

(In)securitising post-Soviet Space through Security Policies: Russian and the Western Concerns on the Colour Revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia

Güvenlik Politikaları Aracılığıyla Sovyet Sonrası Toprakları Güvenlik(siz)leştirme: Rusya ve Avrupa'nın Ukrayna ve Gürcistan'daki Renkli Devrimlere İlişkin Endişeleri

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Abstract

This article mainly elaborates the relations between Russia and the West during and after the Cold War. Both sides saw each other as a security threat during the Cold War. After 1990s when the Soviet Union collapsed, this antagonistic relation ended for a short period. Once Vladimir Putin came to power, Russia once again revealed security concerns in the post-Soviet space. The iconic symbol of this concern was the Colour Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine. The Kremlin saw the Revolutions as a Western threat to Russia's identity formation in the region. On the other hand, the West saw the Revolutions as a call for democratic liberation for the peoples of the region. Hence, this study looks deeply into both sides of concerns about the Revolutions through the concepts of identity politics and security concerns.

Key Words: Russia, West, Colour Revolutions, Identity Formation, Security Concern, Post-Soviet Space.

Öz

Bu makale, Soğuk Savaş sırasında ve sonrasında Rusya ile Batı arasındaki ilişkileri ele almaktadır. Soğuk Savaş sırasında her iki taraf da birbirini güvenlik tehdidi olarak görmüştür. 1990'lardan sonra ise, Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasıyla, bu karşıt ilişki kısa bir süreliğine de olsa sona ermiştir. Fakat, Vladimir Putin'in iktidara gelmesiyle birlikte Rusya bir kez daha Sovyet sonrası topraklarda güvenlik endişelerini ortaya koymuştur. Bu endişelerin ikonik simgesi ise Gürcistan ve Ukrayna'daki Renkli Devrimler'dir. Kremlin, devrimleri Rusya'nın bölgedeki kimlik oluşumuna yönelik Batı tehdidi olarak görmüştür. Öte yandan Batı, devrimleri bölge halkları için bir demokratik kurtuluş çağrısı olarak tanımlamıştır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma kimlik siyaseti ve güvenlik kaygısı kavramları aracılığıyla devrimler hakkındaki endişelerin her iki tarafını da derinlemesine ele almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rusya, Batı, Renkli Devrimler, Kimlik Oluşumu, Güvenlik Kaygısı, Sovyet Sonrası Topraklar

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Introduction

The West¹ and Russia saw each other as a threat to their security during the Cold War. One side (the USSR) saw itself as the defender of *oppressed nations* while the other (the West) represented itself as the saviour of *free people*. However, this does not mean that every state from each side hated every state from the other side during the whole Cold War. For instance, France, under the leadership of Charles De Gaulle, aimed to pursue detente with the USSR. Similarly, there was a thaw in tension between the USSR and the West under Mikhail Gorbachev during the Cold War. During 1990s, Russia did not pose a serious threat to the West due to so-called democratisation and liberalisation process of 1990s in Russia - especially under the Yeltsin administration as well as the weakened capability of Russia and so on. However, increased tension has been seen in the relationship between Russia and the West after 2000s, when the Putin administration took place. Ukraine and Georgia have been one of the sources of conflict between Russians and the Westerners. The Rose Revolution of Georgia in 2003, the Orange Revolution of Ukraine in 2004, and the Euromaidan Revolution of Ukraine in 2014 caused tension between Russia and Ukraine/Georgia. Unsurprisingly, the European Union intervened in this tension aligning with Ukraine/Georgia. In this context, the Russian leadership viewed the Colour Revolutions as both a domestic and a foreign policy issue. In the Kremlin's view, the Colour Revolutions demonstrated the West's efforts to change regime in the post-Soviet space, so the Revolutions posed a dual threat to Russian sovereignty.² Hence, Russia challenged Ukrainian and Georgian authorities in their territories in order to sever the link between democratisation and cooperation with the Western world.³

This article aims to examine *Why Russia and the West saw each other as a security threat after the Cold War*. This question can be analysed through various IR theoretical frameworks. Realist and liberal perspectives have attempted to explain the twentieth century world politics and events such as World War II and the Cold War. The relationship between the Soviet Union and the US in the Cold War, for instance, has been examined from a realist perspective, with its core assumptions of anarchy, self-help, and the balance of power. William Wohlforth, for instance, claims that “during the Cold War, efforts to displace realism from its dominant position were repeatedly thwarted by the continued salience of the U.S.-Soviet antagonism”.⁴ Many IR scholars argue that realism is still a dominant theory in the field

- 1 In this study, the term of the West refers to the US and the Western Europeans (include Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg).
- 2 Jeanne L Wilson, “The legacy of the color revolutions for Russian politics and foreign policy”, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 57(2), 2010, p.21.
- 3 Laure Delcour, and Kataryna Wolczuk, “Spoiler or facilitator of democratization?: Russia's role in Georgia and Ukraine”, *Democratization*, 22(3), 2015, p.459.
- 4 William Curti Wohlforth, “Realism and the end of the cold war”, *International Security*, 19(3), Winter 1994-1995, p. 91.

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of IR⁵ and they tend to explain Russian foreign policy as realist in terms of security and national interests. Bobo Lo, for instance, points out that “the most distinctive strategic feature of Russian foreign policy under Putin has been its securitization”.⁶ Similarly, Richard Sakwa describes Russian foreign policy under Putin using the concepts of material factors and power from the perspective of *realpolitik*.⁷ The study does not claim that any of IR theories provides the best and sole explanation for the Russo-Western relations. Hence, this article focuses on the identity politics aspect of this tension between Russia and the West through the cases of Ukraine and Georgia. It basically claims that identity politics has played a significant role in this relation. Since the Cold War and even before it, they have generally reinforced the established hostility between the two identities by threatening policies and actions instead of sending positive signals to each other for cooperation. With the turning points of 2000s world politics in the post-Soviet space, Ukraine and Georgia have become the battlegrounds between the Russian and the Western identities.

In the first section of the study, a brief theoretical framework will be given. In the second section, the Russo-Western relations will be researched in three periods from a constructivist perspective: During the Cold War, during the 1990s, and since 2000s. In the third section, Ukraine and Georgia will be analysed as the battlefield of identities between Russia and the West or pro-Russians and pro-Western with three events: the Rose Revolution of Georgia in 2003, the Orange Revolution of Ukraine in 2004, and the Euro-maidan Revolution of Dignity in 2014. The Russo-Georgian war in 2008 and the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine will also be examined within the context of the post-Colour Revolutions.

