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MA thesis

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**Rethinking the Relations between Identity and Foreign
Policy: Analysing Russia's Foreign Policy Discourse towards
China**

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This thesis conforms to the requirements for a Master's thesis

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. Any ideas or data taken from other authors or other sources have been fully referenced.

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ABSTRACT

This master's thesis aims to reconstruct Russian identity discourse related to its foreign policy towards China. Taking the timeline surrounding the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea (2010-2016), this thesis was based on the background of the rising concept of "pivot to Asia/East". Using China as the main actor in Russia's Asian policy, this thesis tries to answer the questions regarding the construction of Russia's identity discourse towards China and whether the changing Russian policy after Crimea initiate any changing identity. Based on the poststructuralist approach in foreign policy analysis and the methods of discourse analysis as offered by Campbell (1990), Waever (2002), and Hansen (2006), this thesis offers an alternative understanding of the (re)construction of the identity structure and the intricate relationship between identity and foreign policy. In using the Hansen's methods of discourse analysis, this thesis analyses official speeches and interviews as part of the 1st model of poststructuralist discourse analysis, and both academic articles and opinions as part of the 2nd model. This thesis finds several patterns of discursive identity structure. Firstly, concurring with Waever's argument, this thesis finds that existing discursive structure created limitations to the possibility of any changes in Russia's identity/policy before Crimea. The crisis in Ukraine did provide some concrete policy changes, but these changes at the outmost layer of discursive structure were unable to drastically change the identity discourse in Russia related to China in the post-Crimean timeframe. The effect of this limitation was the stagnation of concrete policy switch towards China. From those findings, two important theoretical contributions could be noted. These findings show that there was the aspect of timeframe which poststructuralist theory of identity/foreign policy change should take into considerations when analyzing the probability of change or non-change. However, this issue did not diminish the usefulness of poststructuralist approach in deepening the understanding of identity construction and its relations with foreign policy.

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INTRODUCTION

The relations concerning Russian national identity and its foreign policy has been a thought-provoking issue ever since the end of the Cold War. Scholars such as Neumann (1995), Prizel (1998), Hopf (2002), Clunan (2009), Thorun (2009), Taras (2013), and Tsygankov (2016) had argued about this relations, particularly related to the conception of the “West” and how this discourse affects Russian foreign policy after the Cold War. The case studies taken by these scholars have a tendency to focus on Europe, US, and the former Soviet Union countries such as Baltic states or the Russian Near Abroad. On the other hand, Kuhrt (2007, p.1) had argued that debates about Russian identity tend to revolve around the East/West axis. That argument would necessitate the assumption that the “East” also matters in Russian foreign policy. However, this other discourse in Russian identity had rarely been investigated. While scholars (Hopf 2002; Clunan 2009; Tsygankov 2016) acknowledged the existence of this alternative discourse, this issue remains underdeveloped.

I try to contribute to these discussions about Russian identity and foreign policy by focusing on the dynamics of the Russia-China relations before and after the crisis in Crimea. Previous works on Russia-China relations have neglected the issue of identity, whereas the small amount of researches concentrating on identity mostly used the paradigm of conventional constructivism by separating “ideas” from the understanding of the “material aspects”. My contribution in this regard is the use of poststructuralism, which was reflected in my findings: the mapping of the discursive structure of Russian identity related to China both before and after Crimea; the need to rethink Waever’s theory of discursive structure by adding the issue of timeframe; and the usefulness of poststructuralist approach to deepen our understanding of the relations between identity and foreign policy.

China was chosen as the representative of the “East”. This decision was made with an acknowledgement of other possible “East” signifier, such as Japan, Asia-Pacific, or Southeast Asia. However, following Lo’s (2014) argument, the majority of Russian foreign policy towards Asia or the “East”, was directed towards China. The Ukraine and Crimean crisis was chosen, as opposed to the Georgian War in 2008 (Turner 2011) or the financial crisis of 2008 (Kaczmarek 2015), to represent the momentum of the worsening relations between Russia and the “West” and as the indicator of the “unprecedented” growing relations between Russia and China. This relation with the West was brought into account to see whether the East/West binary logic of identity axis occurred, and whether the identity towards the “East” was related to the Russian “Western” orientation. In that case, it is possible that the “Turn to the East” was related to Russian identity discourse, only because the breakdown on the Russia-West relations.

Research Puzzle

Even before Crimea, the development of Russia-China relations had reached a level, to which Russia’s then-President Vladimir Putin (2012a) dubbed as “unprecedented”. The border issues, which had afflicted the relation since 1964, had been resolved through the signing of the Treaty of Good-neighbour Relations, Friendship, and Cooperation in May 2001, followed by the 2004 border agreement and the 2008 border demarcation pact. In political terms, the creation of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001, the joint criticism towards US or NATO’s action in Kosovo 1999 and Iraq 2003, the establishment of the “China Year” in Russia and the “Russia Year” in China since 2006, and the joint-military exercises under the SCO banner since 2005 had shown the development of the relation (Eder 2014). In economic terms, after the financial crisis in 2008, Russo-Chinese relations took off to a new level, with the agreement on the Siberia-Daqing pipeline was signed in 2009. The bilateral trade between both countries had risen from US\$ 8 billion in 2000 to almost US\$ 88 billion in 2013. Since 2010 China had become the number one trading partner of Russia (Kaczmarek 2015). Even sceptics as Lo (2008, p.174) had to admit that the

degree of cooperation has been impressive, and “for all its faults...one of the most convincing examples of positive-sum international relations today”. All these developments, ranging from the border issue to the economic cooperation, shown that the relationship was moving towards closer and deeper cooperation.

Nonetheless, even though the relationship was gradually improving, the policies towards China are still secondary to the Western orientation. As Tsygankov (2016) argued, since 2001, Russia’s foreign policies were orientated toward the US and Europe. Tsygankov (2016, p.265) claimed that since the end of the Cold War, Russia’s Western orientation had endured the changing political condition from Yeltsin and Kozyrev “integration to the West”, to Primakov’s “great power balancing”, to Putin’s “pragmatism/assertiveness”, and followed by Medvedev’s “reset” and modernization policy. According to Tsygankov (2016, p.185), especially during Putin’s second term (2004-2008), relationship with China served as part of Russia’s strategy to balance American hegemony while at the same time reengaging with the West under the Russian terms. Lo (2008, p.176) concurred with this line of arguments, arguing that the Russian policy towards China served as an effort to contain the West’s influence.

Based on the view that Russia’s relations towards China (and the “East”) is secondary to the Western orientation, the debate following the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea in 2014 is the turning point on these discussions. Even though the term “pivot to Asia” emerged in 2010 (Lukyanov 2010), it was not until Crimea that it received much attention. Simes (2014) argued that the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea would prompt Russia to move closer to China, to the extent of the creation of a security agreement between both countries. Others argued that the post-Crimean situation marked the end of “Axis of Convenience” and the move towards Sino-Russian *entente* (Trenin 2015a). These assessments were made due to the new policies such as the massive gas deal, the currency swap agreement between both countries central banks, the coordination of Eurasian Union and Silk Road Economy Belt, and the agreement allowing Chinese investors and companies to have a controlling ownership of oil and gas fields (Lukin 2015). These developments were considered important because, before Crimea, Russia had been hesitant to conclude the gas deal, the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the EEU-Silk Road coordination (Yu 2015a). Instead of the usual “strategic partnership” and “unprecedented relations”, the policies have been dubbed in

an identity term as “Turn to the East” or “Pivot towards Asia”, which gave the impression of an alternative identity orientation as Kuhrt had argued before, in the form of the East/West axis (Johnson 2014; Kireeva 2014). As Shevtsova (2015) and Tsygankov (2016) described, this “civilizational turn” towards Asia was promoted by the Kremlin as changing Russian identity.

As I have shown above, the main puzzle of this research is the ambiguity of Russia’s shifting policy/identity towards China. On the one hand, before Crimea, Russia had hesitated to increase their cooperation with China. Even the gradual increase in cooperation could not change Russia’s orientation to the “West”. However, the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea had changed the policies drastically (to a deeper cooperation with China) and changed the narrative of the policies into a seemingly identity-based concept of “turn to the East”. Therefore, it necessitates a further research into the dynamics of the relationship, to explore the changing policies and the changing identity.

Project Design

These changing policies led to the question of changes in Russian identity towards China. Whereas in previous literatures, the significant “Other” for Russia has always been the “West”, the breakup with the West after the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea in 2014 and the subsequent changing policies towards China might have prompted an identity change. To elaborate that possibility, the main question for this thesis is formulated as: *How is the Russia’s identity discourse(s) towards China constructed before Crimea? Are the “Turn to the East” policies, which was heavily promoted after Crimea and the breakup with the “West”, changed the Russian identity discourse(s) towards China?* To answer that question, these following sub-questions are formulated: *What are the discourses on China that exist in Russia before Crimea? What are the discourses that exist after Crimea? Are there any changes in the discourses? Were the changing discourses (if any) informed by the “Turn to the East” policy?*

By investigating whether the development of Russia-China relations in recent years has any relations to the identity discourses of China in Russian national identity, I seek a better comprehension of the relations between the competing discourses of

national identity within Russia and the Russian foreign policy towards China. To add more dimension to the previous works on Russia-China relations and the works on identity-foreign policy nexus, I try to elaborate the identity/foreign policy nexus by using the poststructuralist approach as developed by Campbell (1990), Waever (2002), and Hansen (2006). In examining the case of Russia-China relations and the questions about the discourse of the East in Russian foreign policy, I try to investigate whether there are any changes (or not) to the Russian identity vis-à-vis China by elaborating both the discourses and the current policies (emphasising the mutually-constitutive relations between identity discourse and the foreign policy). In selecting this approach, I hope to examine the relations between the previously understudied discourses of the East (in this case, focusing on China) in the discursive construction of Russian national identity and Russian foreign policy.

By using the poststructuralist approach, I offer a different interpretation to the contemporary Russian identity. It might shed some other light to the relevance of the different “Self” and “Other” in the identity formation. I also hope to identify the presence (or the absence) of identity discourse(s) towards China, which had been underdeveloped in the previous studies. In that sense, the possible findings of an identity change will strengthen the poststructuralist theory of foreign policy, whereas an absence of any reference or change related to identity in the policy discourses might prompted a deeper theoretical discussion on the ability of poststructuralism to explain change.

To achieve those goals, I use the methods of poststructuralist discourse analysis as developed by Hansen (2006). Following the intertextual model offered by Hansen, I emphasise the official discourse while also incorporated the wider academic discourse. As the timeframe, I emphasise on the timeline after the emergence of the “Turn to the East” discourse in the academic debate (2010 up until the referendum in Crimea (16 March 2014)). To be able to explore the possibility of changing identity discourse, I then compare the result of the analysis during 2010-2014 with the discourse within 2014-2016 timeline. The main textual resources are the policy statements, speeches, and interviews made by the policymakers (Dmitri Medvedev, Vladimir Putin, Sergey Lavrov, and several ambassadors), as well as the academic articles from the leading Russian foreign policy experts.

The structure of this thesis is structured following the timeline of the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea. The first chapter is the introduction. The second chapter elaborates the literature review, the theoretical discussion, and the methodological approach. This decision to integrate the methodology to the theoretical discussion was driven by the closely interlinked explanation between the poststructuralist theory of foreign policy and the methods of poststructuralist discourse analysis. The third chapter is the discussion on basic discourses of Russia's identity towards China before Crimea and its relations with the policies. The fourth chapter is the discussion on the existing discourses after Crimea, whether any changes are found, and whether the changing policies informed any of the current discourses. The final chapter is the conclusion that discusses the findings, the theoretical implications of the findings, and the possibility of further research.

Limitations

Several limitations occurred in this project. One of the first limitation is the focus on China as the representation of "pivot to the East/Asia". By focusing on China, I set aside the other aspects of Asia, such as Southeast Asia (as in the case of Vietnam) or Japan. Other research might be able to gain other insight into Russia's "pivot to the East/Asia" by using other countries in Asia as the focus.

Other issues were related to the focus on official discourse and academic discourse. Two limitations arose from this focus: firstly, the focus on Russian official discourse (or, using Makarychev's terminology, practitioners) might be criticised as jumbling both the ideational aspect and the practical aspect of foreign policy. However, following the argument of poststructuralism, policy itself is part of the ongoing discursive formation of identity. Secondly, to address the potential bias of the official discourse and to strengthen my argument regarding the presence of existing discursive identity structure, I include the other discursive model (Hansen 2006) of the academic discourse. The problem is that the Russian academic discourse was vast and diverse, which therefore entailed the need to focus on several groups of academics (due to the limit on time and space). By focusing only on the foreign policy experts (from three

major think-tanks such as the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, the Russian International Affairs Council, and the Carnegie Moscow Centre), it is possible that other academic discourses were neglected. Nonetheless, by taking three major think-tanks as the sources of academic discourses, I try to include different strands of experts, from Karaganov and Lukyanov as the “interpreter and a co-shaper of the official’s international discourse” (Makarychev 2013, p.238) to Westernizers such as Dmitri Trenin.

LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL, AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Reviewing Research on Russia-China Relations

In analysing Russia-China relations, especially since the end of the Cold War, scholars were divided into two major interpretations. According to Turner (2011, p. 51), scholars usually use two broad generalizations in explaining the relationship; by either portraying it as an “impending alliance” or “opportunistic partnership”. Kaczmarek (2015) argued that scholars were either using the “strategic partnership” or “axis of convenience” approach.

The first school of thought is the optimist school. This approach highlights the increasing willingness of Russia and China to cooperate in many sectors, even though some problems still exist. This optimistic approach focuses more on possibility of future cooperation, instead of analysing the reason for the current relations. For example, Wishnick (2001) branded this relationship as a foundation of “incipient alliance, albeit with one weakness”.¹ Wishnick also argued that this impending alliance will be used against the US. Other scholars, such as Levin (2008) even predicted that this alliance would, in the future, be composed of Russia-China together with Iran, North Korea, and Iraq, challenged the supremacy of the US. The other tenets of this approach are the notion that joint statements between the two countries will be more powerful than unilateral statements (Weitz 2008, p. 37). According to Lukin (2013, cited by Kaczmarek 2015, p.24), the other essential principles are the growing interdependence between the two countries and the convergence of interests. In terms of converging

¹ Wishnick (2001, p. 820) argued that although the relations’ strength was drawn from the interest of countering American unilateralism, some differing views on the context of Asian security and regional economic cooperation might create some faultlines.

interests, Nation (2010) argued that the friendship between Russia and China is practical but substantial, which was based on the cultivation of mutual interests by both parties.

Summing up the position of the “optimists”, even though they used different terms such as “strategic partnership” (Lukin 2013), “normal relationship” (Yu 2007), or “practical friendship” (Nation 2010), they all shared some similar analysis. The first is regarding the position of Russia and China, and how they consider each other’s position. As Levin (2008) argued, both countries are more or less at the same position, capable of challenging the US’s unilateral narrative in the world. In this sense, this group assumed that even though historically Russia is more powerful than China, and nowadays we could consider China as the more powerful partner, in this relationship they consider themselves as equal. The second similarity is the argument regarding the mutual converging interests, which then drive the increasing cooperation. As Brækhus and Øverland (2007) argued, this approach assumed that at some point, Russo-Chinese alliance could be the contender of US-Europe alliance. Other issue that might be noticed here is instead of speaking about Europe and the West, the US occupies the main “Other” for both China and Russia, which then converged interests and thus, their relations. One notable absentee is how the “optimist” camp avoids discussing the issue of identity and instead chooses the explanation of material factors. In this case, they focus on the set of shared interests that united both countries, which are the converging views on international order, global condition, and the role played by the US (Ferdinand 2011; Yu 2007).

