Georgia's Europeanization and Russia's response

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Abstract

This thesis makes a contribution to the vast field of International Relations research conducted on Russia and its neighbors. Following constructivist scholarship focusing particularly on national interests, state identities, and the concept of ‘us and them’, the research shines light on how Russia has positioned itself in regards to the Europeanization process of neighboring Georgia. The thesis is additionally founded on understandings of European integration theories as well as information on the empirical case of complicated relationships Russia has with Georgia but also with the European Union. The steps of Georgia’s Europeanization process (2006-2014) are used as a pin point to define a time limit for the study and to analyze how shifts in a state’s surroundings can affect its identity presentation and national interests. The study is conducted as a qualitative content analysis utilizing public statements issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Russian Federation.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research problem

"The West views former Soviet states as fully sovereign countries. As a result, Putin’s determination to re-establish Russian primacy in its former dependencies is the crux of the ‘Russian challenge’ to Europe."

(Giles et al, 2015:7)

This quote brings light to the longstanding but current dilemma of Russian interests in its near abroad that is faced by real life politics and social scientists alike, and which serves as a starting point for this thesis. As a Finnish scholar, having been raised in the close proximity of Russia and having conducted previous research on the Caucasus region and the country of Georgia, the relationships between Russia and its neighbors personally resonates on multiple levels. Arising from the complexities of Russian relations with its neighbors and with a special interest in the ongoing Europeanization process of Georgia, this thesis is guided by the following research question: How has Russia positioned itself in regard to Georgia’s Europeanization - do national interests shift due to changes in international structures?

Struggling to find its place in the global arena after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has arguably not been the easiest or most stable neighbor to either individual countries or the wider European community. Russian leadership has been claimed to have rejected the idea of integrating to or with Europe, instead positioning itself as a self-sustaining ‘great power’ (Trenin, 2009:4). In a broader media discourse the clash between Russia and Europe has often been presented as self-evident but these dynamics have also spurred a vast field of International Relations literature, which will be elaborated on further in this thesis. The underlying assumption here is the disconnect between the quote from Giles et al. (2015) presented in the beginning and the shift in Russia’s international surroundings with Georgia striving closer towards the European Union and the EU meeting these aspirations.

Russia has shown its assertiveness by quite openly threatening its western and southern neighbors to varying degrees. In July 2018 the Finnish broadcasting company YLE reported on Russian Defense Minister's statement about 'counter actions' if Finland and
Sweden were to apply for NATO membership (YLE, 2018). The Moscow Times covered news about president Putin's threats of military action against Ukraine earlier this summer (The Moscow Times, 2018) and the decisions of Ukraine and Armenia not to sign Association Agreements or free trade agreements with the European Union earlier in the 2010s were presented as being highly influenced by Russia (Gardner, 2013). Russian assertiveness and ignorance in the face of international law and state sovereignty, have to an even greater extent become clear in the cases of both Georgia (Russo-Georgian war, 2008) and Ukraine (annexation of Crimea, 2014).

As Fierke and Wiener state in their work on enlargement of the EU and NATO:

the eastward enlargement or expansion of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), respectively, are likely to transform the political and economic landscape of Europe (Fierke and Wiener, 2010: 121).

The European Union and Russian Federation are both major global and regional actors and the power structures and balances between the two, combined with involvement of ‘the rest of the West’ in the form of NATO play an essential role in maintaining peace and security in Eurasia, and even globally. Russian resentment towards NATO expansion and the overall importance of good relations with Russia in order to maintain security and stability in Europe have been argued by for example O’Hanlon (2017). The struggle regarding post-Soviet Russia’s role in the international and Eurasian society and the disconnect between the Russian view of its rights and obligations regarding its near abroad in comparison to how other agents view it, are the core of this research problem.

**1.2 Aim of research**

The aim of the study is to investigate how shifts in the international society, in this case the Europeanization of Georgia, has affected Russian national interests and to examine whether Russia has reacted to Georgia’s aspirations of moving closer towards the European Union, as this specific case has been left without sufficient attention in the International Relations scholarship. As suggested above, clashing interests and Russia’s sense of weakening control over the country's near abroad is of great concern as this combination might lead to negative actions that can impact Europe, Eurasia and even the world.
This is why going beyond given assumptions of Russia and its actions is vital also for the ‘real world’ instead of only being of interest to the academic world of social sciences and International Relations. The thesis also fills a gap in the International Relations literature by connecting the study.

The hypothesis guiding this study is that because Georgia aspires to become more closely connected to the West and to reduce its dependency on Russia, a clash between this direction and Russian national interests can be detected. Building on a broader understanding of constructivist International Relations literature and concepts, this study relates especially back to Martha Finnemore’s (1996) research on how international structures can shape national interests as this claim is reflected upon with the case at hand. In order to set certain limits for the study and to sustain its coherence, the decision is made to focus the analysis on national interests and identity as well as utilizing the concept of ‘us and them’, which is explained further on in this thesis. This decision will be argued for through the following literature review. Based on the hypothesis provided above, the research question of the study will be:

*How has Russia posited itself in regard to Georgia’s Europeanization - do national interests shift due to changes in international structures?*

This research question is examined through a qualitative content analysis conducted on public statements provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. The research design is created using the constructivist approach and the central argument this thesis makes based on the findings presented in Chapter 5 is that there is a shift in the narrative that Russia is producing surrounding Georgia and it can be seen between the first and final texts.

### 1.3 Outline of the thesis

This introduction chapter will be followed by a background section, that is necessary not only for providing a more profound understanding of the turbulent relationships between Russia and Georgia, Russia and the EU, and Georgia and the EU, but also to add to the motivation of certain elements of the methodology and data collection. Additional purpose of the background chapter has been to help shape the following literature review, which provides the reader with an overview of previous discussions in the Euro-
The literature review will be presented to lead the reader to an understanding of where within the field of International Relations this study is placed. The literature review begins with country specific, more empirical material and examines the previous approaches taken to analyzing national identities and interest formation, including but not limited to Russian national identity and interests. The process of further Europeanization of Georgia and some literature on Russian responses to Europeanization processes elsewhere are also to be scrutinized, in order to have possible connections between these different aspects available later on in this thesis.

Drawing from this research, a theoretical framework for the following analysis will be created. The chosen theoretical framework and key concepts are drawn from the constructivist branches of International Relations scholarship and the motivation for choosing this particular approach is provided. The review of previous literature will then be followed by a methodology chapter, and in addition to explaining the method and how to utilize it, the choice of method is motivated. The methodology chapter will also address the limitations and delimitations of the study. Following the creation of methodology, it will be utilized in the analysis. The analysis chapter will assemble the constructivist approach, the methodology and the background to a coherent investigation to answer the research question. Conclusions and suggestions for future research will be provided at the end of this thesis.

2. Literature Review

The following literature review aims to provide the reader with necessary information, relevant discussions from previously conducted research, required to assemble and understand the following analysis and conclusions related to the Europeanization process of Georgia and the Russian response to it. In order to choose and define the key concepts used for the analysis, the International Relations subfield of European integration and the constructivist approach and their origins are brought into the discussion. The literature review moves on to reviewing the constructivist approach to European integration and continuing with introducing the constructivist views on identities, as well as the concept of ‘us and them’. This chapter also looks into how identities, interest formation and Europeanization have been studied in the Russian and Georgian contexts.
separately, as well as together. Directed by these discussions and the research question presented in the introduction, the focus will be shifted towards the key concepts that are needed for analyzing and answering the research question. Undoubtedly this study will also be very receptive towards understanding the conclusions of other scholars, but what is another important task of this literature review, is to see how such research been conducted.

2.1 European integration

In order to designate this study’s place in the broader International Relations literature and emphasize its relevance to the field, it is relevant to discuss the accumulation of knowledge that this research is based on. Therefore the beginning of this section dates back several decades. The broader Europeanization discourse is generally understood as being rooted in Ernst B. Haas’s writings on neofunctionalism from the 1950’s, which placed a high emphasis on non-state actors as the driving force behind European integration (Graziano & Vink, 2013). Haas wrote that political integration was a:

process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations, and political activities toward a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states’ (Haas, 1958:6).

Jeffrey Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein (2009:5) review Haas’s work to be quite little focused on identity and rather interested in functional pressures while also “allowing for changes in interests”. In the same era, a vastly different approach to European integration was developed by Karl W. Deutsch whose views gave room for identity and focused on for example the flow of information but remained drastically more pessimistic towards a common European identity (Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009:6-7; Deutsch et al. 1957; Deutsch 1953, 1967). Checkel & Katzenstein (2009) credit especially Haas to having inspired a great amount of further research, but both of the two ‘original' thinkers behind European integration theories and politicizing identities left room for developing their ideas much further.

Haas’s approach was then later challenged by intergovernmentalists like Hoffmann and Moravcsik with the main claim that ‘after years of European integration still the
state was ‘alive and kicking’ and capable of shaping further the process of supranational integration’ (Graziano & Vink, 2013:32). At the end of the 1990’s these two Euro-centered regional integration theories were further developed into or challenged by the third one - Europeanization (Graziano & Vink, 2013).

Europeanization according to Checkel and Katzenstein (2009:9) “provides the state of the art on how Europe might be reshaping deeply held senses of community - national, local, regional, and otherwise”. The concept they refer to, following Olsen (2002, 2007) and Graziano & Vink’s (2006) works, is a process, or nearer to several interlinked processes that go past traditional scholarly interests of elite identification and state bargaining’s effects on the European Union and its development. Europeanization is about interaction and dynamics of the nation state and EU as well as the effects of the regional power on the nation states according to a great amount of scholars like Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier (2005), Caporaso, Cowles, and Rise (2001), and Knill (2001) to mention a few. Although opponents to the prevalent view of Europeanization being a process in the first place, can also be found. Jim Buller and Andrew Gamble (2002:17) for example require a certain causal effect as they define Europeanization as “a situation where distinct modes of European governance have transformed aspects of domestic politics”. The usefulness of the whole concept has been questioned because of the vast variety of Europeanization literature and definitions, but scholars like Olsen (2002:923) prefer the view that the different definitions can be seen as complementing each other instead of providing a reason to abandon the concept.

