that the Polish spy-ring’s liquidation “prevented the damage to the defense capability of Russia and the Republic of Belarus.”¹⁸⁶ By October there were reports of “trade booming with Belarus”¹⁸⁷ and that “Belarus may host Russian missiles” which stated that the “Iskander system deployment would be in response to U.S. ABM plans in Europe.”¹⁸⁸ There is a continuation of positive coverage through this early 2008 period, with stories such as “Russia and Belarus unite against Western pressure.”¹⁸⁹

Medvedev won the Russian election on March 2, 2008. Articles on Belarus immediately following (just as before) are certainly mixed. There are reports of arrests of opposition members (described as “protesters”) on one hand¹⁹⁰ and yet a demonization of some opposition members as being fascists training at “right-wing Ukrainian military camps” on the other.¹⁹¹ During the parliamentary elections in Belarus in September of 2008 RT covered a variety of positions. One article covered that opposition accused Belarus of rigging the vote¹⁹² and yet others painted the opposition as especially weak.¹⁹³ The fact that Belarus, after its elections, chose not to recognize the independence of southern Ossetia and Abkhazia may have certainly hampered relations. The rationalization given¹⁹⁴ for why Belarus would not cooperate with Russia in this regard was, interestingly, described in rather non-liberal critiques:

“So far, Belorussian president Aleksandr Lukashenko has stopped at providing nothing more than verbal support to the Russian leadership whilst playing for time. His behaviour was largely explained by Europe-oriented ambitions. In August and September the recent

parliamentary campaign in Belarus – an important factor in curing Belarusian ties with the West – was gathering pace.”

This line of reasoning seems to frame the actions of Belarus in the scope of national-interest (a Belarusian interest in growing closer to liberal Europe at that). Seeming to buttress this tendency of chalking up differences to conflicting national interests (rather than conflicting identities), Russia lent Belarus two billion dollars¹⁹⁵ in order to aid them in getting through “the financial crisis.” Even more interesting is that this was followed by an article called “Top Ten Myths about Belarus”¹⁹⁶ which sought to deconstruct all the major Western “myths” slandering Belarus.

The first shift towards criticism of the authoritarian tendencies of Belarus (in other words, criticisms of Belarusian identity) occurred in late 2008 in an article titled “Belarus state films made mandatory.”¹⁹⁷ This liberal-toned piece can be seen as all the more schizophrenic in terms of framing considering the positive pieces that preceded it. What is interesting about this article was the subject of its framing in that it emphasized the tendency of ideological regulation, seen as a chief sin of the Soviet-era in the minds of Russians regardless of their identity-orientation.¹⁹⁸ The notion of tying Belarus to the Soviet-era made arguably its first appearance here, and this concept of tying Belarus to negative aspects of the Soviet past would become more and more frequent with time.

Despite these occasional aberrations, however, coverage of Belarus as a whole was not yet heavily negative. In fact, rather interestingly, despite rhetoric becoming slightly more critical of Belarus in this timeframe, relations were still said to be strong. In an article titled “Taking sides with pipelines”¹⁹⁹ RT proceeded to grade relations with many European countries. Those listed positively included continental Western European powers (Germany, Italy, and France in

addition to Finland and Greece) and some CIS countries (Belarus where the relationship was labeled as being one of “brother-states”, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Moldova). Those listed negatively were all countries on the Russian periphery (Ukraine which was described as “disastrous”, Poland, Georgia, Latvia and Estonia). The remaining countries were classified in neutral terms (mostly Central/Eastern European countries). Interestingly, the schema of the periphery being viewed as especially dangerous and an endorsement of bilateral cooperation with powerful countries (like the continental powers) fits into what one would expect of the theoretical outcome of a statist Russian foreign policy. Incidentally, at this time (the beginning of 2009) Russia was just emerging from the statist foreign policy enacted during Putin’s second term. Despite cooperation between Russia and Belarus, in terms of joint membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC), a steady increase in articles critical of the politics of Belarus began to develop in 2009.

A clear example of this came in the form of manipulations of quotation marks. The title of “Europe’s last dictatorship” has been an epithet reserved for Belarus by Western media sources. This coverage often highlights the Soviet identity of Belarus as well as the authoritarian tendencies of Lukashenko in general.^{5,6,7} In this period the quotation marks were frequently used to issue a statement without actually being culpable. For instance, the article “hockey coach fired after beating ‘Belarusian tyrant’”²⁰⁰ which described the fact that a coach was fired for beating the president’s hockey team.

While this phrase (“Europe’s last dictator”) was absent from RT reporting before Medvedev was president, it made its first RT appearance on September 28th of 2008 (roughly four-and-a-half months after Medvedev became president) when the phrase was described as being how the West refers to Belarus. The phrase made a total of three appearances in 2008,

always in context of a quotation as to how the West refers to Belarus. The use of quotes was also present in all five appearances of the phrase in 2009. The phrase was used eleven times in 2010.

It was in 2009 when criticism of the domestic politics of Belarus became the norm, particularly the authoritarian nature of Belarusian power. When RT stated that the “autocratic instinct allows Lukashenko to go over all kinds of ethical or ideological limits”²⁰¹ or when Lukashenko was quoted as saying that Kudrin (the liberal Foreign Minister of Russia) was “completely conspiring with hoodlums from our opposition and hoping to teach us how to work”²⁰² there was an element of ideological alienation that was missing from earlier reporting on Belarus. In fact, in an article the next day (June 4, 2009) an interesting point was brought up when Lukashenko was quoted as saying Kudrin was one of the “hoodlums who bark for Western money and teach us how to work” and the article followed up by stating that: “Prime Minister Putin also to a certain extent criticized Kudrin, but President Medvedev spoke in full support of him.”²⁰³ This notion of a difference amongst the Russian elite (often hidden from public view) was especially prescient in that Kudrin’s splintering with the administration and subsequent resignation was just over a year away at this time. Interestingly, it has been suggested “that those that lose bureaucratic battles to the point where no career resuscitation is possible have no choice but to join the opposition.”²⁰⁴

There were negative articles before the middle of 2009 (as evidenced by the adoption of the “last dictatorship” phrase starting in 2008), but in particular it was following this period (mid-2009) where there was a nearly exclusive use of liberal critiques of Belarus used by RT. A May 28, 2009 headline stated “goodbye to the idea of Union State”, and shortly thereafter (June 3rd) an exclusively liberal critique was printed quoting Alexei Kudrin (who has since joined the

opposition against Putin). From mid-2009 onwards this tendency continues in earnest and it accompanied the worsening relations in the form of the mid-2009 “milk wars” and critical statements issued by Foreign Minister Lavrov.

When analyzing the whole of RT reporting on Belarus and looking at Ukraine as well, an overall shift towards *consistent* negative reporting against Belarus begins approximately in the middle of 2009, while a shift in favor of Ukraine begins in January of 2010. The period of Ukraine going from a regularly antagonistic description to a positive one has a simple hypothetical explanation-- pro-Russian Yanukovich winning the 2010 election to replace the previous administration that was tied to the Orange Revolution. Yanukovich won the election on January 17, and then won the runoff against Tymoshenko on February 7. While this rhetorical shift seems logical after Ukrainian elections resulted in a more pro-Russian government, the antagonistic shift against Belarus is more difficult to explain. As an authoritarian state, Belarusian elections had little effect on changes in political life.

While at the end of 2006 the cessation of the gas wars gave way to a mending process where past transgressions were overlooked, once the milk wars ended (the most tense period of the process resolved itself by June 18th of 2009) hostile rhetoric not only did not abate, but was used more and more frequently. Articles like “Belarus’ irreplaceable president in office after 15 years”²⁰⁵ and another article the same day which stated that Lukashenko was embarking on a “neo-Soviet” project tend to reflect an increasingly liberal critique with regards to Belarus, focused on human rights²⁰⁶ and Belarusian authoritarianism. Articles such as “web surfers beware: Lukashenko is watching you” (February 2, 2010), “Lukashenko uses CSTO membership to blackmail Russia”, “Belarusian opposition journalist’s death not suicide – colleague”

(September 9, 2010), and “Belarus guilty of political repression – UN human rights watchdog” (October 12, 2010) described Belarus throughout 2010.

July 2, 2010 was the first time the phrase “Europe’s last dictator” was applied *without* quotation marks, instead being used as a statement of fact (when the headline of the article was called “Belarusian President Lukashenko – Europe’s last dictator”). By this time RT sounded akin to a Western media outlet:

“Lukashenko rules his country with an iron fist. After all but wiping out the opposition, he changed the constitution in October 2004, allowing him to run for the presidency an unlimited number of times.”

What followed was an association with arch-rival Georgia in an article titled “Lukashenko & Saakashvili merge in duet against Russia.”²⁰⁷ A telling article by the name of “Lukashenko sees no point in talking to Moscow’s ‘super-billionaires,’” reflected the notion that not only did RT use liberal critiques towards Lukashenko, but that Lukashenko himself wanted to paint his troubles with Russia in terms of a critique *against* liberal identities. The term “super-billionaires,” like the commonly used “oligarchs,” is an epithet for the ruling (and especially liberal) caste in Russia, especially prevalent in neo-Soviet-identity-style news sources.

As a portend of things to come, the July article stated that “Russia may support Lukashenko’s opponent in Belarusian elections”²⁰⁸ and described opposition candidates meeting with famous liberals Kudrin and Chubais (the architect of liberal reforms in the 1990s). Interestingly, in the same article, Zyuganov (head of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation) was quoted as condemning Moscow’s policy on Belarus in that it was “so strikingly at odds with our country's national interests,” which accurately sums up how a statist-identity-centered (or perhaps more accurately, a neo-Soviet identity) critique of Russia’s foreign policy

towards Belarus might sound. Romanchuk, chairman of the United Civil Party (an opposition group in Belarus), and author of the 2007 book “Liberalism: Ideology of a Happy Person,” was mentioned in the July article and then was personally interviewed and covered by RT in August in the article ““Our program lies in the Kremlin.””²⁰⁹ His free-market message was set up in the previous article, “Belarusians demolish the myth of their prosperity,” in which he was also mentioned by name.²¹⁰

The promotion of an actual opposition candidate in 2010, while the opposition was essentially ignored in 2006 marked a dramatic shift in Russia’s treatment of Belarus. Another article (August 23, 2010) covered non-liberal opposition. It described Gaidukevich as similar to Zhirinovskiy (the famous Russian nationalist/Eurasianist standard-bearer), though it did not provide the in-depth coverage that Romanchuk received. Romanchuk ended up receiving the third-most votes in the 2010 election (with approximately 2% of the vote). Of course, these figures were those reported by the Belarusian state and the election has not been ruled as free or fair by the OSCE.²¹¹

This notion of the elections not being free was echoed by RT. Articles included: “Opposition cries foul as Belarus starts early voting” (December 15, 2010); “Belarus gears for ‘foregone conclusion’ presidential elections” (December 17, 2010); “Belarus unlikely to escape from Lukashenko’s iron grasp (anytime soon)” (December 19, 2010); “Thousands protest presidential election results in Belarus” (December 20, 2010); and “Reign of ‘Europe’s last dictator’ not about to end at 16 years.” (December 21, 2010) Similarly, post-election articles ended with stories that were sharply critical of Belarus and its track record on human rights. Surrounding the time of Belarusian elections near the end of 2010, various news videos accused Lukashenko of vote rigging²¹² as well as coverage of police forces battering protesters.^{213, 214}

That RT articles grew increasingly critical of Belarus is undeniable. To answer the question of *why* articles grew more hostile, the data on identity must be analyzed.