This first group argument is not without challenges. The absence of any real alliance between Russia and China since the 2001 Treaty, or as Grant (2012) pointed out “the absence of partners doing things that they do not want to do, for the sake of the relationship”, had prompted scholars to look for another explanation. It was in this context that the “pessimistic views” emerged, as elucidated by Lo (2008) when he used the term “axis of convenience”. Instead of focusing on the equal position, this view argued that the relationship was unequal and that China is now the stronger partner (Kotkin 2009). This views also doubted the claim of converging mutual interests, and instead argued that the relationship with the US is more important to both countries (Kaczmarek 2015). As Lo (2015) pointed out, Russia view China as part of the strategy

to counter US global hegemony. Furthermore, Lo (2008; 2014) argued that several issues such as the fear of the “China threat” and Russian tendency to lean towards the West should hinder the Russia’s “turn to the East” policy. Other scholars pointed out that Russia had tried to push the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as an instrument to limit China’s influence in SCO and Central Asia (Eder 2014), signalling the pragmatic position and their reluctance to allow China into Central Asian sphere, and therefore countering the argument of common interest in stabilizing Central Asia. According to Swanstrom (2008), Russian’s decision to go to war in Georgia would present a threat to China, which will affect their future relationship.² These conditions had encouraged scholars (Hill & Lo 2013; Lo 2014) to argue that this relationship is not sustainable.

Some interesting points are found here, compared to the previous “optimistic approach”. Firstly, the unequal and asymmetric position between Russia and China. This “pessimistic approach” argued that this asymmetric position would create problems in the future, depending on how Russia react to the fact that they are now considered to be the weaker partner. Secondly, instead of mutual interests, this approach highlights the absence of mutual trust (Popescu 2011) and the “myth of identical views” (Lo 2015). Lo (2015) explained further by elaborating many cases when the Russian view differed greatly compared to the Chinese, especially on the issue of US’s importance to each of them. On the issue of any sector that would be crucial, this approach underlined the importance of Central Asia and Russia Far East as the possible breaking point for Russo-Chinese relations. In the terms of identity, the “pessimist” camp also neglected the ideational factors, even though the issue of trust was one of the main component of the analysis. One key missing analysis is the way Russia behave when they perceive themselves as weaker than China. This should have prompted an identity-focus analysis, but with the focus being a prediction of how the future relationship would look like, the issue of identity as an important element have been deserted.

It might be tempting to justify one of the school of thoughts but, as Kaczmarek had argued, both approaches have similar problems. Kaczmarek (2015, p.27) argued

² It would be interesting to note that, on the contrary to Swanstrom’s argument, Turner (2011) actually argued that Chinese media supported Russia’s action in Georgia. That being said, the official statement of China is quite ambiguous.

that both approaches interpreted the relations as a “strategic relations between two rational actors, with their own national interests”. Instead of looking into how the countries, or at least the political elite of the countries, understand the world, they forced their classification and definition of rationality. In this sense, both the “optimist” and the “pessimist” scholars fell into the trap of the rationalist approach in International Relations theory. By looking only at the material factors as the main element, this debate resembles another neorealist (pessimist) and neoliberal (optimist) debate in International Relations. Obviously, both approaches have its own merit, but I argued that to broaden the knowledge, we need to focus more on the identity issues related to the Russia-China relations.

As Kaczmarek (2015, p. 27) argued, when explaining Russian policy towards the West, scholars have used the concept of national identity, but when explaining the relationship with China, scholars tend to use only the idea of strategic interaction. This might connect to the *a priori* assumption that Russian identity is always orientated towards the West. This *a priori* assumption of Russia’s Western orientation was, in part, related to the previous works on Russian identity and foreign policy (Neumann 1995, Prizel 1998, Hopf 2002, Fawn 2004, Clunan 2009, Taras 2013, Tsygankov 2016). The previous works had mainly focused on the discourse of the West. Mainly, the West as the “Others” to Russian “Self”, had been the main subject of the discussion. With regard to China, Hopf (2002) and Morozov (2008) had argued that the discourse of the East and Asia had only a peripheral place in Russian identity. Therefore, I try to investigate this identity problem and offer an additional understanding to the previous works on Russia-China relations.

Several works tried to investigate the identity relations between Russia and China. However, most of them had focused on the description of the relationship, even from the era of Tsar (Lukin 2003). Lukin (2003) had investigated how the Russian viewed China since before the era of Communism until the early years of Putin, but had concentrated only on the aspect of perception and identity, not on the constitutive logic of the relations. From Bellacqua’s edited works, Kuchins (2010) had investigated the relations between Russian “Eurasian” identity and the relations with China. However, similar with Lukin’s work, Kuchins put aside the possibility of the constitutive relations. In his other article, Hopf (2009) investigated the Sino-Soviet split in 1950s by

using his previous resources from his 2002 book. Hopf (2009) argued that the changing identity of the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin created the identity difference with China (which became more Stalinist after the Great Leap Forward in 1958). Following the causal premise of conventional constructivism, Hopf then argued that this changing identity relations was reflected in the “real policy choices” by the countries’ elites. In this case, Hopf’s argument and logic could not be used to explain the possibility of changes in Russian identity discourse towards China after Crimea. Salin (2011a) also tried to analyse how Russians perceive China by looking at the political parties, academic debate, public discourse, and the official position. However, Salin also made the same argument with Hopf, by pointing that the official position was not connected to the discursive debate in the media, public, and academic discourses.

This unquestioning assumption of official discourse was also apparent in the latest effort by Kaczmarek (2013) to explore Russian identity discourse towards China after the 2008 financial crisis was interesting. Instead of trying to question the narratives of official policies, Kaczmarek assumed that the official position was mostly optimistic, and decided to focus on the media and societal discourses. Kaczmarek (2013) argued that even though some Russian scholars and media still sceptical of the growing relations with China, the official policy from Kremlin is more optimistic in establishing closer relations with China. This assumption that official discourse is the “real policy” and that to uncover the identity discourse, one should look at the other discourses was problematic. Even Hopf (2009) has admitted that this move betrayed the intersubjective and interpretivist nature of constructivist perspective which mainly used in researching identity in IR. Hopf (2009, p. 287) justified himself by arguing the analytical need of separating the independent and dependent variables. However, I follow the poststructuralist argument that official discourse itself is a part of the discursive construction of identity and foreign policy, and by eliminating the critical analysis on official discourse, we risk taking the official discourse as a given truth and reality.

On the contrary to Hopf (2009), Salin (2011a), and Kaczmarek (2013), I focus on how the Russian discourse towards China was constructed. Instead of assuming this discursive position *a priori*, I try to uncover the official discourse from the Russian government. To further elucidate this identity discourse, I also compare it with

academic discourses that emerged around the same timeframe. Furthermore, if Kaczmarek focused more on the 2008 financial crisis, I focus on the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea as the major sign. This focus on Ukraine and Crimea was influenced by Lo's (2015, p. 142) argument that Russia's China policy was more of a "forced-turn to the East as a result of Western hostility". Therefore, it is necessary to look at how the official identity discourse(s) was propagated during a conflict and tense relation with the West. As Lo (2015, p. 163) himself argued, even without analysing much of the official discourse, the crisis in Crimea and Ukraine could be seen as the confirmation that Russia saw their Asian strategy as a tool to "counter the US...establishing alternative to Western-led governance...reinforcing Russia as independent power...and reaffirming Russia's uniqueness and indispensability". To that objective, I need to clarify some concepts, such as identity and its relations with foreign policy. The next subchapter is dedicated to elaborate this issue.

Theory on Identity and Foreign Policy: The Need for Poststructuralist Perspective

Identity has been an important concept in the study of International Relations (IR). As some scholars argued, identity is "an inescapable dimension of being" (Campbell 1998, p.9) and that "no world politics without identity" (Burke 2006, p.394). The rising attention to the concept of identity, especially in the field of social sciences, has started since 1980s (Abdelal et al. 2006). However, whether one consider it as a "return" (such as Lapid & Kratochwil 1996 and Urrestarazu 2015) or "discovery" (Berenskoetter 2010), there has been some criticisms towards the concept itself. As Brubaker and Cooper (2000) argued, the term "identity" is problematic, due the over-usage and the tension between "identity" as an analytical concept of a "concept of practice". Therefore, it is vital to discuss the concept of identity before looking at the effort of theorisation of identity/foreign policy nexus.

As Berenskoetter (2010) argued, the discussion on identity could follow two different paths, either by delving into the core meaning of identity or by summarizing the usages and applications of identity in previous researches. The former treated "identity" as a concept of analysis, whereas the latter viewed "identity" as a concept of

practice. I argue that to better analyse the Russian identity discourse towards China, it is necessary to provide just a common understanding of the terminology.³ Consequently, at first, this subsection gives core definitions that provide the basic understanding of the concept of “identity”, therefore giving a basis of the analytical dimension of the concept. Afterwards, the following discussion moves to the theoretical debates on identity and foreign policy, and how those debates informed the theoretical argumentation of this paper, thereby focusing on how the identity has been used (either by scholars or the policymakers and foreign policy experts)

As Urrestarazu (2015) argued, identity is a contested concept. Nevertheless, usually the distinction between “Self” and “Others” is considered the most important feature of identity.⁴ As Kowert (1998) argued, this inside/outside dimension of identity is the important feature, if we were to incorporate identity into the study of IR.

I also incorporate the definition offered by Urrestarazu (2015), which underlined the need to maintain the multidimensional aspect of identity. Urrestarazu (2015, p. 136) delineated the three main dimension of identity, which are the narrative dimension, the performative dimension, and the emotional dimension. The narrative dimension contains the cultural and historical elements of identity, which constructed the set of meaning to inform the “Self” of the actor. This narrative dimension, according to Urrestarazu (2015, p. 137) was grounded in the intersubjective historical construction. This narrative dimension was apparent because of its focus on the discursive construction made by referring to culture and history. The second dimension, the performative dimension, is where the situational character of identity became important. The importance of this dimension is the possibility of having several possible meaning of “Self” at the same time, due to the situational context. The performative dimension helps us to understand the situational context of the pre-Crimean discourse where the idea of the West (through the “reset” policy) and the idea of the East (through the “Turn to the East” policy) existed at the same time. The third dimension is the emotional dimension, which would entail the reference to self-esteem, humiliation, (mis-)trust,

³ For the in-depth debate on the concept of identity, see Brubaker & Cooper (2000), Berenskoetter (2010), and Urrestarazu (2015).

⁴ One should note that Waever (2002) argued that identity might contain other categories. Instead of just focusing on the distinction between righteous Self and barbaric Other, Waever suggested the other possibility such as “friends” and “relatives”. According to Waever, this other type of distinction could explain other cases such as the Nordic identity.

fear, and other emotional terminology. This third dimension is useful in analysing the post-Crimean discourse, if there were any references towards its glory in Crimea, humiliation by the West, or the issue of trust related to China.

Moving towards the issue of identity and foreign policy, it is important to understand that IR scholar tried to study that subject in many different ways. As Clunan (2009) pointed out, constructivist approach might be more inclined to study identity in IR, compared to both the rationalist approach of neorealism and neoliberalism. As the early constructivist, Wendt (1992, p.397) argued that ideational factor is more important than material factor and that identity is “relatively stable, role specific understanding, and expectations about self”. As Wendt argued (1994), there are two kind of identities, the corporate identities (which is intrinsic and constitute the actor individuality) and the social identities (which attributed by taking into account the perspective of other actors). Wendt’s understanding of identity, especially the corporate identity, assumed that identity could exist without the need to relate to others. However, Wendt also suggested that identity, in terms of social identity, was endogenous to the system, which meant he emphasised the importance of external “Others” compared to the domestic construction of identity. The other important assumption of conventional constructivism stimulated by Wendt is that interests are dependent on identity, which in turn influence foreign policy action of any states (Wendt 1994, p.385). Based on Wendt’s arguments, the structural constructivist assumptions of identity are the importance of ideational factors over the material factors, the dual nature of intrinsic and relational identity, the endogenous aspect of identity, and identity-interests-foreign policy linearity logic.

These main assumptions served as a basis for a constructivist account on identity, as exacerbated by many constructivists after Wendt. Katzenstein (1996) and Finnemore (1996) suggested the importance on international norms and endogenous aspects of identity. In his edited volume, Katzenstein (1996) argued that institutionalised norms at the international level shaped the behaviour of the actors. Finnemore (1996) agreed with this suggestion, maintaining the argument that international social relations (in her case, the international organizations) shaped states’ perceptions and preferences. By using this norm-oriented constructivism, both Katzenstein and Finnemore highlighted the importance of the endogenous aspect and

the causal relations between norms, which then informed state's identity, and its behaviour (foreign policy).⁵

However, one element is missing in this structural and norm-oriented constructivist analysis of identity-foreign policy nexus. As Hopf (2002) argued, the internal societal dimension of identity was missing, due to the focus on international system and international norms. Adding to the growing body of literature on identity-foreign policy nexus, Hopf (2002) proposed a more societal logic on identity, by looking at the identity discourses in the society. Analysing the daily life of Russian society in 1955 and 1999, Hopf argued that the existing social-cognitive structures of the daily life were automatically accepted by humans to produce identities, which then shaped the behaviour. State, in this case, had to operate within the social structure of the society. Furthering his argument, Hopf (2013) then termed the approach as common-sense constructivism, arguing that the common-sense of the masses sets the limit on the elites, therefore affecting their behaviour and state's policy.

Developing this societal logic, Clunan (2009) proposed the needs to integrate both social-structural, psychological, and the cultural-historical aspects to this identity analysis. By combining the logic of aspirations (based on history and memory) and the contemporary elite's perception of the contextual situation, Clunan argued that this aspirational constructivist approach could mitigate the gap between structural and societal logic and incorporate human agency into identity formation processes.⁶ Using historical test to evaluate if some identity discourses were promoting national self-esteem based on the history of the nations, and combining that test with the efficacy test by the elite, Clunan claimed that her model could integrate the question on agency-structure problem⁷, as all constructivist had striven to do (Kubálková 2001). However, in the end, Clunan still followed the logic of causality by arguing that a dominant national self-image (that survived the historical and efficacy test) would be reproduced and the related behavioural orientation will be followed.

⁵ However, it must be clarified here that even though Katzenstein and Finnemore were using international norms as their basis of identity analysis, they differed in the role of agency. Finnemore, especially in her later works (with Sikkink, 1998), put more emphasis on the presence of "norm entrepreneur".

⁶ In this context, Clunan tried to address the critic towards Hopf's argument that the social cognitive structures had made behaviour became the result of "unthinking, unintentional, automatic, everyday reproduction of Self and Other" (Hopf 2002, p. 11).

⁷ As Clunan (2009, p. 6) argued, the previous model offered by Wendt and Hopf were both overemphasized either the international structure or the social structure.

Conventional constructivists might differ in explaining the sources of identity, but they agreed that ideational factors could be separated from the material factors (Wendt 1999). Even if Clunan (2009, p.216) argued that history-based identity informed the elite's perception, she also argued that it was the efficacy test by the elite (in another words, the "realism" or practical aspect of one's identity) that influenced the policy. Therefore, instead of presenting the elite's understanding of the material factors as the integral part of the identity, she still subscribed to the ideational-material division. This division would lead to another debate between the optimist-pessimist logic of explaining that material factors played more important role instead of providing more understanding towards the relations. Therefore, I argue that instead of treating ideas and material factors as separate entities, it is more fruitful to argue that both could be understood by analysing the discursive structures presented by the official and academic discourses.