In order to move forward with the research, the vast amount of literature defining Europeanization as a process or processes, will be one of the components this research builds up on. Especially as it becomes clear later on in this thesis, the research here is not focused on the question whether Europeanization has happened to a certain extent but rather builds upon previous literature that has already defined certain developments in EU-Georgia relations as Europeanization and therefore focuses more on what follows from that. What is also relevant to the research puzzle of this study, is to include the view of Europeanization that it can describe situations where certain European features have been exported outside of Europe (Buller and Gamble 2002:10), as it shows that a state’s identity would not necessarily have to be under a threat because of an integration process but maintaining one’s identity and developing closer relations with others do not need to be mutually excluding. Mostly the Europeanization literature recognizes the relationship between EU integration and domestic policy changes, which can be interpreted so that these scholars simply put forward a more allowing and wider definition
for Europeanization than Buller and Gamble’s conclusion provides without limiting it to such simplicity.

### 2.1.1 Constructivism as an approach to European integration

1990s was not only the period of the rise of Europeanization literature, but also the time of notable constructivists to bring their approach to life and to the field of European integration. Most notably Alexander Wendt’s article in International Organization in 1992 called “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics” set the ground for an approach less focused on materialism and instead the understanding that everything about the political world is historically and socially constructed. Constructivists have given space for the idea that actors in the international arena - such as nation-states for example, do not only let their interests be shaped by material but the surrounding world and identity question play a crucial part in interest formation.

Despite some arguments against comparing constructivism to the previous theories of European integration, the father of neofunctionalism E.B. Haas, who has often been acknowledged by contemporary scholars for his insights and comments, sees a rather clear continuation between the different approaches of different decades of scholarship in the field. Depending largely on the topic of research, different approaches even within constructivist scholars can be distinguished. Some argue that ‘sociological constructivism’ is insufficient in understanding for example the enlargement process of EU and demand a turn to Wittgensteinian rooted constructivism (Fierke and Wietner, 2010:124), with enhancing the meaning of language and claiming that the before mentioned reduces ‘norms to causes’, but contrasting views are available. Dividing constructivists into different groups has been done by for example Haas himself in his work discussing the lineage between neofunctionalism and constructivism and where he explains the motivations behind each theory’s birth among other aspects. He drew his division of constructivist scholars according to their approach to the “all-important issue of how actors construct their own interests”(Haas, 2010:26). Haas argues that constructivism was born to be a comprehensive theory of international relations without a certain specific goal, whereas neofunctionalism was solely focused on understanding integration processes in Europe and then possibly elsewhere. Interestingly, specifically in the case of Europeanization, social constructivism is deemed as not even attempting to be a comprehensive theory, but as an approach complementary to its successors in the
field, namely neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism. Despite the origins or purposes behind each theory, building on the works of scholars that came before them has been possible for constructivists because they have not aimed at completely disregarding previous works and findings in the International Relations literature and because of the similarity in stressing causality that can be found between values and ideas and defining actors’ interests.

Out of the three groups of constructivists that Haas (2010:26) defined (‘the systemic school’, ‘norms and culture’, and ‘the soft rationalist’) the first - lead by Alexander Wendt and David Dessler, as well as the third - including Peter Katzenstein and Emanuel Adler, ought to be the most suitable scholars to follow in the task of fulfilling the aim of this thesis and answering such a research problem.

Although it might seem inviting to conduct the research only on a structural level, the several research approaches examined above show that a much more insightful analysis can be provided when unit-level constructivism is allowed to complement the theoretical framework and single actors can also be taken into consideration. The way this thesis takes advantage of the constructivist approach is theory-consuming, which means that theory is utilized for understanding and exploring the case instead of attempting to challenge the theory to a very large extent.

2.2 Constructivist views on identity and interest formation

According to Bernd Bucher and Ursula Jasper (2017:392):

> in the past 25 years, the concept of identity has received wide attention from constructivist and, more broadly, non-foundationalist International Relations (IR) scholars. Identity scholarship has successfully argued that preferences, interests and norm structures are inseparably tied to actors’ identities, which need to be taken seriously in order to account for state action and international security dynamics.

Although as with other concepts, the views on identity and its usage in research vary even within the constructivist branch of IR scholarship. Adler's writing for example might suggest that the works of social constructivists and 'ideational' constructivists provide a great platform for understanding the dynamics of identities in Europe (Adler
2002). Others like Parsons (2003) or McNamara (1998) place the importance of ideas on the aspect that they can be used in attempts of understanding causal dynamics in developments of the EU instead of trying to understand identities themselves (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009:8).

Adler in his prominent constructivist work "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics" (1997) showed that constructivism does not require disregarding rationality. He quotes Toulmin (1972:371) who argues that “rational considerations are brought to bear in collective human enterprises and situations”. Adding his view to the constructivist International Relations literature Greg Parsons (2003:241) has:

used the EU example to argue that we live in a potentially deeply socially constructed world. By employing conservative methods to isolate the impact of ideas in an unusually clear and important case, I leave skeptics little room to deny the basic plausibility of ideational causation.

Martha Finnemore’s (1996) prominent work on national interests brings on several aspects that are important to understand about what states want. Firstly she reflects on more traditional International Relations theories that reduced state interests to power, wealth and security (Finnemore, 1996:1). As a constructivist Finnemore broadens the discussion from this simplistic list to the question if states always actually know what they want, as well as requiring specifications to the list of interests. Finnemore argues that internationally held norms play a crucial role in forming state interests as well as places emphasis on the social structures of international politics. Her book makes the claim that changes in international structures can shape national interests, which is then supported by three case studies that use for example public documents from international organizations as primary sources (Finnemore 1996). By showing how international norms and shifts in norms have affected great changes in international organizations in the fields of state structure, war and development, she makes a powerful case, which the following analysis will make use of as well.

The constructivist family of International Relations scholarly has arguably been the one that has opened the door for understanding and studying identities and interest formations. Throughout the years constructivists have made important inputs on different aspects of studying identity and national interests. A lot of the literature on identities, especially in the European integration context, has quite naturally focused on European Union member states’ identities and their relation and possible clashes with the wider
European identity. The Russian identity questions have on the other hand been studied somewhat separately or at least from a different perspective as Russia’s total inclusion into the EU has quite obviously not been a generally considered goal.

2.2.1 European and national identities

In terms of European and national identities, International Relations scholars - or at least a part of them, have come a long way from the ‘zero-sum game’ of strictly believing in these two being incompatible and against each other.

Thomas Risse (2012:88) for example has shown that some of the constructivist work can be based on survey data. Data that argued that individuals can simultaneously feel attached to different communities and therefore also to both European and national identities (Hooghe and Marks 2005; Risse 2010). Risse (2012:91) argues that in order to succeed in practice, no states or supranational entities can dismiss the material needs in their quest for creating and maintaining a foreign policy identity and promoting their values outside their own borders.

This followed the idea that the European Union is not really different from other great powers with its attempts at promoting its identity outwards and that the EU started behaving similarly despite its agency in foreign affairs having been under dispute (Hill, 1993; Sjursen, 2006). EU’s identity that its aiming to promote outwards is described as being:

- modern and enlightened as well as emphasizing the rule of (international) law, multilateral and peaceful conflict resolution, as well as the promotion of human rights, democracy and a social market economy (Risse, 2012:91).

According to Risse (2012:93) the discourses around European identity construction have showed different variations where European ‘borders’ have taken different shapes and therefore provided different prospects of joining the EU or being considered European for countries on the outskirts of Europe. Some views lean towards inclusion and emphasize the requirement of meeting the Copenhagen criteria, giving rather easy and quick access to the CEE (Central and Eastern European) countries, whereas others draw the lines of exclusion with geography, history, religion and culture - intentionally leaving out for example Turkey (ibid.). He also concludes the article by clearly arguing that “enlargement decisions inevitably involve identity politics” (2012:94) which supports
the importance and relevance of these constructivist views in studying the cases of Europeanization and related issues of ‘borderline’ countries such as Georgia and Russia.

It is no longer sufficient to explore EU institutions and their effects on identity in isolation from broader social and political processes; nor is it sufficient to examine nationalist movements as if they exist separate from European institutions (Risse, 2012:217).

Europeans are accepting a sense of self that display a wider area of values and identities that Europe was not as willing to accommodate for previously. The definition of a European self in relation to the other, as the east to its west, is equal to delimiting the European self of the present day, from the European self of the past (Katzenstein and Chekel, 2009:225).

European identity is captured well by Castiglione and Bellamy, the authors here write with European Union and European identity in specific reference "most people believe it to be useful without feeling deeply attached to it" (Castiglione and Bellamy, 2003:21). Katzenstein and Chekel (2009) argue that everyone benefits from a nuanced and disciplinary inquiry into European identities that more closely relate to the multiple worlds Europeans experience on a daily basis (Katzenstein and Chekel, 2009:227).

2.2.2 Us and them

Continuing with Thomas Risse’s work on the importance of identity (2012), another discussion about the topic that is of high importance to this study is the one concerning the concept of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Risse explains the essentials of collective identities to be two-folded. The usual features behind collective identities are; firstly describing the speciality of the respective community, and secondly creating a certain boundary between different communities - us and them. ‘Them’, the out group can be seen in a neutral light or negatively (Risse, 2012:88).

Following on the ‘anti-radical’ path of constructivists who have fought the need to completely disregard previous research findings, this thesis also allows input from different branches of constructivism in the theoretical framework used for the analysis. This study recognizes Alexander Wendt’s role as one of the most prominent social con-
structivist authors of the recent decades as well as his efforts in developing the discussion of the anarchic nature of the world system and formation of state interests beyond the traditional neo-neo debate.

Because of the ongoing process of Georgia’s Europeanization and the hypothesis that this process causes/has caused reactions from Russia or challenged a certain ‘Great Russia’ identity, those constructivist views that acknowledge the formative role of other actors and international structures on a nation-state’s identity are absolutely necessary. But, as we will see in the following sections concerning the scholarly discussions on Russian and Georgian identities, as well as the already explored European identities; each one of them has been studied to at least somewhat sufficient extent. This enables this study to focus on the effects of other actors’ actions on the Russian identity presentation and national interests, although the study also recognizes the nearly endless possibilities in studying identities that for example post-structuralists have taken to new directions (i.e. Bucher and Jasper, 2017:394-395).

The main criticism towards the understanding of a material world, that is still held by for example some constructivists (Wendt 1999), emphasizes the importance of understanding or examining the context of events that materialists would see as somewhat simple truths.

