Ontological security seeking and rationales: a tripartite take on motivational factors

This paper tries to offer a new take on, and give further meaning to, the otherwise rather generic social mechanism of ontological security seeking (OSS). It will do so by exploring the intersection of social images and narratives of security to scrutinize contested patterns of othering/belonging to shed light onto particular securitization practices and their constitutive motivations.

It also offers another perspective on the poststructuralist debate on the identity-foreign policy nexus by presenting a deeper understanding of the social mechanisms of in/security constitution and intergroup relations: namely, the dynamic interaction of two layers of identity formation – internal and relational - with OSS being the modus operandi of the self’s identity shaping within this framework.

Cutting across the traditional values-vs.-interests debate of foreign policy motivations, the claim is made that this ontological security seeking (and reasoning about) relies on a tripartite set of motivational factors within these processes of identification: 1. cognitive, 2. rationalist/utilitarian and 3. emotional.

Inherently linked to this complex are notions of power: OSS understood as a function of othering is then an exercise of conceptual and categorial boundary drawing. In turn, these boundaries and cognitive frontiers are connected with security discourses as discursive power (could) manifest(s) itself. Thus, categorial (normative) power is part of the complex process of identity demarcations and takes into account not only representations of imaginary sets of belonging/otherness but ideological projections of power. In other terms, categories (of belonging) are securitized - and linked to the tripartite set of motivations of identity construction(s) yet again.
“Praise and blame. — If a war proves unsuccessful one asks who was to "blame" for the war; if it ends in victory one praises, [glorifies] its instigator. Guilt is always sought wherever there is failure; for failure brings with it a depression of spirits against which the sole remedy is instinctively applied: a new excitation of the feeling of power—and this is to be discovered in the condemnation of the "guilty" [...] To condemn [praise] oneself can also be a means of restoring the feeling of power after a defeat. [...]” (Nietzsche 2007 (1861): Aphorism 140)

What Nietzsche calls ‘spirits’ in this context could be translated into ‘a sense of continuity in the world’ – an everyday routine – of a certain group: namely, ontological security – a concept which has been adapted from psychology (Weigert and Gecas 2005) and was significantly elaborated on by Anthony Giddens (Giddens 1991). In this context, ‘depression of spirits’ could be identified as a state of being ontologically insecure, e.g. when a critical situation, here war, radically ruptures the already existing autobiography and related routines. Ejdus (2017) would argue here that although "critical situations are radical and socially constructed disruption of self-identities, [...] they are more than that". He argues that this definition of a critical situation was to so wide and elastic that nearly all (international, political) crises could fall under this definition as they would have the ability to disrupt self-identity narratives. Where Ejdus then proposes to closer examine the four existential questions related to human life as in the initial concept of ontological security by Giddens¹, this paper suggests that having a closer look at the processes of identification and their constitutive motivations sheds light onto different (re)sources of ontological in/security formation on the group level.

As in Nietzsche’s quote, blaming, shaming, humiliating, but also praising, glorifying and gratifying are verbal facets of emotions translated directly into behaviour directed at an ingroup and an outgroup. Who this "we" and this "they" is, is then of utter importance to understand not only the emotional significance, but also the underlying power struggles. These power struggles are embedded, articulated and implemented within the exercise of boundary drawing: the processes of positive and negative identification and identity formation. It is assumed here, in turn, that the dynamic interaction of two layers of identity formation – internal and relational – shape this process. If identity formation is then understood as being constituted on cognitive, emotional and utilitarian grounds, internal and relational vectors of this co-constitution 'meet' on the intergroup level – thus, as a consequence, emotional, utilitarian and cognitive factors interact within this formation.

As such, if ontological security seeking is about holding a stable identity, OSS is the modus operandi of the coherence/fit of the self’s identity shaping within this internal-relational identity framework. This, in turn, then means that the mechanisms of in/security constitution are fundamentally based on the diffusion of emotions and material factors, filtered through and represented by cognitive proxies on the intergroup level.

**Contested Borders – Contested Boundaries, Contested Boundaries – Contested Borders?**

Since the coming-into-existence of the EU’s Eastern Partnership – as more differentiated ENP approach – denominations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as countries which could be considered “in between” (Danii and Mascateanu 2011) the EU and Russia, within the “spheres of influence” or the “near abroad”, respectively, have featured quite significantly throughout all types of discourses. These discourses feature boundaries and borders as the “sum of social, cultural, and political processes rather than simply as fixed lines” (Bialasiewicz et al. 2009: 61) as they enact, materialize and perform those identity and narrative diffusions in a variety of ways, with in particular the latter being at the center of critical geopolitics (Toal 1996). In accordance with the framework proposed here, these narratives – embedding and drawing on representations of the past, the present and the future – represent emotional, utilitarian and cognitive landscapes of social power (Johnson et al. 2011: 62). As such, these boundaries not only set spatial significance, but especially shape group agency – and how these boundaries are constructed: namely as processes, practices and discourses of hegemonic/counter-hegemonic narratives, as politics of delimitation/classification – and with that politics of and claims to representation and expression of identity: topological spaces of relations of belonging and otherness; that is to select and block certain mobilizations of memory and information (Albert, Jacobson, and Lapid 2001; Johnson et al. 2011). They, then, are the constant articulation and rearticulation of the outside-inside division in global politics (Crampton and Elden 2007; Browning and Christou 2010) and are invisible, woven into the social fabric of international society – *stylized by group emotions, utilitarian calculations and cognitive filters as exercises of bordering*.

As the ENP/EaP was initially designed to avoid “new dividing lines” in Europe and aimed at the creation of a zone of stability, prosperity and security on the European continent, these re-emerging categorizations fit yet again in the emerging debate on a “New Cold War in Europe” within which these signifiers of belonging (Jerez-Mir, Real-Dato, and Vázquez-
García 2009) to a certain socially constructed and cognitively evaluated group regain immense importance (Weisel and Böhm 2015). It is exactly within this foreign policy discourse that preferences, attitudes and alignments are constituted on the basis of collective identity constructions (Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder 2001; Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004). In other words: constituted on mechanisms of belonging and otherness. These discursive strategies of highlighting belonging to (imagined) communities (Anderson 1996), yet security communities (Deutsch 1957; Adler 1997), could have been observed to be the cornerstones of securitization strategies of the EU and Russia vis-à-vis the common neighbourhood and of the countries of the common neighbourhood vis-à-vis the EU and Russia vice versa. These idealistic and materialistic positionings, making sense of the world and others, are part of an amalgamation of identity politics: of self-constituted and ascribed identities – the latter being supported by processes of socialization and conditionality, labelled ‘Europeanization’ or ‘Russification’, respectively.

