RUSSIA'S OSCE POLICY DURING CONFLICTS IN GEORGIA AND UKRAINE: IN SEARCH OF THE FORGOTTEN DOMESTIC DIMENSION

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Submitted to

Central European University
Department of International Relations

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Xymena Kurowska

Word count: 16.004

Budapest, Hungary

2017

Abstract

During the last decade, Russia engaged in two major conflicts, namely the war in Georgia in 2008 and the war in Ukraine in 2014, where it had to make decisions regarding the interaction with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Although the nature of both conflicts was similar, Russia's choices regarding the OSCE policy were completely different: they decided to shut a working OSCE mission in Georgia and to open a new OSCE mission in Ukraine. The reasons behind these discrepancies in Russia's OSCE policy remain unclear. Previously, academic literature analyzed Russia's interaction with the organization mostly through the perspective of the external factors, while overlooking the influence of domestic developments on Moscow's OSCE policy. To reach a more sophisticated comprehension of the OSCE-Russia relationship in these two cases, this research draws the attention back to the domestic dimension and argues that the differences in the Kremlin's decisions appeared because of the shift from the defense of "sovereign democracy" principles to the advocacy of traditional values in Russia's dominant understanding of normativity. As the sense of normative self-confidence and shared identity grew, Russia became ready to reengage into the cooperation within the OSCE, while further pushing for the organization's normative reform.

Acknowledgements

"Great times call for great men. There are unknown heroes who are modest, with none of the historical glamour of a Napoleon." By these words, Jaroslav Hašek introduced the good soldier Švejk – one of the greatest literature characters ever. In the same manner, I would like to introduce my personal heroes who with modest sincerity and none of the glamour helped me along the way. I am utmost thankful to my supervisor Xymena Kurowska who found time aside from her meetings with the world-class scholars to guide me through the theoretical and methodological obstacles. To Tea Thaning, Nejra Hodžič, Freya Cumberlidge and Nazarbek Zhuzupbekov for helping to make this thesis comprehensible. To CEU for providing this wonderful opportunity to develop as a professional, an intellectual, and a human being. Finally, to my family for believing in me no matter what.

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Introduction

During the past ten years, Russia has engaged with two widely discussed conflicts in Europe: with the Georgia conflict in 2008 and with the Ukraine crisis in 2014. The largest security organization in Europe, namely the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), initiated interventions in both conflict zones, but Russia as a participating state reacted out to the OSCE's initiatives in two different ways. Although both conflicts had similar origins, and Russia justified its involvement in both cases by claiming the right and duty to protect Russian citizens, its position on the OSCE's involvement differed. In the case of Georgia, the OSCE was already present before the conflict in 2008. Between 1992 and 2008, the OSCE's mission in Georgia was responsible for the settlement between Georgians, Ossetins, Abkhazians, and other minorities.[1] At the outbreak of the Georgian conflict in 2008, Russia decided to block the prolonging of the mission, which resulted in its closure. Meanwhile, in Ukraine in 2014, Russia implemented a completely different policy where it chose to support the establishment of the OSCE's monitoring mission.[2] Recently, president Vladimir Putin even expressed his approval for the armament of the mission in Ukraine. These divergences in the Russian responses to the two conflicts form a puzzle and invite a further exploration of the country's OSCE policies.

The explanatory purpose of the research encourages us to raise the following questions: 1) how can (non)cooperative Russia's policy on the OSCE be understood in the cases of Georgian and Ukrainian wars? 2) what are the origins of the discrepancies in Russia's OSCE policy during the Georgian and Ukrainian wars? Previous efforts to understand Russia's OSCE policy were conducted mostly by assuming that stable national interests are the driving force of Russia's foreign policy.[3] Therefore, the contradicting decisions coming from the Russian government and Moscow's refusals to cooperate were explained through the activity of other international actors, such as NATO and the EU, the international actors'

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[1] CSCE, "Establishment of the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office for Georgia," 1992.

[2] OSCE, "DECISION No. 1117 DEPLOYMENT OF AN OSCE SPECIAL MONITORING MISSION TO UKRAINE," March 21, 2014.

[3] Probably the most chrestomathic example would be by Wolfgang Zellner, "Russia and the OSCE: From High Hopes to Disillusionment," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 18, no. 3 (October 2005): 389–402, doi:10.1080/09557570500237995.

inability to involve Russia into mutually respectful dialogue, and an ignorance towards Russian interests.[4] This attention to external actors creates an impression that Moscow's actions are reactionary, that the state does not possess its own agency and that internal developments do not have any effect on Russia's foreign policy. It follows that Russia is either reduced to the image of an aggressive demon or is mispresented as an innocent victim.[5] This study tries to go beyond this trend by employing constructivist theories to assess Russian foreign policy.

Two constructivist assumptions are particularly important for this research. The first assumption follows the ideas of Ted Hof, Erik Ringmar and other constructivists by emphasizing the interchangeability and plurality of Russia's interests. The second one, under the influence of Bill McSweeney, considers human dimension, i.e. socialization, to be the space where the shifts in the dominant discourses and the interests can be traced. Together, these two notions correspond with the "troublemaker" image of Russia which, instead of considering the Kremlin to be the demon or the victim, sees its external behavior as the outcome of interaction between various domestic interests and ideas. To access these interests and ideas, this research runs a comparative case-based study of Russia's domestic developments during the wars in Georgia and Ukraine.

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, I have limited the ambitions of this comparative study by concentrating on the factors suggested by the ethnic conflict theories. These theories were chosen as a filter because of the importance that the Russian establishments ascribes to the compatriots' notion when reasoning their foreign policy decisions during the period surrounding both of the conflicts. Ethnic conflict theories enabled the formulation of two domestic factors that could contribute to the Kremlin's decision to (non)cooperate within the OSCE. These are political and normative competition. Using these two lenses, it is demonstrated that while the political competition lens does not explain much about the discrepancies in Russia's OSCE policy, a normative competition lens illustrates two different normative

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[4] The examples of this approach may be found in the works Elena Kropatcheva, Derek Averre, Wolfgang Zellner, Pernille Rieker and Kristian Lundby Gjerde, partially Andrei P. Tsygankov.

[5] The distinction is made by Elias Götz, "Russia, the West, and the Ukraine Crisis: Three Contending Perspectives," *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 249–66, doi:10.1080/13569775.2016.1201313.

narratives in Moscow's interaction with the OSCE and the West during the conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine.

To execute the described research design, this study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter engages with the scholar discourse on the topic of the OSCE-Russia and the West-Russia relationship and clarifies the theoretical approach taken in this thesis. The second chapter provides rationale for the decision to choose ethnic conflict theories as an analytical shortcut, indicates domestic factors suggested by those theories and transforms these factors into the hypotheses, and gives the methodological guidelines for the case studies. Starting from the third chapter, the empirical analysis of cases starts. The third chapter analyzes the domestic factors that could contribute to Russia's decision not to cooperate within the OSCE during the war in Georgia. The final chapter investigates the domestic influences on Moscow's decision to cooperate within the OSCE over the course of the war in Ukraine.

Chapter I. How can Russia's international (non)cooperation be explained?

1. *Contradiction as precedent*

Before venturing deeper into the context of the crises in Georgia and Ukraine, it should be noted that these cases are not the first time that contradictions in Russia's policy towards the OSCE have appeared. Christer Pursiainen observed inconsistencies in Russia's OSCE policy already in the early stage of the state's existence. During the First Chechen War, Kremlin's implemented policy was marked by both compliance and noncompliance with the rules and practices of the OSCE. On one hand, Russia violated international norms of peaceful conflict resolution, ignored the existing OSCE's regime of Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBM), and launched a large-scale military attack against part of its own territory Chechnya, which was seeking independence. On the other hand, Russia chose to cooperate in the later stages of the conflict by accepting the OSCE's aspiration to establish a permanent OSCE mission to the Chechen conflict. Pursiainen concludes that Russia's policy on the OSCE represents "a situation of noncompliance and of compliance and cooperation in the same package."[6]

The discipline of international relations seeks answers as to why practices of cooperation and noncooperation coexist in Russia's foreign policy by applying the tools of three traditional IR schools: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Pursiainen applies structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and constructivism in his analysis of why Russia both cooperated and shied away from cooperation during the Chechen War. According to him, structural realism emphasizes that international cooperation is dismissed when the addressed issue touches the vital interests of the state.[7] John J. Mearsheimer argues that, for instance, Ukraine is a strategically important chunk of the buffer zone around Russia and no international intervention is in the interest of the Kremlin.[8] A similar answer could be given by neoliberal

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[6] Christer Pursiainen, "The Impact of International Security Regimes on Russia's Behavior: The Case of the OSCE and Chechnya," in *Understandings of Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Ted Hopf (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 137.

[7] Ibid., 141.

[8] John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, August 18, 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault.

institutionalists who argue that Russia does not cooperate, because it is not beneficial to do so despite the general support for the existing security framework (i.e. it just free-rides).[9]

Constructivists pinpoint the role of contested values. In the case of the First Chechen War, Russia and the West did not have a consensus on when the CSBM should be implemented. Although CSBM was meant to become a tool for enabling international intervention in the early stages of conflicts, Russia perceived the Chechen question as an internal issue of the state, not an international conflict. Therefore the OSCE was not allowed to intervene in the restitution of the "constitutional order."[10] The mission nevertheless became possible when the argumentation calling for its establishment switched to the issues of human rights. One of the possible explanations of why human rights were a less contested norm is the Kremlin's wish to send a message to the international community that not only Russia, but also Dudayev's Chechen forces targeted civilians and behaved in an unacceptably violent way.[11]

While the first two approaches mostly concentrate on the state as a single unit, the constructivist approach reaches deeper, and offers insights into Russia's hidden decision making process. Pursiainen suggests that policy on the OSCE during the First Chechen War shows the existence of two contradicting approaches to international cooperation among Russian leadership. The military rejected any kind of international intervention, while the ministry of foreign affairs considered it feasible to a certain extent. Pursiainen backs this insight by the following piece from Nezavisimaya Gazeta describing a break between two different perceptions of international cooperation as:

> On the one hand, [there is] the continuation of the war using methods that have been condemned, and on the other hand the very open attitude of Russia's leadership to cooperation with the OSCE. It is as though there were two separate states.[12]

This observation about (non-)cooperation encourages the idea that Russia's foreign policy is determined by multiple interests and their interaction. In order to analytically probe this idea, I will

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[9] Pursiainen, "The Impact of International Security Regimes on Russia's Behavior: The Case of the OSCE and Chechnya," 147.
[10] Ibid., 156–57.
[11] Ibid., 158–61.
[12] Ibid., 162.

demonstrate that Russia's national interests are ambiguous, identify the reasons for this ambiguousness, and, finally, suggest an alternative analytical course. These three steps are taken in the following sections of this chapter.

