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Saving Russian Compatriots: Imaginative Geographies, Representations of the Self and Other(s) in Russian Discourses of Military Interventionism

MA thesis

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Abstract: The dissertation incorporates poststructuralist discourse analysis and critical IR perspectives to analyze Russian discourses on military interventions pertaining to the Post-Soviet/ Near Abroad region. It tries to answer the following question: How did Russian diplomats and politicians discursively construct Russia's military interventions in Georgia and Ukraine? To that purpose, I propose a two-fold theoretical and analytical framework informed by poststructuralist and critical IR insights.

First, I choose to interpret Russian contradictory legal discourse of military interventionism by referring to the literature on the subaltern empire. Accordingly, Russian discursive construction of intervention can be situated within a hybrid subaltern context, wherein Russian politicians and diplomats must replicate the hegemonic discourse of new interventionism, albeit in a subversive manner, to articulate the country's subaltern agency and make sense of Moscow's violations of neighboring countries' sovereignty.

Secondly, to examine the discursive construction of Russia's military interventionism, the dissertation attempts to 'read' Russian interventions in Georgia and Ukraine in terms of the production of the Self/Other essential to the discourse of post-Cold War new interventionism. To facilitate the analysis of Russian intervention narratives, the subject of scrutiny is broken down into three major components: representations of the Subject, representations of the Others and imaginative geographies of the intervention. Subsequently, the dissertation applies this analytical framework to deconstruct the official discourses pertaining to Russia's interventions in South Ossetia and Ukraine.

Structurally, the dissertation is divided into a theoretical part and an analytical part. The first section of the theoretical part offers an overview of the development of Russia's approach to normative issues regarding humanitarian intervention and R2P in the post-Cold War context. The second section furnishes a critical review of the literature on Russia's discourses of humanitarian intervention and R2P informed by the English School and norm-oriented constructivist IR theories. Building from this critical review, a case for the application of the postcolonial theory-inspired subaltern empire theory is then made. The last section of the theoretical part is spent to elaborate the poststructuralist framework concerning the analysis of how Russia's humanitarian intervention narratives produced the Self, Other and imaginative geographies. In the analytical part, composed of the subsequent three chapters, I employed the designated analytical framework to analyze the discursive construction of Russia's military interventions in the cases of Georgia and Ukraine.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The remit of this dissertation is to examine the discursive construction of Russian military interventionism, particularly through comparative case studies of Moscow's official discourses on the Russo-Georgian war and Russia's military intervention in Ukraine. Among International Relations (IR) scholars of late, the subject of Russian interventionism has attracted a growing number of followers, due to Moscow's increasingly assertive foreign policy toward the 'Near Abroad' (*blizhneye zarubezhye*), of which the abrupt annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent entanglements in the Donbas were the latest manifestations.

The history of Russia's post-Soviet military interventionism, however, stretches back to the foundation of the Russian Federation itself in 1991, with other significant instances being the so-called Russian 'peacekeeping operations' in Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan during the 1990s (Facon 2006, Luca 2015). Starting in 2015, Russian's ongoing military campaign in Syria also marks the first large-scale intervention by the Russian military in a country outside the former Soviet Union (Myers & Schmitt 2015). Moscow's aggressive behaviors are widely regarded as highly disruptive to the European and international security status-quos, and certain scholars began to contemplate the looming 'new Cold War' between the West and Russia (Karaganov 2014, Trenin 2014b, Lucas 2014; for a critique of the new Cold War framework, see Sakwa 2008).

A bone of contention concerning Russian military interventions in the Near Abroad lurked in the contemporary Russian leadership attitudes regarding humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). While Russia is keen to portray itself as a latter-day champion of Westphalian sovereignty and non-intervention, it has not hesitated to infringe on neighboring countries' sovereignty, citing as justifications real and imagined tribulations suffered by Russian compatriots abroad. Russia's intervention in Georgia in 2008, in particular, was considered the first instance whereby a state invoked the doctrine of R2P, formulated and adopted by the UN in the early 2000s, to justify its use of force against another country. In an assessment of the Russian approach to peacekeeping in the 1990s, Facon (2006: 36) also noted that "Russian

peacekeeping behavior seems to have directly contradicted its declared ambitions of strengthening its integration in the community of 'civilized nations'".

More recently, Russia's problematic invocations of humanitarian intervention and R2P have received much-needed attention from scholars like Allison (2009, 2013, 2014), Averre and Davies (2015), Baranovsky and Mateiko (2016), Holmes and Krastev (2015), and Kuhrt (2015). In trying to make sense of Russia's discourse of interventionism, these scholars turned to the distinction between solidarist and pluralist visions of the international system as well as the norm-oriented constructivist analytical framework as explanatory tools. Generally, according to these approaches, Russia's attitude to military interventionism and R2P was characteristic of the position taken by the pluralist group of states in the international society. Like other countries in this group, Russia champions the principle of sovereign equality associated with the age-old Westphalian system as well as the UN Security Council's ascendancy in normative issues related to military interventions and R2P. As insightful and extensive as they are, however, these analyses often overlooked the similarities between the Russian and the hegemonic discourses of interventionism and the glaring inconsistencies in Russia's approaches to military interventions within and without its post-Soviet neighborhood.

Therefore, to address this lacuna, I propose to engage the analysis of Russia's military interventionism with the postcolonialism-informed literature on Russia's subaltern empire status. Specifically, drawing from the conceptualization of the Russian brand of subalternity offered by Morozov (2013, 2015), the dissertation interprets the inconsistencies in Russia's discourses of humanitarian intervention and R2P as symptomatic of its hybridity and lack of normative alternative to the Western core's. In more conventional IR terms, it can be argued that Russia behaves globally as a revisionist or counter-/anti-hegemonic power vis-à-vis the West (often matching its grievances with those of emerging non-Western powers), while primarily pursues status-quo/ hegemonic aspirations with respect to the Near Abroad, even to the extent of militarily intervene in neighboring countries on the pretext of protecting Russian citizens and compatriots. An empirical corollary of examining Russia's military interventionism through the lens of subalternity lies in the possibility of reading it as a 'borrowed' or hybrid discourse, which simultaneously reproduces – yet also distorts – the hegemonic post-Cold War discourses of humanitarian intervention and R2P. In other words, whilst remaining vehemently opposed to the West's hegemonic discourses

of human rights, humanitarian intervention and R2P, post-Soviet Russia still has no alternative but to turn to the very same reference frames to construct its military actions against other post-Soviet countries.

In trying to validate the above-mentioned empirical assumption, I choose to analyze the Russian discourse of military interventionism as a repertoire of heroic storylines involving the geopolitical struggles between the Russian Subject and the Western as well as the Georgian/ Ukrainian antagonistic Others. Such an analytical approach also represent a departure from previous analyses, in which the emphasis was placed on the formal normative values of Russian leaders' articulations. Instead, I follow the analytical approach of poststructuralist IR, according to which Subjectivity is constantly (re)produced through the distinction between the Self and the Other furnished by foreign policy discourses and practices. Interventionary discourses thus are significant not only in terms of representing subjective/ intersubjective views; more importantly, they operate through the production of the Subject conducting the intervention and of Others whom the self must either defend or defeat (Orford 2003). These discourses or narratives invite their intended audience to identify with certain notions of the Self, thus functioning to *interpellate* members of the audience into subject positions conducive to the maintenance of the internal and/or international hegemonic order (Orford 2003: 160-162). Additionally, poststructuralist understandings of identity suggest that subjectivity is constantly (re)produced through post factum narrations of events as well as contemporaneous 'micronarratives' which cause and/ or influence the course of events and actors' behaviors and attitudes (Campbell 1998: 35-43). Accordingly, this dissertation will examine the production of the Subject/ Self and Objects/ Other as well as the imaginative geographies underlying them in Moscow's official discourses of military interventions.

The dissertation's original contribution to the existing literature is two-fold. First, the dissertation endeavors to link up the literature on Russia's imperial subalternity or subaltern empire condition with the empirical analysis of the Russian discourses of military interventionism. Secondly, in terms of the analytical framework, the dissertation also proposes a poststructuralist alternative to the norm-oriented framework employed by previous studies about Russia's official discourses of military interventionism. Structurally, the dissertation is divided into a theoretical part and an analytical part. The first section of the theoretical part offers an overview of the

development of Russia's approach to normative issues regarding humanitarian intervention and R2P in the post-Cold War context. The second section furnishes a critical review of the literature on Russia's discourses of humanitarian intervention and R2P informed by the English School and norm-oriented constructivist IR theories. Building from this critical review, a case for the application of the postcolonial theory-inspired subaltern empire theory is made. The last section of the theoretical part is spent to elaborate the poststructuralist framework concerning the analysis of how Russia's humanitarian intervention narratives produced the Self, Other and imaginative geographies. In the analytical part, composed of the subsequent three chapters, I employed the designated analytical framework to analyze the discursive construction of Russia's military interventions in the cases of Georgia and Ukraine.

II. PUTTING RUSSIA'S INTERVENTIONISM INTO THE FRAMEWORK OF SUBALTERNITY

1. The Development of Post-Soviet Russia's Approach to Military Interventionism

The aim of this section is to provide an abbreviated account of Russia's problematic approach to peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention and R2P from the 1990s to the present, which furnishes a background for my subsequent theoretical and empirical analysis of the subject. Specifically, it highlights key issues related to Moscow's international peacekeeping practice in the 1990s and Russia's attitude toward the emerging post-Cold War consensus on humanitarian intervention and R2P, from its criticisms of NATO's military campaign against Yugoslavia to the current resistance to the West's invocations of R2P.

1.1. Russian-style Peacekeeping Operations in the Near Abroad

During the first decade of its existence, Russia's stance on interventionism was shaped by the country's experiences of peacekeeping (*mirotvorchestvo*, literally 'peacemaking') in the post-Soviet area and by its opposition to NATO's intervention in Kosovo (Allison 2013: 45-70, 121-140; Lynch 2000). From the very beginning, Russia's interventions in the nascent post-Soviet neighborhood under the guise of international peacekeeping[1] were plagued by contradictions and inconsistencies. Such military involvements were initially spearheaded by the ad hoc responses of Soviet/ Russian forces located near or in the conflict zones[2], often with limited strategic direction or inputs provided by Moscow, which during that period was still struggling to reassert authority over the armed forces (Hopf 2005: 226; Lynch 2000: 31-32; Tsygankov 2013: 79-87). Therefore, in the eyes of international observers, Russia's claims upon impartiality and consent of the parties involved – two core requirements of international peacekeeping – were, at a minimum, unconvincing. Bureaucratic in-fighting among various departments, noticeably between the Ministry of Defense

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[1] Specifically, in Moldova, Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and Tajikistan.

[2] The Soviet/ Russian 14th Army was stationed in Moldova when the fighting broke out in March 1992 and provided military support to the Transnistrian side. Similarly, Soviet/ Russian troops in Tajikistan, chiefly the 201st Motorized Rifle Division, and the Group of Forces in the Transcaucasia (GFTC) in Georgia played key roles in the conflicts which were taking place in these countries (Finch 1996, Lynch 2000).

(MoD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)[3], also undermined the formulation and implementation a coherent peacekeeping policy (Lynch 2000: 32). The absence of clear international or regional mandates, notwithstanding the government's pronounced efforts to legitimize military interventions as international peacekeeping and secure the recognition of CIS states[4], posed another significant challenge to the legitimacy and legality of Russia's interventionism. Consequently, Russia's peacekeeping operations in the post-Soviet region were regarded as problematic and 'non-standard' (Finch 1996, Lynch 2000: 178-179), or worse, as clear violations of international norms on peacekeeping and sovereignty (Hopf 2005: 225-226).

Some of the abovementioned shortcomings and contradictions have persisted into Russia's latest round of military interventions in Ukraine – for example, Moscow tends to become a hostage to previous political commitments, even when they no longer have any strategic values to the regime. More importantly, the 1990s can be considered Russia's formative years when it comes to Moscow's military interventionism, as Russian 'unusual' exercises in peacekeeping during this period had arguably left certain important imprints on Moscow's subsequent interventionary policies. Thus, for the benefit of this study, it is worth considering the idiosyncrasies of Russian-style international peacekeeping in more detail.

First, albeit receiving little external recognition, Russia was adamant to present its military interventions as legitimate, effective and compatible with international as well as regional norms and values. The addition of international peacekeeping to Russia's foreign policy toolbox evidenced the importance of emulating Western concepts and practices for the legitimacy of post-Soviet Russia's military interventions. According to Kellett (1999) and Nikitin (2013: 159-160), the concept of international peacekeeping gained currency in Russia and the CIS only after the collapse of the Soviet Union, whose erstwhile attitude toward such a 'Western' practice was mainly characterized by indifference and abstention. In contrast, it was observed that the Russian Federation had "devoted a substantial proportion of its limited military

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[3] The MoD and MFA reportedly clashed over the direction of Russian peacekeeping forces in 1992-1993, and in the case of Tajikistan, the MoD also quarrelled with the Border Troop Command (Lynch 2000: 9-11)

[4] For instance, in Moldova, Russia proposed to form a CIS peacekeeping force consisting of Belorussian, Ukrainian, Russian and Moldovan army units. The proposal failed to materialize because Belarus and Ukraine declined to participate (Finch 1996).

manpower and finances to UN, multinational, and regional peacekeeping missions"
(Kellett 1999: 40) during the first few years of its existence.

Additionally, Russia's efforts to develop the appearance of international
peacekeeping, if not the actual capability for it, were not limited to ad hoc military
operations and contributions to UN missions. As, in 1995, the State Duma adopted a
new law on this subject[5], establishing a comprehensive legal framework for the
provision of personnel and resources for international peacekeeping missions. Earlier,
stipulations related to international peacekeeping also appeared in Russia's first
military doctrine adopted in 1993 (Trenin 1996: 75). Thus, in strict formal terms, post-
Soviet Russia's swift moves to invoke and institutionalize the practice of peacekeeping
marked a fundamental departure from the modus operandi of its predecessor, and
demonstrated Moscow's willingness to recognize, at least nominally, the authority of
international norms with regards to the use of force in international relations.

