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Security, Civilisation and Modernisation: Continuity and Change in the Russian Foreign Policy Discourse

MATTHEW FREAR & HONORATA MAZEPUS

Abstract

This study analyses official Russian foreign policy discourses to contribute to our understanding of how Russia portrays its role in world politics and *vis-à-vis* neighbouring states. Building on previous studies, we offer a new, comprehensive analysis of Foreign Policy Concepts and the annual Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly during President Vladimir Putin's third term (2012–2018). By systematically coding these documents, counting references to particular discourses and undertaking a careful interpretation of the texts, we provide insights about three broader discourses related to foreign policy: the world order and sovereignty; civilisation, identity and values; and economics and modernisation.

THE RETURN OF VLADIMIR PUTIN TO THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENCY IN 2012 saw a renewed interest in official foreign policy discourses. Commentators claimed that the beginning of Putin's third term (2012–2018) marked a turn in Russian foreign policy discourse away from the pragmatism that was often seen as the hallmark of his first two terms as president from 2000 to 2008 (Lo 2003, pp. 104–6; Light 2015, p. 18; Tsygankov 2016b, pp. 167–72). This new turn has been variously described as civilisational (Linde 2016, pp. 622–23) or conservative (Tsygankov 2014, p. 60). We examine whether official discourses in foreign policy doctrines and speeches from 2012 to 2018 actually reflected more continuity than change, and identify which themes became prominent within these discourses during Putin's third term.

Official foreign policy discourses are a valuable source of information about Russia's international ambitions and the image it wants to project to external audiences (Ambrosio & Vandrovec 2013, pp. 439–40). Of course, official documents do not always overlap

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with the state's actual foreign policy actions (Stent 2008, p. 1090); nevertheless they show how Russia wants to present its role in the world and the region, and how it wants to develop relations with its neighbours (Mathers 2012; Ambrosio & Vandrovec 2013; Light 2015; Foxall 2019).

We provide a systematic analysis of two types of documents from Putin's third term: the Foreign Policy Concepts (FPCs) and annual Presidential Addresses to the Federal Assembly (henceforth, Addresses), which have been identified by scholars as important sources of official foreign policy discourses (Light 2015, pp. 13–4; Sinovets 2016). A focus on this time period allows us to conduct a new extensive study of these primary sources. Our study differs from previous research on foreign policy in terms of scope, as it involves coding and analysis of 200,000 words of text, and in terms of approach. Rather than picking and choosing only those documents or their parts that provide examples of discourses that fit any preconceived notions, we use a comprehensive approach by hand-coding and analysing the sources in their entirety. This approach allows us to contribute to the literature in three ways. First, we provide quantitative data on how the different discourses are distributed within and across the official sources, that is, we show the proportions of text devoted to the different themes, concepts and narratives. Second, we identify continuities and changes over time in these proportions; in other words, we show how the emphasis on different foreign policy discourses changes over time. Third, through careful reading of the sources by two coders, we provide illustrative examples of how the different discourses are formulated and re-formulated over time.

The article proceeds as follows. In the next section we discuss existing studies of Russian foreign policy discourses and summarise their arguments as a reference point for our approach in this article. We distil the main discourses identified by these studies in Russian foreign policy and use the main concepts, themes and narratives within these discourses as a basis for our coding strategy. We then explain our methodology and outline the design of the content analysis. The second part of the article analyses our findings from the FPCs and Addresses, focusing on where they differ from the prevalent trends observed in the literature, highlighting new developments and providing illustrations of how the discourses are articulated. Our findings show that while civilisational discourses are present throughout Putin's third term, they have been invoked less over time. Moreover, we discover that discourses about Russia as a potential economic pole of attraction have often been just as prominent. In practice, by 2018 it is clear in both sources studied that discourses marked by the themes of security and military power have, in fact, come to the fore.

Russian foreign policy discourses: the main themes, narratives, actors and concepts

To avoid the concept of foreign policy discourses becoming a catch-all term (Müller 2008, pp. 323–24), we define them as the 'public articulations and narrative codifications ... used by politicians and practitioners of foreign policy' (O'Loughlin *et al.* 2005, pp. 324–25). Following this definition, we understand discourses as clusters of recurring themes, narratives, actors and concepts in official communications and documents that present a particular understanding of how the world works. We recognise that discourses cannot be used as the sole source to study the behaviour of political actors, as the discourses and

actions of political actors do not necessarily align. However, systematic analyses of discourses over time can deliver valuable information and aid understanding of these actors' behaviour. First of all, the discourses can inform us about potential legal, economic or moral justifications actors use for their behaviour. Second, discourses in official communications frequently serve as a tool to signal priorities and intent for domestic or international audiences.

As a starting point for the coding of Russia's foreign policy discourses, we organise the existing literature on Russia's foreign policy into three clusters. The first cluster focuses on themes and concepts such as security, power and sovereignty in the world order. The second—and largest—cluster of studies analyses the role of civilisation, values and identity in Russia's official foreign policy discourse. The final cluster sheds light on economics and modernisation in foreign policy discourses. We acknowledge, of course, that these clusters are not mutually exclusive and frequently complement each other. For example, successful regional economic integration can be also perceived as an important signifier of Russia's 'great power' status (Dragneva & Wolczuk 2015, p. 9). We briefly outline scholarly debates identifying the different clusters and their content, which we subsequently use to systematically code and analyse recent FPCs and Addresses.

Cluster 1: the world order

A major discourse concerning Russia's place in the world throughout the 2000s has been about restoring its position as a great power in a multipolar world (Svarin 2016, p. 131). The initial positioning of Russia in the world order after the collapse of the Soviet Union assumed its engagement with Western countries and integration into Western organisations. Since the turn of the century there has been a focus on other actors and on developing new avenues for cooperation in the post-Soviet space, such as the Customs Union (CU) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in economic matters, and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) for security matters. At the same time, closer relations with other rising powers—China in particular—have been developed through bodies including the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and BRICS.