2. *Interests and cooperation. A realist input*

Most of the previous attempts to look at Russia's policy on the OSCE considered the state as a monolith, which has a unifying logic to its behavior manifested in concrete interests. For example, Wolfgang Zelner explains the dynamics of the OSCE's international importance throughout the years by analyzing Russia's interests. He outlines strategic interests of the Kremlin such as Russian integration into European structures, avoidance of isolation or marginalization, restriction of NATO enlargement, preservation of influence in "the near abroad" and containment of the European organizations out of this area.[13] He makes a further distinction between Kremlin's interests that can be grouped into two categories of "positive" and "negative" ones. Positive interests are here classed as the ones that represent the state's active efforts to pursue its own goals, while negative interests are those that manifest as the initiatives to prevent other countries from reaching their foreign policy goals.[14]

Elena Kropatcheva comes from a similar perspective and explains the lack of cooperation between Russia and the OSCE during the war in Georgia using an entirely statist perspective. According to her, the West was unsatisfied about internal developments in Russia's political arena, its inconsistent foreign policy, and its involvement in conflicts such as the Chechen War.[15] Meanwhile, the Kremlin perceived the West to be both exploiting Russia's weaknesses and ignoring Russian interests.[16] Pernille Rieker and Kristian Lundby Gjerde provide another state-oriented interpretation by describing the dynamics of Europe-Russia relations as maneuvering between the ideas of "Greater Europe" and "Wider Europe." [17] These ideas

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[13] Zellner, "Russia and the OSCE," 390–91.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Elena Kropatcheva, "The Evolution of Russia's OSCE Policy: From the Promises of the Helsinki Final Act to the Ukrainian Crisis," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 14, doi:10.1080/14782804.2014.1001823.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Pernille Rieker and Kristian Lundby Gjerde, "The EU, Russia and the Potential for Dialogue – Different Readings of the Crisis in Ukraine," *European Security* 25, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 305–6, doi:10.1080/09662839.2016.1186013.

represent European security systems built, respectively, on a Brussels-Moscow-Ankara axis and on Euro-Atlantic structures. These are alternatives for Russia's integration into European security architecture, but the authors present the idea of "Wider Europe" as contradictory to the Kremlin's interests of multipolarity and, therefore, infeasible.[18] All these interpretations are important observations of probable behavior by Russia, yet their focus is too narrow. They are modelled on the notion of Russia's interests and aspirations as objective and internally coherent.

A step towards a more sophisticated understanding of Russia's interests is made by Andrei P. Tsygankov. Although he sees Russia's foreign interests as the products of international developments, he introduces the idea that the interests of the Kremlin are changing and are formed by multiple visions. Tsygankov theorizes at least five different visions of Russian foreign interests (New Thinking, Liberal Westernism, Great Power Balancing, Great Power Pragmatism, and Assertiveness) that are additionally effected by three traditional Russian foreign policy schools (Westernism, Statism, and Civilizationalism).[19] Such theoretical approach shows a completely different understanding of Russia's foreign policy-making and demonstrates the diversity of the existing intellectual tracks.

Despite his broader approach to Kremlin's foreign policy interests, Tsygankov still considers that there are objective interests that change together with the leading personalities. Mikhail Gorbachev's new thinking changed Leonid Brezhnev's isolationism, then it was replaced by Boris Yeltsin's and Andrei Kozyrev's idealism, which eventually was substituted by Yevgeni Primakov's realistic agenda, and so forth.[20] This interpretation is limited because of the lack of attention to the interaction between different discourses on Russia's foreign policy. Tsygankov's conceptual understanding of Russia's foreign policy fails to notice that all of the possible visions/discourses can interact and partake at the same historical time.

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[18] Ibid., 307–8.
[19] Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, 2. ed (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publ, 2010), 221–31.
[20] Ibid., 227–31.

3. Plurality of interests and the domestic. Constructivist input

There is however another stream of scholars, who do not consider Russia's foreign policy to be an unquestionable monolith formed by stable interests. In his research on the question of recognition between the West and Russia, Erik Ringmar claims that it is impossible to know what a state's interests are unless one can know who that state is. He comes to this argument by explaining that interests are not given *a priori*, but "always connected to a *someone* for whom they are interests."[21] In the case of Russia, Derek Averre suggests that its foreign policy is a contestation between the supporters of sovereign autonomy and more moderate formation that promote engagement with Europe.[22] Ted Hopf highlights that "domestic society, its identities, discourses, and relationships to the state, must be brought back into any constructivist account of world politics."[23] He further distinguishes at least three discourses that form Russia's foreign policy. The "new Western Russia" discourse advocates close country's ties with the US and Europe. *Visa versa* the "new soviet Russia" alienates the state *vis-à-vis* the Western actors and opposes the possibilities of positive mutual agenda. Finally, "liberal essentialists" are leaning towards closer cooperation with the European actors and look suspiciously to such relations with the US.[24] Such a plurality of strategic foreign policy visions added to the one outlined by Tsygankov illustrates that the concept of stable Russia's interests needs to be problematized.

The perspective of the ontological security literature offers one way of making sense of the lack of consensus on Russia's external interests. Flemming Splidsboel Hansen suggests that Russia lacks joint identity after the collapse of the USSR. Identity wise, the only unifying notion is the existence of the external others. Hansen explains that making the West into the main other was "a successful act of political engineering," and prevented Russia from the difficult endeavor for its own identity.[25] Since there is no

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[21] Erik Ringmar, "The Recognition Game: Soviet Russia Against the West," *Cooperation and Conflict* 37, no. 2 (June 2002): 131, doi:10.1177/0010836702037002973.

[22] Derek Averre, "The Ukraine Conflict: Russia's Challenge to European Security Governance," *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 4 (April 20, 2016): 718, doi:10.1080/09668136.2016.1176993.

[23] Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities & Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2002), 278.

[24] Ibid., 209.

[25] Flemming Splidsboel Hansen, "Russia's Relations with the West: Ontological Security through Conflict," *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 359, 371, doi:10.1080/13569775.2016.1201314.

established Russian identity, different syntheses of foreign policy visions become possible. Moreover, these syntheses can be formed instrumentally by employing them to reach the narrow interests of the groups that are dominating the leadership of the state. As long as there is no consensus on the identity and interests of the state, these policy areas can be relatively easily misrepresented as the best course for Russia as a whole.

A versatile understanding of Russia's interest and its exposure to the influence of individual interest-groups supports the constructivist assumption that international relations have to be approached through categories and concepts of social nature. For example, Bill McSweeney explains the phenomenon of security as relationship rather than commodity, therefore, the human dimension is the most important when one seeks knowledge on the phenomenon.[26] In this dimension, the meanings of state, its interests and behavior, are coming from interaction among individuals rather than being determined by structures. Hereby, a cooperation issue can be approached similarly: as the product of social interaction, not as the outcome of objective and stable interests. Such conceptual approach allows us to grasp individual meanings through the practices which embody these meanings and are situated in historic conditions.[27] An emphasis on socialization and its circumstances is important when choosing methodological instruments to acquire a better understanding of Russia's policy on OSCE. A constructivist access point nevertheless gives only a spatial direction, i.e. where to look for the sources of discrepancies. Alas, it seems limited in providing the clue that would equip us with the answer what to look for.

When socialization through international actors' interaction is approached without any guidelines, even the greatest constructivist scholars and the most extended studies end up with a Sisyphean task. Although constructivist research is supposed to demonstrate the ambiguity of actors' interests, knowingly taking only a fragment of a larger spectrum of the actor's full set of motivations, this approach often leads to a general overemphasis on the fragmented nature of investigation. For example, Iver B. Neumann conducted a groundbreaking study "Russia and the Idea of Europe," where his constructivist take on

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[26] Bill McSweeney, *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 69 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 15–22, 218.

[27] Ibid., 218.

Russia's interaction with the West demonstrated that when Russia reflects Europe, it reflects itself.[28] Ever since, Russia's image as a receiver rather than an active contributor to the European normative system, remains dominant on the scientific agenda. This shifts our attention away from attending to domestic factors when Russia's OSCE policy is analyzed.

4. *Realist-constructivism: a guided journey to the domestic*

Looking deeper to the topic of consensus on the driving forces in Russia's external policy, it must be said that there is no clear-cut answer if such a common understanding exists. Some guidance is provided by Alexander Sergunin, who writes that there are signs of consensus between the major Russian foreign policy schools and that all of them emphasize the role of national interests. Yet he admits that the meaning of these interests stays contested.[29] While the major schools are able to identify the existing threats for Russia, they "are still not ready to go beyond negativism and construct a positive security concept for the future."[30] In this light, it is no wonder that discrepancies in the decisions of Moscow appear in apparently similar situations. Since the role of interests is important, Russian international moves can be reasoned through the rationalist perspective. However, supposedly established interests might be more contested inside Russia than is assumed by taking the state as a unit of analysis. When it comes to contradicting decisions of Moscow, constructivist approach offers the possibility to reconstruct the internal dimension of policy-making, and seems to be necessary to complement the predominantly rationalist tradition of explaining Russia.

The differences between rationalist and constructivist research agendas in the context of Russia's international behavior is put in a nutshell by Elias Götz, who makes a distinction between three different approaches to Russia's behavior: 1) "revisionist Russia," 2) "victim Russia," and 3) "troublemaker Russia."[31] The researchers of the first two categories take the assumption that the interests of the Kremlin

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[28] Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, The New International Relations (London: Routledge, 1996), 194.

[29] Alexander Anatol′evič Sergunin, *Explaining Russian Foreign Policy Behavior: Theory and Practice*, Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society 147 (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2016), 130–32.

[30] Ibid., 131.

[31] Götz, "Russia, the West, and the Ukraine Crisis," 251–56.

are stable. More precisely, the revisionist approach considers Russia as inherently aggressive entity, which challenges the Western world order and seeks destabilization and domination in the post-soviet area. Advocates of the victim approach, in contrast, interpret Russia as a status-quo power seeking peace, stability, and implementation of its own strategic interests in its neighborhood. Recent aggressiveness of the Kremlin is considered as the result of the Western hostile policy in Russia's "near abroad." Both of these approaches simplify Russia to either a tameless demon or a guiltless victim and can be linked to a rationalist scientific logic.

The "troublemaker" perspective has a more constructivist nature and avoids the demon-victim dichotomy by inviting one to take a deeper look into the internal political reality of Russia. The supporters of this approach pay the most of attention to the domestic political and economic developments, and the effects of foreign policy on the individual interest groups that are able to influence further policy-making. There are three main arguments underlying the works of the "troublemaker" perspective: 1) the Kremlin pursues foreign policy crises to turn population's attention away from the domestic economic and political problems, 2) Russia's leadership seeks to protect Russia from democratic spillover effect, and 3) the crises are engineered when they serve the interests of influential individual groupings.[32] Although this approach mostly stresses the role of elites and their rational interests, it demonstrates well how narrower individual interests and the domestic circumstances can stand behind the supposed rationalities of Russia as a unitary entity.

This research recognizes that both rationalist and constructivist notions are important in the endeavor to understand the domestic developments influencing Russia's OSCE policy. It mostly relies on the logic of the constructivist stream of literature by emphasizing the importance of the internal developments in Russia and exploring them as intersubjective phenomena. Yet this does not mean that interests are rejected as a tool to for explaining Russia's foreign policy. They outline the directions that can be followed to grasp deeper and less obvious factors such as shifts of identities or constellations of

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[32] Ibid., 255.

