

DEFENDING RUSSIA, SECURITISING THE FUTURE: HOW THE PAST SHAPED RUSSIA'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE REGARDING CRIMEA

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Abstract

This paper shows how Russia framed the annexation of Crimea from the securitisation theory perspective, with a focus on the shared past as the key argument. This paper discusses how the idea of shared past in general and the concept of brotherhood among nations in particular were utilised to justify the annexation, along with how the Crimean discourse was framed for the domestic Russian consumption. This includes an analysis of why a shared past is so important to the Kremlin, how this was applied in its foreign policy approach and later justified the annexation and the various methods the Kremlin used to win over public support.

Keywords

Brotherhood of Nations, Crimea, Russia, Securitisation, Shared Past, Russia.

1.INTRODUCTION

As Kagan (2017, 9) aptly notes: "*Russia's historical sphere of influence does not end in Ukraine, it begins in Ukraine*". The annexation of Crimea has been the topic of many debates: was Russia exercising its imperial ambitions or was it Putin's

open offence against the West? This paper aims to show how the annexation of Crimea was framed from the securitisation theory perspective, focussing on the shared past as the key argument of the Kremlin. In order to demonstrate this, the paper discusses how the idea of shared past in general, and the concept of brotherhood among nations in particular were utilised to justify the annexation, along with how the Crimean discourse was framed for the domestic Russian consumption, which eventually resulted in unifying the Russian public behind the state's message.

Russia's position in Ukraine can be divided into two main sections: the annexation of Crimea and the situation in Eastern Ukraine. This paper does not focus on the step-by-step explanation of Russia's military actions in Ukraine, but rather on possible justifications, premises and consequences of Russian involvement in Crimea. Allison (2014) sums up the possible explanations of Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian into three broad groups: geopolitics and Russia's intention to regain control over its neighbourhood, Russian identity as an engine for political actions, and regime consolidation as a primary aim of Russian foreign policy. This paper focuses on the analysis of the historical narrative that has been used by the Kremlin to justify the annexation of Crimea both domestically and internationally.

2.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper utilises the Copenhagen School approach, also known as securitisation theory. Securitisation theory was first introduced by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde in their 1998 book *Security: A new framework for analysis* as a critical approach to traditional security. The Copenhagen School approach offers a new reading of security whereby some security threats are characterised as perceived threats, which go alongside traditional 'real' security threats (for example, invasion or war). Sperlring (2003, 8) emphasises a change in security studies, writing "*A definition of security restricted to the traditional concern with territorial integrity or the protection of ill-defined but well-understood 'national interests'*". *This excludes threats to the social fabric of domestic or international societies*

or threats emanating from states with imperfect control over their territory, weakened legitimacy, or persistent interethnic conflicts". Departing from the traditional understanding of security, Buzan et al (1998, 31) argue that security issues could be seen as 'intersubjective and socially constructed'. This paper argues that the Kremlin's usage of the threat of enmity towards Russia can be coherently analysed within the securitisation framework. In particular, the idea of a shared historical past has been used to reach an unprecedented level of domestic support for sometimes unorthodox foreign policy decisions, thus achieving significant changes in the 'near abroad' such as the annexation of Crimea.

Balzacq (2010, 56) notes: "*securitisation predominantly examines how security problems emerge, evolve and dissolve*". Thus, securitisation theory takes on not only a critical approach to security but also argues that security threats are socially constructed. More recently, Wæver (2015, 123) has succinctly summed up the contribution of securitisation theory to the existing security debate: "*With [securitisation] theory, political events can be studied empirically as social phenomena*". The Copenhagen School aims neither to undermine the traditional approach to security nor to substitute it, instead creating a space for the merger of traditional and new security studies (Watson 2012). It should be seen as a tool, which can help to expand our understanding of security: Emmers (2007, 132) states "*... the Copenhagen School raises the possibility for a systematic, comparative, and coherent analysis of security*". If any perceived threat is seen as a security threat it would enlarge one's theorising of security, adding more nuances (Aradau 2008; Emmers 2007). There would be no more need for an overly restrictive definition of a threat as almost anything could become one if properly 'staged' (for example, the events at Maidan). The Copenhagen School has offered not only a new way of discussing security but has also outlined certain conditions that allow observers to analyse how security threats are defined, used, and managed on each different occasion.