Research suggests that an important concept within the world order discourse is sovereignty, understood in a particular way. The narratives linked to sovereignty show that Russia uses it in an instrumental manner. On the one hand, in the post-Soviet space, Russia can use post-Westphalian arguments that invoke 'responsibility to protect' in order to intervene on the territory of other sovereign states (Lo 2015, pp. 71–3; Deyermond 2016, pp. 967–71). On the other hand, Russia expects the rest of the world to adhere to the Westphalian principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states, including those of the Russian Federation (Deyermond 2016, pp. 961–67). This instrumental emphasis on different understandings of sovereignty suggests that only a few great powers, in particular the US, China and Russia, are truly sovereign enough to 'to exercise genuinely independent choices' (Lo 2015, pp. 41–2). These countries, in turn, should be recognised as powerful centres in the multipolar world that replaced the unipolar domination of the US in the 1990s. These powerful centres have their own 'spheres of influence' or 'spheres of interest' upon which they can exert power (Lo 2015,

p. 178; Smith 2016, p. 175). The narrative about multipolarity and spheres of influence is a common feature of Russia's world order discourse.

Cluster 2: civilisation

Analyses of Russian foreign policy discourses give great prominence to identity issues (Hopf 1999; Kassianova 2001; Duncan 2005; Koldunova 2015). Many of these studies trace the debates about what kind of state Russia is and aspires to be, its place in world politics, and the values and norms with which it identifies (Light 2003, p. 44). This self-identification (defining what you are) is simultaneously a process of differentiation from the 'Other' (defining what you are not) (Kassianova 2001, p. 822; Tsygankov 2007, p. 376). Discourses on Russian identity reflect a persistent dilemma: whether Russia wants to be perceived as 'a part of Europe or apart from Europe' (Baranovsky 2000, p. 443).

In the early 1990s, the so-called 'Westernisers' supported liberal ideas and were oriented towards the reconstruction of links with Europe and the West in general, in the belief that there was a congruence of Russian and Western values (Kassianova 2001, p. 824; Light 2003; Svarin 2016). Meanwhile, the so-called 'Eurasianists' tended to see Russia as a distinct civilisation (Duncan 2005, p. 288; Tsygankov 2016b pp. 65–7). Although Eurasianism is not a uniform ideology and there exist various strands within it, they share several main tenets: criticism of universalism and European values; the distinctiveness and superiority of Russian values; the glorification of the Russian past; the importance of religion and spirituality; and an emphasis on Russia as a great power on the Eurasian continent (Laruelle 2004).

In between these two identity ideas there is a group referred to as 'pragmatic nationalists' or 'statists' (Light 2003, p. 45; Tsygankov 2016a, p. 149). They do not negate Russia's links to the West, but postulate an assertive position towards it, the development of relations with other states and the protection of Russian values. Russia should be sovereign in the matters of domestic and foreign policy and immune to external influences (Surkov 2009). Some scholars have identified a turn towards 'moral sovereignty' based on traditional Russian values (Sharafutdinova 2014), while others argue that a sovereign Russia is seeking to represent a true, 'authentic', traditional European civilisation in its discourse (Laruelle 2016).

In addition, there is a debate about the construction of the Russian nation itself. The ambiguity of the distinction between ethnic (*russskii*) and civic (*rossiiskii*) nation-building agendas has never been completely resolved by the Russian authorities in a state that in itself is multinational (Shevel 2011; Smith 2016, p. 171). Discourses on nationhood usually offer three options for defining the Russian nation on the basis of ethnicity: as a community of ethnic Russians; as a community of Eastern Slavs (which would include Belarusians and Ukrainians); or as a community of Russian speakers including the so-called 'compatriots' living beyond Russia's borders (Shevel 2011, p. 180). These different definitions of the Russian nation have significant consequences for relations with neighbours in the post-Soviet space that often have large Russian-speaking minorities. Neighbouring countries also have to contend with the concept of a vaguely defined 'Russian World' (*Russkii mir*), one which embraces an ethnic and cultural definition of the Russian nation in its broadest context and has the potential to undermine the sovereignty of neighbouring states (Zevelev 2016, pp. 12–6).

In summary, the discourse on civilisation includes the concept of identity with different narratives about what Russian values are and whether they are distinct from European values or their true expression, and what makes someone Russian and thus part of the 'Russian World'.

Cluster 3: economics and modernisation

The emphasis on the modernisation of the Russian economy was particularly pronounced under President Dmitri Medvedev from 2008 to 2012. Deep social and political reform was supposed to improve the status of Russia as a global player competing with other powers, including the US, EU and China; Russia was to become 'one of the most influential global centres' (Freire & Simão 2015, p. 129). The discourse of the modernisation of Russia's economy, coupled with high GDP growth rates, generated even more ambitious plans, such as the possible reform of international financial institutions to grant stronger influence to non-Western powers, such as Russia (Lo 2015, pp. 82–3).

Similarly, Russia might appeal to its neighbours more in the economic sphere rather than through political or cultural discourses (Smith 2016, p. 180). Moscow consistently promoted the integration of Ukraine into Russia-led regional economic bodies. For example, during 2013 Russia presented the idea of the Customs Union as an opportunity to generate growth and support modernisation, rather than appealing to historical or civilisational arguments (Dragneva & Wolczuk 2015, pp. 66–73). Russia's integration project in the post-Soviet space, the EAEU, affects the political choices of countries. Joining the EAEU, as Armenia has, precludes implementing an Association Agreement (AA) with the EU, as Ukraine has.

With a few exceptions (Lo 2003, pp. 51–71; Trenin 2011, pp. 144–47; Gould-Davis 2016), previous studies of Russian foreign policy discourses pay far less attention to the self-ascribed role of Russia in the global economy and as a potential economic pole of attraction than to the issues of security, sovereignty or identity. This could reflect the lack of emphasis by Russian foreign policy elites on economic development and modernisation in their discussions of international affairs. It might also result from the choice of texts usually analysed by scholars, although it has been noted that 'international and intermestic economic concerns' do feature in the Addresses (Ambrosio & Vandrovec 2013, p. 457). The scepticism of experts towards Russian economic plans might be a part of the explanation as to why Russian discourses on economic integration seem to have been neglected in many analyses.

In summary, the third discourse of Russian foreign policy—the discourse on economics and modernisation—includes the narrative of Russia as an economic global player and a 'pole of attraction', and the themes of regional economic integration and the promise of modernisation.

The analysis we present in this article builds on these three discourses in Russian foreign policy. We look at how the documents position Russia in the world order and assess whether the civilisational discourse dominates in the analysed foreign policy statements throughout Putin's third term. Finally, given the limited attention paid to the economic discourse in earlier studies of Russian foreign policy documents, we investigate the status of this discourse, which presents Russia as an economic pole of attraction and a leader of

regional economic integration. The next section outlines how we use all of the above to code and analyse the selected foreign policy documents.