The model presented here assumes that the bridge between the two regional foreign policies of the EU and Russia could be identified in them being different anchors of belonging, yet otherness – whilst concrete images of amity/enmity co-constitute the situation of collective identities on the ground. This collective identity formation, understood as a function of othering, is then one of conceptual and categorial boundary drawing – inherently linked to (definitional/normative) power.
Theoretical Framework 1: The Systemic Perspective

Constitution of (perceptions of) In/Security as a function of otherness and belonging (through ontological security seeking):¹

The process of collective identity construction - relating the self to the other - can be split into a four stage process:

1. comparison², 2. contestation³, 3. confrontation⁴ and 4. counter-action⁵.

Context: thick, e.g. (non-)spatial/temporal diffusion of norms, ideational and material factors

The Self

Self-conceptualization as collective identity states: superordinate groups

WE
Endogenous (internal) identity formation

Identity shaping:
Ontological security seeking

Identity fit and salience as balancing modes of motivations

US
Relational (external) identity formation

The Other(s)

(non-regional) „significant other(s)“:
A concrete other in the process of primary socialization, e.g. foreign policy and security orientations.
Small number, high degree of casting of motivational factors.

“ascribed conceptualizations”

Otherness and belonging as function of intergroup comparison

Constitution of collective (security) identity/(perceptions of) In/Security as cognitive analysis of otherness/belonging based on intergroup comparison

Narratives and images as relational and internal representations of identity constructions and mediators of situation

*= specific diffusion of rational/affectional inputs
(Inglehart 1976; Anderson und Reichert 1995; McLaren 2004; Maier and Rittberger 2008)

¹ Model based on Mead 1925, Ashmore et al. 2004; Harnisch 2011.
² "We-they perception and favorable in-group comparison." (Ashmore et al. 2004: 147)
³ "Instrumental conflicts of interests among counterpoised interactive communities." (Ashmore et al. 2004: 147)
⁴ "Idelogization of social identities, transformation of conflicts of interests into moral confrontations between Us and demonized other." (Ashmore et al. 2004: 147)
⁵ "Discrimination and violence, offensive policy preferences." (Ashmore et al. 2004: 147)
Ontological In/Security and Identity Formation

Ontological Security Theory (OST) (Steele 2005; Mitzen 2006; Steele 2008; Delehanty and Steele 2009; Lupovici 2012; Rumelili 2015a, 2015b; Mitzen 2016) as a framework to understand behavior in realms of security and perceptions of security (on a mostly state-centric level) has featured widely in the recent IR debate and turn on narratives (Huysmans 1998, 2002; Alexander, Levin, and Henry 2005; Guzzini 2013). OST holds that the motivations for behavior can be found in needs of holding and reconstructing a positive self-identity, a constant and consistent self-reflexive positive narrative of the self. This biographical continuity (of the state/society) in form of narratives and images of the self (in fact, an internal domain identity) and the other is sought to be institutionalized by routinized relationships with those significant others. Reducing uncertainty about the behavior of those others and creating predictability are functions of this institutionalization of re-imagined relationships.

However, as Ejdus (2017) quite convincingly argues, whilst a lot of studies have drawn attention to the main argument of OST – that is, that states are ready to compromise their physical security in order to stabilize and defend their ontological security – little attention was paid to critical situations that, in the first place, render actors ontologically insecure. Crises, defined by Nabers (2015) as “disruptive processes”, are exactly such critical situations in world politics, “radical disjunctions that challenge the ability of collective actors to go on” (Ejdus 2017). They are, indeed, a renegotiation of community boundaries and a (re)construction of collective identities. In line with an argument put forward by Chernobrov (2016), this paper suggests that images are instrumentalized within these co-constitutive relationships: as OST assumes security to rest on an ever-so-positive representation of the self, images of othering and belonging are used as balancing mechanisms of those relationships to secure stability in ‘going on (as usual)’ (Flockhart 2006; Flockhart 2016).

How is this (search and struggle for a) ‘stable identity/autobiography’ then translated into/from conflict dynamics and meaningful strategies of doing and being?

The foreign policy-identity and the identity-security nexus are two academic compounds which are vividly debated and tackled from a variety of positions using a wide range of terminology to refer to identity: “identification”, “attachment”, “categorization”, “self-understanding”, “role conceptualization”, “social location or position”, or “groupness” are just a few examples (Hagström and Gustafsson 2015). The arising question of continuity and
change within this is closely related to the agency vs. structure debate on which much ink has been spilled, not least in IR theory. This paper follows the poststructuralist approach on identity and foreign policy, which postulates a dynamic and mutually constitutive relationship between them both. In other words, foreign policies are reliant upon representations of identity, but identities are constituted and reconstructed also through the formulation of foreign policy. In this understanding, material forces and ideas are so interlinked in the discursive practice of foreign policy that the two cannot be separated from each another; they are indeed ontologically inseparable. However, the understanding of this (re-)construction of identity is often under-conceptualized and needs further elaboration.

“There is no ‘I’ without a ‘Me’ and there is no ‘Me’ without an ‘Other’” (Mead 1925:p.268 in Harnisch 2011)

In accordance with early role theory sociologists, identity is here treated as layered and simultaneously constituted on mutually interacting levels of inter-subjective meaning making (Harnisch 2011). These two levels refer to a “domestic (internal) domain” (“I” or “We”) and an “international (relational) domain” (“Me” or “Us”) of identity construction. As in Mead’s quote, a ‘domestic domain’ is thus impossible other than in relation to an ‘international’ one. In this context, the fragile and ever-so-to-be-negotiated balancing act between the domestic and the international locus of one’s identity construction is to be found in the mechanism of ontological security seeking. This is to say that these points require a rather different concept of identity, a ‘relational’ understanding where demarcations between domestic and international, identity and difference, or Self and Other, are exactly what constitute identity (Campbell 1998; Connolly 1985; Neumann 1992). As such, ‘identity’ is both a “mirror-identity”, a function of collective representation and “wall identity”, a function of collective boundary drawing (Koschut 2013).

