Russia's Normative Dependency and the War on Terror

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Abstract

Building on works by Morozov, Sakwa and Wilhelmsen that focus on Russia's place in the international system and its securitization processes, this paper has two aims: to portray Russia's securitization of certain conflicts within a larger discourse that originates from the West, namely the 'war on terror,' and to present certain possible scenarios of how this could evolve under the newly elected United States government.

In the first section of the paper, a particular aspect of the East-West relationship will be described. The central premise is that Russia's 'normative dependency' to the West (Morozov) results in the need to legitimize their use of force within a framework that does not diverge from the West. The outcome of this unequal relationship is a securitization discourse that crosses from West to East, and that informs Russia's domestic and foreign policy making, the 'war on terror' being a case of this. Two cases are explored: first, the shift from the paradigm of post-Soviet nationalist, secessionist conflict in Chechnya to the framing of the second Chechen war as a front in the 'war on terror'; and second, Russia's intervention in the war in Syria. In both cases, confrontational stances taken by the Russian government towards Western observes of their use of force belie Russia's normative dependency on the West.

For the second section, certain scenarios are considered in view of possible changes produced by the new US government. Four scenarios are plotted: replacing the 'war on terror' discourse, shifting the way the discourse determines policy in either a meaningful or non-meaningful manner, or continuity with the previous administration. According to this paper's framework, this change in discourse will have an impact in Russia's foreign policy, as the country's dependency will demand from its leadership to adapt to the new discourse coming from the US.

Introduction

Characterizing Russia's place in the international system has, for the most part, both contemplated its place as a great power, as well as being continuously in the need to catch-up to the West. Not only in developmental, economic terms, but also in its military, power-projection capacities. Likewise, its leadership has had periods of both cooperation with European countries and periods of intense enmity and war, with no continuous certainty of its long-term allegiance. These elements continue to inform interpretations of the geopolitics of the Russian Federation, which, since 2014, have been consistently suggesting an emerging animosity in ways similar to that of the Cold War, albeit without the world-shaping consequences of the previous conflict.[1]

In this essay, the relationship between Russia and the West will be explored through the topic of Russia's use of force and its normative dependency to the West. The thread connecting them is the view of Morozov of Russia as a 'subaltern empire' which characterizes Russia as hybrid: both subaltern before the West, but imperial in regards to its subjects.[2] This perspective aims to both address the character of Russia's foreign policy in regards of its identity, and the continuum of domestic factors and policy-making. In this case, the condition of being subaltern appears as a structural constraint, determining the field of legitimate foreign policy decisions, and more so the use of force for Russia's leadership. While this does not determine the actual aims and measures of those policies, it does condition their legitimacy to certain compliance to Western norms. This essay

[1] For instance, see Robert Levgold, *Return to Cold War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).

[2] Viatcheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity. A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015).

will explore this through Russia's involvement in the 'war on terror,' which, as it will be shown below, obeys to Russia's hybrid identity. Two cases will be presented to support and further explore this topic: the second Chechen war, as Russia's introduction to the 'war on terror' discourse, and the current intervention in Syria, where compliance with the discourse remains in spite of the confrontational tone pursued. Finally, within the same framework, some scenarios will be suggested regarding the way forward.

By using Morozov's framework, this paper aims to further contribute to the overlap between International Relations theory –particularly securitization theory- and post-colonial studies. Also, by introducing Wilhelmsen's work on the securitization of Chechnya[3] to the framework, the connection between the structural circumstances under which policy is made and discourse, here the 'war on terror' discourse in particular, will be further characterized. This framework has certain limitations, like the limited scope in addressing Russia's domestic politics, which for the most part are conceptualized in as much they inform foreign policy. Also, the subaltern condition is presented without explanations for its emergence or the possibility of its reversion. These issues leave open the possibility of further research, either by expanding this essay's framework or by producing a more exhaustive inquiry.