Successful securitisation changes the political climate in any given country as well as how the society perceives threats and possible solutions. According to Buzan (Buzan et al 1998, 26) "*A successful securitisation thus has three components (or steps): existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules*". Securitisation theory outlines how a threat can make its

way up to the political sphere and be portrayed as so dangerous the state's survival would depend on it. A process of positioning a threat as existential is called a speech act (Buzan et al 1998, 25). It could be a speech of a government official, president, or someone unaffiliated with the government. However, no act of speaking about security would also constitute a speech act: in accordance with securitisation theory, an actor who speaks security is of value no less than the content of speech acts (Buzan et al 1998). Any securitising speech act is aimed to convey a security threat to a particular referent object. The referent object is an object or entity portrayed to be facing an existential threat in securitisation rhetoric.

In order to achieve that level of importance a threat needs to be presented as existential. Buzan et al (1998) emphasise that it is not necessary for the threat to be tangible; it could be a threat of terrorism or war that drives certain governmental responses, but the existential threat should be essential to the survival of the referent object to the extent that emergency measures are called for. According to Buzan *"the existential threat has to be argued and gain just enough resonance for a platform to be made from which it is possible to legitimise emergency measures or other steps that would not have been possible had the discourse not taken the form of existential threats, point of no return, and necessity"* (Buzan et al 1998, 25). It is therefore important to understand that the existential threat is an essential part of a securitisation move and is necessary to be referred to for the threat to be transformed into a securitised issue. In the case of Crimea, the perceived threat essentially boiled down to the Kremlin finding justification for Russia's actions which would bring enough public support, and this encompassed a range of other issues concerning Russia's relationship to the 'near abroad'. The besieged fortress mentality arose once more with Russian history, the concept of brotherhood (*bratskie narody*) and militarisation used as ad hoc justifications.

3.A SHARED HISTORY AS AN ANSWER SECURITY THREATS

Twenty First century Russia is a much broader picture and less based along ethnic lines. Its security sphere entails all citizens including those beyond the state's borders and with them, the cultural and spiritual assets of the country (Zevelev 2001). This is why Russia's actions abroad rely on historical references among other things as a means of defending its policy directions. In the former Soviet space, Russia can invoke a special relationship with all the other republics. This in turn allows Russia to apply restricted degrees of sovereignty on these states by promoting its own concepts to increase its attractiveness in the aim of safeguarding its interests, including the 'near abroad'. The notion of a shared history is an auspicious channel for this, since it implies longstanding unity and brotherhood between nations. The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has expanded to include Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, with Tajikistan also seeking membership, and Russia guarantees Armenia's security, as well. By using a shared history in current links to promote its own ideals, Russia can safeguard its national interests with a great degree of flexibility.

A shared history does not always bring nations together, and in Russia's case, the former Soviet republics can cast it in an unfavourable light. Recent examples include Ukraine's ban on fourteen Russian journalists and TV channels claiming they do not respect equidistance and equilibrium (Rotaru 2017). Kazakhstan has begun promoting English far more as a second language and has switched to the Latin alphabet. Belarus started paying more attention to the local language in schools after the Minsk talks. Belarus' own history also allows it to dip its toes into Europe and distance itself from Moscow. In 2015, Moldova disrespected an agreement made at the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Summit 2013 where all member states agreed to give similar medals to veterans bearing Soviet symbols; Moldova's did not have the hammer and sickle (Heads of State Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States 2013). Although rejection is possible, Russia remains attractive in the former Soviet republics, and promoting a shared past is a cornerstone of this.

4. RUSSIA'S PAST, FUTURE, AND FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign policy is an auspicious way of representing a shared past. The annexation of Crimea falls under a concept what Tsgankov & Tsygankov (2010) refer to as 'Civilisationalism'. This particular form of Russian foreign policy emphasises the 'Russian world' or historic areas (the former USSR and Russian Empire) to help Russia fulfil its historic mission. Based on cultural opposition to the West, Civilisationalism focuses on what is principally different, unique or organic to Russia. The Civilisationist argument, as implied, claims that Russia is a separate civilisation in its own right whose mission is to spread its values to the world (Tsygankov & Tsygankov 2010). Even though the idea of Russia being a separate civilisation has long been debated, the past has been used as justification for Russia's increased involvement in the 'near abroad or 'Eurasian space', with some Eurasianist thinkers such as Aleksandr Dugin championing the idea that the ideal society is based on historical traditions. In other words, Eurasian nations are essential to Russia's security and maintaining its unique position to confirm it is 'not like others' and that those who inhabit this geographic space of the Eurasian plain share a unique historic identity (Schmidt 2005). As mentioned however, an ability to use the shared past also relies on Russia's attractiveness to bring in other nations. As Schmidt (2005) notes, Eurasianism relies on Russia's ability to convince its neighbours that Western interests are different from theirs and that the Russian-led Eurasian cause is the righteous one.