These notions of spatial, temporal and social power highlight the practice of categorization and its inherent linkage to collective identity constructions via subjective security perceptions by virtue of defining the other – and the self. This ‘categorial power’ of defining in-category status cuts across the debate on ‘normative power(s)’ as this very act of defining

---

2 “The national role conception framework places its emphasis there: it seeks to understand how actors fashion their role in the international system, navigating between domestic sources of identity and/or cultural heritage, taking advantage of the material resources at their disposal, circumnavigating as best as possible the obstacles imposed by their position in the international structure […] More importantly, it accommodates both domestic and international sources of national role conception by adopting a cognitive perspective.” (Breuning in Harnisch 2011: 26, own highlights). It is this behavioral meaning of roles which adds substance to social identities – and relates to the tripartite construction of them (and, in turn, ontological security) as they are, essentially, perceived roles (of the self(s) and the other(s)).
in-category status could be theorized as an act of labelling something as ‘normal’. However, categorial power is rather the outcome of a much more complex process of identity demarcations and takes into account not only representations of imaginary sets of belonging/otherness but ideological projections of power – of boundaries and borders connected with security discourses through their very implementation(s) as discursive power (could) manifest(s) itself. This socially diffuse production of subjectivity in systems of meaning and signification is, in terms of Barnett and Duvall (2005), productive power. It is, then, a ‘sequencing’ that takes place: social collective identity meanings and positions are generated only through (internal) discourses, and the former then feed into structural power concerns (external) – as structural power “concerns the structures – or, more precisely, the co-constitutive relations of [social] relative positions” (Barnett and Duvall 2005: p.25). Power and (perceptions of) in/securities are then inherently linked – and constitutive of each other – via identity constructions. In other terms, categories (of belonging) are either part of the fundamental self/other ontology and/or securitized.

The Intergroup Theories’ Perspective

Identity formation, as outlined above, is one of othering/belonging on the intergroup level. However, to dig deeper into the mechanisms of ontological security seeking, it is necessary to have a further look into what this identity, boundary drawing, is constituted and narrated on.

2002; Carey 2002, 2002; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel 1998; Sasley 2010; Chacha 2012), neither is sufficient on its own to explain orientations and behavior properly. Considering approaches from political psychology to solve this false dichotomy seems fruitful to circumvent analytical shortcuts and simplifications in the realms of conflict formation in order to link it back to ontological security seeking. It also cuts across the discussion of ‘anthropomorphism of state/society’ as assuming varying groups to have agency cuts across this conceptualization. Hence, the study of intergroup theories, consisting of intergroup threat theory (ITT), social identity theory (SIT), and intergroup emotions theory (IET) serves to delineate these structures (Billig and Tajfel 1973; Allen and Wilder 1975; Tajfel 1982; Hogg and Abrams 1988; Taylor and Moghaddam 1994; Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder 2001; Jussim, Wilder, and Ashmore 2001; Finley 2010; Cuhadar and Dayton 2011; Golec and Cichocka 2013; Martínez-Tur et al. 2014; Weisel and Böhm 2015; Kteily, Hodson, and Bruneau 2016).

**Intergroup Threat Theory, Types of Threats and Resources of Identity Formation**

ITT’s conceptualization of threat is related to social identity theory as it posits that the actions of out-groups, in situations of intergroup comparison, often lead to ingroups feeling as though their group’s identity, their very existence, is threatened, believing that the other group views the in-group negatively (Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder 2001; Rothbart and Korostelina 2006; Korostelina 2007). It is not surprising that this resembles quite prominently fundamental premises of ontological security (seeking) as they have common starting propositions. However, the social identity definition of threat involves both tangible resources and group-esteem. ITT summarizes threats to safety, health, economy and well-being, ergo the very material aspect of existence, to be part of the realistic threat canon. Contrary to expectation, realistic threats have not proven to be the most important drivers for conflict behaviour in intergroup situations, but rather the threats outlined in the next paragraph. (Contrary to expectation, the threats outlined in the next paragraph, rather than realistic threats, have proven to be the most important drivers for conflict behavior in intergroup situations.) Symbolic threats refer to the emotions, beliefs and values of the group which may be at risk. They primarily involve perceived group differences in emotion (norms), morals, values, standards, beliefs, and attitudes. These threats affect the in-group paradigm, in that they

---

3 This ties in with the debate on different conceptualizations of rationality/rationalities, in particular in IR (Abulof 2015)
4 C.f. Krolikowski 2008; van Rythoven 2015
affect the manner in which the group understands and interprets the world. Symbolic threats arise, in part, because the in-group believes in the moral rightness of its system of values. Symbolic threats, thus, are the sum of threats to morals, attitudes, beliefs, values and (emotional) standards and have proven to be significant drivers of behavioural tendencies.

An intergroup threat, then, is experienced whenever members of one group perceive that another group is in a position to cause them harm in the domains referred to above. As such, intergroup threats are important because they have the power to shape intergroup relations significantly – and mostly destructive.

All processes of othering - rendering groups into in- and out-groups - create those specific norm vectors for appropriate utility calculations, emotions and cognitive evaluations. As such, groups are utility-maximising emotional communities (Koschut 2014): that means, groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions. Referring to that, Koschut identifies a security community as an emotional community since emotion norms (the expression of appropriate emotions in a given situation) generates collective meaning and identity: "a matter of mutual sympathy and loyalties, of 'we-feeling', trust and mutual consideration" (Koschut 2017a, 2017b). Whereas Koschut then continues in an overly simplistic manner by just pointing out that the prevalent emotion norms and their mechanisms lead to the inside being categorized as amity and the outside as enmity (2014: 546), ITT, SIT and IET offer a rather differentiated take on this, as the direction and content of the vector is of utter importance.
Social Identity Theory focuses on the relationship between self-concept and group behavior (Abrams and Hogg 1999; Hogg 2004). Tajfel proposed SIT to explain social categorization and perception, intergroup behavior, and the pursuit of social psychological understanding of the causes of prejudice and intergroup conflict (Abrams & Hogg, 1999). Tajfel et al (1973) attempted to identify the minimal conditions that would lead members of one group to discriminate in favor of the in-group to which they belonged and against another out-group. There are three components of social identity in this scenario: self-conceptualization, group self-esteem, and commitment to the group, which, when met, lead to feeling connected to an in-group. As a result, all other groups become out-groups and are rivals for status and resources as well as a source for comparison. This can lead to discrimination in favor of the in-group or against other out-groups, as well as stereotyping and prejudice when a perceived threat occurs. It is interesting to note that there is no contradiction in terms of competition for status (ideational factor)/resources (material factor).

According to Social Identity Theory, "social identity and intergroup behavior is guided by the pursuit of evaluative positive social identity through positive intergroup distinctiveness, which in turn is motivated by the need for positive self-esteem" (Hogg 2004). Furthermore, according to Hogg (2004), social identity is motivated by self-enhancement and uncertainty reduction, which causes groups to strive to be both better than and distinct from other groups.

1. **Intergroup cognition**, in this context, is twofold: First, cognitive mobilization refers to the availability of and exposure to relevant information, and the capability to process it. This process increases the group’s capacity to receive and interpret information relating to a 'remote political community'. As such, cognitive mobilization is "a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of support for a [...] community: one must become aware of it before one can develop a sense of commitment." (Inglehart 1970:47). Second, intergroup cognition describes the sum of collected information about the self and the other as pre-situation inventory (of available and group-normed emotions, utility calculations, experiences, ...) as found in cognitive proxies, that is 'coded' images and narratives, stereotypes and prejudices. As such, intergroup cognition as information filter works as bounded emotion/rationality primer and bias (Perdue et al. 1990).