Statism Whithering?: A Look At The Data

While the methodology of my model was covered in chapter II, it nonetheless deserves some fleshing out of specifics as to the data. The table below illustrates the measurements I used to identify “liberal” and “statist” rhetoric. For these references I used descriptions of identity from leading scholars such as Tsygankov and Hopf. The “liberal” rhetoric was chosen to best reflect those of the “National Democrat” identity. In terms of clan politics this identity is often associated with the intelligentsia (alongside Westernizers) and the professional classes. This identity has been tied to what I have called the “civiliki”: the economic modernizers and technocrats (often from Saint Petersburg) that are often associated with the Medvedev administration. The “statist” rhetoric focuses on the conservative worldview that accompanies those often associated with the siloviki/security services. The notions of the balance of power, pragmatism in foreign policy (in that an authoritarian axis could be just as useful, depending on circumstances, as a brotherhood of democracies), and security/state stability being first among priorities all fit into the statist schema. Using methodologies discussed in chapter II derived from Hopf and Tsygankov in particular,²¹ I have divided two contrasting rhetorical treatments of major issues of policy (regarding multilateralism, political stability, etc.) among liberal and statist instances in table 6 below.

Table 6: Rhetoric as Identity Indicators

Topic in question	Liberal rhetorical focus	Statist rhetorical focus
Security	Emphasis on mutual security	Prioritization on national security-first and foremost
Economic modernization	Method of promoting similarities with the West	Method of competing with other states/materialism being a prime mover of foreign policy
Multipolarity	In context of international institutions	In context of national interests/sovereignty
Views of the West	Cooperative	Competitive
Soviet past	Refutation of past	Boasting of past
Lateralism in negotiations	Endorsing multilateralism	Endorsing bilateralism
Focus on social power	Endorsing social/infrastructural development	Endorsing a strengthening of authoritative/state power
Domestic opposition	Coverage in context of political pluralism	Coverage in context of planted Western agents
Social mobilization	Endorsing dynamism / mobilization in domestic politics	Endorsing staticity / stability in domestic politics
Pragmatism	N/A (not used)	Pragmatism in foreign policy

The only exception to this pattern is on the issue of pragmatism, usually reserved as a tag line to say “whatever works in our national interests is good.” This concept is qualified as statist, whereas it has no rhetorical equivalent in terms of a liberal identity. Descriptive statements were *not* counted, only prescriptive/analytical statements. For instance, a news story stating what was

discussed at six-party talks over Korea would not be counted as a statement in support of multilateralism, while a news story discussing how multilateralism through the UN would aid Europe economically and culturally *would* count as a statement in support of multilateralism. The difference between these two hypothetical stories is that one is merely descriptive (and thus merely reflects recent events) while the other is prescriptive and reveals how the world is analyzed by the writers. Only the latter category of stories is quantified, lest I bias my data in favor of multilateralism just because multiple meetings were held at six-party talks in Korea in the month of December. This focus on the prescriptive/analytical also lends weight to the ability to view RT coverage as reflective of identity/factional dominance within the state that controls the reporting, rather than simply being reflective of descriptions of political decisions that have already been made.

Whenever an article makes a statement that can be identified as being indicative of identity and to fit into one of the above two categories, there are four different categorizations I have used, as outlined by the table below:

Table 7: Typology of Rhetorical Measurements

	Primary focus of article	Secondary focus/mentioned in passing
Endorsement/analytical tool	A	B
Vilification/signifier of Other	C	D

By applying a differentiation between primary and secondary focuses of articles one can get an idea of if the rhetoric is being promoted as a major focus or if it is mentioned merely in habitual instances. For instance, an American neo-conservative in the early 2000s might have

written an article laden with assumptions of mutually exclusive national interests. Countries are “with us or against us”: which inevitably creates a dualistic worldview excluding the conceptual basis of neutrality, of disinterested parties, or of a plurality of interests, or of a state to have the capacity to be “with” another state on one issue while disagree with the state on another issue-- instead reducing international relations to a hegemonic binary of “us” against “them” monopolizing all relations/interactions under such an outlook. However, very rarely would such an article point to the premise of mutually exclusive national interests *explicitly* as the main focus of the article. In this instance the habitual usage of identity rhetoric (“with us or against us”) is reflective of use of neo-conservative rhetoric governing the logic/rules of the articles, whereas a primary focus of an article (for example, “government support of NPR hurts the free market economy”) is a more transparent endorsement of an American conservative worldview where the rhetorical viewpoint is the focus of the article itself. It was with this in mind that I counted instances that are either an endorsement of, or the use of an analytical tool, as the main focus of an article as being categorized as an “A” article. To stick with the example of American conservatism, a hypothetical article about funding of NPR being an unsound economic policy would be an “A” article whereas an article which makes use of the “with us or against us” (usually mentioned in passing in the article) mutually-exclusive-national-interest thought process as an ingrained logic of international relations would count as a “B” instance.

Furthermore, in order to avoid counting mere redundancy as increased rhetorical focus, I have not counted repeated uses of “B” instances of the same rhetorical point in the same article. So for instance, if an article is especially redundant in endorsing notions of multipolar cooperation in the context of powerful nation-states operating bilaterally to achieve their individual interests and uses this concept three times throughout a single article for the sake of

emphasis, I only count it once, so as to avoid one especially redundant article statistically offsetting several less redundant/more concise articles.

Finally is the instance of “C” and “D” statements. While an open endorsement or use of a certain form of analysis of the world is reflective of one discursive formation being applied, it makes little sense to count a *vilification* of an identity as being reflective of that identity in the reporting. For instance, if an article explicitly demonizes those who promote cooperation with the West (specifically because cooperation with the West is viewed as being indicative of the “Other” for instance) then it makes little sense to count that as an “A” or “B” instance of liberal rhetoric, even though technically a mention of cooperation with the West was made. Then again, it doesn’t quite make sense to invert the value and count it as an “A” or “B” instance for statist rhetoric either, since the article didn’t explicitly endorse a conflictual zero-sum worldview towards the West. To invert the value would make sense *if only two identities existed* in Russian discourse, but as we saw in chapter II, there are at least five separate discourses operating within the state of Russia alone. It is for this reason that I have created “C” and “D” instances, for vilifications of a rhetorical outlook as either the primary focus of the article, or the habitual/secondary focus of the article respectively. In the above example, a vilification of someone (or anyone) advocating cooperation with the West would not be an “A” or “B” instance for either liberal notions of the West or for statist notions of the West, but rather a “C” or “D” (reflecting whether it was the primary or secondary focus, respectively) instance *only* for cooperation with the West (so a liberal rhetorical device). While I believe “C” and “D” instances are important (in that they reveal what is being suggested is the “Other”) I do not count them statistically towards being reflective of either liberal or statist rhetoric, specifically because there are more than two discursive formations. Since there are more than two fruits in the world if one

was to analyze consumption of apples and bananas it would make little sense to count the statement “I just ate a fruit that was not an apple” as an instance of eating a banana, since the speaker could very well have eaten a kiwi.

Finally, the time frame chosen, as mentioned in chapter II, is December 2006 and December 2010 respectively. December 2010 was chosen to contrast it with the liberal coverage on Belarus (these stories were omitted from the model of course) the same month. If liberal statements in December 2010 were absent from the news in general while liberal rhetorical devices were used frequently in criticizing Belarus, then one could assume the rhetoric was just that: rhetoric alone. While the previous coverage of Belarusian elections (in March 2006) might have been helpful, RT articles are only available with a wide selection approximately mid-way through 2006 (RT came into existence at the end of 2005). In addition to the fact that March 2006 articles are not available, December 2006 is ideal in that it controls for seasonal media coverage relative to December 2010. For instance, if there is an anniversary specifically in December that commemorates Soviet soldiers (which then likely spawns more stories idealizing Soviet life in December relative to March) then the lack of seasonal consistency (and the holidays that accompany such an inconsistency) could bias the data. In the aforementioned case, it would bias December in terms of statist rhetoric (idealization of Soviet past). Looking at the more than 500 articles from December of 2006 and December of 2010 not only provides an adequate sample size, but it also provides a control for seasonal celebrations and the rhetorical shifts that might result from choosing two timeframes with different months.

If the increased liberal rhetoric applied towards Belarus in 2010 is reflective of an increased liberal identity on the part of the media (which is owned by the state), then we should expect liberal uses of rhetoric to increase *outside* of reporting on Belarus. If it does not increase

(or decreases!) then we can assume that the liberal rhetoric used with Belarus was simply a method of propaganda, more specifically using liberal rhetoric to criticize a decidedly *illiberal* state such as Belarus. If, however, liberal rhetoric noticeably rises, we can assume there is a shift in Russian identity and that this shift may have prompted the corresponding shift in rhetoric (and, in turn, relations) towards the illiberal state of Belarus. In fact, the data reveals just such an increase in liberal rhetoric from 2006 to 2010.