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individual interest-groups. Such approach can be considered close to the one described as "realist-constructivist approach" by Tsygankov.[33] Realist-constructivism takes a clear direction of research from rationalist school and brings into the spotlight domestic factors. It does not only consider "world as social interaction, not a natural necessity,"[34] but also takes into consideration power and structure. As Samuel J. Barkin explains, theoretical approaches are not castles and the researchers have to avoid "definitional overstretch." While epistemologically and ontologically constructivism and realism are different, the difference between them might appear to be surprisingly small while conducting an empirical research.[35]

Application of realist-constructivist approach should be helpful when reaching the main research goal, which is to create a better understanding of why Russia tends to cooperate at times, while ignoring OSCE's norms at other points. Looking from the constructivist perspective, research focuses on the domestic factors or, more precisely, it investigates the dynamics of different foreign policy visions, interests of the decision-makers and circumstances determining local political climate. To have an even clearer direction, the research employs a realist notion of interests. Such merging should not be considered cacophonous, because constructivism is not rejecting the general idea of interests. Constructivists rather seek to understand the internal dynamics of different interests and the circumstances that affect concrete state's decisions. The following chapter serves to provide an interpretation of Russia's interests expressed through the official discourse during the wars in Georgia and Ukraine.

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[33] Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: Honor in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012), 268–69.
[34] Ibid., 268.
[35] J. Samuel Barkin, "Realist Constructivism," *International Studies Review* 5, no. 3 (2003): 154–57.

Chapter II. Ethnic motivations as the bridge to the understanding of domestic

1. *Factor of ethnicity*

While looking for the interests that were driving Russia during the wars in Georgia and Ukraine, one needs to understand that there is no single concern that would show the full picture of Moscow's actual motivation. This research nonetheless highlights the notion of the responsibility to defend the so called Russian "compatriots" (*Rus: sootechestvenniki*). Having a narrower perspective allows a deeper look into some of the specific domestic developments that shaped this particular official discourse of the Kremlin. Such deeper look to the domestic is enabled through using ethnic conflict theories. Before elaborating on these theories, I discuss here why compatriots' notion can be seen as the central one in government's discourse.

First of all, "comprehensive, effective protection of the rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots" is one of the main priorities established in Russia's consecutive foreign policy concepts of 2008[36], 2013[37], and 2016.[38] Compatriots are Russian minorities that stayed to live in the newly created states after the collapse of the Soviet Union. A high importance is given to this issue, since they combined as many as 25 million Russians living outside the Russian Federation in early 1990s.[39] In Ukraine, they consisted 17% of the whole population according census of 2001 and, in Georgia, only 1,55% according census of 2002. Although the Russian population in Georgia was not big prior the conflict in 2008, the compatriots' issue was still a key one since Russia's military intervention to South Ossetia was

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[36] The Kremlin, "The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2008," accessed May 11, 2017, http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4116.

[37] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, 2013," accessed May 11, 2017, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186.

[38] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2016" (Approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, December 1, 2016).

[39] W. Rogers Brubaker, "Citizenship Struggles in Soviet Successor States," *International Migration Review* 26, no. 2 (1992): 269, doi:10.2307/2547057.

reasoned through the responsibility to defend Russian citizens.[40] They combined 90% Ossetian population in the result of Kremlin's "passportization" policy.[41]

Secondly, the Kremlin has been working for years to create the structure to support Russian communities abroad and to maintain their strong affiliation with *rodina* (rus.: *родина*). Moscow forms the opinion of compatriots through the government program *Rossotrudnichestvo*, semi-governmental organization *Russky Mir,* state-owned and private Russian media (e.g. Russia Today and Sputnik), social media channels (e.g. infamous "Troll factory" in St. Petersburg),[42] and other means, such as cyber-attacks against Ukrainian grid.[43] This structure is further reinforced through economic means, corruption networks and even Orthodox Church.[44] All together this package helps Russia to cultivate its influence on Russian minorities abroad. As a result, they are available to be mobilized for broader Kremlin's foreign policy interest and feel more confident when issues with the local governments emerge. In this way, the Kremlin creates legitimacy for its special rights in the post-soviet area, which is also known as "Russian near abroad" or "Russian world."

Thirdly, the Kremlin successfully uses compatriots to ideologically position itself in front of the general Russian population and boost its domestic popularity. Country's establishment successfully created legends about the fascists, who try to destroy Russian compatriots in the neighboring states,[45] and perverted "gayropa,"[46] which aims to distort traditional Orthodox values by the crawling-enlargement to

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[40] Oleg Shchedrov, "Medvedev Vows to Protect Compatriots in South Ossetia," *Reuters*, August 8, 2008, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-ossetia-medvedev-idUSL863997220080808.

[41] Center for European Policy Analysis, "Russia's Passportpolitik: Implications for the Baltic States," Analysis, (2008), http://cepa.org/index/?id=cc3d7fc970bf568a7724296d431785f0.

[42] Alec Luhn, "Game of Trolls: The Hip Digi-Kids Helping Putin's Fight for Online Supremacy," *The Guardian*, August 18, 2015, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/18/trolls-putin-russia-savchuk.

[43] FireEye, Inc., "Cyber Attacks on Ukrainian Grid: What You Should Know," FireEye Industry Intelligence Report, (2016), https://www.fireeye.com/content/dam/fireeye-www/global/en/solutions/pdfs/fe-cyber-attacks-ukrainian-grid.pdf.

[44] Vera Zakem, Paul Saunders, and Michael Markowitz, "Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia's Strategy, Tactics, and Influence in the Former Soviet Union" (CNA Analysis & Solutions, 2015), i–ii.

[45] Sohrab Ahmari, "Debunking Putin's 'Fascist Kiev' Myth," *Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 2015, sec. Opinion, http://www.wsj.com/articles/debunking-putins-fascist-kiev-myth-1438285884.

[46] "Gayropa" is a term mostly used by Russian internet trolls. The term targets EU's efforts to assure equal rights for sexual minorities and seeks to show them as a sign of European moral decadence. In this context, Russia is represented as an alternative pole of "true" Orthodox values.

the states where compatriots form significant parts of the local populations.[47] These legends help to build

an alternative system of values *vis-a-vis* the Wester liberal one, to unify Russian identity, and to consolidate

popular support at home. In the result of policies implemented against Georgia and Ukraine, Putin's public

support skyrocketed to startling heights. Levada Center investigated that positive opinion regarding Putin

reached 88% in the aftermath of the war in Georgia and 83% in the result of the war in Ukraine.[48]

Finally, officials explicitly outline the responsibility to protect compatriots and Russian citizens as

the main reason for the interventions to Georgia and Ukraine. In his press release following the

negotiations with French president Nicolas Sarkozy, president Dmitry Medvedev was explicitly clear that

the main objective during the Ruso-Georgian War was to stop the aggression against Russian citizens:

"Most important of all is that we achieved our set objectives. What were these objectives? First, we

protected Russian Federation citizens living in South Ossetia."[49] Almost analogues statement was made

by president Vladimir Putin in his address to Russian authorities with a request to incorporate Crimea and

Sevastopol city into the administrative structure of the Russian Federation during the development of

crisis in Ukraine: "These were sincere feelings of solidarity. It is at historic turning points such as these

that a nation demonstrates its maturity and strength of spirit. The Russian people showed this maturity

and strength through their united support for their compatriots."[50]

The card of compatriots evidently takes an important part in the Kremlin's rhetoric and is

presented as a reason for many of its actions. The special role attributed to the compatriots in Russia's

foreign policy invites us to look into domestic discourse through the lens of ethnic conflict theories.

Regardless of whether the discourse is a mere tool of political manipulation, or actually expresses the

embeddedness of certain political understandings in the society, the Kremlin can thus draw on these

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[47] Kevin Moss, "Russian Occidentalism: Gayropa and Russia's Traditional Values" (4th European Conference on Politics and Gender, Uppsala, Sweden, 2015), https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/3fd2a3e1-e823-401f-b479-c394caf8978f.pdf.
[48] Mikhail Sokolov and Claire Bigg, "Putin Forever? Russian President's Ratings Skyrocket Over Ukraine," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, accessed May 12, 2017, https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-putin-approval-ratings/25409183.html.
[49] Dmitry Medvedev, "Press Statement Following Negotiations with French President Nicolas Sarkozy," accessed May 12, 2017, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/1072.
[50] Vladimir Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation," *President of Russia*, 2014, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603.

discursive resources without a need to fabricate anything. To have a better understanding of what factors are the most important in the analysis of the conflicts based on ethnic motivation, this study uses clues from ethnic conflict theories.

2. *Political competition*

In order to streamline the discussion given the scope of this paper, as its analytical staring point this study uses traditional distinction between the instrumental and affective motivations. There is also a wide stream of literature that analyzes the effect of structural economic factors on the ethnic conflicts[51] which should be considered in depth in a larger study. If future researches would seek to explain a full extent of ethnicity on Russia's international cooperation, economic factors should not be forgotten.

The instrumental logic allows one to explore material incentives of decision-makers, while the affective perspective enables researcher to investigate more general ideological aspects relevant to making the decision to start a war.[52] Usually studies of ethnic conflicts analyze both decision-makers' and ethnic groups' motivation, but this study consciously limits itself to the decision-makers. Such decision is made, because state-representing officials are the ones who make the decisions whether to involve international organizations into the resolution of conflict or not. Since this study research Russia's policy on OSCE, not the reasons to wage wars against Georgia and Ukraine, the focus on the government and its officials makes more sense.

Instrumental motivation to wage ethnic wars consists of: 1) international political considerations, 2) economic gains, 3) domestic or internal gains, and 4) military considerations.[53] I here stick to the concept of domestic gains, forasmuch as 1, 2, and 4 motivations are mostly related to external factors affecting state's behavior. As the previous chapter discusses, the literature on external factors determining Russia's foreign policy is already extensive, while the domestic indicators remain mostly overlooked. Thus, ethnicity

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[51] E.g.: Lars-Erik Cederman, Nils B. Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison," *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 3 (August 2011): 478–95, doi:10.1017/S0003055411000207; Francesco Caselli and Wilbur John Coleman, "On the Theory of Ethnic Conflict," *Journal of the European Economic Association* 11 (January 2013): 161–92, doi:10.1111/j.1542-4774.2012.01103.x.
[52] David Carment, "The International Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict: Concepts, Indicators, and Theory," *Journal of Peace Research* 30, no. 2 (May 1993): 138–39, doi:10.1177/0022343393030002002.
[53] Ibid., 138.

related domestic gains have the central role when trying to understand instrumental motivations that Russia's decision-makers had during the wars in Georgia and Ukraine.

Ethnicity related domestic gains may have various forms. For example, V.P. Gagnon relates them with the possibility to shift the popular attention from the pressing issues, which the elites are not able to deal with, to the threat of groups from outside.[54] In the cases studied by this research, it means that the Kremlin sought to shift the attention from some of the internal developments (e.g. economic hardship, public dissatisfaction about increasingly autocratic government's practices, corruption, etc.) to the oppression of Russian compatriots carried out by Georgian and Ukrainian governments. Such domestic gains do not make a lot of sense, when trying to explain elites' decision to (non)cooperate in the framework of OSCE. Involvement of OSCE is a decision primarily meant to internationalize the conflict and attract the attention of international, not the domestic community. It can look like then that the domestic gains are not able to explain Russia's OSCE policy.