Russia's normative dependency to the West

To address Russia's use of force in structural terms, it is necessary to address the two paradoxical aspects of Russia's place in the international system: its indeterminacy between East and West, and its mismatch between power-projection aspirations and realities.

The Russian Federation stands out in its uncertain geopolitical position in the post-Cold War world. On the one hand, it has striven to integrate itself to the West. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, it has been joined the world economy, several multilateral organizations that cross East-West, and consistently cast its post-Soviet identity by way of othering its Soviet past. Indeed, while conflict or disagreements may abound, Russia's 'European-ness' has been asserted by its leadership consistently since Gorbachev. On the other, the string of conflicts in which it has participated in the former Soviet Union, its 'near neighbourhood' and in its 'internal abroad,' and the ever-present possibility of forming alternative power-poles either by tilting towards China or fomenting 'multipolarity'[4] point towards real and possible confrontation with and divergence from the West. In this interpretation, Russia is driven either by a revanchist impulse, the wish to change the international order to more favourable terms, or driven to restore its former power and influence.[5] These contrasting interpretations result in there being no consensus regarding Russia's identity in terms of its belonging in the international system, and thus render the country in a conceptual 'interstice.'[6]

The other aspect of this indeterminacy is how to interpret Russia's power, both 'soft' and 'hard,' and the instances of its outright use of force. Gauging its overall power, in rather realist terms, it is common to describe the Russian Federation as a 'great power,' capable of influencing and determining its near neighbourhood and capable of projecting power outside of it.[7] However, its

[3] Julie Wilhelmsen, *Russia's Securitization of Chechnya: How War Became Acceptable* (London: Routledge, 2017).
[4] Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy. Change and Continuity in National Identity*, 4th ed. (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 97-103.
[5] For a discussion of these divergent interpretations, see Richard Sakwa, "'New Cold War' or Twenty Years' Crisis? Russia and International Politics," *International Affairs* 84, no. 2 (2008).
[6] Viatcheslav Morozov, "Subaltern Empire? Toward a Postcolonial Approach to Russian Foreign Policy," *Problems of Postcommunism* 60, no. 6 (2013), chapter 2.
[7] For instance, see the argument in Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapter 13. Also, Morozov, "Subaltern," 16.

overall capacity to exert power abroad is rather mixed, and mostly focused on hard power and the use of force as the condition of being a great power has not effectively been translated into soft power. This points to certain limits in the government's capacity produce a foreign policy that effectively enhances Russia's 'attraction'; even though soft power acquired a central role in Russia's foreign policy since the year 2000, the policies implemented have not resulted in improving Russia's image abroad. And, since 2014, soft power has been either ineffective, counterproductive, or only complimentary to hard power.[8]

This paradoxical combination of power and ineffectiveness is related to the indeterminacy of Russia's position in the international system. To explain this, a constructivist foundation for a frame of reference would address Russia's identity and the continuum of domestic and foreign policy as the object of study.[9] As the subject of this inquiry is explored through the place of Russia in the international system, the focus is on the structural consequences of its systemic circumstances, which, following Morozov, will also have the contemporary Russian state conceptualized as a 'subaltern empire.'[10]

This interpretation accounts for the paradoxical nature of Russia's power and for the indeterminacy of its position in the international system. It has to be understood less so as a paradoxical combination and more a reflexion of Russia's hybrid condition.[11] First, being an empire, its government is capable to exert power and impose itself over its population, and more so over its minorities. Second, it is subaltern to the West, the latter of which appears as a hegemon, over determining Russia's place to the fringe of the Western 'core'. 'Hegemony' here is used in a broader sense than that of International Relations theory, by drawing in elements from postcolonial theory, which expands the notion of hegemony to material (economic, technologic) dependency and normative subaltern-ity. This places the asymmetry between Russia and the West as a constitutive element of Russia's place in the international system, over determining the context in which its foreign policy operates.