A Brief Theoretical Framework: Securitising through Identities

Until the collapse of the USSR, mainstream IR theories, especially realism, were used to explain security issues. However, critical security approaches have emerged and flourished since 1990s. Traditional security approaches mainly focused on military dimension of security in international relations whereas critical theories have added more dimensions to security studies such as energy, health, natural disasters, identity, gender, crime, cyber, and so on.⁸ In addition, the main security referent of conventional security stud-

- 5 Kenneth Neal Waltz, “Structural realism after the cold war”, *International Security*, 25(1), 2000. Stephen Gallup Brooks and William Curti Wohlforth, “Power, globalization, and the end of the cold war: Reevaluating a landmark case for ideas”, *International Security*, 25(3), 2001.
- 6 Bobo Lo, *Russian foreign policy in the post-soviet era: Reality, illusion, and mythmaking*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2002, p.8.
- 7 Richard Sakwa, *Russian politics and society*, Taylor & Francis, United Kingdom 2008.
- 8 Amitav Acharya, “The Periphery as the Core: The Third World and Security Studies”, *Critical Security Studies*, Keith Krause and Micheal C Williams (eds.), Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota 1997, p.299. Peter Hough, *Understanding Global Security*, 2nd

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ies is the state⁹ whereas most of the new wave studies put humanitarian issues at the centre of their research as a security referent.¹⁰ Instead of securing the state, researchers have started to focus on how to secure human beings from many sources of insecurity. In this sense, the state can be the source of insecurity for its own population. Moreover, the traditional security studies, especially realist tradition, focus on material factors but the critical security studies consider ideational factors, like identity, in their security analysis.¹¹

Constructivism is one of those theories which focus on ideational factors on its analysis of international relations.¹² Alexander Wendt defines two pillars of constructivism: “(i) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (ii) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.”¹³ In this sense, constructivism assumes that entities such as threat, security, friend, enemy, and so on are socially constructed. These concepts can have meanings through our understandings of them.

What is the significance of identity? Identity has been used by many scholars, ideologues, and philosophers as a basis for security analysis. For instance, according to Gianfranco Poggi, the German ideologue Carl Schmitt defines the politics as the matter of *Us* and *Other*.¹⁴ In the Schmittian sense, the duty of politics is to secure our identity against the others.¹⁵ For constructivists, identities of agents play a significant role in defining the meanings of concepts because we decide our ally or enemy in accordance with our identities. In this sense, identity is one of these ideational factors which influence the actions of states in the international arena. Then, we may ask *what do identities do specifically in international relations?* Ted Hopf argues that identities bring about some minimum levels of predictability and order in world politics.¹⁶ In addition, in society, identities have three significant functions by telling us (i) who we are, (ii) who others are, and (iii) by telling us who we are, identities strongly imply a specific collection of preferences and interests in the context of choice of behaviour in specific realm, and in the context of specific actors.¹⁷ Moreover, identity is a dynamic entity which is

Edition, Routledge, New York 2008, pp.8-10.

9 Hough 2008, *ibid*, p.2.

10 Hough 2008, *ibid*, p.8.

11 Hough 2008, *ibid*, pp.3-6. Matt McDonald, “Chapter 5: Constructivism”, *Security Studies: An Introduction*, Paul D Williams (ed.), New York, Routledge 2008, pp.59-60.

12 Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge, New York 1999, p.16. Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory”, *International Security*, 23(1), 1998, pp.172-173. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, *International Organization*, 52(4), 1998, p.890.

13 Wendt 1999, *ibid*, p.1.

14 Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1978, pp.5-6.

15 Poggi 1978, *ibid*, pp.5-9.

16 Hopf 1998, *ibid*, p.174.

17 Hopf 1998, *ibid*, p.175.

produced by daily social interactions.¹⁸ Yet, the sense of what our identity means to others is beyond our control because it is about how others perceive us.¹⁹ The understanding of one state (A) towards another (B) depends on the identity that A attributes to B.²⁰ In this sense, according to constructivist approach, identities shape the interests of actors.²¹

In security issues, perception is another parameter that should be explained from the constructivist perspective. Perceptions are subjective and involve the meanings that we give to others' actions as outcomes of social interactions.²² So, identities play a significant role in identification of threats as well. Constructivists explain the significance of perception in decision-making through giving the example of nuclear capabilities. Hopf points out that the nuclear capabilities of the Soviets and France meant differently to the British leadership.²³ Similarly, Wendt argues that the British nuclear weapons meant differently to the US than the USSR's nuclear weapons during the Cold War.²⁴ Wendt also adds that these attitudes are determined by the intersubjective comprehensions and expectations that form the understandings of self and other.²⁵ In this sense, constructivism links security dilemma with perceptions. As it can be seen in the example of nuclear weapons, the possession of weapons or increase in the number of weapons does not initiate security dilemma automatically without our perceptions which depend on our identity. Thus, identity plays an important role in defining security concerns and threats for constructivists.

At this point, we may ask whether change in world politics is possible or not? From the constructivist approach, change in world politics is not impossible but it is very difficult, and it takes place very slowly.²⁶ From the constructivist perspective, once an entity (hostility or friendship) is constructed, daily social interactions reinforce this kind of relationship. Change in attitude depends on change in perception which depends on specific identity. However, change in identity takes so long and it requires reinforcement by the mutual interactions among agents. For instance, the Germans and the French have experienced hostile historical periods in their relations, but they dealt with this hostility through mutual actions. Moreover, they established the European Coal and Steel Community (the predecessor of the EU) and became the leading partners.

In this sense, this study offers two terms determined by identities and perceptions: positive feeding and negative feeding. Positive feeding means

18 Hopf 1998, *ibid*, p.175.

19 Hopf 1998, *ibid*, p.175.

20 Hopf 1998, *ibid*, p.175.

21 Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States make of It: Social Construction of Power Politics", *International Organization*, 46(2), 1992, p.398.

22 Hopf 1998, *ibid*, pp.186-187.

23 Hopf 1998, *ibid*, p.188.

24 Wendt 1992, *ibid*, p.397.

25 Wendt 1992, *ibid*, p.397.

26 Hopf 1998, *ibid*, p.199.

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that an agent (in this sense a state) may change its image (or perception) in the minds of the other agents through its actions which are perceived as friendly by others. However, this positive feeding should be mutual, otherwise unilateral positive feeding may not be enough to repair deteriorated relations among states. In contrast, negative feeding means harming the relationship through policies or acts. However, unilateral negative feeding can mostly be enough to harm good relations. Hence, through their actions, states may send positive or negative signals that construct trust or distrust among sides, respectively. So, enmity can be transformed into amity.

The West and Russia constructed their identities through social and political interactions with each other during the Cold War. In this period, they perceived each other's identity as other, rival, enemy, threat because other's identity connoted opposite of one's values and norms. This, in turn, caused hostility in the relationship between the West and Russia (USSR back then). Once they constructed conflictual relations through policies and actions during the Cold War, they generally kept feeding this socially constructed entity by negative interactions. After the Cold War, this trajectory of their relationship has continued by negative feedings until today. So, enmity has not been transformed into amity until today. This is why this article argues that the West and Russia have continued to perceive each other as rival, enemy, and threat since the end of the Cold War. In the following sections, how the West and Russia perceived and interacted with each other during and after the Cold War will be illustrated in detail.

