Military matters on the civilian mind

An examination of Russian identity construction

Erling Stange Overå

Military matters on the civilian mind

Abstract

This thesis examines the prominent military component of identity construction in Russia to determine the motivation behind state implemented identity initiatives their consequences.

The motivations are investigated by means of content analysis of various scholarly interpretations of the nation-building effort, while the consequences are examined through the analysis of data from all-Russian surveys conducted by Levada and Vstiom between 1994 and 2017. The purpose of the identity construction appears to initially have been short-term image improvement for the military institution but has over time gradually evolved into a multipurpose project aimed at providing benefits to the sitting regime and the military institution. The effects of the identity construction are found to be a likely increased propensity towards militarism and societal support for military operations. The approach establishes intention and effect, revealing the increasing propensity of militarism to be an unintended effect of the continued emphasis put on the military in the identity construction efforts. While militarism was not a planned goal, the Russian regime appears acutely aware of its manifestation, and is utilizing it well to their advantage. While we cannot deduce decision-makers intentions and the generalizability of the survey data with absolute certainty, the thesis concludes that militarism is on the rise in Russia, and the regime recognizes the instrumental value this provides.

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1   Introduction

The issue of Russia has become ubiquitous. After two decades of relative calm, Russia is a headline topic in the international media, and a serious topic in security discussions between international defense organizations. With the 2014 annexation of Crimea, the subsequent military involvement in Ukraine and the 2015 entry into the Syrian civil war, Russia is blatantly placing herself in direct, military opposition to the United States and Western Europe (henceforth collectively referred to as the West). This confrontation is the first such animosity since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The reassertion of Russia as an oppositional actor against the West has led to a rapid deterioration of the relationship between NATO states and Russia. Cold War defense measures and rhetoric are being revitalized. Perceived military ambition held by a historically expansionist nuclear power is causing a shift in international resource allocations. The shift in resources is leading to increased military mobilization, development of new defense strategies and increased funding for relevant research. There is a considerable amount of recent literature discussing Russian military capacity and technology. Information and opinions on Russia's military capacity and mobilization is readily available. Information on Russian military spending, availability of weapons, and track records of import and exports of military equipment are available in frequently updated indexes such as BICC's (Bonn International Center for Conversion) global militarization index and Vision of Humanity's Global Peace index. Recent research on the most probable war scenarios and the most efficient strategies in the event of war between NATO and Russia has been published in various European defense theory contexts such as the European Council on Foreign Relations and the Transatlantic Academy (Galeotti, 2016; Sherr, 2017).

There is a wealth of scholarship dedicated to risk assessment in relation to Russia. However, almost all of the literature appears to examine the same things, namely Russian military capacity and the viability of various types of military strategy. The same data is recycled in different research papers to reiterate similar arguments. In this thesis, I wish to cover a topic that is not commonly addressed—militarism and war willingness in Russian society. The majority of previous research studies have focused on assessing the level of threat from Russia, and taken for granted the willingness and sacrifice required of the Russian people in any military action. I argue that the threat from Russia cannot be fully evaluated if an assessment is based only on military capability. The Russian military is entwined with, not

separated from, Russian society, and the performance of the military is largely dependent on the mobilization of the Russian people, and their willingness to go to war.

1.1 Identity initiatives and other key concepts

Over the course of 19 years, Russian attitudes towards war appear to have entirely changed. The First Chechen War that began in late 1994 is probably the least popular political act in the history of the independent Russian Federation. The unpopularity of the conflict played a significant role in ending the war and even caused the Yeltsin administration to promise the abolition of the Russian conscription system in an effort to appease the public (Eichler, 2012). After the military intervention in Ukraine in February 2014, the Putin administration enjoyed a quite different societal reaction. Presidential approval ratings and the level of self-declared patriotism in Russia reached unprecedented levels (Indicators, 2017; National Pride, 2017).

1.1.1 The identity initiatives

This research considers a series of questions. What has changed in Russian society between these two wars—the First Chechen War and the intervention in Ukraine? Is the difference in attitude towards the conflicts purely a product of context or has there been a systematic shift in willingness to engage in war among Russians?

Over the last two decades, the Russian state has continuously launched initiatives to shape Russian national identity. These initiatives have a prominent military component and attempt to instill military values in the civilian sphere. This thesis examines the motivation behind these initiatives and their effect. The research attempts to answer why the Russian state is attempting to infuse military values into civilian life. Whether there a conscious program to make Russian society more receptive to armed conflict. And if the initiatives allow militarism to manifest in Russia. These key questions have received little attention in previous research literature and should be addressed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary Russia as an actor in the field of international security.

The state efforts to shape Russian national identity have taken various forms. The Patriotic Education for Citizens of the Russian Federation program (henceforth patriotic education program) has altered the school curriculum and organizes a significant range of extracurricular activities with the stated goals of inspiring patriotism. While patriotism and

citizenship education are intricately linked in most societies, there is a prominent military component to the Russian patriot education program. This program encourages patriotism through military imagery and by providing young people with preliminary military training (Bulman, 2016; Sperling, 2003). State organization of public holidays and large-scale events in the civilian sector is occurring at a rate not seen since the Soviet era. Among the projects in this sphere are the creation of "Days celebrating military glory" and the return of military parades (Sperling, 2003; Wood, 2011). Additionally, there is tighter control of the media, allowing the state to construct an unquestioned narrative. While control over the media is used for many different ends, among its uses is shaping Russian national identity through the construction of self and construction of enemies (Horvath, 2011; *The Propaganda of the Putin Era*, 2012; Sperling, 2003). The range of initiatives aimed at constructing and influencing Russian national identity is henceforth collectively referred to as the identity initiatives.

The identity initiatives did not suddenly materialize at a certain point in time. There has been a gradual increase in the effort expended on this strategy and the scope of the initiatives. The earliest initiatives can be traced back to 1998, and occurred in the context of attempted military reform (Eichler, 2012; Felgenhauer 1997). The need for military reform was well established and publicly deliberated during the 1990s. The military was largely unpopular, draft dodging was prevalent, and the subject became politically sensitive for the Yeltsin administration. Boris Yeltsin's government attempted to launch multiple military reforms to alleviate the rapidly declining approval ratings of the president (Eichler, 2012). Changing the conscription service to regional administration was one of these reforms (Felgenhauer, 1997). The regional responsibility for military service led to the creation of the first small-scale identity initiatives, which were regionally orchestrated and implemented to improve the image of the military institution and military service. When Vladimir Putin assumed office at the turn of the millennia, reform of the military had still not been successfully implemented. One of President Putin's first goals was to bring about a successful military reform (Baev, 2001). The new push for reform resulted in the creation of large-scale identity initiatives, consisting of state administered projects aimed at restructuring the Russian armed forces. The overall aim was to reestablish the military as a well-functioning and revered institution. For the purposes of this thesis the identity initiatives are considered to have started on a small scale in 1998, and then grew into a larger scale project around late 2000 and early 2001. After this transformation, the initiatives have gradually increased in scope and budget (Bækken, Forthcoming).

The identity initiatives do not exist as one entity in official government documents, but rather as multiple separate projects. This thesis treats the identity initiatives as one common goal-oriented project.

1.1.2 Militarism

Militarism is an elusive concept. The term is politicized and often attributed with different characteristics in different contexts. For the purposes of this thesis, Alfred Vagts' (1959) well-established discussion of the term provided in his work *History of Militarism* is used to create a working definition. The definition is based on three principal ideas presented by Vagts.

First, to understand militarism, it is crucial to separate the development of military capability and the manifestation of militarism. According to Vagts' definition, any act confined to the function of improving military performance, be it cost efficiency, risk reduction or strategic advantage, is related to military capability and is not an indication of militarism. Vagts has argued that "Customs, prestige, actions and thought associated with armies and war and yet transcending true military purposes" on the other hand, are manifestations of militarism (1959, p. 11).

Second, militarism may occur on an incidental level or a societal level. Incidental militarism may be understood as the occasional occurrence of military concerns taking preponderance over civilian concerns. Societal militarism, or mass militarism, is when military concerns are systematically prioritized above civilian concerns (Vagts, 1959, p. 13–16). The term militarism in this thesis will refer to societal militarism.

Third, societal militarism is evident in civilian attitudes towards military institutions, ideas, and actions. When there is societal militarism, the elevated level of military in society is indicated by what Vagts has defined as the "militarism of moods and opinions." Vagts has asserted that "militarism is more, and sometimes less, than love of war. It covers every system of thinking and valuing and every complex of feeling which rank military institutions and ways above the ways of civilian life" (1959, p. 15). While war willingness is indicative of militarism, militarism may exist and express itself without it. In a society where the military is systematically prioritized above civilian issues, the values held in that society will reflect this attitude.

1.1.3 Militarism and the garrison state

Harold Lasswell's garrison state is another key concept for this thesis. A garrison state is an advanced society with an imperialist ideology and high levels of militarism. According to Volker Berghahn's (1981) understanding, a garrison state is the most dangerous type of state entity as it has the ability to inflict significant destruction and the willingness to do so. A fully functioning garrison state has yet to exist. Advanced societies tend to have robust civil spheres repressing imperialist ideology and ensuring civilian concerns are ranked above military matters. The garrison state is an important concept as it highlights the potential consequences of high levels of militarism. Russia today is a hybrid between a transitional and an advanced state. It is arguably more advanced than transitional, especially in regard to military technologies. It is an historical military superpower with a large nuclear arsenal. If militarism becomes prevalent enough in Russia, the state could potentially become the closest thing the world has seen to a garrison state.

1.1.4 National identity

National identity is another elusive concept and is, in this thesis, defined as an identity shared between the individuals within a nation (Ashmore, Lee, & Wilder, 2001, p. 74). Ilya Prizel (1998) has neatly encapsulated the concept by referring to national identity as "societal glue." Even further, Prizel (1998) has established national identity as having political agency, as societal perception does shape state policy. Because of this political agency, the manipulation and construction of national identity is a powerful political tool that is prone to exploitation by a ruling elite.

1.2 Research questions and key findings

In this thesis, I argue that there has been, and still is, a conscious top-down effort to shape and influence the attitudes of the Russian people towards the military and war. I seek to answer the following questions:

- *Why is the Russian state engaged in a project to reconcile military values and Russian national identity?*
- *What are the consequences of the Russian identity initiatives?*

I argue that the identity initiatives were initially launched to address immediate concerns about the relationship between Russian society and the armed forces at the end of the 1990s. Over time, the identity initiatives developed into a multifaceted tool to consolidate support around the sitting regime while supporting their claim that their true purpose was to serve Russian society. Further, I contend that the initiatives have influenced how conflict is perceived in Russian society and have developed a cultural propensity towards militarism. It is difficult to isolate the effect of the identity initiatives from other potential influences. While the true intent behind the initiatives cannot be proved, the data indicates that the consistent military component of the initiatives have caused an increase in militarism.

1.3 The two spheres of previous literature

In this section, previous research literature employed in analysis or used as the foundation for analysis is introduced. The literature may be divided into two separate sections, corresponding to one of the two research questions outlined above in 1.2. The literature in the first category introduces various scholarly interpretations of the identity initiatives, which serve as the backbone for the first section of this thesis. These interpretations are used to address the questions of why the initiatives exist, and how they are implemented.

The second category introduces the previous research conducted on the effects of identity initiatives on the Russian population. While the previous literature in this limited field is scarce, research that approaches the issue with qualitative and quantitative methods is crucial to both situate and aid the analysis conducted in the second section of this thesis.

1.3.1 The interpretations of motivation

To establish the existence, the motivation, and methods of the identity initiatives, I build on previous research discussing the attempts at identity construction by the Russian state. The literature utilized is introduced in this section and further discussed in the analysis.

I consider four perspectives as particularly relevant. The first, formulated by Valerie Sperling, claims the identity initiatives to be a military recruitment strategy. The second presented by Anatoli Rapaport, considers the project as a strategy to distance Russia from the liberal reforms of the 1990s. The third, introduced by Maya Eichler, argues that the project came into existence to re-establish confidence in the Russian military institution. And, the last,

offered by Studennikova, contends the initiatives to be necessary to shape young people into proper Russian citizens.

Sperling and the recruitment perspective

Sperling published the article "The last refuge of a scoundrel: patriotism, militarism and the Russian national idea" in 2003. The article examines the role of patriotism in Russian national identity. The article alludes to Samuel Johnson's 1775 statement, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel", and places the Russian top-down identity project in a critical light. Sperling has argued that actively promoting the military as a driver for patriotism "could be a dangerous step toward inculcating a violent form of exclusivist nationalism" (Sperling, 2003, p. 237). While she has noted that socialization in all societies is intended to create some sort of patriotism, the limited room for discourse around alternative expressions of patriotism than the one articulated by the state in Russia, is unique on a global scale. A weak civil society and lack of free press in Russia allow the state to maintain what Sperling has described as a "patriotic hegemonic discourse." This state-controlled discourse is transforming what was Soviet patriotism into post-Soviet Russian patriotism by using the military as a shared source of pride.

Sperling has argued that the prominent military ethos of state initiatives, such as the establishment of new annual holidays: "seven days of military glory of Russia", public military parades, and widespread use of Soviet military symbols, makes it clear that the desired national identity is a highly militarized one. She has suggested that a militarized national identity is in the interests of the Russian state as it could facilitate military recruitment.

Sperling's work is useful as it has explained how much emphasis the state initiatives place on military matters and how they attempt to structure a national identity around the military institution. Sperling has largely focused on the recruitment perspective on the identity project.

Rapoport and the tool of counter-reform perspective

Rapoport's (2009) field of interest is citizenship education and social education. His article "Patriotic Education in Russia: Stylistic Move or a Sign of Substantive Counter Reform?" has addressed the details of the patriotic education program. He has discussed how the program is designed and implemented by the state in the educational system. Rapoport has approached the topic from a historical perspective. He has argued that Russian national identity

has an ideological duality: one pro-Western and more liberal identity, originating with Peter the Great's project to make Russia European; and a traditionalist idea, created in opposition to the liberal idea. The traditionalist idea perceives Russia to be autocratic by default and unique from Europe.

Rapoport has argued that the contemporary patriotic education program is a tool used by the current regime to distance society from the liberal reforms of the 1990s and to subdue critical discussion around traditional patriotism. The article has framed the identity project as an old Russian practice: using patriotism of a nationalistic nature to maintain autocratic power and cover up political failures. These earlier practices are Rapoport's main reason for concern, as they have previously ended in disaster: "Observing the tragic consequences of thoughtless and deeply immoral policy, the great Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov described the path to national tragedy as an ominous sequence: 'National self-consciousness – national self-praise – national self-adoration – national self-annihilation'" (Rapoport, 2009, p. 144).

Rapoport has asserted that the patriotic education program exists for five reasons: first, the recent de-heroization of Russian history; second, the humiliation of Russian dignity; third, that human values are being prioritized over national values; fourth, neglect of military training; and fifth, de-ideologization of Russian youth (Rapoport, Patriotic Education in Russia, 2009, p. 147). These points explain the desire to move away from the liberal reforms as the motivation for the state initiatives on the identity project.

Rapport's historical review and analysis is useful in providing an overview of the ideological duality of Russia, and explaining why the military is so central in this project. Rapoport has focused on the tool of counter-reform perspective in relation to the Russian identity project.

Eichler and the military redemption perspective

Eichler's (2012) field of interest is gender studies. In her book *Militarizing Men, Gender, Conscription, and War in Post-Soviet Russia*, she has demonstrated how the military image of the soldier is heavily built on masculinity. The work is also useful, however, to examine how the image of the soldier is created and reinforced through the identity initiatives. Eichler has provided an account of the context of the First Chechen War, Russia's disastrous first major military operation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. She portrayed a war-eager Yeltsin starting a war to further consolidate power and increase his popularity. Instead, an under-equipped, unmotivated and unprofessional army became mired in a prolonged conflict,

and the public began to question the justification for the war. The war led to negative perceptions of the Russian military and state leadership among the Russian population.

Eichler has indicated that when Putin came to power at the end of 1999, he immediately launched projects to increase the sense of Russian patriotism and pride in the armed forces. Putin's use of protectionist rhetoric maintained public support for the Second Chechen War. Emphasizing the sacrifice and heroism of the soldiers and the professionalism of the army, while at the same time facilitating employment of veterans, made the second war a unifying, pride-inducing patriotic success. In the section explaining Putin's motivation for this project Eichler has asserted that "Putin emphasized that the survival of the state hinged on the place of the army in society" (2012, p. 51). She has followed this argument with a quotation from the president himself: "the attitude toward the army and the special forces, especially after the fall of USSR, threatened the country. We would very soon be on the verge of collapse" (Eichler, 2012, p. 51).

Eichler's book contains highly relevant context for this thesis and some insight into the political motivation for patriotism and elevating the standing of the military in society. She presents the perspective that the motivation behind the identity project was the need to redeem the reputation and standing of the Russian armed forces in society.

