

# Identity, legitimacy, and the use of military force: Russia's Great Power identities and military intervention in Abkhazia

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An action is legitimate if the pertinent community deems it so. Most would agree that Russia's conduct in the 1990s in Georgia was illegitimate. Military intervention in another state, unless the other state is preparing an imminent attack on one's own territory, or is engaged in the systematic abuse of one's own citizens, is a violation of the international norm of sovereignty, at a minimum.<sup>1</sup> Some have argued that European politics has gone beyond this 'territorial integrity norm' to something more expansive, to a consensual renunciation of any and all territorial claims on other states. This was first codified in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.<sup>2</sup>

The interesting question is whether Russia deemed its behaviour illegitimate. If it knew that it was violating international sovereignty norms, that would say a lot about Russia's lack of regard for normative constraints on its foreign policy conduct. It would also speak to the relative weakness of international norms to shape state behaviour. On the other hand, and perhaps more interesting, if Russia did not believe its behaviour illegitimate, but instead thought its use of military force in another country was within the bounds of international propriety, then the question is how is it possible for Russia to entertain such ideas?

The answer in this article is that different Russian identities yield different understandings of legitimacy. There is no one Russia. Instead, depending on which discursive construction of the Russian self is empowered by Russia's political system at a given time, a different Russia is acting in the world. It turns out that in the early 1990s, three different Russias were competing to control the Russian state. Which one ended up with the reins of power determined who Russia was, how it acted abroad, how it understood its interests there, and which actions it considered legitimate or illegitimate in pursuit of those interests. The prevailing discourse of Russian identity is simultaneously the product of both domestic identity construction, the interaction between the Russian state and society, and international identity construction, the interaction between the Russian state and international actors. What Russia considered to be legitimate actions by a 'great power' depended on the identity that was produced by both domestic and external interactions.

<sup>1</sup> These norms are stated most explicitly in the United Nations Charter Chapter 1, Article 2. (<http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>) (accessed June 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Mark Zacher, 'The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force', *International Organization*, 55:2 (Spring 2001), pp. 215–50.

There were three main competitors for Russian identity in the early 1990s: Liberal, Conservative, and Centrist. Each of these was socially constructed in interaction with both domestic and international society. Each entailed the idea of Russia as a great power, but understood what a great power was differently. As will become clear below, each of the three discourses implied different policies in Russia's 'Near Abroad'. In short, had Liberals remained in control of the Russian state past the autumn of 1992, Russian military support for Abkhazian rebels might have been understood as illegitimate. Had Conservatives gained control of the Russian state, the 1990s might have been marked by frequent Russian military interventions in the Near Abroad, including in Estonia and Latvia, each one of which would have been regarded as legitimate by Moscow. The reality, however, was different from both of these hypothetical outcomes. Centrists won out, limiting Russian military intervention to just two cases: Abkhazia and Transdniestria in Moldova, but understood as perfectly legitimate exercises of a great power's right to police its periphery.<sup>3</sup>

In what follows, I will try to explain how the Centrist discourse beat out its two competitors, although that is not the main focus of this article. Instead, the primary attention is on how these three different discourses of Russian identity imply different Russian interests, policies, and conceptions of legitimacy.

Strictly speaking, there was no Russian state for most of 1992. That is, there was no unitary actor in Moscow. The defence ministry and Russian armed forces were not even created until May 1992. The Russian Federation (RF) had been in existence for five months already. The foreign ministry found itself in control of foreign policy in the first months of the RF, but by the end of the year, had been eclipsed by the Supreme Soviet and the Presidential Administration.

Moreover, as most accounts concede, the initial use of military force abroad was not ordered by anyone in Moscow, but was instead carried out by local Russian military forces left stranded in foreign countries by the December 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union. In this case, the Russian state was not even responsible for its own actions. In this sense 'its' use of force was not illegitimate, for no Russian state, per se, used force.

By late 1992, however, we can speak of a more unified Russian state. But that state, instead of reasserting command over the previously autonomous military forces, either encouraged them to continue violating international norms, remained silent, or issued conflicting orders. One action the Russian state never took was forceful action against its own soldiers who were violating the sovereignty of Georgia. Moreover, once the military actions were over, Russian forces continued to remain on Georgian territory, despite repeated requests from the Georgian government that they leave. Finally, to the extent these forces were peacekeeping forces, their authorisation to be there, their conduct while there, and their composition, violated most international norms on peacekeeping.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Military intervention occurred as well in the civil war in Tajikistan, but this is mostly understood as an invitation with regional authorisation.

<sup>4</sup> For six international norms of peacekeeping, see Dov Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: The Cases of Moldova, Georgia, and Tajikistan* (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 19–20.

In this sense, then, if we even grant Russia the fact that it was not initially responsible for illegitimate actions, soon thereafter, and indeed for the next decade, it has persisted in illegitimate conduct in Georgia.<sup>5</sup>

The puzzle in this article is to understand how such conduct became possible. The answer is that Russian identity made it possible. In the conclusion, I will argue that this identity is not fixed, but rather is constructed in relationship to Russia's domestic society and external significant others. The latter are Europe and the United States. I suggest that Russia's interactions with these two great powers produces different Russian great power identities. European and US identities resonate differently with the discourses of identity in Russian society. They empower different understandings of the Russian self. Meanwhile, European and US identities also resonate differently with the Russian state, producing different understandings of what it means to be a great power. What is talked about and how it is talked about varies systematically according to whether Putin is meeting with US President Bush, or instead, with European leaders such as Gerhard Schroeder, Silvio Berlusconi, Jacques Chirac, or Javier Solana. Moreover, different Russian identities emerge at these meetings.

To put this in more general theoretical terms, a state's identity, and so interests, and understandings of legitimate international behaviour, is a social product. But it is a product that is the result of a state's interactions both with its own society and with other states. As such, it is a variable, subject to both domestic and international influence. This means significant international others can effect changes in a state's identity, working within the constraints of that state's domestic identity terrain. It is in this way that the US and Europe are in fact 'causing' Russian foreign policy, but only insofar as the identities that are reproduced also resonate with the discourse(s) of identity that predominate in Russia's domestic context.

For example, the broad public in Russia understands Russia as European. This day to day understanding manifests itself in popular novels, high school history textbooks, movie reviews, and other artifacts of popular culture. The Russian state has this identity when interacting with other states in world affairs, but it is most acutely evoked when interacting with European states. The conversations between Putin and Schroeder, therefore, tend to reproduce a European identity for Russia that is both being expressed at the very highest official state level, and reverberating throughout Russian society on a reciprocal basis. No such reverberation is possible when Putin meets with Bush, as there is a vanishingly small level of identification with the United States among the Russian public. The United States is not a significant Other for Russian identity construction at home; Europe is.

