Power-status figurations in the security relations between Russia and the West: From Western domination to Russian emancipation

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WORK IN PROGRESS!

Abstract

On the part of Western politicians, there is frequently put forward the idea that the West has granted Russia too much status in the past 20 years. In Moscow, on the contrary, the dominant view has been and still is that ever since the end of the Cold War the West has not granted Russia the status it actually deserves. If we look at the emotional dispositions of the relationship on both sides, we can identify a situation in which the West tries to dominate the power-status figuration and Russia rejecting these attempts of social domination through anger and resentment, and since most recently through the construction of alternative and competing dominant narratives of pride. This power-status figuration creates and constantly reproduces a divide, an inside-outside arrangement hampering the evolvement of a shared identity and the creation of a security community. The underlying inside-outside arrangement is particularly obvious in post-Cold War NATO-Russia security relations.

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1. Introduction

The study of emotions in International Relations (IR) continues to be a puzzle to many. On the one hand, most scholars from various theoretical backgrounds explicitly acknowledge its presence in world politics. On the other hand, theoretical and empirical research about the effects of particular emotions in specific social circumstances remains marginal. In other words, while we seem to know that emotions are ‘out there’ we still have only relatively little understanding of what emotions actually ‘do’. This puzzle serves as the starting point for this study. Based on a Constructivist approach, we investigate the socio-emotional underpinnings of status and identity in the social construction of power structures in the NATO-Russia security relations. Studying the nexus between identity and emotions is certainly not a novel enterprise. In fact, a good number of scholars have investigated the emotional character of social identities in world politics. What this paper adds to this promising research strand is an attempt to conceptually link emotions and identity to status and power. It is argued that power, status, identity, and emotions are interrelated concepts: emotions shape identities providing agents with a self-definition and evaluative judgment about the world. Identities are hardly fixed but are tied to status difference. Status constitutes an enacted form of social power exercised through emotions.

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2. Theoretical Considerations: Conceptualizing the emotional underpinnings of power-status figuration in international relations

While the emotional underpinnings of identity and status in world politics has certainly not been denied by Constructivism from an ontological standpoint, it has received surprisingly little attention in terms of theoretical conceptualization. Many Constructivist accounts emphasize the logical connection between power and identity. Yet, they seem to either take for granted or neglect to give equal attention to its emotional dimension. To be fair, Constructivists who study power-identity dynamics certainly do not turn a blind eye to the emotions. Bially Mattern, for example, explicitly states that social identity includes emotional bonds. Risse and Sikkink’s persuasive argument that “(n)orm violating states are denounced as pariah states which do not belong to the community of civilized nations” also implies that social identity involves an emotional appraisal of moral arguments. Adler-Nissen has recently provided a convincing theoretical argument about how states discursively cope with stigmatization employing labeling, stereotyping, separation, and discrimination. What these studies have in common is that they center on the discursive construction of power based on socio-linguistic identity. What can be distilled from this, admittedly abbreviated overview, is that even though these scholars present convincing accounts of the discursive nature of power-identity dynamics in world politics they arguably either underestimate or take for granted the emotional underpinnings of such power-identity dynamics.

3 While Constructivism includes a wide variety of different approaches, all tend to share the conception of giving equal importance to both non-material and material structures, the understanding that non-material structures can actually shape actors’ preferences and ultimately, their actions, and finally, the view that agents and structures are mutually constitutive (see Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, ‘Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism’, European Journal of International Relations 4, no.3 (1998): 259-294, 266).
The argument in this paper, on the contrary, revolves around conceptions of socio-emotional identity in which the collective experience and expression of particular emotions shapes power structures and social hierarchies. Groups in international politics exercise social power (the authority to attribute social status) based on emotions of pride and resentment whereas groups that experience shame or fear do not exercise social power. While it is true that such emotions can be expressed through discourse, we argue that social identity is not only represented by language but also by the emotions communicated through language. In this sense, this paper views power structures, status difference, and group identity not as socio-linguistic but instead as socio-emotional constructs. In doing so, the article advances the Constructivist literature on power-identity dynamics by highlighting its emotional underpinnings thus filling an important gap. Moreover, understanding the conceptual link between power, status, identity, and emotions furthers our knowledge about what emotions actually do at the international level, in general, and in the NATO-Russian case, in particular. Finally, investigating the social effects of emotions in the constitution of power structures and group identities at the international level may allow emotion research to step out of the closet of academic specialization by showing how emotions are central to some of the most important questions in IR: social order and conformity, authority and governance, and structural change.

The paper is divided into four parts. First, we conceptualize power, status, identity, and emotions as social categories. Second, we show how emotions carry knowledge about the world thus shaping power structures, status difference and identity construction at the collective level. In the third section, we further refine this argument by outlining a set of specific emotion categories involved in the nexus between power, status, identity, and the emotions and explain how each (de-)constructs hierarchical relationships. Finally, we illustrate the theoretical considerations by offering an empirical window into the emotion-based power figurations in NATO-Russian security relations. The paper closes with some tentative concluding remarks.

a) **Power, status, identity, and emotions**

The purpose of this section is to fill these conceptual containers with meaning as a reference guide for the subsequent sections. Constructivist accounts (despite their diversity\(^8\)) typically

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\(^8\) While Constructivism includes a wide variety of different approaches, all tend to share the conception of giving equal importance to both non-material and material structures, the understanding that non-material
stress the social basis of power thus granting concepts like status and identity a more prominent position. Agents are not viewed as utility maximizers but instead tend to act according to what is regarded as appropriate behavior. International norms and rules are thus viewed as constitutive to the status and identity of participating states involving social power.\(^9\) Social power describes the degree of authority that an individual or group has among its peers and within the social system as a whole. As such, social power plays an important role in shaping international relations. Actors who possess social power hold the capacity to ascribe social status and thus shape the identity of others. Status difference designates the self-identity of a group as socially superior or inferior within a social setting. If a group perceives another group as socially superior (granting them a higher status) the latter group will exercise social power over the former group, which lacks such power. Social power is exercised via knowledge and learning: social hierarchies and international rule based frameworks socialize state identities and define their role within the international system.\(^10\) Social identity is thus understood here as an “internalized positional designation” tied to status within a particular social structure.\(^11\) Social status defines the position or rank of an individual or group within a social system based on particular attributes and categories. Identities are tied to status difference. A low social status is indicated by particular identities expressing inferiority such as ‘colony’, ‘occupied territory’ or ‘periphery’ whereas a high social status involves particular identities expressing superiority such as ‘Great power’, ‘Empire’ or ‘leading nation’.

Social power plays an important role in the discursive construction of status and identity in international politics. Bially Mattern, for example, argues that NATO member states used language power (“representational force”) to repair or recreate a broken-down identity during crisis. By representational force, Bially Mattern means “a forceful but non-physical form of power exercised through language” that “leaves the victim with an unsavory


‘non-choice’ (...) between suffering and compliance (…) in order to save his subjectivity”.12 There is a logical connection to emotions in Bially Mattern’s argument: If power can inflict social “suffering” (the loss of social status) upon agents via language such discursive identity constructions also must have an affective dimension. For, if a “victim” can be forced to maintain a particular identity through non-physical power, it must feel the negative social implications of such power. As argued above, even though Constructivist accounts emphasize the logical connection between power, status, emotion and identity they take this connection for granted and neglect to give equal attention to the affective dimension of such power-identity dynamics. A glance at other Constructivist literature on compliance and social conformity confirms this observation:

Moral consciousness-raising by the international human rights community often involves a process of ‘shaming’. Norm violating states are denounced as pariah states which do not belong to the community of civilized nations (...). Shaming then constructs categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’, that is, in-groups and out-groups, thus reaffirming particular state identities. Some repressive governments (...) feel deeply offended because they want to belong to the ‘civilized community’ of states. In other words, shaming then implies a process of persuasion since it convinces leaders that their behavior is inconsistent with an identity to which they aspire.13

As in the case of Bially Mattern, if we accept this argument, international agents have to be somehow capable to experience “shame” in order to be persuaded or forced into compliance. Evidently, identity is tied to social status while status attribution involves the exercise of social power and, arguably, an affective dimension that remains underdeveloped. Hence, like power, status, and identity, emotions form a social category in international politics that demands further conceptualization.