Studennikova and the Russian traditionalist perspective

A final interpretation has been presented by Studennikova (2009). Studennikova is a Russian scholar in the field of educational science who writes to address what she considers to be a problem with the increasingly Europeanized education system in Russia.

Her article has highlighted the uniqueness of Russia, and how European methods are ill-suited for a well-functioning Russian society. She has argued for the necessity of a sturdy patriotic education program with a substantial military component for youth to become proper and productive members of society.

Her writing, which presents the Russian traditionalist perspective, reflects a widespread and well-established viewpoint held by many Russians. The author is not part of shaping the narrative of the perspective or formalizing what the Russian traditional identity is. Her article, however, effectively illustrates the main concepts of this traditionalist perspective.

1.3.2 Impact of the identity initiatives

Far less literature is dedicated to determining the effects of the identity initiatives in comparison with the scholarship addressing the motivation behind them. Due to the scarcity of pertinent literature, the section of the thesis that examines consequences is largely exploratory. The limited literature that does exist serves as guidelines providing some direction for my analysis.

Sanina and previous quantitative research

In a 2017 article, Anna Sanina has set out to evaluate the effectiveness of the patriotic education program. Sanina's overarching argument in the article is that the Russian state should attempt to inspire a different type of patriotism that inspires civic responsibility and nation building instead of blind loyalty and self-sacrifice. Her quantitative analysis of the effectiveness of the current Russian identity initiatives is of primary relevance for this thesis. In her analysis, she has compared survey data from Russian, Chinese, Singaporean, and American societies. She has opted to employ a cross-section analysis of the four states using the most recent available data from the World Value Survey, conducted between 2010-2014. The analysis is built on two survey questions. One question is intended to measure the level of patriotism, and the other to measure the willingness to fight for one's country; formulated respectively as "How Proud Are You That You Are a Citizen ... (Nationality)" and "In the event of war, are you prepared to fight for your country?" (Sanina, Patriotism and Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia, 2017, p. 42, 44). The responses to these questions are employed to evaluate the effectiveness of the state initiatives used in the various states to foster patriotism. In addition to evaluating the level of effectiveness, Sanina has used document analysis to determine the "types" of programs that the different states use. The document analysis consists of categorizing official documents on citizen education into separate categories based on the words used in their titles. The categories she employs are military training, civic education, nation building, and patriotic education. By comparing the frequency of words of a certain type is used – the emphasis of a state's program is (allegedly) revealed.

The data from the World Value Survey reveals that the percentage of Russian respondents who are "proud" and "very proud" of their Russian citizenship is cumulatively the lowest of the four states and that the share of respondents who are willing to fight for their country is lowest among the Russian respondents.

Based on these findings, Sanina (Patriotism and Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia, 2017, p. 49) has argued that the Russian identity initiatives are ineffective compared to similar projects in other states. In the document analysis, the Russian documents held a higher frequency of words relating to military training than the other programs. Following this line of reasoning, Sanina has argued that a military themed citizen education program is inefficient.

Goode and previous qualitative research

A qualitative analysis of patriotism and the patriotic project in Russia can be found in a 2016 article by Paul Goode. The article examines the differences between state ordained patriotism and how patriotism is perceived by the individual. To determine how the state conceives patriotism, Goode has examined how patriotism is defined in official documents concerning the Russian patriot education program. This type of patriotism is then compared with the perception of patriotism of individual Russians revealed through 65 in-depth, one-on-one interviews conducted in the cities of Perm and Tyumen.

Goode has argued that there are two crucial elements in the relationship between state ordained and civil patriotism. First, he maintains that the respondents perceive patriotism quite differently than the state. While the state definition entails duty and responsibility for the entire Russian society, including self-sacrifice in the interest of the fatherland, the respondents perceived that a more authentic type of patriotism would entail responsibilities for the local community rather than for society as a whole. In addition to believing there is an alternative and more authentic type of patriotism, the majority of respondents considered most large-scale "patriotic activities" organized by politicians or businesses as artificial, and launched for political or economic benefit (Goode, Russian Patriotism without Patriots?, 2016, p. 4). The second crucial point was that the respondents who described their alternative personal idea of patriotism believed that their alternative perception was strictly their own, and not shared with the majority of Russians. The respondents believed that all other Russians were true to the patriotic ideals ordained by the state, just not themselves.

Because of these two findings, Goode has argued that even though most Russians believe in a form of patriotism alternative to the form ordained by the state ordained, no dissent is expressed by anyone. An individual will voice their support for the state definition if prompted, because supporting the ideals of the state has become synonymous with being a patriot, regardless of the individual's perception of what patriotism is.

In conclusion, Goode has claimed that the identity initiatives that the state uses has the potential to be both extremely risky, and extremely beneficial. The perception of state-defined patriotism as dominant is created through state-organized events, official rhetoric or state-endorsed media. This perception is beneficial to the state because it makes the individual believe that there are no dissidents and there is no room for their alternative perception of patriotism even though it is in fact shared by many. The project is risky because long term grievances may erupt into large political movements when the "private" grievances come out in the open and reveals themselves to be shared by many.

1.3.3 Summary of the literature

The relevant previous literature can be divided into two separate categories. The first category covers previous research discussing the methods and motivation of the initiatives, while the second examines the impact. The literature from these two categories together with the previously established key concepts provide a strong foundation on which this thesis is built. The studies of Sperling, Rapoport, Eichler and Studennikova provide multiple lenses from which we can examine the identity initiatives. Sanina and Goode offer their respective conclusions on the effect the identity initiatives have on Russian society, paving the way for further analysis in this thesis.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first and current chapter contains an introduction to the topic and the literature.

The second chapter details the methods and research design of the thesis. This second chapter discusses the process I employ, the rationale behind my decisions and the reservations I make when attempting to determine the motivation behind, and consequences of, the Russian identity initiatives.

The third chapter is the first of two sections of analysis. In order to determine the motivation behind the identity initiatives, the chapter examines previous literature discussing the identity initiatives and their real-world implementation and application. The fourth chapter is the second section of my analysis, where I subject Russian survey data to multiple modes of analysis in an attempt to establish the effects of the initiatives.

The fifth chapter presents the conclusions of the thesis, wherein the findings of the two separate sections of analysis are discussed together and the final findings of the thesis are presented along with suggestions for further research.

2 Research methodology and design

This thesis is a two-part study wherein both the aims of identity initiatives in Russia, and the outcomes of these initiatives are examined. The two parts of the study require engagement with two distinct bodies of research literature. There is a lack of scholarly consensus regarding the motives and aims of the identity initiatives. The variety of arguments put forward in previous research invited an analysis addressing the wide range of interpretations. There is both limited previous literature and limited availability of viable data in relation to the impacts of the identity initiatives. An analysis using multiple types of data was employed to address the challenge of limited data in a largely unexplored field. The preliminary analysis of motivation of the initiatives in conjunction with an examination of the consequences ultimately allows for discussion around intended results, unforeseen repercussions and the overall effectiveness of the initiatives.

2.1 Finding the motivation

The reasoning behind the prominence of military influence on the Russian identity initiatives is a contentious topic. The phenomenon has been deliberated by a variety of scholars from a range of different fields who have interpreted the motivations for the initiatives differently. The diversity of arguments and their occasionally contradictory nature renders it difficult to determine what the actual previous findings are, and how these findings can be used in further research. The first part of this thesis examines the variety of arguments put forward, in an attempt to establish what the motivations behind the identity initiatives may be.

To answer the question of why the Russian state is engaged in a project to reconcile military values and Russian national identity, I employed qualitative content analysis to examine alternative scholarly interpretations of the initiatives. The content analysis was a descriptive idea analysis. This is a method with an advantage in this case as it serves the purpose of recognizing and understanding the reasoning of arguments in previous research (Bratberg, 2014). True intent is only known to the decision-makers who drafted and implement the initiatives. However, by employing idea analysis to extract and dissect the various arguments existing in the plethora of literature addressing the topic, the various arguments presented were evaluated and the most prominent motivations behind the project could be established.

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The overall research design of the motivation analysis chapter conforms with Krippendorf's (2004) content analysis guidelines, detailing the development process for a reliable purposeful analysis. The process for this analysis consisted of identifying previous literature relevant to Russian state sponsored identity initiatives, and categorizing this literature on the basis of whom the text considered to be the primary beneficiary of the initiatives. Finally, the strengths of alternative arguments were assessed, and considered with supplementary arguments from real-world contexts.

The works of Sperling, Rapoport, Eichler and Studennikova were selected for the analysis through purposive sampling. These four works efficiently and eloquently present the primary interpretations of the initiatives and were selected to represent the range of scholarly interpretations. The arguments were deconstructed to determine what each author argued to be the purpose of the initiatives, and who stands to benefit if the purpose indicated should be fulfilled. Ultimately, the analysis determined the most probable interpretations.

2.2 Determining the consequences

Goals and results are often not perfectly aligned. To understand what the aims of initiatives are and to determine what the effects of the initiatives have been, are two entirely different tasks. The second part of this thesis addresses the second question. Very little previous research has been carried out on the influence of the identity initiatives on Russian society. There is a paucity of relevant and available quantitative data on the topic. As a consequence, this analysis consisted of two different modes of analysis. The first was a quantitatively dominant, concurrent, mixed method analysis, and the second was a quantitatively dominant, sequential, mixed method analysis, which are respectively illustrated on the bottom left and bottom right in Figure 1. A mixed methods research design is not confined to a single method or approach and can use multiple types of data. It can draw on both the qualitative and quantitative data available and is therefore the optimum method to address a question when faced with limited data (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Figure 1: Mixed-method research design matrix from "Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come." Abbreviations: "qual" stands for qualitative, "quan" stands for quantitative, "+" stands for concurrent, "→" stands for sequential, capital letter denotes high priority, and lower case letters denote lower priority (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 23).

The quantitative data used for analysis was derived from the press releases of the non-governmental Russian research organization Levada and the government research organization Vstiom. The press releases revealed some of the data the organizations have collected through surveys over time. The data was provided in tables, showing the share of respondents who responded to which alternative at different points in time. The number of respondents and method used for data collection vary between surveys. The majority of Levada surveys had 1,600 respondents selected through cluster sampling. The respondents were 18 years or older and from 45 regions across Russia. The surveys were conducted in personal interviews in the respondent's home (Russia as a great power, 2017; Approval rating of government institutions, 2017; National pride, 2017; Role of social institutions, 2017). The Vstiom surveys tended to use 1,200 respondents aged 18 and upwards. Some of the older surveys were conducted through home queries, while the more recent enquiries were conducted through phone interviews. The phone numbers called and the homes visited were both selected through random sampling (Press Release No. 3445, 2012; Press Release No. 3401, 2012; Press Release No. 3041, 2016). The minority data not conforming to these specifications varied in sample size, while the remainder of the stipulations remained true.

The concurrent analysis examined the range of available attitudes associated with militarism over time to determine whether the propensity towards militarism was increasing in the period the identity initiatives have been in effect. The quantitative analysis employed the

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available observations to construct a timeline revealing how responses have changed over time. The concurrent qualitative aspect was the interpretation of the data. For most of the attitudes, the observations are infrequent and few in number, leaving little room for quantitative inferences. The qualitative analysis considered further contextual elements revealed in the reviewed literature and identified key patterns among the various attitudes, thus allowing for a critical examination of the limited data. The sequential analysis used the data with the most frequent and numerous observations for further analysis. The more detailed analysis enabled by the more accurate timeline allowed for gauging societal reactions to various conflicts— revealing how Russian society reacted differently to different wars.[1] This analysis followed the previous pattern where the quantitative data was initially discussed and interpreted in its qualitative context, before a regression analysis was utilized to examine whether a statistical investigation supported the previous findings. Since the variables of interests were given as share of respondents, they were bound to values between 0 and 100. Having a bound dependent variable limits the feasibility of most regression models, and makes models expressing nonlinear relationships unviable. I employed a tobit model as it allowed for limiting the range of the dependent variable, preventing impossible predictions. The tobit model is a linear model and interaction variables were added to detect potential nonlinear relationships. The tobit model has a less intuitive interpretation than the ordinary least squares model (OLS), so an OLS model was also used, and if the estimates of the two were approximately identical, the OLS predictions were not impossible and could be used for interpretation. In the regression, the state of the economy and time could be factored in. It could, therefore, provide an estimate of the effect of war on attitudes isolated from some of the other major potential influences on attitudes. Ultimately, the findings of the different analyses are discussed to establish the possible repercussions of the identity initiatives. The results of the consequence analysis are placed in the context of the motivation analysis, allowing for further discussion around the intention, effect and overall success of the initiatives.

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[1] The conflicts considered are respectively the First Chechen War 1994-1996, the Second Chechen War 1999-2009, the Russo-Gregorian War of 2008 and Russian involvement in Ukraine 2014-present. The 2015 Russian intervention in Syria is not considered in this thesis.

2.3 Assumptions and reservations

While the use of multiple attitudes and methods of analysis improved the reliability of the estimates, the level of validity of the inferences is not beyond contention. There are several assumptions made in the thesis that need to be declared. The first section attempts to establish the motivation for the initiatives based on the interpretations found in previous literature. This method assumed that there was an approximate degree of truth in the findings of previous scholarship. The second section of the thesis was based on the assumption that the data derived from the research organizations was representative of the entire Russian population and that propensity towards militarism could be recognized and measured through examination of attitudes associated with militarism.

If the first assumption regarding previous literature was false and the findings of the employed research were not at all representative of any actual motivation, inferences drawn from even the strong arguments were faulty. The second assumption of representative data was imperative for any of the inferences made using the quantitative data to be accurate, regardless of whether a qualitative or quantitative interpretation was used. If the data was not representative for the Russian population—any inferences made using the data was not generalizable for Russian society, which is the area of interest for this thesis. Since the Levada and Vstiom datasets are not publicly available, the quantitative data used was retrieved directly from various press releases. The press releases provided very specific and very limited data—without access to any respondent demographic data. While the research organizations each declared their data to be controlled for outliers and statistically significant, the data could not be checked at the author's discretion and was assumed to be representative for the Russian population as is. A third assumption behind my thesis was that militarism is measurable through values associated with militarism. That assumption was required as there is no true or easily achieved measurement of levels of militarism. While a binary approach with clear true or false conditions for militarism would be a less intricate method, no gradual change would be evident—which is a chief concern of this thesis. To denote the level of militarism in Russia at various points in time, it was assumed that attitudes associated with militarism collectively provided a gauge for the propensity towards militarism in Russian society.

The analysis used survey data, which meant that the results could be distorted by interviewer effects and social desirability bias. Further enforcing the pertinence of survey data reservations is the unique culture of Russian survey responses that has been suggested by Goode (Goode, Love for the Mortherland (or Why Cheese is More Patriotic than Crimea), 2016).

Goode has found Russian respondents to confound being a patriot with being regime-positive resulting in a possible misconstruction of the data—if respondents opted for a regime-positive answer to be patriotic, rather than representing their own personal beliefs. The potential distortion of any data acquired through interviews in addition to the possible distortion on questions with a perceived regime-positive answer needed to be taken into consideration when interpreting the data.

Lastly, the regression model requires the data to meet certain requirements. The residuals of the model need to be normally distributed. The mean of the residuals should be zero. There should be homogeneity of variance and there should not be autocorrelation or multicollinearity present. The breach of any of these requirements could alter or invalidate the interpretation of the model estimation and needed to be tested for. The various requirements are tested and discussed in the analysis chapter.

3 Determining the motivation

The identity initiatives do not exist collectively as one entity with official decree, but rather as separate ventures or subsections of larger compound projects. They are often implemented without any official goals or statements detailing the purpose of their enactment. A number of initiatives, however, are implemented through the patriotic education program, which does have officially released mission statements. This program can thus be used to highlight what the purpose of the identity initiatives are according to official documents.

The patriotic education program has existed since the beginning of 2001 and is planned and executed in five-year increments. The initial program running from 2001-2005 had the official purpose of developing a system of patriotic education, facilitating societal consolidation, helping maintain social and economic stability and encouraging unity between the nations of the Russian Federation. The second program running from 2006-2010 aimed to perfect the system of patriotic education, aid the development of Russia as a free and democratic government, develop a patriotic consciousness, inspire loyalty to the fatherland, and instill willingness to fulfill constitutional duties. The 2011-2015 program had no official purpose beyond further improving the system of patriotic education and the 2016-2020 program has no specified purpose (Sanina, Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia, 2017, p. 39-41).

Even though the Ministry of Defense is listed as a primary executer of the initiatives for every reiteration of the project, there is no mention of any military oriented goal in any of the programs. The military receives a brief mention in the task sections of the third and fourth programs, wherein it is stated that it is a task of the programs to organize positive attitudes towards the military and military service under contract or as a conscript (Sanina, Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia, 2017, p. 39-41)

The official purposes of the program are overarchingly benign, with emphasis on maintaining and improving civil benefits. I argue that the nature of the initiatives and their implementation suggest that these official goals are misleading and this assertion is subject to examination in the following chapter.

