

The London School of Economics and Political Science

*Stigmatisation in International Relations:
Russia, the West and International Society
from the Cold War to Crimea*

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A thesis submitted to the Department of International Relations of
the London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, London, September 2019.

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Abstract

This study analyses the effect of stigmatisation – the process of marking certain actors, behaviours or attributes as deviant in order to reinforce the norms of a social order – on Russian-Western relations from 1991 to 2016 and the broader normative fabric of post-Cold War international society. Building on the stigma literature in Sociology and recent applications of stigma theory in International Relations, stigmatisation is conceptualised as a relational process central to how international politics works, most notably in terms of what it means to be a ‘normal’ state.

The study makes two overall contributions. First, to the literature on Russian-Western relations, it provides a critical-theoretical, relational account of the co-constitutive relationship between the two that goes beyond the blame game of much recent work. Second, to the literature on international society and international norms, it provides an account of the contestation that takes place over norms to shape expectations of ‘normality’ in international society. In the process, it also offers to the IR stigma literature a sociological conceptualisation of stigmatisation that challenges structural, psychological conceptualisations.

The study adopts a fourfold definition of the components of stigmatisation (stereotyping, labelling, separation and status loss), and a fourfold definition of stigma management strategies (stigma recognition, stigma evasion, stigma rejection, counter-stigmatisation). It uses these foundations to analyse Russian-Western relations in respect of four norms of state behaviour deemed central to contemporary international society: (liberal) democracy, human rights, non-aggression, (liberal) capitalism. It gauges how stigmatisation and stigma management work in relation to each norm, and what that says about the norm’s importance in contemporary international relations. In conclusion, the study considers the extent to which stigmatisation in Russian-Western relations has made international society ‘hang together’, that is whether Western stigmatisation of Russian behaviour and Russian stigma management has served to strengthen or weaken international society’s norms.

Acknowledgments

The first people who should be thanked are my two supervisors, George Lawson and Iver Neumann. Each in their own distinctive, generous, warm and often refreshingly direct ways, George and Iver have provided first-rate guidance through both the intellectual and human challenges that come with pursuing a PhD, as well as expert knowledge on the natural habitats of salmon. The thesis would never be where it is without them, and I owe them both a huge debt of gratitude.

I have been privileged to be part of an amazing group of PhD students in the LSE IR Department. Thank you for comments, conversations and friendship to Sarah Bertrand, Kelly-Jo Bluen, Ilaria Carrozza, Ida Danewid, Nicola Degli Esposti, Kentaro Fujikawa, Kerry Goettlich, Scott Hamilton, Alvina Hoffmann, Marnie Howlett, Marissa Kemp, Jackie Majnemer, Aaron McKeil, Gustav Meibauer, Chris Murray, Andreas Aagaard Nøhr, Evelyn Pauls, Hanna Rodehau-Noack, Will Rooke, Emma Saint, Alireza Shams Lahijani, Till Spanke, Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson, Marc Sinan Winrow, Joanne Yao and Asad Zaidi, and a special thanks to Mia Certo and Joe Leigh as *Millennium* editors-in-crime.

Several scholars, colleagues and friends have given of their time to discuss thoughts and ideas expressed in this thesis, whether as discussants, research panel members or conversation partners. Thank you to Rebecca Adler-Nissen, Tarak Barkawi, Federica Bicchi, Helge Blakkisrud, Kristian Gjerde, Stefano Guzzini, Minda Holm, Mathias Koenig-Archibugi, Debbie Lisle, Ben Martill, Viatcheslav Morozov, Maria Mälksoo, Vasil Navumau, Alex Pravda, Anatoly Reshetnikov, Paul Richardson, Bahar Rumelili, Richard Sakwa, Jelena Subotic, Einar Wigen, Julie Wilhelmsen and Ayşe Zarakol. Thanks also to participants at IQMR 2017, the UPTAKE PhD training school in 2018, EWIS 2018, the Doing IPS PhD Workshop 2018 and the LSE International Theory Workshop in 2017 and 2018.

My family has made me who I am, encouraged me to pursue the academic route and supported me throughout. Specific thanks to my dad for reading the whole manuscript in the final stages and providing a healthy antidote to the academic ‘gobbledegook’, to my mum for giving me a kick up the backside when I was considering delaying my application, to my brother for the ‘encouragement’ with ‘work’ on my ‘essay’, and to little JPLR for perspective and playtime.

Finally, and most importantly, my partner, Alexia Ash, has not only had to live with stigmatisation and Russia for the past four years but has at various stages been an excellent word-cutter, expert graph consultant, soundboard for numerous ideas and arguments, last-minute fixer of footnote formatting, and both/and grammar pedant. Her love, support and patience for my stubborn pursuit of this strange ambition has been truly amazing.

Table of Contents

Introduction	7
I – Russia and the West: situating the study	10
II – Structure of the study.....	17
Chapter 1: The power politics of norms in international society.....	19
I – International society: Norms as consensual building blocks or an exclusionary ‘standard of civilisation’?	20
II – ‘Thin’ Constructivism: Norms as substantialist variables and ‘good things’	27
III – Dominance, deviance and power: society as a struggle for norms	37
Conclusion	46
Chapter 2: Stigmatisation, relationalism and discourse	48
I – Stigmatisation as a relational process.....	52
II – Stigmatisation and power: The co-constitution of deviance and normality.....	62
III – Methodology and methods: stigmatisation as discursive practices	73
Conclusion	88
Chapter 3: The ‘normal’ state in post-Cold War international society.....	90
I – Democracy.....	92
II – Human Rights	97
III – Non-aggression.....	104
IV – Capitalism	109
Conclusion	116
Chapter 4: Democracy	120
I – Domestic democracy: from ‘transitionology’ to ‘back to the USSR’	120
II – International democracy: from the Colour Revolutions to the Ukraine crisis	134
III – Russian stigma management: stigma rejection and counter-stigmatisation.....	144
Conclusion	156
Chapter 5: Human Rights.....	158

I – Chechnya.....	158
II – Freedom of expression and association.....	166
III – ‘Sovereign morality’ as counter-stigmatisation.....	176
Conclusion	182
Chapter 6: Non-aggression.....	185
I – From Kosovo to Iraq: shifting norms.....	186
II – Georgia 2008: a deliberate transgression?	192
III – Ukraine 2014: Russian aggression takes centre stage.....	199
Conclusion	221
Chapter 7: Capitalism	224
I – Diffuse stigmatisation: Russia’s ‘arrested development’	225
II – Direct stigmatisation: The marginality of ‘capitalism’	230
III – Russian stigma management: diffuse acceptance, direct rejection	240
Conclusion	245
Conclusion: Does Stigmatisation Make the World Hang Together?.....	247
I – Cross-cutting frames and themes.....	250
II – The failing of stigmatisation? The waning of the illiberal taboo	255
Bibliography.....	261

Introduction

Kindly consider the question: what would your good do if evil did not exist, and what would the earth look like if all the shadows disappeared from it? ... Do you want to skin the whole earth, tearing all the trees and living things off it, because of your fantasy of enjoying bare light?
You're a fool.

– *Woland (Satan) to Jesus's apostle Levi Matvei (Matthew the Evangelist)*
in *Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita* (1997, 360)

The Bear of the future will be whatever we make of him... Do we leave the Bear to rot? – encourage him to become resentful, backward, an over-armed nation outside our camp?
Or make a partner of him in a world that's changing its shape every day?

– *George Smiley to a cohort of British spies-in-training, ca. 1990,*
in *John Le Carré's The Secret Pilgrim* (2011, 391)

More than two decades on from George Smiley's (admittedly fictional) warning about the Russian Bear to the first post-Cold War generation of British spies, on 24 September 2014, United States President Barack Obama addressed the United Nations General Assembly in New York:

[T]here is a pervasive unease in our world -- a sense that the very forces that have brought us together have created new dangers and made it difficult for any single nation to insulate itself from global forces. As we gather here, an outbreak of Ebola overwhelms public health systems in West Africa and threatens to move rapidly across borders. Russian aggression in Europe recalls the days when large nations trampled small ones in pursuit of territorial ambition. The brutality of terrorists in Syria and Iraq forces us to look into the heart of darkness. ... We will impose a cost on Russia for aggression, and we will counter falsehoods with the truth. And we call upon others to join us on the right side of history...
(Obama 2014k)

Here was the leader of the proverbial free world, juxtaposing the threat to international peace and security of Russian aggression against its neighbour, Ukraine, with that of a deadly virus epidemic and the vicious, head-chopping brutality of the Islamic State. The statement offers a microcosm of the operation of stigmatisation processes in international relations, which are the focus of this study. In linking Russian actions in Ukraine to a virus, terrorism and the bad old days of the past when large nations trampled on small ones, Obama contributed both to the growing stigmatisation of Russia as an international pariah, a breaker of norms, and to the construction of an ‘audience of normals’¹ – those law-abiding states on the right side of history, who had put such practices as aggression and annexation behind them and followed the civilised norms of international society.

This distinction was not just rhetorical. Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and subsequent support for rebels in eastern Ukraine had led to economic sanctions in the form of travel bans and asset freezes against key individuals, trade embargoes on whole sectors of the Russian economy and diplomatic sanctions in the form of the suspension of Russia from the G8 and of summits between Russia and the EU, NATO, the US and others. The ‘audience of normals’ supporting this status loss for Russia was overwhelmingly Western, including the EU and other European states such as Norway and Switzerland, the US, Canada, Australia, Japan and New Zealand. In return, Russia had denied any transgressive behaviour and implemented its own sanctions, banning the import of agricultural products from Western states.

The empirical question driving this study is straightforward: how did we get here? How did the cautious optimism of the early post-Cold War period in Russian-Western relations become replaced by the mutual recriminations and distrust of 2014, with Russia every bit the ‘resentful’ and ‘over-armed’ nation of Smiley’s caution? This empirical puzzle is paired with a theoretical concern, reflected in Woland’s comments to Levi Matvei, with the constitutive role of stigmatisation in the ongoing contestation of international norms. The claim is that stigmatisation – the process of marking certain actors, attributes or behaviours as ‘deviant’ in order to reinforce the norms of a given society – is central to the constitution of international society, and that Russian-Western

¹ As will be elaborated below, an ‘audience of normals’ is the group of actors that takes part in the stigmatisation of another actor(s).

relations offer a good case through which to investigate its role. Rather than a story of socialisation – the stripping of all shadows to enjoy the fantasy of bare light – this is a story of stigmatisation: the co-constitution of shadow and light, deviance and normality.

The study seeks to make two overall interventions: one theoretical, one empirical. To the International Relations (IR) literature on norms and international society, the study contributes an account of the ongoing constitution and contestation of the normative fabric that holds international society together (and drives it apart) that takes seriously the power relations at the core of international relations. In the spirit of the thick constructivist, poststructuralist, critical theory and Historical IR traditions' critiques of the thin constructivist IR norms literature and the English School's international society literature, it challenges these literatures' overly consensual and 'good' view of norms and society as well as their tendency to treat norms and/or societies as substantialist entities. Drawing specifically on the recent introduction of Erving Goffman's work on stigma (1963) to IR (primarily, Adler-Nissen 2014b; Zarakol 2010; 2014), it conceives of stigmatisation as an ongoing relational process shaping and reshaping international norms and international society. These critiques as well as the theoretical and methodological framework of the study are further elaborated in chapters 1 and 2, including its relational ontological wager and conceptualisation of stigmatisation as a bundle of discursive practices.

The empirical intervention is in the literature on Russian-Western relations and Russian international relations in general. To this sprawling and multifaceted body of work the study seeks to provide, first, a critical, theoretically-inspired interpretation of Russian-Western relations since the fall of the Soviet Union, and second, an explicitly relational analysis that interprets the impasse in relations not through a substantialist focus on the internal dispositions of either side but on the ongoing relational processes between them. Before delving deeper into the theoretical arguments in subsequent chapters, both these arguments are worth unpacking further to set the empirical scene. The next section therefore reviews some of the main trends in the literature, situating the study's contribution and exploring some of the normative questions that its approach raises.

I – Russia and the West: situating the study

To situate the study and explain why a critical, theoretical and relational interpretation of recent Russian-Western relations is worthwhile, this section briefly reviews the existing literature with these three aspects in mind. It highlights how both academic and policy writing on Russia has become polarised and politicised in recent years, making ‘critical’² work a challenge, how much of the most balanced and reflective work is produced by area specialists and journalists with no theoretical agendas, and how much of the literature focuses on internal ‘Russian’ or ‘Western’ dispositions to the exclusion of the interaction between the two. At the outset it should be noted that the literature on Russian-Western relations is large, and while every effort has been made to provide a fair and comprehensive picture below, it is necessarily stylised rather than exhaustive.

The challenge of being critical in a polarised debate

Debates about Russian-Western relations have become increasingly polarised over the past several years, especially since the 2014 Ukraine crisis and Russia’s annexation of Crimea, with much discussion focused on who is to blame for the deterioration in relations that led to these events. Subsequent accusations of Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election, the UK’s Brexit referendum and other elections as well as the poisoning of Sergey and Yuliya Skripal in Salisbury in 2018 have contributed further to an environment in which any writing on Russia that deviates from the dominant narrative increasingly comes with the risk of being labelled an apologist for Russian aggression and subversion of democracy. In Gerard Toal’s (2017, 11) words, ‘any empathetic representation of Russian geopolitical discourse in the West today faces social opprobrium’. The division is most visible in Western media and in policy-making circles, where accusations of acting as Putin’s or the Kremlin’s ‘useful idiots’ or ‘Trojan horses’ contribute to a politicised environment in which being ‘pro-Russian’ has become a stigma of its own worthy of further study.³ However, academic debates (which to a large

² ‘Critical’ is meant here and throughout the study in the general, ‘small-c’ sense of being critical of dominant explanations or interpretations rather than a specific commitment to Frankfurt School-style Critical Theory.

³ For an illustrative case, see the Atlantic Council’s series of reports on ‘The Kremlin’s Trojan Horses’, identifying supposedly ‘pro-Russian’ influencers in several Western countries (Polyakova et al. 2016; 2017;

extent overlap with media and policy debates) have also on occasion deteriorated into a similar form of blame game, with scholars focused on attributing fault through the establishment of the ‘real’ causes of events.

This ‘blame game’ scholarship was most prominent in the immediate aftermath of the Ukraine crisis, with several articles and books appearing blaming one side or the other. Prominent examples include, on the side putting the West at fault, Richard Sakwa (2014a), Andrei Tsygankov (2015) and John Mearsheimer (2014). Each in their own way, these works sought to establish the West’s (i.e. the US, EU and/or NATO) primary responsibility for the crisis, be it because of its (and Ukraine’s) ‘monist’ vision of European (or Ukrainian) identity in Sakwa’s case or the way its leaders ignored basic realist principles of power politics in Mearsheimer’s. In either case, Russia had merely reacted to the exclusionary and expansionist policies of the West, which was pushing up against its borders and ignoring Russia’s ‘legitimate concerns’. On the opposite side, Andrew Wilson (2014), Roy Allison (2014), Michael McFaul (2014), Stephen Sestanovich (2014) and others detailed how Russia had ‘broken the rules’ when annexing Crimea (Allison), attributed the crisis to Russia’s expansionist ambitions (Wilson) and emphasised how this was Moscow’s ‘choice’ and had nothing to do with realist power balancing (McFaul). In this way, battle lines were drawn that have remained largely unchanged ever since. The polemics are in many ways a replay of earlier, Cold War debates, in which ‘people who proposed trying to understand the USSR and exploring possibilities of cooperation ... were pilloried as “fellow travellers”, while those who took the opposite view were branded as ideologues and philistines’ (MacFarlane 2016, 342). This type of analysis has serious drawbacks – as Paul D’Anieri puts it, ‘[w]e are naturally driven to assign blame, in part because doing so is necessary to formulating policy prescriptions, but future research will need to focus more on explanation if we are to improve our understanding of these events’ (2016, 502–3; see also Kuzio 2018). The politicisation and polarisation of the debate has been an obscuring rather than illuminating factor.

2018). A similar polarisation has of course also taken place in Russia, where, as will be analysed further in the following chapters, any ‘pro-Western’ organisation risks being labelled a ‘foreign agent’ or generally part of the Western ‘fifth column’.

The polarisation also poses a challenge for critical academic analysis. While an analysis like Sakwa's can certainly be described as critical on account of its opposition to the dominant Western narrative of Russian aggression and general maliciousness, it follows a 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' logic that makes it singularly *uncritical* of the official Russian version of events. From a critical perspective favouring the subalterns and downtrodden of this world, this would make some sense if Russia was indeed as oppressed and marginalised as the official Russian discourse claims, but becomes problematic when seen in light of the Russian state's own trampling on its inferiors, be it the Ukrainian state, Crimean Tatars or the LGBT community in Russia (for an excellent discussion of the challenges of applying critical perspectives to Russia, see Morozov 2015, 4, 8–37). Critical accounts of Russian-Western relations should thus eschew the 'blame game' altogether and seek balanced, nuanced accounts of how the sides ended up in the current impasse. In Toal's (2017, 16) words once more: 'the issues are too important, the current crisis too serious, to not strive for deeper intellectual and moral understanding'. 'Balance' in this case should not mean simply giving equal weight or consideration to the arguments of each of the above 'sides', but seeking explanations and increased understanding that takes account of both Russian and Western self-perceptions and puts events in the context of wider processes without necessarily passing judgment on who is at 'fault'.⁴ This study aims to accomplish such a task, albeit with an acute appreciation that no analysis is ever apolitical.

Comprehensive explanations, but relative dearth of theory

The study is not alone in this endeavour. After the events of 2014, several works have attempted to provide nuanced explanations of both the Ukraine crisis itself and the broader deterioration of Russian-Western relations of which it is both symptom and contributing cause, joining an already substantial literature on Russian foreign policy, national identity and Russian-Western relations in general. Some aim for broad, synthesising analyses (e.g. Legvold 2016; MacFarlane 2016; Charap and Colton 2017; Wood 2018), some explore part of the puzzle, most often on the Russian side of things, to

⁴ As one analyst put it at a 2017 event attended by the author, balance does not mean simply including Andrew Wilson and Richard Sakwa on the same panel.

explain why certain decisions were made and things happened the way they did (e.g. Treisman 2016), some provide insightful analysis of certain aspects of national identity, for example the rise of Russian nationalism and its impact on foreign policy (e.g. Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2016; Laruelle 2018), and some zero in on particular relationships such as that between Russia and the EU (e.g. Haukkala 2015; Forsberg and Haukkala 2016; Casier 2016; Maass 2017). Overall, the literature provides comprehensive accounts of the empirical story and suggest numerous different causes (what happened and why?).⁵

This study does not set out to rival these explanations. It differs from these works in that its aims are both empirical and theoretical, even if the empirical takes precedence in the analysis. As noted above, it is interested both in providing a new theoretical perspective on Russian-Western relations and, secondarily, in using Russian-Western relations as a case through which to explore stigmatisation processes in international relations and their impact on the wider international society. Much of the literature on Russia, Russian foreign policy and the country's relationship with the West comes from an Area Studies tradition that is primarily interested in explaining the case at hand and as a rule has little interest in theorising beyond it. Some of the most balanced and informative works are written by journalists, focusing for example on the increasing glorification of the victory in WWII and a particular version of history as a source of tension with Ukraine (Walker 2018; for a related argument theorised around 'soft power', see Feklyunina 2016), the need to look beyond Vladimir Putin to the collective around him when trying to understand Russian policy (Zygar 2016), or the sources and effects of the leadership's increasingly authoritarian and conservative policies (Gessen 2017). Such works usually have no explicit theoretical agenda but provide detailed empirical accounts that this study does not aim to rival.

The need for interactionist and relational analysis

The third drawback of much of the literature on Russia's relationship with the West, even its more theoretically minded parts, is its internalist, substantialist and sometimes

⁵ For overviews of the literature and competing explanations for both Russia's conduct in the Ukraine crisis and its assertiveness in the post-Soviet space more generally, see Götz (2016; 2017). See also Toal (2017, 16–33) for the stock liberal and realist answers to the question 'why does Russia invade its neighbours?'.

essentialist focus. The three are not the same. Internalist analyses focus mainly on factors ‘internal’ to Russia, thereby bracketing international dynamics. Substantialist analyses rely on an ontology whereby the ‘unit’ or actor whose actions are to be analysed, i.e. the state in this case, is seen as a coherent unit with certain substantive properties (e.g. certain immutable national interests, or characteristics like ‘democratic’, ‘authoritarian’, etc.) that in turn can be used in co-variance analyses to identify and explain patterns of action. Essentialist analyses see such properties as inherently ‘Russian’ (or Western, or Chinese, etc.), rooted in some ineffable cultural tropes.

The internalist and sometimes substantialist biases are particularly prevalent in much of the Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) literature on Russia, given the sub-field’s generally positivist epistemological approach and focus on explaining the outward-looking foreign policy of units (states) that are generally taken as given, albeit with internal rivalries and competing identities. For example, in Elias Götz’s (2017) review of the literature, three of the four arguments he identifies as explanations for Russia’s assertiveness are rooted in predominantly internal factors: decision makers’ worldview, domestic political concerns (regime security) and identity discourses, with only the fourth explanation, geopolitical considerations, foregrounding the international dimension – and even then focusing on the more or less rational reaction of the unit (Russia) to external international pressures. Given the tendency of much analysis to reduce Russia to the person of Vladimir Putin, Russia in many ways offers the clearest and most extreme example of IR’s tendency to treat states as individuals.⁶ Analyses of individuals need not be substantialist or essentialist – the stereotype of Putin as essentially a KGB thug propagated by John McCain among others is in stark contrast to, for example, the nuanced and thorough analysis of his composite identity offered by biographers like Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy (2013) or even the more critical, effacing Masha Gessen (2012). Overall, however, the tendency to ascribe Russia’s assertiveness to Putin and other Russian decision makers’ worldviews or rational survival instincts is problematic in that it focuses primarily on Russia and downplays the constitutive dimension of its interactions with the rest of the world.

⁶ A tendency so strong that even some works that call for a less Putin-centric analysis end up to some extent reproducing the narrative by explaining why we need to ‘talk about Putin’ (Galeotti 2019) or look at ‘Russia without Putin’ (Wood 2018). For a critical discussion of the tendency to treat states as people, see Wendt (2004) and the forum on his article (Jackson 2004a; 2004b; I. B. Neumann 2004; C. Wight 2004).

The more constructivist and historically oriented literature on Russian foreign policy and/or Russia's place in the world is closer to the relational commitment and theoretically-inspired approach of this study, but several of the key works still fall short on full interactionism. For example, Iver Neumann's (2016) work on Russian discourses of Europe or Ted Hopf's (2013; 2016; see also 2002) work on Russian elite discourses and 'mass common sense' provide thorough analyses of the discursive landscape in Russia and its link to foreign policy (the third category of explanation identified by Götz) that are relational in their understanding of Russian identity as socially constructed vis-à-vis a constitutive 'other' (see also Tsygankov 2013). However, they do not as a rule incorporate the 'other's' actions into the analysis on an equal footing, given the primary focus on explaining the Russian context. Separate, reverse analyses of Russia as Europe's 'other' are thus needed to complete the interactional picture of 'mutual othering' (e.g. I. B. Neumann 1999; Morozov and Rumelili 2012). Meanwhile, works that draw on the social-psychological framework of Social Identity Theory (SIT) to analyse Russia's quest for status (for example Clunan 2009; 2014; Larson and Shevchenko 2010; 2014; see also I. B. Neumann 2008 for a non-SIT analysis of Russia's specific quest for great power status) capture well the various ways in which Russia has sought to improve its international prestige and its frustration with its inferior position in international status hierarchies. However, as Reinhard Wolf (2019, 16–19) argues, these works tend to underestimate the role of interaction and the extent to which Russia's frustration is not with the lack of substantive recognition of its supposed prestige markers but with what he calls 'role status': the lack of 'respect' shown to it and its desire to be treated as an 'equal partner'.

In perhaps the most theoretically rich and ambitious analysis of Russia's historical development and contemporary position in recent years, combining post-colonial theory with neo-Gramscian theories of hegemony, Viatcheslav Morozov (2015) theorises Russia as a 'subaltern empire', a semi-peripheral entity in the Eurocentric world order both materially and normatively dependent on the Western core (see also Hopf 2013; Etkind 2014; Magun 2016 for analyses of Russia's semi-peripherality and/or normative dependence on the West). However, for all its relational and theoretical sophistication, there is very little *interaction* in Morozov's analysis – the Western core does not *do* much besides being the core in relation to which the (semi) peripheries are constituted through

macro-processes of capitalist colonisation. In this way it is similar to Ayşe Zarakol's (2010) structural analysis of stigma and stigmatisation, where the latter becomes a process induced in the stigmatised through their internalisation of the normative hierarchy and their inferior position in it, but without the stigmatising agent(s) always being obvious.

There are a handful of works with similar interactionist ambitions to this study. One of the closest is the practice-focused work of Vincent Pouliot (2010), though its focus on the micro-politics of Russia-NATO diplomacy makes it more ethnographic than the following analysis. Also closely related is the application of a similar Bourdieusian framework to the *longue durée* of Russian-European relations by Pouliot and Neumann (2011), highlighting the 'hysteretical' lack of fit between Russian practices and dispositions and the practices of the European diplomatic field it has sought to join. However, as with much Bourdieusian analysis, this approach tends to highlight the reproduction of conflictual relations rather than a more dynamic, uncertain process of relative stabilisation and destabilisation (see Schindler and Wille 2015 for a critique of Pouliot on this point). A similar focus on incompatibility can be found in another theoretically rich and interactionist work on EU-Russia relations, by Sergey Prozorov (2006, 2), who posited that the source of conflictual relations between the two was down to the 'fundamental opposition between sovereign and integrationist paradigms of international relations' and 'the existence of genuine political divergences'. Finally, Toal's (2017) critical geopolitics-inspired work on Russian interventionism in its 'near abroad' and the current impasse in US-Russian relations is closely aligned with this study in its ambition to provide a theoretically informed and critical reading of the empirical story. Toal's positing of relatively coherent, albeit contested, US and Russian 'geopolitical cultures' verges on substantialism. However, his analysis of the dynamic interplay between the post-Soviet 'geopolitical field' (defined amongst other things by its postcolonial nature and the close presence of the Western 'normative great power centre'), the mentioned geopolitical cultures, and the technologically-defined 'geopolitical condition' shaping the way geopolitics is 'experienced, understood, and practiced' provides for a rich and nuanced analysis (on these concepts, see Toal 2017, 8–14). This study builds on and engages these works and arguments by showing how

Russian-Western conflictual relations are partly the product of ongoing contestations of normality in international society.

II – Structure of the study

The study has two parts. In the first part, consisting of chapters 1 and 2, the study's theoretical framework is elaborated. Chapter 1 critically interrogates the English School literature on international society as well as the IR literature on norms and identifies two related issues. First, the literatures' treatment of societies and/or norms as bounded entities-with-essences, and second, their neglect of power relations. The chapter then reviews a collection of theoretical approaches inspired by Antonio Gramsci, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault that have been employed in IR to highlight the central role of dominance and power to normative orders and show how the process of norm contestation revolves around the ongoing struggle over what constitutes 'normal' and 'deviant' behaviour. Chapter 2 builds on these approaches to introduce the study's analytical framework, stigma theory, arguing that it offers the kind of relational and power-political lens needed for investigating the ongoing co-constitution of international society, its norms and the identities of the actors acting within it. The chapter presents the four-component conceptualisation of stigmatisation that will be used throughout the study – labelling, stereotyping, separation and status loss/discrimination, all of which must be present for stigmatisation to occur – as well as the four different stigma management strategies available to actors on the receiving end of stigma imposition: stigma acceptance/recognition, stigma rejection, stigma evasion and counter-stigmatisation. It also draws a distinction between *direct* and *diffuse* stigmatisation. The former is targeted directly at an actor, the latter is the result of the more diffuse promotion of certain standards of behaviour that makes actors *discreditable* rather than necessarily *discredited*. The chapter also outlines the study's methodological approach, including its case selection and conception of stigmatisation as a discursive practice that can be analysed through discourse analysis.

The second part, chapters 3-7, is the empirical core of the study. Chapter 3 sets the scene by outlining the four norms that, it is argued, constituted a fully 'normal' state in post-Cold War international society: democracy, human rights, non-aggression and

capitalism. It identifies how these standards of behaviour became dominant, the mechanisms and institutions through which they were enforced, and varying regional patterns, notably how the normative and institutional pressures to conform to the norms of democracy and human rights were highest in the Euro-Atlantic context, which is relevant for the study given the specific focus on Russian-Western relations. Chapters 4 through 7 then investigate stigmatisation processes in Russian-Western relations in relation to each norm, analysing both the level and kind of stigma imposition, which actors were involved in the process, and what stigma management strategies were pursued by the Russian leadership.

Finally, the Conclusion summarises the empirical analysis and the study's contributions, identifies some hierarchies between the different norms that emerge from the analysis and discusses the continued relevance of temporal/teleological frames of reference such as 'modernity' and 'backwardness' to stigmatisation internationally. It closes by considering whether stigmatisation is increasingly failing in its purpose of 'holding the world together' (Zarakol 2014), as the taboos surrounding illiberal practices increasingly wane.

Chapter 1

The power politics of norms in international society

This study is about processes of stigmatisation between actors in international society, and the role played by these processes in shaping the norms of that society. It is about the social construction of 'normality' and 'abnormality', and the central role of 'deviance' and 'transgression' in clarifying norms and strengthening or weakening the normative fabric of international society. It explores these processes through an investigation of the co-constitutive relationship between international society's dominant Western actors and Russia, expressed through discursive practices.

The preceding sentences contain several conceptual, theoretical and methodological assumptions. The most basic is the assumption of the existence of an international *society* (as opposed to a system or community). The second is that norms, understood as expectations of social behaviour, are important and relevant to how international society functions, but that norms are not necessarily always 'good'. The third is that deviance and transgression are as important as norm-abiding in the social construction of norms. Fourth, in focusing on social *processes* the study adopts a phenomenological, relational rather than transfactual, substantialist ontology, giving pride of place to the co-constitution of social identities. And finally, it assumes that stigmatisation as a social process can be analysed through discourse.

This chapter and the next elucidate each assumption in turn. This chapter introduces and critically interrogates English School conceptions of international society and constructivist scholarship on norms. It critiques both approaches for their substantialist biases, i.e. the tendency to conceptualise international society and/or individual norms as substantialist entities or 'things', and for their neglect of power relations. The last section of the chapter surveys some of the critical theories that have been used in IR to address such shortcomings, focusing on works inspired by Antonio Gramsci, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. The purpose of this section is to show some of the affinities between these approaches and the study's analytical framework, notably the focus on power relations and the ongoing co-constitution of 'normal' and

‘deviant’.

I – International society: Norms as consensual building blocks or an exclusionary ‘standard of civilisation’?

The argument that the modern collective of states constitutes a ‘society’, as opposed to merely a ‘system’, was popularised within IR by the so-called English School. In Hedley Bull’s (1977, 13) classic definition, an international society ‘exists when a group of states, conscious of their common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another and share the work of common institutions’. In their study of the historical ‘expansion’ of international society, Bull and Adam Watson (1984, 3, emphasis added) similarly described it as a group of states that had established ‘...by *dialogue and consent* common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognise their common interest in maintaining these arrangements’. In addition to this focus on consensually agreed rules and norms, English School scholars from Martin Wight (1977) to Andrew Linklater (2016) have emphasised the requirement of a common culture for international societies or even systems to exist: ‘a state system presupposes a common culture’ (M. Wight 1977, 46).

The enduring legacy of early English School work and the concept of international society is to highlight the inherently *social* nature of international relations. Against the asocial, hyper-rational behaviouralists and the structural realists of the time, Bull and colleagues argued that international relations were conducted not by billiard ball-like states in a system but by thinking, reflective social beings in a society (see e.g. S. Hoffman 1986).⁷ The flipside of this legacy is that this society was seen as defined by a common culture or properties, as primarily consensual and inclusive, and as spreading through dialogue and consent.⁸ This encouraged a view of international societies as bounded

⁷ This is not to suggest that ‘social’ and ‘society’ are value-neutral, mere methodological terms. See Owens (2015) and Bartelson (2015) for critical overviews. Separately, while Waltz (1979) did include a theory of ‘socialization’ in his structural-realist theory of international politics, what he describes is a process of competition and homogenisation more akin to natural selection than socialisation, whereby states that do not follow the structural imperatives of the system will be ‘selected out’ (Johnston 2007, 3).

⁸ An alternative approach with some terminological overlap is the ‘World Society’ (or ‘World Polity’) research programme of sociologist John Meyer and colleagues, developed from the 1970s onwards (for a

entities, and neglected the power relations and hierarchical exclusion inherent in most societies as well as the frequent violence engaged in by the putative members of society both against other members and outsiders. The following sub-sections deal with each of these issues in turn.

Common culture, identity and values – international society as a substantialist ‘entity’

The focus of scholars like Wight on common culture and Bull and Watson on common values as a prerequisite and/or a necessary attribute of international society encourages an approach that envisions societies as bounded units with certain attributes and clear limits separating them from other societies. International society in this view becomes an ‘entity’. Yaqing Qin describes the approach as such:

The first approach to international society is that of regarding it as an independent ego-entity, by which I mean an ontologically self-organizing and self-evolving ego born in a particularly socio-cultural locale that develops its own organs and institutions and expands as it grows. (Qin 2010, 132)

This approach, Qin (2010, 132) argues, is rooted in Western tendencies towards ‘taxonomical thinking’, in which objects (including such abstract objects as a society) are seen as discrete, defined by certain essential properties that are independent of context, identifiable and can be systematised into laws as part of a ‘tenacious search for certainty’. Such thinking is ubiquitous in Western social sciences. In IR, it finds expression in the tendency to define states as, for example, either democratic or authoritarian, status quo or revisionist, etc. (for a recent critical overview, see Cooley, Nexon, and Ward 2019).

In analytical terms, such an approach to international society can be described as substantialist – it treats society as a bounded unit defined by its supposedly internally

collection of key writings, see Krücken and Drori 2009). Meyer et al’s argument that states have taken on increasingly similar form owing to their embeddedness in a ‘world culture’ with its origins in Western society and promoted through the global social ‘ether’ (Drori and Krücken 2009, 17–19; see also e.g. Meyer et al. 1997) has clear overlaps with the English School ‘expansion story’ and constructivist arguments about norm ‘diffusion’ presented in this chapter. For reasons of space, I do not go into the nuances of the approach, but it is notable that one line of criticism concerns its downplaying of coercion, conflict and resistance against top-down ‘diffusion’, similar to critiques made in this chapter of the English School and constructivist norms literature (Finnemore 1996; see also Meyer 2009, 55–56).

agreed substantive culture or values, which are seen as properties of the unit.⁹ Within such a substantialist approach there are varying degrees of nuance. The ‘culturalist’ approach represented by Wight, who argued that the common culture of a states-system would be pre-existing for it to form but was ‘decidedly unclear about what this meant’ (Reus-Smit 2017, 865), is in practice quite close to the essentialist argument about different civilizations put forward by Samuel Huntington (1993a; 1996). In this latter view, cultures are not only bounded and unitary, but their properties are seen as essential to that culture and relatively timeless, frequently reduced to religious identities such as ‘Judeo-Christian’, ‘Muslim’, etc. (though not all civilizational analysis is necessarily essentialist; see Bettiza 2014). Bull’s (and Watson’s) somewhat more open focus on common values and institutions arrived at through negotiation allows for a historical analysis of how these values were arrived at in the first place, but still conceives of international society as bounded once the values and institutions are established. Moreover, Bull (1977, 15) also argued that all historical international societies were ‘founded upon a common culture or civilisation, or at least on some of the elements of such a civilisation: a common language, ... epistemology and understanding of the universe, ... religion, ... ethical code, ... aesthetic or artistic tradition’. This argument risks a degree of tautology – if one’s definition of society in the first place is founded upon the idea of common values, then it is unsurprising that most ‘actually existing’ international societies one finds will have a common culture.