Method and approach

For the purpose of this analysis we have focused on two types of data sources that communicate foreign policy discourses. The first are the three most recent official FPCs of the Russian Federation in 2008,¹ 2013² and 2016³ that have been in force since Putin returned to the presidency in 2012. The second group of sources comprise the six annual Addresses during Putin's third term (Putin 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018). These are usually delivered every December; however, the final Address in Putin's third term was postponed to March 2018, coinciding with his re-election campaign. We acknowledge that these are not the sole sources of foreign policy discourses. There are the daily press releases and speeches by a huge range of actors in the Russian foreign policy apparatus—including the presidential administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committees, prominent politicians and publicists, and think tanks with ties to the Kremlin (Gvosdev & Marsh 2013, pp. 27–59). For the purposes of this structured analysis, however, we decided to focus on certain recurring high-profile sources that we can compare over time in a consistent manner. We chose the FPCs that were in place during Putin's third term to arrive at an overview of official priorities set out for Russian foreign policy.⁴ An analysis of Putin's annual Addresses complemented these findings by demonstrating the relative importance of particular foreign policy discourses on a year-by-year basis.

We manually coded the texts with a pre-determined but flexible code book, developed on the basis of the clusters of themes, concepts, actors and narratives derived from the literature discussed above. The codes we used are presented in Table 1.

We developed these literature-driven codes (more commonly, these codes are called 'theory-derived', see DeCuir-Gunby *et al.* 2011, p. 141) following a typical procedure (Boyatzis 1998). Coding was conducted by two coders: one analysed the texts in English and the other in Russian. Each coder analysed nearly 100,000 words in their set of texts. Initially, we assigned the codes to the first analysed text; subsequently, we reviewed, revised and added codes where necessary in the context of the data; finally, to assure reliability of coding we compared all the coded texts with each other. The coders discussed every paragraph of each document after coding them separately. Where the text

¹Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4116>, accessed 1 December 2016.

²Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February 2013), available at: http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/122186, accessed 1 December 2016.

³Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on 30 November 2016), available at: http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/2542248, accessed 2 December 2016.

⁴While the FPCs overlap somewhat with the 2009 and 2015 National Security Strategies (NSS), these were not included in this analysis as they focus only on security rather than the wider foreign policy themes covered in this article. It would not be possible to analyse the NSS in the same way as FPCs and Addresses to show the proportions of different discourses.

TABLE 1
CATEGORIES AND CODES USED IN THE CONTENT ANALYSIS

General category	Specific codes
World order & sovereignty	<i>World order</i> : economic; security; international bodies and laws; global and civilisational multipolarity <i>Sovereignty</i> : the state sovereignty of Russia and other countries as well as the right to act in a sovereign manner
Civilisation	<i>Regional sphere of influence or interest</i> : security; Russia-led regional bodies <i>Russian/Eurasian identity and culture</i> : promoting and protecting Russian culture, common cultural space, compatriots <i>Russia as 'authentic Europe'</i> : defending traditional values <i>European/universal values</i>
Economics and modernisation	<i>Russia's globalisation and modernisation</i> : an economic pole of attraction <i>Eurasian Economic Union</i> : economic integration in the post-Soviet region

Source: Authors.

was coded differently, the coders compared their interpretations to reach agreement and assure inter-coder reliability. Where necessary, this included discussing the meaning of the original Russian text to ascertain the intention of the authors. Percentages were calculated based on word counts using the English texts. A full breakdown of the coding and the calculations of word counts for each category in every document can be found in the supplementary online material.

We conducted a comprehensive analysis of the entire texts without focusing on one specific aspect of foreign policy, attempting to avoid any bias or preconceived notions, which has been identified as a risk in such studies (Drozdova & Robinson 2017, pp. 252–53). After identifying the extent to which different discourses were employed, we then noted trends and changes over time during Putin's third term with regard to the issues discussed and their relative prominence. The authors collaborated to provide relevant examples from the texts themselves to illustrate how the discourses are articulated and presented. The following section will present the results of the analysis of the FPCs, before moving to the analysis of the annual Addresses.

Analysis of the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation

The three FPCs developed during Putin's third term follow similar templates: basic general principles and provisions; a statement on Russian foreign policy in the modern world; Russia's priorities in addressing global problems; regional foreign policy priorities; and, finally, foreign policy formation and implementation. Our analysis shows that the frequency of references to the specific categories of foreign policy discourse presented in Table 1 remains relatively constant across all three FPCs during Putin's third term, as shown in Table 2.

Cluster 1: Russia's place in the world order and understanding of sovereignty

The order in which the world's regions are prioritised is very consistent across all three FPCs. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), selected member states and other

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL TEXT IN FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPTS DEVOTED TO EACH DISCOURSE CATEGORY

Categories	2008	2013	2016
<i>World order & sovereignty</i>			
World order	51	47	53
Sovereignty	4	6	7
Regional sphere of influence	6	7	6
<i>Civilisation</i>			
Russian/Eurasian identity	6	7	6
Universal/European values	3	5	3
<i>Economics and modernisation</i>			
Russia's economic globalisation	7	6	5
Eurasian economic integration	2	2	2
<i>Uncategorised*</i>	21	20	18

Source: Authors.

Note: *This includes headers, general text about the competencies of institutions in shaping and conducting Russian foreign policy, discussion of climate change and the environment, and references to single countries that did not relate to any of the other categories.

Eurasian integration projects are always addressed first. This is followed by Euro-Atlantic bodies of which Russia is a member, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and then the EU, EU member states, NATO and North America. The Asia-Pacific region is mentioned next, then South and Southeast Asia. From 2013 Australasia is also referenced. The Middle East and North Africa are addressed next, followed by Latin America and then Africa (apart from in 2008, when Africa was mentioned before Latin America).

We conducted a frequency count of international organisations and countries mentioned in all three FPCs, which is provided in the supplementary online material. The United Nations is by far the most prominent, referenced in a variety of contexts, including the UN Security Council, the UN Charter and various UN treaties. The CIS is mentioned more than twice as often as the EU, and while NATO is still prominent, it is addressed less over the timescale of these FPCs.

When it comes to the geographic scope of individual countries mentioned, the top five are consistent in all three documents. The United States is mentioned the most by far, around twice as often as China. Next comes Afghanistan, as an area of instability close to Russia's perceived sphere of influence. India still garners multiple mentions; however, these decline over the period of study. Finally, Belarus is always referenced more than any other former Soviet republic.