The Russo-Western Relations: A Clash of Identities or Balancing the (Big) Powers

In this section, the background of the Russo-Western relationship is examined. By doing this, the study aims to demonstrate how mutual actions - caused by positive and/or negative feedings - have constructed the character of this relationship. By demonstrating the construction of hostile relations (and/or negative feeding) between the two sides, this section also tries to provide a basis for the cases of Georgia and Ukraine in the next section because the hostility between the Russian and the Western identities has spread to Georgian and Ukrainian politics especially since 2000s.

This section consists of three historical periods. The first part examines the Cold War briefly because its legacy continued to influence the next period of the Russo-Western relations. The second part focuses on the era starting with the collapse of the Soviet Union and ending in 2000. It aims to illustrate why the hostility between two identities continued and constituted security threats to each other. The third part studies the period beginning in 2000. It aims to demonstrate how this hostile relation spread to many newly emerged security areas and caused security threats to each side.

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The First Period: During the Cold War

During the Cold War, in general, the Russo-Western (especially the USSR and the US) relations were hostile because of the two conflicting identities: *Communist* and *Capitalist*. According to Oral Sander,²⁷ even during the Second World War (in 1944) in Moscow, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the Soviet President Joseph Stalin negotiated and agreed on a plan (called “the Percentages Agreement”) which divided the Eastern Europe and the Balkans (the Nazi occupied lands) into the spheres of influence of Communism and Capitalism after the Second World War. In accordance with the Percentages Agreement, the British Empire and the Soviet Union would be dominant in politics of Hungary (50% - 50%), Bulgaria (25% - 75%), Romania (10% - 90%), Yugoslavia (50% - 50%), Greece (90% - 10%), respectively.²⁸ Poland and Czechoslovakia were taken by the Red Army from the Nazis. Moreover, the Soviets and the Westerners competed to be the first army to reach Berlin. Like Germany itself, Berlin was divided into four areas among the Americans, the British, the French, and the Soviets (Russians). Like East Germany, East Berlin was left to the Soviet control. The legacies of these events and agreements influence security structures and politics in Europe based on the Communist and Capitalist identities during the Cold War.

After the Second World War ended, the tension between the Soviet Union and the US began to increase. On the one hand, it can be asked *How did the Communists (the Soviets or the Russians) perceive the West during the Cold War?* For Communists, the Westerners were *ruthless capitalist*. The West *oppressed* and *exploited* the nations all around the world. In this sense, the Communists constructed their identity as *anti-capitalist* and *the defender of oppressed nations* to oppose enemy (others) and to secure themselves. On the other hand, it can also be asked, *how did the Westerners perceive the Soviets in the same period?* For Capitalists (or Westerners), the USSR was a *communist, totalitarian regime, red fascism*. The USSR *oppressed* the East European nations. In this sense, Capitalists constructed their identity as *anti-communist* and *the saviour of free people* to reject enemy’s identity and to secure themselves. The Soviets and the Westerners prepared themselves to *A War* that would never blow out. They attempted to use every chance to get advantage over another or to show how their identity (or lifestyle, civilisation, ideology, and so on) was superior to the other’s identity. This hostility was seen in various domains from sporting competition to space race, from politics to scientific research and so on. Even a small advancement of one side was perceived as the other’s weakness.

The US and the USSR perpetuated this hostility during most of the Cold War Era through negative feedings. For instance, on the one hand, the Truman Doctrine (12 March 1947), the Marshall Plan, and the Reagan Doc-

27 Oral Sander, *Siyasi Tarih 1918-1994*, 27th Edition, İmge Kitabevi, Ankara 2017, p.209.

28 Sander 2017, *ibid*, pp.209-210.

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trine (6 February 1985) obviously offended the USSR. The Truman doctrine offered financial and military supports to those who were under communist threats (Greece and Türkiye).²⁹ The aim of the doctrine was to neutralise the risk of the spread of communism in Europe. Under President George Marshall in 1948, for Washington, the aim of the Marshall Plan was to recover the West European economies harmed by the Nazis. However, Moscow perceived the Marshall Plan as an implementation of the Truman Doctrine.³⁰ The Reagan Doctrine offered support to those fighting against communism. Moreover, NATO offended the USSR because it was established against the threat of the Soviet bloc in 1949. On the other hand, the Brezhnev Doctrine obviously offended the Westerners. The Brezhnev Doctrine assumed that any threat to socialist governments in Europe (especially Central and Eastern Europe) was also a threat to the USSR so Moscow could intervene in case of any threat to defend its allies in Europe. In addition, West Germany became a member of NATO on 9 May 1955. This membership offended the Soviet Bloc, especially Moscow. Hence, the Eastern Bloc established the Warsaw Pact on 14 May 1955 as an official response.³¹ The Warsaw Pact was perceived as a security threat by the Westerners during the Cold War. All in all, negative feedings were more in number and much intense during the Cold War. Hence, the Communist and Capitalist identities saw each other as a security threat during the Era.

The Second Period: The 1990s

Although the Cold War ended peacefully, this does not mean that the hostility and security concerns ended, or the dissolution of the USSR was welcomed by the Russians. In general, the tension between Russia and the West during the 1990s was not as intense as during the Cold War. For the West, Russia did not pose as a high level of security threat during the 1990s because Moscow could not give equal response to the actions of the West due to Russia's domestic problems and declining capabilities. For instance, Boris Yeltsin initiated processes of democratisation and liberalisation in Russia which were welcomed by the West. However, these reform attempts failed to prevent the 1998 economic crisis in Russia. As a result, the Russians saw the Westernisation as a responsible factor for the 1998 economic crisis and the difficult conditions during the 1990s.