Moving from the concept of power to emotions, it is hard to contest the argument that emotions are also a social phenomenon. Since the emotion categories of moral appraisal are different in each society, collective emotions may be regarded as social effects in the sense that they are rooted in socio-cultural difference.14 For example, the death of nearly 3,000 people on September 11, 2001 invoked grief and sorrow among most Americans while

12 Bially Mattern, Ordering International Politics, 95-96.
members of al Qaida and their sympathizers rejoiced and probably felt sincere joy and satisfaction.\textsuperscript{15} The experience of particular emotions in specific social situations may in turn motivate collective behavior.\textsuperscript{16} For example, the expression of joy and satisfaction by al Qaida members led to moral outrage and feelings of resentment in American society and a desire for vengeance and retaliation in order to reassert human dignity and “to set things right” (Moore 1978, 17). It is not argued here that emotions necessarily determine a particular course of action but they do leave a noticeable impression on social structure. As Barbalet notes:

Emotions situate actors in their relations with others. Actors are moved in their interactions with others by their emotions, and their emotions lead them to evaluate and change the course of their conduct in the relationships and situations they face. It is through their emotions that actors are engaged by others and through their emotions that they alter their relations with them.\textsuperscript{17}

It is the discernable social effects of particular emotions underlying power structures, status difference, and group identity in international politics that will be of further interest here.

In order to produce social effects emotions must have a cognitive dimension. This paper thus views emotions as moral judgments that represent an intellectual appraisal of past experience and future expectations.\textsuperscript{18} To say that emotions are ‘representational’ is not to claim that emotions cannot also be physically experienced. Rather, our point stresses the importance of the cognitive and epistemic character of emotions without denying their phenomenological expression as bodily feelings.\textsuperscript{19} A Cognitivist position argues that emotions are evaluative judgments that enable actors to participate in and engage with the world thereby giving it meaning. In this sense, emotions are essentially concerned with identity, status and power by shaping “our sense of power and impotence, or sense of


\textsuperscript{17} Barbalet, \textit{Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure}, 133.


\textsuperscript{19} In order to make this distinction clear, I will subsequently distinguish between emotions or emotional feelings (as representational moral judgments) and feelings or non-emotional feelings (as bodily expressions) (see Peter Goldie, \textit{The Emotions. A Philosophical Exploration} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
uniqueness and identity, our sense of belonging and exclusion”. If we can accept this view then emotions should, in principle, be able to impart knowledge about the world thus shaping identity construction, status difference and power structures. In the next section, we will further develop this argument by looking into how emotions function to reinforce hierarchical relationships at the international level.

b) Attributing status via emotions

Why do we eat with forks? It is not based on a functional purpose because we could easily eat with our hands. Neither does eating with forks enhance our physical survival or give us significant material advantage. We simply use forks to avoid getting our fingers dirty because dirty fingers are considered distasteful. This feeling of distaste is an emotional reaction based on what Western society considers ‘uncivilized’ or ‘barbaric’.

From this example, we learn that distaste is a cultural and emotion-based judgment about proper behavior that is tied to a certain status and group identity. Certain forms of social behavior are prohibited not because they are inefficient or threaten the survival of the group but because they are emotionally regarded as offensive and disrespectful and thus threaten the status and identity of a particular group. As Elias notes in his study of the French court society:

(...) shame at offering such a spectacle, originally absent, and fear of arousing such associations are gradually spread from the standard setting circles to larger circles by numerous authorities and institutions. However, once such feelings are aroused and firmly established in society by means of rituals like that involving the fork, they are constantly reproduced so long as the structure of human relations is not fundamentally altered.

Established members of a group pass these standards on to new members. For example, small children are told by their parents not to touch their food by invoking feelings of shame in the child. Through such paradigm scenarios, the child experiences a strong emotional feeling that is tied to a particular social behavior. Its parents receive social conformity by repeatedly invoking feelings of shame. Through this affective dialogue the child assimilates to pre-formed emotion-based social identities and reproduces the status and power hierarchy between parent and child. In other words, by internalizing a certain

emotional feeling, inferior agents tend to follow a certain behavioral pattern in relation to more established agents. These established agents exercise social power based on emotional identification. Social power thus includes the ability of the power practitioners to arouse certain feeling in others. By doing so, the established agent is able to project a certain type of identity and status onto others by influencing the emotions as well as goals and intentions of the socially inferior agent. In this power configuration, social conformity is based on the charisma of the established agent. Inferior agents want to identify with the personal characteristics and qualities of the established agent because they gain satisfaction from their acceptance as a follower. To sum up, it is suggested that emotions enable agents to acquire knowledge about the world and to engage in appropriate behavior thereby reinforcing identity and status difference. I will subsequently use the term emotion-based or simply emotional knowledge to refer to this phenomenon.

Process sociology has confirmed how emotional knowledge forms part of power asymmetries in which established groups secure the compliance of others in international politics. Established groups like the ‘Great Powers’ develop a superior image of themselves that reflects their worldview and group charisma of being superior in relations to others. Group charisma describes a group’s collective feeling of social superiority (prestige) based on the perception among its members that this particular group possesses superior virtues. As such, group charisma forms an important part of the emotional underpinnings of social status and collective identity. It is based on certain group-specific attributes such as racial, ethnic or religious categories and can give rise to group-specific norms of appropriate behavior. Members of the established group perceive themselves as morally ‘better’ whereas outsiders or marginalized groups are viewed as inferior because they seem to lack these group specific attributes and norms. Belonging to such a particular social group evokes a feeling of delight

and satisfaction in participating in group activities as well as feelings of contempt and disapproval toward outsiders.\textsuperscript{31}

The interplay between identity based on group charisma as well as the particular emotions associated with it, in turn, can give rise to status and power figurations between established and marginalized groups. A figuration is understood here as the embodiment of a specific set of emotion categories to enforce a certain mode of collective behavior.\textsuperscript{32} For example, the social construction of an “Arian identity” in Nazi Germany was rooted in the collective establishment and cognitive experience of ritualized and institutionalized emotional feelings of pride and confidence in the German \textit{Herrenvolk} (evident during the infamous Nuremberg rallies) as well as collective feelings of contempt and disgust toward the Jewish Other.