The article proceeds as follows. First, I present a short description of Russian conduct in Abkhazia. I rely on several sources which have corroborated each other on the key points. In particular I will point out the instances in which the Russian state is not fully responsible for its own foreign policy actions, as well as catalogue Russian violations of international norms. I then present the three different discourses of Russian identity that dominated the 1990s and relate each discourse to its implications for Russian interests and actions in the Near Abroad. I also hypothesise which actions might be considered legitimate within each discourse.

<sup>5</sup> Georgia and Russia have signed yet another agreement on Russian force withdrawals. This May 2005 agreement foresees Russian evacuation of its military bases by 2008.

Finally, I conclude with a discussion of how Russia's international interactions, in combination with its domestically constructed identity, help evoke particular Russian great power identities and different views of legitimate uses of force in other countries.

### **Russian (in)actions in Abkhazia**

In this section I provide an abbreviated account of Russian conduct in Abkhazia in the early 1990s, and then describe its violations of international norms on the legitimate use of force it committed there.

#### *A little history*

Although the history of Abkhazia's relations with Georgia, the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union is fascinating and important for a complete understanding of the conflict, my purpose here is more narrow. I will begin with events in Abkhazia as *perestroika* and *glasnost* were permitting the enunciation of national grievances all over the Soviet Union. In 1989 Abkhazia's population was just over 500,000. Of these, only 18 per cent, or 96,000, were Abkhazians. Georgians accounted for 45 per cent of Abkhazia's population, Russians 14 per cent. Abkhazia was only absorbed into Georgia in 1931, having spent the previous 10 years as a Union Republic itself, equal in legal status to Georgia. In 1978 and again in 1989, Abkhazia requested from Moscow restoration of its previous status.

On 25 August 1990 the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet declared sovereignty. This was in response to the Georgian Supreme Soviet's proclamation of Georgian as the official language to be used within the parliament five days earlier. Although the Georgian government refused to hold the 17 March 1991 referendum on the preservation of the Soviet Union in Georgia, Abkhazia held its own version of Gorbachev's referendum, and a reported 98 per cent of Abkhazians supported the maintenance of the USSR.

At the time of August 1991 coup and the December 1991 collapse of the USSR, Georgia was ruled by Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a leader whose aggressive campaign against autonomy for minorities in South Osetia and Abkhazia, in particular, had led both republics to look to Moscow for support against Tbilisi. Shevardnadze's replacement of Gamsakhurdia in March 1992 came too late. Three months later, the Abkhazian National Guard, by the orders of the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet Chairman, Vladislav Ardzinba, seized the Abkhazian Interior Ministry building from the Georgians protecting it. The next month the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet declared Abkhazia a sovereign and independent state. Three weeks later, on 14 August 1992, detachments of the Georgian National Guard, under Tengiz Kitovani, entered and occupied Sukhumi, the Abkhazian capital. The local Russian military, as well as fighters from the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus (CMPC), fought on the side of Abkhazia. Meanwhile, the Russian military, following the

agreement reached between Russia and the other Soviet republics in December 1991, continued transferring weapons to the Georgian government.<sup>6</sup>

On 27 August 1992, Russian President Boris Yeltsin enunciated official Russian policy. He affirmed Russian support for Georgia's territorial integrity, thereby rejecting Abkhazia's claims of sovereignty, and pledged Russia would prevent armed detachments from entering Georgia from Russia.<sup>7</sup> While Russia never did recognise Abkhazia as an independent country, it also did not stop the flow of men and materiel across its borders to the rebels.

In February and March 1993, local Russian fighter-bombers were used on the side of Abkhazian forces. On 16 March, Abkhazia launched an attack to retake its capital, Sukhumi, with the aid of 70 Russian tanks. Despite Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze reaching a ceasefire agreement in Sochi on 27 July 1993, Abkhazian forces regrouped to take Sukhumi just two months later. The rout of Georgian forces was spearheaded by volunteers from the northern Caucasus. As Dov Lynch concluded, 'More than anything else, the Abkhazian offensive highlighted Russia's inability to control the development of events on the ground'.<sup>8</sup>

As Sukhumi was falling, and Georgians were fleeing Abkhazia, pro-Gamsakhurdia forces, or Zviadists, were threatening Shevardnadze's regime. In October 1993, after meeting in Moscow shortly after Yeltsin had the Russian White House strafed with artillery and tank fire, Shevardnadze agreed to Russian requests for four military bases in exchange for Russian military help against Zviadist forces. In addition, Shevardnadze agreed to Georgia's membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and that body's Collective Security Treaty.

Shevardnadze's request for either a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE after January 1995), or UN peacekeepers, having fallen on deaf ears, he further asked for Russian peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia. With the overthrow of the pro-Abkhazian Russian parliament, Shevardnadze was reassured of Russia's support for Georgian territorial integrity against the separatists.<sup>9</sup> In March 1994, Georgia and Russia signed a treaty with the eerily Soviet name: Treaty of Friendship, Neighbourliness, and Cooperation. In July 1994, Russia sent 3,000 peacekeepers to Abkhazia, but their nominal CIS approval did not occur until October. The next month Arzinba became the first president of the self-declared sovereign Republic of Abkhazia.

After Shevardnadze's trip to Moscow, the Russian government began to impose sanctions on Abkhazia and effectively closed Abkhazia's northern border, shutting down military and economic communication with local northern Caucasus sympathisers.<sup>10</sup> Throughout 1995 and 1996, Russia adopted a hard line against Abkhazia. Its electricity from Russia was regularly interrupted; the Sukhumi airport was

<sup>6</sup> Edward Ozhiganov, 'The Republic of Georgia: Conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia', in Alexei Arbatov, Abram Chayes, Antonia Handler Chayes, and Lara Olson (eds.), *Managing Conflict in the Former Soviet Union: Russian and American Perspectives* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 385.

<sup>7</sup> *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 28 August 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Dov Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: The Cases of Moldova, Georgia, and Tajikistan* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 137. And this is saying something, as Lynch can hardly be accused of taking a sympathetic approach to Moscow's intentions in this volume.

<sup>9</sup> Ozhiganov, 'The Republic of Georgia', p. 389.