A recent example that demonstrates the continued existence of this form of analysis is Andrew Linklater’s recent work (Linklater 2016; see also 2011). Linklater sets out to explore the changing attitudes to violence in what he describes as ‘Western states-systems’ over time, from the Greeks and Romans of antiquity and their tolerance of massacres and other mass violence, to today’s supposedly more ‘civilised’ world of restraint and legal codes prohibiting genocide, war crimes, etc. (Linklater 2016, 1–2). To do this, he employs a theoretical framework combining the work of Wight, specifically his call for a comparative sociology of states-systems, and process sociologist Norbert Elias, specifically his work on the ‘civilising process’ (Linklater 2016, 1–17; also 2011, chapter 6). Like much English School work, Linklater has been criticised for being Eurocentric,

⁹ As noted in the Introduction, this study adopts instead a relational approach, on which more in Chapter 2.

downplaying or omitting the constitutive role of interactions between the ‘West’ and non-Western actors in the development of ‘Western civilisation’, and overly elite-focused, underestimating the importance of broader social forces and actors in shaping elite actions.¹⁰ More important for the purpose of this section’s argument is that Linklater perpetuates Wight’s substantialist view of states-systems/international societies. While trying to mould Wight’s insights with the relational, process-oriented work of Elias, resulting in an ‘unstable theoretical scaffolding’, Linklater also ‘accepts Wight’s notion that states-systems can be understood as a “bounded cultural region”’ (Lawson 2017, 672, 677). In Lawson’s (2017, 677–78; see also Reus-Smit 2017; 2018) words, this not only misrepresents the level of unity and coherence of any given ‘culture’, but also underestimates how durable international orders in fact regulate cultural *diversity*: ‘cultural heterogeneity is not the mark of an *unsuccessful* international order, but a *requirement* of international order’. In Linklater’s work, society (specifically Western international society) instead remains largely bounded and unaffected by outside influences.

As Edward Keene (2014, 657) points out, this view of society as a bounded unit, opposed to a more anarchical ‘system’, is the very basis for the English School’s ‘expansion’ thesis, in which a clearly defined, bounded society expanded outwards from Europe until it met other clearly defined and bounded societies, either destroying them or existing alongside them. For a school of thought that has prided itself on its close attention to history, it has been pointed out that this removes attention from the messy and multiple transnational and -societal interactions in ‘actually existing’ history (Keene 2014, 658; see Go and Lawson 2017 for a critique of methodological nationalism). Jens Bartelson (2015, 688–89) argues that part of the problem lies in the English School’s very adoption of a society/system distinction from nineteenth-century historians such as Arnold Heeren, whose conception of ‘society’ was as a ‘pre-political realm composed of moral beings sharing the same general ideas’ and thus relatively bounded and free of

¹⁰ See the forum on Linklater’s book in *Review of International Studies*, in particular Hobson (2017), Çapan (2017), Chong (2017), Go (2017), Lawson (2017) and Ling (2017). For less critical readings, see Mennell (2017) and Dunne and Devetak (2017). Linklater’s (2017) response rests heavily on the argument that the power imbalances between ‘the West’ and ‘the Rest’ from the start of European colonial expansion until roughly the end of World War II were so large as to make the latter virtually powerless, an argument that both homogenises a variety of colonial relationships over a long time period and tends to totalise them, somewhat missing the point about interactions, emulations, etc., never occurring only in one direction.

political conflict. Attempts at adding more nuance to the story by introducing the idea of a 'layered' international society, in which a culturally thin global international society co-exists with several culturally thicker regional international societies (Buzan 2010, 22–23), suffer from the same tendency towards 'either-or' thinking (Qin 2010, 136). It also does little to acknowledge the centrality of political conflict and struggle to the constitution of society.

The tendency towards seeing culture as a defining feature of international society is thus unsatisfactory for two reasons. It gives primacy to an empirically unsustainable idea of cultures as 'coherent, neatly bounded systems of meaning and practice' (Reus-Smit 2017, 857), and it encourages a substantialist view of social relations in which entities and their properties are seen as ontologically primary and the processes and relations that constitute them in the first place as secondary.

Benign expansion vs power-political stratification

Along with and complementary to the cultural critique, the primary line of criticism against the traditional international society literature has focused on its relatively benign view of what a society is and myopia about discriminatory and violent European practices, particularly how the norms that allegedly governed relations between states in European international society were ignored in Europeans' interactions with the rest of the world (see e.g. Keal 2003; Keene 2002; 2007). Moreover, several studies focusing on empirical cases have problematised the traditional conceptualisations of 'entry' into international society by non-Western European polities such as China (Gong 1984; Zhang 1991; 1999; Suzuki 2009), Greece (Stivachtis 1998), Japan (Suzuki 2005; 2009), Russia (I. B. Neumann 2011), Siam/Thailand (Zarakol 2014) and Turkey (Zarakol 2010).¹¹ These studies have broadly reconceptualised the 'entries' as 'encounters' and problematised the unidirectional story of socialisation and entry told by the traditional expansion story. Some have drawn on alternative theoretical frameworks: Ayşe Zarakol (2010; 2014)

¹¹ Not all these authors consider their work part of the English School as such. While some, such as Edward Keene, might be seen as proponents of a more 'critical' English School, others, notably Ayşe Zarakol, approach the issue of international society's historical development from a broader historical-sociological tradition and do not consider themselves 'English School scholars'.

emphasises the centrality of stigmatisation, seen primarily as the internalisation by 'defeated' or otherwise semi-peripheral states of a normative hierarchy that relegates them to an inferior position, and Iver Neumann (2011) draws on memory studies to emphasise the role played by previous experiences for newcomers in their interaction with international society, specifically Russia's memory of existing in a suzerain system.

Several of these studies form part of a critical strand of literature that points to the exclusionary and ordering function played by normative standards such as the 19th century 'Standard of Civilisation' and its historical and contemporary equivalents.¹² These works' fundamental critique of the traditional English School literature (and several other strands of IR) concerns its assumption of anarchy, rather than hierarchy, as the basic concept of international relations (see Bially Mattern and Zarakol 2016 for a full review of the 'hierarchy literature').¹³ The basic argument is that 'IR as a discipline is primed to understand and explain the relations between juridically-equal sovereign states in an anarchic world and therefore finds international hierarchy a conceptual blind spot' (Hobson 2014, 558).¹⁴ More attention must thus be paid to the hierarchy-creating processes of ordering and differentiation that normative standards play a central part in. To do this, one must do away with the simple dichotomy of a society founded on shared values versus a free-for-all system in favour of a more global, integrated view of the multiple ongoing processes of stratification in world politics (Keene 2014; Bially Mattern and Zarakol 2016; Zarakol 2017; see also James 1993 for an early critique of the system/society distinction). As Keene (2014, 658) argues, '...the conceptualisation of the move from system to society in terms of the extent of agreement upon a set of shared values makes it harder to grasp the ways in which hierarchies reproduce themselves through social interaction...', and underestimates the degree to which all societies are ultimately hierarchical.

¹² The term 'standard of civilisation' is used by numerous studies, again not all of which consciously write in the English School tradition. For some of the most defining, explicit discussions of the term see Gong (1984), Donnelly (1998), Fidler (2001), Bowden and Seabrooke (2006) and the 2014 special issue of *Millennium*, 'Rethinking the Standard(s) of Civilisation(s) in International Relations', especially Bowden (2014), Buzan (2014), Hobson (2014), Keene (2014), Towns (2014) and Zhang (2014).

¹³ Though some traditional English School scholars did pay attention to hierarchy – notably Watson (1990) in his 'pendulum' model that conceived of international society oscillating between more or less hierarchical/anarchical states.

¹⁴ Hobson goes on to critique this 'axiom' by arguing that IR theory has always embodied an 'already built-in hierarchical conception of world politics'.

The more critical literature on international society's historical development thus do pay attention to the 'domination and exclusion' inherent in normative discourses such as 'democracy as civilisation' (Zhang 2014, 688). However, with some notable exceptions, such as Keene's (2014) conceptualisation of stratification along three separate dimensions of power or Zarakol's (2010) use of stigma theory to explain the status-seeking of 'defeated' powers, these studies make little explicit use of social theory to strengthen and nuance their arguments. Yongjin Zhang (2014, 694) is a case in point – in critiquing the traditional literature's neglect of power relations and the agency exercised by non-Western states, he argues that it has been 'blind to the complex processes of communicative actions ... through which common norms, values, interests and institutions have been negotiated, diffused, interpreted and accepted in different social embeddings'. While seemingly drawing on a Habermasian communicative action framework, there is neither an explicit reference to this, nor a consideration of the relative strengths or weaknesses of such a framework when analysing norms, for example the way in which it would tend to highlight reasoned negotiation and acceptance of norms over forceful imposition and domination.

Russia: within or without?

Relating this discussion to Russian-Western relations illustrates the limits of the society/system divide. Per the analytical tools given us by traditional English School theory, the recent deterioration would seem to put relations in the 'system' category, with Russia and the West no longer part of the same society. That is, of course, assuming they were part of the same society in the first place, which a cultural view may throw into doubt. However, any civilizational analysis struggles to place Russia and its many peripheries, where religions and ethnicities intersect and overlap (Morozov 2015, 52–54). The country is perpetually seen as both 'part of' and 'apart from' Europe (Baranovsky 2000), a liminal space where clear-cut civilizational boundaries make little sense. Assuming that culture does at least not preclude Russia from being considered part of a European international society, it could be argued that Russia and most Western states or governments no longer share the common values emphasised by Bull or even see themselves as bound by a more limited set of common rules, given the increasing disputes

over everything from democratic credentials and human rights records domestically to the annexation of Crimea and bombing of Syria internationally. Russia in this sense would have fallen out of favour in (high) society, paying the price of its transgressions in the form of relegation to the lower, 'systemic' sphere of relations.

This would not be a very satisfactory analysis. This study aims to contribute a more nuanced reading of Russian-Western relations by drawing on insights from social theory that highlight not only the dominating and exclusionary aspects of norms, but that these exclusionary processes occur *within* society and help constitute it. International society in this view is not an 'entity' but 'an open process of complex social relations in motion' (Qin 2010, 138). Rather than contrasting a consensual, 'social' international sphere with a conflict-driven, 'systemic' sphere, we should take seriously the fact that power relations and exclusion are integral to and inherent in social relations and build conceptual tools that capture these ongoing processes rather than obscure them (c.f. Keene 2014). For there to be social order, there must be social ordering, and norms are excellent ordering devices, as shown by the persistent criticism of those states and societies that fall short of expected standards of democracy, human rights, etc. Actors such as Russia should not be seen as being outside society but as integral parts of it; the deviants whose transgressive behaviour serves to clarify the norms but who also contest their validity. Analytical lenses are needed that highlight these social aspects of norms and their operation.

II – 'Thin' Constructivism: Norms as substantialist variables and 'good things'

The other main area of IR scholarship concerned with norms is constructivism, introduced to IR by scholars such as Friedrich Kratochwil (e.g. 1984; 1989), Nicholas Onuf (1989), John Ruggie (1982; 1998; Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986) and Alexander Wendt (1992; 1999) in the 1980s and 1990s. These works did much to question realist and rationalist approaches, highlighting how supposedly immutable structures such as 'anarchy' or 'national interests' were socially constructed concepts. However, the interaction with the positivist mainstream soon led to an arguable watering-out of constructivism's radical promise in favour of a 'soft positivism' where socially constructed concepts like norms and ideas became merely new 'intervening variables' or

'billiard balls', ready for inclusion in hypothesis-testing models (Wiener 2010, 205–6; Epstein 2012). This assertion that 'ideas matter', but only in the same way other variables do, became the key contribution of the first 'generation' of constructivist writing on norms, exemplified by Wendt's (1999, 1) definition of his theory as a form of structural idealism in opposition to Kenneth Waltz's (1979) structural realism (Widmaier and Park 2012).¹⁵ A second generation of 'thin' constructivist scholarship on norms became concerned with the ways in which norms and ideas spread, how actors in international relations were 'socialised' into adopting certain beliefs or ways of behaviour (Widmaier and Park 2012, 127–28). Among the most influential works in this wave of scholarship were Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink's (1998) article on norm dynamics and change, which coined the term 'norm life cycle', Margaret Keck and Sikkink's (1998) work on 'norm entrepreneurs', Sikkink, Thomas Risse and colleagues' (Risse and Sikkink 1999; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; 2013) work on the spread of human rights norms, and Jeffrey Checkel's (e.g. 1999) work on norms' role in European integration. These works sought to develop testable hypotheses and break down the alleged dichotomy between interest- and ideas-based explanations of state behaviour, including by theorising actors' strategic promotion of their own ideas and adoption of other norms through socialisation (Checkel 1997; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998).

This study joins critiques of this literature on two primary points. First, the substantialist view of norms as 'things' or 'variables' that can be measured and explain actor behaviour, and second, the normative tendency to view norms as benign, as 'good things' done by good people to those who do not know better (or, sometimes, resist). These two points link back to the critiques of the English School and the international society literature above, to provide a basis for this study's relational and normatively more agnostic contribution.

Norms as entities – the substantialist premise of 'thin' constructivist norms research

Just as English School theorists have come under critique for treating international

¹⁵ Wendt's adoption of a 'critical realist' ontology arguably means his work does not belong to the broader social constructivist tradition in the social sciences at all. See Jackson (2011, 72–74) and Wendt's latest work on quantum theory (2015). For his part, Wendt no longer describes himself as a constructivist.

society (or societies) as entities with essential properties, IR norms scholars have been criticised for treating norms as ‘things’ (Krook and True 2012) or even agents – ‘acting abstractions’ with not only substantial properties but agential qualities (Bucher 2014). Such approaches are problematic because they provide over-simplified and overly abstract analyses of what norms are and how they are enacted, contested and adapted through social relations.

The first issue is a problem of definition. Perhaps the most influential definition of a norm is ‘a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity’ (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891). Variations include ‘a *legitimate* behavioral claim’ (Florini 1996, 364–65) and ‘intersubjective [shared] understandings that constitute actors’ interests and identities, and create expectations as well as prescribe what appropriate behaviour ought to be’ (Björkdahl 2002, 21). The problem with such definitions, Mona Lena Krook and Jacqui True (2012, 104) argue, is that ‘although norms may take different forms, their boundaries are largely understood as fixed: norms are taught, advocated and internalized’. Their substantial existence as bounded entities, a clearly defined and relatively stable shared understanding or standard of behaviour, is not usually questioned. The upshot of such a view is that when tensions arise in the process of teaching, advocacy and internalisation, these are not seen as the result of ‘internal contradictions or dissonance, but [of] competition with other, often opposing norms’ (Krook and True 2012, 104) – different stable, bounded norms duelling it out or colliding with each other like billiard balls. In fact, as Bernd Bucher (2014) has shown, the practice of not only treating norms as bounded entities but giving them agency is widespread in the literature. Through both the metaphors used to describe processes of norms spreading (including norm ‘diffusion’, norm ‘cascades’ and norm ‘life cycles’) and the frequent semantic positioning of norms in the subject position of sentences (norms ‘emerge’, ‘diffuse’ and ‘cascade’) norms are turned into ‘acting abstractions’ with a life of their own, separate from the agents who articulate, propagate, contest, adapt, adopt or reject them (Bucher 2014, 742). Aside from the ontological issue with these practices – norms are neither things nor agents, and equating them commits an ‘ontological fallacy’ (Bucher 2014, 745) – they also encourage an overly simplified view of both how complex norms are and how much variety there are between different norms in terms of how stable, prescriptive or bounded they are.

One way of addressing this issue is to keep a view of norms as relatively bounded but make the definition more complex to allow for variety. For example, Carla Winston (2018, 640–41) argues that every norm consists of three inter-related components: a real-world problem, a value that is both constitutive of the problem and suggests an appropriate form of solution or behaviour to deal with it, and the resultant practice or behaviour, summed up in the model 'If [problem], [value] suggests [behaviour]'. This allows for direct comparison between norms with relatively neat, concise problem/value/behaviour combinations and those broader fields with much looser ones. Winston (2018, 650–53) contrasts the relatively concise non-nuclear proliferation norm (problem: nuclear weapons exist; value: nuclear war is undesirable; behaviour: do not develop or transfer weapons, report and verify existing ones) with the broad normative field of transitional justice, in which a variety of problems, values and potential behaviours co-exist. In order to capture variety and complexity, Winston (2018, 647) proposes the concept of a 'norm cluster', 'a bounded collection of interrelated specific problems, values, and behaviors that are understood to be similar enough that their adopters form a family group', and which do not have to be copied exactly by actors in order for adoption to be recognised. This is, in part, a useful way of understanding the more complex norms that will be covered in subsequent chapters. While norms like non-aggression and human rights are both relatively clear and concise and/or backed up by an established or developing legal regime, democracy and capitalism are much looser 'norm clusters'. For example, the core value of democracy is relatively clear (people should have a say in the way they are governed), but there are many ways to implement this in practice, and as will be discussed in Chapter 3, states with a variety of actually existing systems can be recognised as broadly democratic.

Another useful way to distinguish different forms of norms is the distinction between constitutive and regulative norms. This distinction, introduced to IR primarily by Kratochwil (1989) and Ruggie (1998, 871–74) draws on the well-established distinction in philosophy, for example in John Searle's work, between constitutive and regulative rules. Constitutive rules or norms are those that constitute a game or society in the sense that without them, the game or society would be fundamentally different. For example, a constitutive rule of football is that players are not allowed to touch the ball with their hands, while a constitutive norm of contemporary international society is the

formal sovereign equality and mutually exclusive territoriality of its member states, which simultaneously constitutes the members of society and sets a baseline for their conduct towards each other. Regulative rules or norms are those that regulate behaviour given the constituted 'rules of the game'. For example, the ban on the use of force against other states that embodies the norm on non-aggression is a regulative norm, proscribing a certain behaviour to regulate the constitutive norm of sovereign equality, akin to the behavioural aspect of Winston's norm cluster above. Similarly, drawing on the discussion of international society and stratifications within it, norms like democracy and capitalism are constitutive of groups within international society. They are identity markers that implicitly constitute 'civilised' or 'developed' groups of states.

Neither of these two nuancing moves, however, addresses the ontological question of what norms *are*. The 'norm cluster' approach allows for more complexity, but still maintains boundedness. The constitutive/regulative distinction differentiates types of norms but does not by itself challenge the view of norms as stable entities. A more critical approach to norms, pioneered by Antje Wiener (e.g. 2004; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2014), brings attention to the question of enactment and contestation by defining norms as contested 'by default' (2007, 6; 2009, 179) and/or 'all the way down' (2010). In this view, norms do not have a fixed, stable meaning or indeed existence independently of practice – they are 'meaning-in-use' (Wiener 2009), always enacted, always contested. Moreover, they have a 'dual quality' that means they both structure interaction and are structured through interaction, changing in the process (Wiener 2014, 19). This moves away from the view of norms as stable, structuring entities that may move in time and space but remain relatively stable and bounded towards a more dynamic view also of norm *content* and *substance*. However, Wiener has been criticised for in practice falling back on a more static view of meaning given her argument that norms require 'cultural validation' and that contestation principally occurs when norms are moved beyond their original cultural context, thus encountering actors with different cultural and normative 'baggage' (Niemann and Schillinger 2017, 40). In this way, Holger Niemann and Henrik Schillinger (2017, 41) argue, culture, understood as 'fixed cultural scripts' with a 'singular and stable meaning', comes to define norm meaning for individual actors, making contestation 'a divergence between stable meanings rather than a process (re)constituting meaning'. Moreover, as will be discussed further below, while the focus

on contestation implies a focus on power relations, the way it is conceptualised in Wiener's work contains an assumption that there can be 'too much' contestation (Wolff and Zimmermann 2016). Contestation thus becomes an anomaly rather than a defining feature of norms.

A more critical view of norms in line with the relational ontological approach of this study is contained in a set of recent works that draw on the poststructuralist tradition to conceptualise norms as discursive processes (e.g. Krook and True 2012; Engelkamp, Glaab, and Renner 2014; Engelkamp and Glaab 2015; Almagro 2018). This reformulation, Krook and True (2012, 109) argue, 'theorizes that norms are subject to ongoing attempts to reconstitute their meanings, even as they exert effects on patterns of social behaviour'. Moreover, it draws our attention to the link between norms and identity, how agents and the norms they advocate are co-constituted (Almagro 2018, 674). Such constitution, co-constitution and reconstitution is never complete. As will be elaborated further in the next chapter, seeing the social world as made up of ongoing processes highlights how the work of 'stabilization – the ongoing production and reproduction of social arrangements [such as norms] – never ceases, never finishes, and in a certain sense never fully succeeds' (Jackson 2006b, 39).

Norms such as democracy, human rights, non-aggression and capitalism can thus be understood both as essentially contested, in the manner of essentially contested concepts (Gallie 1955; Niemann and Schillinger 2017, 45), and as discourses – systems of meaning-making that constitute certain actors and possibilities. This way of thinking about norms highlights another deficit in the mainstream norms literature: its view of norms as broadly benign and its resultant neglect of power relations. This is discussed in the next sub-section.

Norms as good things – the progressive normative bias

Norms are not just seen as 'things' in much of the mainstream literature, they are seen as *good* things. As Charlotte Epstein puts it (semi-sarcastically): 'Norms, it would seem, are good things. They oil the workings of international cooperation and sustain peace in the anarchic international political system' (2012, 135). Much like the traditional English

School view of international society as a benign, consensual entity, there is an ‘implicit [sometimes explicit] normative bias’ in much of the literature (Widmaier and Park 2012, 127–28). This manifests itself in several ways, three of which are worth highlighting: the tendency to focus on ‘good’ norms, the negative and/or limited attention to contestation already mentioned, and the dominant place of a benign, teleological conception of ‘socialisation’ in the story of how actors supposedly become norm-abiding.

First and most straightforwardly, on a purely empirical level (albeit with an implicit normative aspect) the literature tends to focus on norms that are generally seen as positive and progressive – for example various forms of human rights, the rule of law and anti-corruption, the responsibility to protect (R2P), etc. There is a remarkable lack of attention to what could be seen as ‘bad’ norms (Epstein 2012, 137–38; see also Checkel 1998, 339; Zarakol 2014). Moreover, the language used to describe norms tends to imply the positive role that norms and their promoters play: ‘norm entrepreneurs’ and ‘norm cascading’, etc., versus ‘norm antipreneurs’ and ‘norm regress’ (see e.g. Bloomfield 2016; Bloomfield and Scott 2017; McKeown 2009). The result of these tendencies is, first, to encourage the empirical conclusion that most norms are indeed inherently good. Second, on a more analytical level, the implicit view of norms as good (or indeed bad) goes together with the analytical view above of norms as relatively stable entities with defined content both substantively and normatively. The norm’s substance is clear and can be evaluated normatively based on this clear substance. However, even the most superficially good norm can have adverse effects in practice. As Joe Hoover (2016) has argued in his work on human rights, they are ‘only as good as the ends they help us realise’. Any norm or normative framework should be judged not on its philosophical abstraction but on its implementation in practice and the consequences of this implementation. Whether they are conceived of as entities or processes, substantial or relational, norms in themselves are normatively neutral, neither inherently good nor bad. In seeking to define the limits of appropriate (and thereby also inappropriate) behaviour, every act of norm definition, promotion or otherwise involves an expression of a power relation or a silencing of alternative perspectives (Epstein 2012). While this power relation is often ignored because of the view of norms as good, arguing that this makes norms inherently bad would be similarly misplaced – power relations are ubiquitous in the social world, and are not ‘bad’ in themselves.

A second manifestation of the tendency to view norms as good is the limited attention paid to contestation of and resistance against norms, and the tendency even in works that do give them attention to assess contestation as good only in limited amounts. For example, in addition to their critique of Wiener's tendency towards substantialist thinking in assigning culture as a fixed 'script' of meaning, Niemann and Schillinger (2017, 47) argue that her work ultimately relies on a 'liberal understanding of political conflicts as both disruptive and solvable through consensus and dialogue'. In this view, contestation is ultimately marginalised conceptually by being treated as 'an obstacle to developing global understandings', which are seen as normatively desirable (Niemann and Schillinger 2017, 47). A similar assertion is made by Jonas Wolff and Lisbeth Zimmermann (2016), who include Wiener's work alongside that of three other scholars who take norm contestation seriously in their respective fields – Amitav Acharya (norm localisation), Oliver Richmond (peacebuilding) and Milja Kurki (democracy promotion). Their argument is that in each of these scholars' work, the critical commitment to putting contestation centre stage and seeing it favourably is still accompanied by fairly conventional normative connotations that treat contestation as 'a means to enable dialogue' and nothing more (Wolff and Zimmermann 2016, 513). Contestation through inclusive dialogue is acceptable and desirable; more 'fundamental and radical' conflicts over norms are 'either not considered or seen as normatively undesirable' (Wolff and Zimmermann 2016, 515). In this way, just like a distinction is drawn between good and bad norms, a line is drawn between good and bad contestation.

Finally, the dominant conceptualisation for how actors are brought into the norm-abiding fold has been the model of socialisation, understood as a progressive force. This model brings together the two previous points, in that the norms that actors are socialised into are seen as good and the process therefore as benign and progressive, carried out through peaceful means such as persuasion and argumentation, and because contestation as a result becomes seen as undesirable. In Epstein's (2012, 135) words, the literature's conception of socialisation 'tends to be apprehended as a bettering of the socializee, because of an implicit teleological assumption of change as progress ... tends to frame out the perspective of the socializee ... [and] infantilizes the socializee'. Internalisation of a norm is seen as 'synonymous with socialisation, socialisation with compliance, and compliance with progress' (Zarakol 2014, 316). Epstein (2012, 141–42)

argues that the infantilising tendency is based on an uncritical, misplaced adoption of the socialisation term from the social constructivist tradition in sociology, specifically from Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's influential *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967), in which socialisation referred to the process of children being socialised into society, and which explicitly ruled out such processes occurring in similar ways among 'pre-socialised' adults (see also Epstein 2011, 334–38). A similar point, though more oriented towards the aspect of social control inherent in the term, is highlighted by Patricia Owens (2015, 665–68). She notes that the origin of the socialisation term in the sociology of the early 20th century was an orientation towards making the population more 'social', i.e. aware of their roles in society so that they could contribute to the officially declared social good and drop any thoughts of revolution or rebellion that they may harbour. This element of social control, of how norms can strengthen society by keeping its less advantaged elements in check (another example of the power relations inherent in norms), is marginalised in the mainstream accounts of socialisation because of the inherent bias towards seeing norms as good and progressive things. The next section and chapter will discuss approaches that highlight these elements instead of marginalising them.

The failed socialisation of post-communist Europe?

The implicit biases of the 'socialisation' hypothesis can again be demonstrated through a pertinent case for Russian-Western relations: the expected socialisation of post-communist Europe, including Russia, into European 'norms and values' after the end of the Cold War. The EU's eastward expansion in 2004 and 2007, the processes leading up to it and the ongoing socialisation of the post-communist states into other international organisations and forums such as NATO and the Council of Europe went together with the popularity of the socialisation thesis. Here was a real-life 'laboratory' in which the spread of norms such as democracy and good governance could be empirically tested and, hopefully, proven to be successful. The EU became seen as the quintessential 'norm promoter' and its *Acquis Communautaire*, encapsulating all EU law on matters from agriculture to transport, seen as a blueprint for how to become a liberal democratic state, rather than what it was – a technocratic, historically contingent set of regulatory

standards that had developed piecemeal to suit very different circumstances to those now facing the post-communist states and whose wholesale adoption in fact *limited* democratic choice in the target states (see e.g. Grabbe 2006; 2014; Grzymala-Busse and Innes 2003; Mungiu-Pippidi 2007; 2014; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004). While EU membership was never on the cards for Russia and conditionality thus weaker, it too was expected to become socialised, to ‘eat [its] spinach’ and be the better for it (Wood 2017).¹⁶

A couple of decades on from 1989-91, the socialisation process had not worked out as expected. ‘Western’ norms had been only partially adopted across the post-communist states, with democratic ‘backsliding’ a worry not only in Russia and several post-Soviet states (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Central Asia) but in some of the new Central and East European EU member states too (Hungary, Poland). Given the substantialist approach of thin constructivism explored above, employing such a lens to the puzzle of how socialisation seemingly did not occur would lead one to explain this supposed ‘failure’ through a focus on how other norms somehow outcompeted the norms flowing from West to East, rather than through any internal contradictions or dissonance in those norms in the first place (c.f. Krook and True 2012, 104). Research questions raised by such an approach would tend to be focused on the receiving end of the socialisation process. What salient aspects of national identity and specific circumstances might have been missed by the norm promoters? Were some states just not ‘ready’ for democracy due to deep-seated authoritarian traditions or cultural attitudes, in line with Wiener’s focus on ‘cultural validation’? Did domestic ‘spoilers’ such as Vladimir Putin stand in the way of history? Who ‘lost’ Russia and the other backsliding states (c.f. Conradi 2017)?

The underlying assumptions behind such questions remain both that norms are things, essentially transportable through time and space as ideas or variables, and good, a force for progressive change in world politics. This leads to an underestimation of the true ‘thickness’ and situatedness of norms, how all social actions and interactions are in some sense normative in that they draw on and conform to varying degrees to some

¹⁶ The spinach metaphor was invoked in the context of NATO enlargement in the mid-1990s by Victoria Nuland, then chief of staff to Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and later Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, (in)famous for her comment ‘fuck the EU’ while discussing options for Ukrainian government formation with the US ambassador to Ukraine in January 2014.

temporally and spatially contingent expected standard of behaviour. In turn this leads analysis away from the power-political aspect of norms, the way in which controlling the normative narrative or being on the side of the given normative order is a fundamental 'face of power' (c.f. Lukes 2005), irrespective of whether the normative order is assessed as 'good' or 'bad'.

In sum, English School writings on international society and the thin constructivist norms literature suffer from the twin drawbacks of seeing society and the norms that constitute it as, first, bounded, stable entities, and second, overly 'good' and/or consensual. Society and norms are good things – good in the sense of benign and things in the sense of bounded entities. These approaches do not give us much of a grasp on the power politics of either norms or society (I. B. Neumann and Sending 2007, 88–89). Against these essentialist and liberal tendencies, this study joins calls to focus less on norm 'diffusion' and more on norm 'politics' – the 'propagation, contestation, adaption, adoption, or rejection of norms' carried out by socially situated agents and heavily characterised by power relations (Bucher 2014, 745). In the next section, it is argued that a better approach to understanding international social relations needs a conceptualisation of society that considers both how norms exercise a dominating and disciplining effect and how deviance from a society's norms is a central, co-constitutive part of society, not an aberration indicating its absence.

III – Dominance, deviance and power: society as a struggle for norms

To find analytical lenses that alert us to the power politics of norms and international society, much critical IR scholarship has turned to social and anthropological theories. Before the next chapter's elaboration of the theory and theorist (stigma theory and Erving Goffman) that will serve as the main analytical frame for this study, this section considers some other prevalent approaches and the purchase they give us on the power-political processes that underpin international society and international normative orders. Particular attention is given to three approaches that in similar ways bring attention to the structural power of norms and their role in sustaining the dominance and/or hegemony of the most powerful actors in any given society: those drawing on the writings

of Antonio Gramsci, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault.¹⁷ The analysis here cannot do full justice to the nuances and complexities of these scholars' thought, the tensions between them, or the many ways in which they have influenced IR scholarship. The focus is instead more narrowly on how they help us address the shortcomings noted above in ways that chime with the approach taken in this study.

Norms as constitutive of dominance or hegemony

A common feature of Gramscian, Bourdieusian and Foucauldian thought is the focus on the ways in which the views and practices of a society's most powerful actors come to be seen as the 'natural' or 'normal' way of doing things, thereby framing and structuring what is seen as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This is the common thread linking Gramsci's (1971) concept of 'hegemony', whereby the ruling group of a society legitimises its rule through the promotion of a particular 'common sense' that ensures the consent of the ruled (for a distinction between this and other conceptions of hegemony, see W. I. Robinson 2006), to Bourdieu's (1998, 9) notion of 'symbolic violence', whereby the 'dominated' come to see the world, including their own lifestyles, 'from the destructive and reductive view of the dominant aesthetic'. As with Gramsci's focus on hegemony producing '*consensual domination*' (W. I. Robinson 2006, 166) through the spread of common sense, so Bourdieu (1998, 103, emphasis added) sees symbolic violence as 'the violence which extorts submission, *which is not perceived as such*, based on "collective expectations" or socially inculcated beliefs'. Similarly, Foucault (2007) focuses on how the shifting logics of government or 'governmentality' over time indirectly shape and re-shape appropriate standards of behaviour for both states and individuals through the 'conduct of conduct' – 'a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons' (Gordon 1991, 2). Whether through hegemony, symbolic violence or governmentality, then, these concepts focus on the ways in which appropriate standards of behaviour of a given society are shaped through

¹⁷ These are of course not the only critical approaches that draw attention to the structuring power of norms. For reasons of space, I do not go into feminist theory and its focus on 'normative violence' (Butler 2009; in IR, see e.g. Enloe 2014; Cohn 1987; Hansen 2000; Sjoberg 2013; Weber 2016) or post-colonial theory and its focus on the Eurocentrism of norms (Spivak 1988; Chakrabarty 2000; in IR, see e.g. Geeta and Nair 2002; Seth 2012; Muppidi 2012; Epstein et al. 2014).

historically situated processes, often through the promotion of a historically contingent set of standards based on the interests or worldviews of the powerful as ‘normal’ or ‘natural’. These processes are thus infused with power, what Lukes (2005, 143–44) calls the ‘third dimension’ of power, ‘the capacity to secure compliance to domination through the shaping of beliefs and desires’.¹⁸ Norms are always norms for someone.¹⁹

In IR, Gramscian, Bourdieusian and Foucauldian works have been influential in providing analyses more attuned to the power relations of norms and broader symbolic orders. Neo-Gramscians working primarily within the sub-field of International Political Economy have analysed the ways in which hegemony operates on an international scale, highlighting the shifting dynamics of material, ideational and institutional forces in the shaping of international order (e.g. Cox 1981; 1983; 1987; Bieler and Morton 2006; Morton 2003; 2007; Parmar 2012a; 2012b). Several of these analyses focus on the central role of states or groups of states in particular hegemonic projects – e.g. the post-WWII *Pax Americana* (W. I. Robinson 2006, 167). However, they also provide a particularly useful lens for showing how transnational processes influence hegemonic projects and how powerful civil society actors can aid the promotion of such projects. For example, Parmar (2012a; 2012b) shows how American philanthropic foundations, notably the ‘Big 3’ of Ford, Brookings and Carnegie, formed a central part in the construction of American hegemony in the 20th century, even in periods where the US state itself adopted a more isolationist position. The foundations, Parmar (2012a, 2, 13–22) argues, built ‘the domestic and international infrastructure for liberal internationalism’ through their construction of global knowledge networks promoting the spread of market democracies and other policies congenial to US interests, including modernisation theory in the 1950–1970s. They co-operated closely with the American state, enhancing both their and the state’s power in the process and belying their supposed ‘independence’ (Parmar 2012a, 3–4). The foundations can thus be conceived as something akin to ‘norm entrepreneurs’, but rather than the apolitical register this term evokes, their entrepreneurial project was deeply enmeshed in existing power relations, promoting the ‘common sense’ of the hegemon and sustaining a hegemonic order.

¹⁸ As Lukes (2005, 87–107) notes and then discusses at length, Foucault’s approach to power has sometimes been associated with a ‘fourth dimension’ of power. However, as he shows while partly dismissing that idea, Foucault’s work is also centrally concerned with the ‘third’ dimension.

¹⁹ From Robert Cox’s (1981, 128) famous dictum, ‘Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose’.

Bourdieu's impact in IR has mainly been felt through the 'practice turn', a body of literature that aims to study the ways in which international relations are expressed through international 'practices'.²⁰ In Adler-Nissen's (2013, 1) words, 'Bourdieu allows us to explore how people create international relations in their daily activities'. For the purposes of this study, the key points to take away from Bourdieu's thought are the focus on how normative orders are expressions of symbolic violence or even symbolic domination (a state in which certain ways of 'talking and acting have been actively evacuated' (Epstein 2013, 168)) and thus infused with power relations, and how single 'norms' are always part of a broader inter-connected structure. Epstein (2013, 165) explores the latter point through Bourdieu's concept of *nomos*, 'the underlying normative order structuring a field of interactions'. This focus, she argues, helps us to see how norms do not 'operate in a vacuum ... a single norm always belongs to an organized ensemble' (Epstein 2013, 171). Norms are thus not bounded, free-floating 'things' but part of a thicker, stickier normative structure bound up with existing power relations.