Russia and the West continued to stand at the opposite poles when reacting to events in Europe. The Russo-Western confrontations in many events of the 1990s fuelled hostility between Russian and European identities during the 1990s. NATO and EU enlargements into Eastern Europe were perceived as a security threat by Russians. NATO experienced its first en-

29 National Achieves, *Transcript of Truman Doctrine (1947)* (Online). Available at: <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=81&page=transcript> (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

30 Sander 2017, *ibid*, p.260.

31 Sander 2017, *ibid*, pp.271-272.

largement after the Cold War with the unification of West-and East Germany in 1990. In the event of the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the events after the dissolution such as the Bosnian genocide and ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, Russia sided with Serbia (Orthodox Slav like Russians and its traditional ally in the Balkans) whereas the Europeans sided with pro-Westerners like Croatia and Slovenia. In the event of the Bosnian Genocide (1992-1995), the Europeans condemned the Serbian side - although it was too late and insufficient. Yet Russia's position was ambiguous. On the one hand, Moscow aimed to cooperate with NATO in Bosnia, but on the other hand it aimed to protect Serbia.³² The European Union experienced its fourth enlargement with the EU memberships of Austria, Sweden, and Finland in 1995.³³ NATO experienced its second enlargement in the 1990s with Czechia (formerly the Czech Republic), Hungary and Poland in 1999. Russia and Europe also confronted in the conflict of Kosovo in 1999. Russia rejected the UN-mandated intervention in Kosovo whereas NATO initiated unilateral intervention without UN Security Council backing against the Serbs siding with the Kosovars to stop ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia. In sum, mutually divergent actions in all these events were perceived as security threats by both sides. These negative feedings from both sides impeded the possible cooperation between the two identities: The Russian and the Westerns.

The Third Period: Since 2000s

In general, tension between Russia and the West has increased since Putin became Prime Minister in 1999. Both sides increased the security concerns of each other through their actions. After the collapse of the USSR, the Yeltsin administration extensively supported neo-liberal ideas and the Westernisation of Russia. The Russian political elites opposed their Soviet heritage and sought to participate in the Western world.³⁴ Putin, therefore, eliminated these neo-liberal policymakers and got under control the Ministry of Atomic Energy and GASPROM, which are 'quasi-independent Russian foreign policy actors'.³⁵ Putin, therefore, could re-centralise Russian foreign policy against the West. Especially after the first term of President Putin, "the elite's approach to the West apparently resembled that of the Soviet era, where the West was viewed as the *glavnyi protivnik* (main enemy) out to weaken Russia and overthrow its regime."³⁶ This new foreign policy think-

32 Daria Sito-Sucic, "Powers back Bosnia envoy, Russia faults timing", *Reuters*, 31 October 2007, Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL31634181> (Accessed: 25 April 2022).

33 TC Dışişler Bakanlığı Avrupa Birliği Başkanlığı, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Genişlemesi", Available at: https://www.ab.gov.tr/avrupa-birliginin-genislemesi_109.html (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

34 Andrej Kreutz, *Russia in the middle east: Friend or foe?*, Praeger Security International, United States 2007, p.4.

35 Robert O. Freedman, "Putin and the Middle East", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 6(2), 2002, p.11.

36 Angela Stent, "Restoration and revolution in Putin's foreign policy", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60(6), 2008, p. 1092.

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ing relies on the idea of establishing Russia's sphere of influence against the West. In this context, Russia's new identity formation largely arose because of the idea that Russian identity is different from the West.

On the one hand, Putin aimed to reinstate Russia's superpower status, through constructing a new Russian identity. Even after decades, the collapse of the USSR was called "the catastrophe of the century" by Putin.³⁷ Under the Putin administration, Russia experienced economic growth and increased pro-active foreign policy during the early 2000s. According to Andrei Tsygankov, the Westerners perceive Russia as a fundamental threat to the West as a result of the theory of authoritarian expansionism which has three biases: essentialism, cultural ethnocentrism, and political hypocrisy.³⁸ Moreover, Tsygankov claims that the Russian invitation of cooperation for Eurasian security was not welcomed in the West, and the Russian proposal could not be applied.³⁹ Hence, pro-active Russian Foreign Policy in the post-Soviet space was perceived as ideational and security threats by the West. Andrey Makarychev also signals the normative and non-normative dimensions of Russian foreign policy after the Cold War and seeks to explain relations between Russia and the West with the term *otherness*. In his words,

...the identity-driven juxtaposition between the EU and Russia is the Russian concept of 'False Europe', which includes countries with strong anti- Russian sentiments and countries that have presumably lost touch with 'genuine European values'; while 'true Europe' includes countries friendly to Russia, which adhere to what Russia considers as the original spirit of Europe.⁴⁰

On the other hand, the EU and NATO enlargements towards Russia obviously offended Moscow. In 2004, the EU experienced its fifth enlargement with ten countries.⁴¹ Seven out of these ten were from the former Communist bloc: Hungary, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania; and the remaining three were not in the Communist bloc: Malta, Slovenia, and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC).⁴² In

37 Andrew Osborn, "Putin: Collapse of the Soviet Union was 'catastrophe of the century'", *Independent*, 26 April 2005. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/putin-collapse-of-the-soviet-union-was-catastrophe-of-the-century-521064.html> (Accessed: 3 January 2022).

38 Andrei Pavlovich Tsygankov, "Assessing Cultural and Regime-Based Explanations of Russia's Foreign Policy: "Authoritarian at Heart and Expansionist by Habit"?", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64(4), 2012, p.695.

39 Andrei Pavlovich Tsygankov, "Contested Identity and Foreign Policy", *International Studies Perspectives*, 15 (1), 2014, p.26.

40 Andrey Makarychev, "Rebranding Russia: Norms, politics and power", in Tocci, N. (ed.) *Who is a normative foreign policy actor? The European Union and its Global Partners*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels 2008, p.157.

41 TC Dışişler Bakanlığı Avrupa Birliği Başkanlığı, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Genişlemesi", Available at: https://www.ab.gov.tr/avrupa-birliginin-genislemesi_109.html (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

42 The Turkish MFA calls the Republic of Cyprus (its official name) as the Greek Cypriot

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2007, the sixth enlargement continued with Romania and Bulgaria which were also in the former Communist bloc. In 2013, The EU enlarged sixth time with the accession of Croatia.⁴³ In 2004, NATO enlarged towards the Russian border with the accession of seven states. Six of them were from the Eastern bloc: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria; and the non-Eastern bloc member: Slovenia. In 2009, NATO enlarged once again with the accession of Croatia and Albania. Moreover, Russia and the West confronted the independence of Montenegro (pro-Western) from Serbia in 2006. Montenegro joined NATO in 2017. North Macedonia (formerly FYR Macedonia) became the new member of NATO in 2020.

In the energy sector, Russia has been the leading gas provider of Europe with its companies like Gazprom. Moscow did not hesitate to use this power against the EU whenever it was suitable. Especially during the crises of Ukraine, this threat was so obvious. According to Frank Umbach, the tension between Moscow and Kiev over gas in 2005-2006 was the one of the reasons that led the EU to establish a common bloc against external actors -especially Russia- by approving the Energy Action Plan for 2007-2009.⁴⁴ Christophe-Alexandre Paillard also claims that Russia is a threat to the European energy security.⁴⁵ Paillard advises the European Union (EU) to find alternative energy partners to secure itself from the Russian threat.⁴⁶ The Gulf States are possible alternatives to Russia for the EU in the sense of energy security. In this regard, the study of Oskarsson and Yetiv provides useful knowledge on how Russia responded the EU's sanctions against Moscow. In their study, Oskarsson and Yetiv claim that there has been an increase in the energy relations between Russia and the Gulf States.⁴⁷

The Colour Revolutions in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004 also divided Russia and the West. Moscow supported mostly the incumbent governments which were pro-Russian whereas Europe sided with supporters of change in the governments, which were pro-Western. These cases will be examined more deeply in the next section.