There is also a firm commitment to the Russian Orthodox Church as a means to spread these values. In this sense, Civilisationalism also provides a justification for curbing Western influence and expansion into Russia's areas of interests. Belarus and Ukraine are viewed as part of the core of the Russian World. Both Belarus and Moldova belong spiritually to the same Russian Orthodox Church and as the Russian Patriarch argues the heart of the Russian World is Russian Orthodox faith and that 'spiritually we [Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova] remain one nation' (Rotaru 2017). In Ukraine, The Russian Orthodox Church contentiously remains the largest branch with the most followers, as well. After the annexation, Putin stated that 'everything in Crimea speaks of our shared

history and pride', it was in Crimea where Grand Prince Vladimir was baptised, Orthodox Christianity adopted that predetermined the 'overall basis of the culture, civilisation and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus' (Putin 2014). Thus, Crimea was painted as inseparable from Russia's statehood, military and civilisation.

Civilisationism recognises the Westphalian principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and non-intervention, but calls to traditions and cultural norms as the basis for order. How the concept of territorial integrity is applied in a case of shared past becomes rather blurred in this respect and is often used to justify breaches of sovereignty. The Russian compatriots would be one example. Putin viewed compatriots as a resource to achieve certain aims and restored the idea of a larger homeland for the compatriots, who featured prominently in the Foreign Policy Concept 2013. The countries who fall under the Moscow Patriarchy are included, yet Putin at one time stretched the compatriots' definition to all Russian speakers beyond the 'historic homeland'. Since Crimea, there have been attempts to disassociate Russians abroad with their country of residence to establish political or emotional loyalties (Cheskin 2014). As well as a vulnerability, it is paradoxical. Cultural norms and traditions must be desirable instead of enforced, yet using the past to restrict the sovereignty of former Soviet republics, makes the concept of Eurasianism self-undermining. While this terminology is designed to make the case for Russia's emotional and historic right to intervene beyond its modern borders, the idea of exerting control over other nations contradicts Westphalia principles. In practice, Eurasianism has not blossomed to any great extent, although there has been a flirtation with it post 2008. Dmitry Medvedev declared that for the first time in history, Civilisationalism was the focus of Russia's Foreign Policy in 2008 (Medvedev 2008). Certainly, his presidency began with trips to Kazakhstan, China and the Georgian War 2008, which caused much antagonism with the West, yet the infamous 'reset button' overshadowed any large strengthening of ties in the near abroad. The Foreign Policy Concept 2013 mentioned the need for facilitating dialogue and cooperation between civilizations to enhance accord (2013, 4I), as well as the increased emphasis on a 'civilizational identity' and 'roots' (2013, 14). However, it seemed little more than words on a document especially with the

global challenges post 2013. The Foreign Policy Concept 2016 continued this language but had a more defensive tone reflecting the global changes and position of Russia since annexing Crimea; this was reflected early in the document, particularly with reference to ‘multipolarity’ and ‘balancing interests’ (Putin 2016, 2). By the end of 2016, the rife historical patriotism surrounding Crimea was fading, meaning the message had to be updated.

5. DIFFERENT FORCES BEHIND THE ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

As previously mentioned, the annexation of Crimea represents an interesting case that has challenged an established international order, which was formed around the principle of non-interference into other states’ internal affairs. Russia changed the rules of the game unilaterally, claiming that a good cause, for example, the concept of *bratskie narody* could still be a legitimate reason for a military intervention and territorial acquisition. If the cause is properly framed, as, for example, a restoration of historical ties between Russia and the Crimean people, then a state with enough political will can bend international laws. A great body of literature was developed about the situation in Ukraine, focusing on the legal aspect of the annexation, justifications for it, as well as the discrepancy between how the West saw it (as annexation) and how Russia portrayed it (as ‘the reunification of Crimea with Russia’) (Leonaite & Zalimas 2016, 13). Undeniably, even without the usage of larger-than-life concepts such as Civilisationalism as the justification for annexing Crimea, Russia was able to portray this political move in a desired light, as Allison aptly writes:

“The arguments used have sought, albeit fairly unsuccessfully, to divide the international community, especially western states, and they represent a challenge to sovereignty in the increasingly diverse regional order formed by the post-Soviet states. No doubt, Russia also hopes its claims may deflect or mitigate China’s grave concerns about Russia’s empowerment of separatism in Ukraine and its territorial revisionism. Beyond this, Russian legal claims have been constructed to mobilize and consolidate Russian domestic opinion around Putin’s leadership. They include

justifications for the Russian use of force and the annexation of Crimea, blanketed in partial truth and disinformation, cast in terms which appeal to deeper sentiments and grievances in Russian society and among Russian elites" (2014, 1259).

Russia will not leave or abandon Russians, both citizens (*rossiyanin*) and ethnic (*russkii*). The concept is volatile, flexible and is inconsistently used by the Kremlin. The idea of *bratskie narody* brought the possibility of portraying the annexation of Crimea as a good political move aimed to protect people, however the United Nations High Commissioner (UNHC) report showed the abuses of Crimean Tatars' rights, an ethnicity that historically lived in Crimea (Allison 2014).

The annexation of Crimea is a contemporary example of Russia's execution of its international ambitions and a part of Russia's quest to being recognised as a great power. Regardless of different interpretations of international law on self-determination, the Russian legal position on the Crimean case remains logical, as Borgen (2014, 6) notes: *"Yet, just as the lack of a single sovereign means that enforcement is difficult, the pluralist nature of international law means that in most cases there is no final interpreter of what law is"*. Thus, it should be not surprising that Russia has used the absence of consensus over the Kosovo intervention to its advantage, as Allison sums up Russia's usage of legal rhetoric regarding Crimea:

"Russia cloaked its actions in legal language, as other major states have done in the past, with the aim of fostering a reputation as a lawful actor. It is aware that interpretations of international law are often fiercely contested among states, and that international politics and power play a role in the consolidation of legal arguments and the development of customary international law. Legal rhetoric frames what is considered legitimate, including the legal basis for military intervention and the context of 'self-determination'. This is a discursive process, one of persuasion and deliberation, most prominently conducted in the United Nations Security Council" (2014, 1258).

Russia's uncompromising position on the necessity of compliance with the choice of Crimean residents resulted in the disputed referendum, held on March 16, 2014. The integrity of referendum was contested, as freedom of expression during the referendum was rather questionable. When Russian military forces without insignia seized Crimea's main governmental bodies, the Crimean people

were not left with much of a choice. There were few protests in Crimea regarding the referendum and since joining Russian Federation, the situation has been largely peaceful. However, there were instances of human rights abuses documented in the report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: nonetheless, Russia managed to deter accusations of human rights abuse at one of the meeting of UN SC (United Nations Security Council) (Allison 2014). The arguments used by the Kremlin to defend the annexation ranged from the Kosovo precedent to 'humanitarian'. From a perspective of international law, Moscow also tried the *post factum* approach. This is an attempt to re-interpret international law to legitimise its actions. Often quoting comments from the United Nations International Court on declarations of independence, Putin insisted on the right of nations to self-determination and has repeatedly claimed that the referendum happened within accordance to international law, were free and transparent (The Putin Interviews: Part 3 2017). Although it should be highlighted here, that international law does not recognise historical claims to territory. Despite the report presented at the UN SC regarding human rights abuses and questionable conditions for a free open referendum in Crimea, Russia had an adamant position that the results of the referendum should be respected and if the Crimean people want to join the Russian Federation they should be allowed to do so. However, as Galeotti mentions in his book *Hybrid War or Gibridnaya Voina?* (2016):

*"the Russians have been quick to spot – that modern technologies and modern societies mean that a shooting war will likely be preceded by and maybe even almost, but not quite, replaced by a phase of political destabilisation. The second, though, is **the political war that Moscow is waging against the West, in the hope not of preparing the ground for an invasion, but rather of dividing, demoralising and distracting it enough so that it cannot resist as the Kremlin asserts its claims to being a 'great power' and in the process a sphere of influence over most of the post-Soviet states of Eurasia**" (p.4, emphasis in the original).*