The Russian discourse of peacekeeping, however, was accompanied by certain
'modifications' to the standard format of international peacekeeping, which
detrimentally affected the West's perception of Russian-style military interventions. A
moot point was the connection between Russian peacekeeping operations and
Moscow's insistence on its right and 'responsibility to protect' Russian citizens or
diasporas in the Near Abroad (Allison 2013: 126-128). At the time, the leadership
generally avoided stipulating the protection of Russian citizens abroad as an official
goal of Russia's regional peacekeeping missions, preferring to subsume it under the
more neutral objectives of defending human rights and ethnic minorities (ibid.).
Elsewhere, however, Russian officials and politicians were more vocal and explicit in
their opinions regarding this issue[6]. The 1993 military doctrine also identified "the

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[5] "On Procedures for Deploying Civil and Military Personnel for Activities Related to the Maintenance or Restoration of the International Peace and Security" (Nikitin 2013: 169-170).
[6] For example, the then Minister of Defense, Pavel Grachev, bluntly stated in June 1992: "If the honor or dignity of the Russian population are wounded in any region, I shall take the most decisive actions, even the insertion of troops to put a stop to discriminations, assaults and attacks" (Lynch 2000: 48). Similarly, the commander of the 14th army in 1992, Alexander Lebed (who later ran as a candidate in the 1996 presidential election) compared the Moldavian authorities to 'fascists' and the conflict unfolding there to a 'genocide' (Lynch 2000: 116, Tsygankov 2013: 84).

suppression of the rights, freedom and legitimate interests of Russian citizens abroad" as one of the main sources of military danger to the Russian state[7] (Lynch 2000: 79).

Another bone of contention between Moscow and the West over the status of Russian-styled international peacekeeping/ military interventions was the former's expressed desire to establish a post-Soviet 'zone of responsibility' or 'sphere of legitimate interests', as well as its adamant refusal to allow any 'external' powers, such as Turkey or the U.S., to dispatch peacekeepers to the Near Abroad (Lynch 2000: 93, Allison 2013: 124-126). Keeping the peace (or protecting Russian citizens, for that matter) was thus perceived as the ostensible objective of Russian military actions, intended to sugarcoat the true purpose of reasserting Russia's hegemonic predominance over its newly independent neighbors. Unsurprisingly, the aptly termed "Russian Monroe Doctrine" was a principle cause for the West's displeasure at Russia and Russian-style military interventions both in the 90s and in 2008, when it was revived by president Medvedev as the fifth principle of his eponymous doctrine (Allison 2013: 124; Medvedev 31.08.2008).

In the final analysis, Russian-style international peacekeeping can be best described as a peculiar amalgamation of traditional peacekeeping and coercive diplomacy, designed to help counterbalancing post-1991 centrifugal tendencies and asserting Moscow's claims for exclusive rights to adjudicate and, when it deemed necessary, intervene militarily in local disputes within the Near Abroad/ CIS region. During and after the peacekeeping operations, Russian policymakers eagerly touted the country's irregular peacekeeping conducts as 'innovations' and 'Russian contributions' to the world, even to the extent of framing Russian-style peacekeeping activities as "alternatives to 'classical' UN standards for peacekeeping operation" (Allison 2013: 130) notwithstanding the West's disapprovals and criticisms. In a subsequent section, I will attempt to demonstrate how postcolonial IR theory is well-suited to account for the hybridity in Russia's discourses and practices of military interventionism. In the next subsection, I will turn to another important facet of the Russian discourse, which is

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[7] The language of the final text was relatively moderate compared to the draft doctrine, circulated in May 1992, according to which "a violation of the rights of Russian citizens and of persons who identify themselves with Russia ethnically and culturally, within the former USSR republics, can be a serious source of conflict" (Lynch 2000: 115)

Moscow's uneasy relationship with the U.S. and Europe's discourses and invocations of humanitarian intervention and R2P.

1.2. Russia and the Post-Cold War Development of Humanitarian Interventions and R2P

The purpose of this subsection is to present a brief overview of Russia's primary position with regards to the post-Cold War development of humanitarian interventions and R2P, from the controversy surrounding NATO's intervention in Yugoslavia to Russia's opposition to the West's applications of R2P's third pillar. It shows that, notwithstanding occasional invocations of humanitarianism, Russia's leadership generally dissents from the pro-interventionary stand taken by Western states concerning the permissibility of military intervention for humanitarian purposes, often in solidarity with other non-Western governments (i.e. China, India, other BRICS and G-77 states).

Despite maintaining an active peacekeeping presence in the Near Abroad/ CIS area, Russia reacted with indignation to NATO's controversial military campaign against Yugoslavia, Operation Allied Force (OAF), in 1999[8] (Allison 2013: 45). Earlier, the Soviet Union/ Russia had lent support to the West's interventionist policy and international security agenda, particularly with respect to the First Gulf War, the conflict between Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia, the U.S.-led intervention in Haiti and Western sanctions against Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya[9] (Allison 2013: 126-127, Tsygankov 2013: 74-75). However, by 1996, the so-called 'honeymoon period' in the relationship between Russia and the West had effectively ended. Under the direction of Yevgeny Primakov, who became Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister, Moscow's diplomatic stance on humanitarian intervention quickly toughened. For instance, in 1998, Primakov warned that any military actions that NATO might possibly take in response to Yugoslavia's alleged ethnic cleansing in Kosovo must, without exception, be sanctioned by the UNSC (Allison 2013: 50). As permanent members of the UNSC, Russia and China joined efforts to prevent any resolutions concerning Kosovo

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[8] The content of and legal basis for Moscow's arguments against OAF and NATO's military interventionism have been examined in detail elsewhere (for example, see Allison 2013: 45-70, also Kuhrt 2015: 100-102). Therefore, it is the purpose of this part to only sketch out the broad outline of Russia's position regarding this pivotal case.
[9] Interestingly enough, Russia's acquiescence to the collective intervention in Haiti in 1994 (Operation Uphold Democracy) might have been gained in exchange for the U.S.'s following endorsement of Russian peacekeeping mission in Abkhazia (Allison 2013: 127, Kuhrt 2015: 100).

(especially No. 1199 and 1203) to explicitly authorize, or be interpreted as authorizing military actions against Yugoslavia (Allison 2013: 47-48). Thus, NATO's decision to commence the bombing of Yugoslavia in March 1999 – citing Belgrade's failure to comply with Resolution 1199 as the justification – was immediately denounced by Russia as an illegal use of force against a sovereign state and a serious violation of the UN's jurisdiction (Allison 2013: 49-51, Tsygankov 2013: 109-111).

NATO's military intervention in the conflict in Kosovo was a critical episode in the evolution of the post-Cold War humanitarian intervention. One of the ways in which the dispute was discursively constructed (especially by lawyers on both sides) was as a 'war of values' between two core principles, namely sovereignty and humanitarianism. On the one hand, OAF was vindicated by Western interventionists as a 'just war' that heralded the era of liberal interventionism, wherein the moral duty to stop war crimes and save lives would have precedence over the increasingly out-of-date Westphalian sovereignty (Glennon 1999, Kuhrt 2015: 100-102). On the other hand, Russia's leadership regarded (and still regards) this instance as the epitome of Western exceptionalism. It questioned whether NATO's aims and conducts were justified, expressing the apprehension that OAF had established a dangerous precedent which would be exploited by powerful states to bypass the UNSC and intervene with impunity in the internal affairs of other countries (which, ironically, became a self-fulling prophecy when Russia invoked Kosovo to justify the annexation of Crimea) (Kuhrt ibid). Eventually, the Russian leadership was pressured to accept by the inevitable – to avoid further escalation, President Yeltsin appointed former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to lead the peace negotiation with NATO and Yugoslavia, who eventually succeeded in persuading Yugoslavia to accept the West's terms for peace, which were previously deemed as 'unacceptable' by Moscow and Belgrade (Tsygankov 2013: 111). The bitter dispute, however, has had significant and long-lasting implications for Moscow's view on Western-led humanitarian interventions ever since; specifically, after OAF, Russia generally shared with non-Western states like China and India the voice of dissent regarding the collective use of force for humanitarian purposes (Allison 2013: 68).

September 11th and the consequent inception of the U.S-led global 'war on terror' in 2001 were perceived as temporarily alleviating differences regarding military interventions between the West and Russia (Allison 2013: 72-98). Russia's frustration,

however, quickly resumed with the United States' decision to wage the Iraq War in 2003, and was exacerbated by a series of 'color revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, which Moscow's officials openly described as being backed by Washington (Kuhrt 2015: 102-103). It was against this very backdrop of international politics and Russia-West relations that the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect, a U.N-initiated project to forge a universal consensus on international humanitarian norms and criteria guiding the use of military force for humanitarian purposes, was being introduced (in 2001) and eventually adopted by the UN General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit[10].

Russia's support for the adoption and further development of R2P, like that of many non-Western states (notably China and India), was lukewarm and included significant reservations – especially with regards to R2P's third pillar. Although Russia accepted in principle the obligation of the international community or regional organizations to intervene in an individual state without the consent of its government to prevent or preclude humanitarian catastrophes – which, after all, resembled the legal basis of its peacekeeping operations in the 1990s – it maintained that any such attempts to use force must, first and foremost, be approved by the UNSC (wherein Russia and China can exercise their veto power). Furthermore, it opined that the situations in question must also meet the criteria of a threat to 'international peace or security' as defined by Chapter VII of the UN Charter (Allison 2013: 66-67).

Thus, even as the UN General Assembly unanimously endorsed the Outcome Document on R2P at the 2005 World Summit, it should be noted that the language of the document had been significantly watered-down to accommodate the views of states like Russia, China and India (Allison 2013: 67-68, Kuhrt 2015: 103). Additionally, while other P-5 members (the U.S., U.K. and France) initially opposed or expressed concerns about R2P as well, they did so for reasons very different from those of Russia or China: the U.S. government feared that the criteria stipulated by R2P would constrain its ability to use force whenever and wherever it deemed necessary, while

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[10] R2P consists three main principles or pillars: (1) Each state has the responsibility to protect its populations from the "three crimes" of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity; (2) The international community has the responsibility to encourage and provide assistance to individual states in fulfilling that responsibility; (3) If a state is evidently failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action in a timely and decisive manner and in accordance with the UN Charter (Source: Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, http://www.globalr2p.org/about_r2p, accessed 15/06/2017)

the U.K. and France were similarly concerned that the need for UNSC's authorization would impede timely and decisive responses to humanitarian crises (Bellamy 2009: 67). Considering the fact that Moscow had shown very little enthusiasm for R2P, its move to invoke the Responsibility to Protect as a legal justification for its 'peace enforcing' operation in August 2008 was therefore astonishing and widely regarded as a cynical abuse of R2P (Allison 2013: 158-159, Kuhrt 2015: 108).

Notwithstanding its invocation of R2P in the case of Georgia, however, in the following years, Russia remained mostly unwilling to sanction any UN collective actions based on R2P's third pillar to resolve humanitarian crises. A rare exception was when Russia (along with China, India, Brazil, and Germany) abstained from voting on the pivotal Resolution 1973 in March 2011 – the adoption of which constituted the legal justification for NATO's military intervention in Libya. However, Moscow later accused the Western powers of going beyond the UN mandate and the original scope of the Resolution, as well as engineering regime change in Libya on the pretext of humanitarian intervention (Allison 2013: 172-174; Averre & Davies 2015: 818). With respect to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria, Russia and China continue to adamantly resist all attempts on the part of Western democracies to obtain UNSC's authorization for potential military actions against the Syrian government. Notwithstanding the invocations of R2P it had employed to justify its interventions in Georgia (and more recently Ukraine), Russia's leadership are at great pains to portray itself as one of the staunchest proponents of sovereign equality (which has its root in the Westphalian system). As such, Moscow considered itself, together with China, as the main challengers to Western attempts of applying the principles of R2P worldwide. Russia's 2013 Foreign Policy Concept, for instance, unequivocally expressed the government's disdain for Western states' invocations of R2P for the purpose of conducting humanitarian interventions: "*It is unacceptable that military interventions and other forms of interference from without which undermine the foundations of international law based on the principle of sovereign equality of states, be carried out on the pretext of implementing the concept of "Responsibility to Protect"*" (Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, 2013).

Focusing on Russia's peculiar peacekeeping conducts in the 1990s and positions over the emergence of the Western-led consensus on humanitarian intervention and R2P, this section has provided a brief account of the development of Moscow's

discourse and practices of military interventionism leading up to the Ukraine crisis in 2014. It showed that in spite of employing various humanitarian principles to legitimize its military interventions, Moscow has been one of the main critics and opponents (with a few exceptions) of the Western-led projects to promote liberal interventionism and a new global normative order based on "sovereignty as responsibility" (Kuhrt 2015: 106-107). The account provided in this section also suggested that Russia's post-Cold War discourse of military interventionism is inconsistent and hybridized; viewed through the lens of subalternity, such a discourse can be considered a syndrome of the Russian state's hybrid subaltern-cum-imperial condition. Taking this into consideration, the next section of the dissertation will provide a critical review of the existing literature on Russian military interventionism to understand how the development of Russia's stand on military interventionism has been previously construed.

2. **Understanding Russia's Military Interventionism: English School and Norm-Oriented Constructivist Analyses and the Postcolonial/ Poststructuralist Alternative**

In this section, I discuss two main theoretical approaches within the extant scholarship on Russia's post-Cold War discourse of military interventionism, namely the English School and constructivism. The section then moves on to show what insights poststructuralist and postcolonial approach can contribute to the literature, especially in terms of understanding the (counter-)hegemonic aspirations and hybridity inherent in Russia's discourses of humanitarian intervention and R2P.

2.1. English School and Norm-Oriented Constructivist Approaches

Within International Relations, contemporary discussions about humanitarian intervention and R2P tend to derive from or be influenced by the thoughts of the English School and constructivism (Diez et al. 2011: 95; Bellamy & Wheeler 2008), and studies of the Russian state's exercises in and discourses of military interventionism are not an exception (Allison 2013: 3, Averre & Davies 2015: 813-814). Although realist and liberalist scholars (as well as some social constructivists) have penned many influential studies about Russia's military interventions, they are inclined to place no analytical importance on Moscow's normative arguments and legal justifications, assuming that these assertions and justifications were either hypocritical or, more perniciously, acts of weaponization/ instrumentalization of normative language and thus should be

neglected in favor of systemic or individualistic explanations of Russia's motivations (such as those based on geopolitical or psychological factors, diversionary war theory or elites' configuration, etc.) (Götz 2016; McFaul 2014; Mearsheimer 2014; Shevtsova 2010). On the other hand, because of their penchant for issues related to norms, values and socialization, English School's and norm-oriented constructivist scholars are more inclined to produce (as well as more theoretically capable of producing) analyses of the normative dimension in Russia's discourse of humanitarian intervention and R2P. Thus, in this section, I will summarize and assess the pertinence of previous analyses which are influenced by the two indicated theoretical approaches.