According to Ekaterina Koldunova, there are two competing domestic traditions (the pro-Westerners and the Eurasianists) for Russia's stance on

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- Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) because Türkiye does not recognise the Republic of Cyprus officially.
- 43 TC Dışişler Bakanlığı Avrupa Birliği Başkanlığı, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Genişlemesi", Available at: https://www.ab.gov.tr/avrupa-birliginin-genislemesi_109.html (Accessed: 25 January 2022).
- 44 Frank Umbach, "German Debates on Energy Security and Impacts on Germany's 2007 EU Presidency", *Energy Security Visions from Asia and Europe*, Antonio Marquina (ed.), Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire 2008, p.8.
- 45 Christophe-Alexandre Paillard, "Russia and Europe's Mutual Energy Dependence", *Journal of International Affairs*, 63(2), 2010, p.73.
- 46 Paillard 2010, *ibid*, p.73.
- 47 Katerina Oskarsson and Steve A. Yetiv, "Russia and the Persian Gulf: Trade, Energy, and Interdependence", *Middle East Journal*, 67(3), 2013, p.381.

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the global scene.⁴⁸ The crisis between Russia and the West over Ukraine led the Eurasianist tradition to affect the Russian Foreign policy-making process.⁴⁹ The Eurasian Union (EEU) was initiated by Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia in 2014 with an agreement. Then, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan signed the treaty of the EEU on 10 October 2014 and on 23 December 2014, respectively.⁵⁰ Jon Henley claims that through uniting economies, legal systems, customs services and military capabilities, the aim of Putin with EEU is to establish a powerful, supra-national union, and a bridge between Europe and Asia against “the EU, the US, and China” by 2015.⁵¹

The Russo-Western relations in the Middle East is also another hostility between two sides as the clash of identities. Since the end of the Cold War, Russian foreign policy with the West in the Middle East has been divided into two periods. In the first period, Russia carefully balanced against the West in the Middle East until 2004, which was the end of Putin’s first presidential term. After the September 11 terrorist attacks for instance, Russia offered to aid the US in its struggle with international terrorism. Similarly, Russia’s reaction to the Iraq War in 2003 was muted and the Kremlin did not overtly object to the invasion.⁵² However, Russia’s foreign policy became more assertive and aggressive in Putin’s second presidential term. In this period, Russia has sought to re-establish itself as a ‘great power’ in the region.⁵³ Hence, unlike Gorbachev’s liberal New Thinking and Yeltsin’s policy of cooperation with the West, Putin’s foreign policy towards the Middle East is often viewed as anti-American.

Hence, the Arab Spring is another realm in which Russia and the West positioned themselves at different places. However, only the Syrian case will be dealt with in this study because the Syrian Civil War affected the EU so much. From the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, Russia rejected any UN-mandated intervention for the humanitarian purpose at the UN Security Council whereas the EU (except Germany) supported the implementation of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) concept. Moscow has been supporting Damascus which has been its traditional ally since the Cold War. On the one hand, the regime of Bashar Al-Assad killed hundreds of thousands of civilians and displaced forcefully millions with the support of Moscow. Because of the Civil War, millions of Syrian refugees sought to go the Europe. Many

48 Ekaterina Koldunova, “Russia as a Euro-Pacific power: Dilemmas of Russian foreign policy decision-making”, *International Relations*, 29(3), 2015, p.378.

49 Koldunova 2015, *ibid*, pp.379-380.

50 Eurasian Economic Union, “*TIMELINE*”. Available at: <http://www.eaeunion.org/?lang=en#about-history> (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

51 Jon Henley, “A brief primer on Vladimir Putin’s Eurasian dream”, *The Guardian*, 18 February 2014. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2014/feb/18/brief-primer-vladimir-putin-eurasian-union-trade> (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

52 Christian Thorun, *Explaining change in Russian foreign policy: The role of ideas in post-soviet Russia’s conduct towards the west*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2009.

53 Stent 2008, *ibid*.

Syrian refugees were still stopped at the border of Greece with the help of excessive use of force by the Greek soldiers. Like other events in the 2000s, the Syrian Civil War has also affected the Russo-European relations negatively since 2011.

In sum, Russia and the West have continued to take steps that have been perceived as security threats to each other since 2000s. The contradictions between the two identities have continued to sustain the existing hostility over the last two decades in the realms of the EU and NATO enlargements, the Eurasian Union, energy, the Colour Revolutions, cyberspace, and the Arab Spring.

Post-Soviet Space: The Battlefield of Identities

The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in a lack of a clear Russian foreign policy towards post-Soviet space. Therefore, many IR scholars seek to explain Russian foreign policy in the region from *identity* and *perception* perspectives. According to Makarychev, the Kremlin has two fundamental goals in its neighbourhood: “to prevent the advent to power of anti-Russian regimes, and to block any prospect of exporting the ‘colour revolutions’ to Russia proper”.⁵⁴ In this context, the Russian leadership mainly argues that the Colour Revolutions were the result of Western efforts at regime change in the post-Soviet space.⁵⁵ Russian reaction to the Colour Revolution is therefore very important to understand Russian foreign policy in terms of identity formation, sovereign democracy, and protecting Russian speakers in Georgia and Ukraine.

What is the significance of Georgia and Ukraine? Ukraine has a significant proportion of Russian ethnicity in the south and eastern parts of Ukraine (close to Russia). Georgia has a strategic position in the Caucasus regarding politics, military, and energy policies. In terms of opening the Caucasus to the West, Georgia has a significant position because it may trigger a domino effect in the Caucasus. The main gas and oil pipeline from the Caucasus to the Europe goes through Georgia. Similarly, the main gas pipelines from Russia to Europe go through Ukraine. Ukraine’s Crimea has a strategic position on the Black Sea. Moreover, Kiev was the first capital city of the Russians in history. Hence, Georgia and Ukraine have become sources of conflict between Russian and the West. During and after the Colour Revolutions, Georgia and Ukraine became the battlegrounds of pro-Russians and the pro-Westerners. Unsurprisingly, the Western actors such as the US and the EU intervened in this tension in support of Georgia and Ukraine. This section examines the Revolutions and the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia to demonstrate how negative feedings of identity politics have become a source of security threat for the parties.