A bit different perspective on the domestic gains is taken by Stephen M. Saideman, who offers to pay attention to the domestic political competition.[55] He theorizes that the democratic regimes are more likely to increase their aggressiveness and attention to irredentist matters before the elections, while autocratic elites tend to do the same once they lose the support of the state's power structures, such as police or armed forces. Although Russia is a tricky case in the way that it is difficult to attribute status of democracy or autocracy to it, this theoretical approach seems promising when trying to address country's OSCE policy from the domestic gains perspective. The importance of the domestic political competition theoretically can be reasoned using Robert D. Putnam's observations on the interconnectedness between the decisions of foreign and domestic policies. Among the rest of his findings, Putnam explains that domestic contexts and possible internal reverberations affect foreign policy decisions.[56]

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[54] V. P. Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 130–66, doi:10.2307/2539081.

[55] Stephen M. Saideman, "Inconsistent Irredentism? Political Competition, Ethnic Ties, and the Foreign Policies of Somalia and Serbia," *Security Studies* 7, no. 3 (March 1998): 51–93, doi:10.1080/09636419808429351.

[56] Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (June 1988): 460, doi:10.1017/S0020818300027697.

Applying this logic to the case of Russia-OSCE relations, decision to (non)cooperate can have an effect on Russia's domestic political competition in two aspects. Firstly, the international support might be needed if the regime is weak and the external approval can give a moral advantage *vis-à-vis* the political opponents. The example of this argument can be Boris Yeltsin's struggle to maintain the power in 1993-1996. Successful integration into the European security structure helped him to overcome the constitutional crisis in 1993 and to win the presidential elections in 1996.[57] On the other hand, the regime might want to diminish the role of organization, if it criticizes the ruling elite and threatens regime's legitimacy. In the real-life situation, it would mean that the Kremlin is highly unsatisfied about OSCE's criticism on the quality of Russia's democracy and thus tries to lower organization's interference into own affairs. Combining these two observations and the puzzle of contradictory Russia's policy on OSCE, two hypotheses can be raised:

H$_1$: *The Kremlin seeks more cooperation with the OSCE when the regime feels threatened domestically.*

H$_2$: *The Kremlin reduces cooperation with the OSCE when the organization's criticism on the level of democracy in Russia increases.*

3. *Normative competition*

Coming back to the affective motivations in the course of ethnic conflicts, at least six different factors concerning ideational incentives can be found: 1) historic injustice, 2) common identity, 3) religion, 4) a shared sense of injustice, 5) a degree of inchoate racial-cultural affinity, and 6) humanitarian considerations.[58] Most of these factors are not relevant when addressing the relationship between Russia and OSCE. For example, OSCE does not represent any religion, therefore, it would be difficult to imagine why Russia should take the decision to close OSCE's mission in Georgia. Affective motivation nonetheless is worth mentioning because of the common identity factor.

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[57] David J. Galbreath, "Putting the Colour into Revolutions? The OSCE and Civil Society in the Post-Soviet Region," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25, no. 2–3 (September 2009): 175, doi:10.1080/13523270902860519.

[58] Carment, "The International Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict," 139.

In the ethnic conflicts related literature, identity's role is interpreted in two ways – it can be understood as a primordial or constructivist phenomenon.[59] Primordialist camp explains that ethnic conflicts originate from preexisting and stable cultural differences, while constructivists see identity as a contextual and politically interchangeable factor, which to a large extent serves the interests of the political elites once they need to reason war or cooperation.[60] While primordial account tells us that cultural tension between Russia and the West is stable and therefore the decisions on the mutual cooperation should be more or less the same during both wars in Georgia and Ukraine, constructivist perspective enables us to look for the shifts in Moscow's identity policy in-between these crises.

Some of the analyses examining Russia's identity policy in the Georgian-Ukrainian interbellum period offer a particularly interesting contribution to this study. For instance, Gulnaz Sharafutdinova discovers that the dominant part of Russian society, previously known as the "Putin majority," disintegrated and was replaced by the "overwhelming majority" around 2011-2012. While the prior one was glued by the economic growth, taming of oligarchs, and an alternative of strong-hand rule counter to chaotic Western democracy, the later one is bonded by patriotism, traditional values, and morals.[61] According to Sharafutdinova, this shift not only allowed the establishment to diminish growing popularity of local nationalist groups by transforming their promoted values from a radical discourse into a milder conservatism, but also enabled Russia to exit from the normative defense against the West and to turn offensive by representing itself as "the last bulwark for defending traditional Christian values."[62] Keeping in mind Russia's previous uneasiness about OSCE's third basket activities implemented by the Office for

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[59] Consuelo Cruz, "Identity and Persuasion: How Nations Remember Their Pasts and Make Their Futures," *World Politics* 52, no. 3 (April 2000): 275, doi:10.1017/S0043887100016555.

[60] To be absolutely precise, Consuelo Cruz also talks about a third – instrumental – approach to the identity's role in ethnic conflicts. It is to a large extent related with the constructivist approach, but puts more emphasis on the role of elites in the formation of identities to meet their rational preferences. This approach considers identities as artificial products of conscious social engineering and disregards the possibility of natural shifts in normative meanings that the groups possess. I do not seek to enter into this debate and choose to talk about constructivist approach instead, whereas it leaves the space for both scenarios: changes of identities can happen both under the influence of elites and autonomously from their activity.

[61] Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, "The Pussy Riot Affair and Putin's Démarche from Sovereign Democracy to Sovereign Morality," *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (July 4, 2014): 615–18, doi:10.1080/00905992.2014.917075.

[62] Ibid., 616.

Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and combining them with Sharafutdinova's findings, a completely new analytical perspective to Russia-OSCE relations opens.

This new perspective suggests that the existing contradictions in Russia's decisions to (non)cooperate in the framework of OSCE might be affected by normative underpinnings. The tension between the organization and the Kremlin gradually increased in the context of "color revolutions" in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005), where ODIHR's election reports sparked the civic resistance against the governments' manipulations during the elections.[63] In 2004, the ODIHR openly criticized Moscow for the first time by stating that the elections "overall did not adequately reflect principles necessary for a healthy democratic election."[64] The relations kept worsening until the War in Georgia, which coincided with the lowest point in Russia-OSCE relations. In 2008, Moscow was enforcing so many restrictions on OSCE's electoral observing mission that the ODIHR had to cancel its mission, which monitored Russia's presidential elections.[65] Although Putin's "United Russia" enjoyed tremendous public support during that period, it also became dependent on the ability to manipulate the results of elections through the control of mass media, regional elites, and oligarch groups.[66] Arguably, Kremlin's popularity was based on the control of the crucial opinion-formation tools, but not the common system of values. While serving as the voice of "naming and shaming" and offering a coherent system of democratic values, the ODIHR had a potential to spark similar upheavals in Russia as those in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan.

Russia increasingly saw the third basket or the human dimension of the OSCE as problematic and sought its reform. The most active discussions were held when Russia's president Medvedev in 2008 raised the idea of a new European Security Treaty and culminated with the so-called Corfu process. The main Kremlin's goal in these discussions was to shift OSCE's normative nature from the one described as

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[63] Galbreath, "Putting the Colour into Revolutions?," 174.

[64] ODIHR, "Russian Federation. Presidential Election. OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report" (Warsaw: OSCE, 2004), 1.

[65] OSCE, "OSCE/ODIHR Regrets That Restrictions Force Cancellation of Election Observation Mission to Russian Federation," 2008, http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/49438.

[66] Michael McFaul and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "Elections and Voters," in *Developments in Russian Politics 7*, ed. Stephen White, Richard Sakwa, and Henry E. Hale, 7. ed. (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2010), 79.

"democratizer"[67] to the platform where the leaderships of the states would be able to discuss security issues on entirely pragmatic basis. "Naked national self-interests"[68] had to replace all ideological considerations. Respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence had to take the dominant normative position in the security environment instead of the previous emphasis on promotion of democratic practices and human rights.[69] This alternative vision appeared not to be sufficient enough and failed to trigger broader reforms of the OSCE. Arguably, Russia's alternative offered to narrow OSCE's role to the traditional security questions, but did not provide a positive reflection on organization's normative dimension.

Such constellation of Moscow's efforts to cooperate in the framework of OSCE inspires an argument the main obstacle for Russia's more active participation in OSCE is Moscow's normative weakness. Combined with the ontological security observations, this argument suggests that Russia might refuse to cooperate at times, because the Kremlin takes a defensive normative stance and alienates itself against the West. The decision not to cooperate during the war in Georgia should be examined in this light. Meanwhile, the decision whether to cooperate or not during the war in Ukraine could have a different background, because the Kremlin already possessed a different set of values. Traditional values might have become that spark of self-confidence enabling Russia to access the cooperative relations with the West on equal terms. Such intuition gets even stronger when we take into account a current rise of the radical right in Europe and the amicable relationship of its leadership with the Kremlin. The coalitions of the radical right and their attempts to transform the dominant European normative climate is not an unprecedented phenomenon in the European history. It can be tentatively hypothesized that the Kremlin's decision to cooperate in the framework of the OSCE is a chance to re-enter the organization and seek its further reform on the basis of a newly consolidated identity informed by traditional values. Before making such

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[67] Elena Kropatcheva, "Russia and the Role of the OSCE in European Security: A 'Forum' for Dialog or a 'Battlefield' of Interests?," *European Security* 21, no. 3 (September 2012): 376, doi:10.1080/09662839.2011.640323.

[68] Andrei Zagorski, "The Russian Proposal for a Treaty on European Security: From the Medvedev Initiative to the Corfu Process," in *OSCE Yearbook 2009*, ed. Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg / IFSH (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co KG, 2010), 45, http://www.nomos-elibrary.de/index.php?doi=10.5771/9783845222240-43.

[69] Ibid., 47.

claims, nonetheless, it is important firstly to explore if the normative dimension features in the Kremlin's discourse towards the OSCE in our contradicting cases. To do this, I hereby construct the following hypothesis:

H3: *The Kremlin's cooperation with the OSCE increases together with an enhanced ability to reform OSCE from within in line with the consolidated conservative normative agenda.* In other words, the Kremlin will be more prone to cooperation when it feels confident about its normative stance and sees the cooperation as an opportunity to reform OSCE along its conservative agenda.

4. Methodological guidelines

To probe all three hypotheses, this research draws from the constructivist toolbox a comparative case-based study. The decision to use this type of study is made because it allows for a better understanding of Russia's (non)cooperation cases in Georgia and Ukraine. By taking this approach, I focus on the cases rather than the variables, highlighting the central objective of this study, namely a close understanding of discrepancies in Moscow's OSCE policy in the course of wars in Georgia and Ukraine.