Such calculations played out quite well for Russia. Although it is rather early to talk about drastic changes in Russian foreign policy that are exclusive to the results of the annexation of Crimea, however the annexation itself is quite a unique case. Clearly, there will be more consequences to follow, but these are

rather difficult to predict, in part because U.S. President Donald Trump continues to surprise the American and international public with unexpected and unorthodox political decisions, regarding Russia especially. Taking into account that President Barack Obama initiated the economic sanctions against Russia and the allegations regarding Russian involvement into the latest presidential elections in the US, the situation in Ukraine has become a conundrum over what actions should be deemed appropriate in the case of Russia annexing Crimea. Despite significant international uncertainty over the situation in Ukraine, it did affect Russian policies and a few changes following Russia's involvement in Ukraine have started to take shape. Firstly, economic sanctions introduced by the international community, mainly the U.S., the UK, the European Union and other Commonwealth countries weakened the Russian economy but united the population. The idea behind the economic sanctions in the West was to show Russia and its citizens that interference into another state's affairs would not be tolerated. Instead, and as explored in depth below, the sanctions resulted in the unification of negative Russian feelings towards the West. It should however be added that these feelings were never particularly warm or welcoming to begin with.

The need to allocate the Ukrainian refugees also helped to unite the Russian people. The concept of *bratskie narody* proved effective; the 'helping our brothers and sisters in need' rhetoric united Russia. The government announced additional places for Ukrainians at schools and universities, and allowed them to apply for educational grants from the governments using their Ukrainian passports (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2014). Secondly, Russian domestic opinion polls show that during the year before the annexation of Crimea (2013-2014) the level of trust for Putin significantly increased from 17% to 39% (Fund «Obshestvennoe Mnenie», 2017). The Russian public has also been consistent in its support for the return of Crimea. Polls from 2001 showed that 47% of the respondents wanted Crimea back at any cost, while 37% said that Crimea should be returned but not at the cost of good relationships with Ukraine; only 27% were ready to give up the claims for Crimea in order to keep good relationships with Ukraine (Fund «Obshestvennoe Mnenie», 2001). In 2014, a combined 86% either definitely or mostly supported Crimea's

reunification with the Russian Federation (Levada 2014). When the Russian president announced the ascension of Crimea into the Russian Federation, his own approval ratings skyrocketed. Polling by the *Levada Centre* show the Russian President's approval ratings rose from 61% in November 2013 to 86% in October 2014; it has consistently remained above 80% since the annexation (Levada, 'Putin's Approval Ratings' 2017). Thus, the usage of shared past rhetoric surrounding the Crimean case proved extremely effective for gaining domestic support for Putin as well as the regime consolidation in Russia (Fund «Obsshestvennoe Mnenie» 2017). In addition, Russia denied its military presence in Ukraine and Crimea, continuing with the strategy that has been used in Chechnya, which Allison (2014) calls 'deniable' intervention. Putin declared that any soldiers (or 'little green men') already on the peninsula were present in line with an agreement under international law and that no soldiers got involved with the referendum (Putin 2014). Denying the presence of military personnel in Crimea allowed the Kremlin at least to buy some time to think up possible positions in the conflict, and how the international observers and other players would accept those. Although the strategies in Chechnya were also used in Ukraine, the finesse with which the Kremlin used different rhetoric in these rather similar cases of self-determination shows that Russia is becoming more visible on the international arena, especially after the annexation of Crimea and the current situation in Syria. Putin as the personification of the Russian will gains more power domestically and abroad.

The situation in Ukraine reshaped the targeted securitisation audience in Russia, changing people's opinions: almighty Russia did not give up under pressure from 'evil' Chechen terrorists when they were demanding their right to self-determination to be respected but happily orchestrated the situation to return Crimea to the Russian Federation, helping their 'brothers in need'. However, the ethnic card was never played in Chechnya. "*Chechens are not ethnically Russians so they are evil*" was never a rhetoric used in Chechnya, but was easily applied in Ukraine: "*they are our brothers, we are the same people*" was consistently used, for example by Sergei Ivanov when assessing the situation with refugees in Rostov na Donu, June 2014 (The Kremlin 2014). Undeniably, the way in which the ethnic card was played in Ukraine proves to be more politically versatile: it is more

constructive to change public opinions in Russia using a unifying, all-encompassing concept of all Russian-speaking people being connected than excluding any nations.