Table 8: Rhetorical Breakdown for 2006 and 2010

	2006 (25 total statements)	2010 (53 total statements)
Liberal rhetoric	12% (3 statements)	64.2% (34 statements)
Statist rhetoric	88% (22 statements)	35.8% (19 statements)

An initial concern before I actually quantified my data was if the shift occurred but occurred by a relatively insignificant amount. This would reflect an inability to state whether liberal identity was increasing (or decreasing) or remained unchanged with any degree of certainty. If anything however, the opposite occurred and the change was drastic. The 2006 articles used almost no liberal rhetoric (12%) and were *dominated* by statist rhetoric (88%). By comparison, in 2010, liberal rhetoric had gone from nearly nonexistent to the majority (64%) while statist rhetoric, while still being used, had plunged (36%) relative to total statements. **In 2006 a total of 310 articles were analyzed, while in 2010 a total of 196 articles were analyzed.** To compare the breakdown of exactly how many instances occurred in each time frame, I have included tables below:

Table 9: 2006 Rhetorical Usages

Topic in question	Liberal instances	Statist instances
Security	none	BB (2)
Economic modernization	none	BBB (3)
Multipolarity	none	BBBAA (5)
Views of the West	none	BBB (3)
Soviet past	B (1)	B (1)
Lateralism in negotiations	none	B (1)
Focus on social power	B (1)	none
Domestic opposition	B (1)	B (1)
Social mobilization	none	BBB (3)
Pragmatism	N/A	BBB (3)

Table 10: 2010 Rhetorical Usages

Topic in question	Liberal instances	Statist instances
Security	BBBBBAB (7)	DDB (1, 2 exceptions)
Economic modernization	AB (2)	AD (1, 1 exception)
Multipolarity	BBA (3)	BBDDDABB (5, 3 exceptions)
Views of the West	ABBA (4)	AAD (2, 1 exceptions)
Soviet past	BBBB (4)	BBB (3)
Lateralism in negotiations	B (1)	BB (2)
Focus on social power	BBABB (5)	BB (2)
Domestic opposition	ABBAA (5)	none
Social mobilization	ABB (3)	BBB (3)
Pragmatism	N/A	none

2006 was a year in which the main stories focused on the death of Litvinenko and the prosecution of his case, in addition to the expansion of Gazprom into new markets and its ongoing marketization process. The main focuses of 2010 were the ratification of START, WikiLeaks revealing NATO's (often unsavory) views of Russia, the guilty verdict for Khodorkovsky, and decisions for the upcoming 2012 elections, (often intimating that Medvedev is the most likely candidate, though the articles were always careful to point out Putin had not ruled out running) in addition to the Belarusian elections.

The first thing to notice is the discrepancy between the two timeframes. 2006 had a near-monopoly in terms of its rhetorical focus. Liberal rhetorical emphases on mutual security and

cooperation under the watch of international institutions were essentially nonexistent, while multipolarity in terms of countries (especially great powers) pursuing their national interests was especially prevalent (two times with an entire article devoted to the concept, and three secondary mentions). 2006 certainly mirrors the hypothesis put forward that this was a time of siloviki preponderance, both in terms of factional dominance at the elite level (as discussed in chapter III) and in terms of statist identity discourse through the state's mouthpiece in the media. Though statist rhetoric in 2006 outnumbers usages in 2010 in terms of absolute values and (by a massive margin) relative values, one interesting aspect is the fact that the *total* number of identity statements was nearly double (53) in 2010 what it was in 2006 (25). This seems to be reflective of RT's overall reporting style as much as anything, in that 2006 articles, while being more numerous overall, were more often focused on stories that were more descriptive in nature (sports stories, human interest stories, etc.) rather than analytical or exclusively political articles.

If one was to judge elite dominance on rhetoric alone (without looking at the data in chapter III), 2010 would offer a much more mixed message. That liberal hegemony at the elite level has *not* occurred indeed reinforces the notion of an identity-stalemate in addition to a factional-stalemate at the upper echelons of the Russian state. In addition to the mix between the two identities (64% for national democrats and 36% for statist) there appears to be confusion as to the narrative itself for some of the reporting. An isolated example would be the December 8th article authored by Surkov, who was seen as a key ideologist under Putin and the inventor of the term "sovereign democracy." Sandwiched in between liberal articles was the Surkov article extolling the virtues of modernization as a method to overtake Western competitors (the only time this rhetoric was used in a positive fashion in 2010) along with heavy emphasis on a

national sovereignty schema in which powerful states in particular act to enforce their sovereignties on the world stage.

The identity schizophrenia (or perhaps, more accurately labeled, “the balancing act”) of 2010, however, is most evident not in the isolated article of Surkov contrasted with other articles extolling the virtues of submitting to the authority of international institutions, but rather in articles where two positions are expressed *at the same time*. In a fascinating article (see appendix B for greater detail) titled “Medvedev and Putin slam xenophobia” (December 27, 2010) the two leaders give their views on how to resolve ethnic conflicts within Russia in response to a soccer clash among ethnicities in Moscow which left one Chechen dead. What is interesting is that the leaders give not only alternate solutions, but solutions that are in *direct conflict* with one another (and solutions that are reflective of two separate identities, through Putin boasting of the effectiveness of the Soviet past while at the same time Medvedev explicitly rejected it):

*“Putin suggested using Soviet experience and teaching Russians patriotism, while Medvedev called the USSR ‘a very harsh state’ and said that it is impossible go [sic] back to its practices.”*²¹⁵

This notion of competing identities is also reflected in the issue of usages of “C” and “D” rhetoric as mentioned above. While there were no usages of “C” rhetoric (in that it would be odd to explicitly refute a form of rhetoric as the main theme of an entire article) there were multiple usages of villainizations of rhetorical concepts in 2010. These exceptions are categorized in table 10 above. While 2006 did not use a single example of “exception” rhetoric 2010 made *seven* separate usages of “exception” rhetoric, all of which were directed towards the statist identity. What is especially interesting in these cases is *against whom* the exceptions were directed. Before this issue is tackled, it would be helpful to view how each timeframe categorized the “Other” in terms of identity:

Table 11: What is Viewed as the "Other"

	2006	2010
International Other	Baltics (Estonia in particular), US, UK, Western media, Georgia	Georgia (vilified even more than it was in 2006), the Baltics, US, Kosovo
Domestic Other	Corrupt officials as individuals, traitors (including those related to Litvinenko and Berezovsky, Zakayev, Khodorkovsky)	Corruption as a part of Russian culture, nationalists

It is worth noting the appearance of nationalism as a domestic Other in 2010. While the dramatic increase in articles critical of nationalism (13, with 3 featuring the critique as the chief reason for the article itself, compared to only one critique in all of 2006) can partially be attributed to the events which spawned the critiques, (the death of the Chechen at the riot during the soccer game) many of these critiques were made entirely separate from the soccer incident in terms of what the article's story was centered on. In an article on December 23, 2010, a poll asking Russians who they considered to be the "politician of the year" yielded three top results: Putin, Medvedev, and Zhirinovskiy (leader of the Eurasianist/neo-fascist sop party LDPR). Even though Zhirinovskiy is widely viewed in Russia as a Kremlin stooge to sop the demand for the nationalist vote in Russia, the article still discredited his ideology and chalked up his success only to him as an individual:

"Even those who may not share his political views, registered him because of his enormous charisma. In a lot of ways that's the reason why he ended up third and not fifth for example."

Incidentally Zhirinovskiy is used multiple times in 2010 as an "Other" in contrast to Medvedev in terms of views on foreign policy. The Zhirinovskiy approach is often used in a "threat" style, in that a level-headed request by (often) Medvedev (often stressing multilateralism and cooperation) is extended to the West but if it is refused the article intimates that there are

others who would advocate a more confrontational approach (followed by a Zhirinovskiy quote endorsing realist critiques). In one instance it was Putin himself who offered the olive branch and simultaneously the realist-zero-sum-balance-and-security warning and who thus was simultaneously the good cop *and* the bad cop:

“If our proposals [on a common missile defense shield] are met with only negative replies, and, on top of that, in the vicinity of our borders there is built additional threats in an already tense region, then Russia will be forced to ensure its security through different means and ways,’ the premier affirmed. Concerning the possibility of an arms race breaking out over the issue, Putin stressed that nobody wanted to see such a scenario. ‘That’s not our choice. We don’t want that to happen. But this is not a threat on our part,’ he said. ‘We’ve been simply saying that this is what all of us expects to happen if we don’t agree on a joint effort there.’”²¹⁶

In this way Putin paints a zero-sum response as being only desirable if his initial cooperative multilateralism is refuted by a distrusting West. When this “threat” style is not the way exceptions are used exception-rhetoric is, alternatively, a straight-forward demonization style, usually directed at the Other. This was the case in both one instance of Zhirinovskiy (nationalist, domestic Other) and the United States (international Other) being painted as advocates of a statist-rhetorical-position.

Despite a simultaneous statist and liberal identity (often literally embodied in Medvedev and Putin in some articles, as it was in the article on combating xenophobia) there is no question that liberal identities in 2010 are given greater weight. In addition to searching for statements reflective of identity and the majority being decidedly liberal (64%, even if one was to not include villainization of statist rhetoric as being indicative of an endorsement of liberal rhetoric), words that could be thought to be ascribed to a specific identity were also counted with the following results:

Table 12: Phrase Usages

Word/phrase	2006 occurrences	2010 occurrences
Totalitarian	none	14
Liberal (used as an ideology)	1	15
Human rights	18	45
Terror	46	38
Corruption	8	23
Modernization	none	41

Many of these yielded the expected value changes. “Totalitarian” was used specifically as a description of the Soviet past (in particular the Stalinist past) repeatedly in 2010, mirroring its usage style in the West, whereas the phrase did not appear once in 2006. Coverage of liberal topics such as human rights and, in particular, modernization rose dramatically in 2010. Less conclusive were looks at “terror” (which I presumed would reflect statist identity in focusing on combating threats to order and stability with a security-first focus), which declined only marginally, and “corruption.” While reputations paint the statist and the siloviki as either at the heart of the corruption problem at worst, or at best ineffective at solving it and likely to ignore it and lead the country towards stagnation, in reality there was still an acknowledgement of corruption as a societal problem in 2006. While the instances of the usage of the word rose somewhat in 2010, the overall focus does not serve to indicate a dramatic shift in focus in terms of rhetoric, despite the Medvedev administration and liberals in general faring better in terms of their reputations on tackling corruption.

In addition to usages of significant phrases, tag descriptions were also analyzed. Tags are phrases which can be used to search for similar articles on the same topic. For example, “UN” as a tag is used to categorize and seek out articles based on the UN. How stories are accessed and

how they can be searched could reflect that RT views the subject as relevant enough to merit categorization. In particular many of the tags added after the Medvedev administration came to power seem to reveal a curious pattern in that many of the additions in the later period were of subjects presumed to be more often addressed by a liberal identity:

Table 13: Tag Usages

Tags introduced before Medvedev presidency	Tags introduced after Medvedev presidency
Politics	Crime (late 2008)
USA	UN (late 2008)
Human rights	Protest (early 2009)
Military	Law (mid-2009)
Europe	Modernization (late 2009)
Conflict	Corruption (mid-2010)

That an increase in liberal identity seems to be on the rise from 2006 to 2010 is certainly reflected in an increase in liberal rhetoric on the part of state-owned RT. In addition to furthering a worldview, RT, without embarrassment, often times lavished praise on elites such as with the following statement:

*“Whether you agree with him or not, it cannot be denied that Putin is a crowd pleaser. Indeed, he is one of the few politicians on the world stage capable of holding an audience’s rapt attention for hours on end. His profound knowledge of every subject, peppered with his saucy wit, has a way of keeping a person on the edge of their seat, not wanting to miss the next colorful utterance.”*²¹⁷

RT also villainized international Others, at times bordering on parody. One article titled “Kosovo Liberation Army accused of organ trafficking”²¹⁸ managed to incorporate murder, kidnapping, heroin, and human farming of organs all into one article. Both glamorization of state officials and demonization of international (and domestic) Others were common (though this

statement could certainly be said of Western presses as well). Similar to this notion of RT as the state's cheerleader (and denouncer), RT also played the role of the state's mirror in terms of its identity. That a shift towards liberal rhetoric occurred in 2010 is difficult to argue against, and supports the hypothesis that increased dominance by the civiliki, and in turn the increased preponderance of liberal identity that came with it, caused the Russian state to view Belarus increasingly as an old Soviet relic rather than as a viable partner for bilateral relations. In fact, this concept was repeatedly used by RT in reference to a growing chasm between the two states.