2. In addition, processes of identification, as bound by cognition, are constituted by cost-benefit calculations; that means that orientations and attachments are also always ones of self-beneficial referencing, of 'rationally' choosing 'the best option available' not only in materialistic but also in idealistic terms (Brewer 2003). The latter situation resembles what
Flockhart (2016) would call a maximisation strategy of ontological security seeking, of finding the best positive self-narrative available to enhance self-esteem to a maximum, whereas the former recalls one premise of role theory: that is, that role conceptualisations (identities and their constellations) do always navigate their material surroundings (Harnisch 2011).

3. **Intergroup emotions theory** (Smith, Seger, and Mackie 2007; Seger et al. 2009; Seger, Smith, and Mackie 2009; Menges and Kilduff 2015; Bericat 2016) holds that intergroup emotions are emotional reactions to in-group and out-group interactions/comparisons experienced by individuals when they identify with a social group, making the group part of the psychological self. Intergroup emotions theory takes the notion of a socially collective self as its starting point, borrowing directly from the social identity and self-categorization approaches. The basic premise of IET is that when an individual identifies with a group, that in-group becomes part of the self, thus acquiring such significance, events or objects that impinge on the in-group as appraised for their emotional relevance, just like events that occur on the individual level. Thus, intergroup emotions theory is part of a cognition-emotion/utility-action tendencies triad: as intergroup emotions are socially shared within a group, intergroup emotions contribute to regulating intragroup and intergroup attitudes and behavior.

Recently, also a body of literature concerning emotions in IR has emerged (Ross 2006; Bleiker and Hutchison 2008; Fattah and Fierke 2009; Hughes 2009; Hutchison 2010; Hutchison and Bleiker 2014): Koschut (2017a, b), for example, highlights the relationship between emotion and culture by investigating the affective reproduction of culture in world politics. The most significant term coined by this contribution is the introduction of the complex of ‘emotion culture’ which Koschut understands as a culture-specific complex of emotion vocabularies, feeling rules and beliefs about emotions and their appropriate expression that facilitate the cultural construction of political communities and identity (Koschut 2017a, b) and, thus, serve as boundary drawing support as they are only accessible to in-group members. In concordance with IET, he states that a group's way of feeling is shaped by the group's intergroup comparison and pre-experienced, remembered standards. This emotional code of an emotional culture prescribes what is regarded as an appropriate emotional performance (and what is not) within a particular group, thereby reproducing its collective identity and power structure (Koschut 2017a:279). Moreover, first, certain emotions are associated and linked (only) with certain identities, and, second, these
concepts and processes introduced by Koschut equal what IET postulates: namely, that emotional contagion means that people tend to take on the emotions displayed by fellow ingroup members with whom they interact. As such, people tend to conform to ingroup norms with regard to group-level emotions and move closer to a group prototype – which can be a stereotype or a common ‘emotion profile’. These emotion profiles are exactly the same as emotion cultures. Frequent occurrences of emotional states linked to particular group identities build up associations of specific emotions with articular identities and lead to the display of relatively stable emotional profiles, such as an association of a national identity with pride or an identity as a member of a conflictual group with anger.

**What makes one emotional and utilitarian structure/calculation more effective, virulent and gaining significance?**

1. The way it resonates with historical and cultural memory and history – and specific audiences, e.g. different groups and (inter-)group comparisons at hand. In turn, group boundaries are stabilised and reinforced though socially acceptable emotional expressions (Koschut 2017b: 182), supported by cost-benefit calculations and filtered through cognition.

2. From an ITT perspective, emotions are triggered as a result of a group relevant event if and when people do feel a belonging and identification with a certain group (Korostelina 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>fostering</th>
<th>(in-)group cohesion</th>
<th>(inter)group differentiation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>behaviour/emotion in relation to group norm</td>
<td>conform</td>
<td>empathy, pride, guilt, gratitude, honor, respect, compassion, sympathy, courage, hope, satisfaction, trust, optimism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>non-conform</td>
<td>anger, anxiety, dislike, shame, guilt, embarrassment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1: Emotion and intergroup behaviour tendencies, non-exhaustive list
Emotions do have the capability, as shown by the symbolic threats approach, to predict intergroup behaviour tendencies such as the support for an in-group and confrontation with/opposition to/avoidance of an out-group. However, specific emotions do have specific meanings for different in-groups – various studies showed no spillover of alike emotions from group to group (Smith, Seger, and Mackie 2007).

Both group anger and positive emotions are strong predictors and show significant implications for group identification as emotions motivate to move toward a(n) subject/object (Smith, Seger, and Mackie 2007).

Anger, both at the individual and group level, is particularly capable of driving concrete actions and also drives in-group identification, e.g. boundary drawing (if directed at an out-group), as much as liking, satisfaction and happiness work as positive identifiers for an in-group. This has drawbacks on the (re-)interpretation of group-events as to avoid negative feelings and to avoid these situations. This positive group identification, coined entativity and common group fate in IGT, is supported by exactly those shared emotional codes and is also broadly congruent with what ontological security is conceived of in IR (Smith, Seger, and Mackie 2007).

**Ontological security seeking and discursive strategies of coping with ‘symbolic’ and ‘realistic’ threats**
“...It can be assumed that rationality and emotion affect each other and are mutually dependent. For example, the emotional feelings of ear and shame serve our physical survival and social integrity, respectively.” (Koschut 217a:6)

Constructivist approaches in IR often emphasize the importance of language in the construction of reality, identity and power relations (Koschut 2017a,b). It is sometimes overlooked that the discursive exercise of power via status differentiation is rooted in collective emotions that undergrid and reproduce social discourses and identities at the international level. Thus, the inclusion of emotion, but also of utilitarian aspects, is necessary as additional category of identity formation, to highlight emotional and utilitarian underpinnings of ontological standpoints (Koschut 2017a,b).

Deduced from that, the balancing exercise of ontological security seeking as positive-narration-of-the-self-exercise between internal and external identification inputs, both emotional and materialistic, involves different discursive elements.

![Diagram of emotionalization, rationalization, and securitization](image)

1. **Emotionalisation**
   Is a persuasive discourse strategy (Koschut 2017b). The social and discursive constitution of emotions as shown above takes place through communicative action, the discursive manifestation of emotions and their emotion potential. Discursive
strategies of emotionalisation are defined as activation and construction of certain emotional representations using emotional expressions and emotional terms in order to gain optimal group distinctiveness (Koschut 2017b).