Building on these assumptions, it seems plausible to suggest that the attribution of social power and status and the social construction of collective identities in international politics may be shaped and reproduced through emotions. Emotions facilitate the development and maintenance of status and identity in international politics because emotional categories draw clear distinctions between insiders and outsiders forcing a certain kind of undesirable identity upon the marginalized group through projective identification.\textsuperscript{33} These categories are invoked by using group-specific expressions, symbols, and analogies. Such stigmatization emphasizes the incapability of a particular Other to conform with the ‘civilizational standards’ of the established group thereby confirming the former’s inferior social status despite formally equal legal status. By internalizing misrecognition, the marginalized group can then only take on the identity ascribed to it by the more powerful established group.\textsuperscript{34} Emotions reinforce this process because what these marginalized groups experience is a form of social suffering: a lack of collective agency to resist.\textsuperscript{35}

This is not to say that marginalized groups are incapable of developing collective identities and group charisma. However, given a history of discrimination and victimhood, the particular emotions associated with and collectively experienced by these groups tend to be

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item Weber, Economy and Society.
\item Elias, The Civilizing Process, 262.
\end{thebibliography}
defined more in terms of humiliation and shame and less in terms of pride and confidence.\textsuperscript{36} Because of that, marginalized groups often simply lack the psychological means to independently raise their status. Instead, they continue to be prone to the negative projections of the established group.\textsuperscript{37} The acknowledgement of humiliation and shame among marginalized groups can nevertheless turn into resentment and vengefulness leading to a change in social status from collective subordination to empowerment. Such a change in status entails a change in self-identity, for example, from collectively identifying as members of a ‘colony’ to viewing each other as members of a sovereign nation-state. For this identity transformation to occur, however, marginalized groups must first develop new solidarities derived from the participation in social movements or the support from powerful outsiders that stress the injustice of the status quo and, through collective acknowledgement, enable marginalized groups to transform passive emotions like shame and humiliation into anger and resentment to sustain active resistance against the established group.\textsuperscript{38} Vince, for example, shows how Algerian post-colonial identity in anti-colonial movements was constructed against France in religious and cultural terms based on particular emotion categories of pride and confidence. Hence, in addition to stabilizing social hierarchies in international politics, emotions may equally contribute to the assertion and realization of basic rights, the development of new solidarities and identities, and the rise in a formerly marginalized group’s social status and standing.\textsuperscript{39}

To sum up, processes of emotional socialization undergirding status and identity form an inseparable element of social power in international politics. In the next sections, we outline two sets of particular emotion categories that seem to be most relevant to emotion-based power-status figurations: one set of emotions that confirms and thus reinforces the status gap between established and marginalized groups; and another set of emotions that disconfirms status rank thus challenging the status quo.


c) Status-confirming emotions: Pride and shame

As explained above, established groups maintain their high social status by reproducing a particular self-image of social superiority vis-à-vis marginalized groups described earlier as group charisma. This group charisma is based on the emotion of pride. Pride is an expression of a group’s valued past as well as its confidence in the future.\(^{40}\) Pride thus confirms the superior status of established groups. Established groups exercise social power over marginalized groups by attributing lower social status. Marginalized groups internalize a collective identity of social inferiority through emotional rigidity, stigmatization, and by placing the contact of insiders with outsiders under a moral taboo.\(^{41}\) This collective identity of social inferiority among members of the marginalized group is based on the emotion of shame. Shame signals the presence of a moral trespass and self-blame. It indicates dissatisfaction with one’s own impression in the eyes of others based on a negative response.\(^{42}\) Shame thus confirms the inferior social status of marginalized groups. In sum, shame serves as an emotion category that confirms lower social status whereas pride confirms higher social status.

However, it is important to note that the pride-shame dualism is not neatly confined to an insider-outsider distinction. It has already been pointed out above that pride-shame dynamics also serve to maintain social conformity within an established group. Inside an established group, members are not treated as approximate equals but are also woven together in status/power figurations. The superior self-image of the established group is formed based on the minority of its morally ‘best’ members (core group). This core group performs a norm building function and exercises social power over non-conformers through emotional rigidity and stigmatization.\(^{43}\) Members can only participate in the established group by complying with certain institutionalized emotional patterns of affect control.\(^{44}\) Members who do not comply (for example by siding with or showing sympathy toward members of the marginalized group) will risk losing their status as members of the established group. In Imperial France, for example, the ‘standard of civilization’ as traditionally set by white upper

\(^{41}\) Elias and Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders*, 8 and 12.
\(^{43}\) Elias and Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders*, 13 and 42.
and middle-class elites while French white anti-imperialists (the non-conformers) were associated with “betrayal” and “treason” and thus placed outside the established group.45

d) Status-disconfirming emotions: Fear and resentment

Emotion categories like pride and shame are rooted in a group’s ontological security.46 Ontological security is closely aligned with an actor’s social status and self-identity. Any threat to an actor’s ontological security conflicts with that actor’s sense of belonging to a particular international community and risks losing its subjectivity in the flow of world politics. It is thus plausible to suggest that this should arouse a very strong emotional reaction. As Cooley wrote almost a century ago: “A man cast out of his (...) secure place in the system of the world feels like that of the child in the dark; just as impulsive, perhaps just as purposeless and paralyzing”.47 Fear of losing social status and meanings may thus be understood as another important emotion category in the power figuration between established and marginalized groups. If an established group feels that it may lose its superior social status to outsiders this may elicit a loss of confidence among its members about the future.48 Fear based on a threat to a group’s ontological security usually promotes isolation, suspicion, and a general undermining of trust in the world.49 More specifically, it can lead to a denial of the rights of others in order to exclude them from gaining access to social resources as well as a disproportionate display of pride or even arrogance to compensate for the loss of confidence in oneself.50 Fear thus disconfirms the superior status of an established group.

Resentment, by contrast, uplifts members of the marginalized group. Resentment is the emotional appraisal of an imbalanced or asymmetric power relationship and the ensuing realization of an unjustified lower social status.51 While shame invites subordination and the denial of rights by the established group, resentment, on the contrary, empowers a marginalized group to claim their basic rights and to correct the status gap in order to restore one’s own self-regard and elevate social standing. For example, emotional feelings of resentment among European societies under colonial rule towards the European imperial

48 Barbalet, Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure, 161.
50 Elias, Humana conditio, 144.
51 Barbalet, Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure, 126.
powers motivated anti-colonial resistance and the construction of post-colonial identities. Resentment thus disconfirms the inferior status of marginalized groups.

Based on this conception, it is possible to distill a set of hypotheses regarding the role of emotions in shaping international social hierarchies. On a general level, confirmation and disconfirmation of social status can be said to arouse particular emotions, which, in the former case, function to reinforce and, in the latter case, facilitate changes in group identities and power distribution. Established groups that receive high levels of social compliance (thereby confirming superior status) experience pride. Marginalized groups that receive low levels of compliance or receive non-compliance and attribute their lower status to an inferior image of themselves (thereby confirming inferior status) experience shame. If established groups receive non-compliance (thereby disconfirming superior status), these groups experience fear. If marginalized groups receive non-compliance but blame others for their lower status (thereby challenging inferior status) these groups experience resentment. Groups can be said to exercise social power (the authority to attribute social status) based on emotions of pride and resentment whereas groups that experience shame or fear are not capable to exercise social power.

3. Emotion-based power-status figurations in the relations between Russia and the West: From Western domination to Russian emancipation?

   a) Past and present emotional dispositions and status considerations in the West and Russia: The established and the outsider

Western status considerations toward Russia can be traced back to the Peace of Nystadt on 30 August 1721 which “confirmed the position that Russia had attained as a great power during the Great Northern War (...) As a consequence of its new status as a great power, Russia became a European state insofar as the Russian Empire had to be incorporated into the system of European international relations”. 52 Russia’s entry into the Western security orbit, however, occurred not by invitation but predominantly out of Western fear given its increasing material capabilities and ‘hard power’. As Neumann notes, Russia essentially lacked the social attributes to fully comply with Western civilizational standards and was instead shamed as a “semibarbarian state” that despite its material power could not be fully

ascribed ‘great power status’ by the established European great powers.\textsuperscript{53} As such, Russia became Pluto in the Western solar system: “very far from the center but still fundamentally a part of it” (Trenin 2006, 87).