2.3 Russia and Europeanization

In order to explore the Russian take on Europeanization, this section will be an attempt in understanding Russian identity construction. It should be acknowledged that this is a vast and multilayered sub-topic that could easily demand a separate study to be fully understood, but for the purpose of exploring the research question at hand, it is necessary to preview it briefly. The vitality of such an understanding is due to the intertwined relationship Russian identity formation and Europeanization share with one another. As the construction of a current Russian identity can to some extent be seen as triggered by Europeanization, the Russian understanding of the process of Europeanization can be of great importance and have much influence.

The Russian Federation has not been a stranger to International Relations scholars or social scientists in a wider context. Instead it has been the source of inspiration to an amazingly extensive array of literature both in its current form as well as its predecessor, the Soviet Union. Studying Russia and especially its relationship with Europe and Europeanization is a very multifaceted task as the starting point for research could be
seen as almost anything, from Russia being an integral part of Europe, or even considered a friend of Europe to being a hostile and dangerous neighbor. While studying the different discourses that include these entangled relationships, one has to take into account historical aspects, forms of governance, the relation between state elites and the general public, or even quite specific features of the Russian leadership to mention only a few examples. In addition researchers have had to position themselves by choosing which ‘side’ of the chosen puzzles to approach the information from, leaving the risk of humane bias almost unmonitored throughout the studies. Referring back to the particular topic of this study, it is natural to begin with looking into research that has provided insights into Russia and questions of identity as well as interest formation.

Anne L. Clunan, coming from the perspective of ‘aspirational constructivism’, argues that post-Soviet Russia and its foreign policy is an “especially useful and important case for studying the formation of national identity and national interests” as the outcomes of this identity construction project would be highly consequential for global politics - and especially for countries in Russia’s periphery (2009:1). What makes Russia even more interesting is that predicting its intentions and friendliness or the lack thereof, have provided difficulties for both; Western scholars and policymakers (Clunan, 2009:2). She also argues that any state’s interest formations are intertwined with its national identity and therefore identity questions provide an important field of research. Focusing on the Russian example, her book aims to create an understanding of how “collectively held ideas, in this case national identities, create national interests” (ibid.).

Reflecting on Alexander Wendt’s (1992) views on identity, Clunan desires to bring attention to shifting the focus down from purely structural factors to include internal factors or the idea that states might be constructing their identities according to how other states see them. The argument she makes in the name of ‘aspirational constructivism’ is that “identity formation is a process shaped by past and present and by human reason - it is not fixed for all time” (Clunan, 2009:8).

According to Clunan’s view on identities, ‘self-esteem’ is maintained or enhanced by either changing oneself or the world around them, and in the case of national identities, it is political elites that aim to do so to collective self-esteem (ibid.). Tying the process to historical aspects, are the two pillars of national self-images; political purpose and the state’s international status (international obligations, rights and rank) (ibid.). Her main argument is that “members of political elite develop aspirations based on common historical memories” (ibid.). According to Clunan:
the ultimate choice of national self-image arises both from aspirations de-
rivered from of a state’s own past and from the practicality of a self-image
given the state’s present environment and relations with other states”(ibid.).

Her main argument also includes that identity and interest formation are processes, not
only products of structure (ibid.).

Previous literature on Russia has brought several relevant conclusions that might add
to a working basis for the analysis further down in the thesis. Freire and Kanet (2012 :4)
present the super power/great power status as being much desired by the public. They
argue (ibid.) that in recent times it has been extremely common for statements about
Russian foreign policy to be asserting sovereignty and independence of the country to
be the foundation of all relations to the outside world. It becomes clear from several
studies that Russia has distinct interests in its near abroad, the post-Soviet space (includ-
ing Georgia). Adding to this with her very recent article, Laure Delcour explains that:

throughout the 1990s, the Russian Federation maintained its influence by
default in the post-Soviet space. Its power derived primarily from interde-
pendencies (whether economic, geopolitical or societal) inherited from the
past. It was de facto reinforced by the weak security involvement of other
external actors in the region. (2018:495)

What is innovative about the approach to statements by the Ministry of Foreign Af-
fairs of the Russian Federation presented here derives from the fact that this study is not
strictly wedded to the equation of influence and material power but, rather is based on a
conceptual framework that includes the analysis of non-material variables, including as-
 sessments of national interest and national identity, that can be argued to be at the very
core of policy-shaping and policy-making.

The war in Georgia in the summer of 2008 demonstrated well the level of conflict
that was reached between Russia and Georgia, but it also showed Russian opposition to
Western involvement in an area where Russia wants to play the dominant role. The
post-war developments, with a ‘reset policy’ allowing a changed tone in policies in both
Russia and the US, set the stage for a strengthened dialogue that constitutes a window
of opportunity for defining a new basis for cooperation. However such a change to a
more favorable context in Russian relations with the West has not modified Russian as-
sertive policies in its neighborhood.
The Russian backlash concerning the launching of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009 is notable due to the trivial nature of the EU initiative. The EaP, which was simply a regionalization tool within the already established European Neighborhood Policy framework, was certainly not expected to receive such a response from Russia. In order to analyze this rather surprising reaction, one must first have an understanding of Russia’s interests in the region. Traditionally states have mainly been seen as having their regional interests falling within three different categories. These are military interests, economic interests and societal interests. As it cannot reasonably be argued that the EU initiative posed any threat to the regional military interests of Russia, the unease can only have been triggered by the potential threat the initiative posed on Russia’s economic and societal interests in the region. The Russian backlash can then be seen as worried recognition of EU’s expanding structural power (Cadier, 2014:79).

Russia, whilst continuing to exercise military hard-power in the nearby region, has simultaneously been attempting to rebrand itself as a normative advocate. This rebranding has much to do with the Russian reevaluation of itself and its position in the international community and in relation to the EU. Cadier (2014:80) explains it as

what was originally above all a rhetorical strategy will become a fully fledged attempt to increasingly shape the rules of regional politics and to develop its own structural power in reaction to that of the EU.

The unwavering pursue for a “great power status” has inspired Russia into some questionable choices, such as going along with the EEU (Eurasian Economic Union) that has proven to be economically impracticable for Russia and the wider region. Cadier (2014:81) writes that “the fact that the EaP and the EEU are directed at the same countries raises questions regarding the implications of this collision for the region and for EU–Russia relations”. He presents predictions from multiple commentators those suggest that the aforementioned options for regional economic integration might lead to clashes over their shared neighborhood by Russia and EU. Although these predictions lack details about how they would negatively affect each other (Cadier, 2014:81).
2.4 Georgia and Europeanization

The relationship between Georgia and the European Union has been studied from a variety of different perspectives. The concept of Europeanization has been established and sometimes taken as a ‘given’, and the different steps of Europeanization of Georgia and other post-Soviet neighbors of the EU have been the focus of a great deal of studies. The effectiveness of different factors of the Europeanization processes have been put under review. The focal points of Georgia’s Europeanization process that are listed by the European Union External Action (2017) are the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its eastern dimension the Eastern Partnership (EaP), the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (including visa liberalization) and a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA).

The ENP and its Eastern dimension has been deemed for example to be:

an up-to-date and necessary objective aimed at promoting democracy and good governance; strengthening energy security; promoting sector reform and environment protection; encouraging people-to-people contacts; supporting the economic and social development; providing an additional funding for projects to reduce social inequality and to increase stability. (Kharlamova 2015:62)

European integration processes and the European Neighbourhood Policy have also been described as severely divided between different countries and the delayed inclusion of Southern Caucasian states as being an example of this. Their inclusion is also very dependent on the higher prioritized Eastern neighborhood relations with Russia and Ukraine (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006:150).

Closely linked to the research problem of this study is a note that David Cadier provides in his article about ‘the EU-Russia Competition in the Shared Neighborhood’. He states (2014:77) that the origins of the Eastern Partnership cannot be completely separated from certain circumstances related to Russia as the European Council’s official resolution (European Council, 2008) about the 2008 Russo-Georgian war in which it was requested from the Commission to speed up the coming into being of the said policy.
In Delcour’s article (2018), the author argues that the European Union has made only limited use of political conditionality while under the EaP, they have, however, advanced an explicit understanding of the functional conditionality, and an economic conditionality, and how these advance domestic change in line with trade-related acquis (Delcour, 2018:497). Russia's understanding on these two aspects, and it's sector-specific measures, do not comply or fulfill the EU sector-specific conditions, however, Russia's sector-specific measures are in large part utilized to avert and block post-Soviet states to not further integrate with the European Union (Delcour, 2018:498).

Other researchers have placed focus also on the Georgian public opinion on Europeanization and joining the EU (i.e., Tsuladze 2017, Müller 2011) as well as policy implementation in Georgia (Abashishvili & Paresashvili, 2013). Although it might seem like a controversial move, and one that would be questioned, the choice to integrate into the EU has only been questioned once, this occurred during a shift of Saakashvili power into Ivanishvili at the end of 2012 (Delcour, 2012:498). The authorities kept bargaining for the EU trade demands to better comply with Georgia's reform trajectory, in fact, the power shift at the end of 2012, is what put Georgia on track to more systematically comply with more of EU's list of demands from member states (ibid.). This is a drastic leap from 2008, when Russia's military intervention in Georgia left Georgia with not much choice but to accept EU's demands for a change, which was accepted arguably unwillingly. This resulted in Georgia accepting the DCFTA, although the country’s preference might have rather been a simple free-trade agreement. As it raises questions whether this agreement was fully desirable to Georgia, it comes as no surprise that Georgia only shallowly complied with EU's demands regarding the agreement. In fact, Russia's pervasive use of economic and military power greatly damaged their vis-à-vis leverage with Georgia (Delcour, 2012:498). This highlights how Georgia's response confirms that EU's and Russia's policies are not in competition, this is because they fundamentally work and operate on completely different levels and utilize completely different instruments available to their disposal. They do, however, intersect with each other. Mainly, Georgia vividly shows us how the impact of external conditionalities and influences are limited, especially so when the message from the external actors are so fundamentally different, from what the domestic preference is (Delcour, 2012:499). The EU and Eastern partnership relies heavily on sector-specific, trade-specific conditionality. This is a device that Russia also utilizes in their Eurasian project, however Russia has mainly depended on the interdependence which is still prevalent from the Soviet
past. Especially so, it has desired to exploit regional sensitivity for countries that are engaged with the EU in any way (Delcour, 2012:502). The development of policies and conditionalities from both the EU and Russia, comes with many loopholes to be exploited from states to pursue their own goals. It is also prevalent, that Russia, has not to a great extent been able to undermine Georgia's interaction and integration with the EU, at least not in any significant way (ibid.).