Overall, around half of the content of each FPC is dedicated to various issues of the international world order. The balance between the relative subcategories coded under 'world order' remains similar in each FPC, as can be seen in the supplementary online material. The most significant change is the steady increase in the focus on issues of international security as a subcategory across the three documents, taking up nearly half of the references to world order by 2016, as shown in [Table 3](#). The 2008 FPC predates the conflict between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia and the 2016 FPC comes in the wake of the ongoing conflicts in both Ukraine and Syria. Discourses about

TABLE 3
PERCENTAGE OF TEXT CODED 'WORLD ORDER' BY SUBCATEGORY IN FOREIGN POLICY
CONCEPTS

World Order subcategories	2008	2013	2016
World Order: general	31	19	24
World Order: economic	8	11	10
World Order: security	34	40	43
International bodies and law	23	24	19
Civilisational multipolarity	4	6	4
Total	100	100	100

Source: Authors.

international bodies and law remain the second most prominent, followed by the economic world order.

In the discussion of world order, the 2008 FPC makes it clear that 'a new Russia ... has now acquired a full-fledged role in global affairs' and implies that Russia is returning to great power status thanks to its 'strengthening position'. The 2013 FPC suggests that the West's ability to dominate the world economy and politics is diminishing and that a new polycentric system is emerging. By 2016, this transition is described as almost complete and there are new references to the failings or decline in power of the US and the EU. The Euro-Atlantic region is described as having systemic problems and posing a threat to regional and global stability. Rather than making the case that deep-rooted ties with Europe should inform Russia's relations with the EU, the 2016 FPC underlines that separate European and Eurasian integration processes need to better harmonise with each other. According to the 2016 FPC, the desire of Western countries to regain their dominant position by imposing their views on others is leading to turbulence and instability in the world.

The amount of space dedicated to building relations with the US, which remained stable between the 2008 and 2013 FPCs, is dramatically reduced by 2016. Earlier references to visa liberalisation and preventing the imposition of sanctions are absent in 2016 and the main emphasis is on arms control. The 2016 FPC contains an explicit statement that relations can only be built on a basis of equality, mutual respect of interests and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. It is made clear that while Russia is interested in good relations, it reserves the right to respond harshly to what it perceives as any attempts by the US to exert military, political, economic or other pressure.

The emphasis on China does not increase greatly in the discourses presented in the FPCs between 2008 and 2016. In the section on 'regional priorities', China is only mentioned after the CIS countries, Europe and the US. In 2008, China is only mentioned in the same paragraph as India. The prominence of China slightly increases in the 2013 and 2016 FPCs. The latter references 'common principled approaches adopted by the two countries to addressing the key issues on the global agenda as one of the core elements of regional stability'. The discourses in both the FPCs and, as will be shown later, in the Addresses, focus on the Asia-Pacific region in general rather than China in particular.

Turning to Russia's sphere of influence and interests, [Table 2](#) shows that these topics make up around 6% of the entire text of each FPC. In general, the three FPCs call for 'good neighbourly relations' with adjacent countries (although these countries are not

explicitly named) that are willing to engage in mutually beneficial cooperation while taking into account Russia's 'legitimate interests'. The 2008 FPC, for example, offers the prospect of multilateral dialogue and 'multidimensional cooperation'. The CIS is mentioned in all three FPCs, although it starts to lose ground to mentions of the EAEU by 2016. The Union State of Russia and Belarus (USRB) is only mentioned in an economic context in the 2008 FPC. The two subsequent FPCs, however, stress the promotion of 'integration in all areas'. Belarus is explicitly mentioned in the second paragraph in the section on 'regional priorities' and has a paragraph to itself in the 2016 FPC. This is different from the 2013 FPC, in which the USRB is relegated to a subsection of a paragraph.

Unsurprisingly, the coverage of Ukraine also changes. In 2013 there is a call for Ukraine to be a priority partner in extended integration processes. In 2016 a much longer entry calls for the development of a variety of 'political, economic, cultural and spiritual ties' with Ukraine on the basis of mutual respect and their national interests, but no longer links Ukraine to regional integration processes. The 2016 FPC promises that Russia will make the necessary efforts for a political and diplomatic settlement of what it terms the 'internal conflict in Ukraine'.

An important emphasis in the FPCs since 2008 has been on security in the neighbourhood, making up approximately one-half of all the references to Russia's sphere of interest. This includes cooperation through the Russian-led regional security bodies—the CSTO and SCO. Issues of common interest listed include terrorism, extremism, transnational crime and illegal migration. Russia is presented as a security provider through peacekeeping missions in the post-Soviet space. This is also the only occasion when Moldova is explicitly named in any of the FPCs, in the context of the status of separatist Transnistria. Afghanistan is named as a common security risk for Russia and its neighbours. In the 2008 FPC it is only presented as a threat to the southern CIS countries, but by 2016 it is named as a major threat to Russia and other CIS members, requiring possible input from Eurasian security bodies alongside other international organisations to help resolve it.

Furthermore, any perceived NATO encroachment in Russia's sphere of influence is heavily criticised. The prospect of admitting Ukraine and Georgia to the Euro-Atlantic alliance is directly referenced in the 2008 FPC, but in 2013 and 2016 no specific countries are named. By then, Russia had intervened militarily in Georgia and Ukraine. The 2008 FPC criticises talk of expansion as undermining 'the effectiveness of joint work' between Russia and NATO, whereas the 2016 FPC condemns NATO's 'growing military activity in the regions neighbouring Russia'. Any talk of cooperation with NATO has disappeared by 2016.

Importantly, references to Russia's right (and that of other countries) to be a sovereign state and to act in a sovereign manner on the international stage increase across the FPCs between 2008 and 2016. Nevertheless, as [Table 2](#) above shows, the proportion of text dedicated to sovereignty is similar to the proportion of text devoted to other areas, including Russia's economic globalisation, the regional sphere of influence, and Russian and Eurasian identity.

An interpretation of sovereignty that emphasises the exclusive right of each state to make decisions about its internal affairs and to treat its citizens as they wish can be identified in the 2016 FPC with regard to Syria: 'Russia supports the unity, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic as a secular, democratic and pluralistic State [*sic*]

with all ethnic and religious groups living in peace and security and enjoying equal rights and opportunities'. This interpretation is not applied to all countries, however. References to the inviolable sovereignty of Georgia and Ukraine are conspicuous in their absence. Georgia is not mentioned as a country whose territorial integrity was breached when South Ossetia and Abkhazia were recognised as independent by Russia after armed conflict. Tellingly, Crimea is not even mentioned in the 2016 FPC, although it is referred to in the discussion of Russia's domestic affairs in the annual Addresses, as will be noted in the following section.