This focus on structure and domination has led many to criticise Bourdieu for being too deterministic and/or reproductionist, his work more suited to explaining durability than change (for defences against such criticism, see e.g. Bourdieu 1998, vii–viii; Wacquant 2007; Steinmetz 2011).²¹ An example of this can be seen in Neumann and Pouliot's (2011) use of Bourdieu's concept of *hysteresis* – a lack of fit between an actor's dispositions or *habitus* and the dominant practices of the field in which the actor seeks to operate – to explain the persistent awkward relations between Russia and Europe over the past millennium. The argument is that Russian dispositions about the conduct of diplomacy have had a persistently bad 'fit' with the dominant practices in the European field over time, with for example secrecy and centralised decision-making favoured over more open and flexible European ambassadorial practices. While the analysis is very good at showing how a conflictual relationship is reproduced through the interaction of *habitus* and field, it is hard to see how such relations would change except through some

²⁰ This 'turn' is too wide-ranging to do full justice to here. For the article often cited as its starting point, see Neumann (2002), as well as the *Millennium* special issue of which it forms part. For useful collections or overviews by central figures, see e.g. Adler and Pouliot (2011) and Bueger and Gadinger (2014), and for critical takes see e.g. Kustermans (2016) and Martin-Mazé (2017).

²¹ This charge of determinism was one of the main reasons why a 'pragmatist' research programme was started by some of Bourdieu's students and colleagues, notably Luc Boltanski (e.g. Boltanski and Thévenot 1999; 2006; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Boltanski 2011).

exogenous shock that fundamentally transforms the relationship. In the same vein, some practice-oriented approaches have been criticised for underestimating the importance of struggle to Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus, instead overplaying the role of habitual practices (Martin-Mazé 2017). In fact, in Bourdieu's collaborator Loïc Wacquant's words (2007, 264–65), 'struggle, not "reproduction", is the master metaphor at the core of [Bourdieu's] thought'. Norms and normative orders are thus shaped through ongoing power struggles.

Foucault-inspired work in IR has similarly drawn attention to the power relations inherent in norms and other concepts often taken for granted in the field (for a critical overview, see Selby 2007). Poststructuralist work drawing on Foucauldian discourse analysis has shown how e.g. national identities and ideas of national security are discursively constituted rather than given by material or natural factors (e.g. Campbell 1992; Doty 1993; Hansen 2006; I. B. Neumann 2016).²² Separately, scholars have drawn on Foucault's work on liberal governance practices and the evolution of disciplining practices in modern societies to show how liberal international norms and regimes are not merely benign and voluntary practices engaged in through cooperation, but power-infused and contested disciplining devices that define certain actions and practices as normal and legitimate, and others as 'abnormal' and illegitimate (Keeley 1990; Foucault 1991). Studies applying the concept of governmentality to the international level have further served to 'denaturalise' and critically interrogate the benign nature of liberal orders and practices of governance, whether in relation to regional governance projects such as the EU (e.g. Walters and Haahr 2004) or the broader international arena (e.g. Larner and Walters 2004a; 2004b; I. B. Neumann and Sending 2007; 2010; Joseph 2010; 2012; for sympathetic critiques, see e.g. Hamilton 2014; 2018).

This research is not always explicitly concerned with norms per se, at least not as traditionally understood in IR. Like the approaches discussed above, it instead focuses attention on how the 'norms' of a society form part of broader processes of contestation and control reflective of the current state of that society. As Joseph (2010, 223–24) notes, in 'advanced' or late-modern societies, 'more subtle methods of power' are 'exercised through a network of institutions, practices, procedures and techniques which act to

²² These studies' influence on this study's methodology will be further elaborated in Chapter 2.

regulate social conduct'. Neumann and Sending (2007, 679) argue that the spread of this particularly 'governmental' form of governance (as opposed to e.g. disciplinary forms) also internationally in recent decades means that the international realm can be usefully conceptualised as one of increasing 'governmentality': 'a discourse where liberal norms of governing take on increasing importance'. These liberal norms serve to shape 'the identity and behavioural patterns of states' as well as individuals, setting up 'standards of behaviour for individuals and models of institutions to be implemented and followed by all good members of the international community' (I. B. Neumann and Sending 2007, 699).²³ For those that do not, exclusion and/or status loss may be the result. As Neumann argues elsewhere (2008, esp. 133-134), another way of conceptualising Russia's lack of recognition as a great power by West European states is that its mode of governance has remained focused on direct state power and policing while Western states have moved towards governing 'less', i.e. less directly. However, rather than a sign of civilizational progress and the spread of reasoned, consensual governance as expressed through norms, in a Foucauldian lens such practices are still infused with power relations. They merely represent a shift in the ways power operates.

These approaches thus have in common that they lay bare the power relations and structuring violence behind the operation of any society or social order, and how a society's norms serve to legitimise existing power relations by presenting the viewpoint of its most powerful actors as the 'normal' way of doing things. Society, in this view, is characterised more by a struggle over norms and normality, including the stigmatisation of 'abnormal' behaviour, than by the consensual undertaking based on *shared* norms envisaged by the English School and the rational persuasion of mainstream norms literature. As Berger and Luckmann (1967, 121) argue, all societies are 'constructions in the face of chaos': '...the institutional order ... is continually threatened by the presence of realities that are meaningless in *its* terms. The legitimation of the institutional order [faces] the ongoing necessity of keeping chaos at bay'. The work of legitimising the order, for example through stigmatisation, is an exercise of power, one that is ongoing and never entirely complete. Similarly, contestation of the norms underpinning social order is both

²³ There is a parallel here, notwithstanding important differences, to the 'World Society' approach mentioned in footnote 8 above and its focus on the construction of actors through the circulation of 'scripts' that makes organisations, such as nation states, develop similar characteristics and institutions (see Drori and Krücken 2009, 23–24 for a discussion).

widespread and productive, though it does not necessarily produce ‘progress’ in the teleological sense implicit in the socialisation approach.

The constitutive role of deviance

The conceptualisation of society adopted in this study sees ‘deviance’ and abnormality as an integral part of any social order, international society included. As will be explored further below, the understanding of deviance adopted here is critical, constructionist and relational, inextricably bound up with the production of norms and normality highlighted above. For every standard of appropriate behaviour that becomes established, there must by necessity be a standard of *inappropriate* behaviour that goes along with it. These inappropriate behaviours are just as central to the constitution of society.

The constitutive role of deviance in society has long been the focus of sociological investigations, although the term itself has had a chequered history and has fallen somewhat out of favour.²⁴ For example, already in 1895 Émile Durkheim, one of modern sociology’s ‘founding fathers’, wrote of criminality and the criminal as ‘normal’ sociological phenomena:

[Crime] is a factor in public health, an integrative element in any healthy society. ... crime is normal because it is completely impossible for any society entirely free of it to exist. ... Thus crime is necessary. (1982, 98–99, 101)

This argument gets at the fundamentally co-constitutive relationship between normal and abnormal, good and evil. It relates to this study’s second epigraph, in which Satan dismisses as futile and impossible the idea of absolute good, ‘bare light’, and thereby shows the necessity of evil for good to exist: ‘Nothing is good indefinitely and without limits’ (Durkheim 1982, 101). Just because a group of members of society do not fully

²⁴ The sociological study of ‘deviance’ took off in the 1950s and peaked in the mid-1970s, at which point its most successful approach – labelling theory – came under increasing criticism from conflict theorists, feminists and activists, primarily over the normative problems inherent in studying certain activities as ‘deviant’, even if only owing to society’s labelling of them as such (Best 2004a; 2006). Since then its use declined, prompting debates about the concept’s ‘death’ (J. Miller, Wright, and Dannels 2001; Goode 2003; 2004; Best 2004b). However, it persists as a focus of study, and has been the subject of at least two handbooks in the past decade (on ‘deviant behavior’ and ‘deviance’, respectively), suggesting reports of its death are premature (Bryant 2011; Brown and Sefiha 2017).

share or act contrary to the norms of the society, does not necessarily mean that the group or individuals within it stand outside society, that society itself ceases to exist (as in the English School distinction between system and society) or that the social norms thus flouted are necessarily any weaker. In fact, as Durkheim hinted, deviance may indeed improve the overall 'health' or cohesiveness of the society in question and enhance social order, by clarifying its norms through the example of deviant behaviour – even more so if the deviant is disciplined or stigmatised. It should be noted that, despite his views on crime being unconventional for his time, Durkheim's approach to society was conservative and functionalist. Unlike successors such as Foucault (e.g. 1991), who identified the disciplining violence of norms, he celebrated the norm and saw crime as necessary only in so far as it served to strengthen societal equilibrium as a whole. Much like the norms scholars cited above, he acknowledged the role of contestation and deviance but thought there should be a limit to them.

The approach to deviance in this study is not functionalist, nor does it rely on a substantialist or essentialist view of deviance and normality as solid, bounded entities defined by some essential attributes. It draws instead on the social constructionist, labelling theory of deviance, developed by e.g. Edwin Lemert (1951), John Kitsuse (1962) and Howard Becker (1973). As Becker's work is exemplary for this approach and is very close to the analytical framework of stigmatisation elaborated in the next chapter, he will serve as the primary interlocutor here (see Best 2004a; 2006 for more on the different approaches to deviance and how they have gone in and out of fashion). In his influential work *Outsiders* (1973, 4–6), Becker noted that deviance could be defined in several ways, for example statistically, as the deviation from the statistical norm, or pathologically/medically, as a 'disease' that prevents the healthy functioning of an organism. He argued that the main sociological way of thinking about deviance came close to the medical notion, where the organism in question was society and analysis focused on identifying 'functional' and 'dysfunctional' processes in society that either promoted or hindered its smooth operation and survival (Becker 1973, 7). This reflected Durkheim's view of society as well as the broader structural-functionalist tradition associated with Talcott Parsons.

There is a parallel here to the relative neglect of deviance by mainstream IR scholarship (for a notable early exception, see A. J. Miller 1983). The editors of a recent

volume on deviance in international relations (Wagner, Werner, and Onderco 2014, 1–2) argue that this neglect was due precisely to the legacy of IR's focus on structural theorising, particularly the influence of Waltz's (1979) assertion that the international system tends to produce 'like units' and the tendency to see structural factors as strongly homogenising.²⁵ This parallel is no coincidence. As Stacie Goddard and Daniel Nexon (2005, esp. 22-29) have shown, Waltz was heavily influenced by structural-functionalist theorists, including Parsons and Durkheim, and his theory of the international system shares several features with structural-functionalist approaches to social order and their focus on social equilibrium. The problem with such a functionalist approach, in Becker's (1973, 7) view, was that it marginalised questions of power and politics: the function of a social group 'is decided in political conflict, not given in [its] nature', and consequently what counts as deviant is a political question. This foreshadows the IR constructivist and English School literatures' neglect of the power politics of society and norms.

The labelling view of deviance adopted here is instead fundamentally relational and contingent, infused with power relations. Becker (1973, 7–8) identified another, more 'relativistic' sociological approach to deviance that saw it as the 'failure to obey group rules', but argued that this still failed 'to give sufficient weight to the ambiguities that arise in deciding which rules' apply in any given situation, i.e. the politics involved. Moreover, such an approach risks missing the fundamental constitutive element of rule-making, easily taking the 'group rules' in question for granted and the group as bounded. Becker instead advocated an understanding even more strongly rooted in relational thinking and that emphasised the power-relation aspect of labelling something or someone deviant:

...social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender." The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label. (1973, 9, emphasis in original)

²⁵ They also identify the role of IR's dominant 'positivist metatheory', which treats 'deviant' cases as outliers or 'noise' in the study of regular patterns (Wagner, Werner, and Onderco 2014, 3). Of course, another reason for IR's neglect of deviance may simply be the above-noted decline in the study of deviance in sociology, which meant there were fewer studies to 'borrow' ideas from.

Deviance thus arises not from some inherently deviant quality but from social interaction, the reaction of others to some act. Rules and norms, and therefore deviance, are fundamentally contested and 'part of the political process of society', with society's more economically and politically powerful actors imposing their conceptions of normality and deviance on the less powerful and differentiating, often arbitrarily, on grounds of class, race, gender, age and circumstance (Becker 1973, 14–18).

The promise of this approach to deviance is its focus on the interactive dynamic and power relations between the 'labellers' and the 'labelled'. Drawing on a similar approach, a small number of critical studies have highlighted the similar, selective construction of 'rogue' or 'renegade' states in international relations, and the social purpose of re-enforcing the dominance of those who manage to successfully define such 'rogue-ness' (e.g. Chomsky 2000; Nincic 2005; Homolar 2011). Deviance is relational and managing to establish one's own view of deviance as dominant in a society is both a source and an exercise of power.

Conclusion

While international society is built on norms, it is socially constituted and maintained as much through productive norm contestation, the labelling of deviance and the power politics inherent in norms as through a deliberative process of dialogue, consent and 'norm cascading'. Society is not a bounded entity defined by 'shared' norms, and norms are neither bounded 'things' nor (necessarily) 'good' things. Norms and societies are constituted, developed and clarified through interactive, relational processes, including processes of shaming and ostracising. Rather than rejecting the terms altogether, we need analytical and conceptual tools that allow us to capture these processes. The final section of this chapter highlighted some such approaches, inspired by the work of Gramsci, Bourdieu and Foucault, and the purchase they give us on the power politics of norms – notably the ways in which norms can serve to aid processes of domination by making hierarchical relations seem normal and thereby secure compliance or consent in the dominated. However, as noted in particular about Bourdieusian analysis, while these approaches give us a good handle on structural power relations, they are less well suited

to illuminating the interactive dimension of these processes. To develop a framework that is more attuned to this interactive dimension, the next chapter turns to the theoretical approach that will serve as the main analytical toolkit in the rest of this study: stigma theory.

Chapter 2

Stigmatisation, relationalism and discourse

This chapter elaborates the study's conceptual toolkit, following from the previous chapter's discussion of some of the deficiencies in IR literature on norms and international society and of some alternative approaches more attuned to the power politics of norms. It builds on these approaches and proposes a lens of stigmatisation as a fruitful way of conceptualising the ongoing formation and contestation of international society and the struggle over norms and normality in international relations. After a brief introduction outlining the study's use of stigma and stigmatisation, section II addresses the question of substantialism by showing how stigmatisation can be studied both from substantialist and relational perspectives. It lays out the study's relational ontological wager and conceptualisation of stigmatisation as a relational process. Section II discusses in more depth how stigma theory provides us with a lens that addresses the inherent power politics or 'darker' side of norms. Finally, section III turns to questions of epistemology, presenting the study's methodological approach, methods for studying stigmatisation as a process, as well as case selection.

The central theoretical figure in this chapter is Erving Goffman, author of the most influential sociological work on stigma: *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963). A Canadian-American sociologist, Goffman's work stands firmly within the American pragmatist tradition and primarily concerns itself with social interactionism and the social construction of identities and selves (see e.g. Goffman 1959; 1967).²⁶ As Rebecca Adler-Nissen (2014b, 145; 2016) explains, Goffman's work on dramaturgy and social interactionism, as well as the broader symbolic interactionist tradition of which he formed part, was a source of inspiration for the initial wave of constructivist scholarship in IR, particularly Wendt. However, she argues, Wendt's import of symbolic interactionist principles was 'half-hearted', and, as seen briefly in

²⁶ Goffman was a contemporary and colleague of Howard Becker in the second Chicago School of Sociology, and Becker's *Outsiders* was originally published in the same year as *Stigma*. The two works have many overlapping insights, notably the relational understanding of stigma and deviance and the focus on the agency of the stigmatised/outside. The main focus here is on stigma owing to the theory's broader application and influence in IR.

Chapter 1, his work ended up privileging structural analyses and anthropomorphising the state as a unitary actor (Adler-Nissen 2016, 31). Moreover, echoing the above critique of IR scholarship's tendency to focus on the good side of norms, Goffman's work on stigma remained underused until it was recently picked up and applied to a variety of cases, from European integration to international financial policy options and nuclear weapons (e.g. Adler-Nissen 2014a; 2014b; Chwierothe 2015; Mégret 2014; Sauer and Reveraert 2018; Shamai 2015; Svendsen 2016; Zarakol 2010; 2014).²⁷ The stigma concept has been hugely influential in other disciplines, particularly social psychology, and has been used to explain and elucidate a huge variety of human experiences (see Phelan, Link, and Dovidio 2008 for an overview of the literature). But, in Adler-Nissen's (2014b, 144) and Zarakol's (2014, 317) words, 'the proposition that stigmatization is central to understanding how norms work' has not been 'seriously explored' by IR scholars, despite the fact that it 'characterises normative diffusion to a much greater degree than persuasion ever did'.

Arriving in English from Greek via Latin, stigma originally meant 'a mark made by a pointed instrument', referring to tattoos or identifying marks on animals, and in the Christian tradition referred to marks similar to those left on Jesus Christ's body after his crucifixion (*stigmata*), appearing miraculously on saints and other humans as a symbol of divine grace (Page 1984, 2; Adler-Nissen 2014b, 145). Goffman (1963, 3) defined it as 'an attribute that is deeply discrediting', reducing the bearer 'from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one'. Importantly, however, stigmas are socially constructed and therefore relational and contingent: '...a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype' (Goffman 1963, 14). What counts as a stigma in one place and time may not in another, for instance as the relationship between attribute and stereotype is altered over time. Prominent examples of attributes or behaviours that have become less stigmatised or discredited in recent decades in the UK, albeit not uniformly, include homosexuality, mental health problems or being non-white. Similarly, although again not uniformly, new stigmas have slowly arisen around homophobia, racism and other types of discrimination. In international relations, perhaps the most obvious change

²⁷ Mégret draws on Durkheim rather than Goffman for his work on stigmatisation practices in international law but is part of the broader discussion on stigmatisation's role in international relations.

over the past couple of centuries has been the increasing stigma attached to territorial conquest, as well as the increasing stigmatisation of human rights violations.

Goffman identified three types of stigma, the last two of which appear particularly amenable to the international scale: 1) abominations of the body, i.e. visible deformities or disabilities; 2) blemishes of character perceived as weak will, domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid beliefs, and dishonesty, for example 'radical political behaviour'; and 3) tribal stigmas of race, nation and religion (1963, 13–14). As will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter, I argue that analytically, the most relevant of these three categories for understanding stigmatisation in contemporary international society is 2), given its focus on behaviour rather than attributes. Keene (2013) argues that European international society has increasingly come to be defined by 'individualist' rather than 'collectivist' attributes, i.e. behaviours that any individual state can in theory follow. The same can be argued, albeit more 'thinly', at a global level. This is not to say that 'tribal' stigmas have become irrelevant – politically, they remain the most powerful source of justification for the use of violence against other human beings. Moreover, stigmas are interlinked, and collectivist attributes like gender, class or race clearly influence stigmatisation over supposedly neutral behaviours. As Zarakol (2010, 94) argues, election irregularities in the periphery are more likely to be criticised than in the core. Actors can also come to embody and symbolise stigmas, and in practice, once an actor has embodied a stigma at one point in history it is unlikely ever to fully eradicate it, becoming instead someone who has 'corrected a particular blemish' (Goffman 1963, 19–20): a former alcoholic, an ex-dictatorship, a post-Soviet country.

The contingent nature of stigmas brings the attention to the process of stigmatisation, understood in this study as the social construction of stigmas. A conceptualisation is offered by sociologists Bruce Link and Jo Phelan (2001), who argue that a stigma comes into existence when four interrelated components or mechanisms co-occur: *labelling*, *stereotyping*, *separation* and *status loss/discrimination*. The components are summarised in Table 2.1 below, but a brief elaboration is in order to show how these may operate on an international scale. The first component, *labelling*, refers to how certain differences become labelled as socially relevant, for example one's 'skin color, IQ, sexual preferences, or gender' (Link and Phelan 2001, 367), or in international politics, the nature of a state's government (democratic/authoritarian),

economic organisation (capitalist/socialist), etc. Such labels simplify and order complex reality, and as with all labels, which differences are deemed salient varies over time and from place to place (Link and Phelan 2001, 367–68). *Stereotyping* refers to how labelled differences become linked to particular characteristics, for example how mental patients or black people become perceived as ‘dangerous’ (Link and Phelan 2001, 368–70), or democracies as ‘peaceful’ and authoritarian states as ‘aggressive’, as per variants of the Democratic Peace Theory. The third component, *separation*, concerns how labels and stereotypes combine to rationalise distinctions between ‘us’, the normals (or ‘audience of normals’ in Adler-Nissen’s (2014b, 152) term, denoting the states or individuals that try to impose a stigma), and ‘them’, the stigmatised, often justifying physical segregation (Link and Phelan 2001, 370). In international relations, such processes can be seen in how inclusion or exclusion in inter-governmental organisations are justified on grounds of e.g. required levels of democracy, human rights protections, etc. Finally, *status loss* and *discrimination* refers to how the stigmatised are directly or indirectly devalued, rejected and excluded on the basis of their labelled and stereotyped separation, on an individual scale affecting a person’s ‘life chances’ (Link and Phelan 2001, 370–75; see also Goffman 1963, 15), on an international scale reducing for example a state’s access to credit, trade, aid or generally excluding it from international decision-making processes.

Table 2.1 – Components of stigmatisation

<i>Labelling</i>	<i>Stereotyping</i>	<i>Separation</i>	<i>Status loss</i>
Identifying and labelling certain human differences as socially relevant.	Linking those labelled as different to undesirable characteristics.	Creating categories of ‘us’ (the normals) and ‘them’ (the labelled).	Labelled persons experience status loss and discrimination.

These four components are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. As will be discussed in more detail below, they should not be taken as embodying a linear, progressive model where each step is clearly identifiable and occurring after one another. Rather, the conceptualisation offers a heuristic, an analytical frame through which to

locate, assess and compare instances of stigmatisation. What form does the link between labelling, stereotyping and separation take over time or from place to place? What sort of status loss or discrimination is imposed on those stigmatised in any given situation? How settled or involved is the 'audience of normals' in any given instance? What does all of this in turn tell us about the strength or nature of the stigmatising process and the normative fabric of society? The next section elaborates the relational premises of this conceptualisation.

I – Stigmatisation as a relational process

Stigmatisation and stigma can be conceptualised in many ways for social research – as a primarily sociological or psychological phenomena, as a relational or substantialist concept, as an interactive process or an attribute or variable. This section elaborates this study's relational ontological wager and how it consequently treats stigmatisation as a relational process constitutive of societies and norms. It first outlines relationalism as an approach to social analysis, building on the brief mentions in the Introduction and Chapter 1, and then extends this discussion to the concept of stigmatisation specifically, distinguishing the relational approach from a more substantialist conceptualisation.

Relationalism – analysing a world in flux

Relationalism posits that social relations are logically prior to the social phenomena that become constructed through them, be they durable social forms such as nation states, these social forms' presumed attributes such as national identities, or social categories such as class, crime or capitalism. In Mustafa Emirbayer's (1997, 287) words, social research should therefore take 'relations' as its primary unit of analysis: 'Relational theorists reject the notion that one can posit discrete, pre-given units such as the individual or society as the ultimate starting points of sociological analysis'. Emirbayer dubbed such an approach *substantialist*. In this approach, such pre-given units as individuals or states either 'self-act' or 'inter-act' (with other units) based on their pre-given attributes, identities or interests, and remain substantially unchanged through this

self-action or inter-action, although their attributes may be enhanced or diminished (see also Abbott 2001a, 37–63). In Emirbayer's New School colleague Charles Tilly's (1995, 1594) words: 'Analysts of large-scale political processes frequently invoke invariant models that feature self-contained and self-motivating social units. Few actual political processes conform to such models'.

As noted in Chapter 1, much of the literature on international society and international norms, and indeed the IR literature more broadly, is characterised by substantialism. It treats society or norms as relatively stable things or entities with intrinsic qualities or attributes. Collective actors such as societies or states are seen as acting on the basis of these intrinsic qualities – the variables (or norms), rather than the actors themselves, end up 'doing the acting' (Bucher 2014, 751–52; c.f. Emirbayer 1997). Norms become essential attributes that are either permanently linked to certain actors as part of their intrinsic identities or can be adopted by various actors but do not substantially change in the process. In analyses of international society (or societies) that emphasise the requirement of a common culture, it encourages the either/or-style thinking whereby substances or essences cannot mix and societies thereby are separated from each other either vertically (e.g. 'European' international society vs 'Asian' international society) or horizontally ('global' international society from 'regional' international societies) (Qin 2010). Substantialist ascription of pre-existing, permanent interests to states and indeed permanent logics to the international system also characterises other IR theories like realism (Go and Lawson 2017, 22). When applied to the analysis of a core IR phenomenon such as diplomacy, substantialist approaches become theories either of 'states bumping into each other' (self-action) or of 'reciprocal signaling' (inter-action) (Adler-Nissen 2015, 291–95). Common to all these approaches, then, is the view that one can posit certain substantial entities, be they individuals, states or societies, who either have certain essential, unchanging attributes or, slightly more flexibly, can adopt such attributes, which in turn explain the actors' actions.

What is the alternative? In a similar vein to processual sociologists such as Andrew Abbott (2001a; 2007; see also McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001), Emirbayer instead posited a relational, 'trans-actional' approach in which:

the very terms or units involved in a transaction derive their meaning, significance, and identity from (changing) functional roles they play within that transaction. The latter, seen as a dynamic, unfolding process, becomes the primary unit of analysis rather than the constituent elements themselves. (1997, 287)

In this mode of thinking, the focus is not on entities and their attributes, but on what goes on *between* entities to continually shape and reshape them. As Jackson and Nexon (1999) put it in a bid to correct IR's state-centric substantialism: 'relations' come before 'states'.²⁸ This does not mean that states or national societies should never be taken as the primary object of study. As Emirbayer (1997, 294–95) himself notes, the approach of beginning enquiry with nation states is not 'entirely implausible', but one should remember that, however stable they may seem, such social formations are ultimately made up of (quoting Michael Mann) 'multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power'.²⁹ States may often *appear* as 'static entities with predetermined identities and interests', but they *are* 'entities-in-motion', continually being shaped and reshaped through interactions in space and time, and social-scientific analyses should be mindful of this and avoid reification (Go and Lawson 2017, 23). Processes, interactions and the evolution of various social formations through their relations to other social formations are thus the objects of relationalism-inspired research.

In a relational ontology, international society (indeed, any society) should thus be seen as a process – 'a process of complex, entangled, and ongoing relations' (Qin 2010, 141). It has neither clear boundaries nor a substantial essence. Neither have the norms that constitute it, which are in themselves processual and discursive in nature, not fixed (c.f. Krook and True 2012). The fundamental ontological assumption of this view is that the world is continually in flux, and that the entities and social formations that appear stable and given are, ultimately, fragile and temporary, albeit to varying degrees. Unlike in substantialist approaches where the assumption of stable essences and interests mean that change is the thing to be explained, relational analysis 'begins with the analytical presumption of continual flux and seeks to explain how social life is relatively *stabilized*' through processes of ordering and disordering (Jackson 2006b, 15). This process of

²⁸ See Holm and Sending (2018) for an account putting 'states before relations', foregrounding the importance of the state as a legal entity.

²⁹ See also Emirbayer and Mische (1998, 974) for a discussion of the difficulty of accommodating corporate actors such as states in a relational framework of agency.

stabilisation, the ‘ongoing production and reproduction of social arrangements’, Patrick Jackson (2006b, 39) notes drawing on Abbott (2001a), ‘never ceases, never finishes, and in a certain sense never fully succeeds’. Processes and mechanisms such as stigmatisation contribute to the production and reproduction of relational identities, norms and actors, which are all inextricably bound up in one another. Pre-figured actors with set identities do not arrive on the scene and pick which norms to adopt or promote but in part derive their very identities through the interactional processes that shape and reshape norms and societies.

Relationalism has many sources. Qin (2010; 2016; 2018) locates it in Confucian thought and the ‘Chinese way of thinking’. This borders on essentialism in its own right, particularly when contrasted with a ‘Western way of thinking’ that he argues tends to focus on independent entities assumed to be discrete. As seen above, this underestimates the extent to which relational principles are scattered throughout much ‘Western’ social theory.³⁰ Moreover, imposing a strict, binary division between substantialist and relational thinking would itself be a fallacy of substantialism. Relationalism itself is more of a ‘family of social theories’ than a coherent school of thought, with divisions (‘fractalization’ in Abbott’s (2001b) words) between different approaches that nevertheless share a common ‘relational sensibility’ (Jackson and Nexon 2019). Hence it is more apt to consider the two as opposite ends of a spectrum where more or less relational/substantialist principles appear in different bodies of thought.

Goffman’s work and symbolic interactionism more broadly were prominent examples of relational thinking in Western academia in the mid-20th century. Emirbayer (1997, 295–96) notes Goffman’s call for a ‘sociology of occasions’ and calls the impact of his work on face-to-face encounters an ‘explosion’ of the self-actionist and inter-actionist approaches of his day. Joel Best, in an introduction to a 2005 edition of 1967’s *Interaction Ritual* (Goffman 2005, vii–x), describes how Goffman’s early work (1959’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1961’s *Asylums* and 1963’s *Stigma*) had caused enthusiasm owing to ‘growing disenchantment’ with both the structural theories of Talcott Parsons and the rise of quantitative analysis, and how his work differed from

³⁰ For further discussion of relationalism’s position in Chinese and/or Western thought, see the recent special issue in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, notably Qin and Nordin (2019), Ling and Nordin (2019), Nordin and Smith (2019), Zalewski (2019), and Jackson and Nexon (2019).

existing takes on the 'self' in that he saw the self as 'embedded in social situations', i.e. relationally constituted. Goffman himself, in the introduction to *Interaction Ritual* (2005, 2-3), put it this way: 'I assume that the proper study of interaction is not the individual and his psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among the acts of different persons mutually present to one another. ... Not, then, men and their moments. Rather moments and their men [sic]'. Goffman's goal, Best argues, was to 'spot elementary processes that underpinned all social life' (Goffman 2005, viii). The production and contestation of spoiled and unspoiled identities through stigmatisation was one such process.

Before moving on to consider how stigmatisation can be conceptualised in different ways, a note on analytical terminology is in order. As seen above, Emirbayer distinguishes between a (relational) 'trans-actional' approach and a (substantialist) 'inter-actional' approach. This hyphenated distinction is drawn from the work of John Dewey and Arthur Bentley (1949). As Emirbayer (1997, 285) notes, it is a philosophical distinction that does not match how the terms 'interaction' and 'transaction' are used in everyday life. Moreover, as seen from e.g. Goffman's use of the term interaction and the broader family of symbolic interactionism, it does not match the vocabulary of other broadly relational approaches. The distinction is thus both intuitively and analytically difficult to sustain. François Dépelteau (2015, esp. 55-56) argues that 'transactions are not simply interactions' and that the notion of transaction brings attention to the interdependence of actions, but does not convincingly explain why interactions cannot be interdependent as well, and anyway concedes that the term interaction 'can be used in relational research'. Both in what follows and in the brief discussions in previous chapters, I therefore follow e.g. Go and Lawson (2017) in using interaction as my primary term but also on occasion transaction as an interchangeable replacement. For the purposes of the analysis, the important thing is not any distinction between transaction and interaction, but the relational ontological assumption that stigmatisation is an interactive process occurring *between* a multitude of actors, understood as entities-in-motion that in part derive their identities and interests from the process.

Stigmatisation: process or attribute?

The difference between a relational and substantialist approach to analysing stigmatisation can be summarised as a difference between focusing on stigmatisation as a process or stigma as an attribute. In the former, the focus is on stigmatisation as an ongoing process occurring *between* actors; in the latter, on stigma as an attribute *of* one or more actors. The two different approaches can also be conceptualised as primarily sociological or primarily psychological. Again, in the former, the focus is on the sociological effects of the stigmatisation process on the broader social relations in which its participating actors are embedded, while in the latter the focus would be more on the psychological effects on stigmatised actors (and to a lesser extent those interacting with them). This subsection explores these distinctions and their implications for the IR literature on stigma.

Despite Goffman's relational account of stigma, much of the subsequent literature has tended to adopt a more substantialist approach. To some extent, the tension is already there in *Stigma* – the shorthand definition of a stigma as an 'attribute that is deeply discrediting' has often been more influential than the subsequent, more relational elaboration that 'a language of relationships, not attributes, is really needed' and that a stigma 'is really a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype' (Goffman 1963, 13, 14). As Link and Phelan note, 'subsequent practice has often transformed stigmas into attributes of persons', seeing the stigma as 'something *in the person* rather than a designation or tag that others affix' (2001, 366). When dealing with well-established stigmas this is perhaps understandable to some degree – Goffman noted that he was not going to keep stressing the relationship point because 'there are important attributes that almost everywhere in our society are discrediting' (1963, 14). However, noting that particular stigmas are so well entrenched as to be taken for granted in a particular social context is one thing (see the above discussion of how social forms often *appear* stable and fixed), adopting a substantialist approach where the stigma is taken as an intrinsic attribute of an individual or even state quite another.

The IR literature on stigma to date has approached the concept in a variety of ways. Several scholars have focused on the process of stigmatisation, often drawing on Link and Phelan's four-component conceptualisation (e.g. Adler-Nissen 2014b; Chwioroth 2015; Shamai 2015). Each of these analyses focus on the stigmatisation of particular actors and/or behaviours – Adler-Nissen on West Germany, Cuba and Austria,

Chwieroth on capital controls (and their enactment by, amongst others, Brazil and South Korea post-2008), Shamai on 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' as a category of weapons whose development and use states should shun (see also Tannenwald 2005; Sauer and Reveraert 2018) – as well as the impact of the stigmatisation process and stigma management on the normative fabric of the broader social context. Through the focus on either the construction, maintenance and/or transformation of stigma(s), then, these analyses lie towards the relational and processual end of the spectrum. Somewhere in the middle can be placed Zarakol's work (2010; see also 2014), which focuses on the impact of stigmatisation on three states that were in a similar structural place in world order and had just suffered military defeats: post-WWI Turkey, post-WWII Japan and post-Cold War Russia. Because it illustrates the tensions between a relational and substantialist approach to stigma, Zarakol's argument is worth exploring further.

The central thesis of *After Defeat* is that Turkey's, Japan's and Russia's stigmatisation as outsiders and laggards by the 'civilised' and 'developed' European society of states, coupled with these states' defeats in wars (hot or cold) and the societies' internalisation of Western normative frameworks, led to their leaders feeling ontologically insecure and developing a 'sustained preoccupation with international stature' (2010, 30). This draws directly on the more psychological sides of Goffman's work, notably his argument that a stigma creates 'permanent insecurity' in the stigmatised due to their 'awareness of inferiority' (1963, 24). Zarakol's analysis treats this psychological stigma largely as a structurally-induced factor, both a result of a state's position within the structure of international society and in turn explanatory of that state's strategies. For example, she argues that the development of similar discourses in Russia, Turkey and Japan at different points of the 19th century were 'a direct consequence of the special social space these countries share within the international system and the relational ontological insecurity they suffer as a result' (2010, 223). Following their respective defeats, elites in the three states deliberately picked similar strategies for managing stigma 'because of status concerns, given the international normative standards of the time' (2010, 24). There are two things pushing this analysis towards the substantialist end of the stigma spectrum: the analytical focus on explaining a particular group of states' similar behaviour, and the psychological focus on internalisation.

First, Zarakol's analytical focus is primarily on the explanatory potential of stigma for the similar processes occurring in the three otherwise separate and different states and societies. By itself this is not substantialist, despite the clear distinction she makes between the 'systemic angle' and 'endogenous processes' in each society, which suggests both clear vertical and horizontal separations and a somewhat bounded view of societies (2010, 18). The stigmas Zarakol describes do develop out of processes that are best described as relational – the partial integration into a symbolic and institutional order in an inferior position and a military defeat. However, their subsequent analytical and explanatory power come close to the role played by substantialist attributes: Turkey, Japan and Russia *have* stigmas and act accordingly. This resembles what Emirbayer (1997, 286) called the 'variable-centred approach', in which the variables themselves (e.g. stigma, backwardness) do the 'acting'. In Abbott's (2001a, 39) words, 'attributes interact, in causal or actual time, to create outcomes, themselves measurable as attributes of the fixed entities'. Moreover, the focus on permanent search for status caused by structurally-induced ontological insecurity bears very close resemblance to Social Identity Theory (SIT), another social-psychological approach premised on individuals' perpetual desire for social esteem that has been imported to IR and used to explain both Russian, Chinese and other foreign policies through the prism of status-seeking (e.g. Larson and Shevchenko 2010; 2014). In both accounts, activity is explained through actors' interaction with existing social structures, and motivation is to a large extent imputed based on the actor's objective position within those structures or perceived deficiency in an area such as social status. This ends up underplaying the continued relational interactions that constitute such structures (i.e. the continued stigmatisation by powerful actors) and the fact that actors' search for status often has less to do with perceived normative deficiencies as much as their search for recognition and respect in interaction with others, regardless of whether this is rooted in normative concerns (see Wolf 2019 for a critique of SIT's neglect of this latter point). Thus, while Zarakol's thick historical approach is far more sensitive to context than SIT-inspired approaches, there are elements of a similarly variable-centric approach at work.