54 Makarychev 2008, *ibid*, p.176.

55 Wilson 2010, *ibid*.

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The Colour Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine

The term Colour Revolutions refers to the “Bulldozer Revolution” in Serbia in 2000, the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia in 2003, the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine in 2004, and the “Tulip Revolution” in Kyrgyzstan in 2005.⁵⁶ In all four states, the Colour Revolutions took place as non-violent mass protests to change the ‘quasi-democratic’ governments through elections because elections seemed to be manipulated by pro-Russian governments in all these countries.⁵⁷ In Georgian general elections in 2003, for instance, the Georgian Election Commission proclaimed that the elections were won by the pro-government “For New Georgia” bloc which was supported by President Eduard Shevardnadze.⁵⁸ However, Mikheil Saakashvili objected to the result of the elections and claimed that he had won the elections. The Georgia’s Supreme Court annulled the results after the mass protests in Tbilisi.⁵⁹ New elections were set for 4 January 2004 and Saakashvili took 96.2% of the vote and won the elections.⁶⁰ Similarly, in the Presidential election of Ukraine on 21 November 2004, the winner was Viktor Yanukovych (pro-Russian) with 49.46% whereas Viktor Yushchenko got 46.61%.⁶¹ However, Yushchenko declared that there were electoral frauds, especially in Donetsk and Luhansk provinces (pro-Russian areas). Then, pro-Western mass started civil disobedience, protests, strikes, and civil resistance in Ukraine on 22 November 2004. Their demand was democratisation and good relations with the West rather than Russia and hybrid regimes (combining democracy and authoritarianism). The election was cancelled by Ukraine’s Supreme Court on 26 December 2004. Under very strict observations domestically and internationally, the winner was Yushchenko (pro-Westerner) with 51.99%, and Yanukovych got 44.2% as the results were announced on 23 January 2005.⁶²

According to Jashua Tucker, there are two general views to explain the Colour Revolutions in academic literature.⁶³ The first view mainly focuses on the debate between *East and West* after the Cold War and the second view focuses on the nature of the opposition movements in these countries.

- 56 Jashua A Tucker, “Enough! Electoral fraud, collective action problems, and post-communist colored revolutions”, *Perspectives on Politics*, 5(3), 2007.
- 57 Ieva Bērziņa, *Color Revolutions: Democratization, Hidden Influence, or Warfare?*, National Defence Academy of Latvia Center for Security and Strategic Research, 2014.
- 58 OSCE (2003). *Post-Election Interim Report 3-25 November 2003*. Available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/17822?download=true> (Accessed: 3 January 2022).
- 59 “Georgia’s velvet revolution”, *The Economist*, 26 November 2003. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/node/2243603> (Accessed: 3 January 2022).
- 60 Tucker 2007, *ibid*.
- 61 Alex Kireev, “Ukraine. Presidential Election 2004”, Available at: <https://www.electoral-geography.com/new/en/countries/u/ukraine/ukraine-presidential-election-2004.html> (Accessed: 25 January 2022).
- 62 Alex Kireev, “Ukraine. Presidential Election 2004”, Available at: <https://www.electoral-geography.com/new/en/countries/u/ukraine/ukraine-presidential-election-2004.html> (Accessed: 25 January 2022).
- 63 Tucker 2007, *ibid*.

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According to the first view, "...the lure of the West for members of the opposition fearful that their countries' current leadership could be leading the country down a path of permanent exclusion from "Europe" generally and European institutions such as the EU more specifically".⁶⁴ In Ukraine, for instance, "...inspired by the transformation of their country's western neighbours from Soviet satellites to the EU members, the young generation supported Yushchenko's vision of a democratic and European' Ukraine".⁶⁵ On the other hand, in Georgia "...a bodyguard of one of the opposition leaders reflected on the success of the Rose Revolution by noting that we have done it without bloodshed. This is the first time such a thing has happened in Georgia. It means that finally we deserve our place in Europe".⁶⁶

In this context, it can be claimed that the Colour Revolutions were viewed as westernisation movements in Georgia and Ukraine. Thus, Russian leadership considered the Revolutions as a Western threat for Russian identity and the idea of great power in the region.

The Euromaidan Revolution in 2014

In the Presidential election of Ukraine on 7 February 2010, Viktor Yanukovich (pro-Russian) was the winner with 48.95% whereas Yulia Tymoshenko (pro-Westerner) got 45.47% of the votes.⁶⁷ This election also caused tension between candidates because of Tymoshenko's appeal against the results. After Tymoshenko withdrew her appeal, Yanukovich became president on 25 February 2010. Yanukovich rejected to sign an association agreement (drafted 30 March 2012) with the EU and decided to strengthen ties with Moscow and the Eurasian Union. On 21 November 2013, pro-westerners started protests at Euromaidan (Euro Square) in Kiev. They demanded resignation of Yanukovich and signing the association agreement with the EU. On 21 February 2014, Yanukovich and his opponents signed the association agreement under mediations of the EU and Russia. On 22 February 2014, the Ukrainian Parliament removed Yanukovich from the presidency, and he fled to Russia.⁶⁸ The Revolution ended on 23 February 2014. However, the Euromaidan Protests initiated the revolts of pro-Russians in Eastern Ukraine and a hybrid war between Ukraine and pro-Russian militias backed by Russia. Crimea was annexed by Russia on 18 March 2014. The EU, the

64 Tucker 2007, *ibid*.

65 Taras Kuzio, "The opposition's road to success", *Journal of Democracy*, 16(2), 2005, p.127.

66 Tucker 2007, *ibid*, p.539.

67 Alex Kireev. "Ukraine. Presidential Election 2010", *Electoral Geography 2.0*, Available at: <https://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/u/ukraine/ukraine-presidential-election-2010.html> (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

68 Andrew Roth, "Ukraine's ex-president Viktor Yanukovich found guilty of treason", *The Guardian*, 25 January 2019. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/25/ukraine-ex-president-viktor-yanukovich-found-guilty-of-treason> (Accessed: 25 January 2022). "Putin: Russia helped Yanukovich to flee Ukraine", *BBC*, 24 October 2014 (Online). Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29761799> (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

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US and many countries decided to impose sanctions on Russia. The EU extended the sanctions until 31 July 2020.⁶⁹ Russia faced financial crisis, and Russian Rouble collapsed. However, these sanctions also affected many of the EU members that had trade ties with Russia, causing around 100 billion Euros damage.⁷⁰

In sum, two different identities (pro-Russian and pro-Westerner) positioned themselves on opposite sides during the elections. Their voting patterns were influenced by the divergent demands of the two identities. The Pro-Russian identity tried to strengthen ties with Russia whereas the pro-Westerner identity sought closer ties with the Europe. These divergent demands of the parties initiated two revolutions in Ukraine in 2004 and 2014. As a result, Russia and Europe (including the US) intervened these events on opposite sides. Once again, therefore, negative feeding of the politics of identity influenced the Russo-Western relations in the region through the elections.