The material foundations for this asymmetric relationship are in the economic ties between the 'core' (here understood as both the West and Northeast Asia) and Russia.[12] However, more crucially, this expanded concept of hegemony also incorporates the crucial normative dimension which results in Russia's subaltern character. This is best identified as Russia's dependency on Western norms and ideas regarding development and governance as they remain decisively Eurocentric.[13] The result is the continuous lack of alternatives to European-style modernization; all autochthonous paths of development have been overtaken by an Euro-centric compliance in the world-view of the Russian elite. This implies not only the limitations of path dependency in development, or those of material dependency in general, but also a closure to political alternatives, limiting options to local equivalents of those found in the West. Of course, this does not imply the simple reproduction of them, but their adaptation, use and legitimization by local elites, which feeds back into the imperial aspect of Russia's 'hybrid identity.'[14]

This casts a different light on which to interpret the more recent confrontational stance of Russia vis-à-vis the West. In it, and in its domestic expression in Putin's 'conservative turn,' the opposition to the West is upheld as the defence of 'European values' from the devious West. The terms on

[8] Peter Rutland and Andrei Kazantsev, "The Limits of Russia's 'Soft Power'," *Journal of Political Power* 9, no. 3 (2016). Also, see Morozov, *Russia's*, 115-117.
[9] This approach to study Russia's foreign policy is argued for in Tsygankov, *Russia's*, 14-18.
[10] Morozov, *Russia's*, chapter 1.
[11] Morozov, "Subaltern," 20-22.
[12] Morozov, *Russia's*, chapter 3.
[13] Morozov, *Russia's*, 122.
[14] Morozov, *Russia's*, 23, 77.

which this opposition is cast belies the need for Russia's leadership's ideology to both remain in the European sphere, but oppose 'the West' *without* presenting any concrete alternative to it. As Morozov explains: 'a political action is only seen as legitimate if it is directed against the West (or at least demonstrates Russia's independence from the West) *and* first the 'universal' norm (defined and upheld by Western hegemony) *at the same time*.'[15] As this is based on an undefined notion of 'Europeaness' and 'European values,' it is only adequate to produce a negative and reactive stance to, for instance, LGBT rights developments in the West. This lack of a concrete message is at the root of Russia's ineffective soft power strategy.[16]

While Russia's subaltern character can be articulated in a straightforward manner in addressing soft power, but for hard power, the use of force, a detour is necessary to produce a complete argumentative link. The bridge between Russia's norm-taking dependency and its use of force is found in the expanded notion of hegemony discussed above. As it includes normative elements, it also does so in regards of legitimacy-conveying *discourse*,[17] specifically in Russia's necessity to adopt a foreign discourse originated in the West in order to legitimate its use of force, illustrated here by its compliance and adoption of the 'war on terror' discourse. This not only has geopolitical consequences in terms of diplomatic and rhetoric manoeuvring, but is also reflected in the *way* force is used by Russia.

According to Wilhelmsen, discourse has an effect in how wars are fought. Specifically, by delimiting the field of 'legitimate' actions possible, it constraints the options available to decision-makers in pursuing objectives through and in war. This view rests upon a re-conceptualization of securitization from being the result of a single, defined speech-act, to being the result of an open-ended series of relational narratives that, in the aggregate, are negotiating the boundaries of the legitimate use of force. The competing narratives present different ways to understand the 'other' against which the war effort is conducted. The meaning-providing terms that characterize said 'other' inform the boundaries of legitimate action in war, constraining decision-makers to a set of legitimate measures that will be regarded as fitting the menace that the discourse is presenting. Most crucially, they aim to present their defined menace as an existential threat so that exceptional measures may be taken *legitimately*.[18] This way, 'representations of existential threat (…) make practices of brute force and war seem logical, legitimate and, maybe, even necessary.'[19]