The other issue is the logic of causality. As Hansen (2006) argued, conventional constructivist defined ideational factors like identity as the possible cause of national interests or policies. However, in the case of Russia's relationship with China, the logic of causality between identity and foreign policy could not explain how the absence (or the marginal position) of the "East" in Russia's national identity could influenced or even just informed the emergence of the "Turn to the East" policy. Furthermore, even if conventional constructivist perspective might be adequate in explaining the shifting policy of Russia towards China by referring to the possible identity discourse in the systemic level or societal level, they would not be able to explain the possible change in identity discourse after Crimea. Instead, they would focus much on the ideational-material factors division, which could have prompted another argument that material factors such as energy, geopolitical balancing, and the need for money due to economic crisis, are the explanatory factors.

This focus on linear causality between identity and interest (and therefore, foreign policy) and the stable structure of identity, was apparent in Wendt's, Hopf's, Katzenstein's, and Finnemore's argument. As Hopf (2009) argued, constructivism (especially the societal constructivism that he proposed) assumes that social structures are mostly stable, to which the effect are the continuity of any relationship. Clunan (2009, p.216) did suggest that identity change is possible. However, according to her

initial theory, this change could happen when the political elites perceive that a self-image is not reasonable to be conducted. By focusing on the psychological aspect of the elites, combined with the logic of causality, it would be difficult to see how a change in policy could prompt a change in identity.

In light of those problem within the conventional constructivist argumentation, I need a different theoretical approach. I try using poststructuralist approach developed by Campbell (1990), Hansen (2006), and Waever (2002). In understanding identity, instead of assuming identity as intrinsic, I follow Hansen's argument that identity is relational, related to the "significant Other" (Neumann 1996; Hansen 2006). This idea of relational identity means that identity could only matter in a process of differentiation and linking to others (Waever 2002). As Campbell (1990, p.266) argued, identities are relational, that Self and Other could not exist "prior to a relationship with each other". In this research, Russian identity is evaluated in relation with China as the "Others" (with the "West" as the usual historical "Others").

Secondly, poststructuralism understood identity not as a more important concept than material factors. Hansen (2006, p.19) elucidated that poststructuralist understands that ideational and material factors could not have any meaning without each other. In this sense, contrary to constructivism that put ideational factors as the more important factors, poststructuralism argued that both ideas and material factors are important part of the analysis, which they considered as discourse. Instead of differentiating the ideational factors behind material consideration, I follow Hansen's (2006, p.20) argument that poststructuralist analytical intent is to "understand both ideas and materials as constructed through discourse which gives materiality the meaning by drawing upon set of identity constructions".

The argument of poststructuralism also emphasises that the relations between identity and foreign policy could not be understood causally, as constructivist has proposed. Rather, this body of scholars which formed the poststructuralist strands, proposed the context of "mutually-constitutive" relations between identity and foreign policy. National identity is not something that was given before the construction of the foreign policy, but something that was both constructed by, and informed the formation of a foreign policy. In contrast with the first group, the second group argues that the relations between identity and foreign policy may not be a causal relationship but rather

a constitutive relation. According to Hansen (2006, p.26), “identity is simultaneously a product of and the justification for foreign policy”. In that sense, it will be impossible to analyse identity and foreign policy as a separate concept.

Campbell (1990, p.270) argued that instead of treating foreign policy as responding to an external reality by recalling to the pre-existing identity, it is important to comprehend foreign policy as the “practice of differentiation, constituting the object as foreign while dealing with them”.⁸ To make matters simple, Campbell (1990) used two different terminology: “foreign policy” as the practice of othering and the first understanding of the identity relations; and “Foreign Policy” (with capital first letters) as the second understanding, based on the conceptual matrix established by the first understanding, and the practice of reproducing those identity matrix. By saying that “Foreign Policy” is a practice to reproduce identities, Campbell laid the ground for further research on the possibility that the relations between identity and foreign policy is not causal, but constitutive.

By asking the possibility of change in identity discourse due to the changing policy towards China, and by following the poststructuralist argument that Campbell and Hansen had made, I try to explore the way Russian discourse(s) construct understanding of China (before Crimea); how this understanding produces and legitimised their policies towards China (before Crimea); and how it might reconstruct Russian identity towards China (after Crimea). Instead of following constructivist logic on one-way and linear causality, I try to elaborate the poststructuralist argument of two-way constitutive relations. By looking, firstly, to the basic discourses since the 2010 emergence of the “Turn to the East” policy, and comparing it with the post-Crimean discourses, I intend to test the poststructuralist argument that changes in policies could also prompt changes in the identity discourses. By separating the analysis (the pre-Crimean and post-Crimean discourses), I look at the mutual-constitutiveness of identity and policy, in which both the pre-Crimean and post-Crimean policies were informed by the pre-existing Russian identity towards China. At the same time, the current Russian

⁸ To make matters simple, Campbell (1990) used two different terminologies: foreign policy as the practice of othering and the first understanding of the identity relations; and Foreign Policy (with capital first letters) as the second understanding, based on the conceptual matrix established by the first understanding, and the practice of reproducing those identity matrixes.

policies towards China also constituted the current discursive construction of “China” in Russian official and academic discourses.

To further elaborate the poststructuralist theoretical arguments, I used the explanations by Waever (2002, 2005) and Hansen (2006). Waever (2005, p.34) argued that poststructuralism, which usually tends to analyse “how foreign policy serves to reproduce a certain identity”, could be used as a theory of foreign policy, explaining state’s options and actions. He (2002, p.21) emphasised the needs of using poststructuralist argument because of the inability of neorealist, neoliberal, and even conventional constructivist, to explain the relations between identity and foreign policy. According to Waever (2002), neorealist neglect the concept of identity altogether (due to the ontological assumption of a coherent state/national identity), neoliberal missed the possibility of ideas and norms as important factors in changing state identity, while conventional constructivist such as Wendt focused too much on the systemic level on international relations. He (2002, p.22) even suggested that constructivism failed to address the possibility of change in their analysis, arguing that constructivism is a “very strong theory of non-change”.

To address all those problems, Waever (2002, p.22) then argued about discourse analysis as a theory which respects “the self-producing meaning systems of different actors” and at the same time escapes the ideational-material divide of constructivism. Waever (2002, p.27) also postulated that policy “must hold a definite relationship to discursive structure, because it is always necessary for the policy makers...to argue where to takes us”. The main theoretical argument is that structure put a sufficient pressure so that the policies stay within a certain, limited margin (Waever 2002, p.28). In another words, the discursive structure put some limitations to what the policies could do. On the other hand, these structures are socially constructed and reconstructed through the social process, which refers back to Onuf’s (1998) argument that “rules create agents, agents create rules”. Bringing this principle into the context of foreign policy, it resembles what Campbell had said before, that the structure (consist of the process of “othering”) informed the possible policy choices. The chosen policies (limited by the structures) then reproduce the identity discourse.

Using Waever’s and Campbell’s argument about how the discursive structure put limitation to the possible policy choices, I argue that the pre-Crimean Russian

identity discourse towards China could be explained by this argument. In this case, the growing idea of the “Turn to the East” which had been present since 2010, was not followed by a significant policy changes or greater intensification of Russian policies towards China. Even though the gradual increase in cooperation still occurred, I would argue that, following Waever’s argument, the existing discourses on “China” put some restraints to the possibility of closer alliance. This situation reflected the presence of a stable, yet prohibitive, discursive structure of Russian identity regarding China.

However, the stability of the policies (hence reflected the stable structure) changed drastically during and after the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea. To explain this change, I refer to Waever (2002) argument about potential changes in discursive structure. Waever (2002, p.32) argued that identity was located in a layered discursive structure, and the deeper the layer, the harder it is to politicise or to change it. However, because the structures are socially constituted, the question is not “is it possible to change something?” but the question of how much pressure is necessary and to what degree the political cost can be tolerated if change happened (Waever 2002, p.32). Following that argument, Waever argued that any changes on the “surface level” layer might materialise at the deeper level.

Consequently, I argue that the drastic policy changes (the conclusion of the gas deal, the cooperation of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Chinese “Belt and Road” policy, and the Russian supportive policies of China’s claim regarding the South China Sea) are the representation of some changes in the outer layer (that is the third layer, which consists of the concrete policy towards China). Following Waever’s argument, I also argue that these concrete policy changes were resonated in the deeper layer of Russian identity (the second layer, its relational position towards the East) and produce some changes in the Russian identity position towards China (and the East). However, the whole timeline of the process was still around two years (since March 2014). Therefore, I would argue that the necessary pressure needed to initiate significant changes is not yet reached during the scope of this research. Furthermore, the incremental changes to the second layer were not enough to produce significant changes in the first layer (the construction of Russian state and nation).

It should also be mentioned here that the triggering crisis (Ukraine and Crimea) was a temporal sign of the unsettling of the basic structures of identity towards the

West. It is interesting to note that the changing policy towards the West (the third layer in the West orientation) prompted a change in the other direction (East). Following Waever's (2002) examples, state's concrete policy towards Europe (third layer) related to the relational position vis-à-vis Europe (second layer), and then connected to the core discourse of basic concept of state and nation (first layer). In his argument, Waever only looked at the identity discourse towards one "Other"; he did not look at the possibility of policy/identity towards one significant "Other" could constitute policy/identity discourse towards the other "Significant Other". In another words, Waever could not explain how a breakdown in the relationship with the West could constitute an identity change towards the East. To address this problem, I try to elaborate the possibility that the breakdown of a relationship with one significant Others (in this case, Russia's relations with the West) could produce a shift or a change in identity relations with some other "Significant Others" (in this case, China and the "East").

Another additional point on this identity change was proposed by Hansen (2006). In explaining possible change, Hansen argued about the need to look at oppositional discourses. Government might respond to this oppositional discourses by changing its policy-identity construction, by trying to justify its policy using the existing discursive framework, or by stay silence (Hansen 2006, p.29). This possibility of oppositional discourse should not be neglected, but I focus on the official discourse of Russia, where the oppositional discourses might not be apparent. Therefore, I would instead follow what Waever had offered, by looking at the relation between the third layer (concrete policy) and the second layer (the relational position).

As I have shown in this section, several things could be summarised. Firstly, the linear logic of causality from the conventional constructivist argument could not explain the possibility of marginal Eastern dimension constituted the Russian policy towards China while at the same time were still kept under the dominant Western dimension (between 2010 until 2014). Therefore, I use the poststructuralist principle of mutual-constitutiveness, in which the Russian concrete policy towards China was informed by the existing identity discourses toward China while at the same it could produce (and then reproduce) the changing discourses on China.

Secondly, the poststructuralist theory argued about the existing discursive structures which limit the policy options. I argue that this principle could explain the

condition in the pre-Crimean discourse where the emerging discourse of the East since 2010 could not prompt an identity change. Instead, the findings showed some hesitations from both the official discourses and the academic discourses to endorse any kind of changing identity/policy before Crimea.

Thirdly, using Waever's argument about change in the discursive structure, policy change might inform identity change by putting pressure on the deeper structure of discursive identity debate. If the change was indeed happened, it would prove and enhance Waever's theory of identity/policy change. If, however, the changing policy was not followed by identity change, then some refinement on the poststructuralist theoretical argument about policy informed identity change might be needed. I found that the breakup with the West during the Crimean crisis was followed by the drastic changes in Russia's policy towards China. However, the different policies could not enforce drastic changes in the deeper layer of identity structure. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the second layer (in Waever's concept) endured some changes, especially in the way Russian official and academics view China.

Poststructuralist Methodological Approach

The main logic of this research is the poststructuralist discourse analysis developed by Hansen (2006) and Waever (2002). According to Hansen (2012, p.95), poststructuralist perspective theorises foreign policy as a discursive practice and then analyse how actors construct their policies and, through policies, their identities. Hansen (2012) further elucidated that poststructuralist theory is closely connected with discourse analysis. This would mean that discourse analysis is not only a methodology or a technique for analysis, but also a theory in itself. Due to this close nexus between poststructuralism (as a theory) and discourse analysis (as a methods), I follow the methods of discourse analysis as argued by Hansen (2006).

Discourse, as argued by Holzschleiter (2014), is the space where human beings make sense of the world and attach meaning to the material world. It is expected to be structured in a binary oppositional terms, define the subject authorised to speak and to

act, and put limitations to what could be said and done (Miliken 1999, p.229). This structure of meaning can be used to explain foreign policy (Waeber 2002).

Hansen (2006, p.67) explained that several issues had to be taken into account while formulating research design. First, how many selves would be analysed? In this case, only one Self is analysed, which is the Russian Self towards China. However, due to the previous researches maintain that Russian identity is mainly orientated to the West, and due to the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea as the decisive moment for the “Turn to the East” policy, this Russian “Self” towards China might also be related to the West as “Others”. After all, as Waeber (2002) argued, the discursive meaning of “Self” usually involve other distinctions beside the Self/Other. Instead of a threatening and radically different Others (which, according to Hansen, was easier to identify), Waeber (2002, p.24) suggested other characteristic such as “friends and relatives”. Based on that argument, it is possible that Russian identity discourse towards China might still portray the West as the “Other”, but then placed China in another category.

The second issue is which intertextual model used in the research. In her works, Hansen (2006, p.57) proposed several model based on the intertextuality of official discourse, wider debate, cultural representations, and the marginal discourses. I elaborate model 1 (official) and model 2 (wider debate, especially in the academic and think-tanks in Russia). For the official discourse(s), I mainly focus on the official documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the speeches by President Putin (collected from his official website), and possibly the speeches by other leading member of the government in foreign policy issues, such as the Prime Minister Medvedev, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov. As for the wider debate in the academics and the think-tanks, I investigate the debates in the Russia in Global Affairs Journal as well as the discourses formulated by several leading figures such as Sergey Karaganov and Fyodor Lukyanov (from the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy) which was closer to Russian current policymakers, and also the academic debates published by the Russian International Affairs Council and scholars from the liberal-Westernisers approach such as Dmitry Trenin from Carnegie Moscow Center (in order to provide some balance between pro-Kremlin scholars and the more neutral scholars). However, the limited timeframe of the research forced some limitations to the number of academic discourses that were investigated. Following Makarychev (2013), I focus

on foreign policy experts (scholars and academics) closely connected to the foreign policy official.

Regarding the timeline, instead of following what Campbell (1998) did in his research (using longer timeframe), I use the shorter timeline from 2010-2016, following Hansen's work (2006). To understand the dynamics of identity/foreign policy nexus in Russia, and especially the discourse of the East (by using the case of China), I argue that analysing the shorter timeframe from the time of the emergence of the "Turn to the East" discourse (2000) to the momentous event in Russia's foreign policy (the Crimea-Ukraine conflict in 2014), and then to the year after that (to investigate whether there were any changes) is necessary. The shorter timeframe allows me to explore deeply the position of the Russian elite and Russian academia in viewing China and the discourse of the "East" under the shadow of one case. One event is the middle momentum, in which the analysis is based on. The 4-year period before Crimean crisis (2010-2014) is seen as the timeframe when the discursive construction of Russian "Self" and China "Other" taken place, and the possibility of creating identity/policy from the discourse might have happened. The second period (2014-2016) is seen as the timeline when the policy might affect the (re)construction of national identity.