High importance for these cases is given since they contain different meanings attached to what from the *outside* look like analogous situations. These different meanings are: 1) Russia's decision to close OSCE's mission in Georgia in 2008 and 2) Russia's decision to open OSCE's mission in Ukraine in 2014. By focusing on a small-N comparison, case-based comparative study searches only for limited generalizations about historical divergence, and seeks for concrete knowledge about specific social process through the emphasis on the complexity of its *internal* reasons.[70] While variable-oriented case studies most often handle large number of cases and seek to find regular behavioral patterns,[71] the main task for the case-based approach is to go deep into the context and look for the "thickness"[72] of produced qualitative knowledge.

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[70] Donatella Della Porta, "Comparative Analysis: Case-Oriented versus Variable-Oriented Research," in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, ed. Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, Reprinted with corr (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), 203.
[71] Ibid., 221.
[72] Ibid., 208.

Most of the existing literature of Russia's OSCE policy focuses on the role of external factors and international constellations as the sources of explanation for Russia's positions within the OSCE. Among the most discussed factors are enlargement of NATO and the EU, Russia's international exclusion, and realist power plays.[73] Depicting them in the most similar cases comparative logic, it is possible to say that both cases of 2008 and 2014 are affected by a number of identical external reasons, but the outcome – OSCE policy – is different (1 table). As it was demonstrated in the first chapter, these external factors consider Moscow's interests to be objective and stable, and to a large extent overlooks their plurality, interchangeability, and dependence on the particular contexts.

Table 1, Overview of Factors Shaping Russia's OSCE Policy

War in	OSCE mission	Domestic factors		Reasoned through compatriots	Western organizations' enlargement	Realist power plays	Russia's international exclusion
		Political competition	Normative competition				
Georgia	-	?	?	+	+	+	+
Ukraine	+	?	?	+	+	+	+

Since the extent of this research is limited and a full depiction of the domestic context during the wars in Georgia and Ukraine is infeasible, ethnic dimension of the conflict is used to take an analytical shortcut. Although originally case-based comparative method looks at the full spectrum of values, beliefs, and feelings (sentiments) attributed to the particular policy decisions,[74] the scope of this research does not allow to benefit from all of the advantages provided by the qualitative nature of this method. The shortcut, which is made by employing ethnic conflict theories, nonetheless should be understood as the effort to indicate the most important domestic factors leading officials of the state to participate or disregard the international cooperation. The most important ethnicity-related domestic factors, as demonstrated

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[73] E.g. Kropatcheva, "The Evolution of Russia's OSCE Policy"; Averre, "The Ukraine Conflict."
[74] Dvora Yanow, "Interpretative Analysis and Comparative Research," in *Comparative Policy Studies: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges*, ed. Isabelle Engeli, Research Methods Series (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 133.

throughout this chapter, are the internal political competition in Russia and the changes in the dominant domestic normative system. Despite the emphasis which is put on these factors, they should not be regarded as *variables* in the positivist sense of this term, but rather as directions or lenses enabling research to be more concise.

Following the logic of the most similar cases research design, successful reconstruction of political and normative competition related narratives would mean that these two are the partaking prerequisites[75] in the examined cases. The narratives are formed while analyzing primary and semi-primary Russian sources. Primary sources in this context are statements, decisions, speeches, phone conversations, and other documents that are transcribed and accessible in English in the online databases of the Kremlin and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Writings on Russia's foreign policy theme made by the officials are also considered as primary sources. In this sense, minister Sergey Lavrov's and Vladislav Surkov's texts have particularly high significance. They show the official diplomatic discourse, while the semi-primary sources allow to reconstruct a broader domestic narrative on Russia's OSCE policy and its foreign policy at large. Semi-primary sources are the ones taken from the Russian government financed and foreign policy oriented platforms, namely Valdai Club, Russia in Global Affairs, and Russian International Affairs Council. All of these organizations receive a significant amount of attention and resources from the government, therefore, their publications can be considered as important contributions to the formation of Russia's foreign policy vision.

The search of both primary and semi-primary sources is executed using the search engines. Key-words that were used to find the most relevant texts for the political competition lens were "ODIHR," "OSCE," "election," "domestic," and "democracy." The key-words for the normative competition lens were "OSCE," "values," "norms," "conservative," "tradition," "moral," "spiritual," and "democracy." The timeframe of the primary sources cover six months before and after the decision to establish/close

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[75] Peter K. Manning and Betsy Cullum-Swan, "Narrative, Content, and Semiotic Analysis," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publ, 1994), 464.

the mission in the respective country and the one of the semi-primary sources is three years before and after the same decisions.

Chapter III. Noncooperation in Georgia

1. *Political competition*

Before starting to probe the hypotheses of this research, one important factor has to be emphasized: although constructivism suggests that we should find all of the answers in the official communication between Russia and the OSCE, we need to have a clear understanding of what we are looking for in order to be able to make any conclusions from that communication. As Vladislav Surkov, whose ideas will be very important sources in the following sections, puts it: "culture is manifest both in what people say and in what is not customary to talk about."[76] The same must be said about the culture of international relations and diplomacy. Therefore, before interpreting the meanings behind the official statements, speeches, and other documents we have to build an analytical frame from the semi-primary and secondary sources.

While discussing political competition in Russia around the time of the Georgian conflict, it must be underlined that the color revolutions in the neighboring states had a huge influence on the domestic political climate in Russia. The government interpreted them as a product of Western political engineering, and feared that efforts by the West would also reach Russian political institutions, which would eventually lead to a regime change in Moscow.[77] As demonstrated while forming the third hypothesis, the ODIHR was one of the key instruments influencing the domestic opinion on whether Russia's politicians were elected legitimately in the post-soviet states and whether the ODIHR served as a voice of "naming and shaming." This fear of falling into the same Western traps manifested itself in the decision to contain the OSCE in the post-soviet area, since it is reflected in their harsh criticism on the ODIHR's election observation missions. For example, Russia's MFA reacted to the observation mission's in Belarus report by the following passage:

[76] Vladislav Surkov, "Russian Political Culture: The View from Utopia," *Russian Politics and Law* 46, no. 5 (September 1, 2008): 15, doi:10.2753/RUP1061-1940460502.

[77] Jeanne L. Wilson, "The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy," *Problems of Post-Communism* 57, no. 2 (March 1, 2010): 21, doi:10.2753/PPC1075-8216570202.

We find the elections' assessment by the OSCE/ODIHR observation mission disappointing, whose leadership holds that the OSCE cannot recognize the elections in Belarus as completely free and democratic.[78]

Threats hidden in the ODIHR's activity were seen amongst Russian leadership not only because of the collapsing regimes in the neighboring states, but it also was a reminder of the USSR's downfall. Fyodor Lukyanov, who is an important figure in shaping the intellectual facade of the Kremlin's foreign policy, reminds us that the human dimension of the OSCE had an important role in destroying the ideological monopoly of the USSR's communist party.[79] According Lukyanov, the only domestic faction raising worries about the "third basket," namely democracy and human rights, was the conservatives. Vladislav Surkov, who often is called the "Grey Kremlin's cardinal," and who is the person responsible for the creation of the conservative "United Russia," followed the same line of argumentation and responded to the possibility of a color revolution in Russia already in 2005:

There will be no uprisings here. We realize, of course, that these events have made an impression on many local politicians in Russia -- and on various foreign non-governmental organizations that would like to see the scenario repeated in Russia. We understand this. By now there are even technologies for overthrowing governments and schools where one can learn the trade, so to speak.[80]

In the aftermath of the color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, Surkov formed his notorious "sovereign" or "managed" democracy principle, that are discussed in the following section, from the perspective of political engineering. In the consecutive section this principle is addressed from an ideological perspective. One of the main components of forming the sovereign democracy concept is the wholeness or unity of nation, which might be undermined by the fragmented party system. Therefore,

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[78] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary on the Results of the Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Belarus," 2008, http://www.mid.ru/kommentarii_predstavitelya/-/asset_publisher/MCZ7HQuMdqBY/content/id/322888.

[79] Fyodor Lukyanov, "Debates About Values," *Russia in Global Affairs. Foreign Policy Research Foundation*, 2005, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_5339. Fyodor Lukyanov is an editor-in-Chief of Russia in Global Affairs, Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, and Research Director of the Valdai International Discussion Club. All of these institutions are governmental or semi-governmental entities directly financed by Russian government with a goal to reflect, develop and promote Russia's foreign policy vision.

[80] Uve Klussmann and Walter Mayar, "Interview with Kremlin Boss Vladislav Surkov: 'The West Doesn't Have to Love Us,'" *SPIEGEL ONLINE*, 2005, http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/spiegel-interview-with-kremlin-boss-vladislav-surkov-the-west-doesn-t-have-to-love-us-a-361236.html.

Surkov theorized that the Russian multiparty system has to be built on the foundations of a "divided electorate but united nation." The managed party system has to ensure the support for the political leader in the person of president, who is the main safeguard from chaos.[81] The very term of "managed" democracy develops from this narrative. The objective to have a stable, and for the leader working party system, is more important than the international opinion. Therefore, international intervention in domestic affairs have to be located at a tailor-made level for Russia. When Lukyanov discussed the tension between the Kremlin and the ODIHR, he summarized the Russian attitude towards the international intervention in precisely the same manner:

> This is our country. Our people elect their own leaders, and it is nobody else's affair. We are prepared to allow foreign observers to monitor our election process, but we will determine their number, the terms of their stay and what they can and cannot do. And we have no need of any "certificate of quality" from them.[82]

Although Lukyanov further disagrees that "locking the horns" with the West is a sign of a successful Russia's foreign policy, he admits that most of the voters and country's leadership has this peculiar attitude. The Kremlin uses the card of "successful" foreign politics to distract the attention from the internal issues and the usage of foreign policy as a scapegoat, gives a hint that the country's OSCE policy during the war in Georgia could also have been a case of "locking the horns" with the West. The statements of Russia's MFA strengthen this impression as they blame the West of having unconstructive tone in the diplomatic meetings after the war in Georgia and call for the reform in the OSCE's mechanisms of human dimension. For example, in the 13th Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Russian delegation emphasized the need for their partners to bear "a calm, constructive and unbiased character" during the talks and prioritized the discussion on the ODIHR's functioning.[83] A direct diplomatic interaction with the ODIHR further shows that Russia's officials sought to limit the role of the missions observing the elections by

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[81] Surkov, "Russian Political Culture," 13.

[82] Fyodor Lukyanov, "Thanks, But We Don't Need Your Monitors," *Russia in Global Affairs. Foreign Policy Research Foundation*, 2007, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/redcol/n_9816.

[83] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "On the Opening of the OSCE's 13th Human Dimension Implementation Meeting," 2008, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/rso/osce/-/asset_publisher/bzhxR3zkq2H5/content/id/322822.

imposing more rules on them and depicting their activity as discriminatory.[84] By looking at these examples, we can draw the conclusion that Russia was deliberately seeking to weaken the role of the ODIHR and that this issue was an important burden on the Russia-OSCE relationship.