2.5 The Russia-Georgia relationship

The relationship between Georgia and Russia is of a complex nature. The states, with both cultural and religious bonds, recently fought a short-lived but intense war, which sparked controversial debates in both states regarding the future relationship between the two (Kølsto & Rusetskii, 2012:139). During the 2000's, Russia had already utilized their whole multitude of disciplinary and punitive measures against Georgia. This multitude included introducing a requirement of needing a visa to travel, trade bans, as well as, military interventions. However, the implementation of the AA/DCFTA in November of 2013 corresponded with Georgia’s June 2014 attempt to neutralize and normalize their relationship with Russia, after the power shift of 2012-2013 (Delcour, 2012:495).

Russia's support of separatism, and its intervening illegally across Georgia's borders, were only a few of multiple attempts to destabilize Georgia and to exercise power over the country. In Georgia, Russia's interference and attempt to influence the country, was met with rising tensions from the citizens to the authorities, this especially so, after the power shift, which was among the main causes for Russian concerns over losing influence, power and hegemony within the post-Soviet space (Delcour, 2012:495).

According to Kølsto and Rusetskii (2012:140) establishment of Georgian identity as well as describing further the kind of relationship Georgia and Russia would be able to share became the main focus of these debates in the Russian framework. For Georgia on the other hand, this conflict was a reminder of the inferior position it has had under the Russian hegemony, and furthered the internal discussion of integrating into the European community (Kølsto & Rusetskii, 2012:152). Kølsto and Rusetskii's research on the Russian and Georgian discourses on 'Us' versus 'Them' clearly connects identity relations to being strongly about power. They point out Russia’s nature as being in several
ways much bigger, including more populous than Georgia and having been able to influence it throughout the years. Whereas Georgia and its people have not played even nearly as significant parts in Russia’s history (Kølsto & Rusetskii, 2012:151).

The conflict between Russia and Georgia has been ongoing for a long time and concluding from these previous works of literature one can argue that Georgia has entered onto its path towards a closer relationship or even a full membership with/in the European Union in large part to distance itself from Russian interference. It is also important here to note that a developing relationship with the West has not however been proven to provide a clear guarantee to hinder Russian interfere and utilizing their hegemony over its near abroad and Georgia specifically. In order for Georgia to utilize the EU’s full power in the process of decreasing their dependency of Russia, Georgia would need to convince everyone, including themselves, that Russians do not belong inside the European Union ‘gates’ (Kølsto & Rusetskii, 2012:152).

Many of the aspects of this topic have previously been separately addressed thoroughly by scholars in the field of International Relations. Russia, EU and the enlargement of the West are all significant factors in shaping the political and security environments of Europe and Eurasia, and smaller states such as Georgia are often the locations where varying degrees of power play take place. Bilateral relations between Georgia and Russia have been examined as have bilateral relations between EU and Georgia or EU and Russia. However, as we can conclude from this literature review, what the International Relations literature is still lacking is understanding what happens when a smaller state, in this case Georgia, is arguably very firmly on the path of further Europeanization and distancing itself from the Russian sphere of influence and can we see a shift in Russian national interests. As indicated in the above summary of relevant literature, it is also highly relevant to conduct this study through the concepts related to identity. These relations matter for the stability of the whole region, possibly even globally to some extent, and the aim of this study is to see how Russia has responded, or is responding to the Europeanization process of Georgia. This aim is more specifically conceptualized here to mean Russian national interests and if the Europeanization process of Georgia has affected them.

3. Background
The Caucasus region has historically been of great interest to its neighbors and even to great powers from afar. Positioned as the gateway between two continents, Europe and Asia, the region has great potential in connecting different parts of the world and world markets but also appears tempting to great powers in their attempts in spreading specific political agendas to new areas. For a variety of reasons, the South Caucasian states themselves have also sought for alliance and support from other countries and regional or international entities and therefore enhanced the involvement of third parties in the region, which in turn has also added rising tensions in regional and international relations.

Sakartvelo (in Georgian: საქართველო) or as better known by the rest of the world, Georgia, provides a complex example of this. Being a former Soviet Socialist Republic within the Soviet Union and later on having fought a war with Russia, Georgia continues to have a strong presence of the Northern neighbor in territorial conflicts that are supposedly taking place domestically in Georgia. The country has painted a picture of itself as a friend of the West with aspirations of joining both the European Union and NATO. Venue & Lominadze (2017) in fact claim that Georgia has been striving towards the West already since the 13th century. Although in modern times, arguably the most drastic single shift towards the West happened with the peaceful Revolution of Roses in November 2003. Also known as the Rose Revolution, the demonstrations were a pro-Western movement that ended the long-lasting rule of president Eduard Shevardnadze, who had been running the country already during the Soviet era. The bloodless revolution put the young, U.S. educated Mikheil Saakashvili to power as he became the president of Georgia in the beginning of the year 2004. Saakashvili was widely known as a pro-Western reformist and as described by a renowned Caucasus region scholar Thomas de Waal (2013); “much of his presidency was a rebranding exercise”.

Saakashvili’s openness towards the West was often repeated in his public and media statements as well as in interviews, where he would for example like to bring up his close personal relations with figures such as George W. Bush (i.e. Solomon 2008). The then-president arguably ‘rebranded’ his country and was advertising the supposed ‘mental revolution’ undergone by Georgians, although the depth and successfulness of his reforms and said revolution remain a topic of debate (De Waal and Antelava 2013). Saakashvili stated in an interview in 2011 that the most important thing to Georgia is that we have embarked on our path to the European Union. In carrying out reforms, we want Georgia to become a better candidate for membership. We
do not have this status yet, but it is apparently possible in the future. This is a significant improvement. (Euractiv 2011).

He even went as far as stating that

however, this means that Georgia should never leave the path of European integration. The more closely Georgia integrates with EU institutions, the more Russia will have to rethink its policy towards Georgia (ibid).

Georgia's aspirations towards the West have not been left completely one-sided. The focal points of Georgia’s Europeanization process that are listed by the European Union External Action (2017) are:

I. European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan (Launched in 2004, Georgian Action Plan launched in October 2006, the whole ENP reviewed in 2015): "The 2015 ENP review reconfirms a long-term engagement with partner countries – in particular with partners, such as Georgia, wishing to pursue deeper relations with the EU. Differentiation and joint ownership being the hallmarks of the new ENP, the policy will continue to build ties and encourage Georgia’s objective of further approximation with European structures (EUEA 2017)."

II. The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (Launched in August 2008)

III. ENP’s Eastern dimension the Eastern Partnership (EaP) (Launched in May 2009)

IV. The EU-Georgia Association Agreement (AA) (signed in June 2014, entered into force in July 2016) including visa liberalization (dialogue opened in June 2012, entered into force in March 2017)
"Since the start of the EU-Georgia visa liberalization dialogue in 2012, Georgia had taken all the necessary reforms to meet the benchmarks set under the Visa Liberalization Action Plan. Previously, the EU-Georgia Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements had entered into force in March 2011 and remain in force (EUEA 2017)".

V. Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), (signed in June 2014)

The most recent reaffirmation of the European Union’s supportive approach to Georgia came with a Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the 10th anniversary of the conflict between Russia and Georgia (2018) where it was stated that Georgia “has strengthened its democratic institutions” in the past 10 years and “now represents a model of democratic stability in the region”, both of these features - as ex-
plained later in this study, being important factors when considering Europe and Euro-
peanization. Additionally the EU's engagement with Georgia was described as being “a
true partnership based on political association and economic integration, as well as on a
strong friendship between our peoples” (High Representative 2018). Therefore it is rea-
sonable to argue that Georgia’s aspirations for Europeanization have not been left one
sided.

In contrast, the state of the relationship between Russia and Georgia could very sim-
plistically be observed through the fact that the two countries cut all diplomatic ties in
2008 and still today, after 10 years of continued frozen conflict over the Georgian separ-
ratist regions, diplomatic relations have not at the time of writing been reinstated.

4. Methodology

The research problem of this study is formulated based on the arguments from previous
scholarship that Russia wants to maintain a hegemony in its near abroad, but Georgia
wants to decrease its dependence on Russia. Therefore there is reason to examine how
does this clash manifest and whether changes in Russian national interests are detecta-
able. As shown before, the struggles of post-Soviet Russia trying to find its place in the
world society and the spreading of the Western sphere of influence has been of interest
to several researchers previously. In order to move further from this with the aim of
bridging the gap in the existing literature, the central research question in this study is:
*How has Russia posited itself in regards to Georgia’s Europeanization - do national in-
terests shift due to changes in international structures?*

This chapter of the study will provide the methodology, that will be utilized in the
following analysis chapter and explain the means of data collection, advantages of using
the chosen methods but also the delimitations and limitations of the study.

4.1 Epistemology and ontology

“Debates across the social sciences rely on philosophical markers, notably the contem-
porary polarization between the so-called positivist' and post-modernists.’ These labels
are contested. Few 'positivist' rely on a narrow definition of falsification, and many
'posts-modernists' reject extreme relativism. But the division is also grounded in some legitimate ontological and epistemological differences” (Klotz, 2008:1) Examples of this can be seen in language which is observable. “For instance, positivist resist including language as a form of observable behavior, and those who reject by assumption the salience of culture or language need not debate how best to study meanings. Post-modernists, in turn, generally see concerns over rigorous analysis as a hallmark of a putatively flawed scientific approach to human action. One unfortunate result of this pervasive divide is a limited appreciation of the insights offered by scholars working within alternative frameworks. It leaves little common ground for analyzing the role of rhetoric in foreign policy choice, for instance. (ibid:1)

Haas (2010:27) also states that constructivism is “the prime exhibit of the hermeneutic approach”, and that ‘understanding’ issues of global politics is done with an idealist ontology and a hermeneutic epistemology, which makes it extremely suitable for the research question of this thesis. Risse, a respected and predominant author in the field, argued that ”constructivism is based on a social ontology which insists that human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and its collectively shared systems of meaning” (2009:145).

In the body of literature that creates the theoretical framework for the following analysis, it is possible to see that although as the name suggests, great emphasis is placed on the social construction of identities and interest formation, not all historical views about material interests have been discarded. Rather most of the scholarly work on the basis of this study could be considered to be ‘soft rationalists’ like Ernst B. Haas (2010) in his division of constructivist described.