In the analytical part, the analysis of the text is structured around the questions that Hansen (2006) proposed. According to Hansen, the main sets of question for the poststructuralist discourse analysis is about the type of links articulated in the official discourse, and to what extent connection to other discourses (oppositional, critical, other author) are made. This set of question is designed to analyse whether it is necessary for the official discourse to counter the critical discourses. As regards to the linking process, from the Russian "Self" to China's "Other", the questions are whether the discourses (both official and academic) see China as superior, inferior, or equal. This position might be explicitly articulated, or by putting in a reference with the Russian "Self". It is also important to note if China is considered as a threat, an ally, a stranger, or underdeveloped subject in need of help (Hansen 2006, p.68). In this analysis of discursive encounter, the reference to the East and Asia, compared to the West or Europe, might also be present. Another issue beside the superiority/inferiority is the distribution of power. This is crucial in understanding Russian discourse towards China because, as Kaczmarek (2015) suggested, the material capabilities of China have

already exceeded Russia. Therefore, how the Russia's official and academic discourse see these material disparities would be important in mapping the identity discourse and the possible changes therein.

Text Selection

Hansen (2006, pp.74-75) offered some guidelines to help poststructuralist researcher chooses the texts for their analysis. Following Waever (2002), it is important to note that poststructuralist discourse analysis places high importance for public texts. In that case, Hansen (2006) argued that primary texts must be prioritised, such as presidential statements, speeches, and interviews in the context of official discourse. In terms of general material, three criteria should be noted: the texts clearly articulate identities and policies; they are widely read; and they have the formal authority to define position (Hansen 2006, p.76). As Hansen (2006) argued, the reason for these criteria are the analytical and methodological strengths: the more explicit the articulations, the easier the discourse analysis would be; the widely read criteria would ensure the dominant political discourse; while the formal authority shows the power status of the author.

Based on those criteria, I choose the main texts in the following chapters. In the first chapter, the Russian view and their policies towards China is analysed. The first chapter gathers and maps the official and academic discourse(s) on China that were present after 2010 until the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea in 2014. As a guidance of analysis, the first chapter was based on several key themes such as how China was viewed, what issues were highlighted, and what kind of identity issues existed during this period. The second chapter looks at the discursive structure post-Crimea, with the timeline since March 2014 until April 2016.

The texts for this official discourse are speeches, statements, and interviews conducted by Dmitri Medvedev and Vladimir Putin since 2010 until the Crimean referendum in March 16, 2014. I also analyse the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by analysing the speech, statement, and interview from the Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and Russian Ambassador to China, within the same timeline (2010 to

March 2014, and the March 2014 to 2016). After all the texts were compiled and analysed, the data were compiled into one document. In total, there were 40 texts that was analysed in the pre-Crimean period and 31 texts for the post-Crimean period.

In the academic discourse about China, I look at the academic articles from Karaganov (18 texts pre-Crimea, 9 texts post-Crimea), Lukyanov (28 texts pre-Crimea, 9 post-Crimea), Trenin (26 texts pre-Crimea, 22 texts post-Crimea), and other scholars such as Aleksandr Lukin, Anton Tsvetov, Igor Denisov, Andrey Kortunov, Lilia Shevtsova, Pavel Salin, Alexander Gabuev, and several others totalling 22 texts pre-Crimea, and 29 texts post-Crimea. The selection of experts and scholars was based on the three major think-tanks in Russia and their respective journals and/or publications. The three major think-tanks are the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy; the Russian in International Affairs Council; and the Carnegie Moscow Center. Scholars might write their opinion or expert's analysis on different publications, but patterns could be found regarding their affiliation.⁹

⁹ For example, Karaganov and Lukyanov usually write in the Russian in Global Affairs journal affiliated to CFDP and RIAC, whereas Trenin and Gabuev usually writes in the Carnegie Moscow Center's reports.

Chapter 1. Russian Discourse towards China before The Crimean Crisis (2010-2014)

The Russian foreign policy discourse regarding China before the referendum in Crimea is analysed in this chapter. Combining the official and academic discourse, this chapter tries to draw the basic discursive structure that existed before the Crimean crisis. Based on the discourse analysis to the texts, this thesis observes that the pre-Crimean basic discourse was structured around five major themes, which are related to how Russia views its own Self compared to China as Others (the linking/differentiation), to how Russia perceives China's position (superior/inferior/equal), to how Russia assessed China's current and potential threat, to how Russia comprehends history and memory as a potential (or not) for common identity, and how the issue of Russian Far East (RFE) was related to how Russia views China (and Asia).

Regarding the mapping of identity, the narrative dimension is represented by the logic of difference (culture) and the construction of common identity by using history (historical). The performative dimension is represented by the presence of dominant discourses regarding "Self" and "Other" but at the same time also incorporates the competing and marginal discourses. It is also related to the Russian policies (elaborated in the last part of the chapter) which further strengthen the poststructuralist notion of discourse as a way of understanding both ideas and material aspects of identity/policy. The last dimension, the emotional dimension, is incorporated through the notion of superiority/inferiority (relative position) and the notion of threat.

It is important to take into account what Gabuev (2015a) had argued about Russian policymakers and their China's policies and views. According to Gabuev, in analysing the official policies towards China, some considerations about Putin's view on China is important. This is due to the fact that Putin is the most important decision maker and that the other actors are either a merely technical body with no say at all

(such as the MFA) or insignificant insofar as their views are mostly similar to Putin (due to his background and connection to the security and business community). Gabuev (2015a) noted that the notion of Eurocentrism, anti-Americanism, personal relationship with Xi Jinping, general lack of expertise about Asia, and tendency to favour personal friends and business allies, are the main factors influencing Putin's policies towards China. To add depth into this notion of "Putin as main actor" by Gabuev, I complement Putin's view with others (such as Medvedev and Lavrov).

Due to the focus on the discursive identity-structure, these characteristics mentioned by Gabuev are helpful, because they would help to locate Putin's view under the broader context and identity structure. Combined with the other official's position and in comparison with the academic discourses, instead of only giving the personal view of the leader, the analysis could be argued in a broader context of Russian identity discourse. One should also take into account Kashin's argument (2013) that some issues such as the "China threat" was considered to be a taboo for Russian official's public statement. Therefore, the absence of explicit statement addressing this issue would signify the presence of deeper structures limiting the official position. This taboo also puts the latter analysis on academic discourses in a more important context, because it would help reconstruct the full picture of identity discourse.

Trust as Key Issue

Having analysed presidential speeches (both from Putin and Medvedev) and ministerial speeches (from Lavrov and some ambassadors), some patterns are found. One of the most common concept found in the official statements is "mutual trust". Previous works by Popescu (2011) and Lo (2015) also argued about the absence of mutual trust. As Medvedev (2010a) said in his interview with Renmin Ribao, "I should note that never before have our relations had such a strong component of mutual trust". This sentiment was echoed by then-Russian Ambassador to China, Sergey Razov, when he also stated in 2010 that Russia-China relations is "characterized by mutual respect and trust". Even in his pre-election article written in Moskovskie Novosti, Putin (2012a) also said that "there is an unprecedentedly high level of trust between the leaders of our

two countries”. It seems clear that “trust” is the one important part of the Russian discourse towards China, especially since Medvedev (2011a) stated that “trust” is the main principle of Russia-China relations based on the 2001 Treaty of Good-Neighborliness.

This existence of “trust” as both the main principle and issue raises the question of why “trust” are important in understanding Russia’s identity perception on China. One could then argue that it is important to underline the notion that China is a trustful partner due to the presence of existing suspicion regarding China. Razov’s (2010) statement provided a clue to which this problem of trust used to create unproductive relations. Razov (2010) said that “...pragmatism and de-ideologized dialogue are more productive than mutual complaints and mistrust.”

The answer to this question could be constructed from the other part of the discourses. This thesis argues that the issue of “trust/suspicion” is connected with the other elements found in the discourses, which are the notion of difference, the discourse about relative position (superior/inferior/equal) between the two countries, the notion of China as a threat/friend, the notion of using history and memory as the basis for common identity, and the discourse about Russian Far East as internal “Others”.

China as distinct and different civilization/culture

One of the central recurring theme of the pre-Crimean Russian identity discourse towards China is the continuous reiteration that China is culturally different from Russia. Even as early as 2010, when the idea of “Turn to Asia” started to emerge, Medvedev (2010b) stated that “...China has its own road... I think this road is not an option for Russia, and not just now, but 20 years ago too”. This idea of China as different culture is connected with the other part of the discourses and acts as the basis of linking/differentiation process of “othering”. As Hansen (2006) argued, positive identification of linking and negative identification of differentiating are crucial to the construction of Otherness.

One way to look at this issue is by looking at how Russian officials argued that Russia is different from China because Russia is part of the European, whereas China is

part of the Asian culture/civilization. In the same interview, Medvedev (2010b) stated that “It makes no sense to debate whose habits and customs are better, European or Chinese...This just wouldn't be right.” By saying that, Medvedev argued that China’s model of development and society is different from the European model. One noticeable point is that Medvedev did not explicitly say that Russia is European. Nonetheless, by comparing the Chinese model and the European model and then arguing that the Chinese model is not compatible with Russia’s history, economy, and mentality, he presented Russia as European. Furthermore, other officials also argued along the same lines. In one of his article, Lavrov (2012a) argued that “from a civilizational point of view ... Russia is part of the “greater” European civilization – naturally, along with North America.”

This official discourse is also supported by the academic discourses. Karaganov (2011), argued that “There is no Asian alternative to Russia’s cultural and political orientation towards Europe.” He reiterated the similar argument in June 2012, by saying that “...there is no such alternative for Russia; the Asian development model is basically alien to us in the cultural and human terms.” Until the end of 2013, Karaganov (2013a) still maintained that “rejecting the European path...would mean rejecting ourselves and our essence as a nation.” As one of the early advocates of the pivot to Asia, it is curious that Karaganov had to continually remind the audience that Russia is European, and that the economic turn towards Asia would not change Russian identity as European country.

This line of thought in academic discourses also supported by Lukyanov. In Lukyanov’s view (2012a), he framed Russian “self” as European and as part of the Western world. He then followed his arguments by saying that “Russia will not be able to create an Asian identity, and even if it tries, it will never match China’s powerful civilization and other Asian cultures.” Again, in this argument, Lukyanov followed the same logic of Karaganov, by saying that Russia is indeed European. Not only stressing that Russia is European, Lukyanov also argued that Russia will not be able to change into Asian identity, which means that both cultures are inherently and principally different.

Other scholars have argued along similar lines. Kuvaldin (2011) in his famous article (which quoted by Karaganov as one of the earliest advocates of pivot to Asia)

argued that “according to their traditions, culture, and the mentality, Russia has been and remains a European country.” In a line similar to Karaganov’s argument about rejecting the essence of Russian nation, Gromyko (2012) argued that Russian policy to Asia/China “has nothing to do with the idea of distancing it from Europe, which is absurd if only because it is impossible to distance oneself from oneself.” In a more condescending way, Fomenko (2010) even said that “the West should not count on its ability to understand the Orient and even (the cheekiness of it!) assimilate it.”

This idea of Russia as part of the European was apparent from previous research by Hopf (2002) and Morozov (2008; 2015). Morozov (2015, p.167) even argued that based on his reading of the structure of the identity discourse, Russia is “European” and “in their own way, civilised”. By quoting Morozov’s argument, I argue that other scholars have also shown that the Russian discourse on their “Self” is predominantly European. However, even though it seems that this argument is the dominant view, there are other competing discourses. One of the competing discourse is the portrayal of Russia as Eurasian country, with its unique features of identity. It is interesting to note that Putin has never explicitly distinguished the Asian identity of China from the European identity of Russia. In his pre-election article (2011), he argued that the EEU should cooperate with other key players, including China, and act as a “bridge between Europe and Asia-Pacific”. During his speech at the Valdai Club, he (2013a) repeated this position when he said that “...after consolidating our national identity, strengthening our roots, and remaining open and receptive to the best ideas and practices of the East and the West, we must and will move forward.” Of course, these statements do not mean that Putin neglected Europe. As Lukyanov (2012b; 2012c) argued, Putin’s policy is Eurocentric, to which Lukyanov even argued that Putin is even more Eurocentric than Medvedev. Therefore, it is fascinating to see that Putin never compared directly the Chinese “Asian” model with the “European” model, like Medvedev did in 2010.

Putin’s refusal to construct a differentiation between Russia’s European identity and China’s Asian identity was in line with the Euro-Asian/Euro-Pacific argument, which was promoted by some other scholars. Whereas in official discourses, almost all the documents that were analysed argued about Russia’s European identity (except Putin), the academic discourses are more varied. Trenin (2010), for example, argued

that Russia is a “Euro-Pacific” power, instead of Euro-Atlantic, and that the policymakers need to change their view of the world. Trenin (2012a) even argued that Russia’s emblem of double-headed eagle is the indication of Russia’s identity as a “Eurasian” bridge. Trenin’s view is surprising, because according to Clunan (2009), Trenin is part of the “democratic development Westernisers” discourse who advocates the closer integration with the West. Of course, one could argue that Trenin presented the Euro-Pacific concept as a geopolitical concept, not as an identity preference. Nevertheless, Trenin’s absence in differentiating Russian identity from China’s Asian identity could be seen as a sign of his position in advocating Russia’s identity as distinct from both Europe and Asia.

Other scholars have also had troubles in positioning Russia’s “Self” in a link with China. Salin (2012), for example, argued that it is still a debatable question of whether Russia is a European country or not, but “...it is absolutely certain, however, that from a civilizational point of view Russia is not an Asian country.” Okunev (2013) even put it bluntly that “Russia put itself into an opposition to the Western European path of development and gave rise to the perennial question about the degree, to which it was affiliated with the European civilization,” but he also maintained that culturally, Russia is not Asian. Inozemtsev (2013) also argued that Russia’s focus to China is related to the Euro-Asian character of Russia’s national identity.

Combining all those perspective, I would argue that the dominant view of both official and academic discourses is that Russia is not Asian, which would mean that its culture and civilization differed with China. However, the degree of differences would matter. As Hansen (2006) explained, instead of radical othering, the process of linking and differentiation is a process with different degree of Otherness. Therefore, instead of just formulating the difference as European/Asian or even Eurasian/Asian, it is important to look at how the discourses actually formulated the degree of differences.

Unsurprisingly, it is quite difficult to find the explicit explanation of this differences in the official discourse. Perhaps the only explanation could be found in Medvedev’s 2010 interview, due to the issue at stake (democracy, development, and society). In that interview, Medvedev explained that one of the differences is the ability to mobilise people into acting together for the common goals. He argued that Chinese model of development, of society, and of mentality, are different from those of

Russians. Medvedev said that "...China as a nation is very focused now on achieving common goals and it makes me quite frankly envious in the good sense, and optimistic." In saying this, Medvedev (2010b) argued that culturally and mentally, Russia has trouble in coordinating people to work for the common goals, whereas Chinese culture is more suitable in doing this. Furthermore, he also mentioned that:

"we like to build general, overall constructions, and this is sometimes useful. I think this was one of the main pillars that helped to form European civilisation at one point. But often we fail to draw practical conclusions from these general constructions. And so, if we borrow something of our Chinese friends' practical approach in our political and economic practice we could achieve a lot, I think."

This idea of Chinese culture being more practical than Russian (and European in general) and that Russia would achieve a lot in borrowing this Chinese culture could be seen as the way of putting Russia's "Self" as different from China's "Other", but at the same time admitting that the Chinese culture is attractive. The same logic could also be applied in Putin's statement in his Annual News Conference 2012, when he confessed his fascination to China's model of creating stability. Of course, Putin (2012b) then argued that "...this does not mean that we must create the same system that China has, but we must ensure stability as a necessary condition for development, as I have already said many times." Judging by these two main statements from Medvedev and Putin, it is clear that even though Russian culture is different than China, the attraction of China's stability and practicality could bring the possibility of distancing Russia from its root (which is European, in Medvedev's term) and closer to Asian.