It has been noted that securitization may not be a framework applicable to non-democratic societies,[20] as the government in them is capable of imposing a war effort without contestation from its population. However, Wilhemlsen's re-conceptualization of securitization offers a way to apply this frame of analysis to hybrid regimes. In it, said securitizing narratives are produced and re-produced by members of an elite, whose position allows them to convey legitimacy to their espoused narratives. At certain point, consensus forms around one of the narratives, earning support or acquiescence for its proposed measures, now to be regarded as legitimate. Securitization, and the policy accompanying it shift according to what the legitimate narrative is, thus making consensus and support unstable.[21] This view is also consistent with other characterizations of Putin's foreign policy as a series of compromises between several 'foreign policies' instead of just univocal decision-making.[22] This way, Russia's normative dependency to Western discourse about the use of

[15] Morozov, *Russia's*, 128, his emphasis.
[16] Morozov, *Russia's*, 118-121.
[17] Morozov, *Russia's*, 63-64.
[18] Wilhelmsen, *Russia's*, 19-38.
[19] Wilhelmsen, *Russia's*, 26.
[20] For a critique of this approach, albeit on a different argumentative strand, see Claire Wilkinson, "The Copenhagen School on Tour in Kyrgyzstan: Is Securitization Theory Usable Outside Europe?," *Security Dialogue* 38, no. 1 (2007).
[21] Wilhelmsen, *Russia's*, 22-36.
[22] Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors* (London: SAGE

force places structural constraints on its policies, albeit not to the extent of directly informing them.*

This relationship shows the seemingly paradoxical 'hybrid', 'interstitial' condition of the Russian state, between subaltern-ity and empire, and its use of force. In his 2015 book, Morozov argues that the 2008 war with Georgia and the 2014 propaganda campaign against the Ukrainian revolution are cases where Russia's foreign policy was determined by the *discourse* of international norms, as the former employed the discourse of peace enforcement operations, and the latter claimed to defend the legitimate government in Ukraine from a 'brown revolution'.[23] These cases, as well as the ones that will be examined below, do not aim to address the policy-making decisions that preceded them, but to stress the structural concerns that determined, limited, and constrained the possibilities for action.[24] Attesting to its imperial quality, the Russian leadership is able to impose a certain narrative regarding the use of force, and effectively mobilizing the state and the population's support (or acquiescence). But, and attesting to its subaltern quality and specifically to its normative dependency, it is not able to do so without drawing in discursive elements from the West.

This way, it is possible to not only to conceptualize Russia's adoption of the 'war on terror' discourse as a transfer of meaning-providing terms and discursive legitimacy from the West, done in the context of a structurally unequal relationship. As discourse is here seen as an open to several interlocutors, then it also invites narratives from abroad, in as much they also become legitimate at home. In the next section, two examples are provided where the use of force was also framed in terms that belie the normative dependency of Russia. In both cases, Russia's use of force is tied to the particular discourse of the 'war on terror', of which here Russia is seen as compliant with.

Russia and the 'war on terror' discourse: two cases in the use of force by the Russian Federation and normative dependency

For this section, two cases will be presented in which the connection between Russia's normative dependency is illustrated by its use of force. The aim is both to present an interpretation of the two conflicts, as well as to indicate the dynamic under which Russia's use of force takes part in the 'war on terror' discourse, also called the 'international fight against terrorism.' For each case, first, their relevance to the framework will be argued, showing their connection to the 'war on terror' discourse. Second, and following more closely Morozov's work, this connection will be described in terms of the imperial and subaltern dimension of Russia's postcolonial identity. In both cases, the Russian perspective is the focus of the study. A further description of the way the discourse determined the actual use of force could be done, as Wilhelmsen did,[25] but for the purpose of this inquiry establishing said link will suffice.

The cases chosen, the second Chechen war (1999-2001) and Russia's intervention in Syria (ongoing since September 2015), represent the two main wars 'on terror' of the Russian Federation, and they also bracket a historical period. The first one represents the discursive shift towards adopting the 'war on terror' discourse, and the second one, which began fourteen years since the first one officially ended, shows the enduring character and continuity of this discursive strategy.

First case: the second Chechen war

Publications Ltd., 2014), 52-53.