As Finnemore and Sikkink argue that “constructivism’s distinctiveness lies in its theoretical arguments, not in its empirical research strategies” and therefore provides a certain freedom of choice in creating research strategies and being compatible with most current methods of social sciences (2001:392). According to Finnemore and Sikkink (ibid.) all analyses conducted within the constructivist framework utilizes ontology and holism to some degree, this is because through ontological assumptions which provide constructivists with an understanding, that all actors, public or private, are a product of the socially constructed environment of which they inhabit (ibid.). This provides constructivist with a logical and obvious research question: How does this shaping happen and with what results? (ibid.) Utilizing this knowledge, this research has build on that
general research question within the constructivist field, and examines how Russian na-
tional interests have been shaped by the social environment in which Russia, Georgia,
and the EU are all present.

The core assumptions of constructivist research have also provided constructivist
theorists with an understanding of which methods are of use, and relevant to answering
constructivist styled research questions. Despite the aforementioned freedom of choice
in research designs, constructivist researchers do need to utilize methods that are capa-
ble of capturing the inter-subjectiveness of the core of their framework (ibid.).

Epistemologically, an objective, and unbiased analysis proves to be problematic in a
socially constructed world. However, being aware of this problem, helps constructivists
immensely in addressing and solving it. Constructivist researchers are forced to ques-
tion their own assumptions and biases constantly throughout the research, as well as,
recognizing that from a pragmatic sense, logic matters, empirical work matters (ibid.).

As Finnemore and Sikkink (2001:242) explain "if we are truly interested in explain-
ing human action in a rigorous way, it does us little good to make up general laws or
models and "test" them by correlating predictions to outcomes". Considering these
statements, it provides this research with a deeper understanding of the constructivist
approach to research, that will be prevalent and utilized throughout the analysis.

4.2 Data collection

The data for this study was collected from the official website of the Russian Foreign
Ministry. Selecting a government run website supposedly ensures the quality of the doc-
uments but potentially sacrifices a less biased data set. Additionally, due to the research-
ers lack of knowledge of the Russian language, the English version of the website was
utilized and in addition, the publications were also searched for with English search
words. The usage of the English website and documents should not be an issue or dele-
gitimizing the research as they are still official documents published by the same au-
thority as the Russian versions are.

In order to find publications relevant to this research question, but also to limit the
amount of material, the search words that were used, were limited simply to: ‘Georgia’
and ‘EU’. These search words were used together in the search bar of English section of
the Russian Foreign Ministry website for every search to ensure consistency in the re-
search. Numerical semi randomized selection was implemented in order to guarantee
the unbiased selection of data. To start, every seventh search result from the ten most recent pages were selected to be used in the study.

In order to create a successful research tool, some boundaries for data collection needed to be set. These boundaries assist giving the study more structure and aid with keeping the focus of the study as transparent as possible. The data was collected from time periods around each step of Georgia's Europeanization process, those were set out previously in the background chapter. In regards to the steps of Europeanization process that have two or more clearly separate dates, only one of the dates will be included in the data collection. As in the case of visa liberalization and the Association Agreement the research interprets the starting point of the dialogue and the signing of the agreement as the more important points in time, where willingness for such developments was expressed. Drawing from this timeline of Europeanization of Georgia, the specific time frames for data collection are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>October - December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>August - October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>May - July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>June - August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>June - August</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to remain a pure and consistent data collection method, but bearing in mind the time restrictions of conducting this study, some temporary changes for the method had to be done with the time frame consisting of August - October 2008. As the Russo-Georgian war started in the beginning of August 2008, the said time frame provided an exceptionally large amount of relevant documents and therefore the amount of documents chosen for analysis had to be somehow limited. After gathering every third relevant document from this time frame, only every third document from those was chosen for analysis.

Another significant factor, which is slightly limiting to the data collection process but will ensure that the relevant voices are being heard for the study, was that only items published on the website in the name of the Russian president Vladimir Putin, Prime
Minister Dmitry Medvedev and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, as well as the general publications released in the name of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were taken into account in the data selection. The reason the chain of command of the Russian government was followed for the selection of data was because the aim of the study is to create further understanding of Russian sentiments towards the Europeanization of a neighboring country and because of the oligarchic nature of the Russian Federation, the leadership of the country should arguably provide a prominent 'Russian voice' to the outside world.

Before commencing with the full scale study and the analysis of the collected data, a pilot study was conducted to ensure quality. The method was tested on a smaller sample size, six (6) documents to be exact, of the data to preliminarily investigate the suitability of chosen methodology for answering the research question. The pilot study also provided preliminary information on the limitations and possible errors of the intended research. Upon completion of the pilot study, it was decided that the previous data set would not be sufficient in answering the research question accurately so adjustments had to be made to the way the data was collected. Without having first conducted a pilot study on a smaller scale, the limitations of the study such as, the mention of Georgia in passing while the real issue of the article was Afghanistan, would not have been addressed accurately due to time restrictions.

With the issue of data collection dealt with early on, the data collection method was revised from choosing every seventh published article on the first ten pages to selecting every third published article within a three month span of a key event in the Europeanization process of Georgia. Based on the findings from the pilot study, the data set was even further limited by only taking into account segments of the texts that mention either Georgia, Abkhazia or South Ossetia to remain the focus of the study, especially with longer documents where several different topics were discussed. The results were much more conducive to the research question and provided for a more well rounded study.

This method of collecting data resulted in 19 documents consisting of 106 pages in total being used for the study. These included transcripts of press conferences, interviews, statements and speeches all from Russian foreign ministers that reference the topic.
4.3 Qualitative content analysis

Qualitative content analysis allows researchers to examine public figures, such as presidents and important politicians, that otherwise would be unavailable. This is in large part due to the nature of the content analysis, it allows researchers to “develop a set of procedures to make inferences from text” (Weber, 1990:19), and it does not require the public figures consent, or participation in the research (Hermann, 2008). This method is useful for shedding light on how important public figures, especially within politics, manipulate and make use of symbols to 'invest communication with meaning' (Moyser and Wagstaffe, 1987:20).

Due to the nature of a content analysis, where the focus is on analyzing the texts chosen and presented, and not on the implications of the author(s), nor the reactions of the audience to the text, the chosen method can be argued to suit both the constructivist approach as well as the chosen data set. In comparison to traditional quantitative content analysis, which assumes that the meaning of a text is constant and is highly concerned with being objective, systematic and quantitative in the sense that different coders, following clear rules, should be able to come up with the same results when applying the coding categories to the data (Hermann, 2008:161), using coding as a part of a qualitative content analysis allows the research to be more systematic but reflective. Researchers must consider the following eight steps and decisions before being able to start an analysis within the qualitative content analysis field, these are, but are not limited to, the following (ibid.):

I. Does your research question involve extracting meaning from communications?
II. What kinds of material on the topics is available, and how are you accessing them?
III. Does what you are interested in studying lend itself to the qualitative analysis?
IV. Are the materials representational or instrumental in understand the subject you are studying?
V. What is your unit of analysis, and what coding rules and procedures do you plan to use?
VI. Can one contextualize to take into account situation, culture, and history?
VII. Can others replicate your analysis?
VIII. Does the analysis capture what you are interested learning about?

These eight steps help researchers determine the core of the research they are hoping to conduct, and for the purpose of this research, these have been an important part of
choosing the method. The answers to these eight questions in the context of this thesis, have been considered throughout each section of the thesis.

Since the nature of qualitative content analysis is often considered to be suitable for analyzing texts and speeches from political leaders, one of the main issues a researcher can come in contact with, is the language barrier. This is also the case in this thesis. Touching upon the importance of translation Hermann (ibid.) reminds us of the value of language and cultural differences. Her concerns about words meaning different things in different cultures is a a very prevalent limitation for the research at hand, but this was taken into consideration while creating the protocol for coding. The severity of this issue was decreased by avoiding a research design that would have placed excessive emphasis on individual words but instead focusing on slightly wider meanings.

Russia and Georgia are two nations of which neither usually conduct their official business in English, which is why the issue regarding the amount of primary sources is extremely hard to completely avoid.

When assessing the successfulness of utilizing a qualitative content analysis, considering reliability and validity of the research being conducted is of utmost importance. This text aims to be credible, as well as plausible by being openly transparent to the ways in which this study was conducted. The validity of this thesis stems from its replicability. There is always a chance for reinterpretation when conducting qualitative research which has the potential of concluding a different outcome, however, that fact does not subtract from the validity of the study because of the clear outline which can be followed by fellow scholars to create a duplicate study.

4.3.1 Data coding

When conducting an analysis, it is important that the data you have collected is properly coded, and to do this, one needs to create a protocol. (Halperin & Heath, 2012:322) The protocol helps the researcher limit the data available, as well as, ensure that only relevant information to the topic at hand is included. It is up to the researcher here how broad or narrow the data collection should be, both comes with their own sets of limitations. For this research, the protocol has been decided to follow a certain set of rules. For the data to be eligible to be coded and analysed, it has to be relevant to the topic of Georgia, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Russia and the ongoing conflict. Any information that falls under that category should then be narrowed down even further, it should either address the want/need for a resolution to the conflict, the EU, the UN, the CIS, or describe the conflict, what has happened, which actor has done what. In order to not
limit the data collection in areas not wanted, this protocol allows for areas of collection in categories not thought of here, but rather as they are found in the text for analysis. This is to ensure that any relevant information in regards to the topic is analysed and included.

With the protocol in place it is time to create a code of which to use to analyse the data. For this text, the coding has been done in several different categories. These are: Russia, the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent states, Georgia, the United Nations and Russia’s public image. These categories have been chosen in regards to the topic of national identity, ‘us’ vs ‘them’ and national interests. Any set of words that are descriptive of these specific actors in correlation to the topic, are then sorted into several different tables for each year examined, these are available in the Appendices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Identity</th>
<th>Data interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Chief peacekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Union</td>
<td>Monitoring Georgia’s use of aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>unstable regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Nations</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Interest</th>
<th>Data interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Nations</td>
<td>UN field missions compromised due to Georgian unwillingness to comply, Russia warning UN to not roll over on UN mission in Abkhaz-Georgia region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Union</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Georgia | Legally binding contract between Georgia and South Ossetia needs to be signed with nonuse of violence.
---|---
Russian public image | Russia puts emphasis on the need to work out the aggressions coming from Georgia, wants a European Security Treaty.