In the post-Cold War European security architecture, Western policymakers face a similar dilemma of having to accommodate the legal successor to the Soviet Union without being willing to grant it full equal status. This has perhaps been one of the central issues in Western engagement with Russia following the end of bipolar confrontation. On the one hand, as former NATO Secretary General Willy Claes acknowledges, “(i)t is true that we have not been in a position to dissipate all suspicions left behind by the Cold War”. On the other hand, he cedes that “this country (Russia) is too big to be isolated from Europe by others”.\textsuperscript{54} These emotional dispositions are mirrored in a way in the century-long debate in Russia about the country’s position and role in the relations with the West. The relations with the West have always been a complicated one – oscillating between the wish to be a part of Europe and the Western civilization and the perception that Russia is culturally different and Russian values are incompatible with the West (e.g. Malinova 2009), represented in the discussions between the so-called “Westerners” and the so-called “slavophiles” (see the Philosophical letters of Petr Chadaev). Westerners advocated for a modern, liberal Russia, modelled along the concept of Western European countries of that time. From a Westerner’s position, Russia’s structural approximation to the Western model was an ‘image-to-be’. In this sense it implied an in-group understanding, overcoming isolation, however with the consequence that the laggard Russia had a minor social status in this group. The “Slavophiles”, on the contrary, rejected this Western identity and the subsequent lower social status as weakness and vulnerability – a condition not desirable. They advertised more imperial and nationalist, thus strong and proud, images of Russia. For the Slavophiles, Russia was not part of the West, that Russia was culturally “different”. Russia was constructed as the “European other” (Krastev 2007) outside the Western civilizational model and group, arguing that for the purpose of strengths (and status), it must preserve its special role and character as a more Eastern, orthodox and Eurasian country (for an in-depth illustration of the two positions see Andersen 1967). Hence, the oscillation between Westerners and Eurasianists is also, in sociological terms, an emotional oscillation between shame – not be as developed as


\textsuperscript{54} Andreas Behnke, NATO’s Security Discourse After the Cold War: Representing the West (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 115.
Western Europe, and pride – of being a strong Eurasian empire. Although the two opposing historical models and storylines experienced a number of adaptations over the time, the discussion and attached emotional dispositions in essence remained the same until today. They are relevant for our analysis because they were reactivated after the fall of the communist regime in the early 1990s, when Russians tried to define their political identity anew and fill the ideological vacuum that the fall of the Communist ideology and the end of the superpower status of the Soviet Union had caused.

b) Russia and NATO in the 1990s: From high ambitions to disillusionment

The first post-Soviet Russian government under Boris Yeltsin, a strong critic of the communist system in the last years of the Soviet Union, clearly oriented its policy along Western ideas. He restarted the relationship with the ambition to integrate Russia into the community of democratic states. Westernization was a *sine qua non* for social inclusion in the new global and political environment and, thus, for positive status production. In domestic as well as international statements and agreements, the Russian administration strongly underlined the fact that the Russian Federation had radically turned into a “democratic” country, adhering to fundamental principles of the Western civilization model such as rule of law and human rights.\(^5\) The fact that this new Euro-Atlantic course also led to a situation of strong dependence on material support from the West apparently did not affect the perceived positive status-producing outlook of group inclusion on the part of the Russian policy-makers. The West reacted to Russian policy of approximation highly positive and encouraged Russia in its attempts to adopt democracy and its guiding principles.

However, a feeling of inferiority and subsequent feelings of shame were hardly visible in these early years. Although the geopolitical changes that in ‘reality’ created a very strong status asymmetry between the two former superpowers and blocks – on the one end, the Soviet Union as one of the two superpowers collapsed and disappeared, and with it its geopolitical and ideological influence over one half of the world; on the other end, the demise of Communism triggered a dynamic diffusion and ‘success story’ of the Western democratic model worldwide –, this did not influence the perceived social hierarchy in Russia. A second factor that contributed to a relatively untroubled attitude towards the West consisted in the high degree of continuity in institutionalized political authority for Russia on the international level. After the international community was willing to give the USSR’s now vacant

permanent seat in the UN Security Council to Russia, Russia became a “natural” member in the elite club of most influential powers and norm-setters. In fact, Russia had perceived itself as the mainland of the former Soviet Union and the inheritance of the USSR’s seat as logical. Mutual arms reduction talks with the United States left the strategic balance, and thus basic power structures, between the former antagonists untouched. The international status assets seemed also to provide Russia with “the right to hold its own, independent positions on matters of international and European security”. In this sense, the Russian political elite had reason to believe that the country’s social status in the new geopolitical environment was one of a ‘democratic newcomer’, but due to its remaining material great power attributes not necessarily an ‘inferior’, but an ‘equal’ one in the relations with the West. Thus, historically grown feelings of pride, based on perceived (and real) Russian social superiority, not as an adversary any more, within Western in-group, strongly influenced Russian elite thinking.

The emotional constructions used in the Russian official language on security matters reinforced these beliefs. Russian policy-makers in their statements of that time do not concentrate on the de-facto material power losses for Russia or ‘real’ asymmetries that emerged due to Russia’s new situation in the post-Cold War order. Rather, the rhetoric underlines the positive outlook of having overcome the decade-long divide and the prospects for creating a common future. Communality seemed to be the predominant feeling that shaped the Russian government’s attitude in the security relations with the West. Emotional markers for strengthening this feeling of communality were the reference to ‘common values’ and ‘partnership’. In the security sphere particularly the need to constructively cooperate with the West in creating a new security architecture for Europe. The outlook of a common system of cooperative security in Europe dominated as moral belief and policy orientation.

In these early years, several ideas emerged of how this system of cooperative security could look like. Initially, the Russians assumed that both military blocks, the Warsaw Pact

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56 Richard Sakwa 2011: Russia’s Identity: Between the ‘Domestic’ and the ‘International’, in: Europe-Asia Studies 63: 6, 957-975, here p. 96. Not only Communists, but also reformers in the Russia assumed that Russia had “legitimate interests” in its near abroad. Soviet Deputy foreign minister, Yuli Kvitsinsky: “It goes without saying that there can be no return to the policy of domination in the Eastern European region for any nation. At the same time, the Soviet Union’s legitimate interests in this region have historical and geopolitical roots and must be taken into account. Those who value peace and stability on our continent, and want them to be lasting and durable, understand very well that the Eastern European region under no circumstances should become a source of threat to the security of the USSR. It is equally clear that there should be no foreign military bases or armed forces in this region.” Gerald B. H. Solomon, The NATO Enlargement Debate, 1990-1997: Blessings of Liberty (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 11.

57 Moscow knocks at NATO’s door, but …, in: Rossiskaya Gazeta, 21.12.1991 [Москва стучится в двери НАТО, но…, Российская газета, 21.12.1991]; Pavel Felgenhauer: Russia takes under control all nuclear
and NATO would be dissolved in order to enable a restart of the European security architecture on the basis of the Helsinki document principles of the CSCE. History turned out differently. Despite the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact NATO continued to exist. Now the Russians hoped that it would transform itself from a military alliance into a broader political and inclusive system of collective European security, with Russia and other East European countries becoming members. For the Russians, Western representatives were suggestive to equally aspiring to overcome the divide in the security relationship the West and open the door for an inclusive policy with Russia. In July 1990 NATO members states at the NATO summit in London expressed that “it is time to extend a hand of friendship to our former adversaries.” In September that year at the 2+4 talks, which paved the way for Germany’s reunification, Russia (SU) was assured that NATO would not move beyond Germany’s borders. Soviet leaders mistakenly took this as a guarantee of NATO not to move further east in general. This perception was reinforced by statements made by high-ranking NATO officials towards CEE countries’ such as Poland and Hungary regarding their demands to become a member of NATO. What NATO actually did was to fade-out the problem of enlargement more generally. NATO instead highlighted its “stabilizing” force through the creation of a dense “web of relations which does not exclude the Soviet Union”. While for instance NATO General Secretary Manfred Wörner early 1991 underlined that NATO will “not be indifferent to the Security of Eastern Europe” shortly later in April he made clear: “NATO is not seeking a shift of balance or an expansion of its military borders to the East.”