<sup>10</sup> Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies*, p. 141.

repeatedly shut down; and railroad traffic was only sporadic. In January 1996, the port of Sukhumi was simply closed. At the CIS heads of state meeting in Moscow that month, only Belarus did not sign on to collective CIS sanctions against Abkhazia.<sup>11</sup>

*Illegitimate Russian actions in Abkhazia*

Russian violations of international norms of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and peacekeeping in Abkhazia should be divided into two categories. The first are outcomes which the Russian government could hardly be expected to control, although strictly speaking, was legally responsible to prevent. These might be called acts of illegitimate omission. The second category are acts of illegitimate commission, policies adopted by the Russian government that violate international norms of proper conduct by states. There are plenty of both to go around.

The category of uncontrollables, or illegitimate omissions, includes local Russian military forces acting for themselves in Abkhazia without being ordered from Moscow, the infiltration of arms and fighters across the Russian border into Abkhazia, and the actions by parts of the Russian state that were contrary to the expressed policy of the Russian government, especially by the Supreme Soviet and republic governments.

When discussing the Russian military left stranded in Abkhazia at the collapse of the Soviet Union, it must be borne in mind that a Russian defence ministry was not even created until May 1992, as there were still hopes for a CIS armed force. That said, much of the transgressive behaviour by Russian forces in Abkhazia occurred after May 1992. Russian forces not only transferred arms to the Georgian government, per agreement, but Georgian forces stole and plundered Russian matériel in Georgia, and Russian soldiers sold weaponry to eager local buyers.<sup>12</sup> Baranets further testifies that 'in the archives of the Rostov and Moscow military staffs are secret documents in which our tanks, planes, ammunition, and personnel supplied to Abkhazians are ingeniously camouflaged'. Moscow, in order to 'appease the attentive international public', asserted that Russian air support for Abkhazian forces around Guduat were 'training missions'. The fact that Russian forces 'bombed the positions of the Georgian army during the war . . . , delivered ammunition to Abkhazian forces during their approach on Gagra . . . and participated in battles on the side of Abkhazians are supported by photographs, documents, and testimony of many witnesses. It would be senseless to refute them.'<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, it should be pointed out that these local Russian soldiers had support at the highest levels of the Russian military back in Moscow. Baranets describes one meeting in the spring of 1992 at which the Chief of the General Staff, Colonel-General Viktor Dubynin, argued against the MFA's policy of withdrawing the Russian military from the Near Abroad. Instead, 'we should insinuate ourselves, imposing military-political positions rewarding to Moscow on the Kremlin,

<sup>11</sup> Baranets, *Genshtab bez Tain* (Moscow: Politbiuro 1999), pp. 112–7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 250–4, 266–7. Baranets's testimony is particularly strong evidence as he supported a still more forceful Russian military response to events in the CIS in general.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 286–90.

government, and diplomats, if necessary'.<sup>14</sup> Events in Abkhazia looked very much like this strategy of presenting Yeltsin with *faits accomplis* that would be hard to overcome.

In November 1991 the CMPC held its third congress, significantly in Sukhumi.<sup>15</sup> In August 1992, the Confederation issued an ultimatum to Shevardnadze, demanding the withdrawal of Georgian forces from Abkhazia, threatening to take Georgians hostage on their own members' territory, and to send volunteers to fight for Abkhazia's independence.<sup>16</sup> The same month, volunteer detachments began crossing into Abkhazia from Chechnia, Dagestan, Cherkessia, Krasnodar, Stavropol, Adygei, and other Caucasian republics in the Russian Federation. In the autumn of 1992 alone, from four to seven thousand fighters from the Confederation crossed into Abkhazia to participate in the fight against Georgian forces.<sup>17</sup> Most (in)famously perhaps, Shamil Basaev's Abkhazia Brigade spearheaded the successful Abkhazian attack on Sukhumi in September 1993.<sup>18</sup> The Russian government officially condemned these infiltrations, but the extent of its action to prevent this illegitimate conduct was to open a criminal investigation which came to naught.<sup>19</sup>

The Yeltsin government was not in full control of all the institutions that conventionally constitute a state. Having already described the activity of Russian military forces in Abkhazia, and the actions of subjects of the Russian Federation in the northern Caucasus, we should add to the list actors further afield. For example, in September 1992, just as the military conflict was beginning, the Russian parliament, like the CMPC, passed a resolution demanding Georgian withdrawal from Abkhazia and an end to further Russian transfer of arms to the Shevardnadze government. Actions such as this one only encouraged Abkhazian forces to reject the cease-fire proposals being developed by Russian foreign minister Kozyrev at the time.

As the Abkhazians were retaking Sukhumi in September 1993, President Yeltsin publicly condemned Abkhazian fighters. But his defence minister, Pavel Grachev, demanded that all Georgian forces leave Abkhazia. It is not hard to imagine how encouraged local Abkhazians were by the support from the official in charge of the Russian military.<sup>20</sup>

As we recall, after Shevardnadze's October 1993 trip to Moscow, Russia imposed sanctions on Abkhazia. But the local neighbouring Russian republic of Krasnodar ignored the law, it being ruled by communists who sympathised not only with

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>15</sup> This interesting transnational group was formed in 1989 with representatives of most Soviet Caucasian republics: Chechnia, Dagestan, Adygei, Krasnodar, Stavropol, Cherkessia, Kabardino, North and South Osetia, Ingushetia, and significantly, Abkhazia. Originally the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus, the inclusion of Cossacks as observers deleted the Mountain. Its ultimate objective was to create a multinational state from the Black to Caspian Seas. For a most extraordinary analysis of this most extraordinary project, see Georgi Derluguian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Lynch 2000, p. 133.

<sup>17</sup> V. A. Zolotarev, *Rossiia (SSSR) v Lokalnykh Voinakh I Vooruzhennykh Konfliktakh Vtoroi Poloviny XX Veka* (Moscow: Kuchkovo Pole, 2000), 390 and Lynch 2000, 131.

<sup>18</sup> Ozhiganov, 'The Republic of Georgia', p. 381. Basaev would go on to become one of the most notorious Chechen rebels/terrorists/field commanders. He remains at large.

<sup>19</sup> Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies*, p. 133.

<sup>20</sup> Some might attribute Yeltsin's failure to fire Grachev immediately to the fact that Yeltsin already felt that he needed Grachev and the military in the showdown with Khasbulatov and Rutskoi in the next few weeks.

Abkhazia, but with those who had just been routed in the White House strafing in Moscow.

In August 1994, that is, long after the Yeltsin government had begun to restrain Abkhazian forces, the governments in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan signed Treaties of Friendship and Cooperation with the self-declared Republic of Abkhazia.<sup>21</sup> Actions such as this only encouraged Abkhazia in the belief that Russia's official nonrecognition was only *de jure*, not *de facto*.