The two previous tables are examples of how the data collection and coding has been conducted. Here one can see both the positive aspects and negative aspects of this certain method of collecting data. While the data is not as straightforward, and perhaps, not as easily analysed as a method that only measures certain words, this method allows for words that are found in the text of relevancy to the topic to be included and analysed. This provides the analysis with a deeper understanding of the topic and thus a more relevant conclusion. This way of coding allows for the research to examine underlying issues that otherwise would not be examined, such as, what are Russia’s national interests? This is examined through looking at how Russia explained international cooperation, both with and without Georgia. What is Russia’s national identity? How do they describe their neighbour Georgia? Two topics which are relevant towards understanding the research question.

4.4 Limitations and delimitations

Due to the self-imposed limitations such as numerical selection of materials, it can be argued that this method of data collection was created to ensure a pure and unbiased data set.

As mentioned already in section 4.3 one of the main limitations of this study relates to the lack of knowledge in the Russian and to some extent in the Georgian language. Reasoning from journal article abstracts made available in English, some additional peer-reviewed literature around the studied topic exists, but mainly in Russian. Understanding the local languages would surely also add certain insights and layers into following the media reporting of relevant events and therefore widen the variety of what kind of data could be examined.
The language barrier would cause even greater concerns if the analysis would be more specifically concerned about linguistics. Additionally, what must be enclosed about data gathering is that majority of the publications from the Foreign Affairs Ministry is originally in Russian. This limits the amount of usable data to only statements that have been translated into English and the risk of deficiencies in the translations remains as is often the case with conducting research on non-English speaking countries. Unfortunately due to certain constraints any additional translations could not be made and in order to examine primary sources from Russia this limitation cannot be tackled to a larger extent.

5. Analysis

In the process of approaching the research question “How has Russia posited itself in regard to Georgia’s Europeanization - do national interests shift due to changes in international structures?”, a comprehensive overview of relevant International Relations literature has been provided and a theoretical framework created. In order to tackle the the research puzzle presented previously in this thesis, the analysis will be divided into two primary parts; one focusing on the representation of identities, including the concept of ‘us and them’, and the other focusing on national interests.

In this chapter the data, that has been collected according to the data collection method presented in the methodology and background sections will be analyzed through a qualitative content analysis and by being posited within the theoretical framework. The constructivist lens through which the data will be analyzed, is especially helpful in finding notions of the concepts of ‘us and them’. In order to keep the analysis as clear as possible and first and foremost relevant to the research question; only the sections concerning Georgia and/or the separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia were addressed and further analyzed, despite reading and considering full 'documents' of all the data.

5.1 Analyzing the data

As specified in Chapter 4, the documents being analyzed were gathered from five different time periods. Data from each time period was analyzed through coding and the results are presented in identical tables repeated for each time period. For a clear and
concise presentation of the data, one table was used for compiling all the documents from each time period. The tables can be found as appendices at the end of this thesis.

The first document to be analyzed was set in the time frame following the signing of Georgia’s Action Plan in order for them to gain status within the European Neighborhood Policy in 2006. In order to provide the reader with a slightly wider understanding of the data, the first text is opened up here before moving on to coding the rest of the data.

The ‘problem’ represented by the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov is the conflict situations in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Underlying assumptions with this problem is that the Russian federation, which is present in the conflict zone, has the role of a ‘peacemaker’ and that security and stability of the region [Abkhazia] could be ensured if only all parties would cooperate with them and implement the decisions that have been taken ‘by the parties’. The representation of the problem and the underlying assumptions are both very much related to the history and context of the situation. As one can see from the previous chapters of this thesis, the relationship between Russia and Georgia has not been very warm and Russia - including Minister Lavrov, aim to represent Georgia as the other, the ‘wrong doer’, the one violating rules that have been created by a wider community. What is left silent in Lavrov’s statement is for example the fact (acknowledged by the vast majority of the international community) that any conflicts taking place in South Ossetia or Abkhazia are - and should be treated as such, internal conflicts happening within Georgia. This problem could definitely be seen from a different angle depending very much on who you ask. It would be highly unlikely for the Georgian or European discourse to for example use the term ‘peacemaker’ of the Russian troops in Abkhazia.

The effects of such representation, as used by Minister Lavrov, could be the spreading of the image of Georgia as a violator of international agreements and as an initiator of conflicts. This kind of representation of the problem has been mostly created within the Russian elite, that has instilled and disseminated this representation widely in the Russian public discourse and aiming more and more to spread and defend it also outside the Russian borders.

Following the chronological order of the Europeanization steps of Georgia the second time period as the focus of the analysis is in 2008. As enclosed under data collection, certain changes to the gathering of material in this time frame were made. In the following analysis the first part will consist of introducing the texts selected from the website of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The texts will be divided by the
set time frames, having material from years 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012 and 2014. A crucial part of the analysis was in fact to define the most relevant parts of the texts. These parts will be quoted into this analysis and the content will be commented on. The relevance of the chosen text bits will be defined by the following criteria; the text should mention Georgia and/or its separatist regions Abkhazia and/or South Ossetia, the text should mention the European Union or any of its institutions in a context of integration or separation, the text posits Russia against its neighbors.

Despite the adjustments in the data collection method in the August - October 2008 time frame the amount of material for this section remains quite large compared to the other periods of time. This is rather understandable as obviously 2008 was an extremely significant year in the Russian and Georgian relations. On the other hand, as the August war between the two countries and mutually severing all diplomatic ties have not been deemed as so clearly related to Europeanization as they have to Georgia’s NATO aspirations for example, keeping in mind the focus of this study; the risk of skewing the analysis must be acknowledged as the data from this time frame at question might take an overly proportioned space in the research. Despite this risk, the research follows the data selection method that has previously been tested in a pilot study.

5.2 National Identity

The notions coming from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation do, to some extent, show signs of being in line with Anne L. Clunan’s (2009) previously presented arguments about how states form their identities and how they place themselves in the global arena. These arguments that were presented previously in this thesis when creating the theoretical framework could very well be found in the Russian setting, even if they would not be fully articulated through words. In relation to Georgia and Europeanization, one can also detect both of the pillars of forming national self-images previously in this thesis.

Political purpose as well as the Russian state’s international status - at least from the Russian point of view, can be interpreted in the texts that were chosen to be analyzed. As could be argued, the Russian federation might see itself as an important strategic player globally, in Europe and especially in Eurasia and the Caucasus region, where its status as a hegemony and as a super power, a 'big brother' to the smaller, and in many
ways weaker neighbors, can be derived from the country’s history. Maintaining its sometimes very tight grip of its near neighborhood could be argued to serve its political purpose and strengthening its status in the global community. Although the line here can also be extremely thin and smart placement of itself can be challenging to Russia as Western Europe and the European Union, quite obviously will not agree to all the most extreme ways the country would like to tighten its grip even more.

As the notion of national identity does not that directly come up in the results of coding of the data and therefore those notions might be easier to recognize, acknowledge and analyze with the help of another or additional method. Instead, the term 'interests' comes up more frequently in the texts. Relating this finding to the previous International Relations literature, this should be the correct place to analyze the national interests and their formations as the theoretical framework guiding this study suggests that national interests and identities are closely related and intertwined.

With this data set and selected way of coding the data, it was not possible to create a much wider understanding of each actor's national interests or their dynamics although the Russian interests are sometimes quite directly mentioned.

5.3 'Us' and 'them'

When taking a closer look into the operationalized data, it is very evident that from the Russian perspective there is a clear division of ‘us’ and ‘them’. The data operationalized for national identity (See Appendices A-E), demonstrates the words used to describe both Russia and Georgia. There are clear examples of Russia addressing themselves as “chief peacekeepers”, “protectors of the smaller states”, “peace seeking”, “cooperative”, “victims of this tragedy” and “reliable, respectful and moral”. This demonstrates a language sought to exonerate themselves from any blame in the conflicts between Russia and Georgia. Instead Russia claims to follow international law for “self-defense”. The presentation of Russia and its role in the international and Eurasian society in this data is a prime example of Risse’s (2012) explanation on the concepts of ‘us and them’ as Russia clearly presents itself with a significantly different set of characteristics and ways of acting than any other actors that are mentioned.

In relation to the conflict, when language is used often in correlation to addressing Georgia, the language is vastly different. When talking about Georgia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia presents the country in a significantly more negative light by
assigning terms such as: “aggressors”, “instabile regime”, “hostile”, “barbarous”, “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide” to it.

However, what is interesting to note about the use of the ‘us’ and ‘them’ rhetoric, is that it is evident from the operationalized data that the division was not always as apparent, or reaching equally severe depths. In Appendix A.2, which includes the data from the time period in 2006, Russia can be seen having utilized the word “aggressor” when describing Georgia. In comparison, they did not at the time go as far as to claim Georgia was responsible for a “bloodbath”, or “massacring” its own people, which they did in 2008 (See Appendix B.13). Although the term aggressor which was used in 2006 to describe Georgia, is still part of a rhetoric that divides Russia and Georgia in compliance with the ‘us’ vs ‘them’ mentality, it is noteworthy and interesting, although also understandable, to see such a vast difference in the rhetorics used between different time periods.

When the research has an opportunity to take a closer look at the concepts of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and to what extent they become evident in the researched data, the successful choice of theoretical concepts and the chosen empirical case and data set would be extremely hard to disregard. As becomes clear from the texts used in this research, Russian foreign policy notions - arguably deriving very strongly from identity questions, is colored with division. Russia often portrays itself as being interested in and prepared for cooperation with other actors (See Appendix A.2). The willingness to cooperate only does not present to be extending to Georgia but when talking about negotiating treaties or agreements, the role of Georgia is close to non-existent. If Georgia is mentioned, it is expected to only have a role of a signatory instead of a negotiator. From the selected documents throughout the whole time span of the study, a reader can quite easily gain an impression that Georgia is simply excluded from the in group. To Russia, Georgia seems to be very deeply connected to continuously being part of the 'out group', part of 'them' and never part of the 'in group', 'us'. This means that Georgia is simultaneously being viewed as an outsider but also derived from having an equal status as an actor in the international arena. As has become evident in these quotes from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Georgia is almost never described to be on the 'same side' with Russia, but the small southern neighbor is instead made to look like an enemy.