In the academic discourse, the notion of Asian model is scrutinised in a more unrefined way. Whereas the official texts are bound by the niceties of diplomatic norms, the academic texts could afford to portray China in a more honest way, thus prompted the different portrayal of Chinese culture. One of the notion is the barbaric/backward Asian way. As Karaganov (2011) argued, "'The Asian way of development' will take us not to advanced Asia (we cannot go there), but to Africa – where we seem to be already moving with our monstrous corruption and disdain for morality and culture." This contempt towards the Asian civilization, by referring to the bad things such as corruption, was further elucidated when Karaganov argued, in the same article, that

“either we move closer to Europe, or go barbaric.” As Likacheva et al. (2010) argued, many Russians still associate China with “economic backwardness”, highlighted when the perception of the label “made in China” could made people sceptical. On another hand, there were scholars such as Lukyanov and Trenin, who oppose the idea of contemporary China and Asia as backward. This notion of historical “barbaric” Asia against contemporary “modern/dynamic” Asia presented, to some extent, by Lukyanov (2012d) when he addressed the historical understanding of Asia symbolised “backwardness” in the Russian discourse. Although Lukyanov stated that Asia was previously associated with backwardness, Lukyanov also agreed with the official discourse pointing that Asia now is seen as symbol of dynamism and development. Trenin (2013a), along similar lines with Lukyanov, also argued that “China has stopped being a backward neighbour for Russia.”

In the academic discourse, it seems that two model has developed. I argue that pre-Crimean scholars were divided into two major groups: those, like Karaganov, who thinks it is important to connect economically with Asia, but still views Asia as a backward/barbaric civilization who could not change their backwardness; and those like Lukyanov and Trenin who think that even though historically China had been backward, change is possible, and that contemporary China symbolises dynamic civilization. On the contrary to the official position which argued the possibility of learning from Chinese/Asian values, Lukyanov (2012a) mentioned that “the dissemination of Asian customs in Russian politics ... will lead the country to disaster – its national consciousness will eventually reject attempts to establish ‘controlled democracy’ along the Singaporean or Malaysian models.” Nonetheless, it is important to detect that while Lukyanov use the word “disaster”, he did not put the same strong words such as barbaric, corrupt, or moral disdain. Lukyanov’s view, in this case, is more connected with the notion of “difference”, but not to the extent of radical Otherness.

Compared to the official discourse which perceived China’s culture as different but has some attractive qualities, the academic discourses are more nuanced. Whereas the official discourse did not, and maybe could not portray China in a negative way, academic discourses presented different understanding of temporality. Nonetheless, the notion that Russia is still European (positive linking) and not the backward/barbaric

Asian (negative differentiation) still prevails, thereby following Morozov (2015) argument. This different discourses regarding China's cultural position could then be followed into the next issue of superiority/inferiority.

Russia's inferior/superior/equal position to China

Having shown that the Russian discourse regarding China is not as simple as the "radical Others" proposed by Campbell (1998), and that different degrees of othering exist and overlap within the discourse, the issue of superiority/inferiority/equality could help us understand the other part of the discursive structure. As Kaczmarek (2015) argued, it is possible that the Russian acceptance of China's superior position is one of the main reason why the relationship keeps growing.

Having analysed the official texts, I would argue that Russian official discourse gravitated between these positions and therefore projecting the aura of hesitancy. Medvedev (2010b) proposed that Russian should learn from China, acknowledging the superior position of China's model. The similar statement was made by Lavrov, when he (2010) said "...Is there anything Russian can learn from China? Absolutely." This perception that China is superior, and therefore Russia needs to learn and copy some of the Chinese way, is also evident in Putin's (2012a) famous catchphrase "catching the Chinese wind in the sails of our economy". By saying that, Putin acknowledged that China is far superior and ahead of Russia in terms of economy, and therefore it is imperative and advantageous for Russia to follow China and take advantages of it.

However, there are signs of constant refusal to acknowledge this situation, either by referring to some historical event in which Russia was more superior than China, or by reiterating the principle of equality and that Russia will not be a junior partner to any country. For example, in 26 September 2010, under the context of the 65th Anniversary of the victory in World War II, Medvedev (2010a) reminded China that Soviet Army is the main protagonist of the victory and that the Chinese army was just helping the Soviet. In 12 April 2011, Medvedev (2011b) used the term "huge" to describe China's economy, but then refer to Russian economy as "not so small either". The strongest statement regarding the refusal to be a junior partner came from Lavrov (2012a), when

he said that “I am convinced that Russia simply cannot exist as a subordinate country of a world leader.” Of course, one could argue that this statement was directed towards the US. However, it is important to notice that Lavrov quote the Italian Prime Minister, saying that there were three big powers in the world: the US, China, and Russia. I would argue that this statement is important, in a sense that it represents the unwillingness to be treated as a subordinate or junior country. Putin, on the other hand, has used different style of promoting equal position while grudgingly acknowledges China’s stronger position. The usual line of Putin (2012a) is “Russia needs a prosperous and stable China, and I am convinced that China needs a strong and successful Russia.” Putin has repeatedly constructed his statement in this specific way, saying that Russia needs China, but then immediately adding the next phrase of “China also needs Russia”.

In this sense, official discourse pointing towards a more “equal” approach, reiterating several times that equal position is the principle of Russia-China relations. As Lavrov (2012b) said, “We are ready for equal cooperation with all, who are ready for it, and we are interested in the development of equal and mutually beneficial relations with countries all over the world.” Medvedev, Putin, and Lavrov, have been admitting that even though in some context, especially the economic one, China is superior, Russia is still an equal partner to China. This “equal” approach was also analysed by Levin (2008) from the more optimistic approach. This line of thinking, I would argue, goes along the lines of the logic of othering, especially taken into account that official discourse related to othering is also putting forward the notion of Chinese attractiveness but at the same time reasserting the notion that Russia has its own path.

Again, as the previous part has shown, the academic discourse is more diverse. The main problem for Karaganov, and many other scholars, is that China’s economic superiority would force Russia into an inferior position of raw material appendage. Karaganov, for all his proposed “pivot to Asia”, has argued repeatedly that Russia needs a specific Asian strategy to make sure that Russia has better bargaining position. He (2011) said “I am not over-dramatizing the possibility of Russia’s transformation into a raw material appendage, and in the future, into a political satellite of China...but I believe my country...can claim...a more dignified and beneficial place in a future world order.” This rejection of Russia’s inferior position is related to how Karaganov view China and Asia as “barbaric/backward Other” for Russia. Following his argument of

Chinese culture as backward, it is logical that he would also argue about the need to keep Russia's superior position.

On the contrary, those who proposed the idea of possible changes in the temporal identities of Asia, argue (with some degree of reluctance) that Russia must finally accept the inferior position vis-à-vis China. Lukyanov (2012b) argued that "For the first time in recent history, Russia is weaker than its neighbor, and the gap will continue growing." He continued to argue, surprisingly, along the same line with Karaganov, that Russia needs to develop its own Asian strategy to avoid overdependence from China. However, one notable difference remains, which is the absence of criticism towards Russia's inferior position as "raw material appendage" in Lukyanov's argument. Even though Lukyanov also proposed the creation of Asian strategy, he still begrudgingly accepted that it is impossible for Russia to be superior to China. In his words (2011), "...it was believed before that Moscow would never accept the role of Beijing's junior partner. But now things are not so black and white, and Russia may have to get used to the idea in the next decade." Instead of arguing that Russia must not accept the inferior position, Lukyanov basically argued that to avoid further inferiority, Russia must have an explicit strategy in dealing with China.

Other scholars such as Trenin also argued along the same lines. Trenin (2012b) mentioned that the contemporary situation is a "... historical role reversal. Ultimately - Russians, who heretofore have never lived with a strong China, need to adjust to the new reality." Trenin (2013a) also argued that "China stopped being a weak and backward neighbor to be dominated, led or assisted by Russia; and Russia has not only ceased to be a mentor or a model to China, but for the first time ever has had to concede, however tacitly, China's primacy over it in world affairs." It is another sign that Trenin, like Lukyanov, accepted that Russia's inferior position is unavoidable and the challenge is how to make sure that Russia could get something from this unfortunate situation.

This competing academic discourses of superiority/inferiority complemented the official discourse position regarding this issue. The official position is rather ambiguous, in a sense that it acknowledges Russia's weaker position but at the same time aspires to be equal. In this logic, Karaganov's position mirrored the official discourse, albeit with a stronger tone. On the contrary, Lukyanov's and Trenin's

acceptance of the inferior position might challenge the official rhetoric and the official documents (such as the 2001 Treaty) which emphasised the equal nature of the relationship. However, I would argue that, modifying Kaczmarek's (2015) argument regarding Russia's willingness to accept its inferior position, it was the hesitancy to fully acknowledge it and the ever-presence discourse of Russia as a great power (and therefore, the equal position against China) that put a certain limit to Russia-China cooperation before Crimea. This discursive limit is related, in my view, with how Russia constructed the possibility of China as a threat/friend.

China as a threat/friend

Another issue related to identity discourse is whether the Self regards the Other as a threat, friend, stranger, or underdeveloped subject that needed help. In this matter, the official discourse is quite delicate in addressing this issue. Certainly, it is almost impossible to portray China as a threat. It would damage the relationship and the possible cooperation in the future. However, it is important to notice the differences between saying "China is our friend/ally" and "China is no threat". The former necessitated the unequivocal understanding that no major problem between the two countries has occurred or will occur in the future. The latter however, put forward the notion of hesitancy and reservation about possibility of threat.

In the texts, the term "friend" is casually used by Russian leader, as represented by Putin's statement (2014a) when he said "...I would like to convey my best wishes to all my friends in China both through social networks and via other media. I know that I have many friends in China." Putin repeated the similar statement several times, including when he (2014b) said "...So let us look at your visit in the same way – you are visiting close friends." It is so casual that we could start our own suspicion that it is not as simple as the personal rhetoric.

One indication of this hesitancy is seen in Putin's pre-election article (2012a) when he used a different formulation. Instead of using the word "friend", he said that "...I am convinced that China's economic growth is by no means a threat, but a challenge." By using this construction, Putin then, logically, had to explain why China

is not a threat to Russia. He based this judgment on three factors, which are the possibility of business cooperation, the notion that China was not seeking for global dominance (which connected with the discourse of Russia's equality/inferiority), and the resolution on border issues. However, I would argue that the important clue in this construction of threat is Putin's acknowledgement that there are still some problems, in which "...there are some sources of friction...we will also closely monitor immigration from the People's Republic of China." In my view, this is where the notion of China as a possible threat will arise, connected with the historical notion of Chinese immigration and the "yellow threat".

Obviously, mentioning the presence of "yellow threat" or the potential threat from Chinese immigrant taking over the Far East would be too much, which is why Putin formulated that statement in a casual manner. Nonetheless, two additional findings from the texts actually confirmed the presence of this discourse of China as a threat, even though the official discourse would not explicitly agree. The first one is Ambassador Razov's article in 2012, where he acknowledged the existence of "...the historical complexity and onerousness of the problem (border negotiations lasted 40 years), and the mixed and extremely sensitive public perception of it..." Certainly, Razov followed his argument by mentioning that both government were able to overcome those problems, but he also mentioned the need to "...eradicate the still lingering in Russia and China stereotypical and sometimes preconceived notions."

The second finding is the Russia's Strategy-2020, drafted by the panel of expert (led by the Rector of the Higher School of Economics Yaroslav Kuzminov and Rector of the National Economy Academy Vladimir Mau) under the instruction of Putin himself. One of the major statement, according to Lukyanov (2012b), is the admission that "The main risks for Russia, linked with the emergence of new centres of power, are rooted in the growth of China's economic potential and international status." Even though that, as Lukyanov argued, this document would not serve as official policy document, the authority of the customer (Putin) and the uncertain balance of expert's ideas and Putin's idea blurred the position of this text. I would argue that, compared to the other statement by Putin and Razov, this Strategy-2020 actually confirmed that even though the official discourse is promoting China not as a threat, but as a friend, there was deeply held reservation about China's intention and potential threat.

It is also important to notice that even though the lines of “China not a threat” could be read by some as a sign that Russia and China might become a friend or ally, there was no mention of any political or military alliance. Razov (2012) argued that Russia-China relations “...do not envisage creating a military-political alliance and are not directed against third countries.” This rejection of labelling the relationship as “alliance” could also be seen in the academic discourse, with more obvious construction of “threat”.

Karaganov’s position in this issue mirrored the official discourse. On the one hand, Karaganov (2010) argued that “...I am far from telling ‘yellow threat’ scare stories.” He also mentioned several times (2011; 2012; 2013b) that China is not expansionist and therefore no military threat would come from China. However, on several occasions, he (2011) also argued that Russia must diversify its Asian policy “to ensure there should be no exclusive dominance of China east of the Urals.” At the same article, he also mentioned the problem of labour migration, by voicing that “...some will have to be brought in from China, but under very strict quotas.” This is another reference to the idea of “yellow threat”, which he dismissed in his earlier writing. He (2012) mentioned the possible “Finlandization” of Russia due to Chinese economic power. All these concerns were articulated at the same time when Karaganov (2013b) also argued that no threat from China’s demographic or military expansion (by referring to the Mongols and how China never invaded Russia). At this point, it is a constitutive relation between Karaganov’s view and the official discourse, in which both articulated the “no threat” while at the same time acknowledging possible future threat. In this issue, Lukyanov put the similar notion, albeit with less fear about probable threat. Lukyanov (2013) showed the similar uncertainty, in which he argued the possibility of threat, but at the same time pointed out that domination/expansionist policy is not in China’s nature.

Other scholars are more optimistic. Trenin (2012c) argued that even though China’s rise might threaten other countries, it would not threaten Russia. This notion of Russia as the only country that do not fear China’s rise is fascinating. Even though Trenin also acknowledged the ever-presence fear in Russian public, he and Paal (2013) argued that “neither the elites nor the public are captivated by the notion of a China threat.” Trenin is also the only scholars who used the term “friends”, even when

Karaganov and Lukyanov avoided the use of “friend” or “ally/alliance”. Karaganov did use the term “friendly/unfriendly”, but that was to highlight the possible “unfriendly action” from China or the “friendly action from Russia to its other neighbors in Asia”. Other optimistic scholars such as Salin (2011b) argued that, even though the idea of Chinese threat is persistent, the elites were undisturbed as long as Russia gains something from the Beijing consensus. Korolev (2013), when predicting the possible China’s policy trajectories, also argued that China’s growing ambition would be restrained by its own demographic problems.

However, some competing discourses also highlighted the possible threat, which could be seen as another temporal othering. Shevtsova (2013) tried to argue that China’s rise would create problem in the future. The same line was argued by Kashin (2013), in which he said that “...China can change so much in a matter of several years that the Chinese threat may turn from a hypothetical into a real one... The Chinese threat, however hypothetical, is one of the key factors underlying Russia’s foreign and defense policies.” This negative view of China as a possible threat in the future highlighted the persistent idea of China’s threat, but at the same time confirming that the current China is not a threat to Russia.