*: In Wilhelmsen's work, this framework leads to the connection of the aforementioned meaning-providing terms of the hegemonic discourse and the actual operations in war, being the case of study the second Chechen war. While this 'empirical' part of the inquiry is crucial for theory-building, such inquiry is beyond the aims of the present essay.

[23] Morozov, *Russia's*, 111.

[24] Morozov, *Russia's*, 40; Wilhelmsen, *Russia's*, 29.

[25] Wilhelmsen, *Russia's*, chapters 10-12.

The second Chechen war has been framed as the introduction of Russia in the international war on terror following US leadership after the 9/11 attacks,[26] and the transition from the fight with nationalist insurgencies to terrorism.[27] The geopolitical consequences were marked, producing a moment of close cooperation between Russia and NATO in regards to Afghanistan, and, in general, having the Russian Federation become a partner in the 'war on terror.'

From the perspective of Russia's securitization of Chechnya, Wilhelmsen's study of the two Chechen wars addresses them as a case of de-securitization and re-securitization of Chechnya by Russia.[28] As mentioned above, the meaning-providing elements of the 'war on terror' discourse informed Russia's re-securitization after the *denouement* of the first Chechen war, as well as determined some of the elements of the actual operations on the ground. For Russia, it represented the shift from Yeltsin's war against secessionism to Putin's 'counter-terrorism operation.' Right from the start of the second war, the claim of it being part of a broader war, involving the West, against terrorism was made.[29] Furthermore, the adoption of the 'war on terror' discourse is consistent with the behaviour of Russian elites of looking for support for their policies from the US and Western Europe,[30] in this case for legitimizing a war.

The subaltern dimension of the conflict is in Russia's adoption of the 'war on terror' discourse as a means to legitimize the conflict not only in front of its own population, but also for international observers. Even though this conflict was before Putin's 2012 'conservative turn,'[31] at first it was framed in a confrontational perspective towards the West, which was portrayed as indifferent to the conflict, overly critical of Russia's use of force, or even complacent with the Chechens. Nonetheless, the claim to be a fight against terrorism did earn acquiescence from the West, and after 9/11, further Western acquiescence and support was provided. Indeed, after 2001, international criticisms of Russia's use of force diminished.[32] The fact that Russia's leadership sought to converge with Western countries by adopting this discourse, as well as not to pursue an autochthonous narrative of the conflict, affirms the thesis of Russia's subaltern position, conditioning its policy options in a Euro-centric manner.

In regards to the imperial dimension, the adoption of the 'war on terror' discourse resulted in a renewed effort to re-start the war, this time with a cover of legitimacy to pursue exceptional measures. The 'war on terror' discourse served as an effective narrative to capitalize on the responsive Russian public, shocked after the September 1999 department complex attacks in Beslan, and to justify the state of exception surrounding the conflict and the use of force in it.[33] Attesting to Russia's imperial relation vis-à-vis its own population, once Chechnya was re-securitized under these lines, the discourse of the war as a fight against terrorists was imposed on the daily lives of Russian citizens, most crucially felt by the Chechens.[34]

Second case: The Russian intervention in the Syrian civil war

The case of using the 'war on terror' narrative for the Syrian intervention expands what was argued for the previous case, but now towards the international use of force, and in the context of Putin's

[26] John Russell, *Chechnya – Russia's 'War on Terror'* (London: Routledge, 2007), 95.
[27] See James Hughes, *Chechnya. From Nationalism to Jihad* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2007).
[28] Wilhelmsen, *Russia's*, 52-53.
[29] Russell, *Chechnya*, 74.
[30] Morozov, *Russia*'s, 104.
[31] For a periodization of 'Putin's era,' as well as a more complete description of the post 2012 period, see Richard Sakwa, *Putin Redux. Power and Contradiction in Contemporary Russia* (London: Routledge, 2014).
[32] Mike Bowker, "Western Views of the Chechen Conflict," in *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, ed. Richard Sakwa (London: Anthem Press, 2005), 228-232. Also, see Russell, *Chechnya*, 76, 90-91.
[33] Russell, *Chechnya*, 93-94.
[34] Amandine Regamey, "Rereading Human Rights Reports: Material Violence in Chechnya, 1999-2001," in *Chechnya at War and Beyond*, ed. Anne Le Huerou et al, (London: Routledge, 2014), 206.