2. **Rationalization**

Rationalization is a defense mechanism in which controversial behaviors or feelings are justified and explained in a seemingly rational or logical manner to avoid the true explanation and made consciously tolerable - or even admirable and superior - by plausible means and the presentation of and argumentation with utilitarian 'facts'.

3. **Cognitive stratification**

Cognitive stratification means the prevalence of steadfast categorizations and the construction of a negative bias towards the respective out-group through stereotypes and prejudices (Bar-Tal 2013). Intergroup stereotypes, prejudices and verbal categories as cognitive proxies are both emotionally and utilitarianly codified to evoke specific identities (Bar-Tal 2013).

This inherent drive for consistency (Festinger 1962; Lupovici 2012) within this system opens up space for two quite different strategies of dissonance reduction within the aforementioned discourses according to two types of dissonances: cognitive and ontological. First, consistent with the overall assumption that the aforementioned images of amity and enmity work as cognitive proxies for power configurations, OST puts forward that there is a hierarchy of needs to be achieved by the state: first securing a positive self-conceptualization, then physical security. This rationale for a positive self-identity thus may lead to foreign policy choices inconsistent with physical security needs. In that scenario, images are strategically used as cognitive bridges between the (physical) security policy and ontological security needs in light of the strategic environment and perceived national security threats. Second, otherness and belonging as distinct representations of those instrumentalized balancing methods of states'/societies' drive for ontological security shape intergroup relations (relational domain): they stimulate the construction of security communities and provide incentives to repel outsiders (Subotić 2015), while the behavioural tendencies of these varying identity constructions can stand in strong contrast to each other.
“In other words, emotions and utilitarian calculations reproduce and reinforce specific meaning structures [=cognitive stratifications] of self and other through language while, at the same time, blocking alternative constructions of meaning.” (Koschut 2017b: 176)

4. **Securitization**

Switching away from the essentialist meaning of friends and foes in the Schmittian sense and their provokingly simple/undercomplex and dehumanizing categorizations of others (Kteily, Hodson, and Bruneau 2016), arguing in line with Mouffe (2005) opens up the discursive space in which images and narratives of enmity and amity are constantly invoked as instruments and methods to mobilize groups and foster ingroup cohesion (Alexander et al. 1999). These images and narratives which provide probabilistic heuristics about the other’s behavior are understood as cognitive shortcuts towards reality and are a powerful tool of political discourse (Williams 2003; Chernobrov 2016). Looking at how friends and foes are constructed in political discourse provides a powerful analytical tool for recent developments. Acknowledging this antagonistic constitutive dimension should be understood as admonition of Schmittian reflexes, to “think with Schmitt against Schmitt” (Mouffe 2005). Thus, images of amity and enmity are heuristic categories of (discourse) analysis rather than foundational principles. In this sense, these discourses represent discourses of danger which discern the self from the other and “tell [...] what to fear” (Stern 2005:34). These evaluations construct subjective positions on the boundary of we and them and are reproduced through performance (Stryker 2008). This reflex of “to fix where/who we are” is central to the production of in/security, where the inside is rendered secure and the outside dangerous (Stern 2005). This assignment of ‘foreign threat’ represents a notion of securitizing the identity of the respective group – inherently linked to OST.

To sum up, processes of emotionalisation undergirding status and identity form an inseperable element of discursively constructed power structures in international politics. Groups in world politics exercise power through the discursive enactment of particular emotions and cost-benefit calculations. Hence, a purely rationalist approach may be counterproductive because this perspective fails to appreciate the fact that emotions are central and inseperable from processes of reasoning and rational thought. To this end, emotion based discourse analysis generates important insights with respect to
understanding identity, power and status because it reveals how emotions are capable of making morally informed judgments about the self and other.

Illustrations from the South Caucasus

As Ejdus (2017) has shown insightfully for the case of Serbia and the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, developments which question already existing understandings of collective identities lead to significant re-negotiations of understandings of those boundaries and highlight the fundamental struggle for different discursive meaning by all parties involved – where it is not possible anymore to continue with the same entity ontology anymore. As such, the country cases of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia fundamentally highlight other cases of ontological insecurity, where the (narrated) existence and autobiography of those states – in light of at least elite policy discourses as scope of this paper - is challenged and reconfigured. From this ontological insecurity due to local/regional/international developments, a very specific net of ontologies, captured in enemy/amity images and very specific utalitarian and emotional discursive notions, emerges – in particular when looking at a set of countries, where a litany of “frozen conflicts” is to be found.

All examples have been extracted from randomly chosen direct one-on-one interviews with the respective heads of state to allow for discursive openness and in order to explore existing notions without further pre-selection of issue areas. In order to achieve this, a simplified cognitive discourse analysis was applied to this non-representative sample\(^5\). The main aim of this section is to illustrate the intrinsic relationship of ontological security (seeking) notions with utilitarian and in particular emotional motives with articulations of identities, thus (feelings of ) group belongings and confirmations of and challenges to certain collective identities – updated, reinforced, rejected by those latter motives. These findings are contrasted with frames of images of enmity and amity extracted from main foreign and security policies in place at the time of the respective interview\(^6\) - working as overarching/framing endemic pre-existing (to the interview) stereotypes.

---

\(^5\) Media outlet questions start with a hyphen, whereas answers are in italics. Own highlights are in bold. Extracts are in the order of their appearance in the original interview to guarantee coherence.

Armenia

Armenia: frames and narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreign/Security Policy Self-conceptualizations, ontological assumptions and ingroup definitions</th>
<th>The Other and belonging</th>
<th>Images of amity and enmity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of the state</td>
<td>- Azerbaijan and Turkey: no diplomatic relations due to non-resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, normalization of relations might be envisaged</td>
<td>Russia: most importantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Preservation and development of national identity: within both Armenia and throughout its Diaspora - through broader mobilization and promoting, enhancing, fostering and preserving national spiritual heritage and symbolizing national identity.</td>
<td>- Georgia: friendly relations and cooperation, fostering stability</td>
<td>CSTO/CIS: institutional ally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Important role of the (national) Armenian Apostolic Church within identity construction.</td>
<td>- Iran: mutually beneficial cooperation (shared realities: shared borders, historic and cultural ties, and mutual economic interests)</td>
<td>US/NATO: strategic/very selective ally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Just and peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict</td>
<td>- Russia: strategic partnership (trade and military cooperation), traditionally friendly: OSCE mediator in favor of Armenia, with Russian military presence in Caucasus as an important factor for Armenia’s security and for the preservation of the political and military balance in the region.</td>
<td>EU: strategic, very selective ally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Complementary foreign policy approach: seeks to simultaneously develop relations with all states in the region and with states with interests in the region.</td>
<td>- US: limited military cooperation (particularly together with Greece)</td>
<td>Azerbaijan: Imperialist/ Babarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- participating in European and post-Soviet integration</td>
<td>- CIS: founding member, active integration</td>
<td>Turkey: Imperialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- CSTO: founding member, highly important in terms of military engagement and „main pillar of Armenian security system”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- OSCE: continued</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-Russia is the **main political, economic and military ally** of Armenia. How do you assess this reality at a time when relations between Moscow and the West are in very low **hours**? Do you **think the West is being unfair to Russia**? Could Armenia contribute, in any way, to a normalization of relations between Russia and the West?