In my view, it is clear that the idea of China as a threat is still exist, as the official discourse preference to use the term “no threat” instead of “friend”, and the lack of any academic discourse constructing China as “friends”. The occasional reference to the China threat, especially the demographic threat, in both the official discourse (albeit in a small occasion) and the academic discourse (to a varying degree) could be seen as another limitation made by the discursive structure to any possible policies. Even if the government wanted to push for a closer relation with China, the persistence of the discourse of Chinese threat would exclude that possibility. The next two issues are related to this discourse of “threat”, which are the historical problems (and the effort to create common identity based on this history) and the Far East as the focus on attention.

History as a Basis to Construct Common Identity

Continuing from the discussion of China as a possible threat to Russia, it is worthwhile to see how this threat was constructed and how the history plays the role in the discourses. Based on the textual analysis, I would argue that on the one hand, history was used (especially by the official discourse) to create the common identity, especially by invoking the common struggle during the World War II. However, on the other hand, as the academic discourse would show, the memory of some historical events could be seen as dividing the relations, in which some issues such as border (Aigun Treaty), the Sino-Soviet alliance in 1950s, and the eventual split in 1960s (potential conflict and threat) created another layer of limitation to the relationship. Appealing to the historical memory then is problematic, because it constructs two layer of identity relations, in which both the nexus of “threat/friend” and “positive/negative othering” came into conflict.

In the official discourse, it was clear that in 2010, under the context of commemorating the 65th Anniversary of Victory Day in World War II, Medvedev promoted the idea of common struggle during the war and the China’s support for the Soviet Union as the basis for future cooperation. Medvedev (2010c) said that this friendship between the two countries was “...sealed by the blood spilt during those wartime days.” Just the day after that, he (2010d) mentioned the “Soviet soldiers killed during the liberation of Northeast China from occupation” as another basis for cooperation. In 2012, Lavrov visited Dalian during the opening ceremony of the Museum of History of Liberation of North East of China by the Soviet Army. He (2012c) said that “the binding bases of our partnership is the glorious memory of brotherhood in arms in fight against common enemy.” He (2012d) also mention that “USSR entered the war against military Japan in August 1945 under alliance obligations and liberated the Northeast of China, Sakhalin and Kuril Islands within three weeks.” From those statement, we could see that the official discourse tried to build this historical commonality by referring to the World War. The other effort was to refer to the absence of historical problems, such as when Deputy Minister Morgulov (2013) argued that “...we have a rare example of neighboring great powers with an interaction history devoid of full-scale armed conflicts, and whose shared border was generally (if sometimes not painlessly) demarcated peacefully.” In this statement, instead of creating a positive common past, Morgulov tried to refer to the absence of any negative history.

However, it is important to notice that this effort of building common past was limited to the context of the 65th anniversary of the World War II and the opening ceremony of the museum. It is interesting to notice that the lack of reference to a shared, common past in the other occasions. Interestingly, Putin only mentioned one statement related to this common historical events and it was about the “unchangeable outcome of the World War II”, suggesting that even within the official discourse there was a lack of confidence in building this relationship based on history.

The answer to another hesitancy in extending the relationship (by constructing a common identity) could be found in the academic discourse, where scholars pointed out that historical problems are common feature of Russia-China relations. Karaganov (2013b) for example, mentioned the different memory of Russian and Chinese regarding the Mongols. Lukyanov (2010) reminded the Russian leader that the Chinese still remembers the Aigun Treaty as an unequal treatment of China by the Russian. The same reminder also voiced by Trenin & Paal (2013), when he argued that even though the border delineation has been completed in 2004, but the memory of the “unequal” treatment during the Aigun Treaty could still provoke a more nationalistic China. This issue with Aigun Treaty was also highlighted by Lukin (2010) when he admitted that even though China never made any official claims about this “unequal treaty”, the existence of the discourse in China has already made Russian elites and experts worried.

Normally, based on the previous categories, the competing discourse will exist in the academic discourses, voicing a more positive note regarding the history as positive reference. However, in this case, I only managed to find Kashin’s argument (2013), acknowledging that “Russia and China have no special ‘heavy historical heritage’ that could fuel mutual animosity.” It is interesting to see that, in this pre-Crimean discourse, almost every scholar still see history (and the memory of a particular historic event) as a potential problem (instead of sources for common identity) for Russia-China relations.

In this issue, it is interesting how the official discourse actually mirrored in the academic discourse, showing the hesitancy to use history as a source for creating shared identity. The official discourse supporting this historical use of has been few and concentrated only on the special occasions. Apparently, even though in the previous issue of positive/negative othering, inferior/superior position, and the construction of

threat, official and academic discourse used to have some disagreements, in this historical issue, both were having similar views. I would argue that this converging position conditioned the use of “shared principles” as the common identifying marker of Russia-China cooperation, instead of constructing a common idea based on the historical convergence. The Russian discourse, especially the official discourse, tried to build a common consensus that both Russia and China shared similar principles of global politics, which are the multipolar/polycentric world order, against unilateralism, and against outside intervention which include respect towards sovereignty (Medvedev 2010a, 2011c; Lavrov 2011, 2012b; Putin 2012c, 2013b). It should also be noted that this history of the Aigun Treaty might not be universally known in Russia, or might be known in an ideologically motivated perspective. Therefore, it is possible that other historical events or periods might be used in other discursive structure.

RFE as the focus of internal “Othering”

Another interesting issue which always resurfaced in many texts is the issue of Russian Far East (RFE). It is natural, to some extent, that this geographical area would be one of the focus, considering that it is located in the Pacific, and that the original rhetoric of the “pivot to Asia” is a domestic concern (Trenin 2012a). As Lo (2015) argued, RFE is the possible breaking point of Russia-China relations. However, one of my findings is the existence of competing discourses about RFE. Instead of having one similar view regarding the importance of RFE in its relationship with China, the official discourse and the academic discourse debated about whether the development of the RFE is the goal (by cooperating with China) or whether the political power balance against China and the Pacific region could be achieved by developing the RFE. I would argue that this competing discourse is important because, following Campbell’s argument about “foreign policy” as the practice of constituting object as “foreign”, Russian attitude towards the RFE could be the basis complementing the understanding of China (and Asia/East).

In the official discourse, it appears as if the RFE was positioned as the goal of the cooperation with China. As Putin said (2012a), it was important for Russia to “catch

the Chinese wind in the sails of our economy...in order to develop the economy of Siberia and the Russian Far East.” However, in the same article, Putin also maintained that Russia will try to create “...modern infrastructure that will promote the further development of Siberia and the Russian Far East and enable our country to become more involved in the dynamic integration processes in the new Asia.” In this construction, RFE and Siberia will play the role as a “window”, enabling Russia to deal with China and Asia-Pacific economic integration. This confusing position in the official discourse further elucidated by Putin’s statement (2012d) when he said “...our participation in the integration processes underway in this region will boost socioeconomic growth in Siberia and the Russian Far East.”

Judging from these three statements, what exactly the role of RFE (and Siberia) is? I would argue that at this point, the official discourse’s confusion about RFE’s position is related to the way the central government in Moscow viewed RFE as “backward” and “underdeveloped”. One important clue is Deputy Foreign Minister Borodavkin’s article in 2010, when he stated that it is important for Russia to “...change the image of Vladivostok and Russia's eastern part as a whole.” Obviously, objectively speaking, the economic condition and the lack of infrastructure in the RFE are problematic. In this sense, the changing image of RFE is important to help Russia gains better position in Asia-Pacific. Once we put the comparison with the academic discourse, the construction of RFE as “foreign” and “underdeveloped” could be seen.

Karaganov (2011) argued the need to “europeanise” the Far East, as if it was not “European”. In his words, he regarded the Project Siberia in the context of “...Europe should be extended to new frontiers. The frontiers Russian pioneers once reached to bring with them the European way of life.” This statement coming from the scholar who argued that Russia is European and there will be no Asian alternatives for Russia. By arguing the need to make the RFE European, Karaganov presented RFE as not yet Russian (because Russia is European), and therefore should be developed into a Russian part of the country. This “foreign policy” move of constructing internal part of the country as “foreign” is interesting, because other scholars such as Lukyanov did not have many opinions about the RFE, other than repeating Putin’s position about RFE as national priority to secure Russia’s position in Asia. Baranovsky (2012) also argued that

along the same lines, that RFE is just a “window” to Asia, as a tool to strengthen Russia’s position in Asia-Pacific.

Trenin argued along the similar notion of Karaganov. Trenin (2012a) said that instead of “pivoting to Asia”, the correct term would be “rebalancing towards the East” because it is mostly a domestic challenge. In a more temporal view, Trenin (2012e) noticed that Russian has “...long accustomed to viewing Siberia as its backyard and the Far East as its bulwark.” In the contemporary world, however, Trenin (2012f) offered the reference to Peter the Great, suggesting that Peter the Great would build Russian capital in the RFE, not in the Baltic sea, if he lived under the current situation. Nonetheless, the notion that RFE is just Russian backyard and would act as “window to Asia” was confirmed when Vorontsov (in Oganesyian et al. 2011) argued that “...There is an impression in the Russian Far East that the Center is pursuing colonialist policy there. The natural resources are exploited; the environment is polluted while Moscow gets the money.”

The academic discourse regarding the RFE is fascinating, because we could read Lukyanov’s absence as a sign that he followed the official logic, which is positioning RFE as tools to increase power in Asia. I argue that the Karaganov/Trenin position in this issue is somehow consistent with their position on Chinese culture as a different culture compared to Russian. As mentioned in previous analysis, Karaganov argued that China’s Asian culture is “backward/barbaric” and that Russia should move closer to Europe. This idea bears a striking resemblance to Karaganov’s position on “europeanising” RFE (even though RFE might already be European). This is also similar to Gromyko’s idea (2012), where he also proposed that Russia should bring Europe to Asia. Trenin, on the other hand, was consistent in arguing about temporality. He understood that previously RFE (and China) was seen as “backward”, but the current condition might already change it, to which he refer to Peter the Great’s choice of capital city. All these academic discourses indicate that the degree of internal “othering”, or the policy to make something internal as “foreign” is important, because it connects with how the discourse about the foreign actors is constructed. In the case of Russia’s policy though, it should be mentioned that even though part of the discourses regarding “foreignness” would entail the possibility of lack of interest towards China

and RFE, but the existence of other part of the discourses created, on the one hand the push towards closer relationship, and on the other hand set the limit to that effort.

Chapter 2. Russian Discourse towards China after the Crimean Crisis (2014-2016)

The previous chapter draws the map of the basic discursive structure of the Russian identity discourse towards China. In this chapter, I elaborate the changes in policy and identity due to the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea. Furthermore, in this chapter, I argue that the Ukrainian crisis, which culminated in the Crimean annexation (16 March 2014) prompted a shocking wave into the layer of the discursive structure. Instead of challenging the structure only from the outside (the outer layer), the “Ukrainian/Crimean shockwave” challenged the foundation of the structure by making the idea of the Russian nation debatable. Instead of changing the policy towards China, the crisis challenged the notion of Russia as European country, the very foundation of Russian nation. It might have change the whole identity structure, were it not for the presence of other part of the linking/differentiation process. The presence of China’s Asian civilization in a negative differentiation during the previous process delayed or halted the possibility of sudden change. What happened instead is a gradual move from core layer to the second layer (the relational issue), while at the same time the outer layer was changing as well, due to its flexible position. This creates a steady change in the second layer (the notion of threat, the relational position, the issue of common identity). In the end, even though a whole change of identity discourse might not be possible, but incremental changes did happen.

To understand this process, this chapter is divided into several section. The five following sections analyse each theme at the layered structure.

Distancing from Europe: Eurasian Identity?

Compared to the discourse before Crimea, the issue of China as different civilization was not obvious in the post-Crimean discourse. Based on the textual discourse analysis, I would argue that even though the idea of Russia as European (and therefore different from China's culture and civilization) still prevails, there has been some signs that the rupture with the West actually stimulated the ongoing discussion about possible identity change in the future. As Waever (2002) argued, an external shock could shake the foundation of the discursive identity structure, in which some competing or even marginal discourses might get more attention.

In the issue of "linking/differentiation", the pre-Crimean dominant view in the official discourse is that Russia is European, as also proposed by previous research from Hopf (2002) and Morozov (2015). However, in the post-Crimean discourse, there was no such explicit statement about Russia as "part of Greater Europe" or "having its own path which is different to the Chinese path". There was a continuation of putting China as a different and distinct civilization but no elaboration on that as well, at least from the Russian leaders such as Putin, Medvedev, or Lavrov. For example, Putin (2014c) said that "...Russia and China are countries with rich traditions and distinct cultures."

However, conflicting signs could be seen if we look deeper. It seems as if the official discourse regarding Russia's "European" identity still dominates the view, due to the lack of competing discourses such as the Euro-Asian argument. It is, therefore, interesting when Lavrov (2016) referred to Russia's Eurasian identity by invoking the history of Alexander Nevsky's temporary submission to the Mongols' Golden Horde. Lavrov tried to argue that this temporary submission to the "East" was done due to the increasing pressure by the "European West" regarding Russia's own faith and destiny. It is a striking parallel to the current condition, in which we could then argue that in the official discourse, a closer move to the "East" (in this case, China), is caused by the "West" action. Furthermore, in the same article, Lavrov (2016) made it clear that Russian people had their own culture that never blend with the West, which could be seen as a sign of distancing Russia from the European/West. I would argue that this statement shows the probable movement of the discourse of Russian identity to the East, not to Asian but to a more Eurasianist conception of uniqueness and "bridge between

civilization”. Asian identity, however, remains “different” and, to some extent, historically barbaric, as shown by Lavrov’s reference to Pushkin’s “Eastern steppes’ barbarians”. Compared to the pre-Crimean discourse, when the official discourse is about differentiating Russia from China by saying that Russia is European, not Asian, the post-Crimean official discourse seemed to follow the line of Russia is not Asian, but has moved from European to Eurasian.

This slight change could also be seen in the academic discourse. One example of change in the discourse is Karaganov’s changing position on Russia’s identity. Initially, Karaganov subscribed to the notion of Russia as European and how China’s Asian civilization is “backward and barbaric”. The post-Crimean Karaganov still argued that Russia is European, as shown by his statement (2016a) that Russia has embrace the “traditional European values” and has always developed as European civilization. However, the notion of Asia as backward and barbaric did not occur. In fact, Karaganov (2015) has argued about the presence of Asian alternatives, even though he then proposed the idea of Russia as Eurasian bridge between a culturally close Europe, China, and Asia. This acknowledgment of the existing Asian alternatives and the notion of Eurasian bridge as Russia’s identity is a significant change from Karaganov’s initial position.

It is also important to note the temporality of identity discourse in Karaganov’s idea. In his pre-Crimean discourse, Karaganov argued about the notion that China’s Asian culture was barbaric and backward. He did not argue about the possible change, that contemporary China might be civilised albeit in a different way compared to the European. This possibility of temporal change, the one that Lukyanov and Trenin were arguing in their pre-Crimean position, was absent in Karaganov’s position. However, Karaganov (2016a) acknowledged that previously, Russian people and elites thought that every good thing came from the West and that Asia was seen as a symbol of “filth, poverty, and tyranny.” Eventually, showing the emergence of temporal position, Karaganov argued that the “turn to the East” has acquired a civilizational features and acknowledged the possibility of a “civilizational divorce” from Europe.