The following NATO summit in Rome 1991, NATO came up with a new strategic concept: transformation of NATO; cooperation, institutionalization of cooperation with CEE in NACC as well as strengthening CSCE process. NATO must be part of a multi-institutional system of cooperative security in Europe. Russian reactions were positive: Dec 1991: Yeltsin fully supports efforts “to create a new system of security from Vancouver to Vladivostok”, as was the wording in the NATO Rome declaration. In a letter that surprised the inaugural production facilities, in: Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 28.11.1991 [Павел Фельгенгауэр: Россия берет под свой контроль все предприятия ядерной промышленности, Независимая газета, 28.11.1991].

58 Bush sen.
59 Verbatim Record C-VR (90)36 of the North Atlantic with the participation of heads of state and government, held on Thursday, 5 July 1990 at Lancaster House, London.
60 QUOTE
62 Speech by Secretary-General Manfred Wörner at the Conference jointly sponsored by NATO and the CSFR on the future of European security, held at the Cernin Palace, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague, 25-26 April 1991.
session of the NACC he even raised the question of Russia’s NATO membership as a “long-term political aim”.  

Official statements from president Yeltsin and foreign minister Kosyrev suggest that an important baseline in the Russian position was that Russia is principally not against NATO enlargement or the integration of the CEE countries into NATO, as long as Moscow had a say on the process, shape and decision-making within an enlarged NATO.  

In a letter to NATO, Yeltsin substantiates this claim. According to Yeltsin, Russian relations with NATO should always stay “a step ahead”, and he refers to more fundamental security needs underlining that: “not only the opposition but also moderate circles will, undoubtedly, view [NATO expansion without Russian participation] as a new kind of isolation for our country”.  

However, it seems that the Yeltsin administration was too strongly fixated on principles of commonality, inclusion and in the security sphere on cooperative security designs, as it both misread the evolving debate about NATO enlargement and overestimated Russian influence on the enlargement process. Although still in 1992 NATO reiterated that it “won’t go East”, representatives from the CEE countries as well as some officials within NATO strongly advocated for an eastward enlargement, but at the same time heavily opposed any Russian membership. In Moscow, this dynamic was met with some irritation. On the one hand, pro-Western politicians, such as foreign minister Kosyrev and his deputy Churkin, acknowledged that “Russia is not yet ready for NATO accession”, thus more unwillingly than willingly confirming social inferiority, but at the same time criticize the CEEC’S urge for NATO enlargement as “NATO centrism” and rejecting anti-Russian resentments and stigmatizations as “anti-Russian hysteria”.  

NATO’s following “open door policy”, starting mid 1993, ran counter to the Russian administration’s initial aims, namely to establish a common security space in Europe. Kosyrev repeatedly blamed the CEE countries for inhibiting such a common security approach, also noting that a resentment-guided NATO-enlargement “plays in the hands of Shirinovski” and other ultra-nationalist forces in the country. In one statement, he warns of a “new Jalta” – a new and definite divide of Europe – as the “political price” the West and its allies will have to pay in the case of a NATO

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64 Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kosyrev on Radio Rossii, 03.11.1993.
67 RTR Russian Television, Vesti, 22.02.1994
68 ORT Russian Television, Novosti, 10.03.1994.
enlargement. In reaction, Russia’s government tried to influence the push-started enlargement process, putting forward an alternative proposal in order to avert Russian exclusion from future European security design. According to this proposal, the enlarged NATO was assumed to constitute one pillar of a more complex system of cooperative security. As Kosyrev in his statement pointed out, the CSCE should be strengthened and act as a “counterbalance” to “NATO within a new security system” in Europe, adding with a moral connotation that “it was not NATO that has won the Cold War”.

It is exactly at this moment, when Russian officials seem to for the first time “feel” the status asymmetry which is created by Western policy and rhetoric, also reacting to increased criticism from the ultra-nationalist Duma, by relating to status issues and criticizing the Western policy of degrading and excluding Russia. Russian representatives accuse NATO of sidelining Russia, reneging on the assurance which the West gave Russia in the course of Germany’s reunification not to enlarge towards the East. Regarding the question whether Russia should join NATO’s PfP program, officials point out that Russia is “doomed to be a great power”, that it cannot be treated as the CEEC, but must be treated as an equal partner and have a special status in PfP and NATO’s relations in general. The international conflict management attempts in Bosnia emerged as an overlapping policy-issue, where the impression of being excluded and sidelined by the West was reproduced. So far, Russia had been eager to play a constructive role and had joined Western positions in the UNSC. In principle, the Yeltsin administration also did not fundamentally oppose NATO military intervention in Serbia under the roof of the UN, although it strongly opposed re-interpretations of the international order, especially changes to the sovereignty norm. However, when NATO airplanes hit Serbian targets on the ground on 10/11 April 1994, Russia protested, but particularly against the fact that it had not been consulted. Soon after, Kozyrev criticized the NATO-Russian relationship as being unequal and lacking mutual respect.

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70 Ibid.
73 Due to this debate Russia’s signing of the PfP was delayed.
The feeling of “second class” group member treatment and forced subordination continued to breed in the NATO enlargement context, where it became ever clearer that NATO would further pursue its path of enlargement – without granting Russia accession, but more important for Moscow: without giving Russia an equal say in shaping the enlargement process and European security arrangements in general. The US introduced in the NATO discourse the formula to “give Russia a voice, but not a veto”, expressed by the fact that none of the Russian counterproposals to the ongoing path of NATO enlargement put forward in these years was seriously considered. Late 1994, Boris Yeltsin for the first time publicly raises Russian disappointment about NATO, and half a year later he accuses the West of definitely breaking away from the idea of cooperative security. Not incidentally, by 1995/96, Evgeni Primakov introduced Russia’s new foreign policy principle, based on the so-called “patriotic consent” (Arbatov, 1997) and now also officially putting a stronger emphasis on strengths as a function of Russian great power status. Russia partly moves away from a purely ‘Atlanticist’ position to more traditional ideas of ‘strategic interests’ and ‘spheres of influence’/geopolitics (Primakov, 1997). In this sense, the Russian diplomacy pushed hard for a status upgrade through more influence in the relations with NATO. Russia’s inclusion in the PfP is a good example to show how different the perceptions were regarding the consequences on status. NATO’s view can be interpreted in a way that it “allowed” Russia to participate in its Partnership for Peace program as well as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (later renamed Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) and saw the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1996 and the setup of the Permanent Joint Council as a strong sign that granted Russia special status as a future “strategic partner” of the West including “participation on an equitable basis” (NRC 1997, 9). The Russians, however, domestically quite intensely debated the pros and cons, but finally accepted NATO’s offers on the basis of the outlook that Russia would at least not lose any more influence. The following statement suggests that Russian policy-makers thought that they did not really have a choice not to accept NATO’s offers:

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“We believe that the eastward expansion of NATO is a mistake and a serious one. […] Nevertheless, in order to minimize the negative consequences for Russia, we decided to sign an agreement with NATO.”