This rhetoric then grew into policy as RT began efforts to interview and highlight the Belarusian opposition during the Belarusian presidential election of 2010. While in 2006 the gas wars that erupted between Russia and Belarus certainly caused a degradation in relations, within months of the disagreement relations had been mended and RT had gone back to defending Lukashenko from attacks coming from the West. However, in 2009 when gas and milk disagreements erupted there was no mending process, and rhetoric went from bad to worse, up to and including tacit support for regime change by the end of 2010. Noncompliance on the part of Belarus did *not* change RT reporting in 2006, while by 2010 RT reporting had changed completely in its tone, illustrating that changes in RT reporting were reflective of more than simply punishing a noncompliant state.

The support of opposition liberal candidate Romanchuk (who garnered only 2% of the vote according to the Belarusian results) was likely not reflective of delusions on the part of the Russian elite as to thinking they could unseat Lukashenko in his own managed elections. However, the concept of giving light to opposition candidates (when before they were ignored or demonized outright) is noteworthy, as is RT's attempt to discredit the legitimacy of the

Belarusian government by extensive coverage of the elections as being fraudulent. Not only were the critiques based on a de-legitimization of Lukashenko’s regime, but the critiques specifically favored a liberal slant, and this liberal identity-focus is supported by the fact that liberal rhetoric increased in 2010 not only in relation to Belarus, but also in terms of how the state communicated in general. This statist-to-liberal tendency was also reflected in RIA Novosti’s Russian-language reporting.

Table 14: Rhetorical Breakdown for Russian-Language Articles

	2006 (5 total statements)	2010 (10 total statements)
Liberal rhetoric	20% (1 statement)	70% (7 statements)
Statist rhetoric	80% (4 statements)	30% (3 statements)

Each day of December the stories under the politics category that were closest to 9:00 am, 12:00 pm, and 6:30 pm were analyzed, in order to sample stories that would typically run in the busiest news periods (morning, afternoon, and evening) of each day. **In 2006 a total of 93 articles were analyzed, while in 2010 a total of 90 articles were analyzed.** From these articles a total of 15 identity statements were identified (5 for 2006, 10 for 2010). The data exhibits a similar statist-to-liberal-majority pattern that was present in RT reporting. The tables below exhibit the quantities of identity statements for each year.

Table 15: 2006 Russian-Language Rhetorical Usages

Topic in question	Liberal instances	Statist instances
Security	B (1)	none
Economic modernization	none	none
Multipolarity	none	none
Views of the West	none	B (1)
Soviet past	none	none
Lateralism in negotiations	none	BB (2)
Focus on social power	none	none
Domestic opposition	none	none
Social mobilization	none	B (1)
Pragmatism	N/A	none

Table 16: 2010 Russian-Language Rhetorical Usages

Topic in question	Liberal instances	Statist instances
Security	BB (2)	B (1)
Economic modernization	B (1)	none
Multipolarity	none	none
Views of the West	none	A (1)
Soviet past	none	B (1)
Lateralism in negotiations	none	none
Focus on social power	B (1)	none
Domestic opposition	AA (2)	none
Social mobilization	A (1)	none
Pragmatism	N/A	none

One notable difference between the English-language and Russian-language reporting is the absence of articles covering multilateralism, often lacking articles about the UN even in the descriptive sense. This process could reflect the fact that domestic reports focus on the local issues and are more likely to instead cover descriptive-articles that focus on bilateral relations. An example would be an article describing negotiations between Russia and Finland for each country introducing language requirements in primary schools in order to dissuade ethnic segregation. Overall the similarities in identity-patterns between English and Russian language reporting reflect that **RT is indeed indicative of broader identity patterns**, and not overly impacted by rhetorical posturing simply intended for an international audience. Despite the evidence that identity did in fact play a role in the deteriorating relations between Russia and Belarus, it would also help to look at alternate explanations-- how else did 2010 differ so fundamentally from 2006 in terms of Russian-Belarusian relations?

Alternate Hypothesis 1: Gazprom As Foreign Policy Monopolizer

Up until this point I have argued in favor of identity playing a key role in the sudden shift from the Russian media discrediting Belarusian opposition in 2006 to covering the opposition in 2010 and attempting to delegitimize the rule of Lukashenko. However, one common theme through the time line of Russian-Belarusian relations has been conflicts over gas prices and deliveries. The wrangling over gas prices necessitates looking at Gazprom as a potentially monopolistic economic actor which merges state and corporate interests. Therefore, a closer examination of this study's time line (see appendix A) suggests one possible alternate explanation for the deteriorating relations in 2010. Though the opaque nature of Russia's gas

wars and Gazprom's workings make gathering data extremely difficult (even specialist scholars have told me this in private), it may nevertheless be useful to organize the data that is available.

Table 17: Gas Prices

Time period	\$ price (for Belarus) per 1000 cubic meters	\$ price for Ukraine per 1000 cubic meters
Pre-2004	\$27	\$50
2004-2006	\$46	\$95 as of the end of 2005, down from the \$250 that was demanded (equal to Europe's price) when Yushchenko was elected
Mid-2006	3-4 (depending on source) times higher than \$46 (so \$138-\$184)	No data available
December 2006	\$100 + acquiring 50% of Beltransgaz for \$2.5 billion	Ukraine agrees to pay \$130 starting in 2007
Start of 2008	\$119, and by the first quarter of 2009 the figure has risen to \$148, ²¹⁹ while the price for the second quarter is \$158 ²²⁰	\$180, but by 2009 Ukraine offers \$235 and Gazprom demands \$250 before gas is shut off in January. Price stabilizes at \$334 before 2010 begins, Europe meanwhile pays about \$500 (market price) for the sake of comparison
May 2010	\$150, though it is implied Belarus could pay "domestic prices" if Beltransgaz is given to Gazprom	In April of 2010 Medvedev cuts price down to \$230, in exchange for Russia maintaining its base at Sevastopol, by June the price is given as \$234
First half of 2011	\$280	No data available
End of 2011	\$164, in exchange acquiring 100% of Beltransgaz for \$2.5 billion. For comparison, Germany pays between \$400 to \$420 in this same time period ²²¹	No data available

The core assumption of this hypothesis is relatively straightforward; elites within Gazprom seek to maximize profits for themselves and that necessitates a coercive (and at times

confrontational) policy towards Belarus in order to force payments out of the Belarusian government. Under this scenario the Russian media, as just another asset controlled by elites, serves as an instrument of coercion, and the demonization of Lukashenko is the punishment when Lukashenko does not act according to Gazprom's wishes. According to this hypothesis, negative RT coverage may reflect Gazprom's sanctions against Belarus for refusing to sell Beltransgaz to Gazprom. In this circumstance coercion of Belarus was necessary for several reasons. First, Belarus (as a neo-Soviet state) could leverage its identity to ensure that the Kremlin (and by extension, Gazprom) would subsidize its economy. Second, because Belarus held a strategic position (acting as a bridgehead to Europe), it was invaluable as a zone of control for elites. While political control might be served well by cooperating with the authoritarian Lukashenko, economic control is more difficult to come by and Lukashenko has been steadfast in rebuffing Gazprom's overtures to acquire the Belarusian company Beltransgaz, and he has been equally steadfast in getting cheap gas prices.

Of course the key critique of this hypothesis would be that alienating the one friend Russia has counted on in the region is not in Russia's national interest. The thought here would be that Belarus is too important of a country to replace Lukashenko with an unknown, which could breed instability, or worse-- could create a pro-Western orange-style-revolution in a country bordering Russia. After all, Belarus is the last remaining buffer state that stands between Russia and "the West." However, while it may appear *on the surface* that Russian national interests would appear to be a rational method of analyzing Russian foreign policy, this assumes that national interests in a complex and fragmented hybrid regime such as Russia can be equated with the concept of national interests in a Western democracy. In particular, this ignores the

possibility that Russian elites are simply *not* invested in furthering the national interests of Russia.

Dawisha posited [2011] that while in democratic countries a variety of interests and foreign policy outlooks are contained within a single institutional structure, Russia instead appears to be a picture of an increasingly non-democratic hybrid regime that must parrot rhetoric on national interest and yet is ruled by an elite who often seek personal enrichment, often at the expense of “national interests.”²²² This assertion could potentially be flawed in that it assumes “national interests” as a whole are a static definition outside the scope of identity and the culture that defines those interests. Despite this limitation, the conceptualization of a kleptocratic elite acting in their own interests (rather than in the “national interest”) may help to explain the workings of Russian foreign policy, and particularly that of Gazprom.

Dawisha summed up her sense of the corruption endemic to Russia when she defined how Russian corporatism under Putin fundamentally differs from earlier forms of corporatism historically:

“Where it differs from other forms of corporatism is in the kleptocratic way in which a closed circle of state officials, having suppressed both the market and democratic rights, begin to use their position as state officials to raid these newly-renationalized companies for their private gain. In this process, the rule became that the state nationalizes the risk, but privatizes the reward. Access to this closed group required loyalty, discipline and silence. Once within the group, officials can maraud through the economy with impunity.”²²³

Her notion of Putin as ringmaster in this process was summarized when she stated that “key to their successful functioning” is “their willingness to allow Putin to be the ultimate arbiter of any disputes, without using (and indeed undermining) the written law.”²²³ Dawisha asserted that this phenomenon came into its own as the siloviki (with Sechin at its head), under the guise of the state, dismembered Yukos in 2003, with its key assets being transferred to Rosneft (with

Sechin chairing its board of directors), coupled with the fact that Putin had power to appoint allies in the government to chair these boards.²²⁴

Essentially this picture is one where Putin fostered a capitalism with the government as its barons of industry, an inverse notion of how Marxism painted capitalists as steering government. In many ways this system seems to marry the worst of capitalism (inequality) with the worst of socialism (bureaucracy and corruption), resulting in Dawisha's notion of a kleptocracy where reward is privatized while risk is nationalized. She briefly even applied this notion of kleptocratic elites to Belarus specifically when she stated:

“Kleptocratic Russian elites also function to encourage Moscow to leverage equity shares in industries in debtor states from which they could derive personal benefit. For example, it has been argued that when Belarus found itself unable to pay off its energy debts, Russian elites pressured their own government to demand controlling shares in a number of Belarusian industries at depressed prices.”²²⁵