Second and related to the above is the emphasis put on internalisation, which leads towards a more psychological conception of stigma. Zarakol (2014, 314) defines stigmatisation as 'the *internalisation* of a particular normative standard that defines one's

own attributes as undesirable'. This definition locates the stigma imposition process almost exclusively in the stigmatised person themselves, even if the internalisation occurs through exposure to a normative standard (in the article's case through King Rama IV of Siam's Western education). The need for some form of inter-subjective normative framework to exist or be in the process of being constructed for stigmatisation to be possible is clear. As Zarakol illustrates in *After Defeat* with an imagined example of her grandmother encountering women of the Himba people of northern Namibia, who go about their daily business topless, without some common understandings of appropriateness her conservative grandmother would be unable to shame the Himba women for such behaviour:

...even if she got over the language barrier somehow, my grandmother's comments would fall on deaf ears; she could no more *shame* the Himba women into covering up than they could convince her to shed her blouse. My grandmother's views are irrelevant to the Himba women, as much as their views are irrelevant to her – they are not members of the same society and neither party has to make any effort to see the world as the other sees it. (2010, 60)

Zarakol argues that before the onset of modernity in the 'long nineteenth century' of 1789-1917 and a convergence on normative standards largely based on Western practices, the relationship between Western and non-Western states and societies (and, presumably, between several non-Western ones) was similar to this dynamic. Since that period, the 'modernist ontology' she identifies with a certain view of how to organise states had become increasingly dominant, providing the necessary normative framework for stigma to operate.³¹ Domination or hegemony is thus the necessary conceptual partner to stigmatisation – without dominant or hegemonic norms in any given social setting there would not be the common context needed for stigmatisation to occur.

However, putting the bar as high as internalisation, which implies an acceptance rather than a mere awareness of such norms, puts the burden of evidence too high, for two reasons. First, it raises the philosophical questions of how one can know the extent to which actors have internalised anything, and how such internalisation would be relatively uniform on the scale of society or elites. There is a risk here of reverting to IR's

³¹ For a similar argument about the transformative effect of the 'long 19th century', see Buzan and Lawson (2015).

practice of anthropomorphising states, as Viatcheslav Morozov (2015, 58–59) has pointed out with reference to Zarakol’s work. Anticipating such criticism, Zarakol (2010, 99–102) invoked Bourdieu’s concept of individuals’ *habitus* – a ‘system of durable, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions’ for individuals; ‘a product of history [that] produces individual and collective practices’ (Bourdieu 1977, 82–83; 1990, 53–54) – arguing that ‘national habituses’ shape the identity of individual leaders in similar ways over time.³² This provides a discursive rather than psychological way of conceptualising individuals’ and indeed whole groups’ internalisation of a normative framework, even if the presence of stigma as a quasi-intervening variable turning structural pressures into discourse/habitus remains unobservable. Still, second, internalisation by the target of stigmatisation is not necessary for a stigmatising dynamic to develop in a social context. An actor can be shunned by others without accepting or even fully understanding the reasons for being shunned: ‘One can be stigmatised by society, even though one is not personally shamed’ (Mégret 2014, 287). The dominance of a normative framework in a society or social context means that all or most actors will be aware of the standards set by the framework and the potential consequences of breaching it or having a stigma affixed to oneself. Russian leaders do not need to have internalised and accepted the virtues of democracy or territorial integrity to be aware of the consequences of being successfully labelled undemocratic or aggressive in contemporary international society.

This study is concerned with stigmatisation as a relational process rather than with stigma as a (more or less) substantialist attribute. Following Adler-Nissen (2014b, 156), it adopts an approach not of ‘trying to get inside people’s heads’ but of analysing the ‘intersubjective processes of negotiating stigma’ and these processes’ impact on the context in which they take place. It focuses on how norms, identities and societies are all constituted, contested and negotiated through ongoing interactional processes of stigmatisation in which, following Emirbayer (1997, 298), actors play a variety of roles from which they and the collectives they form ‘derive their meaning, significance, and identity’. Norms or societies are not substantialist entities but relational processes,

³² A Gramscian-inspired focus on education and the promotion of a hegemonic ‘common sense’ would also be a way of answering this critique.

constituted by processes like stigmatisation. Central to these processes are power relations, to which the next section turns.

II – Stigmatisation and power: The co-constitution of deviance and normality

Stigmatisation is both an exercise and source of power – ‘it takes power to stigmatize’ (Link and Phelan 2001, 375). By directly or indirectly participating in stigmatisation processes through labelling, stereotyping, separation and discrimination, actors contribute to the creation and maintenance of hierarchies and the ordering of social groups according to symbolic categories linked to conceptions of (superior) normality and (inferior) deviance, hierarchies that in turn perpetuate the power of those on top. This is what links the theory to concepts like symbolic violence and hegemony mentioned in the previous chapter. When a viewpoint comes to be defined as ‘normal’ and its opposite stigmatised as abnormal or deviant, it provides symbolic power to those who already conform to it. This section explores these power relations, first elaborating further on the power purposes of stigmatisation, then discussing the question of intentionality and distinguishing between ‘direct’ and ‘diffuse’ stigmatisation, and finally considering the agency of and options available to those on the receiving end of the stigmatisation process.

The power purposes of stigmatisation

Symbolic interactionist approaches have often been criticised for insufficient attention to power, particularly structural power. This is unfair: both Goffman and other symbolic interactionists were deeply concerned with the production of hierarchies and ordering going on in the social world, even if this was often implicit in their work rather than explicit (Adler-Nissen 2016, 34–35). The criticism in part rests on the symbolic interactionist focus on the ‘micro’ level of analysis. However, Goffman acknowledged that social structures such as race and class were the ‘central issue’ facing stigmatised groups and that the face-to-face encounters he studied were only part of their experience (1963, 127; see also Kusow 2004). Moving away from the question of scale towards the general

social purpose of stigma processes, Goffman (1963, 164) argued that this was to enlist 'support for society among those who are not supported by it', a clear acknowledgement of the power relations involved. More recently, Phelan, Link and John Dovidio have argued that stigma has three general purposes, all of which relate to power: domination or keeping people or groups 'down'; norm enforcement or keeping people 'in'; and/or disease avoidance or keeping people 'away' (Phelan, Link, and Dovidio 2008; see also Link and Phelan 2014).³³ It is worth considering each of these in turn to demonstrate the analytic utility of the concept and the grip it can give on analysing power relations.

The first purpose, domination, is where stigma theory's links to more structural theories of power is most clear. As noted above, there is a strong affinity between stigma theories' focus on the social construction of normality and Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence, how the viewpoint and practices of the dominant group in any society come to be seen and instituted as the norm, thereby doing violence to other experiences (Bourdieu 1998, 121; Link and Phelan 2014). What stigma theory and other symbolic interactionist approaches give a better grasp on than some of the more deterministic theories of domination is the fact that any dominant social order is ultimately a fragile collective achievement shaped and reshaped through multiple, repeated interactions (Link and Phelan 2014, 25; Adler-Nissen 2016, 38). Dominance in this view is an interactional process, 'always co-constituted by the weak in some way or another' rather than a strict top-down process (Adler-Nissen 2016, 38). In international relations, stigmatisation (when successful) thus serves to form and reform hierarchies according to normative frameworks that keep certain actors 'down' and allow them to be exploited, usually accompanied by differences in material power – it can be seen in such ordering mechanisms as the Standard of Civilisation, the distinction between developed and underdeveloped, and multiple other hierarchies (Zarakol 2010, chap. 2; 2017). Frequently overlapping with other differences such as class or race, such stigmatising frameworks match Goffman's (1963, 15) argument of how 'the normals' construct an

³³ It should be noted that both Goffman and Phelan *et al* use the term 'function' rather than 'purpose'. Because of the structural-functionalist connotations of this term, i.e. the implicit idea that the 'function' serves to reinforce social cohesion and equilibrium, and the questionable compatibility of such a functionalist approach with a relational ontology, I replace it with the more general 'purpose'. Interestingly, despite his usual association with symbolic interactionism, Goffman has on occasion been labelled a 'micro-functionalist', and he spoke of a shared affinity with structural functionalism in some respects (see e.g. Gouldner 1970; Chriss 2003; Jacobsen and Kristiansen 2010, 74–78).

‘ideology to explain [the person with a stigma’s] inferiority and account for the danger he represents, sometimes rationalising an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social class’.

The second purpose, norm enforcement or keeping people ‘in’, is where the critique of the IR norms literature comes out clearest. This purpose can manifest itself in different ways. The process can serve to make a deviant actor conform and either return to or join the ‘in-group’, or to ‘clarify for other group members the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and identity and the consequences for non-conformity’ (Phelan, Link, and Dovidio 2008, 362). Usually, both will be the case simultaneously. For example, when EU member states sanctioned Austria in 2001 after the formation of a coalition government including the far-right Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ*), the purpose appeared both to make Austria conform by ditching the FPÖ from the coalition and to demonstrate to other states the unacceptability of including far-right parties in government – with ambivalent results on both counts (Adler-Nissen 2014b). The heavy criticism directed at countries like Brazil and South Korea by global financial institutions for their implementation of capital controls following the 2008 global financial crisis was also dual-purpose (Chwieroth 2015). Similarly, as will be explored in further detail in subsequent chapters, the stigmatisation of Russia following its annexation of Crimea did not just serve the purpose of pressuring Russia to repent and return Crimea to Ukraine, but to reinforce the norm of non-aggression and territorial integrity. While these are examples of fairly direct stigmatisation, i.e. targeted at actors for specific transgressions, stigmatisation as a lens directs our attention to how norm promotion in general is infused with stigmatisation and power relations given the influence of dominant actors in ‘defining the unacceptable’ (Phelan, Link, and Dovidio 2008, 362).

The third purpose, disease avoidance or keeping people away, may at first glance appear less relevant for international relations, rooted more in stigma’s widespread use in medical literature. However, one does not need to look far to locate instances of state leaders, politicians, diplomats or international institutions employing medical metaphors, or in general advocating the need to keep certain people or groups separated. From the language used to describe migrants crossing the Mediterranean during the 2015 ‘migration crisis’ in Europe, including UK Prime Minister David Cameron’s

description of a 'swarm' of migrants (BBC News 2015), to the IMF's traditional labelling of emerging markets as the main potential sources of global financial instability, which should be contained and kept away from the developed market economies (Chwieroth 2015, 52–54), to President Obama's 2014 juxtaposition of Russian aggression, Islamic State terrorism and Ebola mentioned above, the stigmatisation of people, states, terrorist groups or other actors using language that evokes disease is rife, often with tragic and violent consequences.

These purposes are potentially overlapping and mutually reinforcing. By keeping people down, one may simultaneously keep them out (or vice versa) and others in, by demonstrating the costs of non-conformity. Overall, they demonstrate the centrality of power relations to processes of norm politics. However, while it is possible to speak of the general purposes of the stigmatisation process, this does not mean that the components that make up the process are always purposefully enacted. The next subsection turns to this issue to discuss how different forms of power may yield different forms of stigmatisation.

Direct vs diffuse stigmatisation

To argue that stigmatisation has a purpose (or indeed three) is not to imply that the actions involved in the process are always or necessarily intentional, a deliberate strategy to fulfil a specific aim. As Zarakol (2010, 66–67) argues: 'For a stigmatizing ... dynamic to emerge in a social system, there does not have to be a deliberate master plan of oppression formulated with an eye on the monopolization of resources (although sometimes there are those as well)'. Any relational approach should be agnostic about intentions, both because they are ultimately unknowable, and because they frequently do not matter. Actions and utterances always have unintended consequences, which are often more impactful than whatever was intended. Thus, 'while the exercise of stigma power can be brutishly obvious', for example through direct social or material sanctions such as boycotts or suspensions from international organisations, 'it is more generally hidden in processes that are just as potent, but less obviously linked to the interests of the stigmatizers' (Link and Phelan 2014, 30), such as the ongoing definitions of normality that tend to reinforce the power of dominant groups in society. Sometimes, actors will

deliberately and purposefully seek to label and shame others, as with the human rights NGOs on which the ideal-type of a 'norm entrepreneur' is based (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). However, often the processes will be subtler and not reflected upon by the actors involved as 'stigmatisation' as such, for example in the practices of international judges or election monitors. As Mégret (2014, 294, 287) notes, stigmatisation is probably not a practice that most international criminal lawyers 'spontaneously think of themselves as being engaged in', even if the assignment of stigma to certain behaviours is, he argues, the 'actual goal of international criminal tribunals'.

A useful way of considering the distinction between such different forms of stigmatisation is through Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall's (2005) taxonomy of different forms of power in international politics. Barnett and Duvall distinguish between four types of power:

Compulsory power exists in the direct control of one actor over the conditions of existence and/or the actions of another. *Institutional* power exists in actors' indirect control over the conditions of action of socially distant others. *Structural* power operates as the constitutive relations of a direct and specific—hence, mutually constituting—kind. *Productive* power works through diffuse constitutive relations to produce the situated social capacities of actors. (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 48, emphases added)

A key distinction in the taxonomy is between power that works through direct social relations (compulsory and structural) and diffuse social relations (institutional and productive). Direct forms assume a shorter distance, both spatially and temporally, between those on the exercising and receiving end of power, while diffuse forms acknowledge that power can operate through more 'detached and mediated' connections, at a 'physical, temporal, or social distance' (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 47–48). A similarly useful analytical distinction can be drawn between direct and diffuse stigmatisation.

Direct stigmatisation denotes those instances when the stigmatisation process is clearly and explicitly directed at a single actor or group of actors. This will often be done with the openly stated aim of keeping the target of stigmatisation 'down', 'in' or 'out' as per the three purposes noted above. Examples include the three cases cited by Adler-Nissen (2014b): post-WWII Germany, Cuba under Fidel Castro and Austria while FPÖ were in government were directly stigmatised by the victorious Allies, the US and the EU,

respectively. While the labels and stereotypes employed in each case were not necessarily unique to the targets of stigmatisation – aggression, communism, racism, etc. – the stigmatisers sought to establish the targets as particularly worthy of discrimination and status loss, with direct sanctions and other measures explicitly meant to isolate, induce a change in behaviour and/or establish a stigmatising coalition or ‘audience of normals’ supporting the ostracization. Similarly, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, at various points in Russian-Western relations over the past decades Russia was the object of direct stigmatisation by Western actors, never more so than after its annexation of Crimea prompted direct sanctions by the US, EU and others and attempts to construct a global ‘audience of normals’ condemning Russia’s behaviour. In such cases, exercises of stigma power are indeed ‘brutishly obvious’, and even if actors may not use the term stigmatisation consciously, they often openly talk about isolation, punishment and shaming.

However, as noted, stigmatisation processes are more often not direct but diffuse, constituted by ongoing processes of labelling, stereotyping, separation and discrimination that do not necessarily target specific actors but produce hierarchies of normality that in turn create the possibility for discrediting. The creation and maintenance of such normative hierarchies as developed/underdeveloped, modern/backward, democratic/authoritarian do not as a rule develop from a purposeful master plan to discredit and exploit, as Zarakol notes, but instead from multiple ongoing and often unreflective processes of knowledge production that coalesce to create them. Examples of such diffuse processes in current international relations are the multiple reports produced annually by international and non-governmental organisations covering fields such as human rights, press freedom, economic performance and levels of democracy, rulings from international courts, monitoring reports from election monitors, etc. Of course, some of these are directly targeted at specific actors, for example labelling governments such as Russia’s as human rights offenders or authoritarian. Whether such labels on their own can constitute stigmatisation is an open question. Adler-Nissen (2014b, 147) dismisses for example a bad ranking on Transparency International’s *Corruption Perceptions Index* as not fully stigmatising because it does not on its own involve a status loss. The implication is that in an international society where states are both the main ‘members’ and (usually) the most powerful actors, only states have the

power to fully stigmatise.³⁴ This underestimates the power of NGOs to confer legitimacy in today's world and enforces too strict a separation between stigmatisation being present or not. True, such labels 'may never develop into a genuine system of social differentiation' or 'prove futile' (Adler-Nissen 2014b, 147), but even if NGOs, international organisations and others may lack direct-power enforcement mechanisms of their own, the knowledge they produce contributes to stigmatisation processes and can be mobilised by those who have such power. Moreover, as will be seen particularly in the chapter on human rights, NGOs and other actors can be singled out for (counter-) stigmatisation campaigns by states.

Stigmatisation can thus be both direct and diffuse. Returning to Link and Phelan's four-component conceptualisation, processes of labelling, stereotyping, separation and status loss *may* occur sequentially, intentionally and openly, but they *need* not in order to have the effect of stigmatisation.³⁵ A parallel can be drawn to the prominent IR concept of securitisation, consisting of the four components of, 1) a securitising agent making a securitising statement, 2) that statement identifying an existential threat, 3) that existential threat referring to a particular object that needs to be protected, and 4) an audience accepting the issue as a security threat (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). Since its inception, securitisation has often come to be treated as a 'narrow, linear and intentional event', but its original poststructuralist foundations conceive of it as a much more messy and indeterminate process (Wilhelmsen 2017, 166; see also Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard 2018). Labels and stereotypes do not suddenly appear out of nowhere simply because powerful actors will them into being; they are usually deeply rooted in long-standing discourses. Status loss and discrimination can be direct and intentional but is equally often the result of a myriad unreflective actions. This brings the attention towards the relational and processual nature of stigmatisation as elaborated in the

³⁴ This power is not just material. As Bourdieu (1994, 4) argues, as the '*culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital*', modern states possess 'meta-capital' and power over the 'rates of conversion' between different forms of capital – material, economic, symbolic, etc.

³⁵ A seemingly more intention-driven conceptualisation can be found in the communication literature, for example in Smith's (2007) outline of 'stigma communication', i.e. stigmatising messages or utterances: 'Stigma messages ... provide cues (a) to distinguish people, (b) to categorize distinguished people as a separate social entity, (c) to imply a responsibility for receiving placement within this distinguished group and their associated peril, and (d) to link this distinguished group to physical and social peril'. However, even such messages need not explicitly label a target, thus contributing to a diffuse process in which actors are left *discreditable* rather than *discredited* (Meisenbach 2010, 276).

previous section.

Stigma management strategies and their effects

Before turning to the methodological challenges of studying such a relational process, a final aspect of the power relations of stigmatisation must be considered: the agency of the stigmatised. While stigmatisation processes are infused with both direct and diffuse power relations, they are usually not totalising in the sense of rendering those stigmatised without choices of how to respond to their stigmatisation.³⁶ Goffman argued that stigmatised actors had three coping options. First, they could attempt to '*pass*' the stigma, by pretending to never have had it in the first place (1963, 92–113). Second, they could recognise their stigma and identify with other stigmatised actors, asserting the group's uniqueness and superiority – so-called '*out-group alignment*'. Third, they could recognise their stigma but identify with the normals and seek to overcome the stigma by conforming to ordinary standards as fully as possible – so-called '*in-group alignment*' (1963, 137–49). Adler-Nissen (2014b, 153–56) adopts a similar typology by different names: passing becomes, roughly, '*stigma rejection*', exemplified by Austrian politicians' rejection of the country's stigmatisation by the EU in 2000-01; 'out-group alignment' becomes '*counter-stigmatisation*', exemplified by Cuban leaders' assertion of their stigmatisation by the US as an 'emblem of pride'; and 'in-group alignment' becomes '*stigma recognition*', exemplified by West German leaders' recognition of their stigma and attempt to fully 'normalise' after World War II. Zarakol (2014) provides another example of 'passing', showing how Siam's King Mongkut (Rama IV) claimed he had held 'Western' views about the earth being round long before he almost certainly acquired these during his Western education.

The three strategies above provide a solid analytical basis but are worth unpacking further to show different options within each broad category and consider further potential strategies. Rebecca Meisenbach (2010, 278), building on the stigma literature in communication studies, develops a more comprehensive two-by-two of stigma management strategies built around the two questions of whether the stigmatised

³⁶ As Foucault would say, there is no power without resistance. See e.g. Pickett (1996).

actor a) accepts or challenges the public understanding of the relevant stigma, and b) accepts or challenges that the stigma applies to themselves. The overall strategies derived from this and the various options within them are reproduced in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1 – Stigma management communication strategies (Meisenbach 2010)

Table 2 Stigma management communication strategies

	Accept that stigma applies to self	Challenge that stigma applies to self
Accept public understanding of stigma (status quo)	I. Accepting —Passive (silent) acceptance —Display/Disclose stigma —Apologize —Use humor to ease comfort —Blame stigma for negative outcomes —Isolate self —Bond with stigmatized	II. Avoiding —Hide/deny stigma attribute —Avoid stigma situations —Stop stigma behavior —Distance self from stigma —Make favorable social comparison
Challenge public understanding of stigma (change)	III. Evading responsibility for —Provocation —Defeasibility —Unintentional IV. Reducing offensiveness of —Bolster/refocus —Minimize —Transcend/reframe	V. Denying —Simply —Logically —Discredit discreditors —Provide evidence/info —Highlight logical fallacies VI. Ignoring/Displaying

The overlap with the three-part conceptualisation above is relatively clear: accepting roughly equals recognition, avoiding – rejection, and denying/ignoring/displaying – counter-stigmatisation. The fourth, bottom-left quadrant can be summarised as stigma *evasion* (c.f. Sauer and Reveraert 2018) – a less direct strategy than the more aggressive counter-stigmatising tactics of ‘discrediting the discreditors’ or ‘attacking the accuser’ (Meisenbach 2010, 284). Evasion acknowledges the stigmatising attribute or behaviour but seeks to explain it away by claiming provocation, trivialising or relativizing it, etc.

The four strategies identified so far (recognition/acceptance, rejection/avoidance, evasion and counter-stigmatisation) tend to assume that a stigma has already been imposed on the actor or actors managing it. That is, the actor is already *discredited*. However, it is important to note that all of the above strategies may also be employed *pre-emptively* by actors that are *discreditable* but not yet discredited. Such actors may already

have either done something discreditable or have a discreditable attribute by the dominant normative standards of society, but have not been the object of direct stigmatisation either because the attribute or behaviour is not publicly known or because actors with the power to directly stigmatise have not acted upon the knowledge. Goffman (1963, 57–58) highlighted how for such actors, information management was all-important – they must stop knowledge of their stigma from emerging in order to avoid being stigmatised. Another option open to actors would be to seek to pre-emptively shift the public perception of the stigma, as in the bottom half of Meisenbach’s quadrant above, in order that if the attribute or behaviour ever came to light the negative social effects, i.e. status loss or discrimination, would be less severe. Stigma management strategies can thus relate both to established and emergent, partial or potential stigmas. Table 2.2 summarises the four strategies that will serve as shorthand throughout this study, combining the insights and terms of Goffman, Adler-Nissen and Meisenbach.

Table 2.2 – Stigma management strategies

	<i>Actor accepts stigma’s application to self</i>	<i>Actor rejects stigma’s application to self</i>
<i>Actor accepts public understanding of stigma</i>	Stigma acceptance/recognition	Stigma rejection/avoidance
<i>Actor rejects public understanding of stigma</i>	Stigma evasion	Counter-stigmatisation

Depending on which stigma management strategy actors choose and how successful their strategy ends up being, the impact on the stigma and therefore the normative cohesion of (international) society may differ greatly. For Adler-Nissen (2014b, 153–54), if an actor (in her case a state) accepts a stigma and tries to ‘normalise’, the normative fabric of international society will be strengthened; if they reject their stigma, arguing that it is not applicable, doubts and uncertainty may be sowed about the norm(s) in question, weakening the normative order; finally, if they identify with their stigma but counter-stigmatise the ‘normals’ by promoting the stigma as an alternative set

of values, the presence of competing normative visions may serve to split international society into competing blocs, with normative cohesion within but not between the groups. Stigma evasion may have similar effects depending on the extent to which actors seek to challenge public perceptions and how successful they are. In short, actors may be kept 'down', 'in' or 'out', but they may also contest their position and seek to undermine or overturn the normative framework that excludes them or defines them as inferior. Chwiero (2015, 46–50) shows how stigma rejection and counter-stigmatisation can lead to transformations of the normative order, creating a 'new normal'. His example is the transformed stigma around capital controls following Brazil's (counter-stigmatisation), South Korea's (stigma rejection) and other states' successful implementation of controls and resistance against attempted stigmatisation by the IMF and others in the years following the 2008 global financial crisis. Similarly, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, Russia's counter-stigmatisation strategy in the case of human rights – its turn to so-called 'sovereign morality' (Sharafutdinova 2014) – has contributed to the international undermining of LGBT rights.

Stigmatisation and stigma management are thus contentious processes, infused with power relations, and fruitful concepts for investigating Bucher's 'norm [power] politics' given their focus on defining the boundaries of the 'normal'. They can operate directly or diffusely or somewhere in between, and either reinforce, undermine or transform established frameworks and power relations. Moreover, a stigmatisation lens recognises that society is a struggle over norms and normality, and that the stigmatised or deviant do not stand outside of society but co-constitute it. In Goffman's (1963, 149, 150) words, the special situation of stigmatised people 'is that society tells [them they are] a member of the wider group, ... a normal human being, but that [they are] also "different" in some degree, and that it would be foolish to deny this difference', and 'unwise to pass or to let down "[their]" group'. Indeed, in line with the processual, never-settled process of stabilisation of which stigmatisation forms part, the process creates its own two-way fragility between the stigmatised and normals:

The stigmatised and the normal are part of each other; if one can prove vulnerable, it must be expected that the other can, too. For in imputing identities to individuals, discreditable or not, the wider social setting and its inhabitants have in a way compromised themselves; they have set themselves up to be proven the fool. (Goffman 1963, 161)

As Adler-Nissen argues (2014b, 152), 'stigma imposition may fail (and we need to study the effects of failure)'. Examples of this in international relations include sanctions that have not had their desired effect or where the sanctioned, stigmatised party has managed to lift or subvert its stigma, such as Austria in 2000-01 or Libya after the sanctions imposed for its alleged part in the Lockerbie bombing (Adler-Nissen 2014b; Hurd 2005; Onderco 2014). Such failures will not necessarily be the result of insufficient power imbalances between stigmatisers and stigmatised, but the relational interplay of stigmatisation and stigma management processes and the shifting patterns of 'audiences of normals' supporting or rejecting emergent stigmas.

III – Methodology and methods: stigmatisation as discursive practices

The previous sections have presented the study's conceptualisation of stigmatisation and shown how such a lens provides a relational, power-attentive approach to the study of norms and international society. This section presents the study's methodology and methods, justifies the case selection and addresses such questions as source selection and scale. I follow Jackson's distinction between *methodology* as the underlying assumption about 'what kind of data is preferable and what the status of that data is' and *methods* as techniques for gaining 'access to the relevant data' (2006a, 495). Building on the relational ontology and processual view of social relations presented so far, it is argued that stigmatisation is best analysed through a discursive approach that privileges public utterances and actions as the preferable data and discourse analysis as the preferable way to access and analyse these, constructing an analytical narrative of stigmatisation and stigma management processes. Stigmatisation as a process is seen as a bundle of discursive practices. The first subsection below considers the discursive nature of stigmatisation, the second the methods for selecting and analysing material, the third discusses the case selection, and the fourth addresses questions of how to scale up a theory developed for an individual level for application to international relations, preparing the ground for the next chapter's discussion of the normative context enabling stigmatisation on an international scale.

Stigmatisation as discursive practice(s)

As mentioned above, stigma and stigmatisation can be conceptualised in many ways for social analysis – sociological or psychological, relational or substantialist, an observable social process or an unobservable variable. For example, in a positivist rendering based on an ontological commitment to mind-world dualism, the idea of a ‘real world’ that is ‘independent of our experience of it’, and view that social science should aspire to improve our knowledge about this mind-independent world by establishing law-like patterns of causality about it, stigma could be conceptualised as a somehow measurable ‘ideational variable’ and included in models as either an ‘independent’ (explanatory) or ‘dependent’ (to be explained) variable (Moses and Knutsen 2007, 8; Jackson 2011). Its explanatory power for various outcomes could then be assessed through a comparison with other independent variables, be they ideational (identity, norms, etc.) or material (military capacity, relative power distribution, etc.). Alternatively, the impact of such factors on stigma could be measured: is a deficiency in material or ideational power more likely to induce stigma and to what degree? This sort of conceptualisation would rely on a substantialist ontology as discussed above – stigma would be an attribute of a substantive ‘unit’, e.g. a state, and the focus of analysis would be that state’s ‘self-action’ based on such attributes.

For the relational, processual ontological wager underlying this study, such a conceptualisation of stigma would be highly problematic. Relationalism does not mesh well with mind-world dualism. If the social world is in constant flux (in principle, despite the durability of many social forms) and there is no substantial ‘essence’ to be analysed, it follows both that there cannot be law-like relationships in social relations and that social scientists cannot ever hope to achieve perfect knowledge, as they are themselves inextricably a part of the world they analyse. If stigmatisation is conceived as a relational social process, it must assume that the social world is in principle contingent, and that the social scientist’s role is to interpret the world rather than explain or predict it. Moreover, the components and mechanisms identified as part of the stigmatisation process in the conceptualisation above – labelling, stereotyping, even separation and discrimination – are inextricably discursive, rooted in ‘representational practices through which meanings are generated’ (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 2). This conceptualisation fits much better with a poststructuralist methodology.

Poststructuralism's basic ontological assumption is that the social world is not independent of our perception, but socially constructed through discursive representations. In Foucault's words: 'We must not imagine that the world turns toward us a legible face which we would only have to decipher' (quoted in Moses and Knutsen 2007, 147). The social world is constructed and given meaning through language:

...it is only through the construction in language that 'things' – objects, subjects, states, living beings, and material structures – are given meaning and endowed with a particular identity. Language is not a transparent tool functioning as a medium for the registration of data as (implicitly) assumed by positivist, empiricist science, but a field of social and political practice... (Hansen 2006, 18)

Language produces and constitutes the world, it does not explain or reveal it by establishing neutral descriptions of some essentially graspable 'truth'. The world becomes knowable through our representations of it, which over time form discourses:

Representations are socially (re)produced facts. They are things as they appear to us (not to be confused with the things themselves). Thus, a representation is an understanding or a description of the world: it is repeatedly presented – it is literally *re*-presented – to us as fact. This repeated presentation instils in us a sense of permanence. When a series of such representations appear together in a lasting way, they produce a discourse. A discourse, then, is a lasting system of representations. It is also a system of meaning, in light of which meaningful claims can be presented (and *re*-presented). (Moses and Knutsen 2007, 213)

Thus, discourses are more than 'just' language, understood as 'speech acts or textual products' – they are 'systems of meaning-production that fix meaning, however temporarily, ... enable actors to make sense of the world and to act within it' (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 19). Discourses provide the pre-conditions for meaningful action.

A key tenet of poststructuralist discourse analysis, as opposed to more positivist-oriented variants such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), is that there is no separate, non-discursive realm in which the impact of discourses can be 'measured'. For poststructuralists, '[since] language enters between humans and the world, there is nothing existing independent of text' (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 39). This is the basis for one of the most frequent criticisms of discourse analysis: that it ignores material factors, operating only on a supposedly non-material level of unmeasurable 'ideas' or 'text'.

However, emphasising that the social world should be understood primarily through text does not deny the existence of a material, non-social world as such or diminish the importance of materiality. As Lene Hansen clarifies:

...neither ideas nor materiality have a meaningful presence separate from each other. A tank, for example, is not simply a material assemblage of metal and rubber but [a socially produced] object of warfare – or peacekeeping... the point is not to disregard material facts but to study how these are produced and prioritized. (2006, 22)

Poststructuralists insist that there can be no such thing as unfiltered materiality in human perception; the non-social world is bracketed, not ignored.

Examining the discourse/materiality question through the example of stigma should make the point that materiality never speaks for itself clear. As Goffman argued, a stigma is a 'special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype' (1963, 14). The 'attribute' can be conceived as material and relatively permanent – be it a physical characteristic such as a person's skin colour or a behavioural characteristic such as membership of a political organisation. However, the 'stereotype', which is what gives the stigma meaning, is inextricably linked to discursive representations of the attribute. What is a stigmatising attribute or behaviour within one discursive context can thus be the opposite within another context in another place or time, be it another continent in another historical period or in the same city on the same day. For example, being politically active as a woman was a stigma in 19th century Europe, but is generally not so anymore, despite continued contestation (Towns 2009; 2014). Goffman (1963, 13) notes how going to a library may be normal behaviour for a 'middle class boy' but cites a 'professional criminal' as recounting how they would look over their shoulder when entering a library to check that no-one who knew them was around. The two people would be engaged in the same material activity, but only for one of them would it be discreditable.

Considering the intuitively more 'material' components of the above conceptualisation of stigmatisation, e.g. the physical enactment of separation or discrimination, also reveals the co-constitutive element of discourse and materiality. Without context, for example the discursive elements of labelling and stereotyping that (explicitly or implicitly) justify or explain the reason for the separation on the basis of

some attribute or behaviour, the physical enactment lacks meaning and could be an expression of anything. Material sanctions such as asset freezes or visa bans could happen for a variety of reasons – they would only be ‘stigmatisation’ if accompanied by the components identified above. This does not mean that physical practices resembling discrimination cannot happen ‘on their own’ – a visa ban or asset freeze could occur without any form of justification. The point is that the social effects of the ‘material’ practices are never self-evident, never speak for themselves, just like the discourse itself is also meaningless without a reference to some materiality. It is in the relationship between the two that meaning is produced and in which the potential for stigmatisation occurs.

One way of thinking about this inextricable intertwining of ‘ideational’ discourse and ‘material’ practices is through Foucault’s idea of ‘discursive practices’, which ‘systematically shape the objects of which they speak’ (quoted in Dunn and Neumann 2016, 2). As Dunn and Neumann (2016, 62) argue, this was Foucault’s way of grappling with the discourse analyst’s perpetual ‘dilemma of how to reconcile meaning and materiality, discourse and practice’, and of expressing his argument that practice forms part of discourse:

The analysis of discourse understood as the study of the preconditions for action has to be complemented by analysis of practice understood as the study of action itself. ... Practices are discursive, both in the sense that some practices involve speech acts and in the sense that practice cannot be thought “outside of” discourse. ... The possibility of accounting for a range of contemporary social and political phenomena thus requires treating discourses and practices together, as preconditions for action and patterned action respectively. (2016, 62, 66)

An analysis of stigmatisation as a discursive process enabling and constraining action must also involve an analysis of the practices that either reinforce or undermine the discourse. Stigmatisation can be conceived as a bundle of discursive practices organised around the component parts of labelling, stereotyping, separation and status loss.

Thus, as conceptualised in this study, stigmas are socially produced through discursive practices of stigmatisation, rather than being self-evidently derived from objective, mind-independent material conditions. For example, when multiple Russian

leaders through history seem to have recognised a stigma (or self-stigmatised) by speaking of Russia's 'backwardness' and the need to 'catch up' either by adopting Western military and diplomatic practices (Peter the Great), accelerating industrial development (Stalin) or becoming liberal democratic (Boris Yeltsin), this is not an inevitable result of Russia's material conditions (though it does indicate Russia's persistent liminality). In fact, the invocation of 'backwardness' is already discursive, infusing what would by itself be just a difference in material circumstances with meaning by framing it in relational terms of relative teleological development. Similarly, when Western leaders have sought to stigmatise Putin's Russia for being undemocratic, aggressive, illiberal, etc., this is not an automatic result of objective material conditions but the product of the relationship between these conditions and inter-subjective discourses about how states should behave as well as Western discourses about Russia. Finally, actions large or small do not speak for themselves: Western leaders' non-attendance at the Winter Olympics in Sochi only becomes meaningful when seen in the context of criticisms of Russia's LGBT rights record that themselves were rooted in a particular discourse. Russia's annexation of Crimea was only a 'transgression' because it occurred in a time when military conquest had long since been considered illegitimate in the dominant discourse on state behaviour.