6. THE PAST AS JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

Historical narratives of greatness that are grounded in success are hugely important to the Russian government, as visible in Russia's foreign policy towards the 'near abroad'. The Crimean annexation witnessed an increase in the use of history as a way of securitising Russia and Russian interests. The state applied references to the Great Patriotic War as a defence mechanism with the aim of arousing patriotic fervour amongst the population with an underlying message that this was a temporary struggle to be overcome. On a deeper level, it implied that Russia's way of life and civilisation were again under threat from surrounding hostile others. The sensitive nature of Crimea and military patriotism surrounding the peninsula meant that as the Russian state saw Ukraine within its historic and emotional right to intervene in; an 'illegal coup' financed by Western powers was simply unacceptable.

The annexation also involved a questioning of history to legitimise Russia's actions alongside the messages of historic glories coated in patriotism. The Kosovo precedent was an attempt by the Kremlin to use the recent past against the West in order to justify its annexation, citing that it was a case "*created by our Western colleagues*" in a "*very similar situation*" (Rotaru 2016). As Kosovo was able to separate from Serbia after 500 years, Russia argued the Crimean people should also be able to decide their own fate. Another claim was that the initial transfer of Crimea in 1954 to the UkSSR (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) was illegal under the Soviet constitution, as it lacked the required approval of the Supreme Soviets. Although this argument is factually false and has consequently not been used since 2014, Crimea was labelled a special case of particular importance for Russian civilisation (Zadarozhniy 2017).

As during the Colour Revolutions, the fear of NATO on the borders of the Russian state or even occupying a city symbolic of its military glory was heightened. The security factor surrounding Crimea tied in with the historical rhetoric used by both the Russian President and his Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, the latter of whom stating that Crimea is a land where a lot of blood had been spilt and statehood was at stake (Lavrov 2014). The Crimean question was also of geopolitical importance; one of concerns was Russia's access to the Black Sea. Putin declared that Russia cannot give up everything it had fought for since the time of Peter the Great (Putin 2014). On the outset, this can appear as Russia re-asserting its international ambitions and or acting as an aggressor nation. However, in trying to create a new type of state, the past is essential in the state building process, and therefore, this is a modern and Russian form of identity politics. Furthermore, the existence of the Russian state has always relied upon the projection of strength to secure the country, which means many international disputes and disagreements are often perceived as an attack on Russia's history and attempts to undermine Russian sovereignty, provoking a reaction from the Kremlin.

7. UNITED AGAINST THE 'ENEMY'

Russia's response to the Western sanctions post-Crimea displayed signs of both hard and soft power. The state was able to utilise Russia's strong sense of military patriotism in explaining an increase in the military budget to \$81 billion in 2015, and increased again the following year. Some of the new technology was displayed at the seventieth anniversary Victory Day parade in Moscow.¹ This conveyed a message that Russia had no intention of backing down from its interests and was prepared to defend them. This is also true of certain military

¹However, figures released by the Treasury suggest the budget was cut 25% in 2017, the lowest level since the early 1990s. See *The Moscow Times*, 2014. Russian Defence Spending to Hit Record \$81 Billion in 2015, <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/russian-defense-budget-to-hit-record-81-billion-in-2015-40468> accessed 17/07/2017.

exercises conducted near NATO member states and expulsion of US diplomats in 2017 in response to further sanctions initiated by the US Congress during the 'Russia investigation'¹. Crimea's annexation being portrayed as a gift by the government saw national pride drastically increase in the immediate aftermath. Combined with a surge in support for the Russian president, another *Levada* poll showed that 80% of Russians felt proud to live in Russia, and the majority of pride centered on Russian history (44%); two years later, this had decreased to 75% (Shevchenko 2016). This suggests that historical patriotism as a legitimisation tool for its actions abroad is effective and that the sanctions were viewed as a small price to pay, as Russia was predicted to return to growth in 2017 after two years of recession (The Economist 2017). The federal television channel *Rossiia 1* also produced a documentary *Krym, put' na rodinu* (Crimea, the way home). The documentary's premise was that Putin revealed Russia's willingness to defend the peninsula from a military attack (*Krym, put' na rodinu* 2014). The title gives further confirmation to the nature of Crimea being a gift to the Russian people and a representation of its return to a natural 'great power' status. In addition, the aftermath of Maidan saw the new Ukrainian government depicted as 'fascist thugs' by Russian media (Pearce 2017). This attempt to appeal to nostalgia from the Great Patriotic War was to push against the idea of Ukraine moving closer to the West who 'orchestrated' the events. As many Russians feel Ukraine was 'lost' after the Soviet collapse, this further reflects Russia's concern over 'traditional' and civilisational territory, which should be securitised if the internal situation is to remain stable.