This coercion-for-Beltransgaz logic becomes nebulous, however, when applied to Belarus in this specific time frame. Belarus was in debt for gas payments as far back as 2006, but serious criticism in the Russian media (both in terms of RT and NTV) of Lukashenko's regime did not appear until 2008 or 2009. In fact throughout 2006 and 2007, at the *height* of the gas wars and when Russia was threatening to cut off all supplies to Lukashenko, RT media coverage still ignored Belarusian opposition and refused to attack Lukashenko's regime in terms of its method of rule. Media attacks both in RT and NTV started much later, at a time when battling over the full control of Beltransgaz by Gazprom was still in motion, but when the situation was at most equal to (if not less tense) than it was in 2006/2007. Furthermore, these attacks took place when gas prices were stable in the low-to-mid 100s. Nonetheless, one cannot discount entirely the idea that the hostile articles from 2008 to 2010 were simply the next logical coercive step (after temporarily shutting off the gas in late 2006/early 2007) when Belarus still refused to

sell Beltransgaz in order to alleviate its debts. Importantly, the pattern of debt-followed-by-takeover-of-industries-abroad is fleshed out by Dawisha when she stated that

*“the pattern of using the power of the state to leverage both public and private gain is particularly evident in Russian relations in the former-Soviet countries. A pattern that has been widely used has been Russian state involvement in debt-equity swaps, in which industrial infrastructure is leveraged by Russian-state connected firms at knock-down prices as payment for sovereign debt. Not having sufficient liquid assets to repay their debt to Russia, the debtor states give Russia an equity stake in their economic infrastructure, usually at deeply discounted prices. Russia has shown itself adept at leveraging increased control over the energy-infrastructure of near-abroad states.”*²²⁶

This concept of Gazprom as an “energy mafia” which blackmailed and coerced post-Soviet states was one held by the American government as well, as shown through recent WikiLeaks documents.²²⁷

A large array of circumstantial evidence fits together to raise a concern that Gazprom could have played a key role in shaping Russia’s foreign policy towards Belarus from 2006 to 2010. Kleptocratic tendencies have exhibited themselves in foreign policy in the past and corruption is an accepted reality of Russian life in that Transparency International ranked Russia in 154th place out of 178 countries in its level of corruption.²²⁸ In addition to the prevalence of corruption at large, Gazprom in particular has been argued to be a key player in Russia’s foreign policy.²²⁹

But when analyzing the particular time in question of relations with Belarus over the past five years, the issue with this hypothesis overall is one of ends. If the objective of demonizing Belarus was to coerce Belarus into selling stakes of Beltransgaz to Gazprom, we must look at the Russian media’s reaction to the complete takeover of Beltransgaz by Gazprom, which occurred in November of 2011. Once the objective has been completed (the takeover for the artificially low price of \$2.5 billion in exchange for subsidy-level gas prices starting in January of 2012)

there is little motivation to continue to attack Belarus in the media following November of 2011. Though there is the factor of organizational inertia at work here (in that shutting off the attacks may take time) so far there hasn't appeared to be any cessation or decrease in RT's negative reporting on Belarus. Indeed, as of January 10, 2012 RT released another critical article titled "Belarusian opposition under surveillance" with the normal liberal flavor of criticizing Lukashenko for his poor track record on human rights. This might either be a case of organizational inertia (since it has only been two months since the takeover of Beltransgaz) causing RT to maintain its hostile stance towards Belarus until the trickle-down notion of the need to cease media attacks reaches RT reporters, or the negative media treatment towards Belarus is *not* the result of Gazprom's foreign policy dominance alone. One might logically assume that a simple directive to halt negative campaigns, presumably, would not take an extensive amount of time to enact from the Kremlin through to RT. However, what may make being certain over this analysis even messier is that, at the same time that questions over organizational inertia on Gazprom as a foreign policy mover subside over the next few months following the accomplishment of taking over Beltransgaz, the factional dominance of liberals seems to be on the decline on some levels (more on this later). Thus an issue of controls seems to be at play for determining true causation. To look at another possibility outside of both Russian identity and Gazprom as a key economic interest group, we can now analyze bargaining approaches that might have been adopted by the Kremlin towards Belarus.

Alternate Hypothesis 2: Bargaining Approaches And Russia's Realpolitik

While a constructivist analysis could take note of the factors Russian identity could play, and while a liberal analysis like Dawisha's could take note of interest groups like Gazprom as

they are related to a potentially kleptocratic regime in contemporary Russia, what also should be taken into consideration is a realist analysis based on the material capacities of Russia. While the materialism promoted by Dawisha is centered on a small group of elites, a realist analysis would take the interests of Russia as a whole into consideration. While the interests of Russia as a whole are defined in the eyes of the beholder (and in this identity remains key), what *can* be independently verified are the interests of Russia as stated by Russian elites. In this there can be no doubt that a chief aim of Russia is to expand its influence in the near abroad in general, and in particular to gain recognition for the independence of southern Ossetia and Abkhazia following the 2008 war with Georgia.²³⁰

The hypothesis that Russia bargained (with both positive and negative reinforcements) with Belarus in a bid to extract recognition of Abkhazia and southern Ossetia shares some similarities with methods in terms of the coercive kleptocrat hypothesis, though it importantly differs in who the primary agent is (the Russian state versus a kleptocratic elite). Also, while benefit for Gazprom could be one objective for the Russian state, it is certainly not limited to a Gazprom-only focus, in that recognition for Abkhazia and southern Ossetia could be a definite additional priority in terms of the Russian agenda.

Stulberg elucidated concepts about Russia's "energy statecraft" when he described four separate factors that determined success (or failure) of Russia's energy statecraft if one is to subscribe to coercion as being a key element in foreign policy.²³¹

1. Relative power advantages, though this factor cannot explain deviations of levels of Russia's success amongst CIS countries, in that Russia is significantly more powerful than all of these states (Belarus included).

2. Asymmetric independence, which predicts that the level of bilateral trade between a country

and Russia would determine how much economic leverage Russia holds over that country. This, however, cannot explain Turkmenistan's subservience to Russia (despite having little trade with Russia) or Kazakhstan's ability to circumvent Russian hegemony and find oil alternatives, despite being heavily dependent on Russia economically.²³² Belarus can also be considered heavily dependent on Russia in terms of trade.

3. Structural power, which looks at both identity (the less independent of an identity a country has, the easier it would be to coerce) and geopolitical structure (the more geographically and resource-dependent a country is, the easier it is to coerce). In terms of both identity (where a Belarusian independent identity has been squashed by Lukashenko since he came to power in 1994) and geography Belarus is very dependent on Russia.

4. Institutional strength, which looks at the strength of the executive to subordinate numerous domestic interest groups to national interests. Presumably a state like Belarus can easily subordinate policy to Russia's whims without any concern for institutional whiplash, since democratic institutions are very weak.

All four of these aspects of coercion point to Belarus being very easy to coerce on the part of Russia, in a realist-sense at least. This could help to explain much of the dependence on Russia from Belarus. However, it fails to explain why a country like Belarus, which should be easily coerced under this view, has instead resisted Russia so thoroughly on the issue of the recognition of southern Ossetia and Abkhazia. The table below catalogues all the shifts in Belarusian rhetoric on this issue:

Table 18: Belarusian Positions on Diplomatic Recognition

Time period	Position of Belarus on independence of southern Ossetia and Abkhazia
August 28 2008	Belarusian ambassador states they will recognize their independence within “the next day or two.” ²³³
September 2008	Lukashenko states that the issue would be addressed during the elections on the 28 th . On the 25 th the heads of government of both regions requested that Lukashenko recognize their independence. ²³⁴
December 2008	A member of the National Assembly of Belarus states that Belarus will consider the independence of both regions in the first half of 2009 ²³⁵
January 2009	Belarusian parliament states that a debate will occur on April 2 nd to decide the issue of recognition. Lukashenko has stated he will follow the lead of the parliament. ²³⁶
April 2 2009	Russia blames the EU for blackmail by offering Belarus admission into its Eastern Partnership program and for suggesting it would be denied access to Belarus should they recognize the breakaway regions, which is based on statements made to just that effect. ²³⁷ Though potential EU/Belarusian rapprochement sours quickly, Lukashenko attempts to continue to use it as a threat against Russia for diplomatic leverage. ²³⁸
March 2009	Russia reportedly offers half a billion dollars for recognition. ²³⁹ In June Lukashenko publicly states that the offering of money will not buy Belarusian compliance. ²⁴⁰
August 3 2010	Lukashenko promises to recognize both regions at a CSTO meeting. ²⁴¹ On the 13 th Lukashenko blames Russia for not “meet[ing him] half way” in terms of offsetting what he would lose from the West if he recognized both regions. ²⁴²
2011	Belarus joins the Eastern Partnership program. Belarusian recognition still eludes both regions. Despite turbulent and ultimately unproductive relations with the Eastern Partnership, Belarus remains a member. ²⁴³

Despite all the declarations of an impending recognition, for years at a time Belarus delayed saying definitively that the answer was “no” on the issue of recognition. It appears, from the events above, that Lukashenko designed to hold it as a wedge issue where he could reap benefits from both the EU and Russia. In the end, this tactic may have backfired since he resisted Russia and the subservience to the EU did little to benefit Belarus and did not achieve any of his chief aims (a travel ban on Belarus was reinstated in 2011 and has not been lifted,²⁴⁴ and little economic cooperation has been accomplished). A slight symbolic return to Russia may be

viewed under the context of Belarus (along with Kazakhstan) joining in calls for a proposed “Eurasian Union” (modeled on the European Union for post-Soviet countries) to be initiated by 2015. Another symbol of cooperation may be seen in Belarus joining the Eurasian Economic Space, a common economic space between Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia which was initiated at the start of 2012.²⁴⁵ However, if recent history of Belarus’s tendency of vacillating between organizations is any indicator, this may just be another bargaining tool on the part of Belarus.

The earlier weaknesses of the aforementioned coercive model critiqued by Stulberg are deeper than just an inability to explain why Belarus would resist Moscow’s ambitions. The focus on coercion (cutting off gas supplies for instance) lends a serious selection bias in that it loses focus on all the non-emergency coercion (or more broadly, “strategic manipulation” to borrow a term from Stulberg) that happens on the day-to-day level. For instance; compliance based merely on precedent or based on the reputation of the country to punish, rather than a stated punishment itself creating the coercion. A focus on crisis diplomacy ignores the nuances of extended statecraft over a long period. It is for this reason why I have analyzed a period of both crisis-levels (turning off the gas in 2006) and non-crisis-levels with a focus on RT’s rhetoric.