Russia’s formal status upgrade reconciled Moscow for a moment and created an atmosphere of we-ness and equality on its part. This feeling is expressed in Russia’s support to NATO’s first out-of-area mission in Bosnia in 1995 as well the setup of Russia’s diplomatic mission to NATO. Both express the will to stay inside the group of those who set and act according to the “new” evolving rules of the international system. However, it became quite clear quite soon that while Russia was welcomed as a partner who follows Western norms, Russia’s real influence on NATO’s decision-making remained marginal to none. Western policymakers refrained from allowing Russia full access to the ‘elite club’ of established NATO members because it did not comply with Western civilization standards. Russian warnings to “reconsider PCJ cooperation if accession of the Baltic states was to go forward” or offers to give the Baltics security guarantees, hoping that such guarantees would render Baltic membership in NATO unnecessary, did not render any results.

c) The Kosovo case 1999: assertive NATO, angry Russia

The Kosovo case highlighted the fundamental gap in status perception between NATO and Russia even stronger. As has been said earlier, in the Bosnian case, the Russian leadership did not fundamentally oppose interventionist ideas or a role for NATO in peacekeeping, as long as the country did have a say in the decision, be it through informal bilateral consultation and agreement with NATO or more formal international approval in the UNSC. The most recent experience with NATO, however, had been that the Alliance was not ready and obviously not willing to share any decisions on European and international security with Russia. A key goal of Russian foreign policy, therefore, was to prevent the international community from taking any decision that would consolidate NATO’s role as a regulative factor in European security matters, thereby degrading and marginalizing Russia in international politics.

Foreign Minister Ivanov in February 1999 underlined that Russia is “a key player in the international

79 This position was, although in a more modest way, in essence already formulated in Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept of 1993. Government of the Russian Federation: Foreign Policy Concept 1993, printed in: Дипломатическii Вестник. Special Edition, January 1993 [Правительство Российской Федерации: Концепция Внешней Политики 1993, Дипломатический Вестник. Специальный Выпуск, Январь 1993]. As Sakwa writes, the elites early on defined Russia as an equal. They did not perceive Russia “[…] as a defeated power, obligated to defer to the United States and its allies”, see: Sakwa, Russia’s Identity, op. cit, p. 963)
arena” and that “the resolution of major modern problems is impossible without Russia’s direct participation”.

From this perception it is no wonder that in the context of the international conflict management in Kosovo, Russia categorically rejected any military intervention from NATO and tried to push internationally agreed diplomatic solutions instead. Western leaders, on their part, rather put the emphasis on the perceived disagreement on the norm, not on Russia’s status claims. They claimed that the international community had an obligation to end violence in Kosovo and that also Russia carried the responsibility if not the obligation to promote and defend human rights in Kosovo. They blamed Russia for protracting the conflict by morally supporting Milosevic and even making the Serbian leadership more adamant to a peaceful solution of the conflict. Already in 1998, the US considered a military intervention by NATO – even without a UN mandate. The US Secretary of State Albright concluded: “If force is required, then we will not be deterred by the fact that Russians do not agree with that.”

Adding insult to injury, Western states furthermore disregarded Russia’s international status as a UN veto power by acting without Russia’s consent in the UN Security Council and commencing its air campaign against Serbia without a mandate from the UN in the night from March 24 to 25, 1999. Russians reacted with widespread verbal protests and expressions of discontent and anger. Strong consent across the political camps within Russia and a high degree of resonance among high-ranking representatives from the political environment, encompassing government members, communists and nationalists, as well as leaders of the democratic parties and regional representatives. The substance of the protest was the expression of a feeling of humiliation; however the reference points differed slightly. Officials basically criticized the moral and political inappropriateness of the decision: a unilateral step, undermining the international norm of the prohibition of the use of force and Russia’s authority in the UNSC as well as weakening European structures of cooperative


security. Ultranationalists argued more in terms of Great Power status denial and characterized NATO as a direct threat to Russia.

From a Western point of view, however, Russian criticism was beside the point. In Kosovo, NATO members framed great power status as having a responsibility to protect human rights and if Russia was to live up to its status aspirations it could not hide behind its formal status as a UN veto power. As British Prime Minister Tony Blair underlined: “We are fighting for a world where dictators are no longer able to visit horrific punishments on their own peoples in order to stay in power. (...) Russia has a unique and leading role to play in these efforts.”

d) Russia and NATO in the new millennium: Russia resenting over denied status, NATO fearing a resurgent Russia

Russian-Western relations after the turn of the millennium started quite promising. After the Kosovo dispute, Russia was again taken ‘on board’ and received a formal status upgrade as a member of the G8. After the presidential elections in 2000, President Putin suggested to overcome animosities, misunderstanding and dispute and announced the goal of a new, constructive and “real” partnership with the West, based on pragmatism and mutual interests. The 9/11 terrorist attacks and the converging interest to fight terrorism indeed brought Russia and the US as well as NATO closer together for some time and leveled Russia’s status in the relationship. President Putin was the first state leader to call US President Bush after the planes had hit the World Trade Center and Russia subsequently opened its airspace and intelligence archives to assist in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. American momentary vulnerability and weakness resulted in a new self-confidence in Russia. At a speech at the NATO headquarters in October 2001, Putin underlines that: “[i]f NATO were to become a political organization, of course, we could

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83 Duma Observer. Bulletin of the State Duma, 28.03.1999, Nr. 47 (738) [Думское Обозрение. Бюллетень Госдумы Федерального Собрания РФ, 28.03.1999, No 47 (738)].
86 After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, Russia offered the US cooperation in the fight of international terrorism; it moreover tried to position itself as a reliable energy partner vis-à-vis the European Union. In his first speech, newly elected Russian president Vladimir Putin announced that not military competition with the United States was the main foreign policy concern for Russia, but rather Russia’s economic competitiveness in a globalized world, see: Government of the Russian Federation: Foreign Policy Concept, printed in: Diplomateski Vestnik 8, 01.08.2000, p. 3-11 [Правительство Российской Федерации: Концепция Внешней Политики, Дипломатический Вестник, 8, 01.08.2000, стр. 3-11].
reconsider our position on enlargement.” More institutional rapprochement was to follow. In the Rome Declaration of 2002, both sides agreed to give their mutual relationship “a new quality”. Both would act as “equal partners” in joint decision-making and political practice “to stand together against common threats”. To underscore their desire for concerted international action to address terrorism and other new security threats, the Rome Declaration formally established the NATO-Russia Council to replace the Permanent Joint Council created by the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997.

However, Western policymakers would attempt to keep emotional barriers in place leaving Russia with a feeling of social inferiority as the ‘odd one out’ in NATO’s established group. In fact, Russian policymakers frequently complained about the “scholastic discussions” and a lack of focus on substantial content in the NRC. In fact, NATO members have the right to veto or withdraw any point on the NRC agenda. Referring directly to this kind of unequal treatment in the Council, still in 2009 the Russian envoy to NATO told Western journalists that the Alliance needed to “take part in the discussion not from a bloc approach (...) not in the form of 26+1 but in the form of 27 members of the NATO-Russia Council”.

NATO-Russian relations deteriorated soon thereafter over NATO’s missile defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, where Russia once again felt that it was sidelined, as well as emerging discussions about a possible membership of Georgia and Ukraine in NATO. The missile defense issue gained momentum late 2001, when the then Bush administration announced US unilateral withdrawal from the ABM treaty in order to be able to set up the technical structures for a European element of a missile defense system. Increasing tensions between US/NATO and Russia were ignited by the plans to base elements of that MDS in countries of Eastern Europe. Russians argued that the fact that American strategic infrastructure will approach to Russian borders undermines Russian defensive capacities and, thus the strategic balance in Europe, which was seen in Russia as a cornerstone of European security. Moreover Moscow accused the US to invent scenarios that lack real facts, relating

90 For instance: Dmitri Rogozin: „Хуже того, согласно планам НАТО по 3-й и 4-й фазам развертывания ПРО США в Европе, часть территории России с 2018 года покрывается зоной действия информационных и огневых противоракетных средств, которые будут размещены в Польше и североевропейских морях.“ Dmitri Rogozin: Russia’s foreign policy: it is good being a leader, in: Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 29.02.2012 [Дмитрий Рогозин: Внешняя политика России: лидером быть выгодно, Российская газета, 29.02.2012].
to the argument that EMDS is setup to intercept missiles from Iran. More generally, politicians and military staff in Russia called EMDS a direct threat to Russian security and painted the scenario of a new arms race on the wall. Although NATO members made clear that they aspired to work together with Russia to find a solution for missile defense, they clearly rejected any Russian claims to influence the structure of EMDS, even after US president Obama announced his “reset” policy in relations with Russia in 2009. In this vein, the Russian proposal of a new European security treaty from 2010, suggesting to cover all security issues in a new overarching architecture, was more or less ignored. Equally, Moscow’s claim to receive security guarantees from NATO or its proposal of creating a common EMDS, were rejected. NATO’s ambivalent stance on Russian’ inclusion is best expressed by NATO’s motto to aspire “separate, but cooperative systems”.