**It is true, Russia is our strategic partner and our relations have a long history. And along these relationships have formed many connections that are vital for us. We see no reason to cut these ties, on the contrary, we want to strengthen these ties and expand them. This stems from our national interest. Russia is our main trading partner, it is one of the biggest investors in Armenia, with Russia we have very good military technical cooperation, Russia is a huge market and it is a country where Armenia is well known. [...] Here I want to say one thing: in the modern world people gain when there is free movement of people, goods and services. [...] Therefore, we are constantly working not to cause additional problems between Russia and the West. We believe that it is dangerous to take advantage of contradictions. In many cases, for small countries, that can be fatal. And for that, we always feel more comfortable when relations between Russia and NATO,**

expressions of utilitarian alliance with Russia

emotional reference to differentiated social status - expression of disgust/aversion

implicit utilitarian construction of in-group and emotional expression of trust and pride of belonging to an established ‘group’

negative emotional coding using fear and threat and expression of alternative solution connected to positive emotional coding using comfort

---

7 Context of the interview: The Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan gave an exclusive interview to Agencia EFE in the presidential palace on the 13th of March 2017.
between Russia and the West are not tense.

- What is the objective of the Armenian foreign policy in relation to the EU? Do you see any kind of contradiction or lack of complementarity between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union?

There may be contradictions between the two economic and political structures, but we are a member of the Eurasian Economic Union at the same time whilst we are also trying to cooperate with the EU [...] and this also corresponds to our national interests. We see no contradiction in our policy. On the contrary, we are convinced that this policy is complementary and in none of the documents are there any points that contradict the other, nor do they have conflicting provisions.”

- Armenia has hosted tens of thousands of refugees from the war in Syria. What advice can you give to European countries on the management of this humanitarian crisis?

I can only say that the people who came from Syria – we do not call them refugees, they are our brothers and sisters, we are of the same blood and flesh. And we have received 20,000 Syrians, the majority being of Armenian origin. Of course, they face many problems, but today Armenians living in Armenia also have difficulties and problems. We try to do everything possible so that these people can adapt to these conditions. Of course, it is a great tragedy, they have abandoned their homes that for decades have tried to build, furnish, have left their heritage. Armenians have a great heritage in Syria.

- What is, in your opinion, the relationship between Armenia and Turkey?

I believe that the events commemorating the centenary of the Armenian genocide had no impact on the relations between Armenia and Turkey, because these relations simply do not exist. Even more, it was not our goal to raise anti-Turkish hysteria. Yes we strongly criticize the Turkish authorities for their policy of denial. We do not blame the Turkish people. We believe that denial is the continuation of crime. And we believe that impunity and denial lead to new offenses.

- Is the possibility of recognition of the independence of Nagorno Karabakh still on the table?

We do not recognize the independence of Nagorno Karabakh only for one reason: to allow the process of the negotiation to continue. Karabakh is fighting for its right to self-determination, for its independence. Armenia participates in these negotiations because Azerbaijan does not want to talk to Karabakh. Imagine if, under these circumstances, Armenia recognizes the independence of Nagorno Karabakh. That would be the end of the negotiations. And as you know, the alternative to negotiations is war.

- Are you pessimistic about the possibility of reaching an agreement?

It is obvious that Azerbaijan from 2011, when it refused to sign the document based on the principles of Madrid, tried to solve the problem by military means. During these years Azerbaijan has multiplied its military budget, acquired armaments and increased its war rhetoric even more. Since 2014 has begun to make provocations in the line of contact. Its policy is very clear. Azerbaijan is trying to maintain the tense situation and put pressure on Armenia and Karabakh. On the one hand, it wants to draw attention to the issue, on the other, to frighten the Armenians with their actions.
- Mr. President, let me sincerely congratulate you on the great anniversary of your state. 25 years are just like a human being – the first 25 years of life are crucial. This is when everything is founded. [...] Twenty-five years on, how is Azerbaijan, founded by your father Heydar Aliyev and with you as his successor, doing today?

*It is a landmark date indeed. Twenty-five years is a long time. It is a period that allows one to talk about successes, failures and missed opportunities. But in general, Azerbaijan has covered a very long journey of development and formation over these years. Today, it is an independent and self-sufficient state in the full sense of the word. It rests on a foundation of national roots. At the same time, it is a secular, multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state which successfully develops, relies only on its own strength, has friendly relations with its neighbors, and is a reliable and worthy member of the world community. [...] The key goals related to the development, establishment and strengthening of the statehood have mainly been achieved. [...] and will be implemented in the economic and state as personality metaphor to allow for potentially ‘more differentiated’ emotional expressions and reference to national pride. Emotional expression of national pride and satisfaction as main ontological standpoints were realized, e.g. direct link to feeling ontologically secure.

---

social spheres.

In the economic sphere, [...], the Azerbaijani economy is ranked in 37th place in the world in terms of competitiveness. This is the first place in the CIS and a fairly serious place in the international arena. Therefore, there are horizons ahead of us, we are confidently moving forward, and I am sure that the next quarter of a century will also be a period of rapid development.

- Actually, I wanted to ask this question in the end, but it seems to me that you have missed one very important point, whether deliberately or out of modesty. And it is not about money [...]. What is it?

You know, it may seem trivial, but I think the main thing is the love of one’s city and nation. We, the people living in Baku and anywhere in Azerbaijan, love Baku and our country very much.

- And yet, the signing of this project [TANAP] is not only about business. It is a symbol of reconciliation between Turkey and Russia. What role has Azerbaijan played in this reconciliation?

Of course, we were very worried about what happened between Russia and Turkey [downing of a Russian military plane]. And for a number of reasons! First, Turkey and Russia are our neighbors. Second, they are close countries, perhaps our main partners in politics and economy. And we were very pleased with the relations between Russia and Turkey. [...] Unfortunately, the tragic incident [...] was very disturbing. It was bad for Turkey, for Russia and for their friends, including us.