The core tenets of the English School approach have been characterized as representing a middle-way between the mainstream IR discourses of realism and liberalism; while theorists of this school, following Hedley Bull (1977: 53-77), accepted *a la* realism the idea that the international is essentially a realm of anarchy – since states have no supreme authority to which they must look up – they made the claim that relations among sovereign states, which cannot be viewed simply as variations of a 'zero-sum' game of national interests, are always constituted and governed to a certain extent by common interests, rules/ values and institutions (Diez et al. 2011: 121-122, Hehir 2010: 70; Linklater 2005: 84-92). The development of humanitarian intervention posed one of the most divisive normative issues engendered by the 'international society' of states as envisioned by English School scholars, since it involved clashes among several core principles of the international society, such as the international humanitarian norms, sovereign equality and non-intervention (Diez et al. 2011: 95; Wheeler 2000: 1).

Conflicts among sets of normative principles and different visions of the international society manifested in the division between two theoretical strands within the English School tradition – solidarism and pluralism. On the one hand, solidarists maintain that the normative content of the international society is quite 'thick', i.e. there are certain normative principles and obligations with which all members of the international society must comply, and violations of/ failures to comply with those universal norms and values can become legitimate grounds for collective military interventions. Pluralists, on the other hand, are proponents of a 'thinner' version of the international society which emphasizes the centrality of states; they generally reject the legitimacy of humanitarian interventions, insofar as such interventions violate the rules

of sovereignty and non-intervention (which pluralists regard as the core principles of the international society) and are hence detrimental to the peaceful coexistence of states (Allison 2013: 16-17; Diez et al. 2011: 96; Hehir 2010: 70-71, Wheeler 2000: 309).

Based on this distinction, English School-informed readings of Russia's discourses of humanitarian intervention and R2P were quick to identify Moscow's apparently strict adherence to sovereignty and non-interference with the pluralist camp's core positions (Allison 2013: 17-18; Averre & Davies 2015: 813-814; Kuhrt 2015: 98-99; Baranovsky & Mateiko 2016: 50). Such a framework of classification allows English School's scholars to construe Russia and Western liberal democracies' bitter disputes over humanitarian intervention and R2P as embodying the incompatibility between pluralist and solidarist conceptions of the international society.

Specifically, advancing the pluralist standpoint, Averre and Davies (2015: 813) sought to refute the widely-held belief that Russia's opposition to humanitarian intervention and R2P was merely an end product of its illiberal political system and power politics – they contended that the Russian discourse of R2P should be located within the context of the international society's "structural and systemic change" since the end of the Cold War and Russia's counterhegemonic quest for "a negotiated international order". Accordingly, Russia's current position reflects both changes in Moscow's foreign policy thinking, especially since the beginning of Putin's third presidential term, and the "increasingly pluralist context of debates on humanitarian intervention" (Averre & Davies 2015: 834). Emboldened by these developments, Russian elites put forth value-based narratives which emphasized "traditional moral and spiritual values" and "pluralist policy positions and values" as well as the centrality of the UN/ UNSC to challenge the West's liberal-solidarist interpretations of R2P (Averre & Davies 2015: 828). Thus, the authors interpreted Russia and China's restrictionist views of sovereignty and R2P in terms of the two non-Western powers' dissatisfaction at the "disregard of their legitimate concerns by the Western liberal democracies" (Averre & Davies 2015: 829), and from the association between R2P's third pillar and the doctrine of humanitarian intervention to which both countries are vehemently opposed.

In a similar vein, Kuhrt (2015: 97) noted that Russia's elites generally did not distinguish between the doctrines of R2P and humanitarian intervention, as they

regarded R2P to be a modified version of the same project on the part of the U.S.-led Western hegemony to rewrite existing international norms. Regarding the Russian perspective as characteristic of the pluralist approach (Kuhrt 2015: 98), she gave several explanations for Russia's reservations toward R2P which can be summarized as follow: first, Moscow generally see itself as the guardian of the Westphalian world order, wherein sovereignty was regarded more as a right than a responsibility whilst international peace and security were maintained through the UN Security Council (which resembles a 'Concert of Great Powers); secondly, Russian elites' perceptions of the West' invocations of R2P were tainted by their frustration and anxiety over the impunity with which NATO's military intervention in Yugoslavia and the Iraq War had been conducted previously; and thirdly, as those of many non-Western states who have been increasingly contesting the West's monopoly on humanitarian interventions and interpretations of R2P, the views on R2P of Russia must be located within broader debates on international humanitarian norms' development.

In addition to applying the distinction between pluralist and solidarist views, analyses of Russia's approach to humanitarian intervention and R2P were also influenced to a great extent by the analytical frameworks put forward by norm-oriented constructivists such as Finnemore and Katzenstein (1996). Building on assumptions about the social dimensions of international relations (Wendt 1999) similar to those espoused by English School's theorists (Reus-Smit 2002: 489), norm-oriented constructivists postulate that institutionalized norms play an important role in shaping the behaviors of international actors. Forasmuch as these actors, instead of relying solely on cost-benefit calculations or the "logic of consequentiality", usually behave in conformity with the "logic of appropriateness", i.e. doing what they consider appropriate according to the prevailing standards (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998; March and Olsen 1998).

Applying this theoretical approach to study the evolution of humanitarian intervention practices, Finnemore (1996, 2003) argued that states' changing attitudes and behaviors regarding humanitarianism in the post-Cold War era can be attributed to systematic changes in the international normative context. These changes, in turn, can be tracked in the normative standards advocated by international actors. Central to Finnemore's framework was the analysis of states' discursive practices and "verbal adherence to norms through justifications" (Diez et al. 2011: 96). Specifically, she

argued that justifications for interventions are not "mere fig leaves" behind which states hide their self-interested, ulterior motives (Finnemore 1996). Justifications are important because they "speak directly to the normative context" and are attempts to "connect one's actions with standards of justice or […] standards of appropriate and acceptable behavior" (Finnemore 2003: 15). Furthermore, Finnemore argued that states' actions may contradict international norms and standards which they have themselves articulated, but such contradictions do not preclude "patterns that correspond to notions of right conduct over time" from arising (Finnemore 1996: 159).

Finnemore's constructivist assumptions about the dynamics of the international norms regarding military intervention were prominently featured in Roy Allison's seminal monograph on the evolution of Russia's discourses of humanitarian intervention and R2P, the theoretical framework of which combined both English School's and norm-oriented constructivist perspectives (2013). Analyzing Russian leaders' articulations, Allison acknowledged, like Kuhrt and Averre & Davies, that Russia's views essentially resembled those held by the "pluralist group of states in the international society" (Allison 2013: 4). Nonetheless, he departed somewhat from the treatment of Russia as a purely pluralist state and made the crucial observation that Russia is, to a certain extent, a *hybrid* or qualified pluralist state – because "it has been unwilling to position itself outside the Western, especially European, community of states and so has been reluctant to fully reject the normative language associated with it" (Allison 2013:17).

Indeed, Allison argued that Russia's predominantly pluralist position was not always consistent; there were brief periods such as during the Gorbachev's years, the early 1990s or at the onset of the Libyan crisis in 2013, whereby the Soviet/ Russian leadership appeared willing to overcome the normative incongruence regarding sovereignty and humanitarianism between Russia and the West. Furthermore, he construed Russia's invocation of R2P to justify its intervention in Georgia in 2008, in terms somewhat similar to postcolonial theory's, as a mixture of "instrumentalism" and "mimicking" (by which he implied that R2P was invoked as the result of Russia's fear of social exclusion and loss of face) (Allison 2013: 213-214). Thus, it seems questionable to what extent constructivist concepts of internalization and socialization are relevant to the Russian case, since the Russian leadership had been quite capable of mimicking the normative language of Western solidarists without assuming a proper

commitment to implementing the international humanitarian norms that it occasionally articulated.

Allison's book also threw light on Russia's pursuit of its own regional normative and hegemonic project. He noted that regarding the Near Abroad, Russia's 'pluralism' seemed even more problematic because the efforts to maintain a hierarchical power structure clearly limited the sovereignty of other states in the post-Soviet region and weakened its vocal opposition to 'qualified sovereignty' elsewhere (Allison 2013: 214). Thus, he concluded that the inconsistency of Russia's official discourse reflects "an effort to sustain a *dual normative order, regional and global*" (ibid, emphasis mine), which, as the result, gave rise to a set of 'hybrid norms' that has the potential to undermine the international normative and legal order on which the existence of those norms depends. However, he did not give any further elucidation on the concept of 'hybrid norm' beyond this conclusion.

Altogether, the analyses that I have summarized should provide a representative picture of the extant scholarship on Russia's complex attitudes to humanitarian intervention and R2P. The merits of studies informed by English School and norm-oriented constructivist approaches are considerable. Challenging the rationalist approaches of neorealism and neoliberalism (which downplayed the normative and analytical importance of Russia's legal justifications of military interventionism), English School and constructivist scholars have expounded the normative content of Russia's discourses and situated them in the changing post-Cold War international normative context, which they [the scholars] construed as being defined by the persisting tensions between solidarist and pluralist visions – or, in Ayoob's terms (2002), between Northern and Southern perspectives – of the international society/ global order. However, despite the relevance of previous analyses, some important questions are still left unanswered, to the detriment of our understanding of Russia's peculiar discourse.

First, a rigorous conceptualization of hegemony is missing from the somewhat uncritical categorization of the Western and Russian positions into the solidarist and pluralist camps. This problem is particularly acute considering the inconsistency between Russia's approaches to sovereignty and military interventionism within and without the post-Soviet/ Near Abroad region. Certainly, it would be possible to identify

Russia's opposition to the Eurocentric doctrine of humanitarian intervention and R2P in the 'Far Abroad' with the pluralist or counter/ anti-hegemonic views commonly articulated by non-Western and subaltern countries. However, Russia's own hegemonic projects and invocations of R2P in the Near Abroad have often been neglected or subsumed into the counterhegemonic narrative of Moscow's dissatisfactions with and efforts to reshape the existing international order. Among the analyses that were examined, Allison's was an exception since he did recognize and devote a chapter in his book to explore the 'dual' nature of Russia's normative projects. Even there, however, the issue of how the global and regional normative and hegemonic orders were created/ maintained in conjunction with each other was not adequately elucidated; Allison (2013: 207) suggested that while it is "hardly unique behavior for major powers with ambitions to manage their neighboring regions", such a question "would require further research on the role of hegemons in different world regions and the possible emergence […] of 'regional public orders'".

Another crucial issue (which I have noted earlier) is Allusion's allusion to the 'hybrid norms' which arose as the consequence of Russia's efforts to maintain a dual normative order. Similarly, both Averre & Davies and Kuhrt have noted the hybridity in Russia's normative challenges to Western liberal interventionism. For instance, although not explicitly employing the term 'hybrid norms', Averre and Davies (2015: 828) argued, in a remarkable analogous manner, that the normative challenge to Western liberal interventionism that the Russian elites are trying to promote involves combining "traditional moral and spiritual values" as a source of political legitimacy with a vision of universality based on "pluralist policy positions or values". However, they placed a greater emphasis on Moscow's counter-hegemonic rhetoric pertaining to the 'Far Abroad' than on its deliberate misapplications of R2P in the 'Near Abroad'. "What is concerning and disturbing…" in these cases, Kuhrt (2015: 111-112) wrote, "is the way in which Russia seeks to hold up a mirror to the West", i.e. implying that these instances were problematic because they were spillovers of global normative struggles between Russia and the West. Such an approach to Russia's discursive construction of the military interventions in Georgia and Ukraine, in my opinions, is inadequate. In any event, what I suggest is that the key to understand Russian 'hybrid pluralist' position and 'hybrid norms' lies, quite understandably, in unraveling the pervasiveness of the quality of 'hybridity' in Russia's political discourses.

2.2. Russia's Military Interventionism as a Hybrid Discourse: Postcolonial and Poststructuralist Perspectives

For the reasons stated in the last subsection, I would argue that a theoretical framework informed by poststructuralist and postcolonial IR theories would be a valuable addition to the extant literature on Russia's discourse of military interventionism, and that such a framework can be drawn from the emergent scholarship which undertook to incorporate the postcolonial theories into the field of Russian and post-communist studies (Morozov 2013, 2015; Moore 2001; Mignolo & Tlostanova 2012; Tlostanova 2009). Especially, the works of Morozov (2013, 2015) regarding Russia's hybrid identity as a 'subaltern empire' are highly pertinent to the task of addressing the abovementioned lacuna, since they contain important insights about the hybrid nature of the modern Russian state, its foreign policy and the dual normative order that it seeks to promote/ maintain. According to this thesis, as a subaltern/ semi-periphery in a Eurocentric normative order, Russia has no alternative source of legitimacy and normativity to rely upon but the Western core's – thus explaining the need to constantly appropriate ideas, images and practices of Europe/ the West, such as international peacekeeping and R2P. At the same time, the ruling class faces the daunting task of reconciling the country's imperial legacy and core position in the post-Soviet space with its relatively marginalized position in the post-Cold War hegemonic order. Lacking viable normative alternatives with which to challenge the Western hegemonic order (Morozov 2015: 116), Russian elites eventually resorted to turning their mimicries away from the Eurocentric political imaginary and into articulations of Moscow's postimperial-cum-subaltern agency to challenge the West's normative and political hegemony – which according to Morozov, is equally Eurocentric.

Underlying this approach is the understanding of hegemony as *multilayered*, according which a peripheral or semi-peripheral position in the global hegemonic order may coincide with a core position within a domestic and/ or regional hegemony (Morozov 2015: 64). Hegemony in the Gramscian sense represents "the idea of universalization of a particular socio-economic and normative order in a historical bloc" (Morozov 2015: 63). A hegemonic order inevitably engenders marginalization and *subalternity*, understood as a form of marginalization whereby subaltern social classes, due to their exclusion from the dominant system of political power, are derived of

proper and effective 'voices' to articulate their agencies (it should be noted that mere presence or belongingness of the subalterns in a certain hierarchy does not equal their inclusion into the dominant decision-making structure). But while neo-Gramscians are almost exclusively concerned with the global hegemonic order, postcolonial (Chakrabarty 2000; Spivak 1988, 1999) and poststructuralist (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) understandings of hegemony and subalternity allow us to entertain the idea of seeing the world as "structured by multiple hegemonies" (Morozov 2015: 64). Thus, Morozov (2015: 65) put forth the argument, which in certain ways parallels Allison's concept of a dual (international and regional) normative order, that Russia has a "subaltern identity" vis-à-vis the Western global hegemony, but at the same time also possessing "an imperial identity, which takes pride […] in promoting the same hegemonic order among the native cultures, which occupy subaltern positions vis-à-vis the Russian imperial center".