An even more explosive issue became NATO’s relations with the post-Soviet countries. 2005 started a discussion, not least pushed by the US, on the question whether Georgia and Ukraine should become members of NATO. Both countries (Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004) were gripped by the so-called ‘colored revolutions’ and strongly realigned (Ukraine only temporarily until the election of Russian-friendly Victor Yanukovich in 2010) with the West. At the same time, Russia intensified its attempts to tie its neighbors closer to the country and integrate them into Russia-led projects of political and economic integration. The Russian government declares the neighborhood Russia’s “sphere of privileged interests” and, in order to spur integration, made use of political and economic carrots and sticks. Moscow at the same time criticized the West’s assumed role in the colored revolutions, particularly in Ukraine, blaming it for heavily interfering in Ukraine’s domestic affairs, as the

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Putin regime expected a negative spill-over of revolutionary dynamics to Russia prior to the parliamentary and presidential elections 2007/2008. Western policymakers rejected Russian criticism citing instead the principle of national self-determination of the Ukrainian people and instead accused Russia of attempting to roll back revolutionary accomplishments. As a result, the Bucharest summit turned into a solidarity ritual with the color revolutions when NATO members declared that the Ukraine and Georgia would join NATO “at one point in the future” and warned Russia that it had no right to veto those countries decisions on NATO accession.94

Both issues, EMDS and the post-Soviet neighborhood, triggered strong feelings of resentment in the Russian political elite. At several occasions, president Putin expressed his indignation about the West and, in his eyes, the unjustified lower status attribution, thereby reproducing many of the status-relevant issues of dissent that occurred since the early 1990s and underlying emotions. One ample example of these emotions is Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference 2007 and his explicit criticism of Western ignorant and for Russia destabilizing policies of the last years.95 At various occasions he states: “America does not want partners, but vassals. […] But Russia does not work like that.”96 At another occasion, Putin calls on NATO to stop “forcing forward your relations with the Eastern European countries”.97

Notwithstanding the regional and local significance the Georgian-Russian war in 2008 clearly had, it was also a conflict over status in the post-Soviet space with NATO actively pushing for the accession of Georgia to NATO and Russia strongly rejecting any further infringement of its status as a regional great power in the post-Soviet space. While the West had been at most surprised by Putin’s angry speeches so far, Western perceptions clearly turned more negative after Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008. NATO not only condemned the military invasion but threatened to permanently withhold status recognition. As an immediate reaction, it ceased formal cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council. The G7 foreign ministers issued a statement arguing that: “Russia’s actions have called into question

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94 QUOTE
95 E.g. in an interview on EMDS in the documentary „Cholodnaya Politika“ (Cold Politics) broadcasted on Russian television 2012.
its commitment to peace and security in the Caucasus”. Russian policymakers, on the contrary, resented NATO policymaking in Russia’s immediate neighborhood: “We are extremely frustrated and astonished by NATO’s actions in August-September last year, when our soldiers were killed and instead of support, we only saw the hypocrisy of their policy. NATO turned out to be the only organisation that sided fully with the aggressor”. Moreover, Russian resentment was accompanied by emotional expressions of national pride as another quote from Rogozin shows:

“Today I am representing a strong Russia and I feel – even personally – a completely different attitude towards us, the Russian representatives, here in Brussels. They look at us completely different – they look at us with respect – and I consider this to be Russia’s key diplomatic achievement.”

Also, by militarily intervening in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia eventually succeeded in pushing back NATO enlargement, at least in the Caucasus, and thus secure its status as a regional power. In a speech some years later, president Medvedev underlines:

“[And] a number of countries which (NATO) tried to deliberately drag into the alliance, would have most likely already been part of it now”,

also adding:

“We abandoned direct competition (with NATO), but […] we now have different visions of the solutions of a number of security issues […]”

Russia’s determination to use military force in Georgia and its rhetoric seemed to have triggered considerations in the West to again reproach Russia in security issues and meet the country on an equal level. Obama’s and NATO’s “reset” policy are a direct reaction to the war in Georgia. NATO Secretary General Rasmussen devoted his inaugural speech to NATO-Russia relations and announced a “new beginning”. To underline Russia’s elevated status as a “real stakeholder” in European and international security affairs, NATO recognized that “Russia has security interests which we need to understand and take into account”. At the

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same time, however, Western policymakers would neither compromise on NATO enlargement into former Soviet territory nor on European missile defense and could not comprehend how Russia would see that as undermining its status as a great power. From a Western perspective, opposition to NATO expansion undermined Russian status aspirations because it reverted Russia to a pre-modern imperialist state. Therefore, it was the interpretation in the West that Russian security concerns lacked any geopolitical basis. NATO claimed to have no intention to marginalize or ‘encircle’ the former Soviet space and had promised that it “will never attack Russia”: 103

“NATO does not support the idea of spheres of interests or influence. This should be left where it belongs – in the dustbin of history. We all live in an interdependent, global world in which countries – great, medium, and small – should enjoy the same rights and sovereignty. NATO is certainly not developing any ‘spheres of influence’ of its own” (RT 2011).

Thus, Russia as a ‘good modern great power’ had to subordinate itself to and confirm and replicate NATO’s benign intentions and the norms that underlie NATO’s policy.

However, this would less and less be the case. Russian abstention from the UNSC resolution on the creation of a no-fly zone over Libya in 2011 was so far the last time that Moscow supported (better: did not obstruct) Western interventionist policies. In fact, Russia was praised by NATO members for not blocking the resolution which aimed at preventing massive human rights violations in Bengasi and elsewhere. 104 But as soon as reports about dead civilians and damage of civil infrastructure caused by the international military operation increased in numbers, Russia began to criticize NATO for having overstepped the UN mandate on Libya. Then Prime Minister Putin, passing back the accusation of backwardness, said that the resolution resembled a “medieval calls for crusades”. 105 In fact, Russia complained against NATO for having raised false hopes and expectation, blaming the West for taking advantage of Russian cooperation to break international law and pursue its own interests. 106 In the following international crisis management in Syria, Russia took on a much harder position. According to political commentator Fedor Lukjanov, by opposing any Western initiatives in Syria, Moscow wanted to payback the political “humiliation” from the

103 RT 2011, Rasmussen 2009
decision on Libya and show that the West “cannot sideline Russia”. Moscow not only started to display a more independent position, but also one that intends to show moral superiority to the West, thereby reverting the perceived asymmetrical power-status figuration in the relationship. According to Aleksei Pushkov, chairman of the Duma committee on International Affairs, the Western policy in Libya did have “nothing to do with the strength of the law and the norms of the civilized world”. According to Pushkov, the West’s intentions are to change the norms of the international system for its own benefit – and it wants Russia to follow suit.

e) The Ukraine crisis: a pride-pride/shame-shame deadlock?