As noted above, Russia sent CIS peacekeepers to Abkhazia in July 1994, before the CIS had even met to approve the deployment some three months later. Lynch enumerates six international norms of peacekeeping:

1. They should be established by the UN under the command and control of the Secretary General, with the costs met collectively.
2. They should be established with the consent and cooperation of the parties involved.
3. The forces should be impartial.
4. The forces should be volunteers.
5. The forces should limit themselves to self-defence.
6. The forces should be deployed only after a ceasefire is in place.<sup>22</sup>

The Russian record here is mixed. The Russian government repeatedly requested UN authorisation for its deployment of a peacekeeping force to Abkhazia and tried to convince the UN to accept the CIS as a regional organisation identified as a legitimate authoriser of such missions, but failed in both cases. Of course, Russia would have been delighted had UN members picked up the cost of the Russian mission in Abkhazia, and made requests to that effect.

It is hard to say that there was 'free' consent given by Georgia to the deployment. Georgian forces had already been driven out of Abkhazia by a collection of forces at least indulged by the Russian military, and the Georgian government accepted the Russian offer of peacekeepers only after all was mostly lost, and their preference for UN or OSCE forces had been unmet. At the most, Georgia agreed in exchange for Russian control over its Abkhazian allies.

The force has been arguably impartial since its deployment, and largely acting in self-defence, but this ignores the two years of activity prior to its official arrival. The forces are mostly all-volunteer, and any conscripts would doubtless be delighted to serve in the Russian Riviera over duty in Sakhalin. A ceasefire had been reached prior to the deployment of Russian forces.

### **Three discourses of Russian identity: Liberal, Conservative, Centrist**

At the birth of the Russian Federation in 1992, a Liberal discourse of Russian identity predominated, one which understood all Russian actions and inactions enumerated above as illegitimate. But this discourse was increasingly opposed by a Conservative discourse, which not only understood all these actions as legitimate, but demanded far more aggressive violations of international standards of conduct. By

<sup>21</sup> For the text, see: (<http://www.tatar.ru/english/00000078.html>) (accessed April 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies*, pp. 19–20.



late 1992, neither Liberal nor Conservative discourses of Russian identity were predominant; instead, a Centrist discourse had arisen that understood what Russia had done as legitimate, but which rejected any more forceful Russian actions.

To make sense of this pivotal year, I will describe the three discourses very briefly. I should make one critical methodological point. Finding Russian identity in Russian foreign policy toward Abkhazia, Georgia, the Near Abroad, or even in foreign policy more generally, risks a circular specification of the relationship, and so vitiates any claims about the societal dimension of Russian identity. The content of the Liberal, Conservative, and Centrist discourses was derived from texts – novels, film reviews, history textbooks, and newspaper and journal articles – that were not about either Russian foreign policy or Russian identity. In this way, the contending discourses of the Russian self were recovered and analysed separately from the dependent variable, and so guarded against tautology.

In what follows, then, I present the three contending discourses and their implications for Russian foreign policy. I then offer an interpretation of Russian policy in Abkhazia from the perspective of these different discourses. Each discourse has a particular relationship to its significant Others: the Historical Other of the Soviet past; the External Others of Europe and the United States; and the Internal Other of the Russian periphery.

Within Liberal discourse, Russia was identified with the United States, against the Soviet Union, and as part of a universal civilisation of modern Liberal market democracy.<sup>23</sup> Domestically, Liberal discourse identified its Conservative competitor with a discredited and dangerous Soviet past. While Liberal discourse rejects Soviet economic achievements, the Orthodox Church, and ethnonationalism as desirable parts of contemporary Russian identity, Conservatives value all three. More directly, Liberal discourse admires US individualism and its economic model, while Conservatives declaim both. Within Conservative discourse, Russia was identified with a Soviet Union shorn of its Stalinist brutality, and with a Russia defined ethnonationally. Russia was a unique Eurasian great power. Domestically,

<sup>23</sup> While I derive these discourses from popular novels, history textbooks, film reviews, and newspaper articles in Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), pp. 153–210, it is encouraging that other scholars, relying on vastly different sources, have developed taxonomies of Russian foreign policy thought itself in the 1990s that track quite well with my interpretation. See, for example, James Richter, *Khrushchev's Double Bind: International Pressures and Domestic Coalition Politics* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 207–10; James Richter, 'Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of Russian Identity', in Celeste Wallander (ed.), *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 69–94; Andrew Bennett, *Condemned to Repetition? The Rise, Fall, and Reprise of Soviet-Russian Military Interventionism, 1973–1996* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 306–9; Johan Matz, *Constructing a Post-Soviet International Political Reality: Russian Foreign Policy Toward the Newly Independent States* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2001); Robert English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press); Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 220–68; Margot Light, 'Post-Soviet Russian Foreign Policy: The First Decade', in Archie Brown (ed.), *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader* (New York: Oxford, 2001), pp. 419–28; Neil Malcolm, 'Russian Foreign Policy Decision-Making', in Peter Shearman (ed.), *Russian Foreign Policy since 1990* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), pp. 3–27; Andrei Tsygankov, *Pathways after Empire: National Identity and Foreign Economic Policy in the Post-Soviet World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001); and William Zimmerman, *The Russian People and Foreign Policy: Russian Elite and Mass Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Table 1. *Discourses and their paths to Russia's Great Power identity.*

	Liberal	Conservative	Centrist
Military Power	No	Yes	Yes
Economic Recovery	Yes	No	Yes
International Institutionalisation	Yes	No	Yes
Recovery of the Union	No	Yes	Yes

Conservative discourse understood its Liberal alternative as a disloyal unpatriotic fifth column of the United States.

Within Centrist discourse, Russia identified with a genuine and unique Russia, although associated with European social democracy. It also identified with an idealised Soviet past, but explicitly rejected an ethnonational conceptualisation of Russia. Centrist discourse instead adopted a civic national 'Rossian' identity designed to capture the multinational character of the Russian Federation.<sup>24</sup> While Russia was unique, it was situated within a universal civilisation of modern social democracy.<sup>25</sup>

As Table 1 shows, each discourse contained different ideas about how Russia could maintain or regain its great power identity.

As might be expected, Liberal and Conservative discourses are exact opposites. The Centrist discourse, meanwhile, accepts all roads to greatness. Their foreign policy implications were similarly differentiated.