According to postcolonial theory, any hegemonic order is characterized by the hybridity or co-constitutive nature of the identities of its constituting groups. The identities of the dominant groups and the subaltern groups, for instance, are intertwined. Counterhegemonic struggles are thus always part and parcel of the hegemony and destined to reproduce its logics (Morozov 2015: 64-65). As a subaltern in the Eurocentric hegemonic order, Russia's counterhegemonic and pluralist challenges to the Western liberal normative order as described by Averre and Davies remain essentially trapped in/ conditioned by Western normative paradigms. Morozov (2015: 128) succinctly put it: "a political action is only seen as legitimate if it is directed against the West (or at least demonstrates Russia's independence from the West) and fits the 'universal' norm (defined and upheld by Western hegemony) at the same time".

To gain a better understanding of Russia's hybrid discourse of military interventionism, it would be necessary to engage with poststructuralist insights of how hegemony is constructed and contested discursively. According to poststructuralist discourse theory, meanings are established through relations (deference and difference) among signifiers and *nodal points*, which are privileged signifiers capable of assigning meanings to other signifiers in the chain of signification (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 112). Any discourse, then, is "the structured totality resulting from articulatory practices", with articulations being the practices of establishing relations among signs (Laclau &

Mouffe 1985: 105). [11] From the point of view of poststructuralist discourse theory, hegemony is thus construed as "the expansion of a discourse, or set of discourses, into a dominant horizon of social orientation and action by means of articulating unfixed elements into partially fixed moments in a context crisscrossed by antagonistic forces" (Torfing 1999: 101, Rear & Jones 2013). In other words, a discourse becomes hegemonic when the social practices which are structured by it has been accepted by the majority as 'self-evident', 'commonsensical' and 'objective' (Rear & Jones 2013).

Arguably, the evolution of international norms of humanitarian interventions and R2P resembled the abovementioned process. As constructivist scholars like Finnemore (1996, 2002), Wheeler (2006) and Barnett (2011) argued, the international normative context of the post-Cold War era was in no small part characterized by the ascendancy of international norms of human rights and humanitarian interventions. Indeed, after the Cold War, the use of military force to achieve humanitarian goals had gained currency among many politicians, activists, journalists and academics in the Global North. Among the reasons for such a development, we can identify factors such as the internationalization and internalization of human rights, embodied by the increasingly proactive mandate of the UN and growth in the number of human right NGOs; the globalization of media and communication which enabled public opinions in liberal democracies to be well-informed about humanitarian situations in virtually every countries (the 'CNN effect' comes to mind); and the prevailing anticipation of Western liberal democracy's proliferation and ascendancy, of which the best-known articulation was 'End of History' theory proposed by F. Fukuyama (Hehir 2010: 1-6; Orford 2003: 2-5).

And, because changes in international norms constitute the permissible conditions for changes in international political behaviors (Thakur & Weiss 2009), the ascendancy of international norms pertaining to humanitarian intervention also precipitated the emergence of 'new' or 'humanitarian wars'. Indeed, assessing the impacts of NATO's intervention in Yugoslavia, Joenniemi (2002) argued that the doctrine of humanitarian intervention had subverted the modern (Clausewitzian) discourse of war, thus necessitating the imposition of 'humanitarian' and 'just war'

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[11] It is worth noting that poststructuralism does not dispute the existence of a material reality – it only denies the existence of an extra-discursive social reality; whose meaning is accessible to our minds and yet independent of any discursive structure (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 107-108; Hansen 2006: 19-20).

narrative frames as the conditions for possibility for all subsequent 'legitimate' military interventions. Prominently featured in (or, in other words, constantly paid lip services to by) the official agendas of virtually all military interventions conducted ever since, international humanitarian norms also exert greater 'shaming power' through increasing public pressure on the governments of democratic regimes to punish gross violations of human rights by non-democratic regimes (Wheeler 2006: 39). Thus, in terms of poststructuralist discourse theory, the post-Cold War ascendancy of international humanitarian norms can be plausibly regarded as an instance whereby a discourse attained the status of 'hegemonic' by establishing a (partial) consensus on the permissibleness – if not the desirability – of international/ collective humanitarian interventions for addressing actual or potential crimes against humanity or humanitarian catastrophes.

However, the domination of a hegemonic discourse over a field of discursivity "crisscrossed by antagonism" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 135) is neither permanent or complete; it is always "susceptible of being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices which attempt to disarticulate it in order to install another form of hegemony" (Mouffe 2008: 4, Rear & Jones 2013). In this sense, I can concur with Averre & Davies that Russia's articulations constituted such a strand of counter-/antihegemonic discursive practices. However, Russia's counterhegemonic discourses cannot introduce new nodal points to disarticulate the West's discourse of liberal humanitarianism, because as argued by Morozov (2015: 65), Russia's normative nodal points continue to be defined externally by the Eurocentric hegemony. So, unlike the anti-Western projects articulated by non-Western states like Venezuela, Iran or North Korea, Russia's counterhegemonic discourses do not offer a genuine alternative to the European/ Western hegemony. Rather, Russian elites engaged in acts of mimicry which simultaneously reproduce *and* (potentially) subvert the discourses of the hegemon. With regards to the discourse of military interventionism, such hybrid articulations are designed to link the signifiers of Russian interventions to nodal points previously established by the hegemonic discourse, such as humanitarian intervention, counterterrorism and R2P. These nodal points hence would become 'floating signifiers' (prone to competing interpretations) in the struggle for hegemony between these [Russia's and the West's] discourses (Phillips & Jorgensen 2002: 22).

An example of mimicry can be found, for instance, in Russian-style international peacekeeping operations and invocations of R2P on which I touched in the previous section. Arguably, Russia's military interventions in the early 90s and subsequently for the most part occurred as spontaneous and forcible reactions to the political and military entropies brought about by the USSR's disintegration. However, by seeking to justify them as exercises in international peacekeeping, the post-Soviet Russian leadership effectively acknowledged the Western-led normative order as the new conditions of possibility for the fledgling Russian state's military interventions, replacing the obsolescent discourse of 'socialist internationalism' (which was the basis of the Soviet Union's Brezhnev's Doctrine). As Stuenkel (2014: 12-13) noted, Russian officials' decision to invoke R2P to justify the military intervention in Georgia also demonstrated that Moscow, in principle at least, accepted the idea that violations of sovereignty can be justified under the terms of international humanitarian norms. Although the subaltern can "mimic, distort or even invert the dominant norm", its acts of mimicry cannot "establish any moral authority […] that would not need the Master's sanction to be credible" (Morozov 2015: 129). The issue of moral authority surfaced in Russia's limited successes in procuring the endorsements of CIS members for its regional normative and integration projects. Here, I am inclined to concur with Allison's remark (2013: 170) that Moscow has "no realistic prospect of challenging Western states in solidarity with some CIS or Eurasian group of states over the law and norms regulating the legitimate use of force". Borrowing Bhabha's well-known expression about colonial hybridity (Bhabha 1994: 86), Russia's discursive construction of military interventionism can be described as "almost the same, but not quite" in its aspirations to either imitate or subvert the hegemonic discourse of humanitarian intervention and R2P.

In the final analysis, the insights of postcolonial and poststructuralist theories presented above should make a compelling case that Russia's discourses of military intervention and R2P are, in fact, hybrid or Janus-faced (a term used by Tlostanova: 2008)– as they are symptomatic of Russia's hybrid condition (consisting of both subaltern and imperial traits). In other words, whilst seeking to justify the country's military interventions in the Near Abroad, Russian politicians and diplomats must repeatedly invoke legal arguments, claims and rhetoric in terms *almost* identical to those articulated by their Western counterparts. As a corollary, it would be possible to

read Russia's official discourses/ narratives of its military interventions in the Near Abroad simultaneously as equivalent and distorted versions of the Western discourses of humanitarian intervention/ R2P. Taking this into account, the next section of the dissertation will present a poststructuralist analytical framework with an eye to examining the discursive construction of Russia's military interventions regarding the cases of military interventions in Georgia and Ukraine.

3. Applying the Poststructuralist Analytical Framework

In designing the empirical analysis part, I also depart from the norm-oriented constructivist framework, which foregrounds subjective/ inter-subjective beliefs about the permissibility/ legitimacy of humanitarian intervention, and adopt a poststructuralist analytical framework – in the light of which justifications for military intervention are analyzed as part of the continuous (re)production of binary oppositions essential to the constitution of Subjectivity (Malmvig 2006). According to this approach, far from mere expressions of pre-existing identities and national interests, discourses are the sites on which 'identities' and 'interests' are constituted and articulated, the sites on which 'subjectivity' is produced (Campbell 1998: 1, Doty 1996: 5). In the words of Foucault (1981), "discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized". The objective of a poststructuralist analysis, hence, is not to uncover the pre-existing material or ideational factors behind representations, but rather to "examine how certain representations underlie the production of knowledge and identities and how these representations make various courses of action possible" (Doty 1996: 5), i.e. interrogating how discourses, articulations and representations (in the form of textual data) create the international reality upon which foreign policies can be made.

From a poststructuralist perspective, the use of force in international politics – instead of being a product of an anarchical international system – is an essential mean for states to constitute and perpetuate themselves (Heihir 2010: 76). To put it differently, violence and the state are mutually constitutive, as the use of force is the conditions of possibility of and, at the same time, enabled by sovereignty (Malmvig 2006: 38). As Edkins (2003) argued, humanitarianism is part of "the politics of drawing lines, that is, the politics of producing the sovereign state" – far from undermining

political dominance and sovereignty, it often reinforces them. Hence, the question of how post-Cold War military interventionism, in the shapes of humanitarianism, R2P or the war of Terror, simultaneously produce and are produced by the demarcations between inside/ outside, domestic/ international and Self/ Other has been a focal point of poststructuralist IR scholarship (Zehfuss 2013: 154). Following this approach, the subsequent analytical part aims to elucidate the construction of different Self/ Other binaries in Russia's discourses and examine how they resembled or distorted the hegemonic discourses of humanitarian intervention and R2P.

To facilitate the analytical process, I also incorporate into the current study the analytical strategy of reading justifications of military intervention as heroic narratives, which was proposed by critical international law scholar Anne Orford. Interventionist discourses, according to Orford, often serve to obscure the extent to which the Subject of interventions (i.e. those claiming to act on behalf of the imagined international community) have contributed, politically and economically, to the emergence of humanitarian crises (Orford 2003: 158-159). From this critical standpoint, the binary decision that the international community is prompted to make – of action and inaction, or more poignantly, to save or to abandon innocent lives – is not at all a genuine decision, because the international community is already partly responsible for engendering the inhumane conditions that it attempts to relieve (ibid: 1-39). Crucially, Orford argued that despite conspicuously international focus of legal justifications of humanitarian intervention, they function effectively as instruments of identification on domestic and personal levels, shaping the public's views through the dissemination of humanitarian intervention narratives in mass media (ibid: 11). Accounting for the pervasive effects of legal discourses of interventionism, Orford employed the concept of interpellation – which she drew from Althusser's structuralist theory of ideology and complemented with feminist and postcolonial insights – to indicate the process by which "*narrative operates to shape the subjectivity of the members of the audience*" through identification with the characters along "*gendered lines*" as well as "*racial differentiation*" (ibid: 161). The heroic narrative – which transforms the Subject of humanitarian intervention into a white and masculine savior, a "knight in white armor" (ibid: 165) – thus emerged as a vital component of the contemporary discourse of interventionism.

This type of storyline often begins with an interruption to the established order, like a civil war, ethnic-cleansing or genocide in a Third World country or a particularly devastating terrorist attack in a First World country, and concludes with a full or partial restoration of the disrupted order (take, for example, president Bush's "Mission Accomplished" speech) due to the intervener's selfless efforts and sacrifices (ibid: 163-165, 177-180). Between the two events, the world of an interventionist narrative is populated with imagines of devastated landscapes, helpless civilians, violated female bodies and maniacal authoritarians/ terrorists, which together set the stage for the Subject's heroic exploits (ibid: 171-175). Intervening in this chaotic situation, the heroic protagonist is endowed with symbols of progressiveness, civilization, power and masculinity vis-à-vis the backwardness, barbarism, impotency and effeminacy of the Others whom the protagonist must either rescue (the civilians) or punish (the enemies of human rights and democracy) to restore the symbolic order (ibid: 165-171). By identifying with the Subject, the spectators can experience the freedom and agency of the hero, thereby facilitating their own (re)interpellation into subject positions favorable to the hegemonic order (ibid: 171).

Arguably, the characters (the hero, the villain and the helpless victims) in Orford's analysis of intervention narrative can be understood as concretizations of the categories of the Self/ Other found in other poststructuralist analyses of foreign policy (Campbell 1992, Doty 1996, Hansen 2006). From a poststructuralist perspective, foreign policy (of which military interventionism is a vital component) is essentially a practice of (re)producing boundaries between inside/ outside, internal/ external and Self/ Other that constitute the conditions of possibility for identity discourses (Campbell 1992: 69). Similarly, Doty (1996: 10) argued that representational practices concerning global politics "*simultaneously construct the 'other', which is often ostensibly the object of various practices, and also importantly construct the 'self' vis-à-vis this 'other'*". Furthermore, the Subject/ Object binary of intervention narratives can be understood in terms of the dialectical processes of linking (positive identification) and differentiation (negative identification) which are part and parcel of the discursive construction of identity (Hansen 2006: 17-18); for instance, interventionary narratives associate the heroic Subject with attributes like progressiveness, civilization, power and masculinity while imagine the Others as backward, uncivilized, powerless and feminine objects (as illustrated in Figure 1). Hence, it is not unreasonable for to re-articulate

Orford's framework of humanitarian intervention narrative in the more familiar categories of poststructuralist foreign policy analysis; which, as Hansen (2016: 96) succinctly summarized, including "*representations of the countries, places, and people that such [foreign] policies are assisting or deterring, as well as [...] representation of the national or institutional self that undertakes these policies*", i.e. the Other and the Self.
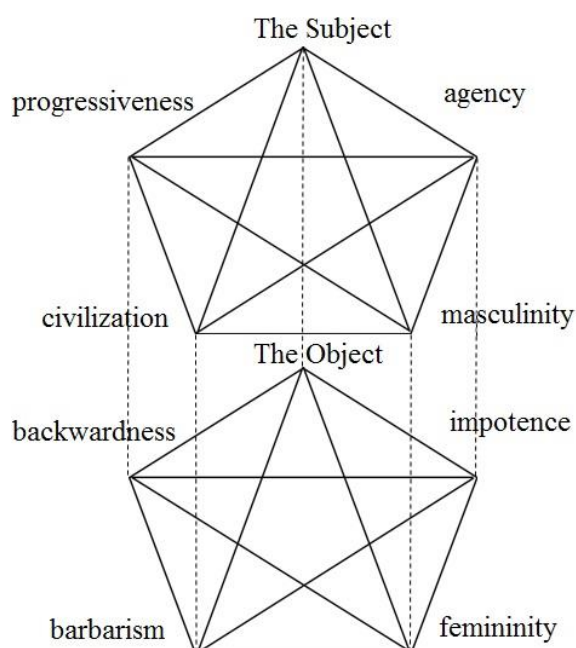

Figure 1: Processes of Linking and Differentiation in the Construction of the Subject/ Object Binary in Humanitarian Intervention Narratives

Additionally, while other analyses of foreign policy and/ or critical security tend to group representations of "*countries, places and people*" into a single category of "the Other", I would prefer to use the term "imaginative geographies" to denote forms of geographical, cartographic and spatial representation in humanitarian intervention discourses. This concept was originally developed by Edward Said in his critical analysis of Orientalism (Said 1978, Gregory 2009: 370), and had ever since entered the core vocabularies of a variety of fields in social sciences and the humanities. Here, imaginative geographies can be defined as representations of 'own' and 'other' places which form the geographical background for the interactions between the Self/ Subject and the Other/ Object, and that convey the Subject's desires and fantasies as well as power asymmetries between the Subject and the Other (Gregory 2009: 369-371). By

affirming ideas about 'near' and 'far', 'our' and 'foreign lands', imaginative geographies contribute not only to the production of Otherness but also to the Subject's self-identification (ibid; Orford 2003: 82-124).