3.1 The four scholarly interpretations

All states actively attempt to encourage and shape national identity within their respective societies. Russia is a geographical colossus housing multiple nations with diverse

ethnicities, religions and cultures. The state is no stranger to secessionist movements and societal fragmentation. For these reasons, it is no surprise that the Russian state makes significant efforts to consolidate a Russian national identity and create a cohesive national idea that will alleviate separatist pressure. The mode in which it chooses to do so, however, is remarkable. The Russian state efforts are conspicuously militaristic and revolve around the armed forces. There seems to be a clear attempt to bolster military culture and reconcile Russian national identity with military values. The heavy emphasis on the military aspects in the Russian identity policy has not gone unnoticed and has been an item of extensive debate in politics and political literature.

This chapter examines and analyzes the range of previous literature discussing the identity initiatives in an attempt to address the first research question of this thesis: *Why is the Russian state engaged in a project to reconcile military values and Russian national identity?*

The analysis contextualizes, discusses and compares the various interpretations of the Russian identity initiatives to establish a comprehensive understanding of the different arguments and present the most likely state motivations.

The previous literature has established four distinct explanations for motivation, in addition to more case specific theories. Sperling has argued that recruitment for the armed forces is one of the primary strategic goals of the Russian state's identity policies, and that the military emphasis exists for this reason. Rapoport has viewed the military focused initiatives as the best means for the state to shift national identity away from the Western influences that took root in the 1990s. Eichler has viewed the military focus of identity policies as a substantial public relations project, intended to re-establish a positive image of the Russian armed forces, while Studennikova has interpreted the Russian military and state initiatives as necessary to keep youth moral and to retain Russian traditions.

3.1.1 The military redemption perspective

All four explanations have a historical foundation, and historical context is paramount when examining them. Eichler's military redemption perspective is tightly bound to the development of the civil-military relationship in Russia over time and establishes historical background and premises useful for consideration of the other theories. Due to the historical background and premises contained in her writing, Eichler's account is discussed first.

Eichler describes Russia a few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. She writes about a nation disillusioned with the promised changes that never came, disappointed in its

current leadership, greatly inconvenienced by an economy in shambles and embarrassed by the failure of the armed forces to maintain Russian territorial sovereignty. Eichler claims that Yeltsin, aware of the less than ideal societal attitude, launched a military campaign against Chechnya in an attempt to regain popularity and purpose (2012, p. 40). The war, however, proved nothing but the incapability of the Russian armed forces, and quickly became a source of public humiliation, international outrage, and a symbol of the historically powerful giant's fall from greatness. Thus, Eichler argues that the army at this point was a symbol of Russian incompetence and a source of nationwide humiliation that threatened to further disintegrate the federation. Consequently, it became a matter of importance for the government to rectify the image of the armed forces.

Eichler's perspective perceives the desire to redeem the armed forces in Russian society as an important driving force behind the identity initiatives. The previous and current administrations consider that there is an instrumental value in a better military image. Therefore, these initiatives can be understood as conscious attempts at conjuring up pride, confidence and loyalty to the Russian armed forces. By doing, so the regime hopes to reduce the potential for civil unrest and the risk of ethnic fragmentation.

3.1.2 The military recruitment perspective

The second perspective builds on many of the same premises as the first, but rather than decision-makers simply assessing that there was a societal need for an enhanced public image for the military, Sperling argues that the state intention was to elevate military standing in society for recruitment purposes, and to control military discourse in the civilian sphere.

Sperling introduces the notion of the difficulty of finding a shared Russian national post-Soviet identity in Russia. She describes how the Russian state is trying to circumvent this challenge by constructing a national identity around the military, and explains why such an identity may be dangerous. Sperling argues (2003, p. 237), as Vagts did, that a militarized national identity may quickly develop into violence and exclusivist nationalism. "If one is instructed to love and defend one's country, some clarity is needed with respect to the question: What holds Russia together as a state?" (Sperling, 2003, p. 239) As Sperling sees it, a unifying identity and a sense of nationhood is crucial to have a well-functioning society and a strong and devoted military. The collapse of the Soviet identity, the diverse ethnicities living in Russia, as well as the millions of ethnic Russians living outside Russia in what used to be Soviet republics, makes formulating a "new" Russian national identity extremely difficult.

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Sperling argues that the manner in which the Russian state has decided to solve the question of how to create a Russian identity is through the military. She writes that the universal pride and high esteem of the Red Army, the champions of World War II, is being capitalized upon in attempts at creating a new Russian national identity. The military is one of the few longstanding Russian institutions that inspire a sense of pride (Sperling, 2003, p. 241). The constructed military identity also provides a reason to fight for the country. Furthermore, it is conveniently propagated through initiatives that include weapons training and war-games for boys in compulsory education, facilitating actual recruitment and training for the armed forces for individuals at a later stage (Sperling, 2003, p. 250).

The military recruitment perspective recognizes that there are government benefits to the initiatives but considers the primary motivation to be improving the recruitment potential for the armed forces. The construction of a close association between identity and military gives the armed forces a recruitment advantage as enlisting becomes an expression of patriotism. Military training for young people may create an early connection between prospective recruits and the armed forces—improving the chances of recruitment. Universal pride in the past achievements of the armed forces situates the military as a convenient platform for the Russian state to construct an identity around. The military recruitment perspective perceives the motivations for the identity initiatives to be the advantages they bring to the armed forces.

3.1.3 The tool of counter-reform perspective

A third perspective, introduced by Rapoport, sees the initiative as a quite different enterprise. Rapoport, like Eichler, sees the collapse of the Soviet Union as a cataclysmic event that completely dismantled the identity of the Russian people—and made the construction of a new identity inevitable. Like Sperling, Rapoport sees the military nature of the current identity construction as dangerous. Yet, his argument concerning the motivation behind the identity initiatives differs from Eichler's and Sperling's. Rapoport sees the initiatives as a tool that the state uses to shift and lead national identity away from Western identity and the liberal reforms of the 1990s.

Rapoport takes a thorough historical approach in order to understand Russian national identity. He argues that ever since the rule of Peter the Great and his pro-European reforms in the late 17th century, a delicate duality has existed in Russian national identity. On the one hand, there are elements of a liberal pro-Western identity, carrying with it a desire to be considered European and on equal terms with other European nations. On the other hand, there are also

elements of a more traditional identity, that emphasizes autocracy, orthodoxy, nationalism, and Russian uniqueness as core pillars of Russian nationality (Rapoport, Patriotic Education in Russia, 2009, p. 143). Rapoport considers that there have been pendulum-like shifts back and forth between the two identities throughout Russian history. The traditional identity gains traction through state induced patriotism launched for the purpose of maintaining or consolidating power and peaks before catastrophic wars. Then the pendulum changes trajectory, and so the cycle continues (Rapoport, Patriotic Education in Russia, 2009, p. 144).

While patriotism was declared dead by the Bolsheviks after the Russian revolution, the communist elite engineered a new Soviet patriotism that largely avoided the complex duality of Russian identity, as it was built upon military pride and achievements. When the USSR collapsed and Soviet identity disappeared with it—the Russian identity suddenly became a topic of contention. At first, President Yeltsin was elected on the platform of liberalism and the promise of some type of inclusion in the Western world. The unsuccessful transition and following chaos, gave a window of opportunity for the alternative traditional identity to regain traction. As Rapoport sees it, the Russian leadership is consolidating power, and are using identity initiatives to manifest the traditional Russian national identity and distance Russian society from the liberal reforms of the 1990s. Traditional identity has always been associated with military nationalism, and now, after the Soviet collapse, has inherited large segments of the Soviet military nationalism, using Soviet symbols and celebrating Soviet victories. Rapoport argues that the military nature of the initiatives comes naturally as it is the easiest[2] and most efficient way to foster the traditionalist identity that the current regime desires. Rapoport considers the formation of a militaristic traditional Russian national identity as highly dangerous, since he believes that such an identity has led to costly wars in the past, and might do so again.

The tool of counter-reform perspective argues, thus, that the motivation behind the identity initiatives is to shift Russian society away from a liberal identity and towards a traditionalist one. The political elites stand to gain from this shift as the traditionalist identity takes pride in the autocratic uniqueness of Russia, and the state would be allowed to consolidate power. The military nature of these initiatives comes naturally to this type of identity as it is

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[2] Easiest in the sense demonstrated by Sperling: The military is universally held in higher esteem than other institutions in Russia, and therefore easier to mobilize positive sentiment around.

propagating nationalism. The initiatives draw from both past Russian and Soviet nationalism, which were both based on pride in the capability of the military.

3.1.4 The Russian traditionalist perspective

The three perspectives discussed so far are all presented by non-Russian scholars who have placed the Russian state and the identity initiatives in a critical light. The fourth perspective, held by the Russian traditionalists, is only found in Russian scholarship and therefore appears to be an almost exclusively Russian point of view. This perspective conceives the military influence on society from the patriot initiatives as a positive force that prevents moral deterioration and preserves Russian culture.

Studennikova (2009, p. 279-280) has perceived true Russian national identity to be similar to that described by Rapaport as traditionalist Russian national identity. Studennikova's argument, and the entire traditionalist perspective, is apparent through three primary notions: that Russian patriotism and national identity is special and without compare, that patriotic education is essential for the proper development of a Russian person, and, lastly, that the military component of the identity initiatives is necessary to encourage citizens to fulfill their duties not only in times of peace, but also during wartime.

Studennikova considers the reforms that took place after the fall of the Soviet Union to have damaged Russian culture, and that any shift towards Western ideals and methods is a shift away from Russian traditions. Before the collapse, the military exerted significant influence in all spheres of Soviet society. The armed forces were central to Soviet identity and patriotism and were integrated into all compulsory state-controlled institutions. All citizens were in interaction with the armed forces through education, conscription or other mandatory state organized proceedings. To Studennikova, the absence of military influence and top-down patriotic education is robbing the youth of a moral compass and correcting guidance. She believes that traditional patriotic education and shifting away from Westernized education forms are crucial for the survival and prosperity of future Russia. She argues that the Russian citizen should be inculcated to serve the fatherland and fulfill duties in both times of peace and times of war (Studennikova, 2009, p. 280).

Studennikova (2009, p. 282) reinforces her arguments with statements on patriotism by President Putin. The use of official state rhetoric on patriotism illustrates how her perception of the unique and immaculate nature of Russian patriotism aligns well with the state narrative on the matter. She ends her article by noting that a highly militarized patriot project, such as the

current Russian project, is often criticized, but given that Russian patriotism is unique, any critique based on a general understanding of patriotism become inapplicable.

The argument to favor traditional Soviet education methods and attain distance from the Western methods concurs with Rapoport's ideological shift argument. However, in Studennikova's narrative, the motivation is to provide Russian youth with moral guidance, not to remove Western influence on Russian society. She argues that the military nature of the initiatives is an attempt to implant patriotism and ensure capable and principled citizens.

The Russian traditionalist perspective illustrated by Studennikova's article, perceives the identity initiatives to be a necessary education project to maintain Russian traditions and culture, provide a moral compass for the youth, while also guaranteeing the survival of the Russian state. The reason that the military is so prominent, according to this perspective, is because the Russian military has always played a prominent part in Russian identity, and now that Russia is recovering after the failed liberalization project, the return of the traditional, militaristic identity is natural.

3.2 Beneficiaries and context of explanations

In the following subchapter, the different perspectives are discussed, compared and examined in relation to the actual methods employed by the state. This is carried out to address the research question: *"Why is the Russian state engaged in a project to reconcile military values and Russian national identity?"* By examining how identity initiatives are implemented and who stands to benefit from their implementation, one can use the findings as a proxy to determine the underlying motivation behind the substantial military component of the project. The following discussion does not set out to prove the existence of the project or its military component, which are both evident in previous literature and current Russian policy. Rather this chapter addresses the lack of scholarly consensus on the issue, attempting to bridge the various perspectives and the wide variety of arguments they entail. Given the complexity and duration of the project—the breadth of interpretations is not surprising. The project was launched almost two decades ago and has continued to run over the course of multiple presidential administrations. It is fair to assume that the goals of the project may have shifted multiple times over the course of its duration, and that some of the above perspectives have been more relevant at certain times than others, only to fall out of focus later. However, I argue that the nature of the initiatives and its military segment, have persisted. The intent of this

analysis is therefore not to select one perspective to be the most appropriate and to discredit the others. Rather, this analysis gauges the strength of the argument of each perspective and examines the implementation of various initiatives, looking for common ground and providing a more elaborate understanding of the aims of the initiatives. I assess the different perspectives to provide three primary arenas of motivation. First, the initiatives were launched and are maintained because they advance military interests. Second, the military nature of the initiatives serves the interests of the sitting government. Third, the initiatives benefit Russian society.

3.2.1 Military identity for the benefit of the military

Perhaps the most intuitive explanation for the identity initiatives is the cultivation of military identity for the benefit of the military. A national identity of with a high level of militarism elevates the position of the military institution in society. In such a situation, soldiers, officers and the overall military institution may be subject to less scrutiny. It may also ease recruitment, because being a soldier is perceived to be more desirable. Even further, as Vagts has argued, there are inherent problems in the modern separation of the military and civilian spheres that are mitigated by having close interaction between the military and civilian society. "Armies and war cannot be considered aside from their relations to society; the potentials of war must be recognized in the practical arts, forms of government and public policies, for the potentials of power indicate the limitations of power" (Vagts, 1959, p. 33).

Some short segments in Eichler's book illustrate the military benefits of the project, even though her overarching argument is more focused on the administrative benefits. In the context of the aftermath of the First Chechen War, she quotes Lieutenant General Lebed: "Russia no longer has an army—what it has is only military formations of boy-soldiers which are hardly capable of achieving anything" (Eichler, 2012, p. 44). She goes on to describe how reduced the prestige, support and recruitment potential of the army was at this time (Eichler, 2012, p. 45). The picture she presents is one where it is not difficult to imagine that state initiatives would be launched to primarily benefit the military, to help it to reacquire prestige and support and, thereby, to motivate recruits.

Sperling's writing heavily supports this notion. She writes that if a conscript is instructed to fight, a clear national identity is necessary. "If one is instructed to love and defend one's country, some clarity is needed with respect to the questions: what holds Russia together as a state? Who counts?" (Sperling, 2003, p. 239). As for whether the national identity needs to be of a military nature, she argues that military patriotism is the only type of patriotism and pride

the Russian state can justifiably construct (Sperling, 2003, p. 240). That is not to say that she believes the military component offers no further benefits to the armed forces, on the "recurring five year patriotic education program" she comments: "(…) this programme will entail efforts to beef up support for the Russian armed forces and for militarism, as the decree on the reintroduction of military training in Russian schools" (Sperling, 2003, p. 249). So while a patriotic identity is necessary to have soldiers eager to serve at all, the military component of the identity that is being constructed further benefits the military. She argues that it provides support for the armed forces, and the preliminary training allows for the faster production of fully trained recruits.

By looking at the implementation of some of the initiatives, the advantages for the military are readily apparent. There are "military preparation" style youth organizations, where children are taught to handle firearms, perform martial arts, and are encouraged to participate in military strategy games. The organizations engaged in these activities range from the highly military, such as Yunarmiya meaning young army (Bulman, 2016), through to the politically oriented, such as Nashi the "Youth Democratic Anti Fascist Movement" (Myers, 2007), to the religiously motivated such as St. Spyridon the Triumphant Orthodox (Rozhdestvensky, 2015). There are cadet classes being created in schools—where children are to wear uniforms and be guided by former military officers (Khodzhaeva, Meyer, Barsukova, & Yasaveev, 2017). Proficiency with firearms, war-games and early contact with the military allow the armed forces to create positive associations towards the military from an early age and consequently facilitate recruitment.

Another initiative of substantial effort is the glorification of the military. While the glorification of the military is commonplace in most societies, as witnessed in the celebration of past military victories, veterans' days, and heroic military characters in entertainment media, the Russian state sponsored glorification of the military is more comprehensive than most. Many projects—ranging from the production of popular entertainment such as TV shows and movies portraying the military in a positive light to the establishment of new annual holidays celebrating military glory, are continuously being realized. One of the more deliberate examples of this glorification is the return of military parades.

Soviet style grand military parades showcasing military might and capability take place annually in major cities all over Russia. Parading missiles and heavy military machinery to project strength seems somewhat archaic, and yet the practice was reintroduced as recently as 2008. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Victory Day parades no longer showcased military

hardware. With the exception of military equipment being a part of the 1995 reproduction of the 1945 Victory Day parade, the parades were without heavy military equipment until the reintroduction in 2008 (Den′ Pobedy: istorija voennyh paradov, 2016). The celebration of military holidays, and the presence of military elements in popular civilian holidays is likely to create positive associations and inspire civilian support for the military.