'conservative turn' and confrontational politics towards the West.

While for the second Chechen war there was certain acquiescence to Russia's portrayal of the conflict as part of the 'war on terror,' Russia's intervention in Syria has been more consistently seen through the pragmatic interests of Russia in the region. Namely, aiding their erstwhile ally in the Syrian government, keeping their only naval base in the Middle East, as well as to prevent a complete regional alignment towards the West.[35] However, this intervention is framed by Russia's government as being part of the international fight against terrorism, instead of openly describing the pursue of state interests.[36]

The terms under which Russia's intervention in Syria is framed, point to Russia's normative dependency to the West, and to its subaltern position. Adopting anew the 'war on terror' discourse for pursuing this intervention obeys to similar imperatives as the previous case, namely, providing legitimacy to the use of force. However, the crucial difference in terms of Russian politics is the aforementioned conservative turn in Russia's leadership. As addressed in the previous section, this has been interpreted as a part of Russia's leadership intent to change their country's position in the post-Cold war order, which serves as the operational context for their Syrian intervention. The rhetorical aspect of the intervention remains within the discourse of the 'war on terror,' in a decisively Euro-centric manner, even though it is critical of the West's war and propaganda effort. In becoming an active participant in the conflict, Russia's leadership sought to bolter Russia's position in world affairs, and portray their country as an equal and viable partner to the West in general, and to the US in particular, in the fight against terrorism.[37] The terms of this proposed arrangement are similar to the quote of Morozov in the previous section: while being critical of the West's behaviour in Syria, Russia is found not only not proposing a completely alternative route for the conflict to develop, but seeking to become a partner in a course of action led by Western countries.

The imperial aspect here is encapsulated in the effective pursue of the pragmatic goals mentioned above, and the government's ability to promote public support for the intervention. A poll conducted in March 2016 showed that only 16 per cent of Russians disagreed with the aerial campaign and 54 per cent identified their government's goal to be that of targeting potential terrorists.[38] Of course, this acquiescence might change in the near future as the discourse may become no longer effective in garnering support for the war.

As a preliminary conclusion, the enduring role of the 'war on terror' discourse in Russia's use of force domestically and abroad has been conceptualized under what Morozov terms Russia's hybrid identity. On the one hand, Russia's subaltern position vis-à-vis the West compels it to adopt Western narratives for legitimating its policies in general, and in particular for its use of force, both internally and abroad. On the other, the imperial role is asserted in the Kremlin's capacity to promote said narrative, pursue its pragmatic objectives, and eventually obtain support or acquiescence from its population. These two are to be interpreted as the outcome of the structural determinants in Russia's interstitial position in the world system, as well as continuously constraining its foreign policy options.

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[35] As argued, for example, in Nazih Richani, "The Political Economy and Complex Interdependency of the War System in Syria," *Civil Wars* 18, no. 1 (2016), 58.

[36] For instance, see The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Special Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova, Moscow, October 6, 2015," http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/1830197 (accessed May 5th, 2017).

[37] S. Neil MacFarlane "Kto Vinovat? Why Is There a Crisis in Russia's Relations with the West?," *Contemporary Politics* 23, no. 3 (2016), 350.

[38] Levada Centre, "Syria," http://www.levada.ru/en/2016/06/10/syria-2/ (accessed May 5th, 2017).

Scenarios of change

In the previous sections, the dynamic between Russia's 'hybrid identity' and its use of force, and the 'war on terror' discourse was described, presenting two cases of it. In this last section, working as a coda to this essay's overall argument, a speculative assessment of the future of this dynamic will be made. This is done by turning around the inductive, case-based inquiry above, into a deductive, speculative argumentation; this retains the essay's framework without introducing a prescriptive aspect to it.