Liberal Russian identity entailed a Russian alliance with the United States and the West, and stressed the centrality of economic power as Russia's only route to restoration of great power status in the world. Great hope was placed on working through multilateral institutions, such as the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe (CE), and European Union (EU). Russia's interests in the Near Abroad were negligible, because post-Soviet republics should be permitted to go their own way, and any conflicts could be handled through multilateral institutions holding all states to universal standards of human rights.

Conservative identity implied a Russian alliance with anybody in the world who would balance against the United States and the West. While not ignoring the importance of economic recovery, far more emphasis was placed on Russian military power as a counterweight to the United States. Multilateral institutions were scorned, in good realist fashion. Russian interests in the Near Abroad were absolutely vital, as the Soviet Union should be restored. These post-Soviet republics were 'unnaturally' separated from Russia, the centre of the Soviet Union and Eurasia. Moreover, the 25 million ethnic Russians living abroad were of vital importance to Moscow, as they were ethnic kinfolk.

Centrist discourse alone suggested no alliance with any particular state, but rather a Russia as one among several Great Powers in a multilateral management of global

<sup>24</sup> Kolsto, *Political Construction Sites: Nation-building in Russia and the Post-Soviet States* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000), pp. 203–27 and Tadashi Anno, 'Nihonjiron and Russkaia Ideia: Transformation of Japanese and Russian Nationalism in the Postwar Era and Beyond', in Gilbert Rozman (ed.), *Japan and Russia: The Tortuous Path to Normalization, 1949–1999* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 344–7.

<sup>25</sup> Matz, *Constructing Post-Soviet Reality*, p. 169 and English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, p. 237.

affairs. Restoration of Russia's great power status was to be through economic development and maintenance of military power at home, and the empowerment of multilateral international institutions abroad. Russian interests in the Near Abroad are important, but they should be vindicated through multilateral institutions first, and by Russian use of military force or economic coercion, second. A civic understanding of Russian identity makes Russian interests in the ethnic diaspora less crucial.

In 1992, Russia was polarised between Liberal and Conservative identities, with Liberals implementing their economic and political plans to make Russia into a liberal market democracy. The collapse of the Russian economy, the failure of the US to provide any significant aid, the rampant and rising crime, corruption, and violence associated with privatisation and democratisation, and the new issue of 25 million Russians living in the Former Soviet Union (FSU), rapidly and irreparably discredited the Liberal discourse.<sup>26</sup> But Conservative discourse did not take its place, largely because of three dangerous identifications: with the failed Soviet economic project; with an ethnonational Russia within a multinational state, and against the United States and the West. Instead, a Centrist discourse emerged, which, by the end of 1992, had already replaced Liberal discourse as the prime competitor of the Conservative one.

Russia's Liberal identity was institutionally privileged in early 1992.<sup>27</sup> In many respects, it was the heir to Gorbachev's new thinking, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) was its primary institutional home. The MFA under Andrei Kozyrev was initially the only coherent foreign policy institution in Russia, and Kozyrev had purged it of any remaining Soviet holdovers. But the MFA's monopoly did not go unchallenged. The Russian Ministry of Defence (MOD) and presidential Security Council (SC) were created in the spring. The defence and international relations committees in parliament became sites of Conservative and Centrist attacks on the Liberal MFA. The 'power ministries', the different intelligence and security branches of the federal government, and General Staff of the armed forces, also institutionalised Centrist-Conservative discursive renderings of Russian identity.<sup>28</sup>

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) was the only organised mass national political party, and it, along with what came to be known as national-patriotic forces such as the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia under Vladimir Zhirinovskii, formed a brown-red coalition, propagating the Conservative discourse. By early 1993, the MFA had become a policymaking arm of the increasingly Centrist Yeltsin government, and so Liberal identity was to be found mostly in national daily newspapers such as *Kommersant* and *Izvestiia*, as well as in the research institutions revived under Gorbachev.<sup>29</sup> In October 1993, Yeltsin crushed a primary institutional carrier of Conservative identity, the parliament, replacing it in December 1993 with a no less Conservative collection of legislators in the Duma, but in a constitutionally subordinate position to the Centrist president.

<sup>26</sup> Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, pp. 222–47.

<sup>27</sup> My discussion of institutions relies on Bennett, *Condemned to Repetition*, pp. 306–10; Matz, *Constructing Post-Soviet Reality*, pp. 40–143; and Hopf, *Social Construction*, pp. 153–210.

<sup>28</sup> Bennett, *Condemned to Repetition*, pp. 313–23, and Emil A. Pain, 'Contiguous Ethnic Conflicts and border Disputes Along Russia's Southern Flank', in Renata Dwan and Oleksandr Pavliuk (eds.), *Building Security in the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), p. 185.

<sup>29</sup> Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, p. 241.

### The three discourses and Russia's conduct in Georgia

These three very different Russian identities implied different Russian policy toward the events unfolding in Abkhazia. We would hypothesise that if Liberal discourse were in control of the Russian state, no Russian support would have been given to the Abkhazian rebels, efforts would have been made to rein in local military forces, the parliament, and local governments, and a diligent search for UN, OSCE, and EU intervention would have been made. Had Conservative discourse been in control of the levers of the Russian state, we might hypothesise direct Russian military intervention on behalf of the Abkhazians, rather than the muddled and indirect Russian actions that occurred there. Moreover, Russia would have rejected any European or international institutional participation in the resolution of the conflict. Had Centrist discourse prevailed, we might expect initial interests in an international or European approach to the problem, followed by unilateral Russian action, if necessary.

Discourses of identity do not float freely. Which one ends up being reflected in the state is a function of institutional empowerment. Given the fact that the Russian state was only forming in 1992–3, no single discourse dominates a single unitary state, but instead different parts of the state – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, armed forces, Supreme Soviet, Presidential Administration, and Security Council – reflect different Russian identities. As the Russian state solidifies, first against its own Liberal Foreign Ministry, and then violently, against its Conservative parliament, the Centrist discourse of Russian identity is institutionally empowered in the Presidential Administration, its Security Council, increasingly in the Duma, and in the foreign, security, and military institutions of state.

It turns out, therefore, that all three Russian identities were in action with regard to Abkhazia in 1992–4. Liberal discourse prevails at first. Institutionally empowered by the military and parliament, Conservative discourse prevails through the local military and in parliamentary resolutions. Centrist discourse, once it occupies the presidential administration, and then the foreign ministry, determines Russian policy by late 1992.