A third project that offers utility for the Russian military is the construction of threat perceptions in the mass consciousness. This practice involves the use of state rhetoric and the mass media to both construct enemies, and portray oneself as a defensive entity (Keeble, 2010). Officially released Russian military doctrines now specify NATO as the greatest potential threat to Russia (Laguerre, 2016), and the Russian media works unceasingly to construct a narrative wherein NATO countries have an anti-Russian agenda (The Propaganda of the Putin Era, 2012, Schifrin, 2017). When creating a perception of threat, there is an increased reliance on the armed forces for a sense of security and well-being. This reliance elevates the importance of the military in society and therefore ultimately benefits the Russian military.

There are military benefits to a civilian military identity. These benefits are not improving the military's ability to conduct war, but they do advance the ability of the military institution to maintain itself and to do as it pleases and still enjoy public support. The military advantages of a military identity and the poor standing of the Russian armed forces in the 1990s suggest that the military benefit from being a major motivational factor in the planning and execution of the identity initiatives.

3.2.2 Military identity for the benefit of the regime

While military benefit may be the most intuitive explanation for the identity initiatives, the interpretation most emphasized in the literature is the regime benefits of a military identity in Russia. A military identity benefits the Russian regime as it provides entrenchment of the ruling elite, reduced internal fragmentation and opposition. These are all major goals that might motivate the identity initiatives.

In states frustrated by economic crisis and political corruption, patriotism appears a relatively inexpensive refuge for politicians. But the use of militaristic patriotism as a means to popular support carries with it the risk of ethnic exclusivity, as well as of the

military domination of civilian institutions, and thereby foreshadows, in the short term, a state-building process proceeding along other than liberal democratic lines.

(Sperling, 2003, p. 250)

Sperling, who argues that the primary motivation behind the initiatives were military benefits, clearly acknowledges that there are regime benefits to note as well. Her point that patriotism is an efficient method by which one can rather inexpensively consolidate support for the sitting regime, is shared by Vagts, Eichler, and Rapoport. All these authors acknowledge the ability of the military sentiment to generate a high degree of patriotism.

Vagts (1959, p. 23) contends that most military institutions have a more pristine image than other state institutions as they have greater autonomy over what is recorded in military history. The moral high ground that the military then enjoys, is easier for the regime to use to inspire patriotism. In addition, the values associated with the military such as loyalty, respect for hierarchy, self-sacrifice, and machoism are all values that will strengthen the position of the Russian state leadership due to the autocratic nature of the regime (Bækken, Forthcoming)

The benefits of the military components in identity initiatives appear to be narrow and specific in some instances. Sieca-Kozlowski (2010) argues that veteran military personnel are employed to participate in patriot education to keep them under government control. In other instances, there is a clearer, broader, overarching benefit. Rapoport (2009, p. 143) argues that military patriotism in Russia enforces a highly autocratic national identity. The propagation of such an identity subdues critical discourse around policy and leaders. He also notes that the sitting regime is using the military identity constructed to shift Russian society away from Western and liberal ideas that manifested themselves in the 1990s (Rapoport, 2009, p. 147).

Eichler argues that the support for the regime in Russia is largely influenced by the attitude towards the military. Pride in the Red Army's achievements and greatness was an intrinsic part of Soviet patriotism for many decades. One legacy of this pride is that the standing of the Russian military is hugely important in how one perceives the state. Eichler argues that Yeltsin attempted to take advantage of this relationship when he started the First Chechen War. He considered a decisive Russian military victory that he could attach his name to would be a potential source of electoral support.

The initiatives contain some clear attempts to strengthen the position of the regime. One revealing instance of this is evident upon closer examination of one of the previously discussed

youth clubs. Nashi, a club that receives public funding requires the children to pass political affiliation tests to acquire membership and participate (Myers, 2007).

The glorification of military initiatives may, in fact, provide the biggest benefit to the regime. The reintroduction of Soviet military symbolism and traditions could have been planned in its entirety to entrench the sitting administration. The World War II victory and the renown of the Red Army are immense sources of pride shared among Russians today. The regime is trying to capitalize on this pride by reintroducing the Soviet-style parades and putting old Soviet military symbols back into use. By doing so, the regime may elevate itself through its association with the prodigious Soviet military might and World War II victory (Wood, 2011). In a 2008 BBC interview on the return of the heavy military equipment to the parades, the Russian political analyst Pavel Danilin commented: "It shows that Russia has restored its great-power status and is ready to defend its sovereignty—nothing more" (Pavel, 2008). The desire to, again, be perceived as a world power is prevalent among Russian citizens. In surveys, the majority percentage of Russians rank being a great power as more important than a high standard of living (Sanina, Patriotism and Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia, 2017, p. 40). This indicates that any initiative that makes Russia appear strong is welcome. By reinstating military parades, the political leadership has created an image of itself as those who brought Russia to a level of might comparable to that of the Soviet Union. While Russia today by no means has the military might and capability to equal the Red Army in its prime, image also matters. President Putin and his contemporaries are creating a narrative in which Russia is reclaiming her rightful power, and the narrative needs to illustrate that it was the current regime that guided her to do so. Thus, the regime is strengthening Putin's image as an autocratic father figure for the state and entrenching the positions of sitting decision-makers.

The last initiative discussed, the construction of threat perceptions in the mass consciousness, also provides benefits for the regime. The shared perception of threat can serve as a strong unifying force. The resilience of the Russian people against extraordinary hardships in World War II is discussed as remarkable to this day. History has shown that the potential for the amalgamation of Russian society during wartime is great, leading both past and current decision-makers to attempt to capitalize upon this potential strength (Sperling, 2003). Eichler (2012) argues that it was exactly this potential that Yeltsin hoped to tap into to reacquire popularity when initiating the First Chechen War. The current regime appears to pursue this latent power of civil unification against threats by using the media. There is a construction of threat and a clear notion of Russia as a defensive entity created largely through the use of mass

media by means of agenda setting, selective reporting, hyperbole and other tools (Schifrin, 2017; Sperling, 2003). Regime-positive and Western-negative rhetoric dominates a large portion of Russian media. The interaction between the positive image of the regime and the perception of Western powers as hostile, creates a sense not only of threat, but also that the sitting regime is a necessary counterforce against the threat.

In summary, there are regime interests that could motivate the identity initiatives. By using the military to inspire Russian patriotism, decision-makers can circumvent contentious or inflamed history and enjoy the benefits of higher patriotism.

Requiring political affiliation tests for youth-group membership might appear to be a low impact measure and out of place in relation to the other more elaborate initiatives, but its one-dimensionality allows for a rather direct interpretation. There appears to be a regime serving agenda behind the implementation of some of the identity initiatives. The armed forces possess an overwhelming cultural influence in Russian society, and the attempt to reconcile military and national identity can partly be understood as efforts to manipulate this influence to serve the Russian political regime by solidifying and elevating its position in society.

3.2.3 Military identity for the benefit of society

The last potential beneficiary of the identity initiatives to be discussed is Russian society. Arguments in this category contend that Russian society enjoys tangible benefits from a military identity. The literature presenting the arguments in favor of this interpretation are all authored by Russian state representatives or scholars. This notion sees military influence as elevating Russian society to a higher moral standard, and to be necessary for the preservation of the Russian state. "The continuing penetration of pro-Western, mostly Americanized 'values' that form the marginalized depatriotized personality continues unabated, extremely negative in its impact on youth" (Lutovinov, 1998). This quotation from government official Lutovinov illustrates the widespread belief that the chaos and youth hooliganism in the 1990s resulted from Western influence. In this understanding, patriotism is a crucial part of moral decency. As is evident from Studennikova's writing, the government rhetoric is well represented in the civilian sphere. "Patriotic education is important not only for the successful development of society and the state, but first of all for the person himself, as a necessary part of a developed personality" (Studennikova, 2009).[3] The traditionalists consider the military to be a vital

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[3] Original text is Russian, translations are author's own.

institution providing national security, but also see it as a presence responsible for infusing patriotism, manners, discipline, and decorum in young Russian men.

The declining living standards, poor economy, and overall embarrassment of the 1990s in Russian society is seen as the fault of Western values corrupting Russian culture, traditions, and values. The complete withdrawal of the armed forces from the civilian sphere, and the concurrent dismantlement of Soviet patriotism caused a moral deficiency in Russian youth. According to this reasoning, the identity initiatives are a natural state response aimed at assisting Russian society. It was wrong to sever the intimate bond between the Russian military and Russian civilian society, and the current program is simply a correction of that error.

While the development of a common national identity provides plausible benefits—the implementation of identity initiatives appear to be less tailored to serve this purpose than serving the military institution or the sitting regime. A military identity may be propagated as the path of least resistance for constructing a common identity, but, even so, the methods employed do not appear to engage this as a prioritized objective. Weapons training for children, display of heavy military machinery, and a constant sense of fear do not provide any distinguishable benefits to the civilian sphere of a state. The arguments favoring this interpretation emphasize the uniqueness of Russian society and identity, making the arguments challenging to support or counter. This does not make the arguments particularly strong, but it does makes them impossible to disprove.

The overarching theme of the arguments presented is that both patriotism and the armed forces are vital to Russian culture, and trying to omit or neglect this part of Russian identity can only do harm to Russian morality. On these premises, it is argued that the identity initiatives were and continue to be launched for the benefit of society. The identity initiatives seem to have little or no relation with the agenda presented through the arguments from this perspective. This perspective can argue that there is a connection between the identity initiatives and Russian society but it can only be understood as part of Russian uniqueness. There is a near perfect alignment between the scholarly arguments made favoring this perspective and government rhetoric. Given the vague foundation and one-dimensionality of the arguments the societal benefit arena is understandably given less attention internationally—but it should not be forgotten.

3.3 Discussion and findings

The arguments for three beneficiaries of the identity initiatives all hold some merit in the contexts in which they are presented. The military institution with declining recruitment rates and an overall poor image had much to gain from an elevated standing in society when the identity initiatives were begun at the end of Yeltsin's term. There are also clear advantages of a military induced patriotic surge for Russian state office-holders. These advantages include the potential reduction of Russian ethnic fragmentation, entrenchment of power-holders and the maintenance of popularity despite political fiascos. While the one-dimensionality and complete alignment of scholarly and state articulation of the societal benefits is easy to ridicule, there are tangible rewards to consider. The nationwide loss of identity, absence of national pride, and international embarrassment became real obstacles to Russian development. An identity implanting pride and providing some common ground for the Russian civilian sphere does indeed involve benefits, regardless of what the identity is based upon.

Examining who stands to benefit from the military identity that is currently being constructed can be used as a tool to determine the aims of the identity initiatives. The continued creation of identity initiatives that elevate and benefit the military may suggest two different things. First, the level of support for the military has not yet reached a satisfactory level. Second, the constructed military identity needs to be maintained to uphold the elevated level of support achieved.

The initiatives that serve the regime may suggest that there is ambition for further centralization and entrenchment. The continuation of the initiatives serves to further propagate a traditional militaristic national identity to allow the state to continue to operate as an autocratic regime within a liberal institutional framework created in the early 1990s.

If initiatives are launched to provide societal benefits in the form of military involvement in the development of moral character and decency, the continued existence of the project can be considered necessary as the state will have to continue to educate and develop the coming generations. While the vast majority of international scholarship and the examined methods of initiative implementation presents this alternative as unlikely, there is a tendency in international literature to understate the potential societal benefits to be gained from the manifestation of a stronger national identity. Russian literature, on the other hand, tends to overstate the benefits and present the society as the sole and true beneficiary, while neglecting to discuss the advantages the regime stands to gain.

The examined literature reveals the societal benefits alternative to be a less likely scenario. The military and the regime both emerge as central beneficiaries and are likely to be the key driving forces behind the identity initiatives. The benefits provided to the military and the regime are varied and ranking them by their agency over the initiatives is impossible.

Regardless of which one stands to benefit more, their participation in the attempts to create a military style Russian national identity is reason for concern. The creation of a military identity and the likely manifestation of militarism is likely to lead to a more war-prone state with unconditional public support for the regime and armed forces. This aspect has received more attention in the last few years, after the Russian annexation of Crimea and military involvement in the Ukraine crisis. While internationally condemned, these acts were highly popular in Russia.

The enabling segment of a military identity is perfectly exemplified in the United States. A parallel can be drawn between the Vietnam War for the United States and the First Chechen War for Russia. The Vietnam War was hugely unpopular and completely disintegrated support for the armed forces. The unpopularity of the war eventually led to the abandonment of the American draft, just as Yeltsin intended to end Russian conscription and start an all-volunteer force in response to the backlash of the First Chechen War (Eichler, 2012). The United States government launched a large-scale military patriotic project to elevate the military and create esteem for the military profession. The United States armed forces are today active in operations all over the globe with substantial public support (Bacevich, 2005). If the same is achieved by the Russian national identity construction, international operations such as the one seen in Ukraine are likely, by default, to acquire unconditional public support.

To provide a less fragmented understanding of the identity initiatives, I used the arguments of merit from the previous four perspectives and used the above analysis in an attempt to construct one collective notion of what drives the identity initiatives.

It appears that the military and the regime stand to gain the most noteworthy benefits from a militarized national identity. These two institutions possess a symbiotic relationship—where the strengthening of the position of one reinforces the position of the other. Due to this relationship, the propagation of a military identity is simultaneously advancing the position of both the regime and the military in Russian society. In addition, the propagation of national identity in Russia has societal benefits that are widely recognized across the population. All three beneficiaries proposed in the literature discussed have an appropriate context that makes the desire for the creation of the identity feasible. Due to the poor standing of the Russian

military at the turn of the millennium, it is reasonable to believe that there was a strong desire by the institution to elevate its position. The sitting regime's intent on solidifying and increasing its power is not difficult to understand. Considering the complete dismantlement of the Soviet national identity and the following territorial fragmentation—the advantages of a unifying national idea is readily apparent. The easily recognizable benefits that a strengthened national identity provides to society makes this arena a convenient tool in official rhetoric—leading to the heavy emphasis on societal benefit as a driving force in Russian sources. The pursuit of societal benefit is an official goal of the initiatives, while the evident regime and military benefits have been left unaddressed in state policy. This explains the absence of discussion around societal benefit in international research studies.

I argue that one can understand the intent behind the initiatives as a two-pronged approach. The two prongs consist of the elevation of the military and the entrenchment of the regime. The two prongs conveniently synergize well and allow for single initiatives to be multipurpose and to serve both ends. To indulge the metaphor, the societal benefit arguments can be understood as the shaft of the two-pronged fork. This benefit is easy to argue, but hard to criticize. It functions as justification for the comprehensive, highly militaristic identity initiatives.

4 Determining the consequences

Regardless of whether one considers the official or unofficial goals as the true motivation for the identity initiatives, their tangible impact is hard to measure. The official evaluation of the success of the previously discussed patriotic education program is measured by the number of organized events dedicated to patriotic education on local and regional levels and the amount of literature that is being produced on the topic. As pointed out by Sanina (Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia, 2017, p. 61), these measurements are easily falsifiable, not at all related to the official goals of the project described at the beginning of the previous chapter, and may at best provide an indication of how much effort is expended to implement initiatives, rather than a real picture of the effect it has on Russian society.

While it is unknown whether the official estimates of success are an intentional smokescreen or just a poorly optimized solution, I consider the official estimates to be unserviceable and attempt to provide an alternative measurement of effect in the following chapter.

4.1 Changing attitudes over time and in war

The second research question of this thesis: *What are the consequences of the Russian identity initiatives?* is addressed by employing mixed methods analysis—utilizing both qualitative and quantitative tools. Using mixed methods to address the question allows for a more extensive analysis than has previously been conducted—exploiting the full range of available resources. Survey data from the last two decades on Russian societal attitudes are used to construct a timeline mapping out change over time. The changes in relevant attitudes over time are examined and connected to the previously established initiative goals—while also controlling for other influences of change. Integrating the findings of previous qualitative research further qualifies the findings of the quantitative data from the surveys.

The prominent military presence in the state sponsored identity construction in Russia causes anxiousness globally. The potential repercussions of high levels of militarism is a danger of which every modern state is aware. The annexation of Crimea, the unanticipated use of military force in Ukraine, and the striking civilian support of these events in Russia have made the need to understand changing Russian attitudes ever more pertinent. The overwhelming support for the military involvement and annexation of the territory could not be further from

the societal response to the First Chechen War in the mid-1990s. Can the momentous change in levels of military support between the two operations be explained by specific case context alone, or has there been a change in Russian society making the Russian population more willing to go to war? While the change in societal response was probably caused by numerous different influences, it is crucial to investigate and determine whether the initiatives enable conflict by making military operations politically acceptable in Russia. If the initiatives indeed enable military conflict, their continued existence may be a serious reason for concern.

Previous research on the effects of the identity initiatives

The limited previous research that has been conducted possesses considerable variation in methods employed, field of interests, and findings. The majority of related research is qualitative research with a significantly narrower focus than this thesis. For instance: Roussulet (2015) focuses on the patriotic expressions of Orthodox Christians in Russia and church activities, Daucé (Patriotic Unity and Ethnic Diversity at Odds, 2015) writes about patriotism among ethnic minorities in Russia, while Dufy (2015) is interested in the financial aspect of the identity initiatives.