The issue here is whether the consistency in RT’s negative rhetoric towards Lukashenko matches the reluctance of Lukashenko to comply with Moscow and recognize the independence of Abkhazia and southern Ossetia. Presumably good-faith actions would be taken when the promise of a breakthrough is made (for example, when Lukashenko promised to recognize both regions in August, 2010). While Lukashenko’s promise was made on August 3, Russia certainly made no show of good faith if one was to be made in terms of state media rhetoric. On August 5 an article titled, “Belarusians demolish the myth of their prosperity” was released deconstructing much of Lukashenko’s propaganda concerning his economic accomplishments, and quoted

Romanchuk (the opposition candidate that would later be interviewed by RT) in efforts to dispute Lukashenko's assertions about the economy. On August 16, shortly after Lukashenko recanted that he had promised on August 3 to recognize the two regions, RT released an article titled "Small chance for Belarusian president to change 'inconsistent tactics.'" While this refutation on the part of Lukashenko would mark the period where any RT-rhetorical-payoff would be closed, it is worth noting that at no time following Lukashenko's promise did RT ease up on its criticisms. If RT coverage *did* play a role in this bargaining procedure, they certainly gave no reinforcements to Lukashenko after his promise to recognize both regions. In fact, the consistency in negative reporting following 2009 seems to indicate a lack of bargaining, in that bargaining approaches tend to have both ebbs and flows during negotiations. On the contrary, RT's reporting instead illustrates an escalating sense of hostility that is uni-directional, and consistently increasing over time until it exploded in dropping quotation marks in reference to Lukashenko as a dictator, and embracing the opposition it previously demonized in its coverage.

This is not to discount the bargaining approach entirely, however, as it is conceivable that the rhetoric-card is possibly the last to be played, and that negative reporting continues on auto-pilot until all objectives have been completed. Under this scenario the purchase of Beltransgaz is just one of many objectives, and until recognition of southern Ossetia and Abkhazia (and the probable removal from the Eastern Partnership program that recognition would entail) is complete negative reinforcements will be applied, in addition to positive reinforcements when appropriate. While the degradation of RT rhetoric does coincide roughly with the time that Belarus rescinded on promises to recognize the two regions (late 2008), the lack of a correlation between periods of a clear worsening of rhetoric (such as 2010) are not tied to actions of resistance on the part of Belarus other than simple non-compliance.

In addition to RT rhetoric, an alternative focus is gas prices (table 17) and the correlation with bargaining for the recognition of the breakaway regions. One would assume, if there was a correlation, a lowering of prices would occur in conjunction with Belarusian compliance, or perhaps more accurately with this case, a rise in the price to punish resistance. In particular, considerations of April 2009 (when Lukashenko lapsed on his promised recognition date and revealed negotiations with the EU) and the start of 2011 (when Belarus joined the Eastern Partnership) could be useful. While exact measurements are hampered by data unavailability and secrecy on the part of Gazprom (as well as honesty regarding how much Belarus *actually* pays rather than what parties *say* they pay), the first quarter of 2011 (when Belarus joined the Eastern Partnership) is the highest recorded gas price, ranging anywhere from \$270 to \$280 (depending on the source). This figure is more than \$100 higher than the second highest price, and while this correlation could be entirely spurious and difficult to isolate in that prices are shrouded in secrecy and constantly changing, it certainly could support arguments that gas prices are a bargaining tool for ensuring Belarusian diplomatic compliance.

While the drop in gas prices for 2012 coincides with negotiations towards forming the Eurasian Union (yet another attempted project in the long line of projects that fosters a union of Belarus, Russia, and Kazakhstan) and the purchase of Beltransgaz, this period marks both a softening of tensions but also a period of theoretically greater Belarusian dependence on Russia. With Gazprom owning Belarus's natural gas supply and (the now active) Nord Stream allowing Russian gas destined for Europe to bypass Belarus entirely, Belarus is entirely at the mercy of Russia. Under these circumstances we might expect to see a Belarusian recognition of Abkhazia and southern Ossetia before the end of 2012, since Belarus now has little maneuvering room to play the EU against Russia as it has done in the past.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Illiberal Pluralism: Russia's Capacity For Change Without Democratic Means

Russia is the case of an illusory leviathan. Russia offers the mirage of unity inherent in all authoritarian regimes that squash dissent. However, occasionally the cracks in the façade are evident. Despite Putin's authoritarian image as a leader directing a subservient bureaucracy, his seeming inability to prevent factional infighting indicates that he is the faction-manager, rather than a puppet master.

The non-democratic and bureaucratic tendencies of Russia's vertical power structure breed corruption, and this corruption may lead to state-capture by clans and the elite according to authors like Dawisha. However, this thesis seeks to illustrate that at root, beneath corruption and short-term economic elite interests, competing worldviews struggle to shape and influence foreign policy. This struggle is a non-democratic pluralism, where ideas compete not at the ballot box but amongst shifting factions, with Putin often acting not as an overseer but rather as a ringmaster. The real protagonist, therefore, is the circus around the ringmaster-- the circus of factions within the Kremlin.

Importantly, there is the notion that the clans are not united in their efforts to compete for resources. In 2007 this was expressed publicly with the Cherkessov war (see chapter III). This public outburst occurred in spite of Dawisha's notion of the siloviki enforcing factional unity by "omerta" (a mafia-linked word to denote a code of silence).²⁴⁶ The problem is that this hypothetical omerta is an inherently shaky argument, because clan-based power supports a pluralism of elite interests. This occurs because clans are not centralized and tend to splinter based on the changing fortunes of powerful individuals rather than institutions. In addition to this decentralized world of clan politics, there is a *simultaneous* political centralization in that the

Kremlin maintains power over the democratic process, the Kremlin holds power over the regions, and the bureaucracy holds power over the economy and media. The result is a centralized decentralization of zero-sum interests, with an inherently *conflictual* center radiating its corruption outwards towards the periphery (in this case, the social-infrastructure power of Russian society itself). Combining this process with a weak rule of law (or “legal nihilism” to quote Medvedev) only further exacerbates this condition. In this way Russian society at large begins to mirror the Cherkesov clan war in the Kremlin—powerful individuals struggling to swallow up all the assets around them, burning anyone beneath them or in front of them who happens to be in the way. The end result is a predictable one, creating one of the most world’s most corrupt societies.

In this sense disorder lies at the heart of Russian politics, rather than the simplistic view of a monolithic authoritarianism. This disorder creates grounds ripe for competing and divergent interests dependent on the individuals who steer and seize control of state assets. These interests are motivated by both financial-kleptocratic interests (as Dawisha maintains) *in addition to* identity-based conceptions. If Belarusian debt was used to leverage the Lukashenko regime to auction off Beltransgaz, what is less clear is why, once this goal was achieved, the coercive tools (negative media coverage) were *still* applied afterwards. What is the role of bargaining if Belarus is already incorporated into the mafia-structure through Gazprom’s ownership of Belarusian industries? Clearly coercion is needed to motivate Lukashenko at certain times, while at other times cooperation may be in order. Belarus is not independent of Russia, nor is Russian foreign policy independent of identity. The shifting perceptions of Belarus are as much a reflection of competing identities within Russia as they are a series of zigging and zagging strategies designed to mold Belarus to Russia’s designs.

While captured-state theory, with its notion of elites in interlocking positions both in government and in business, seems to fit well with Russian events over the last decade,²⁴⁷ this theory only explains the rationale of the *creation* of such a state of affairs. It fails to explain Russian foreign policy decisions once this captured-state situation is realized. On this point, constructivism provides valuable insight by illustrating the ebbs and flows of Russian identity.

Identity As A Shaper Of National Interests

This thesis opened with a description of Mao's relations with the Soviet Union. Khrushchev once stated that, "When I look at Mao I see Stalin, a perfect copy."²⁴⁸ It was because he saw Stalin in Mao that relations with a Stalinist China were impossible for Khrushchev and those associated with him, who were eager to turn their backs on a Stalinist Russia. Shifts in identity had fundamentally precluded what was once a natural alliance that made sense both in terms of geopolitics and political affinity. Under a realist conception, there was little reason for the Sino-Soviet split to occur, and even more troublesome is that there'd be a lack of an explanation as to why it occurred precisely when it did.

Ross argued from a realist position that Putin's post-9/11 alliance with the West was due to his realization that Russia was too weak to project itself and needed to acquiesce to American demands.²⁴⁹ While this might provide an explanation for why Russia retreated in the early 2000s and hardened its position in the mid-2000s (due to windfall profits from oil revenue) and could even be used to explain a liberalization of sorts in the late 2000s (due to the global recession weakening its economy), it illustrates little about Russia's relations with Belarus. Under this logic a powerful Russia could afford not to depend on Belarus as a periphery state. Instead, in the mid-2000s, we see a Russia that consistently caters to Lukashenko, both in terms of support given to him in the 2006 election and subsidy-level oil prices. Likewise, a weakened

Russia in the 2008-2010 period should be *more* dependent on retaining allies due to a weakened economy, instead of the course Russia took when it distanced itself to the point of nearly abandoning Lukashenko entirely. While an economically weak Russia might insist on liberalized gas prices in order to fill its coffers, it wouldn't seek to alienate a key ally (by lending a voice to opposition activists) precisely when it needed Belarus the most according to realist theory. Clearly the realist position alone cannot account for Russia's varied policy on Belarus.

Tsygankov outlined the limitations of realist and liberal theories²⁵⁰ when he stated that realists tend to ignore culture in favor of seeing an Other as a competitor to the realist's localized cultural universe (Huntington's clash of civilizations for example), whereas liberals see in globalization the development of an increasingly culturally homogenous world (Fukuyama's end approaching). Both schools are united in that they take focus away from "identity and diversity" and tend to exclude a dialogue-creating/reciprocal process with the Other, where the Other is both a target for teaching *and* for learning. This dialectical difference was nicely summarized when Tsygankov stated:

"Both conservative and radical cosmopolitan writers tend to view cultural development as a worldwide spread of westernized modernity and its norms of nation-states, market economy, political democracy, etc., rather than as a dialectical interaction of diverse local communities."

Likewise, this Western universalism cannot tell us much about Russia and Belarus. It might predict that these two alien authoritarian countries may or may not be allied, but it does nothing to explain why they may vacillate between the two positions. It might predict that Russia becomes more assertive with an increase in military and economic power, though it does little to explain why Russia would turn against the leader of a state that acts as a buffer between Russia and a hostile NATO. Examining the *why* of Russian-Belarus relations can shed light on these

issues, and is useful for answering other questions as well. It can answer why the Soviet Union drifted from China in the late 1950s, or what we can expect from a 2012 Putin presidency if Putin stays on as faction manager but the factions themselves stay in a similar position to what they were in 2009 and 2010. Alternatively, it can also answer what may happen if siloviki begin to replace the civiliki at the top tiers of government.