Andrei Kozyrev, in one of his very first interviews as Russia's foreign minister, intimated that the Soviet Union was the significant hostile other of the new Liberal Russia: 'Unlike Bolshevik Russia, our country will not have to wait many years to become a full-fledged member of international society. We are welcomed as a democratic, free, peaceloving state which threatens neither its own citizens nor other states.'<sup>30</sup> While identifying against the disappeared Soviet Union, Kozyrev identifies with the 'Western democratic countries . . . our true friends.'<sup>31</sup>

Kozyrev, in defending the Liberal preference for relying on international institutions to defend the human rights of Russians abroad, painted the alternative as Soviet. 'We of course are in favour of defending Russians outside Russian borders, but with methods acceptable to a contemporary sense of justice . . . Of course it is possible to defend human rights on the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) platform using tanks . . ., but one may also use legal methods . . . To cross the

<sup>30</sup> *Izvestia*, 2 January 1992.

<sup>31</sup> Kozyrev, 'Andrei Kozyrev: "Rossiia obrechean byt velikoi derzhavoi . . ."', *Novoe Vremia* 14 January 1992, p. 24. On 'Western states as natural partners and allies', see Kozyrev's interview in *Le Monde*, 19 June 1992, quoted in Matz, p. 15.

border of a sovereign state . . . is absolutely unacceptable.'<sup>32</sup> There could be no clearer statement of the Liberal position on the illegitimacy of using military force, and its association of such violations of international practice with the Communist Soviet past . . . and present. The Soviet way of 'occupying the territory of republics' must be rejected in favour of 'international law. There is simply no third way to defend Russian-speakers . . .'<sup>33</sup> Kozyrev later identified Russian military interference in Georgia not only with Bolshevism, but with Nazi Germany. 'The party of war and of neo-Bolshevism is rearing its head in our country . . . Massive transfers of arms are occurring in the Caucasus and Moldova . . . What is happening here resembles 1933 in Germany . . .'<sup>34</sup>

By 1993, the Liberal discourse was empowered neither in the MFA nor in Yeltsin's Presidential Administration, but neither was its Conservative opposite. Instead, a Centrist discourse had emerged, which was explicitly situated between the two extreme alternatives. Indeed, one could argue that its very emergence was predictable, given the ongoing discreditation of Liberal identity, and the recent disappearance of the Conservative, embodied, as it were, in the dissolved Soviet Union.

Kozyrev navigated this middle ground in stipulating that Russians abroad sometimes had to be defended. 'Russia intends to do this primarily through political-diplomatic methods, with the use of international organisations. But in case these means of persuasion do not stop infringements on the life and security of people, I will not rule out the use of economic and military force, . . . but within legal and peacemaking frameworks.'<sup>35</sup> Here we see the Centrist first resort to non-military, multilateral institutional means of advancing Russian interests in the protection of Russians living abroad, while reserving the right to adopt more Conservative methods if the preferred choice is not effective. The Russian government consistently appealed to international institutions to legitimise its peace-keeping activities in places like Abkhazia. Yeltsin, in a speech often quoted to summarise his clear rejection of a Liberal identity for Russia, said that 'I believe it is time for distinguished international organisations, including the UN, to grant Russia special powers as a guarantor of peace and stability in the region of the FSU'.<sup>36</sup>

Here we see the crystallisation of the idea of Russia as a great power with some kind of 'special' responsibilities, obligations, and rights to police its neighbourhood. Again, this Centrist understanding of Russian great power identity was distinct from the Liberal idea of integrating into the American-West European world of multilateral institutional membership, or the Conservative idea of Russia as carrying on the fight against American hegemony. In his address before the UN General Assembly in September 1993, Kozyrev asked not only that the UN 'recognize Russia as the only power that can manage conflict within the FSU', but suggested that the UN finance Russia's role as a regional peacekeeper.

<sup>32</sup> Interview in *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 1 April 1992.

<sup>33</sup> *Izvestiia*, 30 June 1992. See also Andrei Kozyrev, 'Russia and Human Rights', *Slavic Review*, 51:2 (Summer 1992), p. 291.

<sup>34</sup> *Izvestiia*, 30 June 1992.

<sup>35</sup> *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, January 1993, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> 28 February 1993, quoted in Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies*, p. 52. See also Yeltsin's speech reported in *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 18 March 1993.

The Centrist discourse on the Near Abroad was explicitly situated between its two alternatives. Kozyrev argued that there 'are two extremes: to hold on the USSR (Conservative) – this is hopeless, or, pull out completely from this traditional zone of influence . . . (Liberal) this would be an unwarranted loss . . . (While) it would be wrong to ignore the role of the UN and CSCE, it would be extreme to completely hand over this sphere to these organizations.'<sup>37</sup> As Yeltsin concluded, 'both the neoimperial and isolationist approaches for Russia are inadmissible'.<sup>38</sup>

To summarise, different discourses of Russian identity imply different interests, foreign policy choices, and views of legitimate conduct in world affairs. In the final section, I discuss how Russian use of force might have been brought into more legitimate bounds.

### **Russia's Great Power identities: opportunities for legitimate action**

Could Russian behaviour have been more constrained in Abkhazia? What kind of Russia would ever withdraw its troops from Georgia today? In this final section, I wish to speculate on how Russian behaviour could have been different in the early 1990s, and how it might evolve today. Building on what I have already argued, Russian views of legitimate action in the Near Abroad would have been radically different had Liberal discourse remained in power in the newly aborning Russian state. I argue that the West missed an enormous opportunity to prolong the Liberal honeymoon. Second, even with the Centrist discourse in place, the West, especially Europe, missed another opportunity to institutionalise a more legitimate use of Russian military force in the Near Abroad.

Finally, while Russian identity has deep daily roots, its great power identity is in a daily construction project with the external world, especially with the US and Europe. Interaction with the US and Europe produces, reinforces, and counteracts the discourses of Russian identity at home. Perhaps proper European and American cultivation of a Russian great power identity that adheres to norms of legitimate use of force is still possible.

Liberal discourse lost its place of predominance largely because of its complete failure domestically. The collapse of the economy, skyrocketing violence, crime and corruption, loss of basic public health services, and all around state impotence was directly and closely associated with Liberal identification of Russia with the West, in particular, with the United States. As Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev had begged Western leaders to invest in the new Soviet Union, a social democratic project. As Russian President, Yeltsin, perhaps less credibly, did the same. There was precious little response. One could imagine that some large and sustained commitment of financial support from the West could have, just perhaps, legitimised the Liberal experiment in Russian identity. Had this worked, the Conservative alternative would not have arisen, or the Centrist co-optation of both, become possible. In this event, Russian actions in the Near Abroad would have doubtlessly been far more pacific, and subject to multinational institutional control.