The fact that there has been normalization is, I believe, the restoration of justice and the elimination of this tragic misunderstanding. According to our information, there has been an intervention of certain forces which were anxiously watching the rapprochement of Russia and Turkey. It is clear that after such a tragic event there was an avalanche of emotions which to a certain extent took precedence in the situation, and it was hard to understand what had actually happened. One emotion was superimposed by another. One word evoked a response, and there was a spiral that had to be stopped. And it was stopped. Now we need to find out what happened. I think and am almost certain that it was a provocation because the spirit and nature of Russian-Turkish relations did not provide grounds for such reaction to the flights of Russian military aviation. At the same time, of course, I want to express satisfaction with the fact that it has been left in the past. We are very happy about that.

- As you said, "everything around us is on fire". Of course, you probably meant the threat of radical Islam. To what extent does Azerbaijan feel this threat?

I will put it this way: there is no such threat in the country. Our society is united around the national idea. It is about the priority of our values and promotion of multiculturalism [...]. Our society is rallied behind the idea of restoring the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, as well as the strengthening of our independence and resolving all economic and social issues. Therefore, there is no niche for radicals here: neither economically nor socially. Our society is deeply attached to its roots: national, spiritual and religious. We honor our holy places and are very sensitive about that. At the same time, our society is secular and modern. And I think that the example of a secular Muslim state of Azerbaijan has yet to be studied. It could be a good example for many countries. Therefore, our main goal in fighting radicalism is to protect ourselves from external physical and information threats out there. We cherish this very much. Our citizens cherish this.
They see every day what is going on in the hot spots, what is happening in European countries, in the CIS, in the Middle East. Wars, bloodshed, destruction... This further consolidates our society."

- Speaking about the national idea of Azerbaijan, you mentioned the restoration of territorial integrity as a part of it. Here we come to this very painful subject of Nagorno-Karabakh. Everyone dreams of a compromise.

You know, we need to clearly understand what a compromise means and which side interprets it. To say what needs to be done, we need to know what happened. If we look at history, Nagorno-Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan. This has always been the case. We know the history of the Armenian resettlement to these lands from Persia and Eastern Anatolia. The entire history, all place names, including the word Karabakh itself, are of Azerbaijani origin. In the Soviet era, because there was already a resettled Armenian population there, an autonomous region, not even a republic, was created. It did not have administrative borders with Armenia. And everything was fine, life went on as usual, there were no problems, and Nagorno-Karabakh was ahead of many other regions of Azerbaijan in terms of socioeconomic development.

What does a solution mean? A solution means de-occupation of the territories Armenia has illegally seized. They do not want to do that and want to maintain the status quo.

This is how we see a solution: of course, the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan isn’t and can’t be a subject of discussion. We will never agree to provide the status of independence to Nagorno-Karabakh, and the Armenian side is well aware of that.

[However,] there could be a compromise on issues of local self-governance of Nagorno-Karabakh. In the future, if we agree, it can be an autonomous republic. The Armenian leadership is well aware of that, but they manipulate public opinion, create the image of an enemy, distort the essence of the negotiating process and portray everything as if Azerbaijan wants to destroy or expel the Armenian population. This is not true.

I already said that it was at least shameless to blame [by the U.S Secretary of State Kerry] Azerbaijan for the failure to resolve the conflict.

---

Georgia

Georgia: frames and narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreign/Security Policy Self-conceptualizations, ontological assumptions and ingroup definitions</th>
<th>The Other and belonging</th>
<th>Images of amity and enmity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- As a Black Sea and Southeast European country, Georgia is part of Europe geographically, politically, and culturally; yet it was cut off from its natural course of development by historical cataclysms. Integration into NATO and the EU is Georgia’s</td>
<td>- Armenia: good neighborly relations</td>
<td>Russia: Imperialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Azerbaijan: strategic partnership, good neighborly relations</td>
<td>- Kazakhstan/ Turkmenistan/ Kyrgyzstan/ Uzbekistan/ Tajikistan: great importance of cooperation</td>
<td>EU: strong, “natural” Ally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NATO: strong Ally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Turkey: Ally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ukraine: Ally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

9 Context of the interview: A correspondent of Radio Liberty met with Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili to discuss the future of the country’s foreign policy and its relations with Russia, Ukraine and the West. The conversation took place after Margvelashvili’s meeting with Pope Francis on October 3rd, 2016.
Your meeting with Pope Francis ended a few minutes ago. **What value** do you attach to the Pontiff’s visit to Georgia, the Caucasus, and what are the main topics raised in the course of the tête-à-tête conversation?

This is a **historic visit** of the spiritual and state leader of the Catholic Church and the State of Vatican. Of course, the main emphases derive from the **essence of politics**, on the one hand, of the State of Vatican, and, on the other hand, Christianity as a peacekeeping religion, **focused on love** and prosperity of nations. The Pope’s political role is enormous. **Emotions and wishes** with which we communicated with each other, – the wishes of better times, resolving the conflicts and tensions, so that the countries, individuals, nations could develop peacefully, are of the great political significance for millions. I would say more than a billion of the Catholic Church parish worldwide. **And also for the countries of Christian faith and the principles of good will**.

- What is your opinion on the Russian-Georgian conflict?

[I]f we look at the status quo that we have in Georgia and generally in the region, we’ll see a **strange reality**; the reality, in which the problems are not actually being solved by any of the conflicting parties. **The situation is simply absurd. [...] This is tragic** for our country, the Georgian people, and the Georgian state. **This is the fee that we pay for our freedom and independence.** But, let us look from the other point of view: after all, **no new prospects have opened neither for our fellow Abkhazian and Ossetian citizens! They live in occupied territories without any real perspectives, without future. [...]**

Moreover, **the issue of dignity** has emerged there: **how can a friendly country [Russia]**, a nuclear power that recognized the independence of Georgia in 1990 and contributed to this process, **attack and invade its neighbors** - Georgians, who, along with Russians, developed a common culture, fought against fascism, and, at some point, **created a united cultural social community?! [...]**

**We all have paid a fee for the fact that neither then [2008], nor now, no strong and firm...**
response is given to the Russian policy. After all, it is a fact that Russia has declared clearly and unambiguously: what is in the Russian slang called the "near abroad", in fact is a "zone of privileged interests of the Russian Federation". Apparently, it is meant that international law quasi does not apply to these states, these "territories". When I communicate with colleagues in the West, I always tell them: the point is to be very honest with Russians and tell them directly: this is unacceptable to us!; and also, confirm that the West considers Georgia, Ukraine and other Russian neighbors, as equal and sovereign subjects of international law. This is the 'mere truth' of international relations."