As this normative dependency is focused on the West, and, in the case of the war on terror, on the US, the recent change in administration in that country opens certain questions regarding the continuation of the current shape of the discourse on the war on terror.[39] Deducing from the argumentation in the previous sections, it can be speculated that meaningful changes in that discourse -were they to happen- will have an impact in Russia's foreign policy, through the dynamics described above. As this essay has not delved into the connection of the 'war on terror' discourse and its meaning-providing representations, and their impact in tactical decisions in war (thus connecting discourse with the actual warfare),[40] the following will be argued in broad categories regarding the decision of Russia's leadership to adopt the 'war on terror' discourse.

- In the first scenario, the discourse does not change. This allows the status quo of Russia's investment in the 'war on terror' to continue in broadly the same manner.
- Second, the 'war on terror' discourse is replaced with a different one, which would now guide the use of force abroad. This would entail the promotion of other meaning-providing representations, with other constraints for policy-making.
- Third, changing the discourse in a meaningful manner. This would entail modifying the representations of the 'war on terror' discourse, with the according changes in legitimate actions as mentioned in the previous point.
- Fourth, changing the discourse in a non-meaningful manner. The consequences of this amount to the ones of the first point.

In all scenarios, the narrative is considered in the context of the open-ended negotiation and consensus-building processes that lead up to war becoming tolerable. As this is an unstable, continuous process, the discourse could become again unable to produce consensus, if, as mentioned above, the war wore on, and the initial support to it corroded.[41]

For the scenarios were change happens, the changes could amount to the narrative being or becoming ineffective in producing consensus, thus necessitating either promoting autochthonous changes to the narrative, or the adoption of a different one. In either case, Russia's normative dependency would make it necessary for the new narrative espoused not to stray from *a* legitimate, Western discourse.[42] Also, in both scenarios, failure to adopt a new narrative that effectively provides legitimacy anew would entail jeopardizing support for the measures previously made legitimate by the 'war on terror' discourse. In short, because of Russia's normative dependency on the West, were there to be meaningful changes to the 'war on terror' discourse in the US, there would also be meaningful changes in the Russian narrative, which would have to neither stray from Western discourse, nor result in reducing Russians' support for measures previously regarded as legitimate. As consensus formed by discourse is unstable, this has to be seen as an uncertain, but necessary gamble.

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[39] See, for instance, Eric Schmitt, "Using Special Forces Against Terrorism, Trump Seeks to Avoid Big Ground Wars," *New York Times*, March 19th, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/19/world/africa/trump-special-forces-navy-seals.html?&_r=0 (accessed online on the 5th of May, 2017).

[40] As done in Wilhelmsen, *Russia's*, chapters 10-12.

[41] Wilhelmsen, *Russia's*, 36.

[42] Morozov, *Russia's*, 128.

Conclusion

For addressing Russia's relationship with the ‘war on terror’ discourse, and its connection to the use of force, two elements were integrated into this essay's framework. First, Morozov's conceptualization of Russia as a ‘subaltern empire’, and, second, Wilhelmsen's theory on how war becomes acceptable. Of crucial interest is the normative aspect of said subaltern condition; it amounts to a structural constraint for Russia's decision-makers for it limits policy to a field of legitimate action that is based on Western discourse. By exploring two cases where the connection between Russia's normative dependency and the ‘war on terror’ discourse, as well as exploring certain possible scenarios of future developments in regards of this relationship, it is established that there is continuity in Russia's commitment to the ‘war on terror’ discourse, as well as the conditions for remaining invested in that discourse in the future.

While the theory presented could produce certain scenarios under which to think about the future of Russia's investment in the ‘war on terror’ discourse, a different theoretical framework could further develop the propositions made. It could also incorporate elements that bring in recent developments in internal US politics. Such research could produce results of interest not only for the study of the Russia-US relationship, but also into subjects such as communication in politics and international affairs.

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