While discussing the problematic communication with the West, president Medvedev takes the case of democracy and stresses that it is a relative term. Sometimes, tanks in the streets are not counted as the violation of democratic norms as it happened during the attempt to organize a Constitutional crisis in Moscow in 1993. Recently nevertheless even change of the governor complying to all the domestic Russian laws became a target of international criticism. This historical reference is followed by Medvedev's words, that Russia is unlike other nations and will not allow democracy-based international criticism to affect its politics: "Russia is special but this is the fate of any state, particularly any large nation. Russia will never be able to dissolve itself into a small state."[85] But here, we are already starting to reconstruct Russia's normative narrative, which concerns the third hypotheses of this research and is further examined in the consecutive section.

To conclude this section, a connection between the ODIHR's activity in Russia and the country's broader OSCE policy has to be reiterated. Moscow was clearly agitated by the criticism of the ODIHR on Russia's democratic development around 2008, and considered it to be an external threat for the stability in Russia. A personification of the regime and an implementation of the managed democracy idea, were developed by Surkov as tools to prevent Russia from the spillover of the color revolutions. However, when implemented, these notions led the Kremlin to an even deeper confrontation with the OSCE. The low level of mutual trust between Russia and the OSCE grew into a poisonous ideological confrontation. Having considered the events surrounding the Georgian crisis and Russia's interpretation of these, it is clear that their official statements cannot provide a complete picture explaining Russia's decision not to

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[84] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Yakovenko Converses with Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Janez Lenarcic," 2008, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzcA/content/id/326178.

[85] Dmitry Medvedev, "Transcript of the Meeting with the Participants in the International Club Valdai," *President of Russia*, 2008, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/1383.

cooperate during the Georgian crisis. We nonetheless find traces of confrontational narrative in Moscow's broader discourse on the ODIHR and the OSCE's human dimension. Thus, I suggest a link between ODIHR's criticism of Russia's domestic democratic development to have lasting consequences on its decision to choose noncooperation during the crisis in Georgia.

2. *Normative competition*

The normative climate in Russia around the Georgian crisis in 2008 was significantly influenced by the aforementioned Surkov, who then served as the Deputy Chief of the Presidential Administration and was named as the second most influential person in Russia by state elites.[86] As Richard Sakwa describes, Surkov's influence on the state's policy was unmistakable. Both Russia's controversial federalization reform and the principle of sovereign democracy were his intellectual products. These ideas were extensively debated among Russian public and intellectual figures, yet they did not meet significant resistance among them. His critics, proponents, and impartial commenters were all bounded by a mixture of mild liberalism and Russian interests.[87] Although it was already discussed in the first chapter, stating there is no single interpretation what these mysterious Russian interests are, Surkov's ideas provided a compromise between most of Russia's major foreign policy schools. It is his achievement that elites were "nationalized" and the ones who tried to resist his ideas, were marginalized as the "offshore aristocracy."
[88]

When analyzing the norms on which Russia's foreign policy is built, one needs to concentrate on the idea of sovereign democracy. This notion incorporates four main principles for the sake of successful governance of Russia: 1) the Russian nation, unlike the Western communities, is bounded by the wholeness, not individuality, therefore, it needs strong centralized government; 2) social and democratic changes are necessary, but they have to proceed without causing any harm to Russian wholeness; 3) politics have to be personalized to appeal to the Russian people (to illustrate this argument Surkov demonstrates

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[86] Klussmann and Mayar, "SPIEGEL Interview with Kremlin Boss Vladislav Surkov."
[87] Richard Sakwa, "Russian Political Culture Through the Eyes of Vladislav Surkov: Guest Editor's Introduction," *Russian Politics and Law* 46, no. 5 (September 1, 2008): 7, doi:10.2753/RUP1061-1940460500.
[88] Ibid., 5–6.

the relation between the personalization of institutions and their popular support among Russian citizens); 4) by emphasizing a need for harmony, it is an idealist, maybe even utopian vision.[89] In sum, sovereign democracy rejects the Western type of democracy as culturally, politically, and psychologically foreign to the Russian nation. Although Surkov admits that Russia's political system is to a certain extent backwards and has much to learn from the West, "imported" democracy is unwelcome. To meet Russian needs, the state has to be ran by an iconic figure, like Putin, its political arena has to be engineered to prevent the fragmentation, and it has to be a process rather than a finite goal.

However, sovereign democracy has not solved the problem of ontological (in)security and did not offer a well-developed alternative normative system that could compete with the democratic set of values promoted by the West. The only unifying notion is the one of wholeness, but it lacks clarity regarding what unites the Russian nation. It reflected a style of leadership and governance, but did not offer an explanation of what the Russian nation is. An idea of 'a special nation with a propensity to strong leadership' is insufficient to describe Russian identity. Despite the references to what later will become known as "moral politics," the discussion on Russian spirituality was opaque and only at an intellectually embryonic stage at that moment. When *Der Spiegel* asked what ideological path will follow the newly created "United Russia" party, which until this day holds the power in Russia under the rule of Putin, Surkov articulated the ideological direction, but was still quite abstract:

> We consider [United Russia] to be on the conservative end of the spectrum, and we are trying to strengthen this position. The left wing already has plenty of supporters; three of the four parties in the parliament are patriotic leftists. From that perspective, United Russia represents both liberal and conservative values, in a uniquely Russian sense.[90]

In 2007, Surkov was still somewhat unclear as he talked about the possibility of cultural greatness coded in spirituality, and the difference between Russians and the Westerners as the difference between intuition and rationality respectively. He also made references to the "Third Rome," which means the spiritual duty of messianism. Moscow inherited this spiritual duty as it rose to be the "Third Rome"

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[89] Surkov, "Russian Political Culture," 21.
[90] Klussmann and Mayar, "SPIEGEL Interview with Kremlin Boss Vladislav Surkov."

following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire and Byzantine Empire. This image of Moscow is especially celebrated amongst Russian civilizationists. Surkov nevertheless made it clear that "messianism is now irrelevant to [Russia], but the mission of the Russian nation requires clarification."[91] This shows an uncertainty regarding the values that constitute the contemporary Russian normative system and the components of Russia's current identity. The following quote from Russian political scientist Georgii Bovt's answer to Surkov's 2007 speech further emphasizes this normative uncertainty:

> Is he recognizing here, after all, the need for a breakthrough, especially in the spiritual and intellectual sphere? But a breakthrough where, in what direction exactly? There is no answer![92]

The lack of normative consistency is visible when considering the official diplomatic communication around the Georgian conflict. Moreover, it is difficult to find any references to the normative disagreements between Russia and the West. The MFA keeps repeating that it is ready to discuss prolonging the old or launching a new mission in Georgia, but to make it happen the authorities of South Ossetia must be involved in the discussion.[93] Although participation of the Ossetian officials is represented as the main condition influencing Russia's decision, any sincerity of such a claim is questioned since the same task was repeatedly raised in the OSCE during the conflict in Ukraine.[94] There, Russia nevertheless took a completely opposing decision – to open a new mission.

A mismatch between the official discourse and the actual decisions in Georgia and Ukraine suggests that a better understanding of these decisions can be grasped by looking at the broader discussion on Russia's relations with the West. The discussion at large concerning the relationship between Russia and the West in the OSCE has been normatively grounded. For example, foreign affairs minister Lavrov put a strong emphasis on the principles with the normative foundation in the symposium "Russia in the 21st

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[91] Surkov, "Russian Political Culture," 14.

[92] Georgii Bovt, "Vladislav Surkov: A Pragmatic Idealism," *Russian Politics and Law* 46, no. 5 (September 1, 2008): 40, doi:10.2753/RUP1061-1940460504.

[93] Andrei Nastarenko, "Response to a Media Question Relating to the Situation Surrounding the OSCE Mission in Georgia," 2008, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/international_safety/conflicts/-/asset_publisher/xIEMTQ3OvzcA/content/id/311718.

[94] The Kremlin, "Telephone Conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel," *President of Russia*, 2014, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20900.

Century." As an illustration of the lack of mutual normative understanding he reminded that the European

leaders were not able to reach a consensus on reconfirmation of the Helsinki principles in annual OSCE

ministerial meetings for multiple years and pointed to "the ill health of the entire Euro-Atlantic politics."[95]

In his visionary article on Russia's role in the 21st century, Lavrov reiterated the same notion and went

even further by accusing the West of reckless pressure to accept their "ideological considerations" that

jeopardize the development of free market and democracy at large.[96] Lavrov's call to clear the discussion

on the global "rules of the game" from ideology resonates with sovereign democracy's demand for the

right to culturally acceptable form of democracy.

An insistence for individual space demonstrates Russia's defensive normative stance against the

West. OSCE's activity pushed the Kremlin to follow the path of democratic development, despite the

domestic political resistance in Russia. Obvious signs of raising normative tension between the

organization and the Kremlin can already be seen in Putin's monumental speech in Munich's security

conference in 2007:

> People are trying to transform the OSCE into a vulgar instrument designed to promote the
> foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries. […] According to the founding
> documents, in the humanitarian sphere the OSCE is designed to assist country members in
> observing international human rights norms at their request. This is an important task. We
> support this. But this does not mean interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, and
> especially not imposing a regime that determines how these states should live and develop.[97]

Putin's speech again shows uneasiness about the Western efforts to promote their type of democracy

through the OSCE, but is unable to offer a positive normative alternative. Russian alternative is a

detachment from the ideological considerations and building cooperation with the stress on stability.

Following Georgian crisis, this became the guiding principle for Russian side in the Corfu process, which

had to update the OSCE to meet the needs of the present. However, such position was not productive

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[95] Sergey Lavrov, "Summary of Remarks at the International Symposium 'Russia in the 21st Century,'" 2008,
http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/333384.
[96] Sergey Lavrov, "Russia and the World in the 21st Century," *Russia in Global Affairs. Foreign Policy Research
Foundation*, 2008, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_11291.
[97] Vladimir Putin, "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy," *President
of Russia*, 2007, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034.

and, as Wolfgang Zellner describes, prevented Russia from positive cooperation, pushing it to a purely defensive stance instead.[98]

Summing up, the analysis of the diplomatic discourse towards the OSCE may not permit an unequivocal conclusion that the normative considerations led to Russia's decision to close the mission in Georgia in 2008. However, the analysis of a broader domestic normative discussion on Russia and external world allows us to reconstruct the Kremlin's narrative which has a few key features. Firstly, it suggests that Russia has its own normative path. Secondly, it is not clear how this normative path looks like with an exception of the emphasis on the strong leadership and a few hints on spirituality. Thirdly, Russia seeks the OSCE's normative reform, but is unable to exit the defensive state *vis-à-vis* the West and offer a viable normative alternative at that point. Even if it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which normative considerations affected Moscow's choices of the OSCE policy in 2008, the very existence of such a narrative in the strategic reflection of Russia's foreign relations shows that these considerations had an influence on the Kremlin. This finding gives a foundation for further assessment of the third hypothesis in the case of Ukraine. If it appears that there was an agreement on the normative alternative to the one offered by the West when the decision on the establishment of the OSCE mission in Ukraine was made, we will be able to confirm the third hypothesis.

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[98] Wolfgang Zellner, "From Corfu to Astana: The Way to the 2010 OSCE Summit," *Security and Human Rights* 21, no. 3 (November 1, 2010): 235, doi:10.1163/187502310793529161.