Regarding the selection of texts, the dissertation concerns empirically with Moscow's official (presidential and government) discourses pertaining to the two cases. Specifically, the selected texts are speeches, statements, interviews and articles given/ written with the purpose of justifying Moscow's actions by top Russian officials, namely President Medvedev (in the case of the Russo-Georgian War), Prime Minister/ President Putin, Foreign Minister Lavrov and the late Russian Ambassador to the UN, Vitaly Churkin. While the timeframe for collecting textual data would normally be restricted to the period between the start and conclusion of the military intervention (when the development of the main narrative can be tracked), in reality this approach is only feasible for the case of Russia's military intervention in South Ossetia/ Georgia in 2008. For this case, I choose 08 August 2008 (when President Medvedev issued his first official statement regarding the situation in South Ossetia) and 31 August 2008 (when Medvedev unveiled his eponymous doctrine) as the starting and end dates of the analytical timeframe respectively. For Moscow's interventions in Ukraine, I delimit the time periods for collecting and reading texts based on slightly different criteria. Because the Moscow's involvement – the scale of which is still not officially disclosed – is still an ongoing affair, I decide to limit the corresponding analysis to the period between Russia's annexation of Crimea (beginning with Putin's speech on 18 March 2014) to the Minsk II Agreement in February 2015. Finally, while the military adventure in Syria might have inaugurated a new trajectory for Moscow's interventionism beyond the Near Abroad (Leonard 2016), the contemporaneity and complex nature of the Syrian conflict, e.g. the number of involved parties, their respective (and often shifting) policies, the symbolic and geopolitical significance of the Levant, etc. deter the attempt to give an analysis of Russia's Syrian intervention within the confines of this study. It should be noted, regardless, that the framework of this dissertation is intended to be applicable as well to other instances of Russian discursive construction of interventionism, including that of the intervention in Syria.

As my empirical analysis mainly engages with Russia's official discourse of justification for military intervention, it will inevitably leave out the academic, wider social and marginal (oppositional) political discourses. However, such a limitation is

understandable, because I do not aim to map the whole discursive field pertaining to Russia's foreign interventions nor to distinguish between the official and marginal political discourses. Such objectives would require a much more encompassing and throughout investigation which is simply not practical for the level of a master dissertation. Rather, in designing this analytical framework, I follow the methodological approach of Helle Malmvig (2006: 24), who argues that "discourses do not exist prior to our investigations of them", and hence there are no given rules dictating how particular discourses should be analyzed. As opposed to positivist methodologies, a poststructuralist analytical framework is neither a mean "to test poststructuralist approaches" nor "a way to furnish a set of universal criteria upon which poststructuralist work can be evaluated" (ibid), but should rather provide a guideline "to structure that large body of textual material" with which the study engages. As such, the choices that I make regarding the division of the examined discourses into three analytical categories as well as the selection of texts are but several in an infinite number of research designs and analytical strategies that could be hypothetically employed. I also do not endeavor to test or falsify the validity of the postcolonial theory-inspired assumption about Russia's hybrid 'subaltern empire' status – such a task would also require a different theoretical and methodological framework – but rather to demonstrate its pertinence to our understanding of Russia's military interventionism and its hybridity in juxtaposition to the Western hegemonic discourses of humanitarian intervention and R2P.

III.   IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHIES AND GEOPOLITICAL IMAGINARY

In this chapter, I argue that the analysis of imaginative geographies can be applied to the production of the imaginative 'post-Soviet'/ 'Near Abroad' space in Russia's discourse of military interventionism, and that Russia's imaginative geographies bore similarities as well as differences in comparison to those of the post-Cold War hegemonic discourse of humanitarianism. Based on the analysis of official texts, I identify two major forms of geographical and geopolitical representations that Russia's discourses of military interventionism had employed to make sense of military interventions in Georgia and Ukraine: the former pertains to representations of the locations of Russia's military interventions and foregrounds the geopolitical narrative of a Russo-centric 'Near Abroad' region, while the latter involved framing Russian military actions as counter-hegemonic moves aimed to challenge the West' post-Cold War geopolitical dominance.

1.   Imaginative Geographies of the Near Abroad

In the age of liberal interventionism and R2P, the legitimacy of military interventions is contingent upon the idea of sovereignty as a responsibility, and only states that manifestly fail to perform their perceived responsibilities to the populations can become potential targets for external interventions. Representational practices pertaining to imaginative geographies are therefore essential to the discursive production of the territories wherein humanitarian interventions take place. More often than not, such representational practices function by reproducing colonial Orientalist stereotypes, wherein countries at the receiving end of the interventions are imagined as not only geographically remote and backward but also morally distinct from the interveners (O'Tuathail 1996: 170).

In Russia's official discourses, the Georgian and Ukrainian states were similarly treated as failed states plagued by internal conflicts and lacking the capacity (as well as the will) to protect the populations – many of whom were also Russian citizens or Russian speakers. In the official discourse on Georgia/ South Ossetia, for instance, Georgia was discursively represented as a country suffering from its government's nationalistic and belligerent policies. The links between South Ossetia (and by extension Abkhazia) and Georgia was deliberately kept vague: on the one hand, the

discourse occasionally indicated South Ossetia to be a part of Georgia in order to accuse the Georgian government of crimes against its own people; on the other hand, South Ossetians were frequently referred to as a distinct people whose closeness to the Russian nation separated them from Georgia proper (Lavrov 12.08.2008, Medvedev 26.08.2008). In the case of Ukraine, the post-Maidan Ukrainian state also appeared in the Russian discourse as a failed and backward state ruled by corrupt officials and ultranationalists who favored the use of violence to achieve their political goals, bringing into mind a chaotic and devastated landscape similar to those constructed by other interventionist narratives (Putin 18.03.2014, 17.04.2014; Orford 2003: 171-175). Lavrov, for example, simulated such a landscape of chaos and violence in his description of Ukraine:

> *"... A coup d'état supported by external forces has taken place in the country, which is fraternal for Russia. Anarchy is continuing, actions of national radicals, anti-Semites and other extremists, on which the new powers are based, are fixed every day. Real threats to life and the safety of people, everyday cases of violence, gross and mass violation of human rights in Ukraine, including discrimination and persecution due to nationality, language and political convictions..."* (Lavrov 20.03.2014)

The most salient geopolitical representations employed by Russia's discourse of military interventionism, however, involved the continuous reaffirmation of the 'Near Abroad' geopolitical imaginary and the inclusion of intervened territories in this imaginative geographical space. Geopolitics has been frequently evoked by both Russian and Western scholars to explain Russia's motivation for military intervention in the Near Abroad (for example Allison 2015: 1269-1282; Auer 2015; Gotz 2016; Karaganov 2014; Mearsheimer 2014; Sakwa 2016; Trenin 2014a). Here, I understand 'geopolitics' in terms of geo-political discourses and representational practices, the purpose of which is to explain and justify foreign policy (Mäkinen 2016: 95, Laruelle 2015). Across the examined discourses, the 'Near Abroad' was employed as a geographical nodal point to which the geopolitical significance of Russia's military interventions can be partially fixed – in the official articulation, it generally came to denote the post-Soviet region wherein the Russian nation had a traditional military and political presences as well as vital long-term interests. By demarcating the boundaries between the Near Abroad and the 'Far Abroad', the official discourse distinguished the

military actions taken by Russia within the former from its opposition to the West's humanitarian interventions in the latter – thus exhibiting the dual nature of the geopolitical imaginary in Russia's humanitarian intervention discourse.

In the case of Georgia, Russia's military intervention and subsequent recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia's independence provided the Russian leadership with the opportunity to articulate the idea of a Russo-centric geopolitical sphere in the Near Abroad – i.e. the so-called 'Medvedev Doctrine'. Such an articulation involved, on the one hand, grounding Russia's claims on highly simplified narratives of history and identity, which represented Russia as the historical guarantor and provider of security of the people in the Caucasus. On the other, it involved the linking the Russian Self's vital interests to the Near Abroad nodal point, thereby fixing the meaning of the region as a geopolitical space with ontological significance to the Self (Medvedev 08.08.2008, 12.08.2008, 31.08.2008).

Similarly, representation of historico-geographical bonds between Russia and its neighborhood and the region's geopolitical importance to Russia also played a fundamental role in the signification of Russia's annexation of Crimea and (tacit) military supports to the Donbas insurgency. In the case of Crimea, the historical dimension was foregrounded and mythicized to evoke a sense of organic, cultural and civilizational togetherness between Russia and the Crimean Peninsula and Sevastopol (Putin 18.03.2014). In terms of geo-strategic significance, the discourse emphasized the importance of Sevastopol as the base of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, and the prospect of Ukraine becoming a member of NATO thus posed a pressing security threat to the Russian Self (Putin 17.04.2014). Such an imaginary was put quite succinctly by Putin himself in an interview with Radio Europe 1 and TF1 TV channel: "*we could not allow a historical part of the Russian territory with a predominantly ethnic Russian population to be incorporated into an international military alliance, especially because Crimeans wanted to be part of Russia*" (Putin 04.06.2014). In geo-economic terms, the discourse also articulated the view that the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine would detrimentally affected the economic relations between Moscow and Kiev (Putin 24.10.2014). With regards to the conflicts in Donbas, the official discourse attempted to link Eastern Ukraine to the briefly resurrected geopolitical imaginary of Novorossiya (New Russia) – an administrative region which

dated back to the Russian Empire – as evidenced by Putin's remark during his Direct Line session in April 2014:

> "*I would like to remind you that what was called Novorossiya (New Russia) back in the tsarist days – Kharkov, Lugansk, Donetsk, Kherson, Nikolayev and Odessa – were not part of Ukraine back then. These territories were given to Ukraine in the 1920s by the Soviet government. Why? Who knows. They were won by Potemkin and Catherine the Great in a series of well-known wars. The centre of that territory was Novorossiysk, so the region is called Novorossiya. Russia lost these territories for various reasons, but the people remained*" (Putin 17.04.2014).

To sum up, the section argued that the imaginative geographies pertaining to the Near Abroad in Russia's military interventions on the one hand articulated the objects of Russia's interventions (Georgia and Ukraine) as chaotic and backward landscapes in the language of humanitarianism, but on the other hand also associated the territories in question with the Self's ontological security. Through these links, the official discourse not only represented these countries and territories as legitimate targets for external humanitarian intervention but also sought to naturalize the Russia Self's claims to exclusive right to intervene in them.

2. Russia's Counter-Hegemonic Imaginative Geographies

Another important facet of Russia's imaginative geographies involved the global imaginary based on which Russian official discourses construe the global implications of its military interventions. Generally, the section argues that in contrast with the liberal geopolitical imaginaries of post-Cold War humanitarianism, Russia's intervention narratives traced the country's military interventions in Georgia and Ukraine back to its counter-hegemonic geopolitical imaginary (Gregory 2009: 371). While liberal humanitarianism premised a non-Western world in need of the West' assistances to advance toward universal values such as democracy and human rights, the Russian geopolitical imaginary on the contrary identified the liberal and anti-Russian geopolitical ambitions of the West (manifested in the expansion of NATO and the enlargement of the EU) as the causes of the humanitarian crises and global instability that the Russian Self must address. Through such imaginary, the military interventions in Georgia and Ukraine assumed new dimensions of meaning as

'criticisms by weapons' of the unjust dominance and misuse of the discourse of humanitarianism of the Western hegemon.