Stigmatisation, like discourse, is thus both *structuring*, in the sense of constraining and enabling certain ways of acting, *relational*, in the sense of having no fixed or permanent essence, and *open-ended*, in the sense of being incomplete, contingent, and not deterministic (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 2–4). As noted above, as part of the 'ongoing production and reproduction of social arrangements' it 'never ceases, never finishes, and in a certain sense never fully succeeds' (Jackson 2006b, 39). Nevertheless, it has structuring effects upon the actors involved in it, shaping both the identities of the stigmatisers and stigmatised, and the social context in which they act. In keeping with poststructuralism's focus on the constitution of social reality, the argument advanced here is thus *constitutive*, focusing on how processes of stigmatisation and stigma management constrain and enable relations by producing and reproducing certain discourses. In the neopositivist conception of causality this would not be a causal story where 'A' – stigmatisation – necessarily or sufficiently led to 'B' – an outcome (Jackson 2011, 105). As shown by Milja Kurki (2006), in response to the dominance of this

reductive view of causality several 'reflexivist' scholars have argued for abandoning claims to causality altogether. However, following Kurki's (2006, 189) argument that 'we need to *deepen* and *broaden* our understandings of the concept of cause', the argument advanced here is that constitutive work *is* causal work. This study does not aim to establish a timeless, universal 'covering law' of stigmatisation and its role in social relations, rather a context-specific and thickly descriptive analytical narrative contributing to the interpretation of how a particular state of affairs came into being.

Stigmatisation as conceptualised in this study is a *public* process – as discussed above, the focus is on how actors intersubjectively impose, manage, negotiate and contest stigmas. This leads to a privileging of public sources, i.e. statements, speeches and other utterances made or practices engaged in publicly, rather than ones made in private and subsequently revealed through leaks, memoirs or other sources. As Jackson notes about legitimation processes (which have clear overlaps with stigmatisation processes), 'the important action ... takes place not inside of individual heads, but in the intersubjective space *between* individuals. Hence the reversal of the usual historian's hierarchy of evidence ... is justified by the ontological and epistemological status of the investigation' (2006b, 32). Stigmatisation, whether direct or diffuse, intentional or unintentional, involves an element of performance, of intersubjective audience building, the (attempted) construction of an 'audience of normals' to close ranks against the stigmatised or win support for a particular stigma management strategy. Who this audience is varies from statement to statement, context to context. Consider the difference between President Barack Obama making a standard, brief reference to America 'leading the fight against Russian aggression' in an after-dinner speech at a Democratic Party fundraising event during the 2014 mid-term elections, versus juxtaposing Russian aggression with the risk from Ebola and Islamic State in his speech at the UN General Assembly the same year. While the former statement is evidence of an increasingly settled discourse, its primary audience is Obama's own party donors and its purpose to justify his foreign policy, rather than building a stigmatising 'audience of normals' among world leaders. Between these two relatively clear examples there are many different shades of statements, meaning no hard and fast rule can be made about when something is relevant or not. All texts or utterings have multiple audiences and need to be evaluated on their own terms. The role of the media is important here. In the

24-hour, internet and social media-driven news cycle, even obscure statements by officials can be picked up and magnified, having effects far beyond their originally intended purpose.

Given the relational, discursive ontology of this study and the focus on stigmatisation as a process, the selection of which actors' statements and actions to focus on is guided by what Charlotte Epstein (2011, 342) calls the 'initial question' of any discursive approach: 'who speaks?'. The focus on Russian-Western relations means the primary actors are official representatives of Russia and various Western states and institutions and the focus on 'official' discourse, understood as 'those texts and utterings by agents that society generally imbues with political power and significance', including 'speeches by political leaders and official state documents', and as distinct from 'expert' discourse or 'popular' discourse such as academic writings, mass media reports, films or TV series (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 12–14). However, rather than focusing only on a series of pre-given actors such as the heads of state and government, foreign ministers, etc., the analysis is guided by which actors were found to be empirically more prominent in the stigmatisation process in relation to each norm. Hence, for democracy, election monitors play a key role as actors imbued with the authority to judge whether an election meets democratic standards; for human rights, NGOs provide much of the knowledge on which stigmatisation is based and themselves engage in labelling, while international courts provide authoritative rulings on human rights abuses; for capitalism, credit rating agencies and investors both in their own way participate in processes that may either constitute or show evidence of stigmatisation at work, from changes in ratings to investment decisions. The variation in actors' involvement in the different issue areas in itself is a point of analysis with implications for their 'thickness' in contemporary international society. The material that serves as the basis for the analysis thus varies from statements by heads of states and governments, via NGO reports to international court rulings, voting records in international organisations and levels of foreign direct investment in Russia.

Analysing stigmatisation in practice

Having established poststructuralist discourse analysis as the most suitable *methodology* for this study and discussed the relationship between the conceptualisation of stigmatisation and the prioritisation of public sources, I now turn to the question of *method* – how to practically go about generating data for the analysis of the stigmatisation process.

The overall method of this study is to use the categories identified in tables 2.1 and 2.2 to construct an ‘analytical narrative’ of stigmatisation and stigma management in Russian-Western relations (Jackson 2011, 154). The categories of labelling, stereotyping, separation and status loss on the one hand and stigma recognition, rejection, evasion and counter-stigmatisation on the other, as well as the distinction between direct and diffuse stigmatisation, will be employed to order and analyse the processes of stigmatisation and stigma management. After establishing four core norms of international society in Chapter 3, the following empirical chapters deal with each norm in turn, identifying the main actors in each area through the guiding question of ‘who speaks?’, and investigating the nature and intensity of stigmatisation processes through the lenses of the conceptual models. In doing so, I draw on a series of largely implicit questions, such as: Is there labelling going on and if so by whom and of what kind? Does the labelling draw on stereotypes? Are clear distinctions being drawn between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘normals’ and ‘deviants’, and are they linked to existing labels? Are status losses or discriminatory practices implemented and are they justified by reference to labels, stereotypes, etc.? Are the processes direct or diffuse, and what ‘audiences of normals’ can be discerned? What are the reactions of those on the receiving end – acceptance, rejection, evasion, counter-stigmatisation, a mix or something else entirely? How do the reactions in turn impact the stigmatisation processes, do they defuse them or ratchet them up?

The categories above should be understood as Weberian ideal types, meaning that they are unlikely to neatly and exhaustively map onto real-world events. Stigma imposition is unlikely ever to be a neat, linear process of labelling, stereotyping, separation and status loss, implemented by a unified and harmonious ‘audience of normals’. Moreover, there may be elements of various approaches to stigma management present in actions at any given time. And finally, the two stages are not mutually exclusive temporally but interactive – different responses by the would-be stigmatised to attempted stigmatisation will inevitably affect the success or failure of stigma imposition

and may influence the stigmatisers' future course of action. Finally, it is as important to recognise when stigmatisation is *not* present as when it is – the danger of approaching source materials with a particular theoretical lens is of course to subsume everything under that lens, stretching the concept beyond any meaningful limits. However, it is exactly these potential frictions that the proposed analytical narrative will feed on. As Jackson (2011, 154) asserts, it is when 'the messy complexity of actual concrete experience' does not fit the categories offered by the ideal-type 'that an analytical narrative really takes off', allowing the analyst to explore the nuances and grey zones. Embracing this messiness, the ideal-types will nevertheless be used to 'organize the empirical material ... into a coherent story' and provide details of the different factors' 'sequential interaction and concatenation over the time frame of the analysis' (Jackson 2011, 154).

Aside from the overall approach of constructing an analytical narrative using the categories in question, no one single 'method', understood as a technique to extract data, has pride of place in the analysis. Nevertheless, in order to 'identify and inventory the representational practices that constitute the discourses at work', I draw both explicitly and implicitly on various discourse analysis techniques, notably *predicate analysis*, *subject positioning* and *metaphorical analysis* (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 128). Each of these are considered briefly below.

Predication or predicate analysis 'examines the verbs, adverbs, and adjectives that are attached to nouns within specific texts', seeking 'to expose how certain meanings or capabilities are established, thus enabling actors to understand and act in certain ways' and 'exposing how texts link certain qualities to particular subjects through the use of predicates' (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 111). In their presentation of the method, Dunn and Neumann use as a key example Jennifer Milliken and David Sylvan's (1996) findings of the links between 'male' representations of North Vietnam and 'female' representations of South Vietnam in American discourse during the Vietnam War and the types of weapons deployed in both places: 'hard' explosives in the North and 'soft' chemical weapons in the South. Similarly, Roxanne Lynn Doty (1993) drew on predicate analysis to show how the Philippines and Filipinos were constructed as 'children' in US congressional debates in the 1950s, contributing to justifications of an interventionist policy. Further examples include Dunn's findings about the linkage in US discourse of

Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba of Congo to adjectives such as ‘irrational, erratic, trouble-making, paranoid, unpredictable, reckless, immature, and irresponsible’, and Neumann’s analysis of the connection of certain qualities to Russia in Western discourse and vice-versa (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 111–12; Dunn 2003; I. B. Neumann 1999, chap. 3; 2016). In a similar vein, predicate analysis contributes to identifying stigmatisation in Russian-Western relations by locating stigmatising representations: what predicates are used by the relevant actors to describe actions, actors, attributes and behaviours? Are they negatively, positively or neutrally loaded? What sort of subject(s) do they constitute? This technique is particularly useful for getting at the labelling component of stigmatisation – what predicates or other labels are attached through the discourse?

The second technique is to make explicit the subject positioning in these representations. As Dunn and Neumann explain:

one can uncover the process of subject positioning by interpreting the ways in which text(s) work to create a knowable reality by linking subjects and objects to one another... What defines a particular subject is the relative relationships that are constructed between it and other subjects. Oftentimes these relationships are established through the construction of subject positioning based upon opposition or similarity. (2016, 112)

Doty (1993, 313–16) draws on subject positioning to show how US debates on the Philippines constructed the US as a ‘rational, moral and powerful’ subject, the USSR as ‘equally rational and powerful but morally lacking’, and the Filipinos as ‘guided by emotion and passion, yet full of potential with the proper guidance’, thus again contributing to making possible and even desirable the idea of American intervention in its former colonial subject. This technique is thus particularly useful for uncovering the separation part of the stigmatisation process. How do the actors construct identities through the positioning of themselves and others in relation to each other and to (non-) desirable characteristics? Combining this with predicate analysis, how are predicates used to construct and position subjects, including by separating those associated with desirable behaviour and characteristics from those without?

The third technique is metaphorical analysis. ‘Metaphors are a textual mechanism used for the transference of meaning, connecting the unfamiliar with the familiar’ and employed in order to ‘persuade’ (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 114). An analysis of

metaphors as related to stigmatisation would thus critically analyse the type of meaning evoked by the metaphors used – do they contribute to labelling, stereotyping, separation or discrimination and thereby the process of stigmatisation? Do they link certain subjects to stigmatising characteristics?

Beyond these textual analysis mechanisms used to uncover the discursive ‘preconditions for action’, the analysis will also focus on the practices (the ‘patterned action’) that result. This includes practices such as voting records, attendance patterns at diplomatic and cultural events, frequency of summits, practices of inclusion and exclusion in various diplomatic forums, etc. Through a combination of the close textual analysis and the close practice analysis, an analytical narrative will be created tracing and ordering the processes of stigmatisation and stigma management in Russian-Western relations.

Choosing a case: Political relevance and cultural competence

The case of Russian-Western relations since the end of the Cold War has been chosen for two reasons: its political relevance to contemporary international relations and the author’s cultural competence and situatedness. On the first point, relations between Russia and the West, however defined, are of crucial importance to the international relations both of the Euro-Atlantic geographical region and to some extent the wider world, albeit less than at the height of the Cold War when Soviet-American superpower relations structured the global order. As discussed in the Introduction, the development from the cautiously optimistic relations of the early 1990s to the ‘new cold war’ of the 2010s is not merely the object of abstract academic discussion but also of fractious political debates, not to mention real-world military conflict in places like Ukraine. The empirical case is thus worth exploring for its own sake, in order to provide new perspectives on a politically important subject for contemporary international relations.

The second reason for choosing Russian-Western relations as the subject of study concerns my own cultural competence and motivation. The original motivation for the study arose out of empirical interest. Having completed an MPhil in Russian and East European Studies during a time (2009-11) when Russian-Western relations were cold but still relatively cordial, I went on to experience the subsequent deterioration in

relations at close hand (professionally speaking) as an intern at the OSCE in 2011-12 and as a political risk analyst with a focus on both Russia, Ukraine and the wider European context in 2012-15. All the while, I was struck both by the deeply divergent interpretations of reality between the two sides and the frequently one-sided (on both sides) explanations for the worsening state of affairs. This experience was a direct motivation for pursuing a PhD on this particular subject: I want to improve on these explanations by offering a theoretically informed, relational account that focuses on the co-constitution of the relationship.

From the poststructuralist epistemological position underlying this study, this motivation and the competence gained from previous academic and professional experience are assets in the research process (rather than contributing to a value-laden and therefore biased case selection, as in a positivist framework). While researchers should aspire to pick cases with some theoretical justification and be even-handed and judicious in their evaluation of evidence, from this perspective *all* knowledge is to some extent situated and contingent. Biases can never be eliminated completely. As such, scholars should acknowledge that they are 'situated', be 'mindful or aware of the relationship between oneself and one's context', and think critically about why one chooses 'this phenomenon [or theory or field] instead of that' – what could be called autobiographical situatedness (C. B. Neumann and Neumann 2015, 799–805; see also Inayatullah 2011). Moreover, as Dunn and Neumann (2016, 49, 85) argue, conducting discourse analysis requires a 'basic level of cultural competence'. To be able to make sense of a research area, one must know something about the phenomena involved. Analysing Western discourses about Russia (I. B. Neumann 1999, chap. 3), the Congo (Dunn 2003) or the Balkans (Hansen 2006) requires a certain level of competence in 'Western discourses' as well as historical contexts and events on the ground that become represented in these discourses. Extant knowledge is not just co-incidentally helpful, but vital: a 'primary prerequisite' to the discourse analyst, and one that should be stated openly. Knowing the limits and potential blind spots of one's cultural competence is as important as having some (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 83–86).

My own background of studying and/or working on Russian and European affairs for several years has given me a useful degree of such cultural competence. This includes an intermediate knowledge of Russian and experience of living in Russia along with

sound knowledge of both the recent history of Russian-Western relations and the narratives that both sides tell about each other. As such, I am well placed to conduct research on the specific case, and, importantly, far better placed to conduct research on this case than on other politically relevant candidates for a study of stigmatisation in international relations, such as relations between the West and Turkey, Iran or China.

The case has thus not been chosen to test or (dis)prove the theory, as in a positivist framework. The aim here is exploratory, seeing what can be gained from reading a particular empirical story through a particular theoretical lens and following Hans Eysenck's exhortation to 'sometimes ... keep our eyes open and look carefully at individual cases – not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something!' (quoted in Flyvbjerg 2006, 224). That said, it is hoped that some of the things that may be learned from the application of stigma theory to Russian-Western relations in the following pages can provide useful insights that can in turn inform other studies of stigmatisation processes in international relations.

Scale, actors and language

Before turning to the empirical scene-setting of the next chapter, three methodological questions related to the use of stigma theory to analyse international relations must be briefly addressed. They relate to scale, actors and language.

The first issue is whether a theory developed for the individual, 'micro' level of analysis can be 'scaled up' to the international. Such a move both feels intuitively questionable and violates IR's traditional orthodoxy on levels of analysis, whereby only systemic theories can supposedly apply at the systemic level (Waltz 1979). However, this intuition relies largely on the substantialist claim that such levels are both essentially separate and analytically separable and that stigmatisation is something self-acting individuals *do*, rather than a transactional social process that produces and shapes identities, both individually and collectively and at various 'levels' simultaneously. As Epstein (2011, 342) notes, discursive approaches to the study of international relations do not 'decide a priori at what level the analysis must be cast, rather, this is determined after the empirical observation of a particular issue-area'. Morozov (2015, 58) is right to

call Zarakol's (2010, 4) assertion that 'stigma has the same effect on states that it has on individuals' 'rather bold' and even 'radical', but this is because the statement reproduces the tendency in IR to treat collective actors like states as if they were human beings. This does not necessarily mean that stigmatisation cannot function on an international scale, as long as we shift our attention away from pre-given actors and focus instead on the relational processes that constitute them.

This leads to the second, closely related question of how to conceive of collective actors such as 'Russia' and 'the West' being engaged in a process of stigmatisation. The answer is that the study's focus is not on interaction between pre-given social units but on the process of stigmatisation and its effect on the evolution of discursive structures (in the form of norms) and relations between (in principle) changing social formations. Any actor that takes part in the process of stigmatisation can therefore be legitimately included in the analysis. The actors are those who embody and enact the processes and identities they shape – representatives of large-scale political communities such as Russia, the US and the EU but also a multitude of other individuals representing NGOs, international organisations, private companies, etc. The processes define the actors, not vice versa. Moreover, as noted by Epstein (2011, 342), in a discursive approach the focus is not on the individuals speaking but on the subject position or discourse they take up on behalf of the group they represent. Thus, when 'Russia' and 'the West' are mentioned in the following analysis, they are not understood as substantive entities with intrinsic qualities – the focus is rather on how people acting on behalf of the two 'entities-in-motion' shape, reshape, contest and negotiate their identities and social norms through processes of stigmatisation and stigma management.

All of that said, even if one accepts a relational ontology, this does not necessarily mean that all relational theories can simply be 'scaled up' (or down) without consideration for how the scale might affect fundamentals of the processes involved. A case in point is the question of language. Einar Wigen (2015; 2018) argues that international relations are also *interlingual* relations, an obvious yet underestimated point in IR theory that is also of vital importance to processes such as stigmatisation. On the most prosaic level, if two or more people do not speak the same language, any form of stigmatisation, socialisation or any other social process between them becomes complicated – as Zarakol notes about her grandmother and the Himba women, the first

step to overcome is the language barrier. But more broadly, even if people representing different polities such as Russia, the US or the various members of the EU are able to communicate with each other, whether in English, Russian, French or German, directly or through an interpreter, their communication will be affected by issues of translation, both of words and, more broadly, whole concepts (Wigen 2018, 31–69). As already noted, norms such as democracy, human rights, capitalism, etc., are essentially contested concepts that do not have a stable meaning even to people speaking the same language, let alone across linguistic divides. While some of these concepts and their particular meanings have become dominant internationally, stigmatisation and stigma management processes in international relations often revolve around contestation of what should count as the proper meaning of a concept or its application to a set of circumstances – for example, is ‘sovereign democracy’ still democracy? The majority of sources used in this study are in English, though many will have been initially issued in Russian. Aside from pragmatic reasons of linguistic ability, there is also a theoretical reason for this, namely that it is a study of international interaction in which the primary focus is on interaction with other international audiences rather than domestic ones. That said, any analysis of stigmatisation internationally must thus be attentive to the linguistic context and what the use of language says about a statement’s intended audience(s), rather than assuming a flat mono-linguality.

Conclusion

The points about scale and the need for a common language leads to the concluding point and the bridge to the next chapter. As noted above, for stigmatisation to occur there must be a certain degree of common normative context for the would-be stigmatisers and stigmatised, whether those norms are fully internalised and accepted by all or not. In most ‘national’ or domestic settings we assume such a context exists, given the high degree of shared cultural background, linguistic commonality and similar education between individuals of the same nationality. However, as Goffman’s (1963, 13) example of the different feelings a middle class boy and a professional criminal of the same nationality may feel in going to a library shows, that assumption may be qualified by issues of class, gender, race, etc. Either way, such an assumption becomes intuitively more

questionable on the international scale and needs to be established empirically to show the possibility of stigmatisation taking place. As Zarakol argues, prior to the rise to dominance of a particular view of how to organise a state through the long 19th century, speaking of stigmatisation on a truly international or global scale may not have been possible. However, since then, there has been a set of evolving norms for how best to organise states that together are constitutive of what it means to be a 'normal' state in international relations. Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the communist alternative, the dominant norms have been those constitutive of what may broadly be called the liberal international order, including democracy, human rights, non-aggression and capitalism. In order to set the empirical scene for the subsequent 'deep dives' into stigmatisation processes in Russian-Western relations in relation to each norm, the next chapter elaborates each of these norms, identifying their constitutive elements as well as the relevant actors in each field and the mechanisms by which stigmatisation may occur.

Chapter 3

The 'normal' state in post-Cold War international society

The previous chapter introduced the concepts of stigma, stigmatisation and stigma management as promising concepts for the study of 'norm politics', given the insight they give into ongoing processes of constituting normality and deviance, and the closely related (re)production of spoiled and unspoiled identities. This chapter moves the discussion from the theoretical to the empirical, analysing the norms or characteristics that constituted the expectations for how a 'normal' state should be organised domestically and behave internationally in post-Cold War international society. This had four components: democratic governance at home and support for the same abroad; a commitment to human rights, enacted through legislation and participation in international treaty regimes; non-aggression in relations with other states; and a commitment to free-market capitalism, understood largely as a separation of the political and economic spheres of governance. Each of these norms or norm clusters will be analysed in more detail in the sections that follow, including the practices, mechanisms and actors most central to the ongoing process of enforcement and stigmatisation in relation to each.

To say that a 'normal' state in contemporary international society should be democratic, human rights-abiding, non-aggressive and capitalist is not meant to suggest that most states necessarily always followed these norms (normal as 'average'), or that their primacy or nature were universally accepted or uncontested. Rather, 'normal' is meant in the Bourdieusian sense of the 'natural point of view', the point of view of the dominant actors in society that imposes itself as natural and most legitimate, and any deviation from which is potentially discreditable. In any given society, most actors will be discreditable in some way. Goffman (1963, 153) argued that there was only one 'complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height and a recent record in sports'. Similarly, a 'complete unblushing' state in post-Cold War international society would be something like a (liberal) democratic, human rights-abiding and -promoting, free-market capitalist, peaceful state with no significant level of

corruption, no recent history of authoritarian/totalitarian/communist government, imperialism, violence against neighbouring states or minorities and a good record in providing certain basic levels of public services such as health, employment and education for its citizens (and perhaps, like the 'unblushing male', a recent record in sports). Such a state would perform what Christian Reus-Smit (1999, 123) identifies as the 'moral purpose of the modern state': 'the augmentation of individuals' purposes and potentialities'. As these characteristics in their entirety apply to virtually no state, and as there has never been complete agreement internationally on either the general characteristics or their regulative features, all states are to some degree discreditable. The extent of discrediting or stigmatisation depends on whether a state's particular discreditable attribute or behaviour is picked up by stigmatising actors, whether other states, NGOs or otherwise, and made the basis for public discrimination and status loss.

The 'post-Cold War' order of democracy, human rights, non-aggression and capitalism did not emerge overnight in 1989 or 1991. Ian Clark (2001, 1–12) argues that the order was primarily a reaffirmation and extension of the 'regulative peace' operating in the West since the end of World War II. John Ruggie (1982) has similarly shown how liberalism became 'embedded' in the economic system after World War II and beyond. The 1970s and 1980s were central to two particular inflections of the order: the centrality of democracy and democracy promotion, inspired by the 'third wave' of democratisation, and the neoliberal inflection of capitalism in response to the crisis of Keynesianism and the Bretton Woods system (Guilhot 2005; Harvey 2005). Going further back in time, Barry Buzan and George Lawson (2013; 2015) identify the seeds of the current order in the multiple 'revolutions of modernity' of the long nineteenth century, including the rise of 'ideologies of progress' such as liberalism. Any detailed engagement with the historical process of 'how the West came to rule' (Anievas and Nisancioglu 2015) is beyond the scope of this study. The focus in what follows is rather on how a particular part of this 'rule', understood as the dominant expectation of what a 'normal' state should look like and how it should behave, expressed itself in the decades following the collapse of its main 20th century alternative, the Soviet Union and international communism.³⁷

³⁷ This was of course itself a largely 'Western' alternative, the culmination of one of the many ideologies of progress (in this case socialism) that developed in Europe during the 19th century and since spread around the world with various adaptations.

In the following sections, each of the norms or behaviours that together constituted expectations of a 'normal' state post-1991 are treated in turn, starting with democracy and ending with capitalism. In the conclusion, two further aspects of the norms are considered: their voluntarism or individualism, and their (sometimes contradictory) interlinkages and overlaps.

I – Democracy

One of the most defining features of international relations in the post-Cold War period was the dominance of democracy, which became 'almost universally accepted as the only legitimate form of government' (Morozov 2013b, 1). From its spread through the last parts of the 'third wave' of democratisation (Huntington 1993b) and subsequent waves like the colour revolutions and the Arab Spring (dubbed the 12th and the 13th wave by Gunitsky (2018)), via the concept's inscription in the founding documents and codes of a variety of international organisations (Bowden and Charlesworth 2009), to the 'democracy promotion' agenda of the United States and its allies, including non-governmental organisations, democracy was becoming an inextricable part of the new 'normal' of international relations. And yet it was also a deeply contested concept, albeit often more in theory than in practice (Kurki 2010). This section identifies first the substantive aspects of the dominant, 'normal', view of democracy, before identifying some of the main actors involved in its promotion and mechanisms whereby this 'normal' was enforced.

In keeping with the argument in Chapter 1 about how 'successful' norms are often vague, democracy is a fundamentally vague and essentially contested concept (Morozov 2013b, 5–6). Its academic definitions range from the thin, procedural focus on elections within states promoted by the likes of Joseph Schumpeter and Samuel Huntington, to more expansive models like Marxist 'delegative' democracy, social democracy, participatory democracy, radical democracy, deliberative democracy and cosmopolitan democracy (see Kurki 2010, 372–73 for an overview). These different forms all depart to varying degrees from the liberal democratic model that focuses on regular elections and liberal individual rights such as freedom of expression, encompassing also issues such as

economic inequality or democracy in other arenas of social life beyond the confines of the nation state, in order to enable more meaningful democratic experiences than the four-or-five-yearly opportunity to elect new elites. If we think of democracy as a 'norm cluster' (Winston 2018), it is clear that while the basic value may be relatively clear (people should have a say in how they are governed), the various practices that lead to this value being fulfilled are numerous. The concept itself is understood in different ways around the globe and so has no fixed 'essence' (see e.g. Schaffer 1998; Morozov 2013a). Democracy comes with 'adjectives' (Collier and Levitsky 1997), and it is an open question how far one can stretch the concept – a particularly relevant point when discussing Russia given its leadership's promotion of its own 'sovereign democracy' doctrine in the 2000s (Morozov 2008).

Despite this multiplicity, the dominant version of democracy internationally since the end of the Cold War has been a relatively narrow liberal democratic one, modelled closely on the experiences of the modern West. This reflected both the general Western dominance of international affairs (at least in the 1990s), the liberal triumphalism of the 'end of history'³⁸ and liberal democracy's supposed victory, and the specific loss of confidence in more left-wing forms of democracy that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist bloc (Kurki 2010, 365–66). Despite an increasing focus in the 2000s on the need to also promote and encourage 'liberal democratic cultural values' in order to prevent democratic 'backsliding', the consensus remained that 'democracy promotion' entailed the promotion of 'liberal democratic procedures – encompassing electoral processes and institutionalisation of rule of law, freedoms of expression, press and association' (Kurki 2010, 363). William Robinson (1996; 2013) has argued that rather than 'democracy promotion', the practices of the US and American NGOs since the 1980s should be seen as 'polyarchy promotion', after Robert Dahl's (e.g. 1989) term for describing what he saw as the less-than-fully-democratic form of government in modern Western states. For Robinson, the aim of this polyarchy promotion was as much the spread of neoliberal capitalism as 'democracy', highlighting one of the many links between the different dominant norms: 'democracy promotion' was about making 'the world safe for transnational capital' by cultivating transnationally

³⁸ It should be noted that Francis Fukuyama's work that coined the 'end of history' term does not actually share in this triumphalism, though the earlier article (1989) is more in the triumphalist vein than the subsequent book (1992). See e.g. Fukuyama (2013) for his take on the subject two decades on.

oriented elites willing to open up their countries to foreign capital (W. I. Robinson 2013, 229–30). Regardless of intentions, these processes served to promote a dominant narrow view of democracy as primarily about elections.

The elevation of liberal democracy to the status of a dominant norm owed a lot to the democracy promotion activities of Western (particularly American) NGOs and governments. Organisations such as the National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, Freedom House and the Open Society Institute played central roles in the wave of ‘colour revolutions’ by promoting practices such as independent electoral monitoring, training, equipping and encouraging opposition parties and civic groups, even if their actual impact was often overblown relative to structural and local factors (Carothers 2006, 60–61). Freedom House’s annual report on *Freedom in the World* served a similar role to credit rating agencies by ranking countries according to their degree of liberal ‘freedom’ in the form of civil liberties and political rights, providing both a source of diffuse stigmatisation and information that could be mobilised by governments to justify more direct forms of discrimination and exclusion.³⁹ Backing this up was a succession of US governments and presidents, from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama, devoted to the spread of democracy, albeit with varying emphases (Bridoux 2013). The George W. Bush administration was the most overtly committed to democratic regime changes across the world through its ‘Freedom Agenda’, but also the one that ironically ended up undermining the democracy promotion agenda owing to the justification of the war in Iraq on democratisation grounds and its double standards on liberal rights at home and in the War on Terror (Carothers 2006, 63–65). This led Bush’s successor, Obama, to scale back the universalist pretensions in favour of a more dialogical but still ‘inspirational’ promotion of Western-style ‘freedom’ (Jackson 2016). Through both symbolic rankings and material support, democracy promoters worked to make democracy (or polyarchy) an international norm.

Another process by which democracy became elevated to an expectation for a fully ‘normal’ state was its endorsement by an increasing number of international organisations, whether as a condition for membership or a principle that members should aspire to. Organisations such as the Organisation for American States (OAS),

³⁹ See <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world> (accessed 14 July 2019).

African Union and even the UN took steps towards recognising democracy as a value for its members to aspire to. However, particularly in the UN's case disagreements over definitions, persistent criticisms of democracy promotion as a Western/Global North imposition, and enduring commitments to non-interference in internal affairs above all else – what Gerry Simpson (2001) dubs '[UN] Charter liberalism' – meant that no consensus was reached as to what democracy entailed in practice (Bowden and Charlesworth 2009, 92–99). Nevertheless, the UN did become involved with election monitoring through its Electoral Assistance Division, through which member states could request help with organising elections, and 'acted to restore democratic governance through the use of force' in places such as Haiti, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Angola (G. Simpson 2001, 558; see also Hurrell 2007, 151–52).⁴⁰ Even an international financial institution like the World Bank, which had previously focused narrowly on economic structural adjustment (more on which below), started to include 'good governance' metrics as part of its conditions for lending, although 'democracy' as such was not referred to and the 'core values' of the agenda were more inspired by human rights (Guilhot 2005, 210–15). On a global level, this process was relatively mixed, meaning the norm may be called relatively 'thin' globally.

The processes were thicker in the Euro-Atlantic context, where democracy in its liberal definition became institutionalised through several international organisations. The Statute of the Council of Europe had already in 1949 referred to the principles of 'individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law' as the 'basis for all genuine democracy' and made membership conditional on their acceptance (Council of Europe 1949). The same year, 12 West European and North American states signed the North Atlantic Treaty establishing NATO, which committed its signatories to 'safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law' (NATO n.d.). To this day, NATO defines itself as an alliance that 'promotes democratic values' (NATO n.d.). In 1990, the heads of participating states of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), soon to become the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and including all the states of the rapidly disintegrating communist bloc, adopted the 'Charter of Paris for A New Europe'. This committed them to 'a new era of democracy, peace and

⁴⁰ See <https://dppa.un.org/en/elections> for the UN's current work on elections (accessed 14 July 2019).

unity', and defined 'democratic government [as] based on the will of the people, expressed regularly through free and fair elections' (CSCE 1990).⁴¹ Two years later, in the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty), the soon-to-be EU member states committed themselves to democracy in their domestic governance and the development and consolidation of democracy in their (still embryonic) common foreign and security policy, and in 1993, the so-called Copenhagen Criteria stipulated democratic governance as a condition for EU membership (*Treaty on European Union* 1992; European Commission 1993). Over the subsequent decades, election monitors from the Council of Europe and the OSCE regularly monitored elections across the Euro-Atlantic space and provided assessments of each state's democratic performance, while conditionality as part of the EU's enlargement process imposed a particular vision of liberal, market-based democratic governance on the new formerly communist members from Central and Eastern Europe (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; Grabbe 2006; 2014; for a recent collection of critical takes on the process, see Neuman 2019). This normative 'thickness' and institutionalisation of electoral democracy in Europe is of crucial relevance to this study, given its focus on largely intra-European Russian-Western relations. While globally, states were able to remain undemocratic more easily, the pressures to democratise within the institutional architecture of Europe were stronger. In order to be considered a normal *European* state, a state *had* to be democratic, defined primarily as having regular free and fair, competitive elections where the losing side agreed to honour the result.

Democracy was not limited to how a state should organise itself internally. States were also increasingly expected to welcome and even to work for democratic developments elsewhere, as seen for example in the EU's stated commitment to the spread of democratic consolidation. This was the logical consequence of the 'concern with the beneficial effect of democracy' central to the post-Cold War order and the resultant 'programme for encouraging its extension' represented by, *inter alia*, US democracy promotion and EU conditionality (Clark 2001, 224). It was not enough for a government to be democratic at home, it should also be democratic abroad by welcoming and even encouraging democratic developments in other countries, for example through

⁴¹ The Charter also committed the states to establish an 'Office for Free Elections' in Warsaw, which would eventually become the OSCE's election monitoring arm and all-round human rights watchdog, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

supporting the work of civil society organisations committed to democracy promotion. Befriending or propping up undemocratic leaders or regimes was increasingly frowned upon, at least in theory. Concerns about ‘autocracy promotion’ periodically emerged, although as Lucan Way (2016, 64–65) argues, its impact was often overblown and authoritarian powers tended to be less concerned about spreading authoritarianism per se and more interested in their own ‘narrow economic and geopolitical interests’ (a criticism that could of course also be levied at the ‘democracy’ promoters, and often was).

A failure to live up to dominant democratic standards both in domestic and foreign policy would thus make a state discreditable, subject to diffuse stigmatisation in the sense of being deficient in relation to the dominant expectations of ‘normality’. These standards were certainly never followed in full by any state, Western or otherwise, and criticism of democratic ‘slippage’ in the Western core increased greatly after the turn of the millennium (Cooley 2015). As with the other norms identified below, a failure to live up to democratic standards would not automatically lead to direct stigmatisation – this would be dependent on actors mobilising stigmatisation processes directly against a state.

II – Human Rights

Abiding by certain fundamental human rights was another expectation of a fully ‘normal’ state in the post-Cold War period, both globally and in Europe (albeit again with a thicker and more embedded institutional set-up in the latter and some other regions). Human rights and democracy were often treated as two inseparable sides of the same coin, both in institutional structures (for example in the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, ODIHR) and discursively, despite the fact that the two concepts are potentially at odds – human rights in theory qualify democracy by constraining the demos from doing certain things to its individual members (Hurrell 2007, 158–59). Nevertheless, the right to take part in the government of one’s own country through ‘periodic and genuine elections’ was enshrined as a human right in article 21 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reinforced in article 25 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, demonstrating the close entanglement of the two concepts (United Nations 1948; 1966). This section details the

mechanisms and processes that made protecting the rights of its citizens an increasingly dominant norm of international society.