Chapter IV. Cooperation in Ukraine

1. Political competition

When examining Russia's OSCE policy during the conflict in Ukraine, the explanatory power of political competition dimension becomes more ambiguous. As well as during the conflict in Georgia, Moscow's diplomatic rhetoric still emphasizes the readiness to cooperate and the necessity to engage the Ukrainian government into the direct interaction with the leadership of the rebels.[99] There is also one important difference in the Ukrainian case – the Kremlin does not admit its participation in the military operations in Donbas and in the official discourse tries to present itself as the moderator between the warring sides. Despite instrumental benevolence towards the OSCE, criticism on the ODIHR's activity remains evident in the official Russian discourse. Even though the ODIHR significantly lowered the tone of its criticism after it was allowed to resume observation of Russia's elections in 2011, the Kremlin's rhetoric towards the institution has not softened. Quite opposite, it became even more critical. Such composition of events implies that the second hypothesis of the research does not have explanatory power in our cases. The Kremlin's critique on the ODIHR appears to be more a reflection of the broader ideological disagreements, but not the reason to choose cooperation or noncooperation within the OSCE.

Russia's official discourse towards the ODIHR around the Ukrainian crisis has two main features. Firstly, it emphasizes the organization's practice of "double standards." For instance, the Russian MFA criticized the ODIHR's refusal to participate in the observation of the Crimean referendum.[100] President Putin earlier draw attention to the fact that the organization observes the elections in the post-soviet space extremely strictly, while the ODIHR's observers are not allowed to come closer than 300 meters from the polling stations during the elections in the US.[101] Moscow's understanding of the ODIHR as an inequitable actor determines the second aspect of the official discourse, namely the efforts to depict the organization

[99] The Kremlin, "Telephone Conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel."
[100] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Comment Regarding Statements by the OSCE Chair-in-Office about the Referendum in Crimea on the 16 March 2014," 2014, http://www.mid.ru/maps/ua/-/asset_publisher/ktn0ZLTvbbS3/content/id/70498.
[101] Vladimir Putin, "News Conference of Vladimir Putin," *President of Russia*, accessed May 23, 2017, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17173.

as incompetent and in need of a reform. The MFA highlights that in some cases Russian observers are even refused to be included into the ODIHR's monitoring of elections, calls such approach prejudiced towards Russia, and evaluates the ODIHR's assessments of elections as methodologically incompetent.[102] Russian permanent representative to the OSCE Andrey Klenin claims that "nobody should be misled and share the view of ODIHR experts,"[103] while Maria Zakharova, a high official of the MFA, evaluates that the election monitoring scheme of the OSCE has to be seriously reviewed and reformed.[104] The presented instances of Moscow's rhetoric show that Russia's attitude towards the ODIHR did not change a lot between the Wars in Georgia and Ukraine. The state's official discourse remained critical towards the organization and essentially called for the reform in the OSCE's human dimension. The threat of the color revolutions not only remained the concern of the Kremlin, but even has been "militarized" by naming their spillover as the domestic threat in the National Security Strategy of 2015.[105]

While the organization reduced its criticism towards Russia's democratic development, persistence of Moscow's antagonistic narrative towards the ODIHR suggests that Russia's decision to (non)cooperate is not related with the ODIHR's threat to a domestic political stability. But before rejecting the political competition dimension, we also need to investigate whether the Kremlin was not in need of international support in the face of internal hardships. The example is the Constitutional crisis of 1993, when president Yeltsin greatly relied on international support. Considering the domestic issues that the Kremlin might have been facing before March of 2014, only one event seems to be worth of mentioning. This event is Putin's return to the president's office in 2012.

Both internationally and in Russia there was dissatisfaction with the Putin-Medvedev-Putin flip-flop in the presidential office. Medvedev's refusal to run for the second term, extension of the presidential

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[102] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Comment Regarding the Refusals to Include Russian Experts in the OSCE ODIHR Mission during the Elections in Serbia, Hungary and Afghanistan," 2014, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/rso/osce/-/asset_publisher/bzhxR3zkq2H5/content/id/69538.
[103] Andrey Kelin, "Speech by Russia's Permanent Representative to the OSCE at the Session of the Permanent Council of the OSCE," 2014, http://www.mid.ru/maps/ua/-/asset_publisher/ktn0ZLTvbbS3/content/id/55086.
[104] Maria Zakharova, "Interview to RIA Novosti Regarding the Participation of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in the OSCE FMC," 2013, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/rso/osce/-/asset_publisher/bzhxR3zkq2H5/content/id/85570.
[105] Nicholas Bouchet, "Bouchet, N. (2016). Russia's 'militarization' of Colour Revolutions. Policy Perspectives, 4(2), 1-4.," *Policy Perspectives* 4, no. 2 (2016): 1.

term of service, and Medvedev's political support for Putin's candidacy in 2012 created the feeling that everything was planned already in 2008. Many Russians started to feel disappointment and dissatisfaction about the rule of United Russia party and therefore went to the streets to protests in the major cities after Putin's reelection. In the beginning, the Kremlin reacted sensitively to the protesters' argument and the Kremlin made decisions showing government's consent to liberalize Russia's political life. For example, the political leadership liberalized the rules regulating the establishment of political parties, increased access to the state media for the opposition, and installed surveillance cameras in the polling stations.[106] A respectful tone towards the protests was also evident in the official discourse of the highest officials during that period.[107] But then came the time of the second wave of reaction.

Approximately from the moment when Putin reentered the presidency, the government stepped back from the previously made concessions with the protesters, and started to attack their key groups, especially liberal intelligentsia, and further to looked for the support among other groups of the society.[108] This is the point where the conservative notion of "moral politics" came into the discourse of Moscow as the dominant normative narrative. It means that the decision on cooperation within the OSCE was made during the second, more strict stage of Moscow's reaction to the domestic protests. Because of the mismatches in timing suppose there is no foundation for arguing that the need to receive international political backing motivated the Kremlin to seek for the cooperation within the OSCE. In fact, president Putin's popularity hit the highest point in years on March of 2014, therefore, the stability of his regime did not need any external approval.[109]

In conclusion, related factors to political competition do not seem to explain Moscow's decision to choose cooperation within the OSCE during the Ukrainian crisis. If, in the case of Georgia, the ODIHR's criticism of Russia's democratic development seemed to affect the state's decision not to

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[106] Nikolay Petrov, Maria Lipman, and Henry E. Hale, "Three Dilemmas of Hybrid Regime Governance: Russia from Putin to Putin," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 30, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 18–19, doi:10.1080/1060586X.2013.825140.
[107] E.g.: Dmitry Medvedev, "Interview to Russian TV Networks," *President of Russia*, 2012, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15149.
[108] Petrov, Lipman, and Hale, "Three Dilemmas of Hybrid Regime Governance," 19–20.
[109] Adam Taylor, "Putin's Approval Rating Hits 80 Percent," *The Washington Post*, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/03/26/putins-approval-rating-hits-80-percent/.

cooperate, the continuation of critical narrative towards the organization during the crisis in Ukraine does not allow to confirm the second hypothesis (H$_2$; see table 2 in p. 44). The first hypothesis (H$_1$; also, see table 2 in p. 44), which suggest that Moscow cooperates when it seeks international support during domestic hardships, also does not explain the cooperation in Ukraine between Russia and the OSCE. When the Kremlin's decision to cooperate was made on March 2014, the government was not anymore defensive, but already offensive against its domestic adversaries. Furthermore, Putin's approval rates were increasing at that point which means the regime was not facing any legitimacy problems that would push the leadership to seek for the international support.

2. *Normative competition*

The analysis of the Georgian case revealed that Moscow's normative discourse has three important features. Firstly, it insists there is a unique ideological path for Russia; secondly, it suggests there is no consensus on how this path should look like; thirdly, the analysis shows Russia wants to reform the OSCE's human dimension to make it more compatible with its own normative system. Arguably, since the Kremlin was unable to fulfill own's expectations, its own frustration contributed to them refusing to further cooperate in Georgia. In this section, I demonstrate that, in the Ukrainian case, Russia still confronted the Western normative system and sought the OSCE's third package reform. However, at that time, Russia had already an alternative normative system which could be seen to have encouraged the Kremlin to increase its cooperation with the OSCE. To reconstruct this narrative, both primary and semi-primary sources indicating Moscow's perception of its foreign policy are used.

Russia's normative discourse contained a clear propensity to explain Russia through narrative on opposition of the West at the time of the Ukrainian crisis. Alexander Rahr explains the sense of moral superiority *vis-à-vis* Russia is the main reason of the conflict between Russia and the West. He underlines how the relationship as a whole botheres Russia and other partners who do not belong to the same normative system.[110] Minister Lavrov's complaints about the "persistent attempts by the "historical" West

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[110] Alexander Rahr, "Putin-Merkel Meeting: First Steps Towards Normalization of Relations," *Valdai Club*, accessed May 23, 2017, http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/putin-merkel-meeting/.

to preserve global leadership at all costs and to enforce its approaches and values" and invitation to develop a "more democratic polycentric world order" are the examples of Moscow's efforts to exit the moral shadow of the democratic states.[111]

When it comes to the OSCE, Russia emphasizes the necessity to go back to the principles established by the Helsinki Conference. The current structure of the organization is believed to represent Western standards, and is therefore uncappable to assure mutually respectful interactions. Russian discourse underlines that the OSCE's mission changed after the end of the Cold War, when the Eastern bloc was experiencing the transformation from communism and forgot to critically assess the Western norms and standards.[112] Moscow sees how former Warsaw Pact countries, including Russia, find the integration to the Western normative system complicated and incompatible with local cultures. Therefore, during the 51ˢᵗ Munich Security Conference, minister Lavrov urged the OSCE to go back to the original principles of the Helsinki Act.[113] Although president Putin expressed similar notion by stating "there are no fundamental ideological differences,"[114] the Russian side uses the notion of democracy by referring to the plurality of normative systems, not the fundamental principles of liberal democracy. By promoting the plurality of the normative systems, the Kremlin seeks to create the space for own's normative alternative, Sharafutdinova labels this alternative "moral politics."

"Moral politics" in Moscow's discourse are important for two reasons. The first reason is to demonstrate that Russia finally has a normative system defining its identity. Russia reinforces already established sovereign democracy principle with the "normal values of public and private life, not

[111] Sergey Lavrov, "Address and Annual News Conference on Russia's Diplomatic Performance in 2014," *Valdai Club*, 2015,
http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/sergey_lavrov_s_address_and_annual_news_conference_on_russia_s_diplomatic_performance_in_2014/.

[112] Ján Čarnogurský, "The OSCE Needs a Change," *Valdai Club*, 2016, http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-osce-needs-a-change/.

[113] Sergey Lavrov, "Speech during Debates at the 51st Munich Security Conference," *Valdai Club*, 2015,
http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/foreign_minister_sergey_lavrov_delivers_a_speech_during_debates_at_the_51st_munich_security_conferen/.