<sup>37</sup> *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 24 November 1993.

<sup>38</sup> *Rosisskie Vesti*, 9 February 1994.

But even given Centrist predominance, the West repeatedly missed opportunities to shape Russian conduct through precisely these institutional mechanisms. As was noted above, Kozyrev and Yeltsin repeatedly asked for OSCE and UN authorisation for its actions in Georgia, and elsewhere in the Near Abroad. The West could and should have taken these requests far more seriously. They could have, at a cynical minimum, called Russia's bluff. But far more importantly, they could have traded Western authorisation of Russian actions and Western delegation of authority to Russia in the Near Abroad for strict adherence to a consensual set of standards of legitimate conduct in these places. The intense European involvement in the Baltic region should have been replicated in the Caucasus, Moldova, and Central Asia. In the former case, we should recall, many expected Russian use of military force in Estonia and Latvia in defence of Russians living there. Instead, the credible work of the CE and OSCE in these two countries convinced Russia that universal European standards of conduct were being applied to both the Baltic states and to Russia. The same attention, had it been given to Abkhazia, for example, might have institutionalised legitimate great power conduct by Russia in the Near Abroad.

For the most part, however, this concerns what might have changed the discursive balance, and so levels of legitimate Russian conduct, in the past. Let me close with the contemporary construction of Russia's great power identity.

'The practice of foreign policy . . . helps Russia to become Russia. Interaction with the surrounding world helps her to formulate a Russian stateness and helps in gaining knowledge of Russia's interests.'<sup>39</sup> One might think this is a quote from a constructivist IR theory textbook, but in fact it is from a speech given by a former adviser to Yeltsin.

In order to assess this hypothesis I have collected the transcripts of 38 meetings President Putin has had with US President Bush and European leaders from May 2000 to May 2005.<sup>40</sup> I analysed them in terms of what topics were discussed, how these topics were discussed, and which identities were present in the conversations. The findings are presented in Table 2.

In Table 2, the major differences between conversations with Bush and conversations with European leaders are highlighted in bold.

What kind of great power emerges from Putin's conversations? When interacting with the US, Russia is a partner with the US in a global war on terror and against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, period. When interacting with Europe, on the other hand, Russia is a European great power, who, along with other European powers like Germany, Italy, and France, fights terrorism under the authority of the United Nations and international law.

While not surprising that interacting with Europe evokes Russia's European identity, it is critically significant. Unlike identity relations with the United States, which do not have broader and deeper resonance in mass Russian society, European identity is a natural part of the daily identity terrain of Russian society.<sup>41</sup> A fair amount of recent research in international relations has shown that an international

<sup>39</sup> Sergei Stankevich, 'Vystuplenie S. B. Stankevicha', *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, 6:1992 (31 March 1992), p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> All these documents may be downloaded at (<http://kremlin.ru>). Last accessed 1 June 2005.

<sup>41</sup> This is evident from the high school textbooks, crime novels, and other mass texts sampled to arrive at the domestic discourses on Russian identity. See Hopf, *Social Construction*, pp. 153–210.

Table 2. *Constructing Russia in conversation.*

US N=15	Terrorism	Economics	Proliferation	Partners	Democracy
	9	7	6	4	4
	Civilisation	Terrorism & Human Rights	Allies v. Terrorism	Roots of Terrorism	Chechnia & Terrorism
3	2	2	1	1	
1	UN Central	Friends			
	1	1			
Europe N=23	Partners	<b>European Identity</b>	Terrorism	<b>UN Central</b>	Democracy
	11	11	10	10	7
	<b>International Law</b>	Civilisation	Proliferation	<b>Multilateralism</b>	Racism/ Xenophobia
	6	6	6	4	4
	Chechnia & Terrorism	Terrorism & Human Rights	Roots of Terrorism	CTBT	
2	2	2	2		

One each space weapons ban, BCW ban, light weapons ban, world order

norm is more likely to be adopted by a state if its society already has a dominant discourse within which that norm resonates.<sup>42</sup>

The average Russian understands herself as European, as part of European culture and civilisation, and as engaging in European daily practices. This implies Europe has a greater capacity to more profoundly affect how Russia understands itself than the United States. In fact, the latter, to the extent its identity relations are restricted to that of great power partners in terrorism and nonproliferation, evokes a Soviet identity for Russians, reminding them of the time when the USSR and the US bilaterally negotiated the level of (in)security in the world for everyone else. Europeans should therefore be a more effective conduit for socialising Russia into legitimate great power conduct than the United States, since Russia's European identity is more deeply embedded in the daily practices of Russian life.

To bring the point home I will contrast the presence of Russia's identity relations with Europe to the absence of any such relations with the United States. Putin, for example, refers to Russia's 'European calling', or *prizvanie*.<sup>43</sup> An 'American calling' is simply unthinkable in Russia, except for a narrow slice of the already small Liberal discourse. Similarly Russia's place in the 'common European home' is never matched to any common space with America.<sup>44</sup> Putin also refers to the deep roots of leftist

<sup>42</sup> Jeff Checkel, 'Norms, Institutions and National Identity in Contemporary Europe', *International Studies Quarterly*, 43:1 (March 1999), pp. 83–114; Andrew P. Cortell and James W. Davis, Jr., 'Understanding the Domestic Impact of International Norms: A Research Agenda', *International Studies Review*, 2:1 (2000), pp. 73–6; and Theo Farrell, 'Transnational Norms and Military Development: Constructing Ireland's Professional Army', *European Journal of International Relations*, 7:1 (2001), pp. 63–102.

<sup>43</sup> Meeting in Moscow 29 May 2000 with EU representatives Guterresh, Solana and Prodi.

<sup>44</sup> Interview 2 April 2002 with German and Russian media in Moscow. The idea of the Soviet Union in the 'common European home' was, significantly, Gorbachev's formulation.



ideas . . . communism and social democracy', in Europe and Russia.<sup>45</sup> It is inconceivable for Russia and the United States to share deep Lockean or republican roots, let alone roots farther to the left.