While these articles all advance understanding of the identity initiatives, the instrumental value they provide is somewhat limited to the specific fields they examine due to the narrow focus they hold. In other words, it is difficult to generalize the findings of these articles towards the broader and more overarching idea of the impact of identity initiatives. Two works of literature stand out from the rest in their wider approach and applicable findings: a 2017 quantitative analysis by Anna Sanina and a 2016 qualitative analysis by Paul Goode. Both works are highly pertinent to the impact of the identity initiatives and are recent enough to provide insight into the current state of affairs. Sanina's article employs data from the World Value Survey and officially released documents on citizen education to gauge and compare levels of patriotic sentiment in China, Singapore, the United States of America and Russia in an attempt to assert the efficiency of the Russian identity initiatives. Sanina argues that the Russian program is less efficient than the alternative projects used in the other states. She claims that the heavy reliance on military education used in Russia is inefficient—and the primary cause of the lower patriotic scores in the World Value Survey. Goode examines the differences between how patriotism is articulated in official documents and how it is perceived by individuals. He conducts a number of personal in-depth interviews that reveal Russian perceptions that tend to go unexpressed. Goode argues that even though most Russians affirm

their support for the current regime and the state ordained definitions of patriotism, there are widespread alternative perceptions that do not make it out into the open.

A collaborative project published by Daucé et al, containing a collection of various research on related fields, further reinforces the notion that there are instances where quantitative data may be misleading (Daucé, Laruelle, Rousselet, & Le Huerou, 2015). The most prominent example of this being smaller organizations posing as patriotic programs to receive financial support without organizing any patriotic events. Such organizations inflate both the number of patriotic organizations and the budget for the patriotic program without providing any tangible contribution towards the stated goals of the program.

The works of Sanina, Goode, and Daucé et al, provide valuable insights into the weaknesses of quantitative data, and how qualitative considerations may greatly improve their interpretation.

Situating the analysis in the scholarly landscape

In Sanina's article, she opts to use a cross-section analysis of four states using data from the World Value Survey. Her analysis and assertions emphatically interpret the Russian identity initiatives as inefficient, and perhaps even ineffectual. However, I argue that Sanina's analysis does not justly represent the impact of the Russian program due to a misplaced emphasis on intrastate comparison and the absence of the crucial variable of time.

When Sanina presents the current standing of Russian attitudes and compares them with other states, she neglects development over time. Her deductions are made without heed of context in any of the states she considers. Context, in this case, can mean more general ideas such as duration of the project, aim of the project, and cultural differences between societies, or more specifically the influence of a major cataclysmic event such as the collapse of the USSR and the following societal chaos. A brief examination of survey responses over time provided in various Levada or Vstiom publications reveal a trend of gradually increasing patriotic sentiment. A recurring Levada survey on national pride running from 1994 to 2017 shows that since 1994, the number of people responding they are "not at all proud" of being Russian citizens has gradually decreased from 10 to 2%. The number of respondents who are very proud to be Russian on the other hand has gradually increased from 20 to 34% in the same time span. While the survey is recurring, it is not conducted at regular intervals.

Figure 2: Levada Survey, n = 1,600. Share of respondents who opt for the "Not at all proud" alternative to the question "How proud are you of being a citizen of Russia?" (National pride, 2017). There were multiple observations in 2008. In the figure, the mean of the 2008 observations is plotted.

The trend is visually represented in Figure 2. Even though the number of observations is limited and irregular, the illustration indicates a clear direction and a gradual trend (National pride, 2017).

This trend, suggested by the Levada data, is further reinforced by survey data from Vstiom. Vstiom have been conducting national surveys examining the civilians' associations to certain state symbols since 2006, namely the Russian flag, the national emblem, and the national anthem. These surveys are conducted on an approximately annual basis. The years 2010, 2011 and 2016 are missing.

The results of these surveys largely replicate Levada's findings that Russian pride is growing. The associations of the three symbols change in almost identical patterns. In 2006, approximately half of the respondents associated the symbols with pride, while around 20% associated them with indifference. Eleven years later, over 70% of the respondents associated the symbols with pride, signifying at least a 20 percentage point (p.p.) increase of proud respondents in all three cases. Indifference on the other hand, decreased by 10 p.p. or more in the same timespan for all three symbols. A visual representation of the responses regarding attitudes towards the Russian national emblem is presented in Figure 3. The figure illustrates

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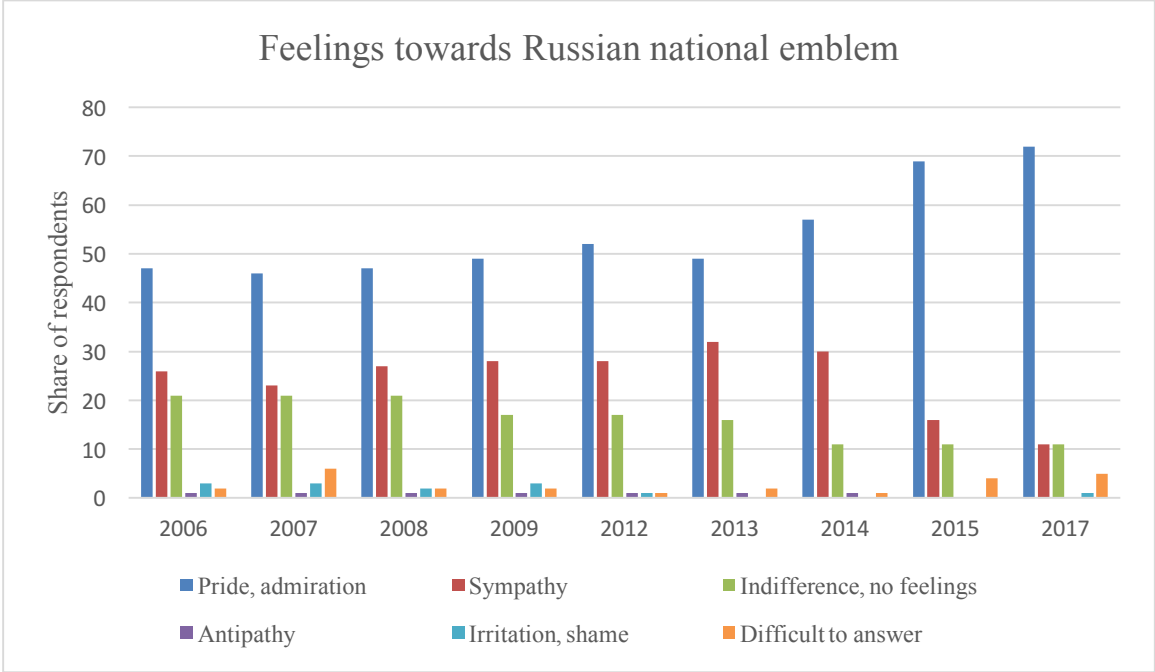the changing associations of the Russian state emblem from 2006 to 2017, with the missing years omitted.

Figure 3: Vstiom survey, n = 1,200. Close-ended question. Question posed as "What feelings do you feel when you see the state symbols of Russia?" (Press Release No. 3445, 2012)

The results of this survey show that changes in Russian attitudes towards key state symbols has occurred over time, and the changes are consistent in their direction (Press Release No. 3445, 2012).

The empirical data reveal a trend of gradually increasing levels of national pride in Russia. While these changes are easily observed in the data, they cannot necessarily be attributed to the Russian identity initiatives. However, they do make it evident that one cannot assert that the Russian patriot program is inefficient on the grounds of how Russian national pride compares to other states—as Sanina does in her analysis. The analysis in this chapter addresses the shortcomings of Sanina's article and uses quantitative data to focus on changing Russian attitudes over time.

Considering Goode's findings, any quantitative analysis utilizing survey data may appear fruitless. If Goode's suspicions are correct, no survey data is representative of actual attitudes. Yet, the data still provide us with a measure of something, and this something is changing over time. The purpose of this analysis is to examine the impact of the identity initiatives—and the changes observed in the quantitative data may be indicative of such an

impact. For these reasons, I evaluate quantitative analysis to be meaningful, but the interpretation of the results may hold complexity that invites qualitative clarification. In addition to helping to qualify the quantitative data, the supplement of qualitative sources may improve the validity of the analysis considering the irregular nature of the quantitative data available. This quantitatively dominant mixed method analysis, thus, attempts to contribute to the almost non-existent field of quantitative research on the Russian identity initiatives, and bridge the findings to the more established qualitative field.

4.1.1 Indicators of militarism over time

The empirical data reveal changes in how Russian respondents respond to questions regarding pride and patriotism over time. Yet, this revelation tells us very little; it shows us only that one cannot discredit the identity initiatives because they might be partly responsible for the observed change. While the gradual advancement of pride is indicative of a directive force, the extent of influence is hard to determine. This thesis is specifically interested in the military nature of the initiatives and the consequences they carry with them. Given that the impact of the initiatives in general are hard to establish, attempting to isolate and measure a subset of outcomes from the initiatives is doubly challenging. The observed increase in national pride may be related to militarism. It may also manifest itself just as well in the absence of militarism (Berghahn, 1981). So, while it is possible to see changes in Russian societal attitudes and these changes may be partially driven by identity initiatives, it is difficult to discern whether there are unique consequences of the initiatives with militaristic tendencies.

In this chapter I aim to determine if there has been an increase in tendencies of militarism and support for jingoism in Russia during the time that the identity initiatives have been operational. This aim is achieved by approaching the subject from two angles. The first analysis examines other attitudes related to militarism and how they change over time. Like national pride, most attitudes may exist and change independently of militarism, however if multiple related attitudes collectively change in meaningful patterns, it may imply a manifestation of militarism. The second approach uses the survey data to gauge reactions to the different wars and examines if and how Russian society responded differently to the various instances of war.

Militarism of moods and opinions and associated attitudes over time

From a security point of view, rising nationalism may not necessarily be anything to be concerned about. However, if rising nationalism is accompanied by an increasing military prevalence in social and civilian life and a constant high level of readiness for military mobilization, Russia may approximate to Lasswell's garrison state[4] (Berghahn, 1981), and the trouble forewarned by Sperling and Rapaport may be imminent (Rapoport, Patriotic Education in Russia, 2009; Sperling, 2003).

In the following subchapter, a propensity towards militarism is measured by values associated with militarism. What qualifies an attitude to be considered associated with militarism is decided on the basis of what Vagts defines as "militarism of moods and opinions"[5]. According to this concept, militarism is evident through how the military and military methods are perceived in civilian society (Vagts, 1959, p. 15). Every available attitude providing some indication of how the military is viewed is therefore used in the analysis.

Approval of the army

An immediately relevant attitude to consider is how the military is perceived in society. In 2015, Vstiom published 10 years of survey data gauging the approval rating of the Russian army. In contrast to the majority of relevant survey data, this survey is conducted at consistent intervals and frequently enough to provide three observations per year, providing a more detailed understanding of the development over time (Press Release No. 3041, 2016).

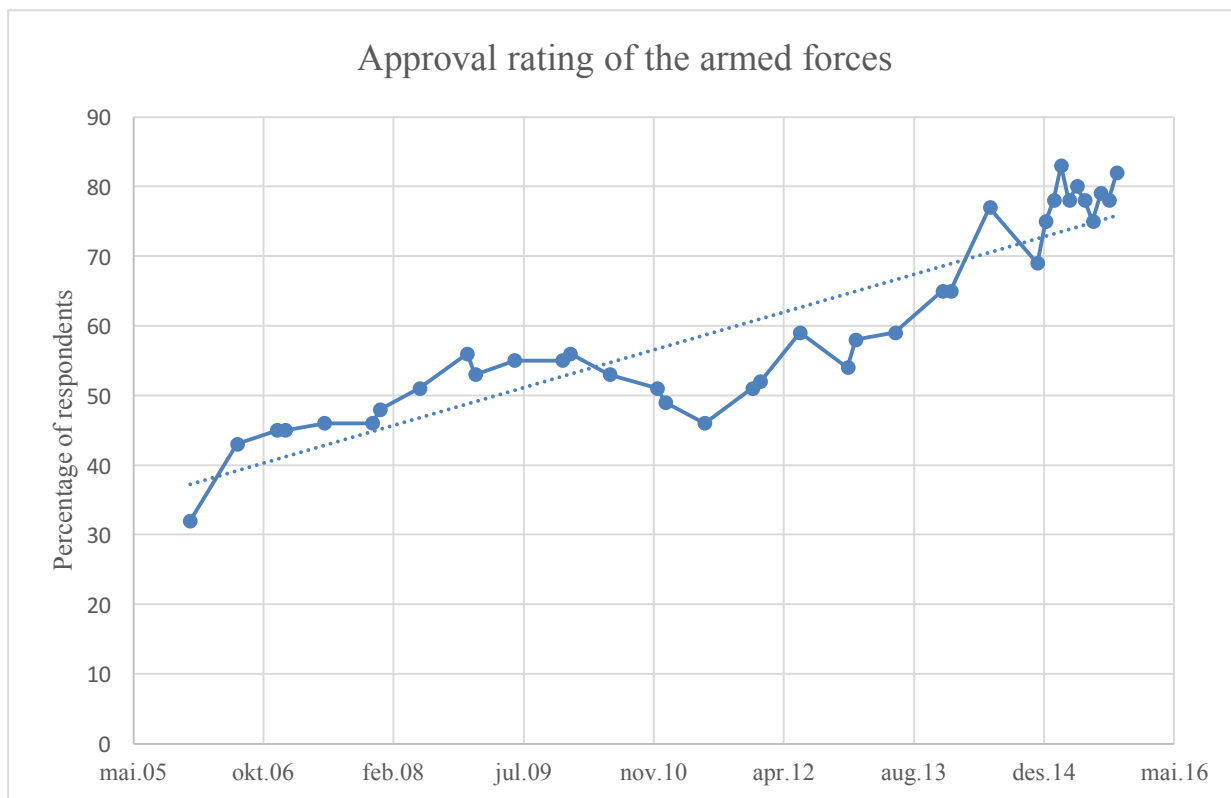[4] Introduced in 1.1.3.
[5] Introduced in 1.1.2.

Figure 4: Vstiom survey, n = 3,000. Question posed as "Do you generally approve or disapprove of the activities of the Russian army? (Closed-ended question, one answer.) (Press Release No. 3041, 2016)

The data reveal a steadily increasing level of approval for the armed forces from 2006 onwards. Even though there are minor fluctuations, the general trend is positive. These responses alone do not tell us anything certain beyond the fact that the approval of the armed forces is rising by itself. By examining the attitudes towards government in the same timespan we may be able to see if the rise in military popularity is simply part of a general trend of improvement in perception for the government, or relates to the enhancement of the military image specifically.
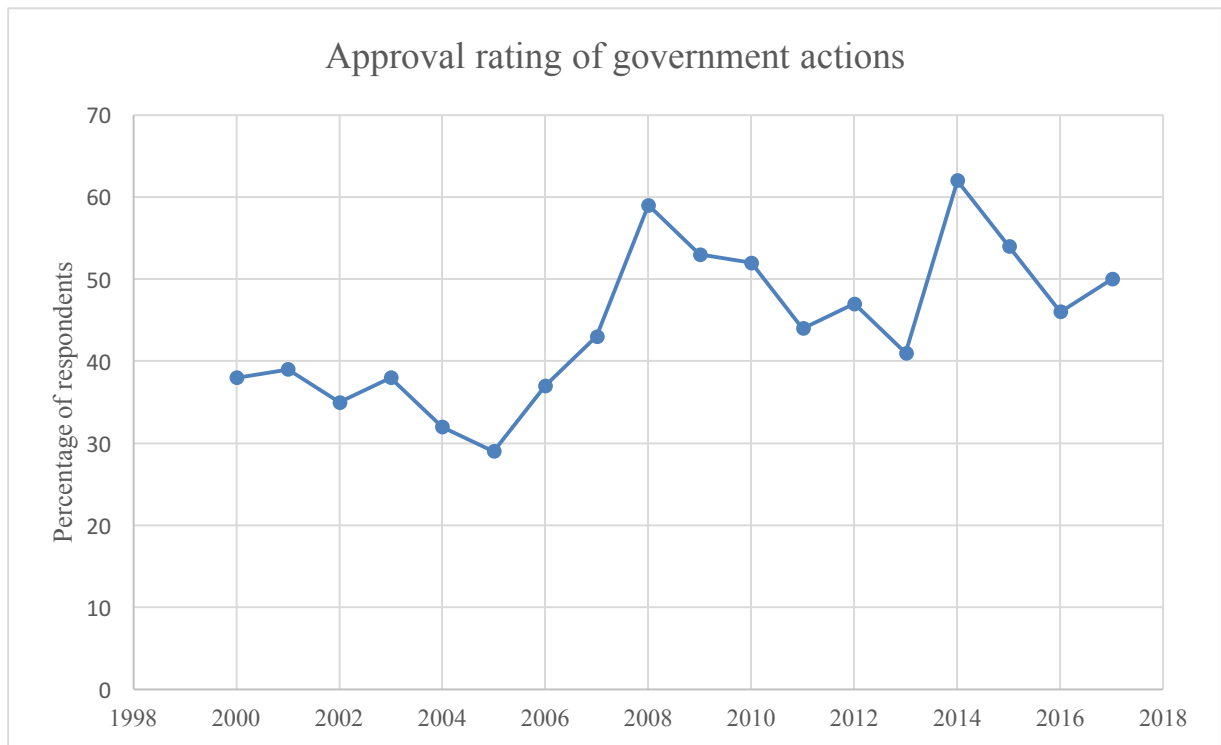
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Figure 5: Levada Survey, n=1,600. Question posed as "Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the actions of the Russian government?" (Approval ratings of government institutions, 2017)

Looking at the survey data from an annual Levada survey that questions the respondents' level of approval of government actions makes for an interesting comparison with the armed forces approval rating. There is a higher variation in level of approval over time than in the military results, and while there is a roughly 20 p.p. increase in approval from the low point around 2006, it is considerably lower than the 50 p.p. increase in approval for the military that we can see in Figure 4.