Russia's Reaction to the Colour Revolutions

The primary identity of Russia is that they view themselves as a great power in the post-Soviet space. The Kremlin, therefore, viewed the role of the West on the Colour Revolutions as a threat for this identity. As Charles Ziegler argues, many of the Russian elites were convinced that the US was a direct threat because of America's obvious violation of Iraq's sovereignty in 2003, and the anticipated violation of Westphalian sovereignty by supporting the Colour Revolutions.⁷¹ Thus, Russian political elites regard the role of the US in the Colour Revolutions as manipulating events behind the scenes.⁷² In this context, Russian media published materials about the relationship between the opposition leaders and the US policy makers. For instance, Katerina Yushchenko, the wife of Viktor Yushchenko, was believed to be a spy of the US, because she was born in the US and was a former U.S State Department official.⁷³

The first and most significant Russian reaction to the Colour Revolutions is that Russian elites have viewed the Revolutions as a Western threat for Russian identity and influence in the post-Soviet space. In this context, the Colour Revolutions can be viewed from both the Kremlin and Western perspectives as a new identity formation after the Cold War. The construc-

69 European Council of the European Union, "Russia: EU prolongs economic sanctions by six months". Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/12/19/russia-eu-prolongs-economic-sanctions-by-six-months/> (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

70 Damien Sharkov, "Russian sanctions to 'cost Europe €100bn'", *Newsweek*, 19 June 2015. Available at: <https://www.newsweek.com/russian-sanctions-could-cost-europe-100-billion-328999> (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

71 Charles E. Ziegler, "Conceptualizing sovereignty in Russian foreign policy: Realist and constructivist perspectives", *International Politics*, 49(4), 2012, p. 407.

72 Wilson 2010, *ibid*.

73 Bērziņa 2014, *ibid*.

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tivist perspective, therefore, tried to explain Russian foreign policy in the region through the concept of identity which is based on antagonistic duality, Russia *versus* the West. The Ukrainian and Georgian governments describe themselves as European countries. In Georgia, for example, Saakashvili described the Rose Revolution as a European-type velvet revolution, while in Ukraine Yushchenko promised in his speech to lead the country into the mainstream of Europe by saying, "...we are no longer on the edge of Europe. We are situated in the centre of Europe".⁷⁴ Therefore, as Hopf argues "identities tell you and others who you are and they tell you who others are"⁷⁵, in the case of Colour Revolutions, Russia considered the West as others, in order to establish its own identity.

The second reaction to the Colour Revolutions is the concept of sovereign democracy, which was firstly mentioned by Vladislav Surkov, the First Deputy of the Chief of the Russian Presidential Administration. The concept of sovereign democracy has been used both domestically and internationally. Zeigler argues that "Surkov's critics view sovereign democracy as the domestic foundation of a new strategy of using foreign policy to maintain political power".⁷⁶ In this context, Surkov seeks to identify Russia's role in the international system as a new type of democracy. Thus, Surkov argues that "...the basic resource for maintaining sovereignty is recognized to be not just military but all-around competitiveness, which is achieved in freedom, in open rivalry, and not in a bomb shelter or hothouse".⁷⁷ Russia created a non-Western identity (sovereign democracy) in order to differentiate itself from Western-type liberal democracy and its consequences in Ukraine and Georgia. Surkov points out three main threats to Russian sovereignty: international terrorism, economic non-competitiveness, and the possibility of Colour Revolutions.⁷⁸ The main aim of sovereign democracy was to promote the idea of being a great power in the region through Russia's new identity formation. Russian political elites also claim that this Russian style of democracy refers to the idea that Russia is not in-fact a liberal democracy, although Russia is still a democratic country. Hence, the West cannot interfere in Russia's domestic affairs via Colour Revolutions.

Thirdly, as a result of the concept of identity, Russia claimed that its government had the right to protect Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine and national minorities in Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia).⁷⁹ In Georgia "Russia reacted to Saakashvili's anti- Russian policy by meddling in the

74 Tucker 2007, *ibid*, p.539.

75 Hopf 1998, *ibid*, p.175.

76 Ziegler 2012, *ibid*, p. 407.

77 V.Iu Surkov, "Nationalization of the future: Paragraphs pro sovereign democracy", *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, 47(4), (2009), p.12.

78 Wilson 2010, *ibid*.

79 Reuters Staff, "Putin tells Obama Russia has right to protect interests in Ukraine", *Reuters*, 2 March 2014 (Online). Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/urkaine-crisis-putin-obama-idUSL6NoLYoSZ20140301> (Accessed: 5 September 2023).

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situation in the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which gravitated towards the Russian sphere of influence”.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Russia undermined Georgia’s territorial sovereignty, and Russian passports were offered to citizens of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.⁸¹ In Ukraine, Russia used substantial political pressure to force the Ukrainian government to make concessions for “...the recognition of Russian as an official language in Ukraine, given that the majority of Ukrainians are Russian-speakers and to prevent Ukraine’s NATO integration, given Russia’s strategic plans to maintain a military presence in Sebastopol”.⁸² In 1 July 2014, President Putin stated that

I would like to make it clear to all: This country will continue to actively defend the rights of Russians, our compatriots abroad, using the entire range of available means -from political and economic to operations under international humanitarian law and the right of self-defence. (...) In Ukraine, as you may have seen, at threat were our compatriots, Russian people and people of other nationalities, their language, history, culture, and legal rights, guaranteed, by the way, by European conventions. When I speak of Russians and Russian-speaking citizens I am referring to those people who consider themselves part of the broad Russian community, they may not necessarily be ethnic Russians, but they consider themselves Russian people.⁸³

Russian decision-makers perceived the Colour Revolutions (and the side of Europe) as a security threat for its identity formation in the post-Soviet space. For instance, in March 2014, Andrey Kelin (the Russian permanent representative to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe - OSCE) stated that “the basis for the protest movement in Ukraine was accumulated discontent with corruption, ineffective governance, and poverty. However, this situation was exploited by radical forces – ‘nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophiles and anti-Semites’ who had set the stage for a coup d’etat. The West actually helped these radical forces when it supported Maidan.”⁸⁴ Thus, the Kremlin opposed the Colour Revolutions both in order to prevent the occurrence of the revolution in Russia and to show that it is still a great power in the region. To do so, Russia took the lead so that other revolutions would not happen in the region. Throughout the post-revolution era, the Russo-Georgian and the Russo-Ukrainian relations became strained. This strain shifted to hot conflict in 2008 when Russia invaded Georgia. The

80 Makarychev 2008, *ibid*, p.178.

81 Delcour and Wolczuk 2015, *ibid*.

82 Makarychev 2008, *ibid*, p.178.

83 New York Times and Office of the President of Russia, “Putin Vows to ‘Actively Defend’ Russians Living Abroad”, *Atlantic Council*, 2 July 2014 (Online). Available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/putin-vows-to-actively-defend-russians-living-abroad/> (Accessed: 5 September 2023).