Putin repeatedly refers to the great contributions Russia and other countries, such as Germany and Italy, have made to the 'enrichment of European civilization'.<sup>46</sup> In a joint statement with Berlusconi, Solana, and Prodi in Rome, they speak of 'our common intellectual heritage and possessions'.<sup>47</sup> Putin once tells Berlusconi that 'the unique national traditions of our countries have absorbed the best features of European civilization'.<sup>48</sup> Putin observes that 'the value of the spiritual legacy of Russia and Germany has global significance, and for many centuries has been a kind of cultural beacon . . . for the entire world, for all of Europe'.<sup>49</sup>

Contrast this to the following excerpt from the 'Joint Statement on Russian-American Contacts between People', in which the development of future US-Russian relations at the societal level are elaborated. 'For centuries, the great poets, writers, artists, composers, and scholars of Russia have made outstanding contributions to world civilisation. The study of this cultural legacy spiritually enriches the lives of Americans'. Consistent with a conversation with Europeans, the statement might have gone on to speak of the similar contributions and shared achievements of the French, or Dutch, or Italians. Instead, 'For their part, Rossians (not ethnic Russians, or *narod*, about which more below), show genuine interest in getting to know the American contribution to art and science'.<sup>50</sup> Russians need not 'get to know' European contributions; they live them, and live with them every day. But they have to familiarise themselves with the heretofore unremarked Americans.

In a very real sense, Russia's partnership with the United States is based almost exclusively on tactical interests in fighting terrorism. There is no deeper identity relationship between the two states. There is no social foundation that could create a stable intersubjective reality that could go beyond mere policy preferences. There are no discursive hooks on which normative legitimising claims could be connected in advancing arguments about Russian use of force. In the 'Moscow Declaration on New Strategic Relations between the Russian Federation and the United States', a document borne out of the closer relationship developed between Washington and Moscow after 9/11, there is not a single reference to any shared identity between Russia and the United States.<sup>51</sup> Instead, it is a long list of common threats and interests. Even in the section on 'contact between peoples', there is a set of instrumental goals in education, health care, tourism, combating AIDS, and so on, but not a word about common values, traditions, norms, identities. As Putin put it at his press conference with Bush in Bratislava, 'What unites the US and Russia are longterm interests and strategic goals . . .'.<sup>52</sup>

It is also very significant that Putin, referring to the peoples of Russia and Europe, uses the word *narod*, while using *liudi* when referring to the peoples of Russia and

<sup>45</sup> 2 April 2002.

<sup>46</sup> Meeting 11 April 2003 in St. Petersburg with Schroeder. See also 29 August 2003 meeting with Berlusconi in Sardinia.

<sup>47</sup> 6 November 2003.

<sup>48</sup> 3 November 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Speech 14 January 2005 in St. Petersburg with German President Horst Kohler.

<sup>50</sup> 24 May 2002.

<sup>51</sup> 24 May 2002.

<sup>52</sup> 24 February 2005.

the United States.<sup>53</sup> This is not a trivial semantic issue, but one of profound significance for identity relations. *Narod* in Russian refers to kinship or blood ties, ethnicity, loosely speaking, while *liudi* are simply a collection of unrelated people.<sup>54</sup> In other words, Russians and Europeans are relatives in the same family, while Russians and Americans are just part of the human race with no particular closeness or similarity.

During Bush's summit visit to Moscow in May 2002, for example, a joint statement on Russian-American contacts between people is issued. The word for people, is *liudi*, not *narod*. In the 'Moscow Declaration', issued at the same summit, Russians become Rossians, that is, *rossisskie*, citizens of the Russian Federation. Often in conversations with European leaders, Putin uses the ethnonational word, *russkie*, to refer to the Russian *narod*, and their ties to other Europeans. In other words, relations with America are official and instrumental, not rooted in history, culture, family even.

It is obvious in Table 2 that terrorism is an important topic in Putin's meetings with both Bush and European leaders. But how the topic is discussed differs in important ways. In conversations with Bush, the war on terrorism is fought by the United States and Russia according to their common vision of the threat.<sup>55</sup> In conversations with Europeans, the very same war is fought in accordance with the appropriate UN Security Council resolutions, with international law more generally, and multilaterally.<sup>56</sup> In fact, a multilateral approach according the central role to the UN in the fight against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is fixed in the Road Map on the Common Space of External Security between the EU and Russia. In this way, Russia's interactions with Europeans explicitly ground the use of military force in legitimating and authorising international law and institutions. Interaction with the US provides no such opportunities.

Moreover, collaboration with the US in the global war on terrorism, absent any reference to norms, legitimacy, or authority, provides opportunity for Putin to link his own war on terrorism in Chechnia to American (mis)conduct. Responding to a German reporter's question on violations of human rights in Chechnia, Putin reminds his audience of American actions in Iraq.<sup>57</sup>

This is not to say that Russian adherence to international norms on the legitimate use of force depends on interaction with Europe. After all, Russian behaviour is consistent with such adherence most of the time most everywhere. Putin's conversations merely suggest that the probability of such adherence increases when Russia understands itself as a European great power, rather than as a partner of the United States.

<sup>53</sup> 6 November 2003 joint statement with Berlusconi in Rome and 9 May 2005 meeting with Schroeder in Moscow.

<sup>54</sup> *Narod* is formed around the root *rod*, which by itself means family, kin, clan, birth, origin, stock, and in science, genus. It gives rise to words, such as, *roditeli*/parents, *rodina*/Homeland or Motherland, *roditi*/to give birth, and so on.

<sup>55</sup> For example, Joint Statement of Putin and Bush on New Relations Between Russia and the United States, 13 November 2001 in Crawford, Texas.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Putin's joint statement with Schroeder in Moscow on 9 September 2004. See also Putin's joint statement with Berlusconi in Moscow on 3 November 2004.

<sup>57</sup> 5 May 2005.

### **Conclusions: identity and legitimacy**

Exploring Russian conduct in Abkhazia showed that different Russian identities implied different Russian behaviour there. Had the Liberal discourse on Russian identity remained predominant, it is very likely that Russian foreign policy toward Georgia would have been far more consonant with international normative desiderata. Moreover, it is even possible that had European and international institutions made a concerted effort to normatively guide Russia in its Near Abroad, even Russian conduct guided by Centrist discourse would have been responsive to multilateral institutional demands, as it demonstrated in the Baltic. Finally, and fortunately, we have seen how Conservative understanding of Russia, read as it was through the Soviet past, found less and less resonance in Russia, and so its neo-imperial restorationist strategy in the FSU was never implemented.

In going forward, however, it is evident that Russia's great power identity is partly the product of interaction with other great powers. The survey of Putin's conversations with Western leaders appears to show that a Russian foreign policy that respects international norms of legitimacy is more likely to develop in interaction with European, rather than American, leaders. Not only is the substance of the two broad conversations different, but interactions with Europeans easily evoke a common European identity that resonates deeply in daily Russian life. In this sense, talk is hardly cheap, but rather an unusually important power resource in the construction of a more European Russia which more commonly adheres to the rules of great power conduct in international affairs.