In the case of Georgia, the counter-hegemonic imaginative geographies of Russia's discourse involved criticism of the West's military and political supports for Georgia, which was explained as originating from its 'Cold War' mentality and unwarranted ambitions toward Russia's neighborhood (Putin 11.08.2008). Georgian's aggressive policies was portrayed as being conducted against the background of NATO's offering of the Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia in early 2008, which was depicted by Lavrov as "*anti-Russian policy, supporting an aggressive regime in Georgia*" (Lavrov 19.08.2008). The West/ NATO was also criticized for not for its geopolitical double standard and the discrepancy in its invocations of humanitarian norms. For instance, in his speech in Vladikavkaz, Putin drew a comparison between the atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the destruction caused by Georgia – which he described as more appalling – in an effort to ridicule the disparate applications of humanitarian norms by U.S. authorities:

> *"But, of course, Saddam Hussein had to be hanged for destroying several Shiite villages. And the present Georgian leadership, who have simply wiped out ten Ossetian villages from the face of this planet, whose tanks were running over children and old men, who have burned civilians alive in sheds - these people, certainly, had to be taken under protection. If I am not mistaken, Ronald Reagan once said about a Latin American dictator: "Somoza is a bastard, but he is our bastard. And we will help him, we will protect him.""*
> (Putin 11.08.2008)

Russia's counter-hegemonic geopolitical imaginary in the context of Russia's military intervention in Georgia was articulated most succinctly in Medvedev's interview with Channel One on 31 August 2008. Here, alongside a Near Abroad's 'sphere of privileged interests', Medvedev also expressed Russia's desire for a multi-polar world. A unipolar international system with the U.S. at its head was seen as unacceptable and cited the source of instability and conflict:

> *"… The world should be multi-polar. A single-pole world is unacceptable. Domination is something we cannot allow. We cannot accept a*

world order in which one country makes all the decisions, even as serious and influential a country as the United States of America. Such a world is unstable and threatened by conflict." (Medvedev 31.08.2008)

In the case of Ukraine, the Russian narrative framed the annexation of Crimea in the context of a geopolitical-historical narrative, centering around three key events: Nikita Khrushchev's decision to transfer the Crimean Peninsula along with Sevastopol to Ukraine in 1954, the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the Euromaidan crisis in Ukraine in 2013-2014 (Putin 18.03.2014; Churkin 31.03.2014). Each of these three events constitutes an equivalent of a 'disruption' to the symbolic order, which the hero of the intervention narrative must seek to undo. For instance, both Putin's and Churkin's speeches depicted the transfer of Crimea and Sevastopol to Ukraine as an 'illegal', 'unconstitutional' and 'voluntaristic' decision that contradicted the entire historical course of the Russian nation. This 'historical injustice' was further exacerbated when Crimea was "*cut off "alive" from Russia*" (Churkin 31.03.2014) and the Crimean people were *"handed over like a sack of potatoes"* (Putin 18.03.2014) in 1991, and in 2014, when the political upheaval in Kyiv threatened to unleash the forces of Ukrainian neo-Nazism and ultranationalism onto ethnic Russians living in Ukraine. Thus, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov depicted the Russian Self as facing an urgent choice

"...dictated by the entire history of our modern day life, international law, Russian national identity, our responsibility for the destinies of those Russians who found themselves abroad in a flash as a result of procedures, which did not correspond to international legal procedures..." (Lavrov 30.03.2014)

Furthermore, the discourse presented the last two events in this historical sequence as being accompanied by even more perilous and sinister geopolitical developments of a global magnitude – namely the collapse of the bipolar global order and the ensuing unipolar global disorder. In the Russian narrative, this type of disruptions, whilst resembling the instabilities and violence of the post-Cold War era that were evoked to rationalize the Eurocentric discourse of military interventionism (Orford 2003: 162-163), was construed as inevitable consequences of the West's exceptionalism and geopolitical ambitions – instead of being the works of "rouge states, ruthless dictators and ethnic tensions" (ibid: 163) as in the Western discourses. Thus,

echoing his 2007 speech in Munich, Putin's speech on the eve of the annexation provided a tour d'horizon of how the Ukrainian crisis originated in the post-Cold War political development:

> *"Like a mirror, the situation in Ukraine reflects what is going on and what has been happening in the world over the past several decades. After the dissolution of bipolarity on the planet, we no longer have stability. […] Our western partners, led by the United States of America, prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun. They have come to believe in their exclusivity and exceptionalism, that they can decide the destinies of the world, that only they can ever be right. They act as they please: here and there, they use force against sovereign states, building coalitions based on the principle "If you are not with us, you are against us." To make this aggression look legitimate, they force the necessary resolutions from international organizations, and if for some reason this does not work, they simply ignore the UN Security Council and the UN overall"* (Putin 18.03.2014)

Furthermore, it is implied in Putin's speech that the decision to admit Crimea and Sevastopol into the Russian Federation was consequential for Russia as well as the non-Western world, because it proved that peripheral countries were "*independent participants*" in international affairs whose national interests must be "*taken into account and respected*" notwithstanding the core's objections (Putin 18.03.2014). Likewise, Lavrov (07.04.2014) conjured a pedagogical metaphor to convey Russian counter-hegemonic message: "*The world of today is not a junior school where teachers assign punishments at will*".

Throughout the crisis in Eastern Ukraine, Russia's counter-hegemonic geopolitical imaginary continued to be evoked in order to make sense of Russia's interventionist policy. Putin's speech at the Valdai Forum later in 2014 offered a fine example of this continuation (Putin 24.10.2014). In this speech, Putin articulated another sweeping narrative of geopolitical development since the end of the Cold War, which in his view had led to the erosion of "*the current system of global and regional security*", making the world considerably less safe and more volatile. Once again, the triumphalism of Western states after the collapse of the Soviet Union was identified as

the root cause of the global disorder – the proliferation of ethnic conflicts and extremist groups (such as Islamic terrorists and neo-fascists) in the periphery was traced back to the West's disdain for national sovereignty and efforts to impose their wills and models of development – without the UNSC's sanctions – on other countries. The current crisis in Ukraine was then construed as a symptom of this global disorder, as "*a result of a misbalance in international relations*". Against this chaotic geopolitical backdrop stood the Russian Self as a bastion of stability and moderation; Russia was depicted as seeking neither world leadership nor superpower status ("*We don't need to be a superpower; this would only be an extra load for us*"), but merely the redress of its grievances and the establishment of a proper functioning global system – a system founded on the norms of international law (especially sovereign equality), interdependence among different regions of the world and respects for the legitimate interests of all countries.

To sum up, the analysis of Russia's imaginative geographies and geopolitical imaginaries presented in this chapter demonstrated that there were structural similarities as well as differences between the ways the Russian and hegemonic discourses of military interventionism were constructed. On the one hand, like liberal interventionism's narratives, Russian intervention narratives viewed the objects of its military interventions, Georgia and Ukraine, under imperialistic lenses. Through these lenses, the two countries as well as the territories under contestation appeared as vital components of the 'Near Abroad' post-imperial geopolitical imaginary. At the same time, due to Russia's fundamental hybridity, articulations of Russian geopolitical imaginary also linked its imperial reflexes with the subaltern dreams of challenging the geopolitical domination of the Western hegemon. The two sides of Russia's imaginative geographies – the post-imperial and subaltern imaginaries – reinforced rather than cancelled out each other, as Russia's military interventions were rationalized simultaneously on the ground of defending its vital interests and historical role within the Near Abroad and as the manifestation of Russia's counter-hegemonic aspiration to challenge the Eurocentric hegemonic order.

IV. THE OTHERS OF RUSSIAN HEROIC INTERVENTION NARRATIVE
1. The Antagonistic Others: Representations of the West and Georgian/ Ukrainian Others

The role of the Other or 'Others' in the formation of Russian identity and foreign policy has been studied extensively by IR scholars following constructivist and

poststructuralist approaches (for example, see Tsygankov 2012, 2015; Hopf 2015, 2016; Neumann 2016). Among other things, this scholarly discourse generally established representations of Europe/ the West as the most significant form of Otherness informing debates on national identity and foreign policy among both the Russian elites and public (Morozov 2017). For instance, Tsygankov (2013: 17) argued that the West "played the role of the significant Other and prominently figured in debates about national identity" and is "the key point of reference" of Russian foreign policy discourses. Therefore, as an integral part of foreign policy, Russian discourse of military intervention naturally would replicate the dichotomy between the Russian Self and the Western/ European Other found elsewhere.

Yet, according to Hansen (2006: 36), the foregrounding of a single Self/ Other duality could be counterproductive, as the Other is usually located in an intricate 'web of identities' that involves various degrees of Otherness as well as multiple Others. Similarly, Orford's conception of the narrative of military interventionism – as described in the previous section – suggests that such a narrative must put together a 'cast' of various characters to sustain valid Objects for the intervener's heroic quest. Informed by these assumptions, the current analysis elected to depart from previous studies and locate in the Russian discourse different representations of the Others that can fulfill the prescribed roles as either 'antagonists' or 'sufferers' of the humanitarian intervention story.

1.1. Representations of the Western Other

In the official discourse of the military intervention in South Ossetia, the Western Other was discursively constructed as partly responsible – though indirectly – for engendering the crisis that required the Russian Self's heroic intervention. At times, however, the offical discourse did portray certain Western leaders and officials (such as those of Finland, France or the EU and OSCE) quite positively. For instance, France's President Sarkozy were commended for brokering the ceasefire agreement between Russia and Georgia (Lavrov 12.08.2008; Medvedev 12.08.2008). Some of the texts also cast positive lights on the EU and OSCE for these organizations' perceived cooperation and understanding. Additionally, at the very beginning of Russia's military intervention, references to the roles of the West were mostly neutral in tones or even avoided entirely, as in the case of President Medvedev's first offical statement

regarding the situation in South Ossetia on 08 August (Medvedev 08.08.2008). Lavrov's statement on the same day also included only passing mentions of the European Union and Russia's 'European & American colleagues' (when he stated that Georgian aggression was being carried out "*against the background of the flag of the European Union*" and that the West would "*understand what is happening*" and support Russia's rightful military actions) (Lavrov 08.08.2008). Similarly, in his speech in Vladikavkaz on the next day, Putin only alluded to Tbilisi's desire to become a member of NATO, which according to him was pursued in order to "*involve other countries and peoples in its bloody adventures*" (Putin 09.08.2008).

However, as the military intervention progressed, attitudes toward the West were increasingly characterized by frustrations over the unwillingness of Western capitals – especially Washington – to recognize Tbilisi's 'war crimes' as well as the legitimacy of Moscow's R2P-based military intervention. Negative representations of the West were articulated, for example, in Putin's opening remarks at a government meeting on 11 August, wherein the then Prime Minister criticized 'Western partners' for not giving heed to Moscow's previous warnings about Tbilisi's belligerence, thus holding them partially responsible for their client state's aggressive behaviors (Putin 11.08.2008). Echoing Putin's criticisms, Lavrov (12.08.2008) also apportioned the blame on Western countries and specifically the U.S.: "*What happened in South Ossetia lies, to a significant extent, on their [the Western states'] conscience as well […] Our US partners gave assurances to us that they would not allow the Georgian army trained by them to be used to solve problems in the conflict zones. Obviously, they failed to keep Mikhail Saakashvili from the temptation to solve all his problems by way of war*". From there onward, negative images of the U.S. government and NATO were evoked more frequently, occasionally supplemented by favorable descriptions of European leaders like Sarkozy or organizations like the EU and OSCE. The examined texts showed that Russian officials explicitly attributed the blame for engendering the crisis, through politically and militarily assisting Saakashvili's regime, on the U.S. government and its allies. NATO as a whole was openly criticized for pursuing 'anti-Russia' policy and aiding Georgia's militaristic agenda – Lavrov, for example, remarked that "*NATO is trying to make a victim of an aggressor and whitewash a criminal regime*" and "*it's Mr. Saakashvili telling advanced democracies such as NATO countries what they should do to satisfy his ambitions*" (Lavrov 19.08.2008).

Not only holding the West partially liable for Georgia's actions, Russian discourse also sought to rebut Western governments' criticisms of Russia's R2P-based justifications by bringing up ethical and legal issues regarding previous military interventions and framing them as examples of the West's double standard and exceptionalism. In his Vladikavkaz's speech, for instance, Putin acrimoniously denounced the 'surprising level of cynicism' of the American government, which prior to speech helped transporting Georgian contingents from Iraq "directly into the conflict zone" in Georgia (Putin 11.08.2008). Lavrov's speech on the next day offered additional examples of how the Russian official discourse constructed the idea of a hypocritical Western/ American Other. In this speech, he criticized his American counterpart, Condoleezza Rice, for trying to dissuade the Russian Foreign Minister from labelling the conducts of Georgia's military as genocide, ethnic cleansing and war crimes (which he considered "*an obvious designation supported by testimonies of eyewitnesses and journalists covering the situation*") as well as denied outright her accusation that Russia was seeking to overthrow President Saakashvili, stating that "*it is not a part of our political culture and not in the tool-box of our foreign policy to engage in the dethroning-enthroning exercise. That's what others do, whom we know*" – refereeing to the United States' notorious record of engineering regime changes.

In the context of Russia's military interventions in Crimea and Donbas, the West continued to be portrayed as the antagonist force behind the chaotic situations unfolding in Ukraine and as the main facilitator of the Ukrainian Other's aggressive behaviors. Putin's speech on the annexation of Crimea, for instance, contained a lengthy and indignant description of the West's exceptionalism and hypocrisy, juxtaposing them with the honorability and responsibleness of the Russian Self. In the speech, Putin denounced the West states for disregarding international laws and trying to overthrow the government of a sovereign country: "*Our western partners, led by the United States of America, prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun*" (Putin 18.03.2014). The degree of antagonism attached to the Western Other in Russia's discourse on Crimea was conspicuously greater than was the case with the discourse on Georgia – instead of just being partially responsible, the Western Other was represented right from the start as instigator of the crises which necessitated the intervention of the Russian Self. For example, Lavrov wrote in his The Guardian's opinion piece that the undemocratic and unconstitutional coup in Kyiv was

conducted "*with the direct participation of ministers and other officials from the US and EU countries*" (Lavrov 07.04.2014). Moreover, the EU's Association Agreement and the Eastern Partnership were portrayed as geopolitical tools of the West to impose its desires on the Ukrainian people and turn Ukraine into a satellite state of the EU (Lavrov 30.03.2014). Among the Western states, the U.S. Other was portrayed in an especially harsh light as the one country who played the most significant role in manipulating the crisis in Ukraine and orchestrated the Western states' reactions to it. The European states, on the other hand, were regarded as being led astray by their American ally (Putin 18.03.2014; Lavrov 14.06.2014).

In summary, across the selected cases and texts, Russian intervention narratives routinely assigned the roles of 'antagonists' to the Western as well as Georgian and Ukrainian Others – hence, the tropes of 'Western exceptionalism', 'unilateralism', 'color revolutions', 'NATO/ EU expansion', 'double standard', etc. made frequent appearance in the examined texts. The attitudes to the Western Other, however, varied among the examined cases and sometime even fluctuated over the course of a studied period. Moreover, while the West was frequently represented as a monolithic group to which Russian officials collectively referred as 'our Western partners', 'our European & American colleagues' or simply 'the West'/ 'Western countries', the heterogeneity and incongruousness existing under these generic labels were also emphasized by the speakers/ writers in efforts to particularize the attitudes of the Russian Self toward certain national Others (or groups of national Others, such as NATO or EU) within 'the West'. Finally, it should be noted that even in its most radical articulations, Russian official discourse still maintain the prospects for 'cooperation' and 'understanding' between the Russian Self and 'Western partners'; this reluctance to antagonize the Western Other signifies persisting normative and material dependency of Russia on the Western core (Morozov 2015), which despite symbolic triumphs of Russia's military interventions continue to limit the realm of possibility for the Russian Subject.

1.2. *Representations of the Georgian/ Ukrainian Others*

While the West was discursively constructed as an adversary (whose double standard and exceptionalism regarding R2P the Russian Self endeavored to subvert) but still regarded as an Subject to whom the Russia Self sought to establish equal relations (in order to conceal its material and normative dependence), representations of the

Georgian and Ukrainian Others were constructed primarily through representational strategies of vilification and negation which resembled those of the post-Cold War discourses and practices of interventionism (Orford 2003: 171-175). Through vilification (attributing negative characteristics to the extent of reducing the adversaries to inhumane villains) and negation (depriving of the effective agency essential for self-determination), intervention narratives ascribe to the Others the attributions that stood in stark contrast with civilizedness, rationality and potency (which are linked to the Self), thus depriving those Others of the qualities needed to be self-governing Subjects and legitimizing external interventions against it.