Another way in which the FPCs refer to sovereignty concerns the right to act in a sovereign manner in the international arena. On multiple occasions, the FPCs mention Russia's right to pursue its interests in international politics and economy—usually linked with some sort of international legal framework. As an illustration of this, the 2016 FPC states that Russia, 'in accordance with international norms and principles, adopts the necessary trade policy measures to protect national interests and effectively respond to unfriendly economic actions by foreign states that infringe upon the rights of the Russian Federation or Russian business entities'.

Cluster 2: civilisation, identity and values from a Russian perspective

In recent years there has been a growing focus on a possible 'conservative' or 'civilisational' turn in Russian politics (Sharafutdinova 2014; Laruelle 2016; Linde 2016; Robinson 2017). However, based on the analysis carried out here, we do not find any significant increase in references to a special Russian civilisational identity across the three FPCs. Regardless of the importance of such discourses in domestic political discourse, they have not yet taken on extra prominence in the FPCs. Furthermore, when identity, norms and values are invoked, in approximately one-third of the cases the FPCs still refer to universal standards rather than any specific Russian ones, even in 2016.

The 2008 FPC refers to 'the full universality of generally recognised norms' and 'universal democratic values, including protection of human rights and freedoms'. All three FPCs condemn racial discrimination and anti-Semitism in particular, but do not mention other forms of discrimination. The 2008 FPC notes that the rights of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic states should be protected in accordance with European norms. All three FPCs contain pledges to support international human rights conventions and agreements, as well as work with bodies such as the Council of Europe (CoE). Nevertheless, each FPC suggests that it is necessary to eradicate 'double standards' in the area of universal human rights.⁵ There is a reference to promoting 'Russia's approach to human rights issues' in the 2013 FPC, although what that means in practice is not explained, and similar references are absent from the 2008 and 2016 FPCs.

The volume of discourse on Russian civilisation and identity is similar across all three FPCs. Russia reserves the right to provide 'comprehensive protection' for compatriots

⁵While it is not outlined in the FPC, elsewhere officials describe Western double standards as politicising human rights in certain countries, or not living up to the same standards domestically as they expect from other states, for example, 'Russian Ombudsperson Points Out Western Double Standards on Human Rights', *TASS*, 8 November 2018, available at: <http://tass.com/society/1029938>, accessed 2 May 2019.

abroad in the 2008 and 2013 FPCs; this becomes ‘comprehensive, effective protection’ in the 2016 FPC. The documents promise to expand and strengthen the space for Russian language and culture. Similarly, all three FPCs emphasise the need to promote an objective image of Russian accomplishments across a variety of spheres, and to counter the selective use of history or attempts by (unnamed) outside forces to manipulate public opinion under the guise of ‘soft power’. In the later FPCs there is a greater emphasis on the need to ‘promote Russian and Russian-language media in the global information space’.

It is interesting to note that the term ‘Russian World’ is in fact only mentioned once, in 2008. Nor is there any mention of a specific Eurasian identity. The 2013 and 2016 FPCs both mention the need to develop ‘interstate cultural and humanitarian ties between Slavic peoples’, but how the definition of Slavic peoples should be understood is not stated. The 2008 and 2013 FPCs reference the ‘common cultural and civilisational heritage’ of the CIS countries and later this becomes their ‘common cultural and historical legacy’ in 2016. Whether this commonality should be interpreted as Russian, (post-)Soviet or Eurasian is left unsaid. None of the FPCs place a strong emphasis on the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), although each notes the need for the spiritual education of the population. Where the ROC is mentioned, it is in the context of collaboration with other confessions in a multipolar world of diverse civilisations.

Cluster 3: economics and modernisation of Russia

Our analysis reveals that the portrayal of Russia as a potential economic pole of attraction is indeed important. Despite having attracted relatively little attention in the extant literature, economic discourses are in fact as prominent in all three FPCs as expressions of a particular Russian identity or civilisation. In all three FPCs, just under 10% of the text is dedicated to issues that the authors coded as ‘prosperity’, while just over 10% discussed issues of civilisation and identity, as shown in [Table 2](#). This cautions against an overemphasis of any ‘civilisational turn’ in Russian foreign policy discourse in these sources.

The projection of Russia as a driver of regional economic integration is a constant and recurring argument, dating back to the 2008 FPC. The focus in the earlier FPC was on relations within the CIS in terms of trade and economics. Particular emphasis is placed on Belarus and Kazakhstan as partners, which continues in 2013 and 2016. In later FPCs, the focus shifts away from the CIS and moves to first establishing and then expanding the EAEU. In the 2016 FPC, official foreign policy ambitions for the EAEU include harmonisation with Europe and complementary projects in the Asia-Pacific region.

There are also common themes when presenting Russia as a prosperous prospective partner in the world economy. Each has a section on international cooperation in the sphere of the economy, emphasising the modernisation of Russia, the transformation of its economy and its innovation-based development. Russia is portrayed as possessing ‘real capacity to play a well-deserved role globally’ (in the 2008 FPC) and an ability to make a ‘considerable contribution to ensuring the stability of the global economy and finances’ (in the 2013 FPC). Each FPC promises that Russia will integrate with the world economy, develop foreign economic and investment links, and strengthen strategic partnerships. The 2008 FPC proposes that Russia will help develop a ‘just and democratic architecture of global trade, monetary and financial relations’ through pursuing membership of the World

Trade Organization (WTO) and the OECD. In 2016, when Russia had become a member of the WTO, the FPC promises to ‘contribute to the efficiency of the multilateral trade system’. In the 2013 and 2016 FPCs, the importance of Russia’s geographic location is mentioned, highlighting the opportunity to facilitate trade between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.

One noticeable change over time is the attitude towards international development. The 2008 and 2013 FPCs state that Russia is pursuing active and targeted policies as a donor at both the multilateral and bilateral level. All mention of this has disappeared in the 2016 FPC, implying that the government might be reining in its ambitions and promises to potential partners in the developing world. This particular topic also demonstrates the importance of checking the English and Russian texts in order to catch and interpret nuances. In English, the 2008 FPC refers to ‘donor capacity’ while the 2013 FPC references ‘donor potential’, suggesting a subtle downgrade in importance. The original Russian in both texts, however, refers only to ‘donor potential’.