Identity is not simply elites parroting what has been successful elsewhere. If this were the case, the Westernizers would still be hegemonic actors in Russia today as they once were in 1993. After all, the United States is still the global hegemon, and efforts to emulate America complement the Westernizing identity that has been largely abandoned by Russians since the turn of the millennium. Instead the Westernizers exist only in fringe elements of society and in a disparate and repressed opposition at the elite-level, unified with communists and fascists in their lack of a cohesive message as opposition members.

Despite the inertia and tendency for organizations to avoid radical shifts in ideological schemas, shifts do occur as the result of formative events.²⁵¹ This reasoning explains the shift towards Yeltsin's liberalism following the collapse of the Communist Party from power, and the shift towards realist-centered foreign policy following the collapse of the liberal narrative with the enlargement of NATO and the economic collapse of 1998. It also explains the shift away from US-allied pragmatism following the invasion of Iraq, diplomatic betrayal regarding permanent American bases in Kyrgyzstan, and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. These external shocks also could have increased the domestic need for a rise in the preponderance of siloviki/statist identities during Putin's first term. After all, it is important to understand that Russian foreign policy is not only shaped by identity, but that Russian identity is responsive to outside foreign policy pressures as well (particularly of great powers like the United States).

Identities change not only because of outside phenomenon, but because identity construction itself is a fundamentally dialectical process. Identity is not created in a social vacuum, but through the result of interactions with other states and communities. For example, from the primary hypothesis of this thesis one could explore an alternate explanation: that Russia's increasingly liberal identity made Belarus view Russia through an antagonistic lens, rather than only focusing on Russia's conception of Belarus as a Soviet relic of decreasing relevance. In terms of rhetoric, there is some foundation for this view of Belarus being alienated from an increasingly liberal Russia, since Belarusian propaganda consistently painted Russia as a liberal traitor just as RT painted Belarus as an authoritarian relic.

Hopf pointed to the concept of a Khrushchev bubbling beneath the repressed surface of a Stalinist identity, and a Gorbachev bubbling beneath the repressed surface of the Brezhnev era. Similarly, it is useful to look at what is repressed and censored in order to find competing worldviews that today's elite deem as dangerous. If we look to notions of the domestic Other in RT reporting in 2010, this Other comes in the form of nationalism. This process can be witnessed through RT excusing Zhirinovsky's popularity through stating that people simply like him on a personal level, or through multiple stories in which authorities are encouraged to squash nationalist gatherings, or through the fact that these activists are routinely described as "criminals" (just as Stalin described counter-revolutionaries in the 1930s). At the very least, this points to the notion that nationalism is viewed by elites as being dangerous to the point that it must be discredited from the top-down in order to transmit the right message to the masses. Though the Eurasianist/nationalist identity is not widely popular, it may be growing in intensity among a small minority of Russian adherents. In 2007 attacks on foreigners rose in tandem with an increasing "patriotism and xenophobia." This could perhaps mark an identity shift (at least

among the masses, if not elites) in favor of Eurasianism/revolutionism bubbling beneath the surface of contemporary Russian politics.²⁵² This would reflect a rationalization for why United Russia must usurp revolutionist sentiment through Potemkin parties such as the LDPR, and for why government media increasingly tries to denounce nationalist sentiment.

An Impending Shift Away From Liberalism In 2012?

Is the siloviki waxing? Chapter III covered the recent shifts in personnel that have occurred at the end of 2011. Liberal Kudrin has been ejected from government (and even joined the opposition protesting the December 2011 elections) whereas silovik Sergei Ivanov has recently been promoted, to effectively undo the demotion he received at the beginning of Medvedev's term. One might be tempted to predict, with the return of the ex-KGB man Putin to the presidency in 2012, a return to siloviki orientations, where tensions rise with the West and friendliness and oil subsidies materialize for Belarus. But I believe this reading of events would be an oversimplification, based on Putin's individual role rather than the systemic conditions he operates under. Thus, Putin's inconsistencies throughout 2000-2008 can either be read as a form of political schizophrenia, or can instead be viewed as Putin acting as a faction manager more than simply an autocrat. Putin's authoritarian tendencies do not change the reality of clan politics in which he is embedded. Putin's role as faction manager has been consistent, even after he left the presidency. In fact there is a likelihood that a Putin presidency may alter little for Russian foreign policy, **if** the factional dominance and the identity dominance it carries remain constant. If the events of 2008 (where changes did not solidify until approximately a year later) were any indication, we can expect any potential changes to come over the course of 2012 and 2013, as the next constellation of factional dominance manifests itself. Russia watchers should pay close

attention to prominent demotions and promotions to gauge which faction benefits from the reshuffling, and what that faction's dominance may mean for relations with Belarus (or the United States). Attention should be focused on if one faction in particular is benefitting from these personnel shifts, and if so, what that faction's dominance could mean for relations with Belarus (or the United States). Likewise, Russian media reports may reflect the calm before the storm: an indication of which way future foreign policy winds may blow. A dramatic increase in statist formulations could indicate a swinging of the pendulum towards a more confrontational foreign policy, presumably one that would tend to see Belarus as a *realpolitik* ally.

Nord Stream was inaugurated on November 8th, 2011. Currently (with one of the two pipelines operational) it has the capacity to deliver 27.5 billion cubic meters of gas annually, though this will double by the time the second pipeline is completed (presumably sometime in 2012).²⁵³ Nord Stream runs from Vyborg (near St. Petersburg), through the Baltic, and directly into Germany. This Gazprom venture intends to ship gas directly to Western Europe without crossing either Poland, Ukraine, or Belarus. This essentially will lessen the need for Russia to rely on these countries and eliminates the need to bargain with them in order to obtain low transit fees. While Belarus putting forward the idea of transit fees (only to later retract the notion once Russia conceded more favorable export duty prices to Belarus) was a diplomatic weapon in the arsenal of Belarus in the past, that weapon is now virtually useless. The bait of Beltransgaz, now that Gazprom owns the company, has been taken away as a Belarusian diplomatic weapon as well. In the end, *if* siloviki are promoted to top positions once again *and* the Belarusian capacity to resist Russian demands is lessened (as it presumably has been with these two events), one can expect a rapprochement to blossom between the two countries. Under these circumstances, Russia would appear poised to remain in the driver's seat in its relations with its "brother-state."

**APPENDIX A: CHRONOLOGY OF RUSSIAN-BELARUSIAN
RELATIONS**

September 1993 - Prime Ministers of Russia and Belarus sign an accord on monetary union within the CIS

January 1994 – Belarus’s leader Stanislau Shushkevich (who was opposed to the CIS union) is ousted with a vote of 209-36. With his removal efforts to reintegrate with Russia are considerably increased. By April a monetary and customs union is introduced between the two countries.

July 1994 – Lukashenko becomes president of Belarus by getting 45.1% of the vote on a populist platform, trouncing leading contender Vyachaslau Kebich, who only attained 17.4% of the vote.

1995 – Russian (rather than Belarusian) opposition stalls the accord.²⁵⁴ This, however, does not prevent a broad treaty of friendship to be signed by the presidents of Belarus and Russia in February. Russia’s reluctance to lift trade barriers bottlenecks the ability for any economic integration. Part of the treaty stipulates that Russia can retain its military presence in Belarus until 2010 and can use their air defense facilities free of charge.

May 1995 – In a national referendum 83.3% of Belarusian voters voted in favor of closer integration with Russia.²⁵⁵

March 1996 – Principal agreement to establish a Community of Russia and Belarus is signed. Russia writes off a billion dollars in debt and gives Belarus subsidies in the form of domestic gas prices. This price difference amounts to over one billion dollars a year for Belarus.²⁵⁶

Start of 1996 – The height of liberal/oligarchic domination over Russian society before its imminent decline, according to Yakovlev.²⁵⁷ It is assumed that the proposed union of Belarus and Russia is a ploy by Yeltsin in order to undercut his domestic opposition (in particular communists and nationalists).²⁵⁸

1997 – The “Community” becomes the “Union of Sovereign Republics”

1998 – Ruble collapses. Russian economy (under liberal leadership) collapses. Oligarch/liberal clans wage war between each other in an effort to seize assets following the collapse. Ironically, bureaucratic wars between the elite at times resemble genuine pluralism in politics to the observer.²⁵⁹ Primakov (realist) is elected as Foreign Minister and steers country away from Yeltsin's/Kozyrev's liberal foreign policy.

1999 – NATO attacks Yugoslavia. It has been argued that NATO's support of a Kosovan periphery over the Serbian center effectively destroyed liberal sentiment in Russia, since liberal discourses were the only ones that rejected the need to exert control over the uncivilized periphery and obvious allusions could be made with regards to the Russian periphery in the form of Chechnya.²⁶⁰

1999 – Confederal Russian-Belarusian state is proclaimed

2000 – Boris Berezkovsky, who alongside Vladimir Gusinsky, was an oligarch who controlled much of Russia's mass media, flees the country once he clashes with the new Putin administration.²⁶¹

September 11 2001 – Terrorist attacks on America are followed by America (with Russian approval) setting up bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to aid in the invasion of Afghanistan. This position is unpopular among both elites and the masses in Russia, but Putin proceeds with it. Russia and America begin to cooperate on anti-terrorism efforts.

2001 – Following 9/11 Russia's westward drift marks a temporary degradation of Belarusian-Russian relations.²⁶²

September 2001 – The election that Europeans regarded as “unfair and fraudulent” is supported by Putin when he calls to congratulate Lukashenko on his “convincing victory.”¹⁴³ Unlike previous elections, this time Lukashenko is bolstered by visits from Kremlin officials while

Russian media covers him favorably on a consistent basis.¹⁴⁴

August 2002 – Putin suggests that Belarus should join Russia in forming six different regions (destroying the idea of an equal confederacy that Lukashenko desired). Lukashenko refuses.

Late 2002 – Following the Afghanistan war, America states that it will keep bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. America withdraws from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in order to start building missile defense systems that are seen as a threat to Russia. US starts to send military advisors to Georgia.

2003-2004 – Yukos oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky comes under attack by Putin administration.

2003-2004 – Russia pushes Belarus to privatize industries in the petrochemical/gas transit sectors. Threats are made to hike prices if state-companies are not privatized.

February 2003 – Russia proposes creating Common Economic Space (CES) consisting of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan with a goal of eliminating trade barriers and having shared energy transport policies.¹⁴⁵

April 2003 – Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Armenia form the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Pledges are made to pool resources to fight terrorism.

November 2003 – Rose Revolution begins in Georgia. Anti-Russian politician Mikheil Saakashvili becomes the new leader in the spring of 2004.

February 2004 – Tensions peak when Gazprom cuts off supplies for a single day. Belarus agrees months later to a price hike from 27 to 46 dollars per thousand cubic meters. Lukashenko turns the situation to his benefit when he portrays himself as an independence fighter against Russian oligarchs (a code word for liberal businessmen in Russian politics).¹⁴⁶ A deal is signed stipulating that subsidization prices will continue, but Gazprom must have a greater stake in Belarusian

pipeline company Beltransgaz.