Indeed, in Russian intervention narratives, the two post-Soviet countries were portrayed as non-democratic and failed states which needed to be intervened in order to rescue the populations (of whom many were seen as Russian citizens or compatriots). The leaderships of Georgia and Ukraine were stigmatized as transgressors and corrupted politicians, who led their countries to conflict and disunity to satisfy their corrupt political ambitions. In the former case, the actions of the Georgian side from the very beginning were framed as gross violations of international laws as well as its previous commitments to the peace process. Among other things, they were portrayed as "*aggressive actions against the South Ossetian people*" which were conducted in total disregard of "*the UN General Assembly resolution appeal to observe Olympic Peace during the Beijing Olympic Games*" (Lavrov 08.08.2008). Especially, Georgian soldiers were frequently described as those who opened fire at the Russian peacekeepers with whom they were supposed to cooperate – thus framing their actions as a dishonorable violation of the norms of international peacekeeping (Medvedev 08.08.2008, Lavrov 12.08.2008).

From the initial framing of Georgia's military operation as a one-sided act of aggression that broke international laws, the vilification of the Georgian leadership as human right violators and war criminals became prevalent after Putin's visit to North Ossetia-Alania. In Vladikavkaz, Putin began to openly describe the actions of the Georgian side as "*a crime against their own people*" and "*a crime against Ossetian people*" which caused a humanitarian crisis affecting thousands of people, including many Russian citizens (Putin 09.08.2008). The case against Georgia was reinforced by Putin on the next day, when he reported to Medvedev that "*elements of a kind of*

genocide against the Ossetian people" (who, as he was at pains to point out, were also Russian citizens) were evident (Medvedev & Putin 10.08.2008). Afterward, charges of ethnic cleansing, genocide and war crimes were publicly laid by the Russian government against Saakashvili's regime and the Georgian leader personally. In the Russian discourse, Saakashvili was vilified as a dangerous, untrustworthy and power-hungry politician in the mold of Third World dictators. Not only chargeable for causing the humanitarian catastrophe in South Ossetia, the Georgian President was also portrayed as an authoritarian ruler who came to power "*not via elections*" (Lavrov 14.08.2008) and who ordered "*the dispersals of demonstrations, the brutal restrictions on opposition activities, and the shutdown of opposition media*" (Lavrov 28.08.2008) and "*opted for genocide to accomplish his political objectives*" (Medvedev 26.08.2008). Lavrov (14.08.2008) even explicitly described Saakashvili as a deranged person: "*There are no crazy leaders there who would be preoccupied with destroying their own states and settling the conflicts by the use of force, as the leadership of Georgia did in South Ossetia and Abkhazia*".

Similarly, to justify the annexation of Crimea, the official discourse used the representational strategies of vilification and negation to constructed the new Ukrainian government that emerged out of the Euromaidan movement as illegal, illegitimate, and therefore incapable of representing the Ukrainian people. The politicians in both the old and new regimes were labelled as oligarchs, corrupt officials or ultranationalists ("*They milked the country, fought among themselves for power, assets and cash flows and did not care much about the ordinary people*", Putin 18.03.2014). Framing the overthrown of Yanukovych as an unconstitutional coup d'etat, the offical discourse refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the post-Yanukovych Ukrainian government and portrayed the members of it as "*nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites*" (Putin 18.03.2014). Not only unable to protect the Russian-speaking populations, the new regime was portrayed as actively seeking to victimize ethnic Russians and Russian speakers living in Ukraine. The new government's policy to restrict the use of Russian as an official language, for example, was repeatedly put forth as an example of Kyiv's anti-Russian attitude (Putin 04.06.2014). The Ukrainian government was also depicted, like the Georgian government before, as a non-democratic regime which was using violent force against its own people, leading to a grave humanitarian crisis in Donetsk and Lugansk. In the Russian intervention

narrative, the Ukrainian Other therefore ceased to be regarded as a functioning national authority and even as a unitary state ("*It is also obvious that there is no legitimate executive authority in Ukraine now, nobody to talk to. Many government agencies have been taken over by the impostors, but they do not have any control in the country*", Putin 18.03.2014; "*the unitary state no longer functions in Ukraine*", Lavrov 16.04.2014).

To detach the Maidan elites from the people they claimed to represent, the discourse often expressed sympathy with ordinary Maidan protesters but denounced the leaders of the movement, describing them as having selfish political agendas and wicked methods: "*They resorted to terror, murder and riots*" (Putin 18.03.2014). By sustaining the differentiation, the Russian official discourse sought to further de-legitimize the democratic marking of the Euromaidan and the regime emerging from this movement in the eyes of Russians, Ukrainians and international observers. Although the sovereignty of Ukraine was not rejected per se, the discourse constructed the new Ukrainian government as powerless and unable to represent the Ukrainian people (if not actively misleading them).

The negative descriptions of the Ukrainian Other, however, underwent a transformation later in 2014. Instead of denying the legitimacy of the new Ukrainian government, the official discourse began to recognize its status as well as the possibility of reconciliation between the government in Kyiv and the separatist group in Eastern Ukraine under the Minsk Agreement (Lavrov 29.12.2014). Even then, however, the Ukrainian side continued to be cast under less than positive light. For example, it was portrayed for persistently pursuing violent methods to resolve the conflict in Donbas, resulting in the failure of the first peace arrangement (Putin 23.01.2015). Thus, it can be concluded that while the strategy of negation was employed less and less, the official discourse persisted in vilifying the Ukrainian Other and depicting it as the opposite of the Russian heroic Self.

In summary, negative representations of Georgia/ Ukraine and the Georgian/ Ukrainian leadership, constructed through strategies of vilification and negation, functioned to produce the antagonistic Other essential to humanitarian intervention heroic storylines. The goal of such representational practices, following the arguments of poststructuralist IR, was to construct the antagonistic Other as a complete opposite

of the Self and to deny it of the legitimacy to exercise political sovereignty. Through such negative representations, Russian discourse sought to construct the Georgian and Ukrainian Others into legitimate Objects for the Self's heroic interventions.

2. The Suffering Other: Representations of Russian Citizens and Compatriots

Aside from representations of the antagonist Other (the West and Georgian/ Ukrainian governments) against whom the Self must struggle, Russian discourses of military interventions also importantly constructed the suffering Other (in the forms of Russian citizens or compatriots living in South Ossetia, Crimea and Eastern Ukraine) who functioned as the main referents of Russia's humanitarian and R2P-based justifications. Once again, the analysis indicated that across the three cases, Russia's discursive representational practices pertaining to the suffering Other are not unlike those of the Western liberal humanitarian discourses. As Barnett (2011: 16) argued, the discourse of human rights focuses on the long-term goal of eliminating the causes of human suffering while the discourse of humanitarianism is based on the immediate goals of keeping people alive and punishing the perpetrators. Hence, discursive representations of sufferings and atrocities are essential for intervention narratives to invoke emotions and a sense of moral urgency which serve as the catalysts for the exceptional use of force.

In the case of South Ossetia, the South Ossetian people were constructed as victims of cold-blooded acts of unprovoked aggression on the part of the Georgian regime. To elicit the helplessness of the victims, official speeches and documents often characterized them as peaceful and innocent inhabitants, of whom the majority was comprised of the elders, women and children (Lavrov 08.08.2008). The historical complexity of the conflict was simplified to a series of unilateral attempts of the Georgian leadership – from Gamsahourdia to Saakashvili – to subjugate the populations of South Ossetia through violent means ("*annexing South Ossetia through the annihilation of a whole people*", Medvedev 26.08.2008). In terms of nationality/ ethnicity, South Ossetians were described as possessing Russian citizenships, hence linking the atrocities committed against them to an attack on the Russian Self. At the same time, the discourse also attached to the victims Georgian and Ossetian identities– the former to help framing the actions of the Georgian army as a crime against its own people, while the later – to construct them as acts of ethnic cleansing committed by the Georgian government against the South Ossetians. An example can be found in

Lavrov's interview with Ekho Moskvy on 14 August, during which he remarked that "*Mr. Saakashvili has inflicted colossal harm not only upon the South Ossetians, not only upon the Abkhaz, if you take the ethnic characteristic, but also upon the Georgians – his own people*" (Lavrov 14.08.2008). The decision to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia was also framed in humanitarian languages as the only viable solution to prevent any further crises from arising (Lavrov 26.08.2008, Medvedev 26.08.2008).

In the contexts of Russia's interventions in Crimea and Donbas, the images of the suffering which were produced by the official discourse also resembled to a considerable extent the representational strategies used by other humanitarian intervention narratives. Ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers living in Ukraine were portrayed as constantly suffering from discriminations as well as political and economic hardships due to the incompetence of the Ukrainian government – with the undemocratic and unconstitutional coup d'état staged by ultranationalists in Kyiv being the final straw (Putin 18.03.2014, Lavrov 17.04.2014). At one point, Putin (24.10.2014) even declared the Russian nation as a whole to be the victim of "one the greatest humanitarian disasters of the 20th century" – by which he meant the collapse of the Soviet Union. Another indication of how the Russian intervention narrative reproduced the tropes of post-Cold War humanitarianism to sustain the images of the suffering Other during the military intervention in Ukraine can be found in a series of White Books entitled "*On Violations of Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Ukraine*", which were published by Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in April, June and November of 2014 (RMFA 2014). Following the language of human right reports, these documents provided detailed lists of 'human right violations' carried out by or in the name of the Euromaidan and the Ukrainian government against ethnic Russian populations and other minority groups in the country during the indicated periods of time. Interestingly, some of the 'violations' listed in these reports taken the forms of vandalizations and destructions of Soviet-era monuments to Lenin or the Red Army (RMFA 04.2014) – which served to corroborate the accusation that the Ukrainian Other was trying to erase the history and identity of Russian speakers in Ukraine, in addition to other human right violations.

However, in both cases, the suffering Others were not portrayed only as passive victims – they were also positively linked with some of the attributes associated with

the heroic Self, such as *"courage, dignity and bravery"* and especially political agency (Putin 18.03.2014). Such depictions were essential to frame the interventions as disinterested applications of humanitarian norms and R2P rather than just one-sided military actions motivated by the antagonism of the interveners toward the antagonistic Other. In the case of Georgia, the offical discourse portrayed South Ossetian Other was praised for bravely defending their homeland with the support of the Russian Self against Georgia's aggression: "*You defended your land and justice was on your side. That is why you won, with the assistance of Russian peacekeepers, a reinforced peacekeeping contingent.*" (Medvedev 14.08.2008). Similarly, to justify the annexation of Crimea, the "residents of Crimea" were described by the Russian discourse as true legitimate authority of Crimea and Sevastopol. Thus, it was repeatedly stressed, in virtually all official accounts, that the decision to secede from Ukraine and rejoin the Russian Federation was the expression of ordinary Crimeans' political will through the mean of plebiscite. In a similar vein, the Russian discourse also depicted pro-Russian insurgents in Eastern Ukraine as desperate people who were forced to take up arms to protect their rights from being violated by the corrupt Ukrainian government (Putin 17.04.2014). The discourse thus frequently proposed the federalization of Ukraine and the recognition of the political agency of the insurgents as the viable long-term solution to the 'internal conflict' of Ukraine (Lavrov 17.04.2014)

To sum up, in the studied cases, ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking populations (which were often used interchangeably in official discourses) living in the two post-Soviet states came to represent the victims of the antagonist Others. Here as well, the representational strategy of negation was also employed to a certain extent to create symbols of helplessness – characters who lacked manifest power and agency (e.g. innocent, harmless civilians, the elders, women and children) to resist political oppression in an effective manner, thus motivating the Self's heroic interventions. At the same time, the Other also need to be constructed as capable of transformation and development (via its struggles for self-determination or democracy), i.e. possessing latent agency, which make it more relatable to the Self. The ultimate dream of humanitarian intervention discourse, therefore, is similar to that of the civilizing mission, which involved "making objects in the image of the white subject, who reflect his desires and ambitions but do not quite achieve them" (Orford 2003: 172). Because the Russian discourses imagined the suffering Other as already possessing the Self's

likeness (being ethnic Russian or Russian-speakers), however, the heroic mission of Russian humanitarian intervention was no longer 'saving strangers', as Wheeler (2001) put it, but 'saving Russian compatriots' – which can be considered a distortion to the hegemonic discourse of humanitarian intervention.

V.   REPRESENTATIONS OF THE RUSSIAN SUBJECT/ SELF

This chapter tackles the construction of the Self in Russia's discourses of military interventionism. Based on the analysis of texts in both Georgian and Ukrainian cases, it can be argued that Russia's official discourses produced the Russian Self in the mold of the masculine and white Subject of previous humanitarian intervention narratives. As such, the Self was readily associated with righteousness, progress, martial power and agency vis-à-vis the wickedness, backwardness and impotency of the Other. At the same time, Russia's official discourses also created a protagonist who was determined to challenge the West's perceived oppression and restore the proper international order previously disrupted by the actions of the antagonists. The Subject produced by Russia's official discourse thus reflected not only the idealized muscular hero of the post-Cold War humanitarian discourse, but also the subaltern dream of inverting the hegemonic order and replacing the Western hegemon (Morozov 2015: 12).

1. The Muscular Humanitarian of the Russo-Georgian War

In the context of the 2008's conflict with Georgia, it can be argued that the Russian Subject established a more visible martial presence than it did in the latter two cases. In fact, the heroic Self's presence in the forms of the Russian peacekeeping force in South Ossetia even preceded the outbreak of the conflicting situation. The discourse portrayed the Russian forces in South Ossetia as selfless peacekeepers who, in the words of the Russian Foreign Minister, have "*risked their lives to maintain peace, even if it was fragile, in the South Ossetia zone of conflict all these years*" (Lavrov 08.08.2008), and the unprovoked attack on these peacekeepers by Georgian forces was given as one of the main reasons for Russia's military actions. The depiction of the Russian military's prior deployment as a legitimate exercise in international peacekeeping served to obscure the responsibilities of Russian Self in creating the conflicting situation and presented it instead as a blameless victim of Georgia's aggression (e.g. "*Russia has maintained and continues to maintain a presence on Georgian territory on an absolutely lawful basis, carrying out its peacekeeping mission*

in accordance with the agreements concluded", Medvedev 08.08.2008). Hence, the decision the use force against Georgia was not constructed as an entirely 'new' military intervention, but a necessary step to carry out Russia's pre-existing peacemaking mission "*to its logical conclusion*" (Putin 11.08.2008) and repulse the attempt of the Georgian Other to disrupt the established regional order.