Overall, the emphasis on Russia as a regional economic power is constant in all three FPCs. The focus is on regional integration organisations, with the emphasis shifting from the CIS in 2008 to the EAEU in 2016. There is a slight decline in the amount of text which refers to Russia as an active participant in a globalised economy. The only significant absence in the 2016 FPC is any mention of international development assistance. Otherwise, it appears that the discussion of international economic cooperation is simply presented in a more succinct manner than in earlier FPCs.

Analysis of the Presidential Addresses to the Federal Assembly

The Russian Constitution grants the president the right to define foreign policy guidelines and represent the country in international relations. As such, the language employed in Putin’s annual Addresses after his return to the presidency can provide additional insights into Russian foreign policy discourse since 2012. These Addresses routinely receive extensive media coverage in Russia and the region, reaching a wider audience than regular press releases from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or other sources noted earlier. Unlike the FPCs discussed above, there is far less consistency in how much attention is paid to particular foreign policy discourses in the Addresses.

Unsurprisingly, the speech given in 2014, in the wake of the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the West’s response, dedicates the largest proportion of time to the foreign policy discourses analysed in this article. Issues of sovereignty, regional influence and Russian identity are particularly prominent in that Address. On the other hand, it is in the following year, 2015, that the most emphasis is placed on Russia as a potential economic pole of attraction out of any of the Addresses. This may have indicated a desire to present Russia as prosperous in spite of Western economic sanctions. An overall summary is presented in [Table 4](#).

Cluster 1: Russia’s place in the world order and understanding of sovereignty

In coding these Addresses, we also conducted a frequency count of international organisations and countries mentioned. The full findings can be found in the supplementary online material. We summarise the key trends here. In terms of mentions

TABLE 4
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL TEXT IN THE ADDRESSES DEVOTED TO EACH DISCOURSE CATEGORY

Categories	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018
<i>World order & sovereignty</i>						
World order	4.2	9.0	6.5	3.9	9.2	16.7
Sovereignty	2.9	2.3	12.3	3.2	2.0	0.2
Regional sphere of influence	1.8	1.4	3.8	0.9	0.3	0.4
<i>Civilisation</i>						
Russian/Eurasian identity	13.5	5.6	5.6	3.2	4.3	0.4
Universal/European values	0.6	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.3
<i>Economics and modernisation</i>						
Russia's economic globalisation	2.4	3.4	3.5	5.1	2.0	3.7
Eurasian economic integration	1.2	2.5	1.3	0.4	0.5	1.0
Total for all categories	26.5	24.5	33.0	16.7	19.2	21.7

Source: Authors.

of international organisations, bodies in post-Soviet Eurasia predominate during Putin's third term: the CIS, the Customs Union (CU) of Russian, Belarus and Kazakhstan that subsequently became the EAEU, the CSTO and the SCO. Regional economic bodies (CU/EAEU) are mentioned more than twice as often as regional security bodies (CSTO, SCO) over the entire period analysed; however, this gap narrows following the launch of the EAEU in 2015. Similarly, international economic bodies (BRICS, G8, G20, WTO) are mentioned almost twice as often as regional security bodies. References to eastward-facing organisations (ASEAN, APEC, SCO) outnumber those to the EU or NATO across all six speeches. These findings corroborate the trends identified in earlier studies of Presidential Addresses (Ambrosio & Vandrovec 2013, p. 445).

When it comes to the geographic scope of individual countries mentioned, certain trends emerge. Particular attention is paid to Ukraine during Euromaidan in the 2013 Address and after the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of fighting in Donbas in 2014, but since then Ukraine has not been mentioned. The only countries in Russia's so-called 'sphere of privileged interest' that warrant a specific mention are Belarus and Kazakhstan, reflecting their status in the vanguard of Eurasian integration in the run up to the establishment of the EAEU in 2015.

References to and comparisons with the US are another familiar constant. On the other hand, while references to the Asia-Pacific region and eastward-facing organisations increase, this is not reflected in direct mentions of China. References to China still lag behind references to the US. It should be noted that references to the US are influenced by specific events—tensions over Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, for example.

Turning now to the discourses themselves, references to sovereignty and the right to act in a sovereign manner in a variety of ways appear in all the Addresses following Putin's return to the presidency. In 2012 he focuses on factors that would guarantee Russia's sovereignty in the twenty-first century, not only aiming to preserve Russia's geopolitical relevance but also to generate 'demand among our neighbours and partners'. In addition, the Address emphasises that 'unity, integrity and sovereignty are unconditional' and that expressions of separatism are not welcome. Nor is any 'direct or indirect foreign interference in our internal political processes' tolerated. In the 2013 Address, Putin promises that Russia also respects the sovereignty of other countries: 'we do not claim to be any sort of superpower with a claim

to global or regional hegemony; we do not encroach on anyone's interests, impose our patronage onto anyone, or try to teach others how to live their lives'.

Sovereignty is invoked the most in 2014. Russia had 'supported' and 'facilitated' Ukraine's aspirations for sovereignty in the 1990s. President Viktor Yanukovich, a legitimate head of state, was perfectly entitled to postpone signing any AA between Ukraine and the EU. The US is charged with meddling 'behind the scenes' in Russia's neighbourhood. European countries are accused of treating sovereignty as 'too much of a luxury', while 'true sovereignty for Russia is absolutely necessary'. Putin refers to supporters of separatism 'from across the pond' who would have gladly seen the 'dismemberment' of Russia in the 1990s, but Russia had remained a sovereign nation. In the same speech, however, Russia is presented as having the right to support the 'historical reunification' of Crimea with Russia following a 'resolution on sovereignty', even when this went against the indivisibility and integrity of the Ukrainian state.

In 2015 the focus of the Address shifted from Ukraine to Syria and, with it, Russia's sovereign right to wage 'an expressly open, direct struggle against international terrorism', in response to 'an official request from the legitimate Syrian authorities'. This was necessary because other (unnamed) countries had sought to undermine state sovereignty in the Middle East and North Africa through a desire to 'oust unwanted regimes and brutally impose their own rules'. In subsequent Addresses the emphasis on sovereignty declines. By 2018 it warrants only a passing mention, in the context of technological progress.