Previous International Relations literature has suggested several multifaceted research puzzles as well as explanations on why Russia 'cannot play nice’ and linkages on the connections between Russia, Georgia, the European Union, and the Europeanization
process of Georgia, but deriving from research data studied in this thesis, such connections are sometimes challenging to see. Focusing on Russian data sources, it is not surprising to see that certain characteristics found through different research designs are missing in this analysis.

Continuing with a play of words, according to the data, in the eyes of Russia, the European Union in turn has been open to different kinds of cooperation but also been portrayed as a certain kind of ‘guarantor’ and therefore as itself should not be posing much of direct dilemmas on the relationship between Russia and Georgia. On the other hand, reflecting on previous International Relations literature, the Russians have been in a structural or normative ‘conflict’ with the European Union, especially over the middle ground between the two. As Cadier (2014) argued, Russia and the European Union have had somewhat different views for their common neighborhood as Russia has chosen to join the Eurasian Economic Union and has wanted to remain a structural and economic power over its neighborhood. This division between regional organizations can create pressures for As shown previously in this thesis, certain countries have been made to choose between the two major regional players, because of clashing interests and/or identities in the common neighborhood, but the interesting question here is that this same logic does not seem to be directly applicable to the conflict between Russia and Georgia. It is also important to remember that according to Risse’s (2012) definition of ‘us and them’, the out group does not always have to be presented in negative light, but they can also be seen as a neutral counterpart. In this analysis, one can see that the European Union has been subjected to both kinds of representations by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (neutral, even positive notions in 2008, 2009 compared to undoubtedly negative notions in 2012).

What we could see from the data analyzed for this study, Russia quite often presented the European Union in a rather neutral light. It was named to be a ‘guarantor’ and hold a position of monitoring power (See Appendices B.13 and C.5). This monitoring was specifically directed towards Georgia, whose actions were in turn presented to be in need of monitoring. The European Union was not seen as a full member of an ‘us’ but it was often accepted as a partner of some level and seen as a desirable companion. This observation provides quite the contrary to some previous research, for example Cadier (2014) whose findings include surprising and serious backlash from Russia regarding the launch of the Eastern Partnership in 2009. In the data of this empirical exploration, many interesting things were seen, but the relationship between Russia and the European Union, most definitely did not provide the most heated debates to study, not taking
into account the shift that is seen between the examined time periods of 2009 and 2012. This reinforces the stance that it is relevant and adds to the interestingness of the study examine the topic of Russia’s response to Europeanization through a problematization that includes a ‘third party’, in this case Georgia.

The aspect that requires further explanations, is indeed the main focus and guiding question of this thesis; how has Russia responded to Georgia’s Europeanization and can we see a shift in its national interests throughout the Europeanization process. Although focusing on analysing the data gathered specifically for this research and analyzing the content of the documents, it is important to bear in mind the historical aspects and presence or possible presence of other actors - such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization -NATO for example, when presenting any conclusions.

As this section has shown, placing Russian statements under an investigation with the concept of ‘us and them’, can be straightforward. Russia makes a distinction between its ingroup, which follows international law and does not breach agreements, and everyone else. This becomes especially visible when data from different time periods is examined.

5.4 National interests

Moving on from researching identities and the concept of ‘us’ vs ‘them’, this section will focus on national interests. According to Finnemore (1996:1), states are traditionally assumed to want power, security and wealth. This stems from a lot of neorealists and neoliberalists that have written about state interests. However, according to Finnemore (ibid.) a large number of “big and important things” are yet to be explained in regards to national interests. One of the questions one has to consider when discussing national interests is that, states, generally do want some power, but what kind of power do they want? For what means do they want power? What does security mean, and how do you obtain security, or ensure it?

In this section of the research the author will examine the data at hand and analyse its relations to state interests in regards to the Russian response to Georgia’s Europeanization. One of the main aspects prevalent throughout the operationalized data, is that Russia is attempting to undermine Georgia, in at least one occasion, Russia publicly stated that Georgia is not to be trusted, and attempting to discredit their involvement (See Appendices B.13 and C.5). One can only make assumptions as to the reasoning behind this, since it is not something Russia openly states. The undermining of another state one is currently in a frozen conflict with, can certainly be interpreted as acting out of national interest, when it comes to conflict resolution, especially conflict resolutions that are resolved at the hands of, or with the help of, the UN or
the EU, the state that has the most credibility could be expected to be the one to most likely come out of negotiations with the upperhand.

If one takes the stance that Russia is trying to ‘undermine’ Georgia on the political arena for an upper hand in negotiations with the EU and UN, which Russia has consistently supported, asked for, and claimed Georgia is disregarding (See Appendices D.2), then the next natural step to examine is, what kind of power are they seeking for in these negotiations? What kind of security? How are they ensuring it? In several instances Russia claims that they are the ‘chief peacekeeper’ of the region and that they are self-sacrificing in compliance with their good Christian values to help their friends (South Ossetia and Abkhazia), this in order to ensure security and peace within the region (See Appendices B.13, C.5, D.2). Could this be correlated to Russia’s fear of losing control over its close proximity neighbours? Relating back to Risse (2012:91) who claims that states cannot completely ignore material needs for the process of seeking their national interest, Russia obviously holds on to this belief as it strives to maintain not only structural but military power over its neighbors.

Analysing the rhetoric used, as well as, understanding how Georgia has been more and more westernized (see Appendices, D.2), could it correlate to Russia wanting to ensure that its neighbours are strongly under the influence of their nation state rather than the EU? Russia did on at least two occasions (see Appendices B.13 and E.2) claim that Georgia was ‘too westernized’ and that Georgia's hope to “internationalize peacekeeping in the region” was unlikely to happen as the only actor who has successfully maintained peacekeeping in the region is Russia. A conclusion to be made here in regards to Russia’s national interests is that Russia seems unwilling and reluctant to let Georgia become too westernized, which stems from Russia’s potential loss of structural power, or even the feeling of loss of power, and security over their neighbouring regions. It is also very likely that in this case of studying national interests, it is not about gaining power or security, but rather to maintain it, as Russia has had almost sole control over almost the entire Transcaucasus region, and are very reluctant to let go of that and welcome in the westernized ways of politics.

Whenever the European Union is described to be holding monitoring power, it can be seen as working in line with Russian interests in the region. This is something that Russia addresses on several occasions (See Appendices B.13, D.2 and C.5), where the European Union will monitor Georgia in an attempt to enforce a nonuse of violence on their part, but not monitoring Russia and their use of violence. This can therefore be seen as the EU collaborating with Russia over Georgia in the attempts to resolve the conflict.
5.5 Discussion of the findings

In order to better reflect on the guiding hypothesis and to answer the research question, these three categories need to be brought into a coherent discussion. As we could see from the previous literature, the three main concepts (national identities, national interests, and us and them) are often examined as interlinked subjects.

Russia often presents itself as a sort of ‘mighty victim’. Their statements often aim to reinforce the image of Russia and its ingroup, the ‘us’ as superior to ‘them’. But these findings are accompanied by a sense that ‘they’ are powerful enough to threaten ‘us’ and therefore the ingroup is also to a certain degree vulnerable. This “threat” is a vital tool that can be used to drum up support for conflicts internationally and is used to justify behavior on the international stage all in the name of national security and self preservation.

Relating back to the representation of Georgia in the data but also to previous literature in order to place it into a wider societal context, Georgia’s role as being a part of ‘them’ must be reconsidered. When placed in wider context and taking into account the findings about Russia undermining Georgia’s role as an international actor, a more accurate conclusion might be that despite a clear ‘out group’ position in regard to the concept of ‘us and them’, Georgia is somewhere in between ‘us and them’. As Russian state interests include maintaining power over its near abroad and former territories, especially in the post-Soviet context, it cannot be argued that Georgia would be defined as being part of the ‘out group’ with, for example, the European Union and NATO. This conclusion is also supported by the Russian notions about the Georgian people that they frame as being a close nation, and that the real issue behind conflicts between the countries lie on the shoulders of Tbilisi elite. This depiction of the issue being that of the Georgian elites can be seen in as early as the first analyzed document where it is stated that the Georgian people are viewed as being the same mentally as Russians but it is the morality of the elites that is causing bloodshed in the region. This view has a slight shift as Georgia starts to align itself more with the EU and the support of the United Nations is now leaning towards the favor of Georgia rather than Russia. The Russian narrative surrounding Georgia is harsher as Georgia embeds itself with the West, while Georgia is still not seen as an explicit ingroup or outgroup member by the end of the analysis, it can be argued that the speech used to describe Georgian elite decision making agents is more hopeless and threatening in the later texts.

6. Conclusion
President Vladimir Putin's Russia has not shown signs of settling for much less than a hoped resurgence of a great power status in the world society, including maintaining or returning its powerful and controlling role in its near abroad/sphere of influence/sphere of interest. As simply following world news provides almost anyone with the understanding, one could assume that Russia might not like Georgia's indications of going against those attempts. The discourses surrounding this puzzle have occasionally been extremely loud and not always very sophisticated. Therefore investigating the Russian response to Georgia's Europeanization process provided an interesting research topic.

This study also filled a gap in the International Relations literature as it brought together the case of Georgian Europeanization, Russian perspectives and constructivist theory. The research question *How has Russia posited itself in regard to Georgia's Europeanization - do national interests shift due to changes in international structures?* was thoroughly examined and the research concludes with that we could find a shift in the narrative Russia has produced surrounding Georgia and its aspirations of moving towards the west and the European Union. This shift is clearly visible especially between the first and last time periods that were examined. The research was logically placed in the European integration subfield of International Relations literature and examined through a constructivist lens, which resulted to be extensively useful by allowing space for certain nuances that previous scholars in their works surrounding this nexus suggested/hoped for future literature to achieve. The concepts of 'us' and 'them' were brought to the analysis as well as discussions of national identities in relation to interest formations. These concepts were utilized in relation to Europeanization of Georgia.

The analysis, building upon a wide array of constructivist works, managed to bring light to the notion that research sometimes benefits from even accounting for different levels of analysis; understanding that both structure and agent can simultaneously affect a nation state's interests and actions in the world arena.

Constructivists view most aspects of political and international life, that are relevant to this study, as processes; national identity and interest formation according to Martha Finnemore (1996) and Anne L. Clunan (2009), Europeanization according to for example Checkel and Katzenstein (2009) . This contributed to the interestingness of the thesis and made it the most reasonable decision to examine the chosen factors related to Russia by following a timeline from the Europeanization process of Georgia. Although the research itself does not reach beyond the set timeline, the previous literature presented in the background and literature review chapters served as a well functioning
foundation and a point of reference when tracking possible shifts in Russian national interests and presentation of their identity.