¹ 'The Russia investigation' was the phrase coined to describe the legal investigation into the alleged ties between Donald Trump's Presidential Campaign and the Russian government during the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, in which Russia was widely believed to have interfered with to favour the Republican nominee.

8. MILITARISATION OF SOCIETY

Militarisation of Russian society helped to boost Putin's domestic popularity and has been introduced and implemented in different ways. Militarisation extended to Russian schools, with the introduction of military education. This includes lessons in bravery and a variety of military skills such as maintaining firearms (RIA Novosti 2016). This also involves more military history and learning things such as tactics, and is combined with the development of a new series of school history textbooks and lessons on the annexation of Crimea. Moscow's Department of Education and Methodological Centre, the body that sets the public school curriculum, issued guidelines for Russian teachers to lead a class entitled 'We are United' about Crimea's joining the Russian Federation, in order to clarify for students 'what actually happened' (Radia 2014). Whilst the official aim of this was to give the patriotic education programmes more of a structure and for students to be aware of themselves as citizens, it was a clear reaction to events abroad and an attempt to legitimise its own actions. The suggested lesson plan is uncannily close to the Kremlin's narrative and even asks students to analyse Sevastopol's strategic importance, including its strong and weak defence points (Mosmetod 2014). This does not just seek an awareness of oneself as a citizen, but rather teaches students the importance of defending the motherland, even territories beyond its modern borders, thus reiterates the uniqueness of Russia and the importance of its participation in international affairs. In public, many Russians began to wear the orange and black ribbon of St. George as a symbol of their patriotism during the sanctions period, which is usually worn to celebrate victory in the Great Patriotic War (Pearce 2017). This symbolised that Russians remember how they defeated the enemy (Nazi Germany), overcome tremendous hardship and saved the world. The message also extends to school textbooks, where for example the Molotov Ribbentrop pact is depicted as the USSR being 'forced' to join in because Europe would not accommodate the USSR in its collective security, to then go on and document the great victory, immense sacrifice and bravery (Dannilov et al 2013).

9. CONCLUSION

This paper has shown how the securitisation of a shared past was used as a unifier in modern Russia, which is not exclusive of Russians with the borders of the modern Russian state. This is by design to add legitimacy to the existential and external threats seeking to undermine Russian sovereignty. Due to the redundancy of Russia's legal arguments surrounding the annexation of Crimea, securitisation was a likely fall back with old arguments becoming relevant again. This paper has shown that domestically, the state's securitisation arguments gained enough resonance to justify emergent political responses, but achieved mixed results. The use of the past in defending Crimea's annexation was successful in securing support from the Russian population and allowed the state to exercise its power through different channels, ultimately aimed at securitising the state's decisions. The resulted surge in patriotism due to a historical justification provided a sense of credibility in lacking legal arguments surrounding Crimea's annexation, changing the securitisation audience in Russia. However, there were drawbacks as well: Russia was expelled from the G8 and the ruble plummeted following Western sanctions and falling oil prices. Yet, Russia continues to feel surrounded since only a handful of countries formally recognised Crimea joining the Russian Federation, which allowed the state to put forward the notion that it was under threat since the international community disregarded its positions. The economy and state's ability to exercise power on the international level were all under threat and scrutiny, so history served as an antidote, although some critics like Alexei Navalny labelled it a distraction (BBC Hardtalk 2017). However, increased patriotism appears to have only had short-term success. By 2017, patriotic fervour surrounding Crimea was burning out. This may also add to the decision to erect a monument dedicated to the Russian Civil War here for the centenary of the October Revolution. This event could not go un-covered or un-commemorated, but as an uncomfortable subject, the revolution is not an ideal legitimisation tool. The planned monument in Crimea helps tie to Russian patriotism, soften the narrative of a 'tragedy' and prevent the population from using it against the state. Referring back to Balzacq, this security problem has emerged, evolved, was used by the Kremlin to its

advantage. However, it has not fully dissolved yet, and therefore, a short-term strategy. Further threats to Russian security will require new and more developed arguments, although it should be kept in mind that Russia has a tendency to return to approaches that worked successfully in the past.

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