This changing position of Karaganov is an indication of a possible change in the discourse. However, it should be noted that other scholars keep their position in this issue. For example, Lukyanov (2015) has argued consistently, both in his pre-Crimean

and post-Crimean statement, that Russia used to be part of Europe, not a Eurasian bridge, and definitely not Asian. He also made the point about the differences between Chinese culture and Russian culture, and that both are not compatible with each other. Furthermore, his pre-Crimean discourse saw that the barbaric Asian was a history, and the same message appeared in his post-Crimean text. I would argue that in this case, Lukyanov actually remained open to possible change, and that his position strikes a similar notion with post-Crimean Karaganov, by acknowledging that Russia “used to be European”, and it opens up the possibility of change. Again, it might not be a change into “Asian” identity, which is completely different, but a more “Eurasian” one.

Trenin, also followed the same line of post-Crimean Karaganov when he (2014a) argued that while it may be true that Russia is European, he referred to (as Lavrov did) Alexander Nevsky’s effort to “...fought Western invaders while remaining loyal to the Mongol khans.” It is also interesting when Trenin (2014b) proposed that Russia is an “East European” civilization, spanning from the Baltic (not Atlantic) to the Pacific. Obviously, since the pre-Crimean discourse, Trenin had never negatively differentiate between Russia’s European identity and Asian identity. I would argue that Trenin’s position has moved even closer to the “Asian vector”, when he (2015a) said that Russia “...no longer able to straddle the West and non-West divide.” It seems that he suggested the Russia’s initial game of straddling between two civilizations might not be possible in the future.

This tendency to a slight departure from the rhetoric of “European” into “Eurasian” or unique and independent civilization is apparent in the academic discourse. Lukin (2015) argued that, following Putin’s position, Russia is inalienable part of Europe, but independent from the Euro-Atlantic political centre. Inozemtsev (2014) followed Lavrov and Trenin, by invoking the reference to Nevsky’s position regarding the Teutonic Knights and the Mongols, and then argued that it is part of Russian identity to move East, based on history and due to the “sacred proto-national and quasi-religious values.” Tsvetov (2014) even argued that since the Russian czar spread its political control to Vladivostok, Russian identity should be more Eurasian. Based on all these academic statements, the dominant view of the academic discourse is that even though Russia’s identity used to be European, it might be possible to change its orientation, and return to its historical Eurasian identity.

One interesting finding is the emergence of another discourse of China as “unknown Others”. It is mostly marginal, but I would argue that due to the increasing focus on China, it could be more prominent in the future academic discourse. It was mostly articulated by Alexander Gabuev, from the Russian International Affairs Council. As Gabuev (2015a) argued, Russia considered themselves as European, but not really being accepted as a member of the Western family. This is important to underline, even though the scope of the analysis is beyond this project. The divorce between “Europe” and “the West” might be relevant in explaining Russia’s (both official and academic discourse) post-Crimean tendency to distance themselves from Europe, but in this case of China, the more important thing is that if Russia felt that the refusal from the West is important, then it could still be European (in essence) but trying to find another path. Asia and the East, represented by China, is a logical choice. However, Gabuev (2015a) argued that Russia could not understand China’s values and identity, which then prompted the intrusion of some Western myth about China, such as the “yellow threat”. This idea of China as something “unknown” and “exotic” refers back to the Orientalist idea and might be connected with how the Russian officials and scholars perceive the Far East. As explained in the previous chapter, the way the RFE was seen resembles a Campbellian “foreign policy” logic, in which the internal othering was mirrored by the external othering, to construct the internal identity of the state.

Although this idea of China as “unknown Others” might portray accurately the several changes in the issues related to Russian identity discourse, but it is clear that the dominant view still concerns about Russian “Self”. The crisis in Ukraine and Crimea had shaken the core layer of the identity by challenging Russia’s positive linking with Europe (in their pre-Crimean discourse). As Waever (2002) has argued, it might be difficult to change the first layer of the structure without any external shock. The official discourse might not really connect the China’s policy with the West, but in the academic discourse, such link was made in an obvious way. Karaganov’s statement (2016a) is a good indication, when he argued that Russia as “true Europe” was rejected by contemporary Europe. As Lukyanov (2014) also argued that “...a new Ostpolitik is being formed...the West is pushing Russia in that direction.” The same idea was confirmed by Trenin (2015b), that “it is precisely the rupture with the West ... that make outreach to the East even more relevant.” All three leading scholars in this

analysis agreed that the West had pushed Russia to the East, while at the same time pushing the debate of Russian identity shifted Eastward. Not enough to change the positive linking with Europe into a positive linking with Asia, but enough to make people rethink its position in Europe-Eurasia-Asia axis.

China as Superior/Inferior/Equal Partner?

On the issue of how Russia perceives China's position, and how they themselves perceive their own position related to China, the post-Crimean discourse differed from the pre-Crimean in the sense that the official position is quite similar with a stronger sense of "great-powerness" (arguing that Russia's position is equal, and that Russia remains a great power even though it is now dependent on China), whereas the academic discourse moved towards more acceptance that Russia is now inferior to China. Based on the discursive analysis, I would argue that the changing perception of Russian "Self" (either as no longer European or Eurasian/Asian identity) conditioned the way China is viewed.

In the official discourse, this issue of China's relative position is no longer the important issue. Before Crimea, it seemed that the official discourse was trying to understand how Russian "Self" could be situated in a relationship with China as "Others". I would argue that the different context might have adjusted the official position on this. Before Crimea, Russia still faced a choice between the West/Europe and the East/China. In the context after Crimea, the option was limited. Therefore, the notion of which one is superior or if the relationship was equal no longer matter. However, it is still important to notice this tendency.

Obviously, the 2001 Treaty declares that equality is one of the major principles of the relationship. It is not surprising when Putin (2014d) mentioned that this relationship "...should be based on the principles of equality." However, the clue to what the official discourse regarding this position could be seen in Ambassador Denisov's statement (2015) when he said that "...Russia needs support more than help. China does not render any help to Russia for the time being and it is absolutely unnecessary. As I said, Russia needs support rather than help." This statement

highlighted the fact that even though Russia might need help economically, Russia still maintains that they are strong enough and do not need help from China. During the situation of the economic hardship, and under the context of current discussion in China's public media regarding whether China needs to help Russia, it is interesting that Russian Ambassador chose to tell the Chinese media that they do not need help. I would again argue that it shows how Russia does not want to be seen as inferior to China. In this sense, there is no evidence of any discursive changes because in the pre-Crimean discourse, the official texts also acknowledged the inferior position but pushed the notion of equality.

In the academic texts, the discourses are moving towards the acceptance that Russia is inferior. In another words, this falls under the notion of the pessimistic approach (Kotkin 2009). One of the most transparent indication of this is the changing position of Karaganov, in a manner similar to how he changed from advocating Asian backwardness into a more neutral position. His initial position (2011) regarding Russian inferiority was that Russia is indeed in an inferior position, but he rejected this position by arguing the need to "claim a more dignified place" in the world. However, his latest position (2016b) changed drastically in which he said that he is "...not worried by the fact that we look like China's junior brother in financial and economic terms." I would argue that this changing position is connected to his new position on the othering and the absence of negative differentiation which he had argued before. The absence of negative differentiation to China as "barbaric and backward" diminishes the idea of China's position as inherently inferior. Therefore, by changing the position on the differentiation process, Karaganov had to change his position with regard to the inferiority of Russia.

With the same logic, Lukyanov and Trenin would not have to change their position, due to the fact that they did not change their position regarding China's temporal backwardness/modernity. Lukyanov (2015) maintained the notion that even though he despised the inferior position, he grudgingly has to accept the situation, by saying that "...becoming China's junior partner is just the same with becoming Europe's junior partner." The similar position also held by Trenin (2014c), who argued that Russia "...in the present situation, when Moscow has to rely on Beijing's support more than ever before, Russia might have to lower the bar." Again, in these two quotes,

we could see the emerging consensus between leading scholars such as Karaganov, Lukyanov, and Trenin that the present condition of inferiority has to be accepted.

An interesting finding could be seen from several of Trenin's article, in which he (2015a) argued that even though Russia might accept its inferior position, Russia would always strive for equal position and China should have granted this request. This notion of Russia always wants to be seen as equal, even though Russia realised that they are weaker than China, is important. It shows the persistence of discursive idea of being seen as great power at the same level with China, and even though scholars begrudgingly accepted the inferior/weaker position of Russia, the idea and pride of Russia as a great power still plays its role in constraining this acceptance. This could be seen in Gabuev's (2015b) argument, in which he argued that Russia should accept Chinese domination, but then use its position as junior partner to gain more from China.

China as a Threat/Friend

Continuing the notion that Russia sees itself as moving from Europe towards a distinct Eurasian identity, and that they no longer see China as a backward/barbaric country, and the reluctant acceptance of China's superior position, this subsection looks at how Russia perceives the possibility of China as a threat or as an ally/friend. In the pre-Crimean discourse, Russia perceived China in a friendly but reserved manner, with the usage of the term "no threat" (instead of "friend") occurred continuously. The crisis in Ukraine and Crimea, however, has left the Russian with no other choice that to concentrate on their relations with China. This necessity to pivot East, combined with the taboo of explicitly mentioning China as a threat (Kashin 2013) is forcing the official discourse to return to the normative discourse based on the principles of 2001 Treaty, which are the friendly relations based on mutual trust, respect, and equality. For example, Putin (2014d) said that "...Establishing closer ties with the People's Republic of China, our trusted friend, is Russia's unconditional foreign policy priority." In this statement, the term "trusted friend" is used, in conformity with the main principles of the relationship. During the same interview, Putin constantly used the term "friend" by

saying "...Promotion of friendly and good-neighbourly partnership relations," and by expressing his gratitude "...to our Chinese friends."

This casual reference to China as "friend" might be just another diplomatic politeness, but the absence of the term "China is not a threat" is significant. As I argue in the previous chapter, these two terminology indicate two different approaches. In the pre-Crimean discourse, by invoking the term "no threat", government official then elaborated the reason why China is not a threat, and therefore we could see the construction of fear and possibility of future threat. After Crimea, by using continuously the term "friend", it seems the Russian official texts abandon the possibility of threat from China. As Putin (2014e) said in his meeting with Jiang Zemin, "Today, we do not have a single problem with China that might burden our relations." In his other speeches, Putin (2014f) also stated that "...we have had no conflicts, thank God, and no problems to settle in bilateral relations." Even Ambassador Denisov (2015) said that "...there is nothing in Russian or Chinese policies that prompt competition. There are no issues, on which Russia and China act as rival forces." These kind of statements supported the positive construction of China as a "friend", instead of the negative construction of China as "no threat". Nonetheless, the discourse stopped short in regard to the possible alliance. As Denisov (2015) said, the previous experience of joint-alliance (the 1950s) was bad, and there was no point in trying to repeat that.

Another way of constructing China as a "friend" is by referring to its support (or the absence of condemnation) during the Ukrainian and Crimean crisis. This option was used several times by Russian officials, such as when Lavrov (2014a) conveyed Russia's gratitude to China's "impartial and balanced position" regarding the Crimean crisis and also when Lavrov (2014b) showed appreciation to China's humanitarian aid to people from Eastern Ukraine. This recognition might strengthen the notion of China as a "friend", and that no future threat would arise from the cooperation, not even to the Far East region, which has been the focus of concern before Crimea.

In the academic discourse, things are quite similar. On the contrary to the pre-Crimean discourses, in which scholars were split, the post-Crimean academic discourse is more similar to the official discourse. In this sense, I would argue that the academic discourse in post-Crimean context is actually more optimistic, which again might be related or conditioned by the absence of any alternatives. For example, even though

Karaganov (2014a) still suggested that China would become a threat in ten or fifteen years, due to its growing strength and confidence, his dominant view is the presence of China as a friend. Contrary to the pre-Crimean discourse, he now uses the term “friendly” in a sense of an unequivocal friendliness instead of the absence of threat. His statement (2016b) that “I can assure you that there can hardly be another country as friendly and attentive to us as China is”, showed the changing position once again. In his pre-Crimean discourse, Karaganov avoided the term “friend/ally”, but now he used this term in a straightforward manner.

Other scholars such as Trenin also used the term “friend”, in which he (2015a) said that “...most Russians today see China as a friendly country, and vice versa.” He (2014d) also mentioned that, after the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea, “Russia looks to a long period of close and friendly relations with its great neighbour to the east.” These two statements summarise Trenin’s positive perception regarding China, a continuation of his pre-Crimean position. He did mention some possible future problems, such as the historical perception of the border and ever-present suspicions in the local context regarding each other, but he normalised these potential problems as a normal problem, not as threat. This is another important element, showing that both official discourse and academic discourse are now trying together to construct China in a positive way, rather than pointing out at possible threat. Inozemtsev (2014) went so far as arguing that China is not threatening Russian identity because, unlike Europe and the West, China does not insist on some particular values such as democracy or human rights.

This common position in the academic discourse is quite remarkable, and its commonality with the official discourse makes it more curious, because that would suggest a change in this second layer of discursive structure. This change in the second layer, brought by the slight shift in the first/core layer, and then reverberate through the second layer, might constitutively turn the outer layer (concrete policy as well).

History as a Common Denominator

In the pre-Crimean discourse, both official and academic discourse have some hesitancy in using history as a basis for common identity. At best, history was used in

the context of special occasion, such as the 65th Anniversary of the Victory in World War II. This hesitancy, I argued in the previous chapter, might be related to the problematic history between the two countries. Therefore, it is fascinating to see that in the post-Crimean official and academic texts, history and memory of the World War II was used in such an extensive length, to construct a common identity between Russia and China, even before and after the 70th Anniversary of the Victory in World War II, which happened in 2015.

Official texts put this issue as the major theme of the discourses. Even as early as 15 April 2014, Lavrov (2014c) already mentioned two recurring historical themes: the friendship and alliance between people of Russia and China during the World War II as the basis of the relations; and the attempts to falsify history as the common threat to both Russia and China. Strangely, the historical themes that were used here are the same with the one used in 2010. The question then, is how the discourse portray these events and how different the portrayal is, from the 2010 discourse.

Some differences could be found, such as the sheer numbers of the texts addressing this theme (of all 31 texts analysed, 13 of them addressing this issue since April 2014 until March 2016, compared to only 7 out of 40 texts in 2010 until February 2014), but I would argue that the key difference is the way Russian official used the situational context to help them formulated the statement. The crisis in Ukraine and Crimea factored in to this discursive formulation.

As the starting point, we could look at the how Putin (2014d) formulated his statement during an interview in 19 May 2014. He was bringing up the event in Ukraine, mentioning the alleged “Neo-Nazi’s campaign of terror against civilian” in Ukraine, before retelling how the Soviet sacrificed many soldiers to help “liberate Northeast China from invaders”. He then continued by reminding the Chinese about the common threat of “...attempts to falsify history, heroize fascists ... blacken the memory and reputation of heroic liberators.” These constructions are powerful, in a sense that it tried to relate to current events (Ukraine), create common enemy (Neo-Nazi/fascists), show the pride and superior position of Russia (liberating China), and create a common threat (falsify history, blacken memory of liberators).

These historical narratives are different from the one promoted by the Russian official in the pre-Crimean discourse. Certainly, the theme of “relation to current

events” and the “common enemy” was absent at the pre-Crimean discourse. The idea of Russian liberating China has been used by Medvedev (2010c), during his visit to Lushun and Lavrov (2012c) in his visit to Dalian, both related to the Museum of the Northeast China’s liberation by the Soviet soldier. However, those two occasions were the only times the construction of Russia’s historical superiority regarding China has been used. In the post-Crimean discourse, the same construction was used by Lavrov in April 2014 and Putin in his speeches in 6 November 2014, April 2015, September 2015, and even November 2015. This idea of Soviet soldier fighting together with Chinese soldier in order to liberate China from Japanese occupation has been used in all those speeches.