[114] Vladimir Putin, "Greetings to the Participants of the International Conference on European Security," *President of Russia*, accessed May 23, 2017, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/48127.

postmodern ones, rooted in the thousands of years of human history."[115] When this system was applied to Russia's foreign policy, Sergei Karaganov called it a "conservative realism." According him, "mankind is going back to the world of nation states on a new global basis" and Russia is a spearhead of this positive change. According Karaganov Russia once suffered from the "Weimar syndrome" by turning into a periphery of Europe, but now it reemerges as a center of rising Eurasia and a conservative Atlantic-Pacific power.[116]

The second function of "moral politics" in the Kremlin's discourse is to depict the West as a crumbling civilization. Minister Lavrov, in the plenary session of the OSCE Minister Council, drew a clear line between the liberal and the Russian worlds:

> Children [are re-homed] to families of illegal guardians, frequently for the purpose of their sexual exploitation, in one of the OSCE countries. Is there really anybody who thinks that such illegal use of the Internet is admissible under the slogan of the freedom of speech? Other glaring facts include attempts to legalise child euthanasia in one of the European countries, open activity of a paedophile club in another country. All of these are challenges to moral foundations, foundations of Christianity and other world religions. If humanity has no respect for them, it will become inhuman.[117]

Here, we still identify an effort to explain Russia through the opposition with the West. This time, nevertheless, the Russian identity is more developed and is presented as a more stable alternative for a wobbly Europe. As Karaganov writes, "the West rapidly moved towards post-European values, while Russia reverted to traditional European values – sovereignty, a strong state, Christian ethics and morals."[118] These images show the efforts to present the West to be in moral decadence, in contrast to Russia's stability stemming from traditional values.

When "moral politics" are put in the OSCE context, they strengthen Russia's position that the organization must be reformed. In 2013, minister Lavrov clearly indicated the "third basket" of the OSCE

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[115] Sergei Karaganov, "2016 – A Victory of Conservative Realism," 2017, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/2016-a-victory-of-conservative-realism/.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Sergey Lavrov, "Speech at the Plenary Session of the OSCE Foreign Ministers Council," 2013, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/rso/osce/-/asset_publisher/bzhxR3zkq2H5/content/id/85194.
[118] Sergei Karaganov, "The 21st-Century Concert of Vienna," *Valdai Club*, 2015, http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the_21st_century_concert_of_vienna/.

to be nothing else but a tool to "aggressively impose neoliberal interpretations of human rights."[119] Lavrov further makes a deliberate distinction between the OSCE's and the EU's norms:

> Many approaches used today in the European Union were perceived as unacceptable in the same countries only 20-30 years ago. I mean, in particular, moral relativism, propagation of all-permissiveness and hedonism, reinforcement of volitions of militant atheism, refusal of traditional values, which have been a basis of human development for many centuries. Such ideas are promoted with the insistence of a messiah both inside countries and in relations with neighbours. For this reason, I would like to recall that the principles of democracy primarily envisage respect for others' opinion. [120]

This distinction is made to highlight that the current dominant interpretation of the OSCE's human dimension is only a recent development, while the traditional values are more customary to the broader European culture. Thus, Moscow's discourse tries to promote Russian normativity as an opportunity to abandon present relativity and uncertainty of everything and to go back to the times of certainty and stability.

Such normative self-positioning helps Russia to get rid of bear's in porcelain shop image and enables to seek for the leadership amongst the European conservatives. The most visible coordination is with other states of the CIS. Here, president Putin reiterates the notion we already indicated in the broader Moscow's normative discourse towards the OSCE: the CIS members have to use the opportunity to coordinate on topical issues with the OSCE and together end the domination of the "particular countries."[121] Members of the CIS are mostly authoritarian regimes that are keen on learning from each other and have a distaste for liberal democracy.[122] If these regimes are more or less traditional partners of Russia in the OSCE, Moscow also sees an increasing space for cooperation with the European right-wing. Karaganov is convinced the rise of anti-globalist, anti-liberal and anti-postmodern forces will help Russia to find new allies. According him, "state nationalism is on the rise" the Western societies "will obviously

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[119] Lavrov, "Speech at the Plenary Session of the OSCE Foreign Ministers Council."
[120] Sergey Lavrov, "Russia-EU: Time to Decide," *Valdai Club*, 2014, http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia_eu_time_to_decide/.
[121] Vladimir Putin, "CIS Summit," *President of Russia*, accessed May 23, 2017, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17069.
[122] Nicole J. Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule: A Case Study of Russia's Influence on Central Asian Regimes," *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 1 (March 2010): 102–3, doi:10.1080/13569771003593920.

want to change their elites for right-wing and conservative [ones]."[123] These discursive findings suggest the idea indicating how Moscow sees an opportunity to reform the OSCE by taking the leadership of broad coalition formed from the CIS states and the European right-wing leaders.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the OSCE reform is not the only solution in Moscow's considerations. Alexei Fenenko evaluates the OSCE as an unproductive organization which became into a platform for "only the NATO-Russia exchange of human rights accusations."[124] He sees Munich Security Conference's potential to develop into an alternative for the OSCE since the discussions over there are mostly detached from the normative evaluations and focus on finding the solutions for the "hard security" issues. Karaganov suggest even more drastic idea of the European security architecture "from Tokyo (or Shanghai) to Lisbon."[125] This idea refers to the well-known notion of Europe "from Vladivostok to Lisbon" which means more European independence and from the US and more cooperative relationship with Russia. Kuraganov's updated version of this idea shows a new range of options that Moscow sees in the post-Cold War world. By this return of the Eurasian debate into Russian discourse on its foreign affairs, Russia demonstrates that there are more options than the OSCE and the state's integration into the international system is not any more completely dependent from its relations with the West.

Overall, Russia's normative change between the crises in Georgia and Ukraine is evident. In contrast with the years around the Georgian war, Moscow was not in the normative defense against the West when it decided to cooperate with the OSCE in Ukraine. Contrary, the Kremlin around 2012-2013 started a normative attack against the West. This attack was built on the foundations of "moral politics" and traditional values. The West was depicted as decaying and weak civilization, while Russia's choices to follow the traditional Christian values and to strengthen the nation are presented as the conditions for Russia's being in the right side of political evolution. These aspects of Russia's normative discourse created moral incentives to feel more self-confident about the possibilities to reform the "third basket" of the

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123 Karaganov, "2016 – A Victory of Conservative Realism."
124 Alexei Fenenko, "The Munich Conference: A Vital Platform for International Security Discussions," *Valdai Club*, 2014,
http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the_munich_conference_a_vital_platform_for_international_security_discussions/.
125 Karaganov, "2016 – A Victory of Conservative Realism."

OSCE which constantly troubled Russia in the past. The changes in the dominant normative discourse also gave Russia the perspective to a broader range of possibilities for the European order and revealed the coalitions that would enable the reform of this order.

Successful reconstruction of more concrete Moscow's normative narrative allows to look into the choice of cooperation in Ukraine anew. In this respect, three findings are the most important. 1) Most of the tensions between Russia and the OSCE arise from the normative disagreements on the human dimension of the OSCE. 2) We were not able to observe normative clarity in Russia's discourse during the war in Georgia. 3) Conservative normative agenda strengthened Russia's ability reform the "third basket" in the years of conflict in Ukraine. Considering these three findings, I confirm the third hypothesis (H_3) of the research and offer the interpretation that the domestic normative competition in Russia has contributed to Moscow's contradicting choices in its OSCE policy during the wars in Georgia and Ukraine.

Table 2, Findings: Domestic Factors in Russia's OSCE Policy

| War in | Political competition | | H_3: Normative alternative |
	H_1: Regime's need for the external support	H_2: Regime's confrontation with the ODIHR	
Georgia	N/A	+	-
Ukraine	-	+	+

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to reach a better understanding of Russia's divergent OSCE policies during the conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine. To do this, I have explored the existing knowledge on the OSCE-Russia relationship. This part of the research showed an academic preoccupation with the external influences on Russia's OSCE policy, and the lack of attention to the influence of domestic factors when it comes to the state's foreign policy decisions. To be able to analytically enter Russia's domestic context surrounding the crises in Georgia and Ukraine, I used ethnic conflict theories and developed two lenses of political and normative competition that allowed me to form three hypotheses. For each of these, I reconstructed corresponding narratives while analyzing Russian foreign policy discourse around the time of the wars in Georgia and Ukraine. H_1 was rejected since I could not reconstruct the narrative showing the Kremlin's need for the international support in the wake of Ukrainian crisis. The narrative corresponding to H_2, i.e. marking ODIHR's critique on Russia's democratic development and Russia's negative rhetoric towards the organization, is found in both of the studied cases, therefore, it is not considered as the one explaining the difference in Moscow's OSCE policy. H_3 appeared to be the most productive among the hypotheses since it revealed the difference between Russia's normative narrative towards the OSCE and the foreign policy at large in each case.

The period around 2008 was marked by the dominance of Surkov's sovereign democracy idea, but it did not give a set of norms that would form Russia's identity and thus took rather defense posture *vis-à-vis* the West. Although the Kremlin intended to reform the OSCE's normative basis, it was unable to offer a productive alternative. In the years surrounding the crisis of 2014, a significantly different normative narrative appears in Russia's discourse. It is the best explained by the descriptions of "moral politics" and traditional values. The conservative turn in Russia's normative discourse brings a better understanding of what is Russian identity and gives the state more self-confidence in international arena. Russia is not anymore defending itself from the Western normative accusations but attacks them for being a collapsing civilization. The OSCE's human dimension is being charged for the "aggressive imposition of neoliberal interpretations of human rights" by Russians stronger than any time before. Moscow keeps

seeking for the reform in the "third basket," and sees the opportunities for the alliances with other autocratic states in the CIS and emerging radical-right regimes in Europe. Also, the OSCE is not the only option for the international Russia's integration anymore. Broader Eurasian integration and the possibility of further development of Munich Security Conference are alternatives, if the cooperation within the OSCE would become impossible. Altogether, these normative changes have boosted Moscow's self-confidence and made the expected reform of the OSCE more probable. Since we see significant normative differences in Russia's discourse in both cases, I offer the interpretation that this is a partaking reason of why we see discrepancies in Moscow's OSCE policy during wars in Georgia and Ukraine.

This thesis does not aspire to introduce theoretical innovation, rather it reviews existing conceptual approaches to find an analytical entry point. Namely, the "troublemaker" perspective allows us to enter the domestic field of Russia's discursive data. Reinforced with the lenses of ethnic conflict theories, this perspective bears out the ambiguity of the discourse and demonstrates how this can be captured for a better explanation of the divergent policies in the cases of Russia's OSCE policy during the wars in Georgia and Ukraine. The findings do not prove anything about Russia's foreign policy, rather they contribute to the understanding of these two particular cases of (non)cooperation and do not claim to be established as generalizations. Also, recent anti-corruption protests in Russia remind that the so called "overwhelming majority" built on the foundations of traditional values may be just a temporary achievement of the ruling regime and does not mark a fundamental shift in Russian identity. Further research should be conducted for a better understanding of how Russia's identity is developing, what shapes it and what broader implications on the state's foreign policy this process has. Such research could become a great contribution to the ontological security literature, which I use in this research only as a help to capture the logic of how the normative changes from chaos towards a consolidated agenda of moral politics.

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