The Ukraine crisis is the most obvious example that Russia’s political elite tries to create a positively distinctive identity for Russia through reversion of the perceived social status order between Russia and the West. Russian framing and argumentation is not only about resenting over unjustified lower status attribution, about claiming inclusion or shaming exclusion any more, but about the discursive construction of an alternative positive role model and identity for Russia that clearly distances the country from the West, its social authority over Russia as well as its normative ordering principles. This new narratives consist of the following basic elements: First: Russia is morally superior to its Western counterparts. This moral superiority is based on adherence to the long-standing and effective – in terms of creating stability – operating rules of the international system. The most important and basic rule is sovereignty and non-interference, while Western liberal universalism is strongly rejected. Thus, Russia is not justifying itself any more, but ‘counter-blames’ the West for moral trespassing in Ukraine, Syria, and elsewhere. This is observed notwithstanding the fact that Russia in the Ukrainian crisis interfered in the domestic affairs of a sovereign country and that Russian leaders, strangely enough, argue along lines that strongly resemble liberal concepts: namely that Russia has intervened – particularly with regard to the annexation of Crimea – in order to “protect the lives and the rights” of the Russian and Russian-speaking minority against potential violence, or as the Russian Envoy to the UN Vitalii Churkin put it, “with all the

107 Fedor Lukyanov, cited in: Vedomosti, Ot redakcii, op. cit.
109 Ibid.
110 Обращение Президента Российской Федерации. 18 марта 2014 года, 15:50 Москва, Кремль [Presidential Address, 18.03.2014, Moscow, Kremlin].
signs of ethnic cleansing”. 111 This also means that Russia’s intentions in Ukraine, as in international politics in general, are “good” and that Russia is a normatively oriented power that uses its force to promotes peace in the world, while the West is blamed and stigmatized for acting ‘selfish’, disrespectful of international norms and, thus, irresponsible.112 Secondly, this positive self-image is underpinned with nationalistic elements, combining heroism, imperial glory and other more conservative and resentment-driven ideas about Russia’s national role and mission. They are resentment-driven because all these elements strongly rely on pre-existing historically grown narratives of a Russia that is distinctively different from the West/from Europe and that finds its identification via nationalistic ideas. These narratives of nationalistic pride served as mechanisms to overcome a perceived/felt inferiority vis-à-vis the European/Western “other” already in the past.113 A central argument here is that the “West” is politically and culturally in decline. This ties on to a century-old narrative about Western Europe as a ‘fallen’ continent – fallen in a sense that the “West” – Western Europe – while adopting liberal principles of statehood has ‘lost’ its Christian values and morals – justice, peace, respect and mercy –, whereas Russia remains the steward of the ‘true’ Christian Europe. Another element is the reliance on nationalistic pride. This goes along with the argument that only autocracy and obedience towards a ‘responsible’ and ‘just’ state authority can promote peace and stability. These more recent framings have a new quality compared to the anger-guided policy of the first decade of the 2000s and might be a sign that Russia is about to adopt a post-post Cold War identity in its relations with the West. Most important is that on an emotional level, they create a relationship which is characterized by competition, if not close to rivalry, and that they moreover give legitimization for the Russian leadership to adopt new security practices in Europe as well as redefine the rules of engagement with NATO and other Western actors.

NATO, for its part, employs a similar discursive strategy of blaming Russia for its “illegal and illegitimate” actions in the Ukraine crisis.114 Specifically, NATO states accuse Russia of violating the territorial sovereignty of the Ukraine through military intervention. By

111 Выступление Постоянного представителя России при ООН В.И.Чуркина на открытом заседании Совета Безопасности ООН по ситуации на Украине, Нью-Йорк, 19 марта 2014 года [Statement of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Vitali Churkin, at the open UN Security Council Meeting on Ukraine, New York, 19 March 2014].

112 Обращение Президента Российской Федерации. 18 марта 2014 года, 15:50 Москва, Кремль [Presidential Address, 18.03.2014, Moscow, Kremlin].

113 See for instance: William Leatherbarrow/Derek Offord (eds): A history of Russian thought, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010, chapters on “the West” (ch. 9, p 197-216) and “the East” (ch. 8, p. 217-240).

114 Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers on Russia, Press Release (2014) 062, 1 April 2014.
“condemning” Russia for having caused the Ukraine crisis\textsuperscript{115}, NATO members discursively intensify a positive we-feeling on the inside by contrasting it to a negative emotion encoding of anger and projection of shame/blame on an outsider (Russia): “Our goal of a Euro-Atlantic region whole, free, and at peace has not changed, but has been fundamentally challenged by Russia”.\textsuperscript{116} What is more, NATO states discursively frame the current situation in a way that denies Russia’s status as a ‘responsible partner of the West’: “Over the past twenty years, NATO has consistently worked for closer relations and trust with Russia. However, Russia has violated international law and has acted in contradiction with the principles and commitments in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Basic Document, the NATO-Russia Founding Act, and the Rome Declaration. It has gravely breached the trust upon which our cooperation must be based.”\textsuperscript{117} From NATO’s perspective, Russia does not deserve the higher moral status it claims because its political elites seem to have betrayed shared liberal values and international principles that the NATO-Russia partnership used to be based on. This pride/shame dualism reveals a Western mind-set that puts Russia on equal footing with the threat of the so-called Islamic State (IS). In the words of former NATO General Secretary Rasmussen: “Russia has trampled on all the rules and commitments that have kept peace in Europe and beyond since the end of the Cold War. It is now clear that Russia regards the West as an adversary, not a partner”.\textsuperscript{118}

4. Conclusion

Whereas there are constant status markers for Russia such as equal social status within the group of international political authorities in the UNSC as consolidated in the post-WW II era, what is perhaps more important are the variations in its status markers, notably the degree of a sense of belonging to the “West” as a civilizational model in the post-Cold War era. Russian policy-makers have more or less always tried to reject a Western social domination over Russia, however with different intensity and different emotional attributions and with different strategies overcoming the perceived asymmetrical power-status figuration.

First, there have been asymmetries in the social relationship through accentuation of an inclusive with the West identity in all instances based on strong emotional orientation towards

\textsuperscript{115} NATO’s Relations with Russia, 17 June 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50090.htm?
\textsuperscript{116} Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers on Russia, Press Release (2014) 062, 1 April 2014.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
the West and its guiding norms. Second, we have witness a rejection of Western domination of the social relationship. In the first decade of the new millennium the status-power figuration on the Russian side was dominated by anger, gradually turning into resentment, which materialized in various attempts to produce a political counterweight and to try to change the asymmetric circumstances triggered by repeating incidences of emotional exclusion and stigmatization attempts.

In the course of the Georgian war we observed this gradual transformation in the emotion-based power-status figurations between NATO and Russia to complete. While Russia started to behave more aggressively toward its immediate neighbors and the West (an expression of resentment), NATO seemed more afraid of a resurgent Russia that could eventually challenge NATO’s superior status. This leads us to conclude that the pride (NATO)/shame (Russia) power-status figuration could be (or has already been) replaced by a fear/resentment figuration elevating if not equating Russia’s status vis-à-vis the West.

More recently, and spurred by the conflict over Ukraine, we witnessed a second transformation of the power-status figuration, turning into a shame-shame/pride-pride constellation. Russia, while still displaying elements of resentment, has started to create a new identity that not only tries to overcome, but decisively reverse the perceived power-status asymmetry with NATO. This constellation is well reminiscent of the Cold War era. The material contexts and constellations between Russia and NATO do not speak in favor of a “New Cold War”. However, when looking at the current power-status figuration, the impression grows that the emotional part of the relationship has reconfigured along lines we thought to have overcome a long time ago.

References


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