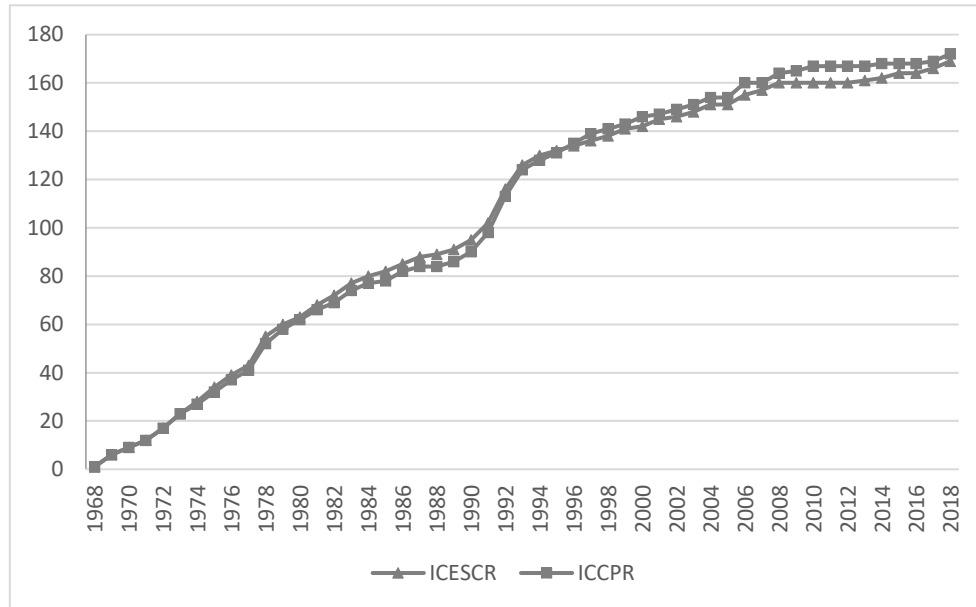
A defining feature of human rights as an international norm was its increasing legalisation and institutionalisation through international organisations and treaties, starting long before the end of the Cold War. Despite the scepticism of the major powers and after pressure in particular from Latin American states and NGOs, human rights language became a key feature of the 1945 United Nations Charter, with seven references to 'human rights' and the member states' determination 'to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights' as the Charter's second point (United Nations 1945; Sikkink 2017, 69–73; Morsink 1999). At the UN level this was followed up with the 1948 Universal Declaration, the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD, championed by Jamaica and other newly independent Global South states) and the 1966 covenants on civil and political rights (ICCPR) and economic, social and cultural rights (ICESCR), which entered into force in 1976 and expanded and gave international legal force to the principles of the 1948 declaration (Sikkink 2017, 106–8, 119). By 2014 a total of 18 international human rights treaties (including optional protocols) had been completed under UN auspices, covering violence against women, torture, children's rights, etc.⁴² From ICERD onwards, the inclusion of a treaty body that monitored compliance became standard, albeit usually without any judicial or legal powers (Sikkink 2017, 107–8). While ratification levels for all the 18 treaties and protocols varied, ratification of the two core covenants grew steadily to 172 (ICCPR) and 169 (ICESCR) states, respectively, demonstrating the increasing normalisation and peer pressure to conform.⁴³ Figure 3.1 shows how the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s coincided with an increase in ratifications, indicating a consolidation around principles of human rights. However, this was not just owing to former communist and newly independent states 'joining up' – the US only ratified the ICCPR in

⁴² For a full overview, see <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CoreInstruments.aspx>, and for an interactive overview of ratifications, see <http://indicators.ohchr.org/> (both accessed 14 July 2019). See Sikkink (2017, 204) for a graph showing ratification of six 'core' treaties including the two covenants.

⁴³ At the time of writing, of the nine core treaties, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child had the most ratifications with 196 (the US being the only non-state party, having only signed) and the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families the least with 54, demonstrating the contested scope of human rights.

1992, the Clinton administration fulfilling the Carter administration’s signature from 15 years previously (the US has yet to ratify the ICESCR).⁴⁴

Figure 3.1 – Ratifications of the international human rights covenants, 1968-2018



Source: Database of the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) <http://untreaty.un.org/ola>.

Beyond the global level, there were regional variations in the thickness of the institutional human rights ecology. The two geographical areas with the densest set of institutions were Europe and the Americas. The latter was the first to issue a declaration of human rights, the 1948 American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man that preceded the UDHR by several months. Despite patchy progress over the next decades, by the late 1980s both an American Commission, Convention and Court of Human Rights had been established (Sikkink 2017, 74–77, 114–19). The member states of the Council of Europe, which in addition to democracy had established ‘the further realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms’ as one of its founding objectives and thus conditions for membership (Council of Europe 1949), were the first to create a legally

⁴⁴ In John Meyer’s (2009, 49) argument, the fact that states sign up to these treaties despite the most powerful state in the world’s ambivalence about them is a crucial point against realist conceptions of actorhood and power in international relations – ‘it is difficult to say the Americans make a third world country sign treaties the Americans themselves do not sign’. However, his conclusion from this that the process is more voluntary than often assumed does not necessarily follow – for example, stigmas can operate to discipline states into conforming without necessarily being backed by overt material power.

binding human rights treaty, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which entered into force in 1953 and established the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) as an unprecedented enforcement mechanism (for a history of the negotiations, see A. W. B. Simpson 2001). The institutional bite of the Council's mechanisms became clear in 1967 when Greece withdrew from the organisation under threat of being excluded owing to human rights abuses under its new military junta (Sikkink 2017, 122–23). Meanwhile, the conclusion of the Helsinki Accords at the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 1975 between 35 European states from both sides of the East/West divide provided an added impetus for human rights across the Euro-Atlantic area. While both sides initially thought the commitments to human rights in the Accords would be secondary to the mutual recognition of the post-World War II borders in Europe, they established a precedent that allowed NGOs in countries across the communist bloc (the so-called 'Helsinki committees') to increasingly hold their governments to account for human rights abuses and contributed to the gradual unravelling of the Cold War and the communist bloc (Thomas 2001; Morgan 2018).

As with democracy, the end of the Cold War intensified, spread and deepened the institutional architecture promoting human rights as an expectation of state behaviour, especially in Europe. One by one, the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe joined the Council of Europe, submitting to the jurisdiction of the ECtHR. From 1998, individuals could bring claims against their state directly to the ECtHR, reflecting the increasing move towards the individualisation of international human rights justice. In the 1990 Charter of Paris, the CSCE states committed themselves to the 'protection and promotion' of 'human rights and fundamental freedoms' as 'the first responsibility of government' (CSCE 1990, 3). As with democracy, the EU's founding document committed its members to 'respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms' and its criteria for expansion stated that new members must have achieved 'stability of institutions guaranteeing ... human rights and respect for and protection of minorities' (*Treaty on European Union* 1992; European Commission 1993). The revival of minority rights as a distinct category of rights was also reflected in the CSCE's appointment of a High Commissioner on National Minorities in 1992 (Hurrell 2007, 144). Through the 1990s and 2000s, the EU accession process of the post-communist states of Central and Eastern

Europe required them to adopt extensive human rights legislation, despite ongoing controversies over implementation.

Another defining feature of the rapidly evolving human rights regime in the post-Cold War period was the increasing focus on individual responsibility and accountability for human rights abuses, especially but not exclusively war crimes and genocide. The establishment of the ad hoc UN tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and Rwanda (ICTR) as well as the International Criminal Court (ICC), along with such events as the arrest of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in the UK in 1998 and his subsequent trial in Chile over numerous human rights abuses, all contributed to a trend from state accountability towards individual accountability (Hurrell 2007, 147–48; Sikkink 2017, 133–34). This ‘justice cascade’ (Sikkink 2011) still had a statist dimension, in that it increased the expectations on states to investigate and prosecute their own worst human rights offenders so that international tribunals would not step in, but the trend was towards qualifying state sovereignty and diplomatic immunity in cases of grave human rights abuses. The process was far from complete, particularly given the reluctance of important states like the US, Russia and China to sign and/or ratify the Rome Statute establishing the ICC and the continued criticism of the Court, primarily from African states, for its exclusive focus on the Global South (on the ICC’s emergence and early existence, see e.g. Bosco 2014; Bower 2019; Stahn 2015; De Vos, Kendall, and Stahn 2015). However, it contributed to a growing individual-level stigma around human rights abuses and evasion of prosecution (c.f. Mégret 2014), as well as a state-level stigma for non-prosecution.

Where NGOs played only a relatively central role in democracy promotion, when it came to human rights their involvement was crucial. They gathered, produced and disseminated information and knowledge about human rights abuses, mobilised shame to pressure governments, acted as conduits for external assistance and were a ‘transmission belt for changes in attitudes and values’ in the broader social context (Hurrell 2007, 148). As will be seen in Chapter 5, these roles all contributed towards the stigmatisation of human rights abusers. Human rights NGOs and transnational advocacy networks were thus the archetypal ‘norm entrepreneurs’ defined by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998). Given the many linkages between human rights and democracy in practice, many NGOs worked explicitly in both areas (e.g. Freedom House), but several

also had a more narrow focus on particular human rights issues, for example Amnesty International's original focus on prisoners of conscience and work against the death penalty or Human Rights Watch's origins as Helsinki Watch, founded in 1978 to monitor compliance with the Helsinki Accords in the Soviet Union (Hopgood 2000; Neier 2012, 186–232). Both international (INGOs) and national NGOs working on human rights proliferated through the latter half of the 20th century, forming a vital part of the advocacy networks increasing pressure on governments of all stripes to defend human rights (Sikkink 2017, 154–55). These organisations played key roles particularly in the labelling part of the stigmatisation process.

Despite the growing dominance of human rights in the post-Cold War period, the norm as a whole and the practices embodying it remained contested on several levels. This was not a clear-cut story of 'the West' promoting liberal tolerance and rights against the ignorance of 'the Rest'. While many Asian governments insisted on the special status of 'Asian values' in the 1990s against the supposedly imperialist practices of Western human rights promotion, Jensen (2016), Sikkink (2017) and others have convincingly shown that the modern human rights regime developed through contested processes that owed as much to Latin American legal advocacy and post-colonial states' push for racial equality as to 'Western' thought. In practice, Western states were often ready to ride roughshod over human rights principles in the name of a greater good, most notably the US during the 'War on Terror', in which its supposed commitment to the 1984 Convention against Torture was severely undermined in the name of national security (see e.g. McKeown 2009; Kutz 2014; Schmidt and Sikkink 2019). Overall, the US's ratification of only five of the 18 core human rights treaties listed by the UN showed the leading Western state's ambivalent relationship with parts of the human rights regime, despite its declared promotion of civil and political rights under the guise of 'freedom and democracy'.

The division between civil and political rights on the one hand and economic and social rights on the other embodied in the ICCPR and ICESCR was one dividing line in the ongoing contestation of human rights' scope. However, the explicit adoption of economic and social rights by organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch in the late 1990s-early 2000s was one of many factors undermining this (see e.g. Roth 2004; M. Robinson 2004). As Hurrell (2007, 144) notes, the old civil/political-

economic/social divide was increasingly superseded by claims to a ‘third generation’ of rights (including to ‘development, peace, clean environment, cultural identity’) that brought attention to structures of oppression. Moreover, even among ‘Western’ or ‘developed’ states there were controversies over the scope of civil and political rights – while the death penalty was effectively outlawed in Europe by Protocols 6 (in force since 1985) and 13 (since 2003) of the ECHR, it was still practised in several US states and Japan (see e.g. Neumayer 2008 for a discussion of the spread of abolition). This led the ECtHR to rule in 1989 that extraditing those at risk of the death penalty to the US would be a breach of the prohibition on torture.⁴⁵ Areas like LGBT rights were likewise ambiguous, characterised by late recognition even in supposedly progressive, liberal states, with their embrace and promotion by the US and others criticised as ‘homonationalism’ – the idea of tolerance for LGBT people as yet another standard of ‘civilisation’ disqualifying intolerant states from full sovereignty – and ‘pinkwashing’ by academics and activists (Puar 2007; 2013). This highlights the link between human rights and interventionism, the potential for human rights abuses to qualify the dominant norm of non-aggression, which will be explored in more detail in the next section.

In addition to their close conceptual and practical links with democracy and troubled relationship to intervention, human rights were the object of criticism arguing that they went hand-in-hand with a particular individualistic form of neoliberal capitalism. For example, Samuel Moyn (2018; see also 2010) has argued that in their minimalist form focused on individuals’ rights to sufficiency, economic and social rights do not challenge the persistent structural inequalities of the globalised economy. In Kathryn McNeilly’s (2016, 271) summary, the critique has been that the ‘subject of liberal human rights is a bounded individual who possesses their life, liberty and security as property which should be protected from external interferences, in doing so reflecting the wider imperatives of a capitalist economy’. The extent of the ‘affinity’ between human rights and neoliberalism is disputed. For example, Sikkink (2017, 38–48) argues that such a critique relies on a confusion of human rights as a whole with US and UK human rights policies and, as a consequence, ignores both the many struggles *against* neoliberalism in

⁴⁵ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/death-penalty> (accessed 14 July 2019). By 2006 all Council of Europe member states except Russia had ratified Protocol 6 (outlawing the death penalty in peacetime), and by 2014 all except Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia had ratified Protocol 13 (outlawing it in all circumstances). However, Russia had a moratorium on capital punishment in effect since 1996 (see Light and Kovalev 2013 for a discussion of the Council of Europe’s influence on Russia in this matter).

the name of human rights and the fact that the focus on civil and political rights in the 1970s onwards was because of the nature of the repression faced at the time, notably in communist Eastern Europe. Sikkink is surely right that human rights are not inherently neoliberal just because some human rights movements in contexts of state repression have also advocated market reform. However, it is also clear that the dominant human rights norms in the post-Cold War period were at the very least compatible with the spread of liberal capitalism.

In sum, despite the contested scope of human rights, the expectation of a 'normal' state in post-Cold War international society was that it upheld the basic rights of its population. The stigma attached to human rights violations was growing and was becoming increasingly individualised, with state leaders no longer beyond the reach of international humanitarian law.

III – Non-aggression

The third dominant norm concerning state behaviour in the post-Cold War order was the imperative not to act aggressively against other states. Unlike democracy and human rights, which first and foremost referred to the internal governance of a state, the norm of non-aggression by its very definition concerned inter-state relationships. Moreover, while democracy and human rights as concepts were more towards the constitutive side of the constitutive/regulative norm spectrum, non-aggression was more of a regulative norm following logically from the constitutive principles of the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of states that formed the basis for the UN system. Indeed, the most basic expression of the norm is encapsulated in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which states that 'All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state' (United Nations 1945). However, like democracy, human rights and indeed capitalism, exactly what constituted aggression was a contested issue, with states and international lawyers engaged in ongoing debates over its precise definition and the extent of criminalisation. These debates were closely entangled politically with questions of intervention in general, including humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect. This

section briefly charts the processes through which aggression – but not intervention per se – became a discreditable behaviour for states.

Attempts to prohibit the use of armed force between states and make peaceful resolution of conflicts the norm proliferated throughout the 20th century. Article 10 of the League of Nations Covenant called on all members to ‘respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence’ of all other members, but stopped short of outlawing war (‘The Covenant of the League of Nations’ n.d.; see also Sellars 2016 on the attempts to charge Kaiser Wilhelm II with aggression after WWI). That was done, in theory, by the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact or the ‘General Treaty for the Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy’ (McDougall 2013, 2). The Nuremburg and Tokyo Tribunals following World War II then – controversially, given the lack of legal precedent – tried German and Japanese officials for ‘crimes against peace’, defined as the ‘planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression’, which subsequently became part of customary international law (McDougall 2016, quote from 53). The UN Charter, in addition to prohibiting the ‘use or threat of force’, declared that one of the UN’s purposes was to suppress ‘acts of aggression’, giving the Security Council the right to ‘determine the existence’ of such an act and therefore to define what it meant in practice (United Nations 1945). The meaning of the different terms (‘war of aggression’, ‘act of aggression’, ‘use or threat of force’) were not fully resolved or clarified in the years that followed, and given developments like the onset of the Cold War, several states maintained their right to use force in certain situations (McDougall 2013, 3–5). The most comprehensive definition of aggression to date, albeit one that still ‘masked deep divisions of opinion’ (McDougall 2013, 6), was adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly in 1974: ‘Aggression is the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, as set out in this Definition’ (United Nations 1974).⁴⁶ This language shows the close entanglement of the concepts of sovereignty, territoriality and independence with the concept of aggression, and the various developments clearly

⁴⁶ The definition included several illustrative examples of what might constitute aggression, such as invasion, bombardment, blockade of ports, the use of one state’s armed forces within another’s territory, etc.

indicate a gradual process towards the stigmatisation of aggression and/or aggressors, despite continued contestation over its proper meaning and scope.

The process towards individualisation and criminalisation that was affecting the broader human rights regime also came to affect aggression, with the eventual inclusion of a 'crime of aggression' in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. This only happened at the first Review Conference for the statute, in Kampala in 2010, after the parties had not been able to reach agreement in Rome in 1998 (see McDougall 2013, 6–32 for a brief history of the process; and Kress and Barriga 2016 for a collection of commentaries). Article 8 *bis* of the Statute drew on the various terms in circulation to define a 'crime of aggression' as 'the planning, preparation, initiation or execution, by a person in a position effectively to exercise control over or to direct the political or military action of a State, of an act of aggression which, by its character, gravity and scale, constitutes a manifest violation of the Charter of the United Nations'. It defined an 'act of aggression' as 'the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another State', and listed a series of illustrative acts that, 'regardless of a declaration of war' would qualify as an act of aggression (International Criminal Court 2011, 9). Thus, although the 2010 amendments were not due to take full effect until after the time period under investigation here (2017), by the end of this period the act of aggression by individual state leaders was not only stigmatised and prohibited under various treaties and customary international law, but criminalised.

It is important to distinguish the stigma attached to aggression from the broader debates about intervention. Intervention *per se* was not stigmatised, despite the constitutive role of mutually recognised sovereignty in the order and the push from both postcolonial states and groupings such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) for their 'right to non-intervention' over the past decades (Lawson and Tardelli 2013, 1239–40). Under the post-Cold War order, intervention or the use of force could still be permitted in at least three instances: self-defence against aggression; with permission from the UN Security Council in its capacity as guardian of 'international peace and security'; and, most controversially, for humanitarian purposes. These three instances are discussed in more detail below. Each of these forms of intervention and/or the use of force could be legitimate depending on circumstance. The aim for an

intervener, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, was thus to avoid having an intervention labelled as illegitimate and being stigmatised as an aggressor, by successfully framing the intervention in legitimate terms.

The first two instances of legitimate intervention – self-defence and Security Council-endorsed use of force – are summed up in theory in Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The Charter authorises the Security Council to ‘determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression’ (article 39) and details the various measures, up to and including the use of armed force, the Council may call upon UN members to take to restore the peace (articles 41 and 42) (United Nations 1945). The long-standing right to self-defence is reiterated in article 51, which states that ‘Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations’ (United Nations 1945). The Security Council’s role indicates the enduring great power management aspects of contemporary international order, where such a role comes with the price of deciding when an intervention is appropriate and frequently contributing heavily to the material and human costs of interventions (Lawson and Tardelli 2013, 1242–43). The collectivism embedded in the UN Charter regime also goes to the core of what Clark (2001, 206) argued was the key security component of the post-Cold War order: a ‘collectivist’ approach to security. This collectivism was aligned with the dominant norm of non-aggression and intended to uphold it. Thus, to avoid potential stigmatisation, any use of force by a state should be shown to be defensive, and preferably to be undertaken as part of a wider collective. Clark (2001, 209–10) identified the 1990–91 Gulf War as key to the establishment of this order, the prototype that subsequent war should follow to comply: it ‘stood for the delegitimation of any use of force not sanctioned by the victorious Cold War coalition, while also promoting the collectivisation of the use of force to deter resort to it’. Not every subsequent intervention was as clear-cut, however, as will be seen in Chapter 6, and most – from NATO’s intervention in Kosovo in 1998–99 to Russia’s in Ukraine in 2014 and several states’ in Syria since 2011 – involved a symbolic struggle to define the intervention as legitimate and/or legal. In practice, then, the theory of the UN Charter was not always clear-cut, but it set the ground rules.

The most controversial aspect of intervention in the post-Cold War era was the practice of humanitarian intervention, closely entangled with the emergent concept of

the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). As the international human rights regime expanded and solidified and (civil and international) wars in the Balkans, Rwanda and elsewhere involved war crimes, ethnic cleansing and even genocide, so debates surrounding the need to protect populations from such human rights abuses accelerated through the 1990s and 2000s, both in academic and policy making circles.⁴⁷ There was a tendency in many of these debates to speak of humanitarian intervention as a ‘subject without a history’ (Simms and Trim 2011a, 2), a novel outcome of the post-Cold War victory for human rights and liberalism. This was mistaken – as much academic literature has shown, the principle and/or practice of some form of humanitarian intervention have long histories, and the tension between domestic and international authority over the protection of individuals, be they foreign nationals, ethnic minorities or all citizens, is nothing new (see e.g. Bass 2008; Orford 2011; Simms and Trim 2011b; Wheeler 2000).

Despite the often exaggerated novelty, the relatively successful attempts to consolidate, institutionalise and legalise (under international law) a responsibility on all states to protect their populations from so-called ‘atrocities crimes’ (Dieng and Welsh 2015) and the right for other states to intervene if this responsibility was not upheld, represented a growing stigmatisation of such crimes and legitimisation of intervention to avert them. The principle of the Responsibility to Protect, the core aspect of these attempts, was first proposed in a 2001 report by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (established by the UN General Assembly in 2000), and was formally adopted by the General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001; UN General Assembly 2005).⁴⁸ The World Summit resolution stated that ‘[e]ach individual state has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity’, and noted states’ preparedness to ‘take collective action’ ‘through the Security Council’ in cases where ‘peaceful means [had been] inadequate and

⁴⁷ The literature on humanitarian intervention is too vast to do full justice to here. For a selective sample, see Deng et al. (1996); Wheeler (2000); Chesterman (2001); Holzgrefe and Keohane (2003); Welsh (2004); Orford (2011); Simms and Trim (2011b); Weiss (2016). UK Prime Minister Tony Blair’s April 1999 speech at the Chicago Economic Club, available at <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/154/26026.html> (accessed 10 July 2019), is widely cited as the most prominent expression by a state leader of a doctrine of humanitarian intervention (in Blair’s actual words a ‘doctrine of international community’).

⁴⁸ See <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/key-documents.shtml> for all relevant UN documents on the Responsibility to Protect (accessed 14 July 2019).

national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity' (UN General Assembly 2005, 30). Subsequent practice was patchy. While special UN advisers Adama Dieng and Jennifer Welsh, writing in 2015, noted a growing embeddedness of the principle in resolutions passed by the UN and regional organisations as well as an increasing number of states signing up to support implementation, they also noted ongoing, unanswered atrocities in 'the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of North Korea, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen' (Dieng and Welsh 2015, 124, 128). Conflicting interests usually prevented states from agreeing on when and where the Responsibility to Protect should be applied, with the 2011 intervention in Libya remaining the only use of force authorised by the Security Council with reference to human protection 'against the wishes of a functioning state' (Lawson and Tardelli 2013, 1243). This patchy practice notwithstanding, the slowly growing consensus around the principle provided an emergent source of stigmatisation to partner that of committing human rights atrocities, whether at home or abroad, namely opposing intervention to prevent atrocities. Any state either blocking intervention (which was the prerogative of the P5 members of the Security Council, including Russia) or in other ways working against or refusing to commit to it were potentially discreditable as 'deviant' against the new, emergent 'normal' of R2P.

The dominant order thus tolerated the use of force by states, but only use of force that could be shown to be non-aggressive, i.e. undertaken in self-defence against an act of aggression, authorised by the UN Security Council, and/or undertaken to prevent atrocity crimes under the auspices of humanitarian intervention/Responsibility to Protect. A fully 'normal' state would refrain from any non-aggressive action, and any state using force faced an imperative to successfully frame this action as legitimate in one of the three ways. Any use of force successfully labelled aggressive would expose a state to potential stigmatisation.

IV – Capitalism

The fourth norm for a fully 'normal' state to follow in post-Cold War international society was that of capitalism. A commitment to organising one's economy based on capitalist,

market-based principles and an openness to trade became a norm both in the sense of an expected behaviour and in the sense that most states did in fact organise their economies in such a way, albeit to varying degrees. As highlighted by Buzan and Lawson (2014, 72), for much of the twentieth century a key geopolitical question was ‘Capitalism or not?’, owing to the presence of the state socialist alternative, while in the post-Cold War period ‘...the core ideological question in world politics has [instead] been: “What kind of capitalism best delivers stable prosperity?”’. Even the centre of the communist world, Russia, became capitalist (not to mention China), albeit still with discreditable features that will be discussed in Chapter 7. This section discusses the dominant, primarily liberal capitalist features of post-Cold War international relations as well as the mechanisms and institutions that put pressure on states to conform to the liberal capitalist norm.

As with democracy and its many adjectives, so capitalism comes in different shapes and forms. There were competing versions of capitalism even within the Western capitalist ‘core’, from the neoliberal emphasis on a state as small as possible allowing the market to be fully ‘free’, to a more social version concerned with state regulation of markets in the interest of social justice and equality. As was the case in the extreme with the communist/capitalist dichotomy, perhaps the most central axis of distinction was the level of state planning and intervention in the economy. The ‘varieties of capitalism’ literature distinguishes between ‘liberal market economies’ and ‘coordinated market economies’, with the latter having greater levels of state-driven planning (e.g. Hall and Soskice 2001). Bruno Amable (2003) identified five versions of ‘modern’ capitalism – market-based, social-democratic, Continental European, Mediterranean, and Asian. Adding the political governance structure in which capitalism is embedded nationally into the mix, Buzan and Lawson (2014, 72) propose an ideal-type of four forms of capitalism: liberal democratic, social democratic, competitive authoritarian and state bureaucratic. As indicated in particular by Amable’s geographically-denominated versions of capitalism, debates over exactly how to be capitalist were ongoing even within the West, with the EU and US representing different traditions and the EU itself internally divided. This was not just a matter of theoretical debate: since 1995, the US and EU have opened at least 55 disputes against each other at the World Trade Organization (WTO)

over issues ranging from bananas to steel to copyright.⁴⁹ Even with the collapse of the communist alternative, then, capitalism remained, as always in its history, a contested concept and form both in theory and practice.

In spite of this diversity, certain dominant features were common to almost all the different states that the above variations and ideal types were based on. Capitalist states organised their economies based on 'market logics', took part in 'global regimes governing trade, production and finance' and, in a departure from previous ideas of political economy, sought 'to formally distinguish distinct realms of politics and economics' (Buzan and Lawson 2014, 75). This conception distinguished economics as a separate, non-ideological and technocratic sphere distinct from the inherently ideological world of politics, and was the underlying condition for complaints from businessmen and politicians alike about 'political interference' in the face of proposals for increased regulation or taxes, and the imperative for governments of maintaining a 'good business climate' (Harvey 2005, 71–72). Private rather than state enterprise should be the cornerstone of economic activity, with the state's role primarily to facilitate private enterprise and relatively unfettered market mechanisms through ensuring 'strong individual private property rights, the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning markets and free trade' (Harvey 2005, 64). As a default position, politics should be subordinated to economics (and/or business and/or finance). As a result, despite continued variation the 'ideological bandwidth' of acceptable forms of capitalism was becoming 'increasingly narrow' (Buzan and Lawson 2014, 72).

The ideological and theoretical basis for this narrowing bandwidth can be traced to the increasing dominance of neoliberal and/or 'ordoliberal'⁵⁰ economic thinking in policy-making circles in both Western states and international financial institutions in the 1970s and 1980s. These terms do not denote monolithic schools of thought – Mark Blyth (2002; 2013; see also Harvey 2005) has shown how the roots of what is often lumped together as 'neoliberal' economic thinking has several different intellectual

⁴⁹ See https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/find_dispu_cases_e.htm (accessed 26 August 2019).

⁵⁰ From German 'ordnung' (order), emphasising the importance of rules and strong independent state institutions because governments seeking re-election cannot be trusted to make sound economic decisions. Note the subtle difference from neoliberalism, which in theory wants neither a strong state nor government, but in practice needs a relatively strong state to create and protect the 'free' market.

sources. Moreover, while the education of neoliberal economists at places like the University of Chicago and Harvard and their promotion through the ranks of institutions like the US Treasury, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in the 1970s helps explain the dominance of neoliberal thinking on the western side of the Atlantic (see e.g. Chwieroth 2007; 2010; Peet 2009), the ordoliberal design of EU financial institutions like the European Central Bank and European Monetary Union can be traced to the particular influence of Germany and German ordoliberal ideas on their formation (Blyth 2013, 141–43; see also Bonefeld 2012; 2017). The dominance of both these intellectual traditions and the resultant promotion of neoliberal and ordoliberal economic principles as the only way by which to achieve economic prosperity, are excellent examples of how the viewpoints of the most powerful come to be seen as ‘normal’ – Bourdieu’s ‘symbolic violence’, Gramsci’s ‘common sense’. They both take theories based on the very specific economic experiences and histories of states (mainly the US, UK and Germany) and generalise them into universally applicable policy recommendations. For example, because the US and UK were able to industrialise and prosper with a fairly small state, everyone should be able to, irrespective of time and place (Blyth 2013, 134–43). Moreover, the actual historical experiences of these countries often do not match the theories – the US and UK became rich through protectionism, not free trade, but in Ha-Joon Chang’s (2007, 15–16) words, ‘[t]he history of capitalism has been so totally re-written that many people in the rich world do not perceive the historical double standards involved in recommending free trade and free market to developing countries’.

The institutional mechanisms through which states were pressured to conform to a broadly neo-/ordoliberal version of capitalism (and potentially stigmatised if they did not) varied. For developing countries globally, including the former Soviet states, the role of the trio of international financial institutions – the IMF, World Bank and, from 1995, the WTO – was central. Highly controversial, the institutions have been dubbed both an ‘unholy trinity’ (Peet 2009), ‘bad samaritans’ (Chang 2007) and, more neutrally, the ‘globalizers’ (Woods 2006), reflecting their role in processes of globalisation and opening up economies, for better or worse. Successive US governments used their powerful position within the organisations to push certain agendas (Woods 2006, 4), and they and the institutions were at the vanguard of promoting what was dubbed the ‘Washington

Consensus', a set of economic policy recommendations summed up in the mantra 'stabilize, privatize, liberalize': 'get your macro balances in order [stabilize], take the state out of business [privatize], give markets free rein [liberalize]' (Rodrik 2006, 973; also called the 'holy trinity' of stabilisation, privatisation and liberalisation, see Rutland 2013, 338).⁵¹ The IMF and the World Bank promoted stabilisation and privatisation as conditions for loans – so-called 'structural adjustment programs' that governments had to complete in order to continue to borrow – while the WTO had trade liberalisation as its core mission and required member states to commit to 'free trade' by reducing tariffs and opening up their economies (Peet 2009).

Conditionality was never a completely successful process. As Ngaire Woods (2006, 4) argues, the institutions (and/or their most powerful members) often had strong political and bureaucratic incentives to keep lending even when borrowing states were less than diligent in carrying out reforms. A consequence of this patchy implementation was that the IMF in particular tended not to assume responsibility for failures, i.e. instances where the prescribed economic medicine did not have the desired effect of promoting growth, often blaming governments for not doing the reforms properly instead. The World Bank was more ready to admit to failings, but it is unclear how much either institution substantially changed practices as a result (Blyth 2013, 164; Peet 2009, 31–32; Woods 2006, 3). Despite the uneven implementation, the institutions' promotion of a particular form of capitalism as the 'right' kind contributed greatly to the establishment of liberal capitalism as the 'norm' that states should aspire to. Aside from direct conditionality, this also happened through regular reports on the state of states' economies, and rankings such as the World Bank's 'Doing Business' index, which since 2001 has rated and ranked the regulative environment in states worldwide based on its friendliness to business.⁵²

An additional and crucial institutional promoter of liberal capitalism in the European context was the European Union. As noted above, the EU's conditions for its new member states frequently had less to do with democracy than it had to do with

⁵¹ The 'Consensus' was originally a set of 10 policies drawn up by development economist John Williamson in 1989 as a summary of the supposedly new orthodoxy in development economics, replacing the more statist policies that had dominated in Latin America previously (Blyth 2013, 161). See Williamson (2004) for his own reflections on the 'strange' and unintended history of the term.

⁵² See <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/doingbusiness> (accessed 13 July 2019).

another of the Copenhagen Criteria – the requirement of a ‘functioning market economy’ (European Commission 1993) or, in practice, the adoption of the EU’s regulative *acquis communautaire* (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004, 661). In the process, there was a tendency towards universalising a particular experience, where the *acquis* was taken to denote ‘best practice’ regardless of whether its provisions actually suited the situation in the candidate countries (Grzymala-Busse and Innes 2003, 71; Grabbe 2006, 107). Again, as with IMF or World Bank conditionality, the actual results were not uniform (see e.g. Bohle 2018). But the promotion of capitalism, EU-style, as the only way to organise an economy efficiently contributed to the sense that a ‘normal’ European state was a capitalist market economy integrated into the EU’s single market.

NGOs and other civil society actors were not nearly as active in relation to capitalism as to democracy and human rights, albeit with some notable exceptions. Closest to the dominant neoliberal vision of capitalism were institutions like the US-based Heritage Foundation, which together with *The Wall Street Journal* produced an *Index of Economic Freedom* from 1995 onwards to match Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World*.⁵³ However, the most prominent think tank globally working on a capitalism-related issue was Berlin-based Transparency International, with its annual *Corruption Perceptions Index* ranking countries as more or less corrupt and multiple other publications exposing corruption around the world.⁵⁴ The potential stigma of corruption’s place within the dominant capitalist norm was more implicit than explicit and somewhat ambiguous, relating also to other core norms like democracy. Organisations like Transparency International almost certainly would not see themselves as upholders of a capitalist order – its ‘normal’ was rather a transparent and rules-based order where the resources lost to corruption benefitted society as a whole, as much a democratic and human rights-based society as a capitalist one. Moreover, aspects of neoliberal capitalism, such as the liberalisation of capital flows, clearly helps to enable corruption by making it easier to move and hide money, including through the supposed bastions of neoliberalism such as the US and UK (e.g. Bullough 2018). Still, corruption almost by definition involves a circumvention of the supposedly neutral ‘rules’ of a liberal capitalist order and a distortion of free-market principles, and thus is a mark against a

⁵³ See <https://www.heritage.org/index/> (accessed 13 July 2019).

⁵⁴ See <https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publications> (accessed 13 July 2019).

'healthy business climate', with business decisions made based on corruption ratings and rankings. While not explicitly a part of either the *Doing Business* or *Index of Economic Freedom* rankings, then, corruption would clearly affect several of the categories in these rankings, from getting construction permits and enforcing contracts (*Doing Business*) to property rights and government integrity (*Index of Economic Freedom*). Reducing corruption would thus be a means of approaching 'normal' status for a state in the post-Cold War international society by achieving more favourable assessments of one's capitalist (and democratic) credentials.

The 2008 global financial crisis and its aftermath rocked liberal capitalism's dominance but did not overthrow it (for a comprehensive history of the aftermath, see Tooze 2018). As noted in the previous chapter, states like Brazil and South Korea were able to resist and transform the policy stigma around controls on capital inflows (Chwieroth 2015), and several states, including Russia, did react to the crisis by intervening strongly to keep their economies afloat (Tooze 2018, 223–25). However, neo-and/or ordoliberal policies soon reasserted themselves as the expected norm, especially in the European context, whether through the US Federal Reserve's condition for its post-crisis credit swap lines with other central banks that a country had to have been 'well-managed with "prudent" policies' (which was used to exclude East European countries, pushing them towards the IMF instead) or through the German-led insistence on austerity politics in the Eurozone, backed up theoretically by public choice economists claiming – on dubious evidence – that cuts would lead to growth (Tooze 2018, 220–21; Blyth 2013, 165–67). While regulation of the largest multinational banks was stepped up through the Third Basel Accord in November 2010, requiring the banks to gradually increase their liquidity to avoid another crisis, the changes were 'by no means radical', owing to a mix of lobbying by the banks and unwillingness by particularly European governments to adopt stronger measures (Tooze 2018, 311–15). As protest movements such as Occupy Wall Street fizzled out, the system as a whole went unchallenged and 'normal' states were still expected to be good capitalists, albeit with a little more leeway for regulation. This continuation of 'business as usual' and the imposition of socially painful austerity measures on top of the economic disruption already caused by the 2008 crisis in turn contributed to the growth across the West of populist movements of both right and left, several of which advocate 'neo-protectionism' as a 'bulwark against

globalization’ (Lawson 2019, 242–45). The most important instance of populist-protectionist political success globally, the election of Donald Trump on his platform of ‘America First’, marks the end of the period under investigation in this study. As such, while the current trend may be towards greater acceptance of a more protectionist form of capitalism and thus a transformation of that particular policy stigma, for most of the period under analysis here protectionism was a discreditable offence.

The point is not that all economic policy in the world had become (neo)liberal and capitalist, but that the tenets of neo-/ordoliberal capitalism had become dominant internationally (with a more socially oriented capitalism as a close second). Any state breaking with these tenets, for example by engaging in protectionist measures, openly manipulating economic relations for political ends, or ‘interfering’ in domestic markets through e.g. expropriation, nationalisation or punitive tax measures, would be discreditable, in the sense of possessing a potential stigma. The move from discreditable to discredited would depend on a successful process of stigmatisation. But the shared normative background that would make stigmatisation *possible* was present.

Conclusion

Before moving on to examine Russia’s stigmatisation and stigma management in relation to each of the four norms covered here, two overall issues are worth pointing out about the norms, one pertaining to their individual, voluntarist nature and one to the interlinked relationships between them.