The more frequent and severe dips in approval suggests the military as an institution is somehow elevated above or exempt from the societal backlash the government may experience. The steeper slope for the military approval rating is indicative of the military as an imperative part of developing Russian attitudes.

Perception of threat

Whether there is a perceived military threat is vital in terms of justification of a high level of military mobilization. As discussed in the previous section 3.2.2 Military identity for the benefit of the regime, there appears to be a conscious effort to generate uncertainty and a perception of threat in Russia. According to Vagts' arguments, this elevated sense of threat can

be used to justify military considerations taking preponderance over civilian concerns, which is a clear indicator of militarism. The survey measuring the level of perceived threat is infrequent and inconsistent resulting in few data points. However, the limited data it does provide are still useful.
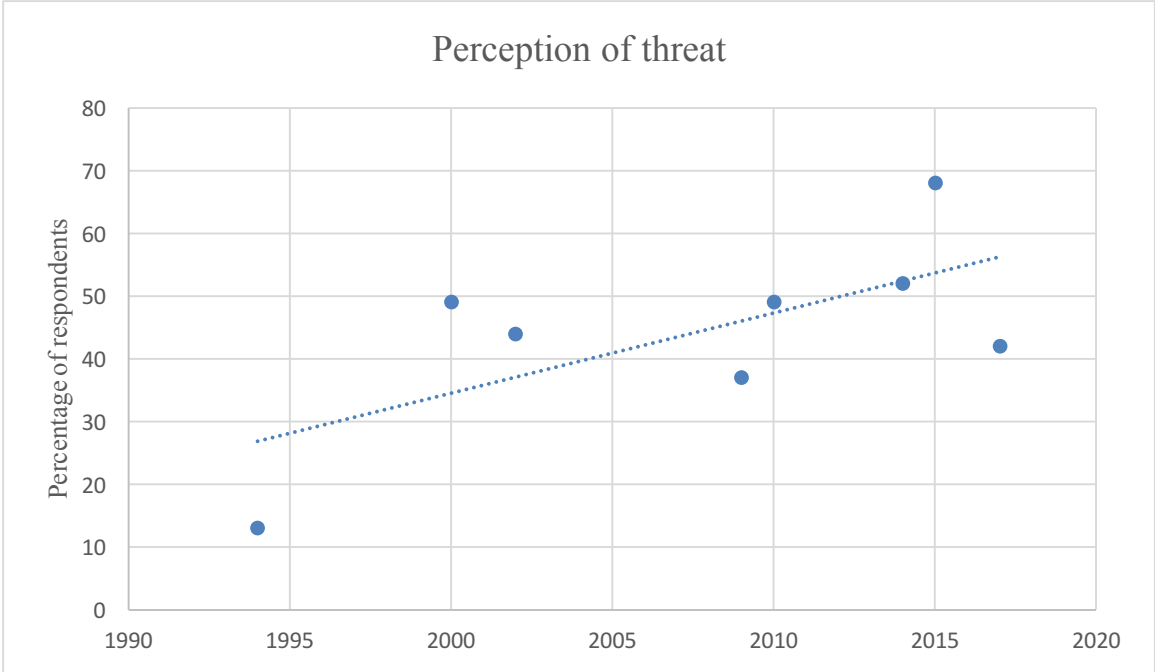

Figure 6: Vstiom survey, n = 1,600. "Yes" alternative to the question "Do you think there is now a military threat to Russia from other countries?" (Press Release No. 3401, 2012).

One early observation in 1994, before the identity initiatives launched, found 13% of respondents to perceive a military threat to Russia. The next observation in 2000 measured the percentage of respondents perceiving a threat to be 49%, alluding to a significant change in attitudes. From 2000 onward, the data reveals the perception of threat to have remained high, peaking around the Ukraine crisis in 2014 and then returning to approximately pre-crisis levels at 42% (Press Release No. 3041, 2016).

Changes in threat perceptions can be expected in any society, as geopolitical events may increase or decrease a sense of security. However, in Russia there is a seemingly permanent elevated sense of threat that may be partially caused by state efforts to maintain a sense of peril. A constant readiness for war is a key characteristic of militarism. A permanent perception of threat does not necessarily translate into readiness for war, but it does, however, instill a civilian preparedness for conflict and justifies a high level of military mobilization.

Military prestige

By making military service prestigious and celebrated, the ability of the military to conduct operations is improved. Military prestige is one of the most prevalent aspects of militarism around the world (Bacevich, 2005). Empirical data suggest that the prestige of the Russian armed forces is gradually rising. To approximate the level of military prestige, a question introduced in Vstiom surveys from 2010 measured whether respondents would like close family to enroll in the army. The initial 2010 survey showed 36% of respondents answering positively. In 2015, 57% of respondents answered positively, meaning that the share of respondents who answered positively increased by 21 p.p. over the timespan of five years.
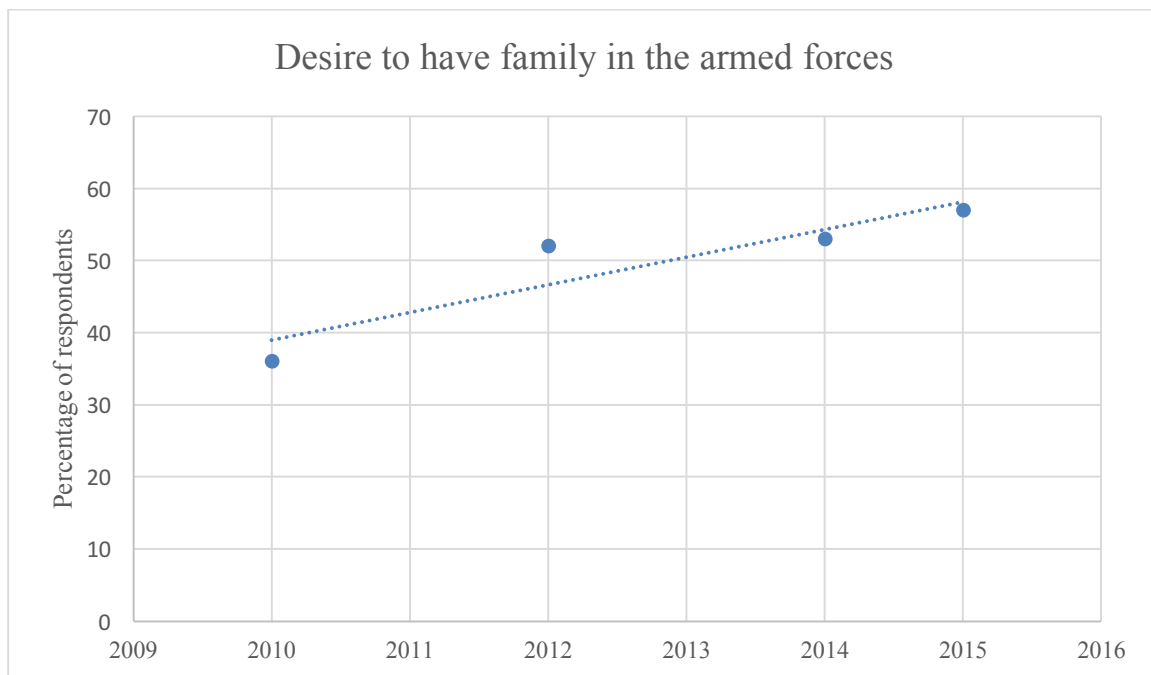

Figure 7, Vstiom survey, n = 1,600. "Rather yes" (Скорее да) alternative to the question "Would you like your son, brother, husband or other close relative to be in the army now?" (Press Release No. 3041, 2016).

Figure 7 shows an increase in positive responses over the relatively short period of five years. Each observation holds a higher share of positive responses than the last, providing us with a clear positive trend. It is evident that the sentiment around military service is very different now, than the description given by Eichler in the late 1990s. The prestige of the Russian armed forces has now reached a level wherein the majority of respondents would like their close relatives to enlist. Military prestige is not necessarily a dangerous phenomenon. It is likely to primarily affect the ease of recruitment. However, it does provide insight into how the military is perceived in a society. While the recent introduction of the question leads to few data points, the available data clearly indicate a rapidly growing level of military prestige.

Importance of military might

Another indicator of militarism worth examining can be found in the Levada data. A series of questions regarding Russia's position in the international community has periodically appeared in Levada surveys. The question prompts respondents to determine the most important characteristic of a great power. The question implies that Russia is a great power. One of the available options for respondents to select is military might. The share of respondents who select this option has been increasing over time.
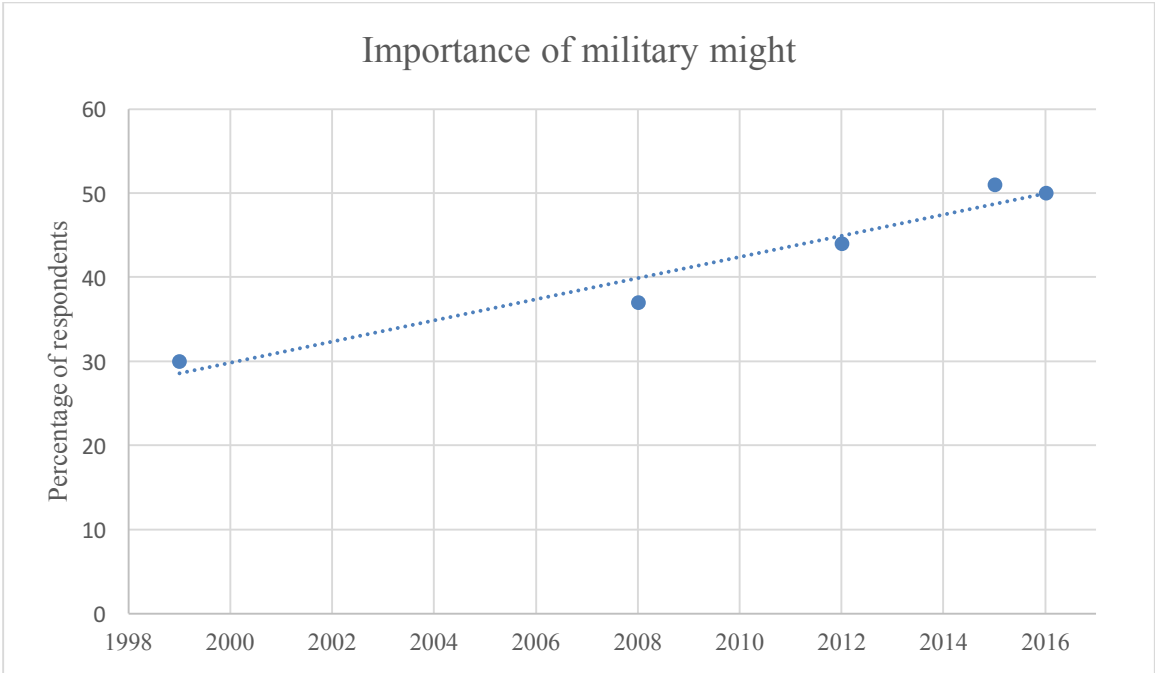
Figure 8: Levada survey. n = 1,600. "Military might" alternative to the question: In your opinion, what does the idea "great power" consist of?" (multiple answers) (Russia as a great power, 2017).

The first measurement in 1999 found 30% of the respondents considered military might to be the most important characteristic of a great power. According to the most recent measurements in 2016, the share of respondents who opted for the military might alternative had increased to 50%. The highest measurement for military might occurred in 2015 at 51%. The interpretation of these data is rather direct. The importance of military power is increasing for Russian respondents. Having a strong military capability and a willingness to use it to promote national interests are fundamental principles of militarism, meaning that the trend towards increasing importance for the military may indicate a propensity towards militarism.

Understanding the data

This thesis is not trying to prove or disprove the existence of militarism in Russia, but rather attempting to establish if the propensity towards militarism is increasing as a consequence of the identity initiatives. The difficulty of controlling for other influences and the lack of available data, before and after the initiatives went into effect, are major obstacles to determining the effect they have had. By looking at how values related to militarism develop over time, we are not circumventing these challenges, but the information we acquire may be utilized to better understand how attitudes in Russia are developing in the timespan that the identity initiatives are active. This examination cannot provide a direct causal relationship between militarism and identity initiatives, however, it can determine whether there is an increase in the propensity towards militarism in the period of interest.

Attitudes in relation to approval of the armed forces, military prestige and importance of military might all have positive trends, indicative that Russian society is gradually becoming more receptive towards militarist ideals. The perception of threat observations were unique as more recent observations revealed that this attitude remained at relatively stable levels and that the positive trend was largely influenced by a single observation from 1994. This relationship is visually presented in Figure 9.
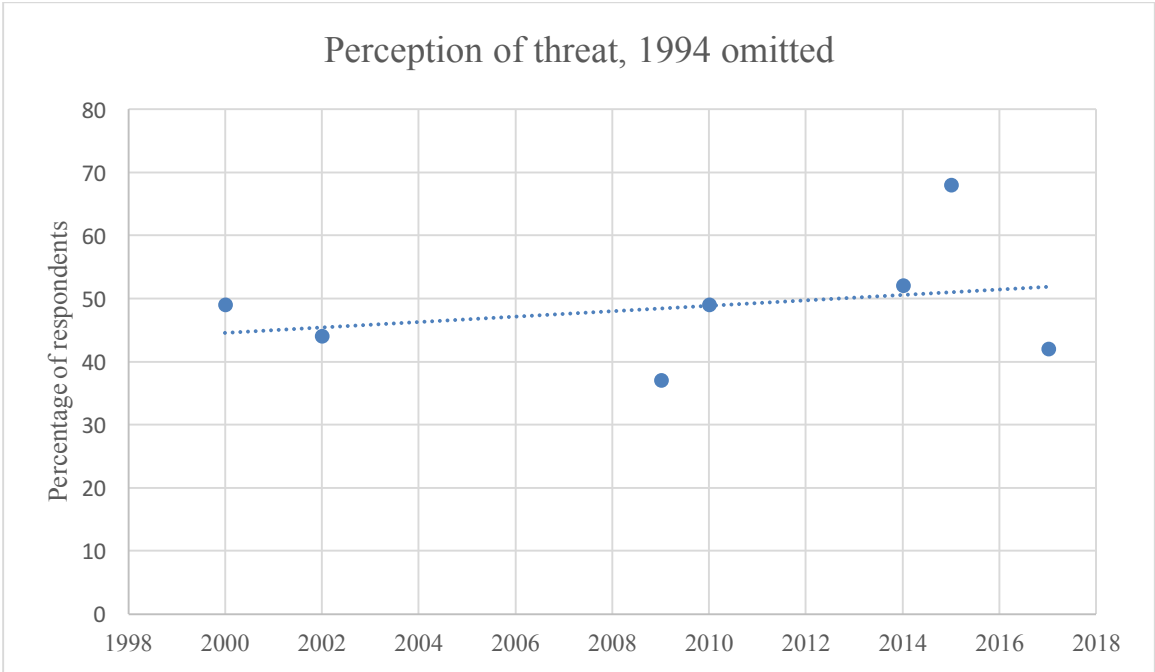

Figure 9: Vstiom survey, n = 1,600. "Yes" alternative to the question "Do you think there is now a military threat to Russia from other countries?" (Press Release No. 3401, 2012)

The perception of threat has remained roughly at the same level, with the exception of a spike in 2015, probably relating to the Ukraine crisis tensions with the West. Even though there is no distinct rise in the perception of threat in the timespan that the identity initiatives have been active, the maintained high level of perceived threat is worth considering in the analysis. When approximately 50% of respondents believe there to be a serious foreign threat the threat perception can be considered to be high, considering the 13% observed in the early 1990s. Conjecture about a looming war is easily used to justify military means and could aid the manifestation of militaristic ideologies. The relatively stable level of the observations from 2000 to 2017 suggests the identity initiatives are not causing an increase of the perceived threat of foreign states. The initiatives may yet play a role in maintaining the high levels of perceived threat evident in the data.