The source of data could have been re-evaluated in a sense that as previous International Relations literature as well as media often focus on mainly the current president's statements. The link between this study and previous ones could have been stronger if the data set would have included more presidential statements instead of the clear focus on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Another suggestion might be that the type of texts used in the analysis would have been harmonized in order to create even more coherent insights with higher levels of comparability.

As argued in the previous chapters of this thesis, despite Russian lack of acknowledgement of the connection between specific statements from state leadership and the steps of Georgia's Europeanization process that have been described to be of significance, a connection to a certain degree can be seen. The hypothesis of this study quite strongly and simplistically expected a very clear and linear connection between the two, starting with the assumption of a linear process of Europeanization for Georgia that would have stemmed from a collective European identity and aspirations towards the West. As has become clear through a more in depth review of the literature and the actual analysis the hypothesis could not fully be argued to be true but the study as a whole proved to be much more vibrant and versatile than expected.

Georgia can still be seen as mainly pro-European but the process of Europeanization has not necessarily been as clear cut as especially the public discourse of Mikheil Saakashvili's times may have implied. Saakashvili's Westernized 'rebranding' exercises may not have been drastically challenged or overturned, but it should be recognized that power in the country has definitely changed and slur-names such as 'lilli-Putin' have somewhat disappeared from the utterances of Georgian leadership. Therefore a shift in one of the underlying assumptions of this thesis, that also Georgia is loudly and strictly posited against Russia, should be noted.

In regards to the Russian response to Georgia's Europeanization, the hypothesis expected a vastly stronger reaction, which could then have been interpreted as a possible threat to the Eurasian region's security. In order to remain within the set limits of the study and to maintain the focus, security or securitization were not further defined and therefore further conclusions about the outcomes of this analysis in relation to these terms should not be made at this point.

The information provided by this thesis together with other case studies involving Russia and its neighbors might later be used for example in research aiming to predict
Russian foreign policy. This suggestion however requires the possible future research to acknowledge and agree to the concept of causality between European integration processes somewhat similar to the one studied here, national identities, and interest formation. Vibrant expressions from the Russians even on state level might also provide for interesting analysis in the field of enemy images.
Bibliography


Delcour, L 2018, ‘You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink’: the EU’s and Russia's intersecting conditionalities and domestic responses in Georgia and Moldova’, European Politics and Society, vol. 19, iss. 4, pp. 490-505.


Katzenstein, Peter and Checkel, Jeffrey 2009 Conclusion - European identity in context in Checkel, Jeffrey and Katzenstein, Peter European Identity, Cambridge University Press


Appendices

All of the data can be found online at the website of the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation.

A. Data collection and operationalization for 2006

(A.1) Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation: “Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Media Questions by Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov at the Press Conference on the Results of the Activities of Russian Diplomacy in 2006, Moscow, December 20, 2006” - 17 pages

(A.2) Table of operationalized data: 2006

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subject:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Cooperative, legitimate, moral, peace seeking, problem solving, victim, internationally backed, in-group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Union</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>Legitimate giver of authority, gives legitimacy to Russia’s cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Aggressor, stagnating policy, in/out-group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Nations</td>
<td>Legitimate giver of authority, gives legitimacy to Russia’s cause</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subject:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The United Nations</td>
<td>Observer mission without expiry date, close cooperation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Union</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>close cooperation on keeping the peace.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Georgia fails to comply with UN security council, we cannot see any changes for the better in regards to relationship with Tbilisi and Russia, Georgia backs down on its commitments, not reliable to cooperate with.

Russian public image

Difficult relationship with Georgia negatively impacts Russia’s public image.

B. Data collection and operationalization for 2008

(B.1) 12 August 2008 20: 04 Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference After Meeting with Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland Alexander Stubb, Moscow, August 12, 2008 - 8 pages

(B.2) 16 August 2008 13:38 Interview of Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Alexander Grushko on the Situation Surrounding the Georgian-South Ossetian Conflict, Published in the Newspaper Vremya Novostei on August 15, 2008 - 4 pages

(B.3) 27 August 2008 13: 51 Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation - 4 pages

(B.4) 1 September 2008 14: 18 Transcript of Speech by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at the Foreign Ministry’s MGIMO University on the Occasion of the New Academic Year, September 1, 2008 - 10 pages

(B.5) 3 September 2008 20: 54 Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium Karel de Gucht, Moscow, September 3, 2008 - 5 pages

(B.6) 10 September 2008 13: 20 Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference Following Talks with Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ursula Plassnik, Moscow, September 9, 2008 - 5 pages

(B.7) 13 September 2008 15:14 On the Withdrawal of Russian Peacekeepers - 1 page

(B.8) 18 September 2008 18: 32 Transcript of Remarks by Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at an Enlarged Meeting of the Federation Council International Affairs Committee, Moscow, September 18, 2008 - 7 pages
(B.9) 28 September 2008 11:25 Address by Sergey V. Lavrov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, at the 63rd Session of the UN General Assembly, September 27, 2008 - 6 pages

(B.10) 8 October 2008 20:13 Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference Following Talks with Mexico’s Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Patricia Espinosa, Moscow, October 8, 2008 - 4 pages

(B.11) 22 October 2008 17:45 Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference Following Talks with Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdelwaheb Abdallah, Moscow, October 22, 2008 - 5 pages


(B.13) Table of operationalized data: 2008

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<td><strong>Subject:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>chief peacekeeper, fulfilled duty, reliable, guarantor, resolving frozen conflicts, Russian citizens victims to Georgian regime, stopping bloodshed, negotiate ceasefire, tragic events, Russian Federation members deceased, self-defense, our only mission is to provide peace for South Ossetia from Georgian armed forces, no trust in Georgia in regards to negotiation processes, no plans of overthrowing anyone, friendship and harmony wanted between Russia and Georgia, self-sacrificing from Russia made it possible to stop bloodshed, responsible state who stands up for its citizens, Christian tradition of dying for our friends, Russian army never fire on residential quarters, filing citizens claims to International criminal court against Georgia, Medvedev-Sarkozy Plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The European Union | guarantor, overlooked war crimes from Georgian regime, anti-Russian, treaty of Euro-Atlantic security in cooperation with Russia, guarantor of nonuse of force by Georgia against South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The Commonwealth of Independent States | monitoring situation, security, supports Russian peacekeeping, not a 'chessboard' for playing geopolitical games, common civilization area.

Georgia | armed forces, compliance obligation, hostile, internationalizing, barbarous, inflicted irreparable harm, war crimes, unleashed bloody massacre, chauvinistic policy, genocide, revolution, reckless, ethnic cleansing, failed to seize south ossetia, Georgia for Georgians, underestimate Russia, Georgian army only fire on residential quarters. “When we are being continuously told about "Georgia's democratic government," does this mean that it is permissible for a democratic government to act this way against a civilian population which it considers its own?”

The United Nations | monitoring situation, supports Russian peacekeeping, sees need for a ceasefire agreement between Russia and Georgia.

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**National Interest** | **Data interpretation**

**Subject:**

<p>| The United Nations | Peacekeeping by Russia supported by UN, resolution in the security council. |
| The European Union | Deal reached with CIS and Russia in Moscow, binding agreement to be guarantors of nonuse for Georgia, Medvedev-Sarkozy six principles plan. |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Commonwealth of Independent States</th>
<th>Deal reached with EU in Moscow.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>There is no trust in Georgian leadership, Georgia ignore commitments to UN agreements, binding agreement with EU to not use force, disrupting negotiations of resolution with UN Security Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian public image</td>
<td>Self-sacrificing for South Ossetia and Abkhazia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Data collection and operationalisation for 2009
(C.4) 2 July 2009 10:36 Outcome of Sixth Round of Geneva Discussions on Transcaucasia - 2 pages
(C.5) Table of operationalised data: 2009

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<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Repulsion of Georgia’s actions, firm guarantees of the prevention of aggression from Georgia, ensuring the security of other younger states, the actions of Russia aims to protect and ensure survival of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia defends principals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Union</td>
<td>Monitoring Georgia’s use of aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Georgia
restore by force its territorial integrity, fortification, concentrating armed forces, external enemy, instable regime, attacking sleeping city’s, aggression against its own people.

The United Nations
Goes against Russian warnings.

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<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Nations</td>
<td>UN field missions compromised due to Georgian unwillingness to comply, Russia warning UN to not roll over on UN mission in Abkhaz-Georgia region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Union</td>
<td>Foster Russia, UN and EU interactions in regards to Georgia by EU continuing monitoring the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Legally binding contract between Georgia and South Ossetia needs to be signed with non use of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian public image</td>
<td>Russia puts emphasis on the need to work out the aggressions coming from Georgia, wants a European Security Treaty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Data collection and operationalisation for 2012
(D.1) 6 August 2012 14:00 Interview of state-secretary – deputy minister of foreign affairs of Russia G.B.Karasin to ITAR-TASS news agency, Moscow, 6 August 2012 - 4 pages
(D.2.) Table of operationalised data: 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Identity</th>
<th>Data interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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### Subject:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Strong, reliable, moral, selfless, hopeful, giving, important, big brother figure, peaceful unless something other needed, respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Union</td>
<td>Inconsiderate, disrespectful of international agreements, passive to interests that do not serve them, cause of crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Disrespectful of international agreements, aggressive, military inclinations, internal instability, could create a region of safety but refuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Nations</td>
<td>Hindering and not giving a voice to Abkhazia or South Ossetia, unfair, furthering Western influence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### National Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Data interpretation</th>
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<tr>
<td>The United Nations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Union</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Georgia - South Ossetia conflict does not exist anymore,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian public image</td>
<td>Russia did and does everything they can to protect South Ossetia and Abkhazia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**E. Data collection and operationalisation for 2014**
(E.1) 27 August 2014 22: 21 Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s speech and answers to questions during International Youth Forum Seliger on 27 August 2014 - 9 pages

(E.2) Table of operationalised data: 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Identity</th>
<th>Data interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Upholding and strengthening international law, moral, reliable, respectful,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Union</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Corrupted by Western influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Nations</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Interest</th>
<th>Data interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Nations</td>
<td>Multilateral agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Union</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian public image</td>
<td>Multilateral agreements</td>
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