In general terms, the Addresses rarely emphasise Russia's regional sphere of influence to the same extent as the FPCs do. Rather than focus on multidimensional forms of cooperation, as seen above in the analysis of the FPCs, Putin instead emphasises assistance to ensure effective immigration controls. In 2013 he vows to 'preserve our special ties with the former Soviet republics' but wants new regulations for employing foreign workers to control migration flows.

Naturally, the 2014 Address is particularly clear about placing Ukraine within Russia's sphere of influence and Crimea being part of the Russian Federation. Putin suggests that the EU and the West have been unable to provide the assistance Ukraine needed. By contrast, Russia would have been able to offer assistance had there been an attempt to engage in dialogue earlier. Curiously, Ukraine is never mentioned in the following Addresses. We continued to code mentions of Crimea after that speech as examples of redefining Russia's sphere of influence rather than domestic politics. The speeches, however, refer to Crimea purely in the domestic politics context of Russia. Crimea is one of only a handful of Russian regions named in the Addresses, and always in the context of the need to create 'favourable conditions' (Putin 2014) in the peninsula through 'projects of national importance' (Putin 2016) that will 'stimulate ... the entire Russian Black Sea region' (Putin 2018) such as the construction of a bridge to Crimea. It illustrates that, for all the talk of sovereignty described above, this idea of sovereignty did not extend to Ukraine as part of Russia's 'near abroad'.

The regional security of Russia is mentioned in 2015, shortly after Russia had begun its military operations in Syria. Putin states that militants from the CIS fighting in Syria must be 'eliminated' there, before they potentially return to Russia's sphere of influence. In 2018, the need to develop military infrastructure in the Arctic is mentioned as a regional priority for the first time.

What stands out in the final Address before Putin's re-election in 2018 is the huge focus on security in the world order, to a far greater extent than in the other Addresses examined. While in 2012 none of the text coded 'World Order' came under the subcategory 'Security', in the 2015 speech the proportion rose to 26% and by 2018 it was 86%, as can be seen in the supplementary material in the [online Appendix](#). Issues around global security exceed all other foreign policy discourses combined in 2018. In part this was due to long descriptions of historical context dating back to the Soviet period and detailed summaries of what Putin had discussed with US and European partners. Russia is portrayed as a reliable partner who wants to act in the interests of international security, but if its hand is forced by the West, it will respond militarily. These remarks about Russia's security in the world order are made after an extensive presentation of the modernisation and upgrading of the Russian armed forces.

Cluster 2: civilisation, identity and values from a Russian perspective

Unlike the three FPCs since 2008, in which universal or, to a lesser extent, European identities and values still appear in the discourse on civilisation and identity, these have a lower profile in the Addresses. Even when they are mentioned, they are usually tempered by certain Russian exceptions. So, in 2012, when Putin mentions Russia sharing 'universal democratic principles adopted worldwide', the text immediately proceeds to qualify that by adding that 'Russian democracy means the power of the Russian people with their own traditions of self-rule and not the fulfilment of standards imposed on us from outside'.

Putin devotes the most attention to identity in his first Address after his re-election in 2012: 'We should preserve our national and spiritual identity, not lose our sense of national unity. We must be and remain Russia'. He argues that 'many moral guides have been lost' and that there is an 'apparent deficit of spiritual values'. Educational, cultural and youth policies will create 'a responsible Russian citizen'. Furthermore, he urges the simplification of citizenship application procedures for 'the bearers of the Russian language and culture, the direct descendants of those who were born in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union'.

The 2014 Address devotes significant time to Crimea as 'the spiritual source of the development of a multifaceted but solid Russian nation'. The indivisibility of Russia and Crimea is invoked early in the speech, noting that they shared 'ethnic similarity, a common language, common elements of their material culture, a common territory, even though its borders were not marked then, and a nascent common economy and government'. Moreover, 'Christianity was a powerful spiritual unifying force that helped involve various tribes and tribal unions of the vast Eastern Slavic world in the creation of a Russian nation and Russian state'.

Elsewhere, there are regular references to the need to defend Russia's 'national interests, history, traditions and values' (Putin 2015) and its 'national civilisational code' (Putin 2018) as well as the 'all-encompassing, unifying role of Russian culture history and language for our multi-ethnic population' (Putin 2013). The need to 'strengthen Russia's cultural and intellectual influence' in neighbouring countries in the sphere of education is expressed in 2013. Compatriots living outside of Russia have been mentioned in this context, in terms

of foreign students coming to study at Russian universities or *via* distance learning. A new development in the 2018 Address was a section on improving procedures for granting Russian citizenship that focused on being young, healthy and well-educated, and did not highlight any particular identity or civilisational pre-requisites.

It is interesting to note that in none of these Addresses is the term ‘Russian World’ explicitly used. Nor do they refer to any form of Eurasianism as discussed in the literature above. By referring to Russia’s ‘millennium-long history and great traditions, as a nation consolidated by common values and common goals’, Putin highlights spiritual issues and moral standards far more than they are ever raised in the official FPCs. This suggests that the so-called ‘conservative turn’ in the Russian official discourse is aimed more at the domestic than the international audience. This does not mean that elites or publics in neighbouring countries are not paying attention to such statements.

Cluster 3: economics and modernisation of Russia

We have demonstrated above that the economic dimension of Russian foreign policy discourse is just as prominent in all three FPCs as any discussions of civilisation or identity. In Putin’s Addresses, one might have anticipated an emphasis on discourses that reflect a civilisational turn in foreign policy. However, while that indeed appears to be the case in the 2012 Address, that trend was not maintained subsequently. Based on our analysis, issues of prosperity are just as important as civilisation and identity in the annual Addresses from 2013 onwards, mirroring what is seen in the FPCs. By 2016 and 2018, this discourse far outstrips mentions of civilisation and identity in an international context.

Regional economic integration is the key element of the discourse on prosperity. The goal of setting up the EAEU attracts the most attention in the Addresses leading up to its establishment in 2015. In the 2013 Address, Putin notes that ‘the real achievements of Eurasian integration will only enhance our other neighbours’ interest in it, including that of our Ukrainian partners’ and promises that the process will proceed ‘without setting it against other integration projects, including the more mature European one’. However, since the launch of the EAEU in January 2015, its prominence in annual addresses has declined. The 2016 Address mentions strengthening EAEU cooperation with other CIS countries and the 2018 Address emphasises ambitions to develop common markets in areas such as energy and finances within the EAEU. Both speeches briefly acknowledge the idea of a ‘greater Eurasian partnership’, which at this point had begun to emerge in Russian discourse more widely, but what it meant still lacked clarity (Lewis 2018). Although the implications of this new focus are not yet clear, it might be that integration within the EAEU is too narrow (or too shallow) to accomplish the economic goals of both Russia and other members without the organisation developing stronger economic cooperation with other actors, such as China.