September 2004 – Beslan Crisis occurs in Russia. Lukashenko states, in order to keep Belarus peaceful and free from such terrorism, his term limits must be removed. The Kremlin silences critics of Belarus throughout the media, congratulates Lukashenko on the referendum's victory.

October 2004 – Another election occurs in Belarus, this time in regards to a referendum which essentially gives Lukashenko unlimited power. Putin again calls to congratulate Lukashenko on his electoral victory.¹⁴⁷ Sergei Ivanov states, in response to Condoleezza Rice meeting with opposition candidates, that: “we would not, of course, be advocating what some people call regime changes anywhere... We think the democratic process, the process of reform cannot be imposed from the outside.”¹⁴⁸

Late 2004 – Orange Revolution occurs in Ukraine. Russia agrees to give Belarus discounted gas prices for at least another year. By Spring of 2005 the Tulip Revolution occurs in Kyrgyzstan.

2005-2007 – Russia actively tries to undermine OSCE observer missions to support its “authoritarian axis” and halt further color revolutions that are seen as funded by the West. Media spin supports these governments as well, usually under the guise of anti-terrorism. In May 2005 siloviki strongman and FSB leader Patrushev (allied with the Sechin clan) “unmasked” a plot by the West to use terrorist organizations to finance Belarusian opposition.¹⁴⁹ FSB officers aid their Belarusian counterparts (the KGB) in getting leads on opposition activists who smuggled banned literature during the last election. Russian media discredits Belarusian opposition.¹⁵⁰

December 2005 – Russia demands Ukraine pay a price similar to Western Europe (five times higher than what Ukraine paid in the past). When Ukraine refuses gas is shut off on January 1, 2006. Three days later Ukraine agrees to pay \$95 instead of the \$50 it paid before the Orange Revolution. Transit fees are also raised against Ukraine.²⁶³

March 2006 – Russia freezes Belarusian gas prices at \$46 (a fraction of what Ukraine is paying) presumably to economically aid/buttruss support for Lukashenko in his presidential election.

Relations reach a high point as Russian media praises Lukashenko and discredits his opposition.²⁶⁴ Ivanov states that Lukashenko is “the most popular politician in Belarus, whether you [the West] like it or not.”²⁶⁵

April 2006 – Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan pledge to sign the first set of 38 documents for implementing the CES as laid out in 2003.

2006 gas war – Gazprom states it needs much more than the \$46 Belarus currently pays. This is not the first time that Gazprom has threatened to raise prices, as it occurred in 2002 and 2004 as well. The 2004 deal stated that Gazprom would have a stake in Beltransgaz and this would expire in 2006. Once 2006 arrives Gazprom offers to extend subsidy-level prices in exchange for ownership of Beltransgaz, which Belarus refuses.¹⁵¹ Lukashenko threatens a “breakup of all relations.”

December 2006 – Belarus reaches a deal with Gazprom just hours before the deadline of when Gazprom had threatened it would cut off the gas supply. Despite the deal, Russia imposes a tariff on oil exports. Belarus responds with a transit tax of Russian oil moving westwards. Belarus agrees to pay \$100 (rather than a price “three times” the original \$46), in exchange for Gazprom receiving a 50% stake in Belarus’s gas company Beltransgaz at the price of 2.5 billion dollars.¹⁵²

2007 – Ukraine agrees to pay \$130 for gas in the year of 2007, with some politicians considering \$160 as being acceptable.²⁶⁶ At the start of the year Russia briefly cuts off oil to Belarus. By mid-March however balance is restored to Belarusian-Russian relations. Lukashenko denies an alliance with a prominent anti-Russian Belarusian opposition candidate, Lukashenko signs numerous economic agreements in March, and in April Russia speaks of a \$1.5 billion

“stabilization loan” to be given to Belarus.¹⁵³ Lukashenko responds by saying that Belarus and “the brotherly Russian people” would stand together and face their mutual threats. By the end of 2007 subsidy-level prices are still maintained.

December 2007 – Belarus gets a “discount price” of gas at \$119 for the first quarter of 2008.²⁶⁷

August 2008 – On the night of the 7th Georgia attacks and invades southern Ossetia, first attacking Tskhinvali. On the morning of the 8th Russia responds with artillery attacks of their own. Within three hours Russians have pushed the Georgian troops out of Tskhinvali. Russia then attacks Gori (in Georgia). The war will eventually lead to Russia bombing Tbilisi, Western countries supporting Georgia, and Russia pressuring its allies to recognize southern Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent.

January 2009 – Disagreements over gas debts and accusation of gas siphoning result in Russia turning off the gas to Ukraine. Eighteen Western European countries go without Russian gas and suffer a shortage.

2009 – RT begins practice of regular negative reporting on Belarus.

June 2009 – Milk war breaks out. Russia bans dairy products coming from Belarus. Lukashenko claims that the ban is political in retaliation for Belarus not recognizing the independence of southern Ossetia and Abkhazia following the 2008 war in Georgia. FM Lavrov criticizes Lukashenko for not attending a CRRF (Collective Rapid Reaction Force, a CSTO organization which Belarus held the presidency of at the time) meeting.

July-August 2009 – Belarus cuts off Latvia from Russian oil in July. In August Lukashenko travels to Moscow “to restore ties”¹⁵⁴ though later RT articles show this attempt largely failed in that RT states that Lukashenko “jeopardises” (sic) any breakthroughs or talks.¹⁵⁵

September 2009 – Belarus and Russia cooperate with war games known as “Zapad 2009.”

November 2009 – Lukashenko meets architect of the Orange Revolution (Yushchenko) in Kiev. RT paints the visit as an attempt to “strengthen friendship against Russia.”²⁶⁸

January 2010 – RT stated that Belarus will receive “no more preferential terms for oil.”²⁶⁹ Russia cuts off oil to Belarus briefly before situation is resolved by the end of January.

April 2010 – Medvedev and newly-elected Yanukovych meet in Moscow. Russia agrees to cut gas prices by 30% (by June down to \$230) and Ukraine agrees to extend Russia’s naval lease in Sevastopol.

April 20 2010 – Kurmanbek Bakiyev, the authoritarian leader of Kyrgyzstan, is overthrown by protesters and flees the country with his family. He is granted asylum in Belarus and Lukashenko states that he may live in Belarus for as long as he pleases.

May 2010 – According to RT Belarus is “thought” to pay \$150 per 1000 cubic meters of gas (though this is projected/threatened to rise in the near future).¹⁵⁶ By the end of May Belarus offers Gazprom to fully take over Beltransgaz in order to sustain domestic-priced gas from Russia.

June 2010 – Lukashenko orders Russian gas transit to be cut off from Europe until Gazprom “pays of its existing debt for gas transit.”

July 4th 2010 – State-owned NTV of Russia shows a highly critical documentary about Lukashenko, accusing him of dictatorship.

July 2010 – Three opposition candidates to Lukashenko visit Moscow and meet with Kudrin and Chubais.¹⁵⁷

August 2010 – Liberal opposition candidate who visited Moscow earlier, Romanchuk, is given full and favorable coverage by RT.²⁷⁰

August 2010 – Belarus promises to finally recognize the independence of Abkhazia and southern

Ossetia. However, by October the promise was still not fulfilled.²⁷¹ Meanwhile, Saakashvili (president of Georgia and Russia's geopolitical archrival) is said to be considering to invite Belarus to GUAM, viewed by many as an anti-Russian alliance.²⁷² At the end of August, the Russian embassy is firebombed in Minsk. No injuries were reported, though a car was destroyed. On September 1st Lukashenko suggests the attack was organized by the Russian government in order to discredit the Belarusian government.²⁷³

December 2010 – Lukashenko is re-elected in Belarus. RT decries the results.

November 2011 – Gazprom takes over full control of Beltransgaz for the low price of \$2.5 billion. For this Russia would charge \$164 per 1000 cubic meters, starting in 2012 (down from the highest figure of \$280, which was the amount paid in 2011). With the purchase Gazprom now effectively owns Belarus' national gas supply.

**APPENDIX B: RT ARTICLE ILLUSTRATING HOW IDENTITY WAS
QUALIFIED**

A sample article has been chosen to demonstrate the methodology used in choosing which statements were “statist” and which statements were “liberal.” Elements that were **prescriptive/analytical** for a certain identity (“the world would be safer if all countries worked together through the UN to enhance their mutual security”) were counted as being indicative of an identity, whereas elements that were only **descriptive** (“in light of six party talks with North Korea, the UN has announced that...”) were not counted since they were merely reporting events/decisions that had already occurred. The above two hypothetical examples both relate to multilateralism in the context of international institutions, but only the first would count as a liberal identity statement.

In the sample article given in the page below, *Russia Today* lending a voice for a viewpoint is deemed as prescriptive, and specifically analytical in terms of how the world is interpreted. What is interesting in the chosen example is the specific highlighting of a discourse in the form of individuals (Putin and Medvedev). The concept of the Soviet past as a useful model and the concept of the Soviet past as an aberration from conditions in contemporary Russia are both given credence through *Russia Today* quoting Putin and Medvedev respectively. In 2010 this notion of “endorsement through quotation” was at times inversed, when an individual who was painted negatively was quoted with a statement that was indicative of a certain identity (in fact, in 2010 all “exception” rhetoric was aimed towards non-liberal identities).

Medvedev and Putin slam xenophobia²¹⁵

Tackling inter-ethnic clashes in Russia has been in the spotlight of the National Council, where President Dmitry Medvedev and Premier Vladimir Putin offered their vision of how to combat the problem.

Putin suggested using Soviet experience and teaching Russians patriotism, while Medvedev called the USSR “*a very harsh state*” and said that it is impossible go back to its practices.

“There were no such problems with inter-ethnic relations in the USSR. Soviet leadership managed to create inter-ethnic peace...The USSR managed to create some substance that was above ethnic or inter-confessional relations,” Putin said. “*Unfortunately, it had ideological character. It was the idea of socialism.*” What could replace that idea now, according to the premier, is raising patriotism.

Medvedev, for his part, agreed that Russia does need new approaches. However, the idea of using Soviet experience did not seem appealing to the president.

“[Putin] recalled the Soviet Union found its own way in achieving certain results in maintaining peace between nationalities. Is it possible to repeat what was done in soviet period? We are realistic people and we understand that it is impossible,” the president said. “But we do need to work out new approaches,” he added.

What both Medvedev and Putin are unanimous on is that inter-ethnic peace is fundamental for Russia’s existence.

The tandem, as well as heads of regions, ministers and representatives of Russian political elite, discussed on Monday how to deal with xenophobia that has lately risen to a dangerous level.

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- *Underlined section lends a voice to statist identity via boasting of Soviet past as useful*
 - *Bolded section lends a voice to liberal identity via refuting the Soviet past as a model*

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