While the perception of threat is not gradually growing like the other measured attitudes, a permanent elevated perception of threat is still an indicator of militarism, meaning all observed attitudes indicate some propensity towards militarism. However, even though this interpretation is intuitive and rather straightforward—two reservations should be made when utilizing this data to make assumptions. Firstly, there is variety in the timespan and frequency of the data points for the various variables. While the data that are available indicate a constant positive trend for each of the variables, there may be considerable fluctuations in attitudes over the relevant years without any observations to represent it. Secondly, according to Goode's findings, survey data on Russian attitudes might not be representative. Goode argues that survey respondents are inclined to agree with what they perceive the state to intend for them to answer on questions related to concepts of patriotism.

The first reservation is difficult to address. Most of the measured attitudes are in some instances missing data for consecutive years, leaving unfavorable gaps in the timeline. Given the intertwined relationship between the attitudes and the armed forces, one could argue for looking at the attitude to the armed forces, which has annual observations, and expect the other values to have a similar trend in the missing years. Ironically enough, the observations one could potentially use to address the first reservation, are the very same that are the most likely to be affected by the second. Goode finds that Russian respondents make a distinction between being a patriot and what patriotism is. Based on his findings, Russians believe that to be a patriot one must support the state, regardless of one's own beliefs, while patriotism is a personal interpretation of how one best supports one's country or community. Being a patriot is perceived to be a desirable trait, and an increase in the approval of the armed forces may then

not necessarily be a societal change in attitude towards the armed forces, but rather an increase in respondents who consider themselves to be patriots. These particular respondents may believe it is important to the state that the armed forces are approved of. The questions best equipped to circumvent the second reservation are not binary in the response alternatives or are not as easily recognized to have a "state-endorsed" answer. The importance of military might, where respondents were allowed to rank their responses from a list of multiple options, and the perception of threat question, which has a more diluted connection to patriotic sentiment, are therefore the least likely to have been influenced by patriotic distortion. Both of these questions however, as previously mentioned, have infrequent and few records.

Having discussed the weaknesses of the data and the difficulty of addressing them, I still argue that the data are useful. If one is clear about the limitations of the data and take these reservations seriously, there are worthwhile observations to be made. Despite the limited data for each attitude, there are similar trends expressed in all of them. So while we are limited when looking at each attitude individually, I argue that the trends collectively provide circumstantial evidence for the propagation of militarism.

4.1.2 War and attitude

A few of the survey questions stands out from the rest, due to how long and frequently they have been used in surveys. These attitude measurements with higher frequency of observations may be used to see if attitudes change around specific events. There was an unprecedented wave of patriotism measured immediately after the annexation of Crimea and overt military operations in Ukraine (Daucé, Laruelle, Rousselet, & Le Huérou, 2015). This was very different to the reaction of public outrage against the First Chechen War roughly 20 years before. These different reactions prompt the question of whether Russian society is less opposed to war now than it used to be.

This subchapter examines how war influences the development of Russian societal attitudes by adding armed conflicts to the timeline displaying changes in attitude. The utilization of the data with more observations makes it possible to determine whether changes in attitudes are occurring in reaction to conflict. While the reactions to a conflict have contextual elements that are likely to influence societal response to some degree, I argue that there are elements determining societal response unrelated to the specific intricacies of a conflict. This response is related to a society's willingness to shoulder the burden of war, especially in a state such as Russia where recruitment is partially reliant upon conscription.

This analysis adds the First Chechen War (December 1994–August 1996), the Second Chechen War (August 1999–April 2009), the Russo-Georgian War (August 2008) and the Russian involvement in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea (February 2014–ongoing) to the timelines indicating respondents' approval of armed forces and Russian progression. Through this comparison it is possible to gauge if and how these conflicts made tangible impacts on Russian attitudes.

War and the approval of the armed forces

The approval rating of the armed forces is measured consecutively over a 10-year period and with a relatively high frequency. The high number of observations for this variable makes it suitable for an alternative method of analysis that examines the relationship between attitudes and war.
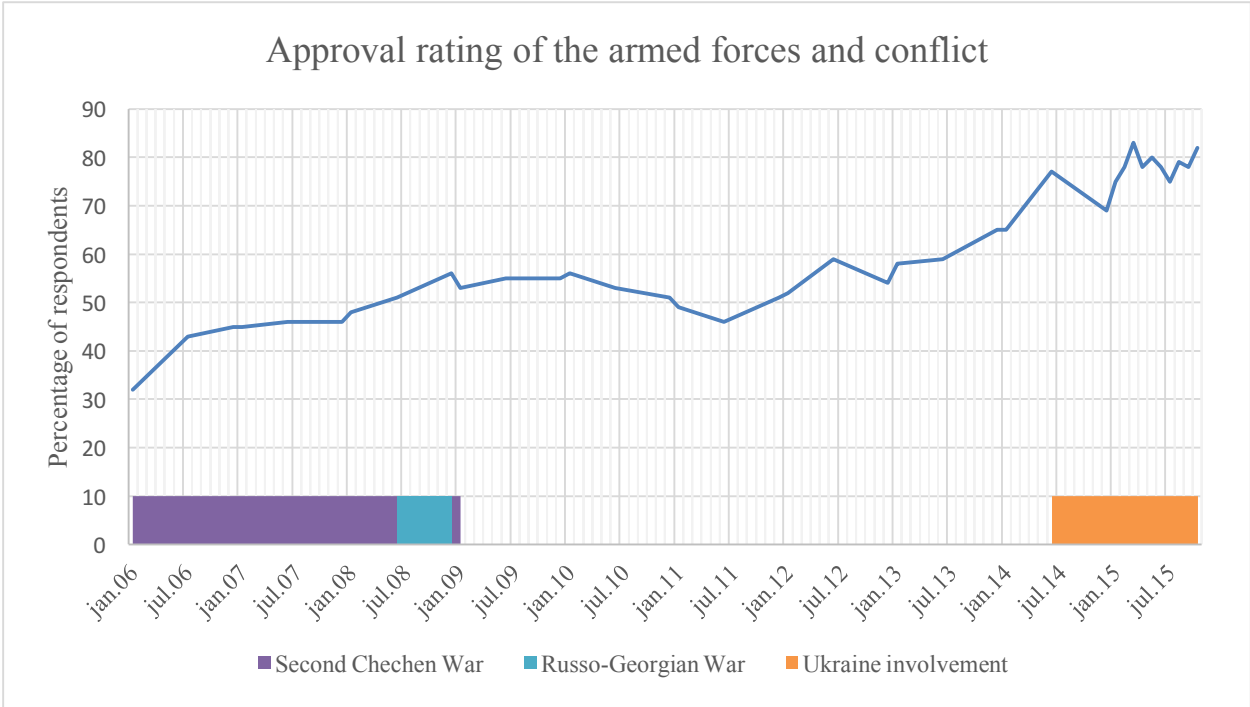
Figure 10: Vstiom survey, n = 3,000. (Press Release No. 3041, 2016)   Figure 4 with conflicts added to the timeline. The conflict is marked to begin and end at the first and last observation of the variable made during the conflict. The timeline does not accurately represent when conflicts begin and end, but rather when the first and last observation of the variable was made in the time period the conflict occurred.

The 10-year period during which the attitude is measured covers the latter part of the Second Chechen War, the Russo-Georgian War, and the current Ukraine involvement. Figure 10 expresses the approval rating over time, with armed conflicts added to the timeline. The figure reveals the data to possess an intricate ambiguity. The positive trend is more pronounced in times of conflict, while also revealing that there may be spikes in approval without war.

Immediately evident is that The Second Chechen War and the Russo-Georgian War coincide with years of constant rises in the approval rate. After the two wars end, the approval rating of the military appears to cede its positive trend and remain at more stable levels. While the period between the Second Chechen War and the involvement in Ukraine has no overall trend to speak of, one can see a clear dip and peak in the graph around mid-2011 and mid-2012 respectively. During the Russian involvement in Ukraine the approval rating reached unprecedented levels, peaking at 83% in March 2015.

While a spike in approval around the instigation of a conflict is to be expected in accordance with a rally around the flag syndrome,[6] even the extended periods of conflicts coincide with a consistent increase in approval. Rally to the flag induced surges of approval are expected to provide short term steep increases, and a subsequent gradual decline ultimately leaving the approval roughly equal to pre-conflict levels. The data thus implies the relationship between approval of the armed forces and conflict to be more advanced than the default approval rise one can expect at the beginning of a conflict. However, not much else can be derived about the relationship from this data. The revealed fluctuations in approval during peacetime allude to other potential influences not considered, and the sample size of only three wars over the course of the then years of available data are significant restrictions to consider. These obstacles are hard to address as wars are not a common occurrence, and it is inconceivable to control for all influences on attitudes. These aspects must be taken into account when making deductions, and ultimately leads to limited inferences as one wants to ascertain one is not grounding arguments in spurious relationships.

War and whether the country is moving in the right direction

By using the same method of analysis on a variable with observations spanning a longer period of time, additional wars may be added to the timeline. Out of the limited number of questions with frequent and longstanding observations, the question "Overall, is the country moving in the right direction or going down the wrong path?" found in the Levada data is the most suitable. The question has annual observations since 1993, which are consistently measured in August.

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[6] Short term increase of public support for government during wartime (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2011, p. 101)

Whether respondents perceive the state to be moving in the right direction does not hold the same immediate relation to attitudes towards the military and has a lower frequency of observations than the measurements of approval rating of the military. Yet, the longer timespan covered by the question allows for the inclusion of additional conflicts in the timeline and therefore provides a more comprehensive indication of how Russian society reacts to conflict.

Figure 11: Levada survey, n= 1,600. "Moving in the right direction" alternative to the question "Overall, is the country moving in the right direction or going down the wrong path?" (Approval ratings of government institutions, 2017) The conflict is marked to begin and end at the first and last observation of the variable made during the conflict. The timeline does not accurately represent when conflicts begin and end, but rather when the first and last observation of the variable was made in the time period the conflict occurred.

The observations expressed in Figure 11 cover the First Chechen War and the years prior to 2006 of the Second Chechen War (missing from the approval of armed forces data). The figure reveals strikingly positive shifts in attitude to align peculiarly well with the outbreak of conflict. Every single conflict is accompanied with a steep increase in share of respondents who consider Russia to be moving in the right direction.

The sharp drop in the graph after the First Chechen War alludes to the negative societal response that developed over the course of the war as discussed by Eichler (see page 21). After the conflict, only 10% of respondents believed Russia was heading in the right direction, which was the lowest observed value over the 24 years of recorded data. The first three years of the Second Chechen War is concurrent with a rise from 12% in 1999 to 37% of respondents answering positively in 2001. This time, the shift in values do not sink after its initial surge and remains relatively stable at its new elevated level. The Russo-Georgian War coincides with

another peak in the graph. This time the values do recede after the war but remain higher than they were before the war broke out. The last conflict on the timeline, the Russian involvement in Ukraine, overlaps with the steepest incline in the graph. This incline occurs between 2013 and 2014 wherein the share of respondents who responded positively increased from 40% to 64%. As with the Russo-Georgian War, there is a decline after the sharp positive shift, but the values appear to stabilize at a considerably higher level than before the conflict.

While the attitude towards whether the country is moving in the right direction appears to have more shifts of higher severity than the approval for the armed forces, the shifts indicate strong positive trends coinciding with conflict. Beyond reinforcing the previous findings, the data also reveals how the First Chechen War appears to be the only war where the surge of positive answers could potentially be caused purely by the rally around the flag syndrome. There were fluctuations in attitudes during and after the other conflicts, but the share of positive responses never decreased below its pre-war values after any of them. Although potentially coincidental, and empirically so difficult to argue for that its mention is mostly anecdotal, the three later conflicts that coincide with permanent elevation of attitudes all occurred while the identity initiatives can be considered to have been in effect. This analysis, even though it takes additional conflict and a longer timespan into consideration, suffers from the same chief weakness as the previous; a magnitude of other potential influences not controlled for. Even though the restrictions are still present, this data consists of annual observations over multiple decades, which makes it easier to address the issue. The attitude towards the armed forces has been observed thrice annually over three decades. This provides a detailed overview of the development in the 10-year timespan, but without having a comparable number of data on another potential influence in the same time span, it is not feasible to control for it. The annual and longstanding data on whether respondents believe Russia to be moving in the right direction aligns well with available data for a potentially major influence—the Russian economy.

Annual estimates of the Russian gross domestic product (GDP) available from The World Bank is used as an indicator for the economy. By graphing economic development in conjunction with the changes in Russian attitude we may examine if the positive shifts in attitude correlate with a growing economy and vice versa.

Figure 12: Levada survey, n= 1,600. Blue line represents the "Moving in the right direction" alternative to the question: "Overall, is the country moving in the right direction or going down the wrong path?" Dotted line represents gross domestic product in current USD retrieved from The World Bank (Approval ratings of government institutions, 2017; The World Bank, 2017) The conflict is noted to begin and end at the first and last observation of the variable made during the conflict. The timeline does not accurately represent when conflicts begin and end, but rather when the first and last observation of the variable was made in the time period the conflict occurred.

The relationship between the economy and responses to the question of whether Russians perceive the country to be heading in the right direction is expressed in Figure 12. Instantly evident in the figure are three key instances that appear contradictory. First, as evident during the initial years of the First Chechen War, there can be strong surges in attitude without any comparable change in economic development. Secondly, the peak and the following dip in attitude around the Russo-Georgian War appear to correlate perfectly with the rise and fall of the Russian economy. And lastly, major economic growth may occur without any shift in attitude as is seen in the data between 2010 and 2013.

The first and the last instance imply that there is little to no relation between economic development and changing attitude as the two rise and fall independently from one another. The second instance, on the other hand, suggests a high correlation. Between 2007 and 2010, the bar lines are close to perfectly symmetrical, which is indicative of high interdependence. The data present an ambiguous relationship that is difficult to interpret. The seemingly changing level of correlation may be caused by the economy holding a higher or lower level of importance in the society at different times, or the one instance of perfect correlation may be a spurious relationship caused by an unknown confounding factor.

Regression analysis for war and whether the country is moving in the right direction

Do wars cause positive shifts in state-related opinions in Russia, and if so, is this tendency becoming more prominent as new generations of Russians grow up with the identity initiatives? The first analysis using the approval rating of the armed forces and conflicts since 2006 found the positive trends in the approval rating to be stronger in times of conflict. The second analysis using the share of respondents who perceive Russia to be moving in the right direction possessed data points from further back in time that enabled the analysis to gauge societal reactions to The First Chechen War and the Second Chechen War. The findings from this data align well with those of the approval of the armed forces analysis, showing stronger positive tendencies during wartime.

When graphing the attitude over time in conjunction with GDP both complete independence and perfect correlation is apparent between the two variables at various points in the graph. The complexity of the relationship invites analysis beyond visual interpretation. Regression analysis[7] is used in an attempt to find more conclusive answers.

Due to the data being salvaged from various press releases, it is somewhat limited in nature. The dependent variable is given in a percentage, which makes it a bound variable.[8] Since we are interested in whether tendencies become stronger over time, we want to use a model that can reveal a nonlinear relationship. These two issues together are severely limiting as nonlinear models will struggle with a bound dependent variable.

To address these two issues, I employ a tobit model and add an interaction variable between conflict and time. The tobit model is a linear model that allows for right and left censoring, meaning the range can be set to limit the predictions to be between 0 and 100. While the tobit model has this added utility, it is less straightforward to interpret than the OLS model.[9] Because of this, an OLS model is run with the same input and if the results are approximately identical, it is indicated that the OLS model estimates valid predictions and may be used for interpretation purposes. The issue of a potential nonlinear coefficient for the conflict variable is addressed by adding in an interaction variable between time and conflict. One can determine if the positive effect of war becomes stronger over time.

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[7] Regressions and assumption tests are conducted in Rstudio version 3.3.1.
[8] A variable bound to a specific set of values, in this case values between 0 and 100.
[9] Tobit model can be interpreted as effect on the uncensored latent variable and not the observed outcome as it is in OLS regression.

Table 1: Tobit model coefficients 1993-2016. Censoring: Left: 0. Right: 100. Standard errors added in parenthesis.

	Is Russia moving in the right direction?	
GDP	0.031***	(0.009)
Time	1.535***	(0.482)
Conflict	-4.163	(4.426)
GDP: Time (interaction)	-0.001***	(0.0005)
Time: Conflict (interaction)	0.908***	(0.311)
Constant	3.573	(4.809)
Observations	24	
Log Likelihood	-73.166	
Wald Test	167.231*** (df = 5)	

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The tobit model parameters visible in Table 1 provide a set of valid predictions where all but one coefficient are significant at a 99% confidence level. The conflict coefficient is not significant as its estimated effect is now largely bound up in the interaction effect between conflict and time.