When deciding on how to identify examples of Russia’s economic globalisation in the annual addresses, the coders agreed that it was not enough to simply code all mentions of the Russian economy. Instead, it was agreed that coding would only be applied to comments that could be seen as portraying Russia as an economic pole of attraction, even though it might not be explicitly expressed as such. Examples of this include references

to building a ‘rich and prosperous Russia’ (Putin 2012) that ‘works towards prosperity and affluence’ (Putin 2014), a country ‘in the group of 20 nations with the best business climate’ (Putin 2012) that ‘asserts itself among the world’s five biggest economies’ (Putin 2018). Calls to welcome foreign investors and educated professionals were coded under this category, as were references to Russia’s international competitiveness, global innovation and opportunities for partners to work with the country’s modernising economy. In 2015 in particular, there is an emphasis on ‘holding consultations’ and ‘open[ing] new possibilities’ in the Asia-Pacific region, in a bid to ‘work out a mutually beneficial agenda for cooperation’. Such ambitious talk of leading an economic partnership in the region is absent the following year; nevertheless, the 2016 Address is the first in which Putin directly mentions China, as it ‘is about to become the world’s largest economy’. By 2018, the focus moves to connectivity, with reference to Russia’s importance for the Northern Sea Route and the overland transport corridors between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. It remains to be seen whether Russia’s success as an economic power will be more explicitly linked to ties with China in the discourse during the coming years.

Conclusions

Our analysis yielded five main findings: the three FPCs follow a stable template in terms of proportion of space devoted to different issues, while annual Addresses vary more between 2012 and 2018; FPCs and Addresses emphasise the theme of security increasingly over time; sovereignty is a core concept used in both documents and continues to be used in a strategic and instrumental way depending on the context; a ‘civilisational turn’ does not become more prominent in the official discourses over our period of study; and the economic prosperity discourse is nearly as prominent as the civilisational one, although its focus is mainly on future aspirations rather than actual developments.

Our analysis of the FPCs demonstrates that there is a great deal of continuity in the amount of space dedicated to the discourses under investigation in each document. Within the discourse on the world order, there has been a growing emphasis on security issues at both the regional and global level. While our review of the existing studies on Russian foreign policy discourse notes that they pay particular attention to questions of Russian identity or Eurasian civilisation, this is not especially pronounced in the FPCs in comparison to other categories identified. This could suggest that many of these studies place too much emphasis on a small sample of sources—such as the 2012 FPC—to justify the importance of any civilisational turn. It can also mean that when evaluating official foreign policy, other scholars have implicitly incorporated knowledge from other sources, such as Russian television programmes, propaganda outlets, and interviews with particular politicians or political commentators. Those other sources might give the impression that the discourses focusing on identity, values and nationalism predominate. What we discover in our analysis, however, shows that the civilisational turn is not particularly prominent in purely official foreign policy discourses. Significantly, economic foreign policy discourses are almost as prevalent as civilisational ones in all three FPCs.

Putin’s annual Addresses are less consistent than the FPCs, which is partly intrinsic to the type of communication they represent. There is some variance in the proportion of text

devoted to foreign policy, which most probably reflects the salience of particular international events for the domestic audience. At the regional level, there are more references to economic organisations than security ones, and this is mirrored in the discourses employed as well. The issues that are emphasised in discussions of the world order appear to be event-driven. In some years, such as 2013, 2015 and 2018, world security predominates in the speeches; in others, such as 2012 and 2016, the world economy prevails. The 2014 Address has the largest proportion of text about foreign policy matters, reflecting the importance of events in Ukraine. Meanwhile the 2018 Address talks about the world order in the context of Russia's military modernisation, shifting the emphasis once again to hard power.

The importance of sovereignty, in all its forms, is emphasised in both sets of documents and is particularly pronounced in Putin's Addresses. Sovereignty means that Russia has the right to act in a sovereign manner and will not permit outside interference or internal separatist tendencies. Moscow will defend Ukraine's sovereignty in deciding not to sign an AA with the EU, but it will also support Crimea's sovereign right to separate from a Ukraine that is turning towards the West, even at the expense of the country's territorial integrity. While, according to this narrative, the West meddles in the sovereign affairs of other countries, the discourses presented argue that Russia protects the sovereignty of other states. Moreover, these documents argue that, unlike the West, Russia often has long-standing, primordial ties with countries in which it has intervened, and this intervention has been at the invitation of legitimate rulers. This indicates that Russia does not see all states as equally sovereign.

Our analysis of the Addresses over time shows that while at the beginning of Putin's third term there was more emphasis on Russian civilisation and identity, this trend was not sustained and was almost absent by 2018. This suggests that the focus on identity narratives in 2012 might have been a part of a wider 'ideational improvisation' in domestic politics at that time, in a bid to shore up support for the authorities as economic growth declined and in response to the protests that had taken place in the winter and spring of 2011–2012 around Putin's re-election (Feldmann & Mazepus 2018; Hale *et al.* 2019, pp. 185–89).

Instead, these official discourses increasingly focus on security on the world stage and Russia's military power. Similarly, the new FPCs that came into force after 2012 did not evince a noticeable civilisational turn either, despite opportunities to include an explicit shift in the 2013 or 2016 FPC. All the FPCs analysed show a similar, limited emphasis on the issues of identity. Any shift towards civilisational discourses at the beginning of Putin's third term was not maintained and did not constitute a strong ongoing narrative across all the sources studied for this article.

Despite the increasingly prominent role of security within the world order discourse, economic discourses in Russian foreign policy are no less important than discourses on civilisation and identity. This suggests that while military and security agencies seem to have an increasing voice in the policymaking process, actors promoting economic modernisation may still have some say in the process. However, the narrative of prosperity within the economic discourse is more about aspirations for future than the actual achievements of the Eurasian integration project. Less focus is placed on what the EAEU has done, and more on the rather vague promise of 'Greater Eurasia' and global

connectivity. Nevertheless, this discourse is as prominent in the FPCs and Addresses as the discourse on identity, which has been often overlooked in previous studies.

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