First, democratic governance, human rights protection, non-aggression and capitalist economic policy are all practices that governments can, in theory, freely choose to follow. As noted in Chapter 2, this voluntarism, however voluntary it really is in practice, is a core feature of contemporary mechanisms of social stratification and closure, and forms a central part of dominant Western actors’ defence against accusations of neo-imperialism – no-one is forcing anyone to be democratic or follow human rights, it is a choice (c.f. Keene 2013). The closure mechanism is individualist rather than collectivist, based on credentials and behaviours that anyone can, in theory, achieve – a formerly authoritarian, repressive state can become democratic and human rights-

promoting, a former socialist state can become capitalist, etc. (see Naylor 2019 on closure mechanisms). This reflects the evolution of international society and politics through the 20th century and the discrediting of overtly collectivist forms of ordering. In the post-decolonisation era, 'tribal' stigmas of race, nation or religion lost their legitimacy as official ordering principles of international society (Zarakol 2010, chapter 2). While racism and xenophobia clearly had not disappeared, stigmatisation based on attributes such as race or religion would be less likely to succeed in the post-Cold War period owing to the discrediting of openly racist ideas (until reversals in recent years). Instead, the insider/outsider dynamic was sustained through norms about behaviour that anyone could in principle meet. Stigmatisation would now be likely to occur over what Goffman (1963, 13–14) called 'blemishes of character' or 'radical political behaviour', deviations from the 'normality' of peaceful democracy, human rights and capitalism.

As also noted in Chapter 2, this formal voluntarism should not hide the continued existence and deep effect of stigmas like race and class on international relations. The above sections have made clear that all four norms are essentially contested, meaning their designation onto a state of affairs in the real world is always a contentious process of symbolic struggle – what counts as democratic, human rights-promoting, non-aggressive or capitalist is a political question infused with power. In such processes, old stereotypes die hard, and new systems of differentiation often divide the world much like old systems of differentiation, as any colour-coded map of the world based on the indexes covered in this chapter visually shows.⁵⁵ As will be seen in relation to Russia over the coming chapters, old stigmas have a tendency to stick, raising the bar for being accepted as 'normal' and giving 'normals' a ready-made stereotype to which to attribute any 'lapse' in behaviour (c.f. Goffman 1963, 19–20).

Second, the norms are interlinked, in that they work cumulatively, even if the relationships between them are not straightforward. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, a fully 'unblushing' state is both democratic, human rights-abiding, peaceful and capitalist – the absence of any one characteristic is potentially discrediting, two doubly so, etc. Beyond such simple addition, however, as discussed in passing throughout the

⁵⁵ See, for example, Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* 2018 map at <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world> (accessed 14 July 2019), painting the white, industrialised West (and, admittedly, a handful of Asian and African countries) in a 'free' green and most of Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Russia in a 'not free' purple.

chapter, the norms were often taken to be mutually reinforcing, all part of a broad package. It was not just democracy that should be spread but ‘market democracy’, and this spread would also help the spread of human rights (because market democracies abide by human rights) and peace (because democracies are more peaceful than authoritarian states, at least in relations with each other, and free trade also contributes to peace). Such thinking was widespread in Western states, both in policy and academic circles, which often reinforced each other. The classic example was the Democratic Peace Theory’s impact on the democracy promotion agenda of US governments. If democracies really were non-aggressive, at least against each other, then what better way of spreading peace than promoting democracy?⁵⁶ The perceived links between free trade and peace also ran deep, whether in the EU’s self-understanding of having prevented new war in Europe through trade liberalisation or in the WTO’s claim that one of 10 benefits of its rules-based system was ‘a more peaceful world’ (Peet 2009, 191–92). None of these claims were without merit in isolation, but they did tend to smooth over potential conflicts or nuances, such as democracies being just as aggressive against authoritarian states, the above-noted constraints placed on democracy by human rights, etc.

A substantial and quite fundamental conflict is between capitalism and democracy. As noted by Blyth (2013, 141–60) and Harvey (2005, 65–70), neo- and ordoliberalists were deeply suspicious of democratic control over the economy, favouring instead technocratic rule by elites conforming to economic orthodoxy and the strict separation of politics and economics. In Blyth’s (2013, 141) words, referring to the pressure on Greece and Italy to implement austerity measures in 2011, ‘if that meant deposing a few democratically elected governments, then so be it’. This was more in line with Robinson’s (1996; 2013) polyarchy promotion – empowering elites friendly to transnational capital. This is highly relevant for a case like Russia, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 – in one analyst’s view, Russia’s post-Soviet history has been all about domestic and international forces teaming up to safeguard capitalism, if necessary at the expense of democracy (Wood 2018). When in conflict, then, capitalism has tended to trump democracy, even if a commitment to (electoral) democracy has remained. This is despite the best efforts of a range of protest and/or political movements that have

⁵⁶ For classic Democratic Peace texts, see e.g. Doyle (1983) and Russett (1993). For a critical discussion and overview of the debates, see e.g. Gat (2005), and for an analysis of how the theory influenced policy, see Ish-Shalom (2006).

sought to reverse the hierarchy, from the broad anti-globalisation movement of the 1990s and 2000s to post-2008 crisis movements like Occupy Wall Street, Podemos, Syriza, Bernie Sanders' campaign for the 2016 US Democratic Party nomination, etc.⁵⁷ Combined with the populist-protectionist trend noted above, such movements may be contributing to an ongoing shift towards a 'new normal' in the relationship between democracy and capitalism, particularly the neoliberal, globalised form of capitalism, and thus the establishment of new stigmas. However, the fact that the separate movements have very different ideas about what that relationship should be means what this new normal might be or become is not yet clear.

In conclusion, this issue brings attention to the question of hierarchies between the norms. Was either of the four more fundamental to a state being accepted as 'normal' in the post-Cold War world? Did either carry more potential for stigmatisation? These questions will be returned to in the Conclusion, considering the analysis of the four following chapters, which analyse each of the norms in turn.

⁵⁷ An important point about these movements is that they have, broadly speaking, dropped the idea of 'systemic transformation' that characterised revolutionary movements of the past (Lawson 2019, 226–34). They are working to redress the *balance between* democracy and capitalism, not to completely overthrow the latter in favour of a centrally planned economy. What they see as stigmatisable is not capitalism per se but particular forms of rampantly unequal capitalism.

Chapter 4

Democracy

This chapter charts the stigmatisation of Russia by Western actors over its democratic credentials, both domestically, as brought out primarily in reactions to the country's heavily 'managed' elections, and internationally, as seen in disputes over the democratic credentials of the 'colour revolutions' of the early 2000s and the 2013-14 'Euromaidan' revolution in Ukraine, as well as Russia's evolving stigma management strategy. It proceeds in three sections. First, the focus is on stigmatisation over Russia's domestic democratic credentials. Given the dominant view of free and fair elections as the litmus test of democracy, the section focuses on the developing labelling by election monitors and Western officials of Russia as a façade democracy owing to its deficient elections. The second section looks at stigmatisation over democracy internationally, focusing on the fall-out over the colour revolutions of the early 2000s and the initial phase of the 2013-14 Ukraine crisis, in which the symbolic conflict was mainly over whether the Ukrainian government or protesters represented the nation's democratic will. The third section charts Russia's stigma management approach, with a particular emphasis on the stigma-rejecting, counter-stigmatising doctrine of 'sovereign democracy'.

I – Domestic democracy: from 'transitionology' to 'back to the USSR'

This section traces the development of Russia's constitution as an undemocratic, semi-authoritarian state through international assessments of its elections and other democratic credentials from the 1990s to the 2012 presidential election. Particular attention is paid to the different forms of power wielded by election monitors, who had a high degree of credibility as far as assessing democratic procedures go but only productive power, and Western state officials, who had more direct forms of power by which to effect status loss and thereby full stigmatisation.

The turbulent 1990s and 'transitionology'

The 1990s was a turbulent decade in Russian politics. New political institutions were constructed almost from scratch following the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991 and the discrediting of both its institutions and leading ideology. The methods used to build a more democratic Russia were not always obviously democratic. The most prominent example was President Boris Yeltsin's use of military force to resolve a stand-off with his own parliament during the constitutional crisis of September-October 1993 (Treisman 2011, 54). The constitution pushed through by Yeltsin following the forceful dissolution of parliament ensured a formal separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary, but swung the balance of power strongly towards the presidency from the legislature, making the president 'slightly stronger than his French or American counterpart' (Treisman 2011, 55). Following elections to the new parliament, the Duma, in 1993 and 1995 Yeltsin still had to deal with a majority opposition coalition of the Communist Party (KPRF) and the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR). His re-election as president in summer 1996, beating KPRF leader Gennady Zyuganov by 54.4% to 40.7% in the second round, was won by shattering the limits on election spending, using relationships with TV channel-owning businessmen to ensure positive news coverage, and frustrating Zyuganov's campaign at every turn using the state's administrative resources (Treisman 2011, 60-61).⁵⁸ In Sergey Prozorov's (2009, 40, 47) words, both the 1990s and 2000s were characterised by the '*deactivation of [democratic] politics*' in Russia: whereas under Putin and Medvedev in the 2000s this took the form of a 'sterile technocratic administration', under Yeltsin it was a "'mediatic" spectacle', where the leader failed to establish a 'meaningful socio-political order of his own' but simultaneously prevented all other political forces from doing so.

However, in the 1990s international actors usually gave the Russian leadership the benefit of the doubt as the direction of travel was perceived to be right and the alternative much worse. Russia was considered a country in transition from communism to democracy, with Yeltsin in the driving seat. While his main opposition remained Zyuganov and the Communists, he could count on the support of Western leaders. American advisers worked closely with Yeltsin's team during the 1996 presidential election, and despite his obvious flaws, Yeltsin was considered to be a democrat at heart. Responding to his sudden resignation on New Year's Eve 1999, US President Bill Clinton

⁵⁸ Yeltsin had at one point drafted a decree cancelling the election due to fears that he would lose.

told the press that he liked Yeltsin 'because I think he genuinely deplored communism [and] believed that democracy was the best system' (W. J. Clinton 1999b). Even in the election observation reports from the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) for the December 1999 Duma election and March 2000 presidential election, Yeltsin was personally singled out as having 'forged' Russia's 'transitional period' (OSCE/ODIHR 2000a, 1; 2000b, 2).

As a result of this dominant 'transitionology'⁵⁹ paradigm (Monaghan 2016) and the fear of reversal, there was less stigmatisation of Russia for its democratic credentials in the 1990s than could perhaps have been expected, except for its rhetorical separation from the more 'developed' democracies and the stigma attached to its recent Soviet, undemocratic past. The Western reactions to the 1999-2000 election cycle illustrate this well.⁶⁰ The ODIHR reports describe both elections as 'benchmarks'; the Duma election for Russia's '*advancement toward* representative democracy', the presidential election for the 'ongoing evolution of [Russia's] *emergence* as a representative democracy' (OSCE/ODIHR 2000a, 1; 2000b, 2; emphasis added). The shortcomings in Russia's electoral process were 'symptomatic of an established democracy *incomplete in its transition*', which was blamed primarily on its unfortunate past: 'Given the rapidity with which [Russia] has emerged from its *Soviet past*, the problems encountered are not totally surprising'; '...where lingering weaknesses exist [in the electoral process], they tend to reflect an environment in which the *vestiges of Soviet style thinking* remain' (OSCE/ODIHR 2000a, 4; 2000b, 5; emphasis added). American assessments concurred: State Department Deputy Spokesman James Foley described the elections as 'key *milestones* in Russia's post-communist development', part of a process of '*movement away* from the very long *undemocratic past*' (U.S. Department of State 1999; emphasis added).⁶¹ The 'milestone' metaphor was repeated by both Foley and President Clinton following the

⁵⁹ Alternatively, 'transitology' or the 'transition paradigm', the term used for the academic field of study focused on transitions from authoritarian rule – implicitly or explicitly usually with the assumption of the transition being towards democracy (see Carothers 2002 for a critical review).

⁶⁰ The election cycle consisted of the 19 December 1999 Duma election and the 26 March 2000 presidential election, brought forward from June after Yeltsin's resignation, in which acting president Putin was elected with 53.4% of the vote in the first round. The Duma election saw KPRF and LDPR lose seats to new, broadly centrist blocs including the government-supporting Unity (*Edinstvo*).

⁶¹ Foley also observed that the new Duma may be 'less ideological and also more pragmatic than its predecessor' – another indication that at the time, being non-communist was more important to the US than being strictly democratic (U.S. Department of State 1999).

presidential election: 'Sunday's vote was an important milestone in the development of a democratic Russia' (quote from W. J. Clinton 2000a; U.S. Department of State 2000).

These assessments illustrate two important points from a stigmatisation perspective. First, they demonstrate both 'normal' state actors' and nominally impartial observers' use of a teleological metaphor where democratisation is equated to a progressive process, with the implication that states can be separated according to their progress along the path towards the *telos* of democracy, defined broadly speaking as an electoral-parliamentary, Western-style democracy. This opens two potential sources of stigmatisation that can be seized on to enforce 'normal' behaviour: one is simply being less democratic than other states, behind in the process but still going in the right direction; the second is regression, moving backwards on the path away from the democratic *telos*. The 1990s Russian experience was broadly assessed by international actors as an example of the former dynamic – moving in the right direction, but not quite there yet. This involved a certain level of diffuse stigmatisation, in the form of being separated rhetorically from the more developed democracies and constantly reminded of the need to continue to develop. However, in terms of more direct stigmatisation involving targeted separation and status loss, the reverse was true. Russia was admitted to the Council of Europe in 1996 and the G7 (to form the G8) in 1998,⁶² at Clinton's insistence against 'naysayers' (Treisman 2011, 333), and signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU and a Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security with NATO the same year, both increasing Russian-Western contacts and enhancing Russia's international status. This further substantiates the tempering effect of 'transitionology' on stigmatisation.

The second point is the importance of the past for the present, the continued relevance of past attributes for contemporary relations and potential stigmatisation. The relevance of Goffman's (1963, 19–20) point that when a blemish is corrected it may still linger can be seen in both the OSCE monitors' explicit reference to Russia's Soviet past as an explanation for the persistence of undemocratic practices, and Foley's contrasting of the current, imperfect Russian democracy with its 'very long undemocratic past'. The stigma of being ex-Soviet still lingered 10 years on, much like the stigma of Nazism has

⁶² Notably, this only applied to the 'political 8' – pressure from the US Treasury meant Russia was not allowed entry into the economic side of the G7 (Naylor 2019, 127). I come back to this in Chapter 7.

lingered for Germany despite its ‘normalisation’ (Adler-Nissen 2014b). The fact that Soviet-style communism was considered the very antithesis of the 1945-1989 liberal international order (and to some extent its extension post-1989 as well), the ‘other’ against which the order had largely defined itself, made this attribute potent in terms of potential stigmatisation and likely to be invoked by the order’s defenders.

The 2003-04 election cycle: gradual increase in direct stigmatisation

The 2003-04 Russian election cycle contributed crucially to the eventual stigmatisation of Russia as undemocratic. The December 2003 parliamentary election and March 2004 presidential election consolidated President Putin’s power at the top of Russian politics. The government-aligned new ‘party of power’, United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*), won 37.57% of the popular vote and 223 of 450 Duma seats in December, and Putin was re-elected in March with 71.9% of the vote in the first round.⁶³ The cycle marked a turning point in external assessments of Russian elections and Russian reactions to these. In Thomas Ambrosio’s (2009, 54) words, until 2003 election monitors had ‘effectively given the Kremlin a pass on several questionable elections’, in large part due to the perception of movement in the right direction. This changed in 2003, with a gradual increase of stigmatisation centred on Russia’s democratic credentials. Nonetheless, owing to the geopolitical priorities of the US at the time, primarily keeping Russia onside in the ongoing War on Terror, the primary stigmatisers at this stage remained election monitors, whose power to implement status loss was limited.

The election monitors’ assessment of the elections again employed the metaphor of democratisation as a teleological process, but this time Russia was adjudged as moving backwards. In an OSCE press release following the Duma election, the special co-ordinator for the short-term observers, Bruce George MP, stated that despite a ‘technically correct’ conduct of election day proceedings, the ‘main impression of the overall electoral process is of *regression in the democratization process* in Russia’ (OSCE 2003, emphasis added). The primary shortcomings from the observers’ perspective were

⁶³ United Russia was formed in 2001-02 as a unification of Unity (mentioned above) and the Fatherland – All Russia bloc. As with all Russian elections since 1991, the official results should be taken with a big pinch of salt.

the excessive use of the state's administrative resources, including state television, in support of United Russia and the denial of equal access to other parties (OSCE/ODIHR 2004a). In 1999-2000 shortcomings had been linked to the 'Soviet past'; now explicit and implicit links were made to the Russian authorities generally and Putin particularly. The ODIHR monitors' preliminary statement on the Duma election noted that it was the first to be held with Putin as president, and that the failure to meet international standards and enforce domestic legislation was a 'worrying development that calls into question Russia's fundamental willingness to meet' international standards (OSCE/ODIHR 2003, 1). From a stigmatisation perspective, this focus on *willingness* demonstrated the move towards behaviour rather than essential characteristics as key to international society – all states could be democratic and follow democratic norms if only their governments were willing. The final report noted that the sub-standard election was 'viewed as an important indicator of the course of democratic development under Mr. Putin's presidency', reinforcing both the teleological metaphor of democratisation and the positioning of Putin as a contributor to the backward movement (OSCE/ODIHR 2004a, 3). In stark contrast to the democrat Yeltsin, Putin was being identified with the regression of democratic norms.

A new form of language entered the OSCE/ODIHR assessments in this cycle: qualifying adjectives separating Russia from 'genuine' democracies. In the press release mentioned above, head of the Council of Europe's parliamentary delegation David Atkinson MP criticised 'unfair practices' benefitting 'one party' (United Russia), adding: '*Real* political competition and choice ... are indispensable elements in a *true* democratic election process' (OSCE 2003, emphasis added). In both the preliminary statement and final report assessing the March presidential election, the electoral process was described as not reflecting 'principles necessary for a *healthy* democratic' process or election; 'essential elements' of OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democracy were lacking, including a '*vibrant* political discourse and *meaningful* pluralism' (OSCE/ODIHR 2004c, 1; 2004b, 1, emphasis added). An OSCE press release the day after the presidential election said that while it was administered well it 'lacked elements of a *genuine* democratic contest', including 'a dearth of *meaningful* debate and *genuine* pluralism' (OSCE 2004a, emphasis added). There was 'technically' a democratic process in Russia, but it was not healthy, meaningful, vibrant, true, real or genuine.

The actors that would have had the power to impose a status loss on Russia concurred with the monitors' assessment but did not appear interested in pursuing the matter further. When pressed for a comment on the Duma election, both the White House and State Department spokespeople said the US shared the election observers' concerns and had communicated these to Russia, and emphasised the importance of the new Duma continuing democratic reforms (McClellan 2003; U.S. Department of State 2003c). The harshest criticism from the US came in January 2004, in between the two elections, from Secretary of State Colin Powell. To coincide with a trip to Moscow, Powell published an op-ed in Russian newspaper *Izvestiya* in which he praised the country's progress and voiced American support for Russia's democratic future, but warned that recent (unspecified) developments had given the US 'pause': 'Russia's democratic system seems not yet to have found the essential balance among the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. ... We hope that Russia's *path to mature democracy* and prosperity is cleared soon of all obstacles' (Powell 2004a, emphasis added). The echoing of the ODIHR's labelling and separating language was clear: Russia was democratic but not mature, and could achieve maturity if only it removed obstacles, implying the Russian leadership's responsibility. However, in his public appearances in Moscow, including a press briefing with Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Powell downplayed the criticism (Powell 2004b; 2004c; 2004d). Powell also criticised the March presidential election, albeit in an interview on Fox News and therefore mainly to a domestic audience, making explicit the need for Russia to do more work to become fully accepted internationally: 'I don't think democracy is in trouble in Russia. But Russians have to understand that to have full democracy of the kind that the international community will recognize, you've got to let candidates have all access to the media that the president has' (Powell 2004e).⁶⁴ President George W. Bush, who as recently as September 2003 had praised Putin's 'vision for Russia' as 'a country in which democracy and freedom and the rule of law thrive' (Bush 2003), remained silent throughout.

⁶⁴ It is worth noting Powell's use of the term 'international community' and its connotation of a smaller, more tight-knit and normatively 'thicker' group than 'society', making for a supposedly more coherent 'audience of normals' and a setting in which stigmatisation would be more likely to occur because of the supposed strength of community norms. As will be seen below, other leaders including Tony Blair and Barack Obama also used the term similarly. See e.g. Kritsiotis (2002), Addis (2009), McEntee-Antalianis (2011) and Rao (2011) for analyses of how the concept has been imagined and constituted over time.

Despite the caution of Western officials, the sum of the adjectives and characteristics employed by ODIHR was the emergent labelling of Russia as a deficient democracy – at best a façade democracy, at worst a quasi-authoritarian state – and its (rhetorical) separation from ‘real’ democracies. The fact that the assessments were given by the most authoritative election monitoring outfit around lent them substantial credibility, even if the monitors themselves had no power to follow up their labelling and separation with the imposition of status loss, except in so far as being labelled a non-democracy by ODIHR in itself leads to a loss of status – they had productive but not compulsory power. However, Russia’s democratic credibility soon suffered another setback, as President Putin responded to the devastating September 2004 terrorist attack on a school in the North Caucasus city of Beslan by announcing sweeping reforms aimed at strengthening central power over the regions, including the abolishing of gubernatorial elections and giving the president the right to appoint governors (for discussions of this reform within the wider question of democracy in Russia’s regions, see e.g. Ross 2005; Sharafutdinova 2007). As Treisman (2011, 351) notes, by itself having appointed regional executives is hardly incompatible with democracy (Portugal, Bulgaria, Estonia and Lithuania all do). However, in the context of the broader direction of travel in Russia in 2004, the move was cast as deeply undemocratic.

The 2007-08 election cycle

The period from 2003-04 to the 2007-08 Russian election cycle saw a steady decline in Russian-Western relations overall. The controversies of the 2003 Iraq War (which Russia opposed) and the colour revolutions (more on which below) were fresh in memory. In addition, tensions grew over issues including the implications of NATO and EU enlargement (by definition a democratic move in the EU’s self-understanding) to the east in 2004 and 2007, Western support for regional initiatives like the GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, Russia’s cut-off of gas to Ukraine in January 2006 and NATO members’ linking of their ratification of the Adapted Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty to Russia’s full withdrawal of troops from Georgia and Moldova (in 2007, Russia suspended its ratification of the Adapted CFE in protest). With less perceived need for Russian support

after the Iraq invasion and emboldened by the democratic success of the colour revolutions, American officials more freely extolled the virtues of spreading freedom and democracy in Russia's immediate neighbourhood and Russia itself. At a summit of Baltic and Black Sea states (excluding Russia) in Lithuania in May 2006, Vice President Dick Cheney (2006) equated the 'spread of democracy' with 'an unfolding of history', and criticised the Russian government for 'seeking to reverse the [democratic] gains of the past decade': 'Russia has a choice to make'.

It was in this context that the 2007-08 Russian elections arrived, in which the labelling and stereotyping of Russia as undemocratic increased substantially. In the 2 December 2007 Duma election, United Russia established a constitutional majority with 315 of 450 seats, and in the 2 March 2008 presidential election, Putin's anointed successor, Dmitry Medvedev, won in the first round with 71.2% of the vote – two heavily managed and extremely favourable results for the powers that be. One of the most notable things about the elections were the absence of an election observation mission from the OSCE/ODIHR. Since the observer missions' critical assessments of the 2003-04 elections, Russia had been at loggerheads with ODIHR, allying itself with other post-Soviet OSCE member states to consistently criticise it for 'double standards' and lacking or lenient assessments of elections in countries 'West of Vienna' (where the OSCE is based), and demanding reforms that would increase the political control of OSCE member states over the Office's activities (Ambrosio 2009, 54–61; Hutcheson 2011). In the run-up to the 2007-08 elections, disagreements over the size and nature of the ODIHR's proposed observation mission culminated in the Office calling off the mission less than three weeks before the Duma election. It cited Russia's delayed invitation, 'unprecedented restrictions' and the denial of entry visas, and concluded that 'the authorities of the Russian Federation remain unwilling to receive ODIHR observers in a timely and co-operative manner' (OSCE/ODIHR 2007; see also Hutcheson 2011, 691–93). A small joint observation mission from the OSCE's and Council of Europe's parliamentary assemblies (OSCE PA and PACE) did observe the election, concluding that it was 'not fair', 'failed to meet many OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections' and 'took place in an atmosphere which seriously limited political competition and with frequent abuse of administrative resources'; 'there was not a level playing field in Russia in 2007' (PACE/OSCE PA/Nordic Council 2007). Gone were the

qualifying adjectives of the ODIHR report four years prior describing Russian elections as not ‘genuinely’ democratic: this time the election was unambiguously labelled a sham.

A similar dynamic played out before the March 2008 presidential election. Already at loggerheads, the ODIHR and Russian officials failed to reach agreement on an appropriate mission and ODIHR again chose to stay away rather than send a suboptimal team, leaving a 22-member PACE observer mission as the only predominantly Western observers. It concluded that the election process was still neither free, fair nor reflective of democratic principles. While acknowledging that the outcome may have been similar even if voting day flaws had been addressed, the broader problem was the obstacles for candidates to register and the unequal access to institutions, most notably the mass media. As a result, it argued, the ‘democratic potential’ of the electorate had ‘not [been] tapped’, and called on Medvedev to ‘have sufficient confidence in his own country and his own democracy’ to welcome more observers in future (PACE 2008). In the words of the mission head, Andreas Gross from Switzerland, the election was ‘still not free and still not fair’ (Harding 2008).⁶⁵

As before, however, these institutions primarily wielded productive power, contributing to the constitution of Russia as undemocratic. They could not institute any formal separation or status loss, except in so far as ODIHR’s decision not to be associated with what it deemed a sub-standard democratic process may in itself include some amount of reduced status. The reactions of those who could – American and European officials – were mixed. When prompted by a journalist, President Bush said he had expressed his ‘sincere’ concern about the Duma election to Putin directly, and State Department spokesperson Tom Casey twice referred to the president’s remarks and deferred to the ‘more detailed assessment’ of the OSCE and the EU (Bush 2007; U.S. Department of State 2007a; 2007b). At the weekly meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council (PC), the US delegation gave a detailed statement of the many alleged breaches of good electoral practice and called on Russia to cooperate with the ODIHR (OSCE 2007b).

⁶⁵ Gross’s words were in response to a question from *Guardian* journalist Luke Harding, who in his report noted that the PACE statement was less critical than had been expected. It is very likely that the PACE group felt under pressure to be more conciliatory, in particular considering that the pro-Kremlin youth group *Nashi* had sued it and the OSCE for libel following the Duma election assessment and been awarded damages by a Russian regional court – a particularly legalistic form of stigma rejection and counter-stigmatisation.

The Portuguese EU presidency issued a short statement along similar lines, reiterated at the same PC meeting (OSCE 2007a). Other European officials, mostly foreign ministers or ministries, overwhelmingly called for investigations of allegations of fraud, with German deputy government spokesperson Thomas Steg going furthest in labelling: 'Russia was no democracy and Russia is no democracy' (Reuters 2007a; 2007b). This was a much harsher statement than anything coming from the more cautious foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, or the silent chancellor, Angela Merkel.

Despite instances of harshly critical statements in the OSCE PC during the conflict over ODIHR's monitoring mission for the presidential election, the mixed Western tone was replicated after Medvedev's victory in March 2008. Despite Medvedev's close links to Putin and United Russia and his authoritarian-style scale of victory, a note of cautious optimism was present in statements from both the US and EU after the election. When pressed by journalists, US government officials referred to their previously stated concerns about the electoral process as a whole but deferred to observers to provide clear judgments as to whether the election was 'free and fair' (see e.g. Johndroe 2008; Perino 2008). At the OSCE PC, the US noted that Medvedev would be Russia's next president (without offering the usual congratulations), expressed concerns about the electoral process but noted positively Medvedev's stated commitment to improving the rule of law, combating corruption and supporting independent media, encouraging him to act on these promises (OSCE 2008a). The Slovenian EU presidency did congratulate Medvedev, and similarly expressed hope that his promises of political and social reforms would be implemented, while also expressing disappointment that a 'truly' competitive election had not taken place, in a return to the qualifying adjectives of the 2003-04 cycle (OSCE 2008b).

In addition to assorted geopolitical reasons for going easy on the Russians – the UN Security Council voted through a third round of sanctions against Iran over its nuclear weapons programme on 4 March 2008 with Russian support – the more cautious note also reflected a hope that Medvedev would genuinely turn out to push Russia in a more democratic or at least 'liberal' direction (despite the continued presence of Putin as prime minister). However misplaced these hopes were in hindsight, at the time they contributed to the somewhat less stigmatising tone than could otherwise have been expected after

two such one-sided and manifestly ‘managed’ elections.⁶⁶ The ‘reset’ in Russian-American relations from 2009 under the new Obama administration, with new Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in the driving seat, was in part enabled by the presence of a superficially more ‘liberal’ person in the Kremlin, despite his lack of democratic credentials and the fallout from the Georgia war in August 2008 (to be covered in more detail in Chapter 6). But despite this, as well as a turn to a more ‘inspirational’ democracy promotion strategy under Obama than under Bush (Jackson 2016), the underlying labelling and stereotyping of Russia as undemocratic persisted, and resurfaced with full force in 2011.

2011-12 elections: Back to the USSR?

The hopes of those who thought Medvedev might provide a genuine break with the Putin period were dashed when, at the United Russia party congress on 24 September 2011, Medvedev recommended Putin as the party’s candidate for the presidency in the March 2012 election. Medvedev himself would lead United Russia’s party list in the December 2011 Duma elections and eventually become Putin’s prime minister. Known as the ‘castling’ move and amounting to a ‘constitutional coup’ (Sakwa 2014c, 111–33), with presidential terms extended to six years under Medvedev Russia was potentially facing another 12 years of Putin’s leadership. In Masha Gessen’s words, this was the moment when Russia was transformed ‘back to the USSR’ (2012, chap. 11). However, the sheer audacity of the move, allied to the growing unpopularity of United Russia (dubbed the ‘party of crooks and thieves’ by opposition politician Alexei Navalny), complicated the ‘management’ of the election cycle. In the 4 December 2011 Duma election, United Russia officially received 49.32% of the vote and 238 of 450 seats, a significant downturn from 2007 and only achieved due to widespread fraud (Sakwa 2014c, 116–19). Regular protests numbering in the tens of thousands soon broke out in Moscow, St Petersburg and other cities, prompting Medvedev to offer a series of electoral reforms in his address

⁶⁶ The tendency to keep looking for signs that Medvedev was going to break with Putin and take Russia in a more liberal direction blinded Western analysis for a long time after the election; see Monaghan (2016, 41–48). For a more sympathetic view of Medvedev’s achievements, see Sakwa (2014c, chaps 5–6), and for a withering assessment of Medvedev the politician and the Russian intelligentsia’s misplaced hopes in him, see Gessen (2012, 263–70), not to mention Alexei Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation’s 2017 documentary video ‘Don’t Call Him Dimon’ about Medvedev’s alleged corrupt practices, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrwlk7_GF9g&t=441s (accessed 16 July 2019).

to the nation on 22 December, including the re-introduction of gubernatorial elections (a promise that eventually ended up not being delivered – see Blakkisrud (2015)). Faced with a country showing signs of crisis at several levels and the possibility of needing to fight a presidential election run-off against a potentially unifying opposition candidate, Putin offered voters a political programme of sorts, eventually winning the 4 March 2012 election in the first round with 63.6% of the vote. This was the lowest winning result since 2000, achieved with less fraud than in the parliamentary election though as always with the full weight of the state administrative apparatus and national media behind him (Sakwa 2014c, 134–58). A tightening of the screws followed, with a crackdown on protests against Putin’s inauguration in Moscow on 4 May and further coercive measures enacted in the following months (Sakwa 2014c, 159–89).

In a change from four years earlier, OSCE/ODIHR observers did monitor the elections, albeit in smaller numbers than they would have liked and still facing administrative frustrations. Their reports contributed to the continued constitution of Russia as a façade democracy. Noting that the Duma elections had been ‘marked by the convergence of the State and the governing party’ and had lacked ‘a level playing field’, the 5 December preliminary report also returned in parts to the ‘adjective’ approach of 2003-04: there was some political competition in Russia, but it was ‘narrowed’ by the denial of registration to parties and was not ‘fair’ – the campaign ‘lacked vibrancy’ (OSCE/ODIHR 2011, 1–2). The presidential election was similarly assessed as lacking ‘genuine’ competition – ‘the conditions for the campaign were clearly skewed in favour of one candidate’ (OSCE/ODIHR/OSCE PA/PACE 2012). Without naming him directly, the monitors thus undermined Putin’s democratic legitimacy.

American officials this time were more direct in their criticism, with the official discourse taking a turn towards open stigmatisation of the Russian authorities and an attempt to separate them from the ‘Russian people’. The most high-profile example was Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s speech to the OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius on 6 December 2011. Echoing critical comments made to the press at a meeting in Bonn the day before (H. Clinton 2011a), Clinton used the annual summit’s plenary session, surrounded by other foreign ministers and representatives, to denounce the Duma election as ‘neither free nor fair’, voice the US’s ‘serious concerns’ about the conduct of the elections and harassment of independent Russian observers, and ‘commend those

Russian citizens who participated constructively in the electoral process'. In sum, affirming the universality of democratic values: 'The Russian people, like people everywhere, deserve the right to have their voices heard and their votes counted. And that means they deserve fair, free, transparent elections and leaders who are accountable to them' (H. Clinton 2011b). Talking to the press after NATO and NATO-Russia meetings in Brussels two days later, Clinton reiterated the message:

...the United States and many others around the world have a strong commitment to democracy and human rights. It's part of who we are. It's our values. ... we are supportive of the rights and aspirations of the Russian people to be able to make progress and to realize a better future for themselves, and we hope to see that unfold in the years ahead. (H. Clinton 2011c)

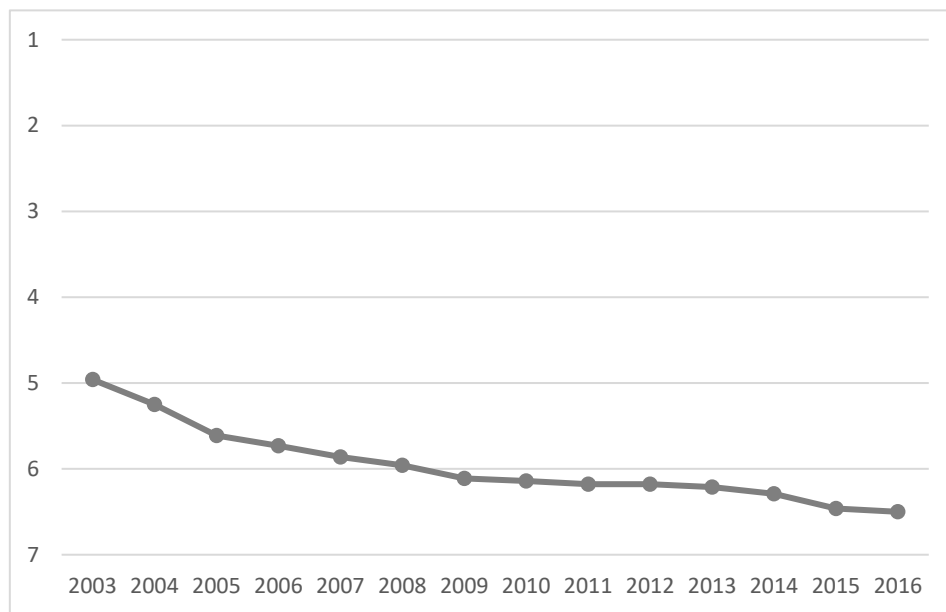
A similar statement was issued by the State Department after the presidential election, in which the United States congratulated 'the Russian people on the completion of the Presidential elections' and said it looked forward to working with 'the President-elect' Putin (Nuland 2012).⁶⁷ The sum of these statements appears to be an attempt to include the Russian people in the democratic 'audience of normals' along with the US 'and many others around the world', against the undemocratic and unaccountable Russian leadership.

By 2012, then, Putin's Russia had been thoroughly constituted as undemocratic by both Western state actors and election monitors. From a cautious optimism in the late 1990s and early 2000s, via the qualifying adjectives of 2003-04, assessments had arrived at the direct labelling of 2007-08 (albeit with the caution over Medvedev) and 2011-12. To summarise and visualise the downward drift and show the assessment of another relevant actor in the stigmatisation process, the NGO Freedom House, Chart 4.1 shows Russia's declining score for democracy in its *Nations in Transit* reports, monitoring the democratic development of the post-communist states. From a 'transitional/hybrid regime' in 2003, the year scores were introduced, its score declined to a 'semi-

⁶⁷ See Herszenhorn and Myers (2012) for a contemporary analysis of the divisions within the US policy establishment on which line to take about the election and the influence of the upcoming US presidential election on this.

consolidated authoritarian regime' from 2004-08 and a 'consolidated authoritarian regime' since.