84 Yulia Nikitina “The Color Revolutions and Arab Spring in Russian Official Discourse”, *Connections*, 14(1), Winter 2014, p.92.

Russo-Georgian war in 2008 started with the effect of post-Colour Revolution. The Rose Revolution overthrew the Georgian pro-Russian President Eduard Shevardnadze in 2003. The new president Mikheil Saakashvili was a pro-Westerner who sought to join NATO as well. The tension between Pro-Western Georgia government and Russia resulted in the Russian intervention in 2008. Russia claimed that Moscow intervened to prevent Georgian government's genocide and ethnic cleansing against South Ossetians and Abkhazians. Yet, Europeans insisted that Moscow aimed to overthrow the Georgian government. In fact, the real concern of the Russian intervention was explained by the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. According to Medvedev, the Russian intervention prevented further NATO expansion.⁸⁵ Russia recognised South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states in 2008 whereas the West insisted on the territorial integrity of Georgia by rejecting their independence.

Similarly, Russia's concern for the protection of pro-Russians in Ukraine did not end and a hybrid war broke out between Ukraine and pro-Russian militias backed by Russia in Eastern Ukraine. Crimea was annexed by Russia on 18 March 2014. The War in Donbass region started between Ukraine and pro-Russians on 6 April 2014. Donetsk and Luhansk declared independence in May 2014. The US sent military aid and approved arms sale to Ukraine whereas Russia continued to support pro-Russian militias.⁸⁶ The War has not ended yet. In the Post-Soviet area, Donbass region and Crimea became another frozen conflict zones like Karabakh (Azerbaijan vs Armenia-aggressor), Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Georgia vs Russia-aggressor), and Transnistria (Moldavia vs Russia-aggressor).

After Volodimir Zelensky became Ukraine's president on 20 May 2019, Ukraine's pursuit of Westernisation continued. Kiev's pursuit of membership of EU and NATO increased tension between Ukraine and Russia once again. On 21 February 2022, Russia recognised the so-called independence of Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine. On 24 February 2022, Russia initiated the invasion of Ukraine under the disguise of protecting Luhansk and Donetsk. This invasion caused serious reactions from all around the world, especially from Europe and the US. Many states imposed sanctions on Russia whereas Moscow responded back with its own sanctions. Once again, both sides suffered from serious damages due to sanctions although Russia got much more serious harm. Ukraine's demands for memberships of the EU and NATO were denied by both organisations although the EU, NATO and

85 Denis Dyomkin, "Russia says Georgia war stopped NATO expansion", *Reuters*, 21 November 2011 (Online). Available at: <https://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-60645720111121> (Accessed: 2 January 2022).

86 Joe Gould and Howard Altman, "Here's what you need to know about the US aid package to Ukraine that Trump delayed", *DefenseNews*, 26 September 2019. Available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2019/09/25/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-us-aid-package-to-ukraine-that-trump-delayed/> (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

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many states sent their support in political, economic, militaristic, and other realms. On 30 September 2022, Moscow declared annexation of four regions of Ukraine (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Zaporizhia).⁸⁷ The invasion ruined Ukraine by killing its people, destroying the infrastructure, causing refugee flow, harming its economy, and so on. For instance, according to the World Bank, the EU, and Ukraine, the financial support worth of 349 billion US Dollars would have been needed for the reconstruction of Ukraine if the war had ended as of 1 June 2022.⁸⁸ All in all, these social interactions obviously have a serious impact on identity formation of Ukraine, Russia, and Europeans. This war caused acceleration of Ukraine's breaking away from Russia. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine still continues. Russia's main claim in this controversial issue is still to preserve the Russia's identity formation in the region through the claim of protecting pro-Russians. However, it is still difficult to get accurate information from the field because of the ongoing situation.

Conclusion

This study examines why Russia and Europeans have seen each other as a threat to their securities especially after the Cold War. It claims that identity politics has played a significant role in their security relations. Constructivism claims that once a relation is established, it is reinforced by daily interactions depending on identity. Moreover, it is hard to change existing relations although change is possible. Since the Cold War and even before it, they have reinforced the established hostility between the two identities by threatening policies and actions instead of sending positive signals to each other for cooperation. Ukraine and Georgia have become the battlegrounds between the Russian identity and the Western identity especially after 2000s. Moreover, this conflict divided Ukraine into two as pro-Russians and pro-Westerners. This conflict also moved Ukraine away from Russia. Russia's identity and the role of Russian leaders occupy an important place in examining Russia's role in the region. In this context, the Kremlin indeed views Russia as a great power in the region. The Colour Revolutions, for instance, serve as milestones to examine Russia's role in the region. Russian elites have viewed the Colour Revolutions as a Western threat to Russian identity in the region. Thus, Russia strives to both display its power and safeguard its influence in the region.

As it can be seen in case of the EU sanctions on Russia, threats affect both sides. Instead of sending negative signals through threatening actions

87 "Rusya Devlet Başkanı Putin, Ukrayna'dan ilhak edilen 4 bölgede sıkı yönetim ilan etti", *Habertürk*, 19 October 2022. Available at: <https://www.haberturk.com/putin-ukrayna-dan-ilhak-edilen-4-bolgede-siki-yonetim-ilan-etti-3530812?page=2> (Accessed: 19 October 2022).

88 "Ukrayna'nın yeniden yapılanma maliyeti 350 milyar dolar", *BloombergHT*, 9 September 2022. Available at: <https://www.bloomberght.com/ukrayna-nin-yeniden-yapilanma-maliyeti-350-milyar-dolar-2314462> (Accessed: 9 September 2022).

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and policies, Russia and the EU can focus on cooperation through changing their perspective and perceptions in many realms such as culture, economy, and military, and so on. In the sense of identity, the EU and Russia may focus on inclusive *Europeanness* that does not see the identities as “threats or others” via reforming the education system in accordance with this, or changing the language used by sides in the politics, media, and so on. In the military realm, the sides should get rid of the security dilemma easing the security fears by creating new common mechanisms or upgrading the existing mechanisms (like OSCE) for security issues. In the economic realm, the decisions of the sides should concern not only the welfare of their citizens but also the other side’s citizens through common economic council and trade partnership. Moreover, they should not use their economic advantage against the other as a threat. It may take so much time to realise these goals. Yet, they can be realized if the sides act patiently and persistently under institutionalised actions.

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- Alex Kireev, “Ukraine. Presidential Election 2010”, *Electoral Geography 2.0*. Available at: <https://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/u/ukraine/ukraine-presidential-election-2010.html> (Accessed: 25 January 2022).
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