Table 2: OLS model coefficients 1993-2016. Standard errors added in parenthesis.

	Is Russia moving in the right direction?	
GDP	0.031***	(0.011)
Time	1.535**	(0.557)
Conflict	-4.163	(5.110)
GDP: Time (interaction)	-0.001**	(0.001)
Conflict: Conflict (interaction)	0.908**	(0.359)
Constant	3.573	(5.553)
Observations	24	
R^2	0.874	
Adjusted R^2	0.840	
Residual Std. Error	5.891 (df = 18)	
F Statistic	25.085*** (df = 5; 18)	

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The coefficient predictions from the OLS model are identical to the tobit predictions. There are slight differences in standard errors, reducing the confidence level to 95% for three of the coefficients, the change does not meaningfully alter the interpretations. Because of the close approximation, the estimates may be used for interpretation purposes as long as one keeps the limits of the dependent variable in mind. The primary coefficient we are interested in from the model is the one estimated for the interaction variable between conflict and time. The coefficient should be interpreted as the expected increase of the effect of conflict when time increases with one. Time is coded as number of years since first observation, meaning the effect of conflict is predicted to have had a positive effect of 0.9 p.p. increase on the share of respondents answering positively in 1993, 9 p.p. in 2003, 18 p.p. in 2013 and so on and so forth, controlled for GDP, time and any interaction effect between GDP and time.

As for the control variables, the GDP coefficient should be interpreted as the expected percentage increase in share of respondents who answer positively per 10 billion USD increase in Russian GDP, controlled for time, conflict, the interaction effect between time and conflict, and the interaction effect between time and GDP. The model estimates this effect to be a 0.031 p.p. increase, which translates to a 31 p.p. increase per 1 trillion USD of GDP. Controlling for time prevents unrelated gradual change over time from being misattributed as an effect for another variable. The coefficient can be interpreted as an expected 1.54 p.p. increase in share of respondents who answer positively per year, controlled for the effect of conflict, GDP, and the interaction effect time has on the two variables. The coefficient for the interaction effect between GDP and time is estimated to be a 0.001 p.p. increase per year, controlled for GDP, conflict, time and the interaction effect between conflict and time—meaning there is no significant real interaction effect between the two.

The adjusted R^2 of the model is 0.84, meaning that the model explains 84% of the variance of the dependent variable adjusted for the number of independent variables. The number is quite high, indicating a respectable reliability of fit between the model and the data.

Assumptions of the model

The OLS model used to create the predictions in Table 2 makes certain assumptions when calculating predictions. Some of these assumptions cannot be checked by direct observation of the data and require testing. To ascertain that the OLS model's predictions are the best linear estimate, the following assumptions need to be tested: the mean of the residuals is zero and they

should be normally distributed, there is homoscedasticity of residuals, there is no autocorrelation and there is no multicollinearity (Christophersen, 2013, p. 73).

The mean of residuals is quite accessible as the residuals may be extracted from the model in R, allowing for the mean to be easily calculated. The mean of the residuals in the model is calculated to be 3.469447e-16, which is approximately zero, so the assumption is accepted as true.[10] A Shapiro-Wilk test[11] is utilized to test the distribution of the residuals, which determines the distribution to be acceptably distributed.

The homoscedastic residuals assumption requires variance to be constant among the residuals. To determine if the assumption holds true the residuals are plotted against fitted values to examine if there are any evident trends.
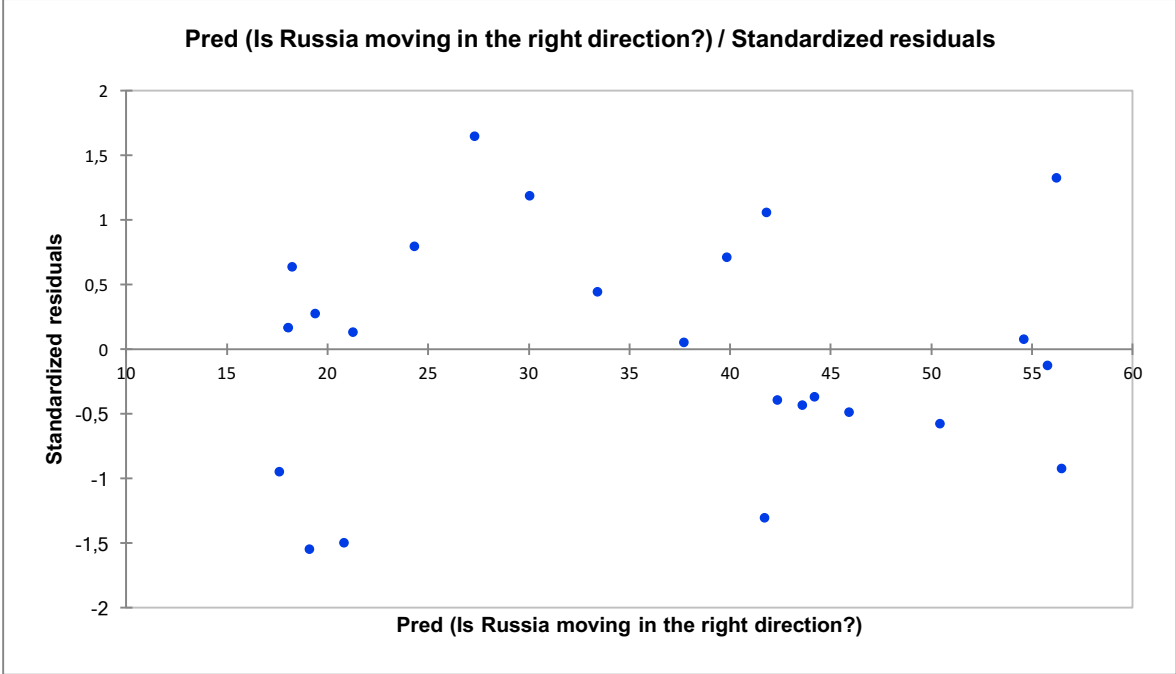

Figure 13: Scatterplot. Residuals vs fitted values from OLS regression.

The model uses relatively few observations, which results in a wide spread of the points apparent in Figure 13. For the assumption to hold true there should be increasing or decreasing trends of variance from 0. Such a trend would be evident by a cone or inverse cone shape of the observations in the scatterplot. There appears to be no systematic changes in the variance of the residuals and the assumption holds true. To further reinforce the reliability of the estimation, the Global Validation of Linear Models Assumptions (Pena & Slate, 2006) (GVLMA) function

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[10] 3.469447e-16 is scientific notation for 3.469447×10^{-16}.
[11] See Royston (1982).

is used to detect if there is heteroscedasticity, and no significant estimate is returned, meaning the function finds the residuals to be homoscedastic.

The autocorrelation assumption needs to be tested for in time series data such as the one used in the analysis. If residuals are autocorrelated it means that a current value depends on a previous value. While autocorrelation provides correct coefficient estimates, it increases the coefficient variance. To test for autocorrelation, a correlation test between current and lagged residuals is plotted.
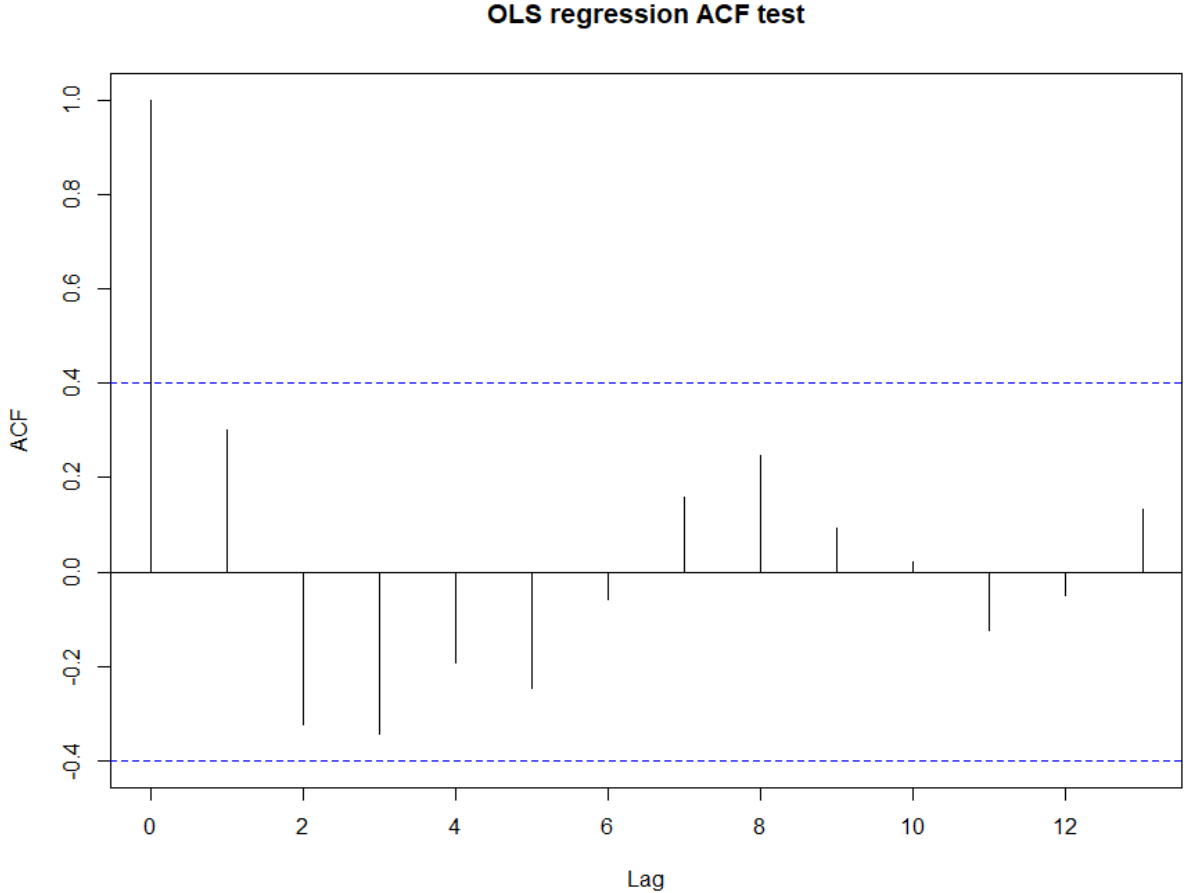

Figure 14: ACF test for OLS regression.

The test result observable in Figure 14 indicates no significant autocorrelation. The blue lines in the plot indicate the highest acceptable amounts of correlation between residuals and lagged residuals. The plot shows all lagged correlations as falling within the accepted parameter.

The last assumption on multicollinearity is an unavoidable issue for the model due to the inclusion of interaction variables. While the presence of multicollinearity does not compromise the coefficient estimates, it is likely to increase the standard error of the coefficients. Fortunately, the presence of multicollinearity does not necessarily mean the model has a multicollinearity problem. The variation inflation factor[12] does suggest multicellularity between the independent variables as is expected. However, the coefficient of the interaction variable between time and conflict, which is the coefficient of interest, has
a meaningful effect regardless of whether the true effect is at the higher or lower end of the confidence interval. This means the model may be used for analysis even though the assumption of no multicollinearity is not upheld.

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[12] VIF – a measurement of multicollinearity, here tested with the VIF function in R.

4.2 Discussion and findings

Over time the approval for the armed forces, military prestige, and importance of military might are all found to have positive trends. The perception of threat is found to be at a high but relatively stable level. These attitudes are associated with militarism and their gradual increase suggests a growing propensity for militarism in Russian society. While most of these values have infrequent observations, the similar results for each of the values presents a strong indication of how the values related to militarism are developing over time.

By using the values with a higher number of observations in a more detailed analysis, conflicts are revealed to coincide with stronger positive trends on the timeline. Even though the variable measuring the attitude towards the armed forces has the highest number of observations, the 10-year span used and the lack of data with comparable detail limit the utility of the observations. For these reasons, a less pertinent attitude measuring the share of respondents who believe Russia is heading in the right direction, with observations covering a wider timespan, is used for comparison and regression purposes. While the attitude is not as closely associated with militarism as the previously mentioned ones, the measurements do give an indication of the societal response to war. The analysis reveals wars to have a nonlinear positive effect, where the positive effect on attitude becomes stronger for each passing year from 1993 to 2016.

A reservation to consider when interpreting the data is presented by Goode. Goode argues that there is a tendency for Russian respondents to opt for answers they perceive to be desired by the regime. If this is true, the positive trends may be caused by a shift in what Russian respondents perceive the state to desire. While some of the questions are less prone to the effect due to less obvious "regime-positive" answers or prompts for the respondents to rank multiple alternatives, many of the questions are binary with a clear "regime-positive" alternative. This potential weakness should not be forgotten when deliberating analysis results that utilize the survey data.

5   Conclusions and suggestions for further research

While I cannot establish exactly what the motivation or the consequences of the identity initiatives are, I argue there are clear indications of intention and effect provided by means of analysis. The motivation is approximated through examination of implementation of initiatives and who benefits from the implementations. The consequences are investigated by analyzing how Russian attitudes change over time.

The first section of this thesis analyzed previous literature discussing potential motivations for the identity initiatives in conjunction with real-world instances of initiative implementation to determine why the Russian state is attempting to construct a national identity with a prominent military component.

The current identity initiatives provide the clearest benefits to the regime and the military while official rhetoric maintains that the initiatives primarily serve Russian society. The way in which youth are being encouraged to engage in military activities, the way the perception of threat is being reinforced, and the way in which the military is being celebrated in the civilian sphere are all prominent components of the initiatives that symbiotically advance agency for both the military institution and the sitting regime.

The analysis finds the motivations behind the identity is multifaceted. While the initiatives appear to initially have been instigated to improve what was the rapidly disintegrating relationship between the military and society in the 1990s, the purpose has evolved into an elaborate and expansive program of citizenship education designed to consolidate regime power. While the primary aim is found to be providing benefits to the sitting regime, the methods used rely heavily on the military and thus also provide significant benefits to the Russian military. The persistence of the military component of the initiatives can thus be explained by the initial military focus, and later as a convenient platform around which the regime could consolidate support.

When discussing the potential consequences of the identity initiatives a cause-effect relationship is difficult to establish due to the high number of other potential influences. The second part of this thesis attempts to provide an indicator of the initiatives' consequences by examining change over time in Russian survey data. The indicators of militarism over time analysis finds the values associated with militarism to possess clear positive trends, indicating an increasing propensity towards militarism in Russian society. Subsequent analyses investigate

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the effect of conflicts on attitudes to determine whether the societal reaction towards war changes over the course of the identity initiatives period. Measurements of GDP are added to control for economic development as a potential spurious effect on attitude. Both qualitative and quantitative interpretations of the data reveal conflict to have an increasingly positive effect on attitude, ultimately suggesting that Russian society is gradually becoming more accepting of, if not embracing, conflict.

Applying the findings of the two separate sections of the thesis together allows for a brief discussion of intention and repercussions of the identity initiatives.

The initial goals of the initiatives were achieved in a short span of time, evident by the improved standing of the armed forces in the early 2000s. The almost immediate success of these initiatives might have inspired the development of further initiative goals, leading to the more intricate current state of motivation. Each of the initiatives examined appeared to address rather specific short term goals such as improving the standing of the military or consolidating public support. The growing propensity towards militarism and the amplification of positive reactions to war appears to develop outside of any agenda and rather as unplanned by-products. The manifestation of militarism in Russian society is indicated by these by-products. Even though this manifestation is not part of any long term goal and rather a repercussion of the persistent military components of the identity initiatives, its appearance is not unsolicited. The emergence of militarism enables the rapid acquisition of public support by using military rhetoric or the military in policy, which I claim the current regime is acutely aware of.

While there is a plethora of recent literature dedicated to the examination of Russia and her capacity for war, not much research has been carried out on the changing Russian attitudes and its role in Russian risk assessment. This thesis is therefore largely explorative and touches upon multiple fields worthy of further examination. Most prominent is the amplifying positive effect of conflict on attitude. The effect revealed in this thesis invites research addressing the reaction to different conflicts in further detail and should be investigated both collectively and on a case by case basis. A time series examination of similar attitudes stratified by age groups could also provide valuable insight towards how attitudes develop for different age groups, and if there are substantial differences between generations being exposed to initiatives at an early age through schools and youth programs, the generations who grew up in the absence of any programs, and the older generations who experienced citizenship education in the USSR. This thesis is a pilot study revealing that there are a considerable number of aspects of Russian national identity development that are worthy of further examination. Russia is a major political

power that has shown herself willing to assert herself militarily, despite threats from other powerful states, international organizations and coalitions. This renders the desire to recognize and quantify Russian military capacity significant. However, society and the military do not exist and function independently of each other and the changing components of Russian national identity are important to understand in relation both to Russian motivation and capability.

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Attachements

Attachment 1: Constructed dataset

See: Attached USB flash drive

Attachment 2: R Script

See: Attached USB flash drive