Russian leaders have claimed that it was Saakashvili’s aggressive position that caused all ills. We mentioned that we were ready to start our relations from a "new page", and offered our colleagues to stop scolding each other and build the relations not based on aggressive rhetoric, but rather on a rational analysis of the situation - the current state and the interests of Russians, Georgians, including Abkhazians and Ossetians, and all ethnic groups living in Georgia. These were emotional expectations. I was exposed to them too. After all, when there comes a new president, a new government oriented on a rational dialogue, this creates an opportunity to escape a problematic situation.

By the way, there were the first "sprouts", first hints of the fact that the situation was moving towards a real dialogue on the problems between the Russian and Georgian states; we have reestablished economic ties, more Russians began visiting Georgia … However, since 2014, we have been witnessing the process that is beyond the logic of the existing opportunities. I am referring to certain “strategic agreements” between Russia and Abkhazia and Russia and South Ossetia. That is, Russia has made a new step towards deepening the problem of the occupied regions and their alleged “recognition” as “independent states”.

Well then, you tell me: was not the border between Russia and NATO the calmest and safest one? Does not it remain so? Politicians are namely the ones, who just live with myths that NATO and the EU policy is directed against Russia. Tell me, what is problematic for Russia, if Georgia, as a member of the EU, would become a more developed country, including in terms of economy, and also, for the Russian business, which would become able to develop relations? Why is the stable Georgia providing stability to the region, so problematic to Russia?

It is also necessary to realize that Georgia is a good neighbor for Russia. We wish and hope to build good neighborly relations with Russia, considering the only condition: our sovereignty, our independence should be recognized by Russians.

We, Georgians, are generally known for emotionality and temper; however, in this case the Georgian state has shown the a good level of diplomacy and tact. In difficult times for the Ukrainian state, we have never raised this sensitive issue [political asylum for the former president M. Saakashvili]. I have approached this topic several times, but only in general terms: the high officials of a friendly country should not speak out against the Georgian government and make sharp statements against a friendly state.

Our relationship with Russia is targeted on the policy of bringing the dialogue to rational discussion, the policy of maintaining peace and not letting any of the war parties engage the Georgian side in any kind of provocation.
All three illustrations highlight the potential of emotions to structure intergroup perceptions and evaluations and specific ways how those emotionalisations are achieved in discourses. Whereas positive emotions are attached predominantly to the in-group, the out-group is referred to with negative emotions. Strategies for doing so include blaming, shaming, appealing to responsibility and good will (conditionalisation), and using constrasting positive/negative metaphors whilst drawing, most commonly, on the referencing narratives and stereotypes on the policy level. Moreover, utilitarian arguments about intergroup situations are, in those illustrations, a minority – cognitive evaluations and expressions are rather strongly based on emotionally laden notions, differentiations and interpretations: both explicitly and implicitly. This again underlines again the importance of stable ‘emotion(al) communities’ and related processes of identification for ontological security (seeking strategies) as constitutive meaning in attached through this very process. Through those emotionalizations it is sought to establish stable emotional communities, indeed, the very normalization of attaching certain emotions to certain in- and outgroups where a deviation from those emotion norms creates an impetus for identity recalibrations as manifestations of productive power (as elaborated on in Table 1). Securitization then is a potential strategy to impose inter-group differentiation and positive self-identifications, both emotionally and utilitarian, as negative feelings towards the other or perceived and assigned material threat foster in-group cohesion, positive emotional in-group expressions and shifted rationalizations.

**Preliminary Conclusions and points for discussion**

Several assumptions guided this argumentation and sense-making exercise:

1. Identity and processes of identification as twofold processes (internal/external domain) are based on emotions and utilitarian aspects, embedded in and represented by cognitive structures and conditionalities.
2. Ontological security is the need of holding a positive, stable (narrative of an) identity.
3. Ontological security seeking is the balancing and (re-)negotiating struggle/fit between internal and relational identity layer/domain.
4. If these assumptions are held to be valid, it followst hat OSS is a fit/balancing act in the realms of emotions, utility and cognition as to realize ontological security.
5. Ontological insecurity, supporting Ejdus propositions, is then any non-fit, related to a significant group-event or crisis in the realms of emotion/utility identity non-compatibility narratives.

6. Ontological security seeking strategies to ‘dissolve’ these insecurities are then represented by certain discursive strategies to cope with competing (narratives of) emotions and utility calculations framed by longer-lasting cognitive structures (e.g. images of amity/enmity, stereotypes, prejudices), namely emotionalization and rationalization to uphold/justify a positive self-categorization/narrative in both realms of identity constitution through cognitive stratifications. Both concepts, linked to both notions of intergroup threat conceptualisation, can then be linked to securitization. Securitization then has material and ideational value.

7. The methodological canon to discover those dynamics may be found either in a simplified cognitive linguistic discourse analysis or in a social psychological frame analysis.

Approaches imported from Social Psychology proved to provide powerful additional explanations in the way one could make sense of ontological security (seeking). They draw the connection between micro- and macro level of IR, the internal and the relational identity layers, as they conceive of both as part of the same group dynamics. As such, group dynamics in the realms of conflict formation is shaped by symbolic and realistic threat perceptions, equalling emotional and utilitarian motivation for behaviour (within processes of identification). As such, not only emotions but utilitarian calculations embedded within cognitive pre-structures structure and underpin identity formation and discursive power. Social identity is then not only represented by language but also through emotions and utilitarian aspects communicated through language (Koschut 2017a,b).

To sum this up, one has to assume that any rational choice, any utilitarian calculation in this system by any agent - that is, a group - is severely bounded by the initial cognitive and emotional filters. That means that only after the already described notions of cognitive evaluation and emotional reaction, the material, physical environment as such is taken into consideration. However, even though the former two do take precedence, the internal balance between emotional and utilitarian socio-temporal evaluation, e.g. motivation for a certain type of behaviour, is always a function of the overall ontological security seeking narrative. As such, Flockhart’s argument (2016) that ontological security maximisation is functionally equivalent to rationalist theories’ agent assumption of utility maximisation fits into the larger picture. From that, she identifies two strategies for maximising ontological
security in this compound: a ‘strategy of being’ (securing a stable and esteem-enhancing identity) and a ‘strategy of doing’ (ensuring cognitive consistency through routinised practices whilst also undertaking action contributing to a sense of integrity and pride).

Thus, collective identification (in a security community) cannot be treated in isolation but can only be fully understood if viewed as an emotional construction of a (or multiple) shared others. This is in particular true when looking at the countries of the South Caucasus where emotional groupings play a very significant role in political discourse.

References


Fleigstein, Neil; Alina Polyakova and Wayne Sandholtz. 2008. "European Integration, Nationalism, and European Identity."