To return to the official discourse regarding history of World War II, it is clear that by appealing to the basic construction of identity, such as common enemy and pride, the official discourse tried to build a common position strong enough to be the basis of further cooperation. This move is also flows logically from the previous themes in official discourse. Having acknowledge China as significant Others, different from European Russia but at the same time moving closer to the Eurasian identity, there was a need to address the reason to move further from Europe, and a reference to the current condition in Ukraine and Crimea would do just that. By acknowledging that China’s Asian civilization is no longer a barbaric and backward culture, and that China might be superior but Russia wants equal position, it was logical to bring up the specific memory of the World War II: the liberation of the Northeast China, which showed to the Chinese that Russia is helpful to its neighbour, but at the same time showed the Russians the historical glory of Russia saving China from Japanese militarism and occupation. The notion that China is no longer a threat and current a friend would need some basic commonalities, which related to the construction of common enemy and common threat.

Not only the official discourse, the academic discourse also changing, albeit in a more complicated way. Karaganov, for example, who reminded the elites about the different historical memory between Russia and China regarding the Mongols, was notable in his absence on discussing the history of World War II in the China context. The same condition happened regarding Lukyanov, who was also absent in this historical discussion. These two leading scholars’ absences are curious, because

previously they have talked about the importance of not using problematic history as the basis of cooperation. Trenin almost follows the same pattern, but he mentioned the still-lingering problems of the Aigun Treaty of 1858 and 1860 (2015a). He also took the note on Nevsky's temporary submission to the Mongols, even though this might not really relate to how history could be used (or not used) to form a common identity.

Regardless of these leading scholars' little contribution to the issue, other scholars still discussed the issue of history as a ground for common identity formation. Davydenko (2014), for example, argued that Russia's role in Asia is rooted in history, with Russia/Soviet Union supported the victory of many national liberation movements. Of course, in this case, Davydenko did not specifically mentioned China, but it would be easy to connect this with the main official discourse of "Soviet as liberators". Igor Denisov (2015) on the other hand argued about the need to restore the bad perception in China regarding Russia and the Aigun Treaty by using public diplomacy, and also to strengthen both countries' commitment on fighting "history falsifiers", not only in the foreign context (usually Japan) but also to solve bilateral differences. In this context, even though Denisov still hesitant about using history, but nonetheless he did not object against the use of the memory from World War II.

It seems that the official discourse managed to get all the attention and avoid any competing discourses, both from within or from the academic discourse. The logical move from avoiding the negative differentiation, acknowledging China's superiority while aspiring for equality, and admitting that China is no longer a threat but a friend and possible ally is by creating common identity. History is one of the possible path, but other way also exists.

The Position of the Far East

One of the interesting finding from the pre-Crimean text is the ambiguity of official discourse with regard to the position of the RFE: some texts show that RFE is a "window to Asia", a tool for achieving Russian greatness and political power in Asia. Other texts showed that the move to Asia is a tool to develop RFE, in which RFE internal development is the main goal. I have argued in the previous chapter that these

two competing discourses are actually the reflection of how Russia viewed the East (and therefore Asia and China). By placing the RFE as a tool and a “window to Asia”, it would confer to the Campbellian logic of “foreign policy” in which the internal part was constructed as “foreign”. This logic of “internal othering” and that Russia’s foreign policy on China constitutes its domestic identity regarding the RFE was apparent during the pre-Crimean discourse, with both the official and academic discourse perceived RFE (and Siberia) as backward and in need of assistance.

In the post-Crimean discourse, the official discourse initially leaned towards a more positive approach, by putting RFE as the goal. The move by Putin to finally allow China’s investors to directly invest their money in RFE might be one indication. Putin’s statement (2014g) regarding the gas deal with China in 11 September 2014, for example, stated that the gas deal with China would “help resolve many issues in both the actively developing Chinese provinces and in the Russian Far East.” However, after deeper research and comparing Putin’s speech regarding the gas deal with Lavrov’s remarks in the Assembly of CFDP and also Ambassador Ivashentshov’s argument (2014), it seemed that the official policy keeps placing RFE and Siberia as the object of Moscow’s policies. Both Lavrov and Ivashentshov argued that Russia would not be able to be a great power in Asia-Pacific without developing its eastern region. It is an indication of Moscow’s view towards RFE as still “backward” and “foreign”, because even though the RFE was part of Russia, the focus towards RFE only begins with the reference to the Russia’s pivot to Asia-Pacific.

In the academic discourse, I would argue that significant changes have occurred. For example, Karaganov, who had advocated to bring “Europe” to RFE and Siberia, now focused more on advocating that RFE and Siberia should be the main focus and that their development has already a decade too late (2014a; 2014b). He (2016a) even argued that “for the first time in history Siberia and the Russian Far East could be more than just the home base in the confrontation with the West or a frontline in the fight with China.” This is an important development, because, following the logic of Karaganov’s changing position on Europe/Eurasia, superior/inferior issue, and the issue of threat, this is a continuation of his initial domestic “pivot to Asia”, and that RFE and Siberia is the main target for development.

The more telling evidence, however, is Tsvetov's criticism towards the lack of attention to RFE that was used to be the norm in Russia. He (2014) argued that historically, Russia was supposed to focus on its Eastern region (by referring to the name of Vladivostok) and that the current Russian policymakers (and probably society) still thinks that "...the Primorsky region is still 'there' and not 'here.' The Far East is mostly a place you go, not where you are from." This is a clear suggestion that the "European" Russia perceives RFE and Siberia as "foreign", and this way of thinking has dominated the discourse about RFE to the extent that it might actually constitute the way Russian perceives China and Asia.

This logic from Tsvetov could serve as a bridge to the idea of "unknown Asia" proposed by Gabuev. As I have briefly mentioned in the subsection about linking and differentiation, the idea from Gabuev is that instead of moving from "European identity" to the "Eurasian identity" and confronting China's Asian identity which used to be barbaric and backward, Russia is now distancing themselves from Europe only to meet the "unknown East". As Tsvetov (2014) argued, the inability of Russia to understand Asia might have caused problems in misperception and incompatible policies. Lukin (2015) also argued about this, criticising that the Russian elites and scholars were too predisposed with their worldview and failed to take into account the Chinese view. Lukin by no means mentioned RFE, but the similar logic of ignorance in the policymakers' circle (which include prominent scholars) could be seen here. Interestingly, Gabuev (2014) also argued that Russia "completely lacks understanding of what is going on in Asia."

CONCLUSION

This research aims to investigate the discursive construction of Russian identity towards China. In order to achieve this goal, I proposed two main questions, which are how the Russia's identity discourse(s) towards China was constructed before Crimea and whether the "Turn to the East" policies changed the Russian identity discourse(s) towards China. As the timeframe, I set the timeline since 2010 (the emergence of the "pivot to Asia" based on Lukyanov's article in 2010) until March 2014 (the referendum in Crimea) and since March 2014 until February 2016 (Lavrov's article on Russia's position in global politics). Using the methods of poststructuralist discourse analysis and poststructuralist approach in foreign policy analysis, I tried to answer both research questions.

Pre-Crimean Russian Discourse on China: A Balance of Position?

Following Waever (2002), discursive structure could be found in three layers of structure: the first core layer (basic construction of identity); the second layer of relational position, and the third layer of concrete policy. Based on the analysis of these layers of structure, the three discursive layers of the pre-Crimean discourse consist of, firstly, of the argument of difference, in which it is difficult to challenge and change the notion of Russia as European. The issue of RFE is related to the basic construction of the nation, because it deals with the way Russian views its internal part (RFE & Siberia) and then constructs how the relation between the Western part of Russia and Eastern part of Russia. The other arguments, which is prone to change, consists of the relative position (superior/inferior/equal), the notion of threat, and the common identity (in this case, the usage of history).

I argue that this existing discursive structure is projected in several steps. Firstly, the official discourse and the academic discourse have the same idea regarding the logic of difference: Russia is mostly European country and thus a different and distinct civilization compared to China. This positive linking to Europe created some limitation to a possible identity/culture-based China policy is the same. This condition was exacerbated by the other issue at this core layer, which is the RFE. By seeing the RFE as backward and marginal, the structure strengthened the discourse about how different is Russian nation compared to Asia and how Europe is still the main reference of Russia's policy, and "pivot to Asia" would not change anything (in cultural term) and should be secondary to Europe. In another words, the core layer shown a positive linking to Europe and negative linking to Asia/China.

Secondly, this limitation to any closer identity/cultural-based cooperation creates hesitancy in the second layer to acknowledge Russia's own perception regarding superior/inferior position and strengthen the ever-persistent idea of Russia as a great power. As I have shown in the analytical part, both discourses portrayed Russian as weaker than China economically, but then argued that Russia is still stronger militarily. This discursive portrayal of Russia's relative position was reverberated in a political context, in which Russia pushed for equality vis-à-vis China and positioning itself as a great power. It also relates to the other issue, which is the views that China is not a threat, but then at the same time acknowledging possible threat in the future. This combination creates the condition that, again, constrain the possibility of closer economic integration, for example. It then lead to difficulties in creating a common identity. The lack of usage of historical background as the common denominator, coupled with the academic discourse's uses of history as the source of possible problem, did not provide any strong ground for a bolder political moves towards China.

Instead, the third layer, which is a concrete policy towards China, was filled with hesitancy, constraint, and simple technical partnership. As Yu (2015a) had observed, several hesitations occurred in Russian foreign policy, from the rejection of AIIB, to the reluctance to align the EEU with the "Belt and Road Initiative" under the umbrella of SCO. For example, Putin (2012c) highlighted the growing trade between Russia and China (to \$85 billion in 2011). He also has to underlined the importance of several high-technology projects, the Russian support to the Tianwan nuclear power

plant and the fast-neutron reactor, the reciprocal national years related to tourism, and the joint-projects of creating wide-body aircraft and heavy helicopters.

Post-Crimean Russian Discourse on China: A Change in Identity?

The post-Crimean discursive structure could be read as follows. The first layer, consists of the Russian “Self” and its linking/differentiation to Europe, Eurasia, and China/Asian civilizations. In the post-Crimean discourse, the positive linking with European culture was shaken due to the rupture in the relationship with the West. Therefore, the balance of the construction of identity shifted and moved Eastward. I would argue that it is not enough to push Russia into abolishing the negative differentiation with Asia. Instead, Russia still positively links with Europe, but was rejected from that position. Therefore, other links, which used to be seen as a negative, were diluted and gradually lose their negativity. It makes the core layer a bit more flexible than the pre-Crimean discourse. However, one caveat must be noted here. I have argued that the construction of the Far East played an important role at the core layer. Due to this presence, and the fact that the post-Crimean discourse about RFE has not changed that much, the possible switch to Asian discourse was delayed, making Russian identity stays European/Eurasian. This would also relate to the issue of timeframe, which I discuss in the next subchapter.

I would jump to the third layer to acknowledge that some concrete changes, such as the gas deal and the railroad deal, were not really pushing for any identity changes. The concrete policies have not changed much and stays at the same level in early 2014 (after the Crimean annexation and the gas deal). However, more changes appear on the second layer. In all three themes, both official discourses and the academic discourses are converging into similar patterns. In relative position, both discourses agree that China is now more superior and Russia has no choice but to accept it. In the issue of threat construction, both discourses also agreed that instead of “China is not a threat”, they used the concept of “friend”, where they do not have to explain the absence of threat and the kind of historical or future threat. In using history, both (especially the official discourse) agreed to explore the history and memory of the World War II and

put forward the notion of Russia/Soviet as liberators, Nazi/Neo-Nazi/Fascism as the common enemy, and by using Ukraine as the anchor to current events, they were able to sustain the discourse about 70th Anniversary of the World War II before (2014) and during the year (2015).

Theoretical Implications

My findings suggested several implications on the theoretical level. It is strengthening Waever's theory regarding the discursive structure. As Waever had argued (2002), it would be hard to change the deeper discursive structure. My findings show that even though the policy towards China changed drastically after the crisis in Crimea (the third layer, or the concrete policy), the other layers have not experienced any drastic changes. Nevertheless, as I have shown in the previous subchapter, some changes have happened in both the core layers of identity and second layers (the relational aspects). Therefore, the changing process might be related to "time", which had not been discussed extensively by Waever.

This aspect of time period as one of the important part of the theoretical framework to understand change in the discursive structure of foreign policy. Waever (2002, p.32) highlighted the concept of "pressure", in which any changes would be related to "how much pressure is necessary and what kind of political cost can be tolerated". However, he did not elaborate the time period required for this pressure to initiate the changes in any level of the discursive structure. Based on the findings, I suggest the need to integrate the aspect of time period into Waever's theoretical argument. My suggestion was based on two different arguments.

Firstly, as I have shown in the analytical part, the breakup with the West due to the continuing crisis in Ukraine and Crimea was followed by drastic changes in concrete policies (third layer) which then, theoretically, put some pressure on the deeper layer. From the findings, I found that even though some changes were indeed happened (such as the growing acceptance of Russia's inferior position or the repositioning of China as a "friend"), they were not yet enough to press some changes in the core identity layer. At best, the discursive change was a switch from the purely European

identity into a more ambiguous European/Eurasian identity. Confirming Waever's argument, the existing discursive structure (based on pre-Crimean discourse) put some limitations into the possibilities of change.

However, the ambiguous changes at the deepest discursive level could not resonate to the outer layer. This condition was evident when the findings show that, as Gabuev (2016) argued, the concrete policies towards China were stagnated and there were some signs of a disillusionment from the Kremlin's elites regarding Russia's "Asian strategy". I would argue that this condition could be read as the lack of "required pressure" to change the basic identity discourse (core layer) which then reproduced in the form of stagnation at the concrete policy (outer layer). In this case, Waever's theory of discursive structure and identity/policy change might need some additional dimension, especially regarding the time period. As the findings show, two years (since March 2014) are not enough time for the process of sedimentation from the concrete policy changes to instigate a drastic identity change. Of course, this issue of time period did not eclipse the findings that existing discursive structure is not easy to be altered. Nonetheless, I have shown that even when some incremental changes occurred, the changes did not manage to create necessary pressure to reverberate to the outmost layer. The two years' time period were not enough to sustain the process of reconstructing a drastic identity change.

The stagnating process of discursive changes also shows the process of identity (re)production and how concrete policy as part of the discursive structure could not be separated from the performative dimension of identity. As Urrestarazu (2015) had argued, if we framed identity in a performative dimension, the concrete policy of Russia towards China was part of its identity structure, as also argued by Waever. I have shown that poststructuralist's argument regarding the mutual-constitutiveness of identity and policy was useful in enhancing more dimension to our comprehension of Russian identity and foreign policy.

In addition to all the findings and implications, some caveat should be noted. Firstly, the focus on the discursive structure (re)formulated by the foreign policy establishment (both the policymakers and the scholars-academics) entails the possibility of neglecting the marginal discourses. Therefore, other discursive structure, albeit in a more marginal position, might be present in Russian identity discourse. It is an

opportunity for further research intending to provide a more complete map of identity discourse in Russia related to China. Secondly, the selection on official discourse (model 1) and wider academic discourse (model 2) put aside the other discourse (model 3) such as the media, wider public, and popular discourse. This other discourses might reflect the presence of similar discursive structure, especially if we took into account the identity/foreign policy debate in Russia which concentrated on the foreign policy circles. Nevertheless, as Hopf (2013) had argued, “common sense” in a wider public could be more reflective of the existing discursive structure. Therefore, other potential for future research is to include other possible model, especially the more popular/public discourse.

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