While seeking to obscure Russia's responsibilities in engendering the crisis, the discourse was unequivocal in asserting the heroic Self's perceived 'responsibility to protect' Russian citizens living in South Ossetia. References to the sufferings of South Ossetians and Russian citizen coalesced into an urgent call to action which the Self cannot deny without undermining its own integrity. Underlying this idea was the production of an honorable, resolute, assertive yet empathetic Russian Self – in other words, as the embodiment of a humanitarian hero. Linking the Self with the traits of honorability and responsibleness, the official discourse portrayed the actions undertaken by the Self as fully in alignment with it national as well as international obligations and duties. For example, already in his first statement, Medvedev declared that it was the duty of the Russian government "*to protect the lives and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they may be*" (Medvedev 08.08.2008) – a claim to the right of guardianship that would be repeatedly made by Russian officials in later texts. Like previous humanitarian narratives, the Russian narrative also imbued the Russian Self with the power to intervene in the humanitarian crisis in a decisive and swift manner to save innocent lives and punish the perpetrators. Adamant in its struggle against Georgia's aggression (which was compared to "*surgical methods*" by Medvedev), the Russian government was portrayed as equally compassionate and dedicated in its efforts to provide humanitarian reliefs to South Ossetian people (Putin 11.08.2008, Medvedev 12.08.2008).

Not only transforming the Russian Self into the masculine Subject of post-Cold War humanitarianism, Russia's official discourse also importantly imagined the Self as a defiant Subject who steadfastly performed ordained humanitarian duties in the face of the Western Other's opposition and sabotage. Despite Russia's legal objections to humanitarian intervention and R2P, the discourses still constructed the Russian Self's intervention in South Ossetia mostly in terms of an application of R2P – albeit Russia's rendition of R2P was presented as morally superior and more effective than the Western ones. While Western states' motivations for conducting these interventions were

presented as problematic, the Russian Self's fraternal bonds with both the South Ossetian and Georgian peoples and traditional geopolitical presence in the Caucasus were cited to substantiate Russia's claim to the right to use force (Medvedev 31.08.2008). For example, Medvedev declared that Russia's peace enforcing operation was conducted "*in accordance with the United Nations Charter*" and "*absolutely effective and the only possible option*" and contrasted it to the "*lessons of the 1938 Munich Agreement*", i.e. the policy of appeasement practiced by European political leaders before the Second World War (a comparison which had the added effect of linking Saakashvili's Georgia to Hitler's Germany) (Medvedev 10.08.2008).

In a similar vein, Lavrov explained the need to maintain Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia by invoking the failure of Dutch peacekeepers to prevent the massacre of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica, stating that "*we will not find ourselves in such a position, and our peacekeepers will never be in such a situation*" (Lavrov 12.08.2008)[12]. After Russia officially recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia, comparison to Western states' recognition of the independence of Kosovo were repeatedly evoked – for example, in interviews with domestic and international television networks following his announcement, Medvedev described the decision to recognize the two breakaway Georgian regions as similar *yet* more legitimate in comparison to the case of Kosovo ("*In the case of Kosovo we did not see sufficient reason for recognizing a new subject of international law, but in this case, in order to prevent the killing of people and a humanitarian catastrophe, in order for justice to triumph and for these peoples to realize their right to self-determination, we have recognized their independence*" (Medvedev 26.08.2008). The Self's geographical closeness and emotional links to the suffering Other thus served to distinguish Russia's military intervention from those of the West, which usually aimed to rescue people living in faraway lands and having few connections with the intervening Subject (Wheeler 2001).

2. "Polite People" and Reluctant Humanitarian: Self-Representations of the Russian Subject during the Conflicts in Ukraine

In the case of Crimea and Donbas, it can be argued that the Russian Self was actively trying to conceal the true extent of its military interventions – or even the

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[12] Churkin also used the same argument in his interview with PBS's Charlie Rose on the same day (the transcript of which is available at https://charlierose.com/videos/11624).

factuality of the interventions themselves. It thus conducted in Crimea what Roy Allison (2014) termed 'deniable interventions'. Thus, the Subject became less visible militarily but still retained the central roles in the narratives. The institutional Self (the Russian president and government) were especially regarded as a guardian of stability, peace and rationality, imbued with attractive attributes that contrast sharply with those of the antagonists. For instance, Lavrov wrote in his article on The Guardian (07.04.2014) that Russia had always worked to promote security, stability and integration in the Eurasia region, and only the Western powers' hubris had threatened peace and brought about the Ukrainian crisis. In the same vein, Putin's speech (18.03.2014) presented images of the Russian Self as accommodating, patient, responsible and just vis-à-vis the aggressiveness, unilateralism, irresponsibility and hypocrisy of the Western Other. Against accusations that Russia was trying to act imperially and restore the Soviet Union, the standard response was categorical denials – the Russian Self was portrayed instead as pursuing its legitimate interests and helping the suffering people in southern and eastern Ukraine. Sanctions imposed by the West were constructed as unproductive against the unity and self-sufficiency of the Russian Subject:

> "*Russia is a self-sufficient country. We will work within the foreign economic environment that has taken shape, develop domestic production and technology and act more decisively to carry out transformation. Pressure from outside, as has been the case on past occasions, will only consolidate our society.*" (Putin 24.10.2014)

The martial/ muscular side of the Subject, however, was somewhat concealed during the interventions, as the role of the Russian military was not fully disclosed by official sources. Putin (18.03.2014), for example, was initially adamant that *"Russia's Armed Forces never entered Crimea; they were there already in line with an international agreement"*, *"They keep talking of some Russian intervention in Crimea, some sort of aggression. This is strange to hear"*. However, he later admitted in a Q&A session that the 'little green men' previously dubbed 'local self-defense forces' were in facts Russian soldiers, but stressed that their presence in Crimea only served to secure the organization of the referendum (Putin 17.04.2014). Similarly, the Russian official discourse until the end of the studied time frame consistently denied the involvement of the Russian military in Eastern Ukraine.

Regardless, it is noteworthy that representations of violence committed by the Russian military in Crimea were particularly lacking, especially when compared to humanitarian interventions conducted by the West and to the Russian army's record up to that point. In the other instances, the use of brutal forces against the antagonistic, unreformable Other was a hallmark of post-Cold War interventionism. It derived from the 'bare life' logic which reduces the enemies of human rights, democracy and Western civilization (such as terrorists or those who committed genocides) to non-humans, thereby enabling the use of excessive and exceptional violence against them (Vaughan-Williams 2009: 103-105). Regarding representations of the use of force, the Russian state and military are on a par with their Western counterparts. For instance, images of the military's use of violence against Chechen insurgents were part and parcel of the Russian media reportage on the Second Chechen War (Casula 2015). Similarly, after the military intervention in South Ossetia in 2008, the fact that Russian army's unsatisfactory performance was widely discussed attested the centrality of martial self-representations to the discourse of interventionism (Reuters 2008). In this respect, the performance that the Russian marital Self achieved in Crimea and Sevastopol were crucial to the Russian narrative. They were constructed as evidence of the military's *"new quality and possibilities"* and *"the personnel's high moral spirit"* (Putin 28.03.2014). In the final analysis, this aspect of the Subject arguably helped to create an image of a modern, disciplined, and well-mannered military Self that not only contradicted those of the opposition but also represented a clear 'maturity' in comparison to its own temporal Other.

VI.   CONCLUSION

This study was conducted with the objective of examining the Russian official discourses of military interventionism pertaining to the Near Abroad geopolitical space. In the empirical analysis, two cases were studied – namely Russia's military interventions in Georgia in 2008 and ongoing involvement in Ukraine, beginning with the annexation of Crimea in March 2014. For the first case, 08 August 2008 and 31 August 2008 were chosen as the starting and end dates of the analytical timeframe respectively. Concerning Moscow's ongoing military intervention in Ukraine, I decide to limit the corresponding analysis to the period between Russia's annexation of Crimea (beginning with Putin's speech on 18 March 2014) to the Minsk II Agreement in February 2015.

Following the poststructuralist IR framework, I understand foreign policy (of which military interventionism is a component) as practices of (re)producing boundaries between inside/ outside, internal/ external and Self/ Other that constitute the conditions of possibility for identity discourses. Therefore, the purpose of the analysis is to examine how certain representational practices underlie the production of the Self/ Other binaries in Russia's intervention narratives and how these representations enabled the course of actions taken by the Russian authorities. Additionally, the analysis is also concerned with the production of imaginative geographies in Russia's military intervention narratives – which can be defined as representations of 'own' and 'other' places which form the geographical/ geopolitical background for the interactions between the Self and the Other. Underlying notions of 'near' and 'far', 'our' and 'foreign lands', imaginative geographies contribute not only to the production of Otherness but also to the Subject's self-identification. The empirical part thus divided and analyzed the examined discourses based on three analytical categories: representations of the Self, representations of the Other and the imaginative geographies.

First, the analysis of imaginative geographies demonstrated that Russian intervention narratives subsumed the objects of its military interventions – Georgia and Ukraine – as well as the territories under contestation (South Ossetia, Crimea, Donbas) into a 'Near Abroad' post-imperial geopolitical imaginary. At the same time, Russian geopolitical imaginary also linked its military interventions with the subaltern dream of

challenging the geopolitical domination of the Western hegemon. Military interventions were based simultaneously on Russia's post-imperial 'sphere of privileged interests' and counter-hegemonic challenges the Eurocentric hegemonic order.

Secondly, the analysis showed that representations of the Others in Russia's discourses of military interventions to a considerable extent reproduced the structure of the post-Cold War humanitarian intervention discourse. On the one hand, the Russian discourses constructed Western and Georgian/ Ukrainian Others as the instigators and perpetrators of the crimes against humanity that the Russian heroic Self must address. On the other hand, the people living in the territories of South Ossetia, Crimea and Donbas appeared in the discourses as the victims of human right violations, ethnic cleansing and genocide in urgent need of assistances and salvation from the Self. At the same time, the discourses also constructed the suffering Other as possessing latent agency and capable of advancing its own causes against the oppression of the antagonist Other.

Thirdly, regarding the construction of the Subject/ Self, the analysis showed that the Russian heroic Self was produced simultaneously as an embodiment of the humanitarian heroic Subject (identical to ways the masculine and white Subject of post-Cold War humanitarianism was produced) and as a counter-hegemonic hero who was determined to challenge perceived injustices and restore the international order previously disrupted by the actions of the antagonist Others to the proper state – a heroic figure which reflects the subaltern desire of inverting the hegemonic order and replacing the Master. If the first image of the Self placed it on equal footing with the Western humanitarian Subject, the second sought to subvert the hegemony of the West on humanitarianism and present the Self's military intervention as a legitimate – if not superior – rendition of the humanitarian/ R2P narrative.

The empirical findings thus corroborated the dissertation's assumption that the Russian discourse of military interventionism was hybrid and both reproduces and distorts the hegemonic post-Cold War discourse of humanitarian intervention and R2P (although it must be noted that the distortions did not amount to Russia's discourse being an alternative formulation of humanitarianism). As discussed in the theoretical chapter, the notion that Russia was articulating a normative challenge to Western brands

of humanitarianism and R2P has been put forth and analyzed by scholars informed by English School and Constructivist approaches of IR, such as Allison (2013) Averre & Davies (2015) and Kuhrt (2015). However, previous analyses often overlooked the inconsistencies in Russia's discourses of R2P and humanitarian interventions within and without the Near Abroad geopolitical space, as well as the ways in which Russian discourses reproduced the hegemonic post-Cold War discourses of military interventionism. Additionally, even when the incongruity in the Russian discourses was acknowledged and somewhat explained through the notions of hybrid pluralism or dual normative order (by Allison 2013), there was still a lack of conceptualization concerning the ways in which Russia's position in the international system begot its hybrid normative impulses.

To address this issue, I have proposed to engage the empirical analysis of Russia's discourse of interventionism with the postcolonial theory-informed concept of the subaltern empire (Morozov 2013, 2015; Tlostanova 2008). According to the subaltern empire theory, as a subaltern empire – which possesses both subalternity vis-à-vis the Western core and post-Soviet periphery-oriented hegemonic aspirations – Russia had no alternative source of moral authority and legitimacy to turn to but the normative order which was established by the Eurocentric hegemony. This condition is apparent even as Russia was pursuing its own normative and hegemonic projects in the post-Soviet neighborhood – the Russian elites largely consider themselves as part of the Eurocentric order, and as such, it continues to promote the very same normative project in its own periphery. Consequently, Russia's efforts to articulate a normative challenge to the Western discourse of military interventionism still cannot avoid reproducing the same justifications, rhetoric and legal languages originated from the Western normative order. In this sense, Russia's subaltern mimesis is not simply the matter of instrumentalizing the language of humanitarianism for justificatory or counter-normative purposes as some scholars have claimed (for example, see Holmes and Krastev 2015) – more importantly, it also represents a clear symptom of Russia's subalternity, of its normative dependency on the Western core.

Linking this assumption with the empirical findings, it became apparent that even when moving away from purely normative content and taking into account the production of Self/ Other as well as the imaginative geographies underlying their relations, Russian official discourses still bear many structural similarities to the

hegemonic post-Cold War discourse of humanitarianism. The production of the Self as the Subject and of the Others as the Objects of Russia's military interventions for example involves making claims and evoking images in similar terms to those employed by previous humanitarian intervention and R2P-based narratives. At the same time, we can still detect the tensions between the subaltern and the post-imperial facets of Russia's interventionism in the articulations of a counter-hegemonic geopolitical imaginary (which is simultaneously hegemonic vis-à-vis Russian neighboring states), the antagonization of the Western Other and the production of the Self as a counter-hegemonic protagonist. Thus, it can be concluded that the Russian Subject produced by Russia's official discourses of military interventions was still very much a hybrid Subject.

Of course, limitations regarding the size and scope of the examined cases and texts mean that the empirical findings of the dissertation represent only a fraction of the official discourses and the fields of discursivity (which also included inter alia wider social debates, academic and marginalized discourses) concerning Russia's military interventionism. Future analyses that take into examination Russian official discourses in different contexts or other types of discourses may offer new angles from which to understand Russia's imperial subalternity. For instance, it would be interesting to examine the discourse surrounding Russia's decision not to intervene in Kyrgyzstan in 2010. Comparatively, Russian discourses of military interventionism pertaining to both the Near Abroad and the Far Aboard (which most recently involves Russia's military campaign in Syria) can be analyzed in conjunction with humanitarian/ R2P discourses in other subaltern/ non-Western contexts, for example Brazil's "Responsibility while Protecting" Proposal or military interventions carried out under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa.

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