Chart 4.1 – Russia's democracy score on Freedom House's *Nations in Transit* report, 2003-16. 1 = most democratic, 7 = most authoritarian.



Source: Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/nations-transit>.

II – International democracy: from the Colour Revolutions to the Ukraine crisis

As noted in Chapter 3's discussion of the democratic norm, to be a fully normal democratic state one should both be democratic at home and support democracy abroad. Failure to support democracy, or active support for opponents of democracy, was discreditable behaviour. This section traces the diffuse and direct stigmatisation of Russia over its opposition to what Western actors deemed were democratic developments outside of Russia itself. Primary focus is on developments in the 'shared neighbourhood' of the EU and Russia, where the electoral 'colour' revolutions and the 2013-14 events in Ukraine provided particular flashpoints.

Stigmatisation by implication: The colour revolutions

The events that more than any shaped regional debates about democracy in the early-to-mid 2000s were the so-called colour revolutions that followed contested elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 2000, Georgia 2003 and Ukraine 2004. In each case, largely non-violent protests against fraudulent elections succeeded in overturning the results and forcing out the countries' existing political leadership in the process. The revolutions were hailed by Western actors as democratising events and involved stigmatisation of the leaderships being overthrown (and the opposite for their successors). However, the stigmatisation of Russia, which particularly in Ukraine had provided support for the 'non-democratic' side, was less direct. What occurred instead was something like 'stigmatisation by implication' – the welcoming of the newly democratic states into the Western fold while Russia remained kept at arm's length and criticised for the same shortcomings as the ousted leaderships. This contributed to the emergence of a more active stigma rejection and counter-stigmatisation approach from the Russian leadership, namely the development of the 'sovereign democracy' doctrine – the idea that each state's path to democracy was unique and should be respected as its sovereign, *democratic* right. This will be analysed in more detail in the next section.

The stigmatisation dynamics varied from episode to episode. Yugoslavia, under the leadership of Slobodan Milošević, was already stigmatised over its role in the July 1995 Srebrenica massacre during the Balkan Wars and its persecution of Kosovar Albanians domestically: the US and EU had both imposed economic sanctions before the NATO bombing campaign in 1998-99, and the country was excluded from such regional initiatives as the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (established in 1999), enforcing both separation and status loss.⁶⁸ When Milošević was declared the winner of the 24 September 2000 presidential election amid widespread suspicion of fraud, the opposition took to the streets to protest. Western actors supported the protests and promised the de-stigmatisation of the country: '...if the will of the people is respected, the doors to Europe and the world will be open again to [Yugoslavia]. We will take steps with our allies

⁶⁸ It was also not yet a member of international organisations like the UN and the OSCE, owing to its claim to be the sole successor state to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It was duly admitted to both after dropping the claim shortly after Milosevic's overthrow.

to lift economic sanctions' (W. J. Clinton 2000b; see also 2000c; Siewert 2000). Within three months after Milošević was forced out and a new government established, several sanctions were lifted (in Clinton's words due to the 'victory of freedom'), Yugoslavia was admitted to the Stability Pact, the OSCE and the UN, and the US, France, Germany and the UK established formal diplomatic relations; in a joint statement, the US and EU emphasised means of accelerating the country's integration into the 'Euro-Atlantic mainstream' (W. J. Clinton 2000e; 2000f; 2000g; United States and the European Union 2000). Thus, a pariah status appeared to be reversed in record time and Yugoslavia welcomed as an aspirant 'normal' country, owing to its embrace of democratic principles.⁶⁹

In Georgia and Ukraine, the dynamic was different. Neither were stigmatised in the manner of Milošević's Yugoslavia, but both were coming under public pressure from the US and others to democratise. President Bush had sent former secretary of state James Baker to Georgia in July 2003 to urge President Eduard Shevardnadze publicly to ensure a free and fair 2 November 2003 parliamentary election, and the US provided generous funding for both civil society organisations and election monitors in the country in 'its most consistent and serious attempt ever in any ex-Soviet republic to secure fair and free balloting' (Fairbanks 2004, 114–15). When the final results of the election were announced on 20 November, declaring victory for government-friendly parties amid mounting evidence of electoral violations and negative assessments by ODIHR observers, the State Department declared itself 'deeply disappointed', accusing the Central Election Commission and government of manipulating the results 'to ignore the will of the people' (U.S. Department of State 2003a). When Shevardnadze resigned on 23 November after large-scale protests, it offered US support for 'a democratic Georgia' and for the opposition leaders' efforts to ensure the 'integrity of Georgia's democracy' (U.S. Department of State 2003b). The new president after elections in January, Mikheil Saakashvili, was received by Bush in Washington, D.C., in February 2004 and Georgia became a close US ally under his presidency.

Ukraine followed a similar pattern. Large sums of money were spent by the US and other Western organisations supporting civil society groups in the country ahead of the

⁶⁹ Though ongoing disagreements over the status of Kosovo hindered full recognition of 'normality' for several years yet.

November 2004 presidential election. Before the 21 November second-round run-off, contested between incumbent prime minister Viktor Yanukovych, who advocated closer relations with Russia, and the pro-EU opposition candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, the White House issued a statement criticising the first round of voting for having failed to meet the 'basic test' of giving the people the choice to 'freely' elect their president 'without intimidation or fear'. Ukraine was also warned about its potential status loss or status deprivation if it failed to meet democratic standards: 'The United States supports Ukraine's aspirations to join the Euro-Atlantic community, a community which requires a commitment to shared values. If the election fails to meet democratic standards, Ukraine's aspirations would suffer' (Bush 2004). Similar statements came from representatives of the EU, which after its expansion eastwards in May 2004 and the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2003 had started to take a more active interest in Ukraine (Maass 2017, 85).

The second round was initially declared as a narrow victory for Yanukovych, with strong criticism from the OSCE/ODIHR observers, and large crowds of pro-Yushchenko protesters started to gather on Kyiv's Independence Square. In reaction, US Secretary of State Colin Powell re-iterated the threat of status loss: 'It is time for Ukrainian leaders to decide whether they are on the side of democracy or not... If the Ukrainian Government does not act immediately and responsibly, there will be consequences ... for Ukraine's hopes for Euro-Atlantic integration' (Powell 2004f). EU representatives similarly rejected the election's credibility and warned Ukraine of its potential status loss: both High Representative Javier Solana and Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner told the European Parliament that the 'quality' of the EU's relationship with Ukraine would depend on the 'quality of [Ukraine's] democracy' (Solana 2004; Ferrero-Waldner 2004a; see also Council of the European Union 2004a; Maass 2017, 89). On 3 December, amid ongoing mediation by European officials, Ukraine's Supreme Court declared the second-round election invalid and (surprisingly) ordered a re-run of the second round only on 26 December, an outcome welcomed by EU, US and Council of Europe officials (Pifer 2007, 34). However, the EU kept up the pressure: when presenting the first ENP Action Plans on 9 December 2004, Ferrero-Waldner noted that implementation of Ukraine's plan was dependent on 'free and fair Presidential elections in accordance with OSCE standards' being held (Ferrero-Waldner 2004b). When Yushchenko won the re-run and

the election was given a clean bill of health by observers, Powell spoke of 'an historic moment for democracy in Ukraine', bringing the country 'substantially closer to meeting international democratic standards' (Powell 2004h). Yushchenko was duly received in both Washington and Brussels within months and hailed by President Bush as 'the courageous leader of a free Ukraine' and 'an inspiration to all who love liberty' (Bush 2005).

In each of these episodes, a mix of the institutional power of actors like US and EU leaders and the productive power of actors like the election observers combined to enforce democratic norms by threatening the (new or continued) stigmatisation of those who would not follow them. Actors were denied democratic credibility, separated from an invoked 'audience of normals' (the Euro-Atlantic Community, the EU) and threatened with status loss unless discreditable behaviour was changed. Stigmatisation processes in these episodes primarily occurred in relations between Western actors and the governments of the states in question – Yugoslavia, Georgia and Ukraine. However, given stigmatisation's logic of separation between 'normals' and 'deviants', any actor siding with the deviants or otherwise opposing the spread of democracy would be at risk of stigmatisation too. This became increasingly the case with Russia as the revolutions rolled on, although its involvement was still largely of the indirect, diffuse kind, 'by implication'.

Yugoslavia's 'Bulldozer Revolution' passed without direct stigmatisation of Russia, although seeds of its counter-stigmatising discourse can be found in some of Russia's reactions. Given the recent controversy over the 1998-99 Kosovo War and Russia's close relationship with Yugoslavia, there was concern in the West about what position Moscow would take, as indicated by journalists' persistent questions to Western leaders about the Russian position. Despite this concern, US leaders stressed good contacts with the Russians throughout the crisis (Siewert 2000; W. J. Clinton 2000d).

Direct stigmatisation of Russia was absent also during events in Georgia, despite the Russian leadership being far more active than in Yugoslavia. As protests started on 21 November 2003, the Russian foreign ministry issued a statement acknowledging that there had been 'irregularities' in the parliamentary election but calling for the mistakes to be corrected 'within the law' and warning that 'those who are prompting

unconstitutional actions, including from abroad, should realize that the full responsibility for possible grave consequences' would be theirs (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003a). Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov travelled to Tbilisi to mediate between Shevardnadze and the opposition, taking a much more government-friendly line than US leaders (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003b). Despite this, there was limited criticism of Russian conduct by Western officials.

By the time of Ukraine in 2004 this was gradually changing, though direct stigmatisation still did not occur. Rather than playing 'go-between' as in Georgia, this time the Russian government had openly supported Yanukovich, including through assistance from the Kremlin's 'political technologists' and two high-profile visits from Putin during the election campaign (Charap and Colton 2017, 71). Putin also congratulated Yanukovich on his victory before the official results were out and called the election 'transparent', putting Russia squarely in opposition to both the assessments of OSCE/ODIHR and the US and EU interpretation of events (Maass 2017, 90). However, even this did not lead to direct stigmatisation of Russia by either the US or EU. US officials emphasised the need for Ukrainians to democratically elect the new president free from outside interference (clearly implying Russia), but Bush, Powell and other spokespeople repeatedly stressed their 'good' contacts or relationship with the Russians and did not directly criticise Russian conduct even when invited by journalists to do so (Pifer 2007, 38). EU officials likewise openly disagreed with Russia but did not threaten separation or status loss for its opposition to democracy: the EU-Russia Summit on 25 November 2004 laid bare the differences in opinion, but a press release was still agreed that emphasised areas of co-operation in the relationship and mentioned merely an 'exchange of views' on Ukraine (Council of the European Union 2004b). Russia and Belarus were implicitly chastised for their refusal to support a common statement on Ukraine at the 6-7 December OSCE Ministerial Council in Sofia: in its statement in the final document, the EU 'deplore[d] very much' the inability to find consensus but did not name names (OSCE 2004b). The most stigmatising statement about Russia from a Western official in this episode was Powell's (2004g) speech to the same Ministerial Council, in which he emphasised the interest of the 'OSCE community' in a 'democratic process' in Ukraine before immediately singling out Russia and Belarus as states in which the 'unfulfilled promises of democracy' was a cause for concern, noting in particular 'freedom of the

press and the rule of law' in Russia. However, even during this tense international stand-off about democracy in Ukraine, the most directly stigmatising language still concerned Russia's domestic democratic credentials rather than its international conduct.

The stigmatisation over Russia's position in Ukraine and the other colour revolutions was thus mostly by implication. The stigmatisation of the Yugoslavian, Georgian and Ukrainian governments for trying to thwart the democratic will of their people gave a clear example to the Russian leadership of what could happen should they do the same, at a time when Russia's own identity as a democratising state was being increasingly called into question by dominant international actors.

Ukraine 2013-14: Pro-democracy vs anti-democracy

Between the colour revolutions and the 2013-14 Ukraine crisis, the most notable international democracy episode pitting Western interpretations of events against Russia's was the 2011 'Arab Spring', with electoral revolutions spreading through North Africa and the Middle East. Again, Russia's position of support for regimes such as Bashar al-Assad's in Syria and generally negative, counter-revolutionary stance singled it out as discreditable by implication given the democratic interpretation given to these events in the West, at least before democracy started to provide undesirable governments (see e.g. Dannreuther 2015 on Russia's view of events and how it contributed to Russian-Western tensions). However, the most direct stigmatisation over Russia's international democratic credentials occurred over Ukraine in 2013-14, during the first phase of what became known as the Ukraine crisis. The trigger for the crisis was President Viktor Yanukovich's 21 November 2013 announcement of his decision to suspend negotiations for the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, a deal negotiated under the auspices of the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative. This partnership, in the EU's view, 'aims at building a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation' (European External Action Service 2016) between the EU and its eastern neighbours, though crucially without these becoming EU members. The Association Agreement was opposed by Russia, which had lobbied hard for Ukraine to instead join its alternative regional integration project, the soon-to-be-established Eurasian Economic Union.

Following Yanukovich's announcement, Western reactions were of disappointment in Ukraine's decision (with Russia's encouragement) against democracy and prosperity. According to the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton (2013), the decision was 'a disappointment not only for the EU but, we believe, for the people of Ukraine'. The signing of the agreement would have 'sent a clear signal to investors [and] international financial institutions that Ukraine is serious about its modernisation pledge', and the people of Ukraine 'would have been the main beneficiaries of the agreement through the enhanced freedom and prosperity [it] would have brought about'. The US, through State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki (2013), was similarly disappointed: 'The EU has offered Ukraine an historic opportunity to cement a European future for its people and demonstrate to international financial institutions and investors its unwavering commitment to democratic reform. We stand with the vast majority of Ukrainians who want to see this future for their country'. Neither statement mentioned Russia directly, but the baseline for the subsequent separation was set: not only did the Association Agreement and the EU represent democracy and prosperity, as per the stated aims of the Eastern Partnership and the EU's self-understanding, but this was the Ukrainian people's democratic choice, being frustrated by its government. Opposition to this view of things would be anti-democratic.

Russia was quickly identified as the primary force behind the frustration of the Ukrainian people's democratic will. In a joint statement on 25 November, the presidents of the European Council and Commission, Herman Van Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso, expressed their conviction that the Association Agreement offered '...the best possible support for Ukraine's economic situation, reform course and modernisation' and was an 'opportunity to accompany our [the EU's and Russia's] common neighbours towards modern, prosperous and rule-based democracies' (Barroso and Van Rompuy 2013). They referred to the 'pressure' Ukraine was under, emphasised that the EU would never 'force' Ukraine into anything and appropriated the nascent protests against Yanukovich's decision in Ukraine for their cause: 'Ukrainian citizens have again shown these last days that they fully understand and embrace the historic nature of the European association'. Underlining the 'win-win' nature of the Association Agreement, the presidents 'strongly disapprove[d] of the Russian position and actions' and were ready to 'clarify' to Russia

the 'mutual beneficial impact of increased trade and exchanges with our neighbours'. In sum, if the Russians would only understand the universal benefits of democracy and free markets, EU-style, and stop standing in their way, there would be no need for this unpleasantness.

EU representatives' framing of Russia as anti-democratic continued through the winter as protests in Ukraine ebbed and flowed towards their climax in February 2014. In his statement at the 29 November Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, where the Association Agreement was to have been signed, Barroso (2013) said: 'We know how much the Ukrainian people ... aspire to be recognised as members of the democratic community of nations of Europe', thereby also putting Europe squarely in the democratic camp. Hinting at Russia's opposition, he said the Association Agreement and Eastern Partnership were not directed 'against someone' but were 'a process for something; ... for democracy, for stability and for prosperity. ... I don't believe someone should be against democracy, against stability or against prosperity'. Van Rompuy reportedly said Russia's attempts to influence its neighbours' 'sovereign choice' was in breach of its OSCE commitments, and speaking to the press after the event Barroso stated that 'the times of limited sovereignty are over in Europe', implying Russia's opposition to the Ukrainian people's (rather than its government's) sovereign choice (Rettman 2013). In their comments after the 28 January 2014 EU-Russia Summit, the two presidents continued in the same vein. Van Rompuy (2014a) re-emphasised the 'win-win' nature of the Eastern Partnership and called for the avoidance of 'misunderstandings'. Barroso (2014a), meanwhile, underlined the Partnership's centrality to the integration of the continent, which must be built on 'respect for sovereign decisions, democratic societies and open markets', and its positive role in making 'our neighbourhood more prosperous ... something that can only benefit our other partners, and certainly will not harm Russia'.

The US president, Barack Obama, remained supportive of what by definition was considered pro-democratic, peaceful protests but did not engage in direct criticism of Russia. This started to change on 19 February, as the worst violence was under way in Kyiv. At a meeting with the Canadian and Mexican presidents Obama was asked by an Associated Press reporter to comment on Russia's involvement in Ukraine and Syria, implying similarities between the two regimes and Russian support for them. In response, he stated that Ukraine was a case of a government, 'supported by Russia, where

the people obviously have a very different view and vision for their country' (Obama 2014a). The Ukrainian people were expressing their aspiration to enjoy 'basic freedoms' and 'fundamental rights' such as 'fair and free elections', and he hoped there would come a time where 'Russia will recognize that over the long term they should be on board with those values' (Obama 2014a). Fundamentally, the Ukraine situation was about 'whether or not the people of Ukraine can determine their own destiny', and Obama had told Yanukovich that he should 'recognize the spirit of the Ukrainian people and work with that, as opposed to trying to repress it' (Obama 2014b). The phrasing of the Ukrainian people determining their own destiny or future would become a standard reference in Obama's statements about Ukraine over the next month, establishing both the people's (and in time the new government's) democratic credentials and the US's support for these (e.g. Obama 2014b; 2014c; 2014f; 2014h).

The inclusion of the protesters and political opposition as part of a democratic, pro-European 'us' separated from an anti-democratic 'them' including Russia and the Yanukovich regime meant that the revolutionary seizure of power in February 2014 was assessed as a positive, democratic event by Western actors, and the new government imbued with democratic legitimacy. This was visible at subsequent milestone events. On 21 March, when the new Ukrainian government and the EU signed the political part of the Association Agreement, Van Rompuy praised the democratic nature of events:

[The signing] recognises the aspirations of the people of Ukraine to live in a country governed by values, by democracy and the rule of law, where all citizens have a stake in national prosperity. And the popular yearning for a decent life as a nation, for a European way of life. Last November, the refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union created a popular uprising, a political and cultural shift. We pay tribute to those who gave their life for freedom, and we support all those who today are striving to build an open and inclusive Ukraine. (Van Rompuy 2014b)

Thus, even before the Ukraine crisis developed further into an altercation over the norm of non-aggression owing to Russia's annexation of Crimea, a clear separation and emergent stigmatisation was already established over another core international norm,

namely democracy. Russia was guilty of standing in the way of democracy, freedom and prosperity.

III – Russian stigma management: stigma rejection and counter-stigmatisation

This section analyses Russian stigma management in relation to democracy. It first traces the evolution of the leadership's complete rejection of its stigmatisation as undemocratic by election monitors and other actors. Then, special attention is paid to the concept of 'sovereign democracy' and its mix of stigma rejection and counter-stigmatising elements. Finally, the counter-stigmatising response of criticising Western states and monitors for their own democratic faults and 'undemocratic' domination of international affairs is analysed.

Stigma rejection at home

During the 1990s and early 2000s, Russian leaders themselves generally accepted the more diffuse stigma of backwardness in relation to democratic development and sought to 'normalise'. This was particularly true of Yeltsin and his reformers, but also of Putin, at least early on and on a rhetorical level. In his presidential inauguration speech on 7 May 2000, Putin used the same metaphorical language as his American counterpart Clinton, identifying the election as a historic moment on Russia's journey on the 'road to a free society' and asserting the need to keep moving in the right direction:

Today truly is a historic day; ... for the first time in Russia's history, power is being transferred in the most democratic and simplest way, by the will of the people, legally and peacefully. ... We have proved that Russia is becoming a modern democratic state. ... The construction of a democratic state is far from complete, but many things have been achieved. We must guard what we have gained, we must protect and promote democracy...
(Putin 2000a)

However, this stigma acceptance would soon give way to stigma rejection as direct stigmatisation of Russia's democratic credentials developed.

The 2003-04 election cycle provided the foundation for the Russian leadership's subsequent stigma management approach with regard to democracy and democratic norms. Even if the ODIHR election observers by themselves lacked the power to 'fully' stigmatise Russia, Russian actors reacted furiously to their criticisms of the elections, denying all charges. At the weekly meeting of the OSCE PC following the Duma election, after the US, EU and Canadian delegations had expressed their concern based on the observers' preliminary report, Russian ambassador Alexander Alexeyev simultaneously rejected any suggestion of discreditable behaviour and turned the accusations back on the observers and Western states. Referring to the preliminary report's questioning of Russia's 'desire [willingness]' to follow democratic standards, Alexeyev fumed:

That statement is unacceptable, it is politically motivated and has no foundation beneath it. It casts an unwarranted doubt upon the historical choice made by Russia's people and leadership, including in the past elections, to follow steadfastly the course of democratic development. (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003c)

He went on to castigate the 'glaring manifestation of double standards' in the assessment of elections, the 'selective and biased' approaches of the US, EU and Canada, and provided examples of criticisms from reports on British and American elections that had 'not once' been raised in the Council, where the talk was 'constantly about Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Central Asian states only' (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003c). From a stigma management perspective, two things stand out here. The first is stigma rejection: Russia's people and leadership have made a choice for democracy and are following the course 'steadfastly'. The second is counter-stigmatisation: the observers' objectivity and neutrality are called into question (the statement is 'politically motivated'), as is the democratic credibility of other states. This twin approach was repeated by Putin himself following the March presidential election, with emphasis on the counter-stigmatising *tu quoque* tactic (Ambrosio 2009).⁷⁰ At a press conference the day after the vote, in response to a question about whether he had seen comments by US officials about the election, he noted: '...some people see a mote in their neighbour's eye but fail to see a beam in their own. ... We were all taken aback four years ago at the way

⁷⁰ *Tu quoque* – Latin for 'you also'/'you, too', a term for responding to an accusation by calling out the accuser's own record instead of dealing with the substance of the claim.

the electoral system in the United States ran into problems' (Putin 2004a).⁷¹ The official discourse was solidifying around a combined stigma rejecting and counter-stigmatising approach.

The same was the case in 2007-08. The attempt to limit ODIHR's monitoring of the election can itself be read as an attempt to prevent any discreditable behaviour from becoming publicly known (albeit in the process engaging in the even more discreditable behaviour of preventing the transparent monitoring of your elections). The official Russian reaction to the few monitors' assessment and Western criticisms remained one of stigma rejection, as encapsulated in a 3 December foreign ministry statement providing 'information' and 'commentary' on international observers' assessment of the election. The ministry noted how observers from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) had assessed the election as 'free, open and fair, in full accordance with ... the generally adopted approaches toward democratic elections' and claimed that several PACE/OSCE PA observers had 'spoke[n] similarly in media interviews' (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2007).⁷² It then castigated the PACE/OSCE PA observers for their 'slogans not supported by any factual material' and 'random judgments', arguing that their 'theses about a "fusion of the state and political parties"' had more to do with dynamics in their own countries, as 'in many western countries ... the government is formed by a party that has won in parliamentary elections'. Finally, it dealt with each of the observers' other accusations – biased media coverage, the high threshold for entering parliament, etc. – in turn, concluding that 'these norms of our laws are consistent with the present stage and requirements of democratic consolidation in Russia'. That these statements fundamentally misunderstood and/or wilfully misrepresented the division of state, government and parliament in most Western countries was beside the point. Understood as part of a stigma rejection discourse they formed part of a purposeful attempt for Russia to 'pass' as democratic, albeit a democracy at a certain 'stage' of development. Interestingly, this was an example

⁷¹ This refers to the alleged irregularities during the 2000 US presidential election won by George W. Bush against Al Gore.

⁷² The establishment and funding of the CIS election monitoring arm from 2002 can be interpreted as a vital component of a broader, purposeful stigma rejection and/or evasion strategy on Russia's behalf – the monitors have reached separate conclusions to the ODIHR in every election in the post-Soviet space except the 2010 Ukrainian presidential election, providing an alternative institutional assessment that governments can draw on as evidence of their democratic legitimacy, however illegitimate it may seem to Western eyes. See Cooley (2015).

of a stigmatised actor simultaneously insisting on its democratic credentials and ‘owning’ its position in a temporal-teleological hierarchy of democratic consolidation.

In 2011-12, the Russian leadership’s reaction to open criticism from the likes of Hillary Clinton was a doubling down on the stigma-rejecting and counter-stigmatising discourse. In an address to the Russian people on the eve of the Duma election, Medvedev (at this stage both president and top of United Russia’s party list, in a perfect example of the fusion of state and party the ODIHR raised concerns about) had praised the ‘fair and free competition’ of the election campaign, praised elections as ‘the highest manifestation of democracy’ and ‘our citizens’ direct and free participation in elections’ as ‘one of Russia’s indisputable achievements of these last decades’ (Medvedev 2011a). After an 8 December meeting with Czech president Václav Klaus, Medvedev responded to a journalist’s question about the elections by first appropriating the ongoing demonstrations as ‘an exercise in democracy’ (albeit one that ‘must be held strictly in designated areas and in accordance with Russian law’), and second by focusing on how despite criticisms, ‘nearly all observers came to the common conclusion that the elections were well organised’ (Medvedev 2011b). In widely reported comments from a meeting with members of the recently formed Popular Front that exemplify the intensified counter-stigmatising official discourse, Putin directly blamed Clinton and the State Department for instigating the protests in Moscow and elsewhere: ‘She set the tone for some of our political figures ..., she sent a signal. They heard the signal and with the support of the State Department, they began their active work’ (Putin 2011). Moving on to questions of foreign financing of civil society activities, Putin said the investment of ‘foreign money’ into political activities ‘should give us pause’: ‘injecting foreign money in electoral processes is particularly abhorrent. This is simply inadmissible. ... we must develop forms of protecting our sovereignty, protecting ourselves from outside interference’. The tone was thus set for Putin’s third presidential period, which would be characterised by an increasingly marked anti-Americanism in the official discourse and the targeting of NGOs receiving foreign funding as ‘foreign agents’, more on which in Chapter 5.

The dominant approach of the Russian leadership throughout the 2000s and 2010s was thus one of stigma rejection, insisting variously that Russian elections had been conducted according to democratic best practice and/or that any deficiencies were

due to being at a particular stage of democratic development. Both of these themes came together in the concept of 'sovereign democracy'.

'Sovereign democracy' as stigma management

The concept of 'sovereign democracy' is usually attributed to Vladislav Surkov, one of the Kremlin's foremost 'political technologists' of the mid-2000s, who coined the term in 2006. Its status as an official slogan or ideology of the Russian government was always unclear. Viacheslav Morozov (2008, 154–55) points out that neither Putin nor other top officials tended to use the term themselves, although its constitutive elements featured heavily in their speeches: an emphasis on Russia's and other states' right to choose their own path of democratic development, free from interference or pressure by the universalist policies of the US and/or EU; a focus on legality and 'democratic laws' as a core part of democratic development; and a call for the 'democratisation' of international affairs to counter the hegemonic power of Western actors. These elements encompassed a dual stigma management approach. On the one hand, stigma was rejected through an attempted pluralisation of definitions of democracy, an insistence on the democratic credibility of both Russia and other states. On the other, Western actors were counter-stigmatised as undemocratic owing to their perceived 'meddling' in the internal (democratic) affairs of others and their 'undemocratic' domination of international affairs.

The full fruition of this discourse can be traced to the colour revolutions period. Elements were present already in Russian responses to events in Yugoslavia, during which Putin declared Russia's 'fundamental belief ... that only the people of Yugoslavia themselves should determine their own destiny, their future without outside interference' (Putin 2000b). On the face of it, this was entirely consistent with support for democracy, although it was almost certainly intended as a kick against the open Western support for the opposition and would form the basis for subsequent counter-stigmatisation. Putin also stressed the need to stay within the country's laws and end its international isolation, without linking this to the need for democratic practices, implicitly accusing Western states of unjustifiably stigmatising Yugoslavia. In the aftermath of events, in an interview with French newspaper *Le Figaro*, he stressed that

the 'process of democratic transformation' gave 'hope that stability will come' to Yugoslavia, welcomed the lifting of sanctions and noted NATO countries' 'particular responsibility to make good the material damage inflicted' in 1999 (Putin 2000c) He also called for the establishment of a 'multi-polar' world order 'based on collective solution of key problems, supremacy of the law and sweeping democratisation of international relations' (Putin 2000c). This combination of support for democracy (albeit with a strong emphasis on legality), thereby undermining any attempt to stigmatise, and highlighting of Western transgressions, thereby counter-stigmatising, would develop more fully in subsequent episodes. However, in Georgia in 2003 the Russian reaction was mixed – Putin's reaction to Shevardnadze's resignation was phlegmatic, calling it expected and blaming it on Shevardnadze's own manifold political mistakes, although he also emphasised that Shevardnadze 'was never a dictator' and that Russia felt 'a legitimate concern at the way pressure was used to help bring about this changeover' (Putin 2003). This 'pressure' had clearly come from the West, specifically the United States.

It was during and after the 2004 events in Ukraine that counter-stigmatisation moved centre-stage. At a meeting with the Portuguese prime minister on 23 November 2004, Putin argued that Ukraine 'does not need to be taught [about democracy]' and criticised EU foreign ministers and OSCE observers for casting doubt on the election result (Putin 2004b). When answering journalists' questions during a visit to Turkey on 6 December, two days after the Ukrainian Supreme Court had ruled that the election should be re-run, Putin highlighted Western colonialism, the Cold War division of Germany and the 1999 Kosovo War in a highly counter-stigmatising statement:

What worries me with regard to the situation in Ukraine is that democracy is one of the absolute values in the modern world but it is also something very complicated. ... I would not like for Europe to be divided as Germany was into east and west, into first and second class people. I don't want a situation where you would have first class people able to live according to stable and democratic laws, while second class people get told by well-intentioned gentlemen in pith helmets what political course to follow. And if the ungrateful natives object, they will get punished by having bombs dropped on their heads, as in Belgrade. (Putin 2004c)

The counter-stigmatising message was clear: actors with a history of bombing 'ungrateful natives', whether in Belgrade or further afield, had no right to lecture others on

democracy, and by doing so they were taking the world back to a past of colonialism, division and strife. In an echo of the stigmatising Western discourse's metaphor of democratisation as progress and any anti-democratic behaviour as a regression in time, the counter-stigmatising Russian labelling of Western actions as colonialism through the thinly veiled reference to British colonialist headgear (pith helmets) similarly drew on time and untimeliness.

Two particular stigmatising tropes that became prominent in the Russian discourse around this time were how Western actors were creating new 'dividing lines' in Europe and were guilty of 'double standards' in their assessment of democratic pedigree. The former encapsulated the argument present in Putin's comments above that by dividing European countries into 'first- and second-class people' on the basis of their democratic credentials, the US and EU were breaking with the post-Cold War vision of a united Europe. The latter accused the same actors of applying different standards to their own allies and friends than to Russia and states like Ukraine and Georgia. The two tropes featured together in Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statement at the 2004 OSCE Sofia Ministerial Council during the Orange Revolution. Lavrov lamented the 'double standards' that were eroding the OSCE's 'comparative advantages', i.e. its broad, inclusive membership, and disuniting rather than uniting states.⁷³ He called on the OSCE to 'work to prevent new dividing lines from appearing in our continent' and criticised the 'increasingly ruinous practice of "double standards" in the assessment of election processes' (Lavrov 2004). Later in the month, three days before the re-run of the Ukrainian presidential election, Putin brought up 'double standards' at a press conference with Russian and foreign journalists, sarcastically comparing the complaints about Ukraine's election with the democratic credibility given to elections in Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo: 'Kosovo also had elections. Over two hundred thousand Serbs fled their homes and were unable to take part in the elections – and that is okay, the elections were democratic. Perfect!' (Putin 2004d).⁷⁴ In his Sofia statement, Lavrov referenced similar

⁷³ Russia had for a long time talked up the OSCE, featuring participating states from across North America and Eurasia, as the basis for a new European security architecture, an alternative to what it saw as the exclusivity of NATO and the EU. See Godzimirski (2009).

⁷⁴ Putin was referring to Serbs who left Kosovo for Serbia and Montenegro in 1999, fearing retribution from Kosovo Albanians after the ethnic cleansing of the latter by Yugoslav forces. The International Crisis Group (2001, 13) estimated their number at around 170,000, but also showed how this led to a Western preoccupation with securing Serb participation in the 2001 Kosovo parliamentary election.

argumentation from two statements issued by the Russia-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) bloc in the OSCE context in July and September 2004, indicating that the negative assessments of the 2003-04 Russian election cycle and potentially the Rose Revolution had already pushed the Russian discourse in this direction.

The statement that most forcefully established the stigma rejection part of the sovereign democracy discourse was Putin's April 2005 annual address to Russia's legislature, the Federal Assembly. Widely known as the speech in which Putin called the Soviet Union's collapse 'a major geopolitical disaster of the century', the speech is generally considered to have spelled out the core ideas of sovereign democracy, albeit without actually using the term (Putin 2005; Morozov 2008, 158-59).⁷⁵ Indeed, the words 'sovereign' (*suverennyi*) or 'sovereignty' (*suverenitet*) were used only four times in the address, whereas the words 'democracy' (*demokratiya*) and 'democratic' (*demokraticheskiy*) were used 23 times and 'freedom' (*svoboda*) or 'free' (*svobodniy*) 31 times. Putin identified the development of a 'free and democratic state' as the government's 'main political and ideological goal'. But two caveats were emphasised throughout: that Russia had chosen and would choose its own route to democracy with due consideration of its own unique circumstances, and that democracy could not be separated from law and order:

The creation of an effective legal and political system is an essential condition for developing democracy in our country. But developing democratic procedures should not come at the cost of law and order, the stability that we worked so hard to achieve, or the continued pursuit of our chosen economic course. The democratic road we have chosen is independent in nature, a road along which we move ahead, all the while taking into account our own specific internal circumstances. But we must and we shall move forward, basing our action on the laws and on the guarantees our constitution provides. (Putin 2005)

Like Western actors, Putin used the progressive metaphor of democracy as a road, but a road that Russia and the Russian people had chosen independently. 'As a sovereign

⁷⁵ 'A major...' is a quote from the official English translation of Putin's address. There has been much debate about whether he said or meant 'the greatest' rather than 'a major' (the fact that the simple superlative *krupneyshiy* rather than the compound superlative *samiy krupneyshiy* was used indicates the latter but is ambiguous), and, perhaps more importantly, whether the quote indicated a desire to re-establish the Soviet Union or an equivalent Russian regional hegemony.

nation, Russia can and will decide for itself the timeframe and conditions for its progress along this road' (Putin 2005).

In another example of stigma rejection, Putin re-iterated Russia's identity as a European nation, linking this to democracy and other normative ideals:

Above all else Russia was, is and will ... be a major European power. ... the ideals of freedom, human rights, justice and democracy have for many centuries been our society's determining values. For three centuries, we – together with the other European nations – passed hand in hand through reforms of Enlightenment, the difficulties of emerging parliamentarism, municipal and judiciary branches, and the establishment of similar legal systems. Step by step, we moved together toward recognizing and extending human rights, toward universal and equal suffrage, toward understanding the need to look after the weak and the impoverished, toward women's emancipation, and other social gains. I repeat we did this together, sometimes behind and sometimes ahead of European standards. (Putin 2005)

As analysed extensively by Iver Neumann (2016), Vladimir Baranovsky (2000) and others, the concept or idea of 'Europe' has played a central part in Russian identity formation, with distinct discourses on Russia's place within Europe and the nature of Europe as either a beacon to learn from or a rotten entity to separate oneself from constantly competing. Here, Putin placed himself somewhere in the middle: Russia did not need to copy Europe because it had lived through the historical process along with the other European nations.

Without specifically mentioning Western criticisms, Putin's speech was a clear statement of stigma rejection: Russia *is* democratic – indeed it has chosen the path of democracy actively – and European, and should be recognised as part of a broader family of nations, but it is democratic in its own, sovereign way. In the face of increasing criticism of Russia's democratic credentials, his response was to assert and defend Russia's democratic identity, rather than to openly embrace authoritarianism or another alternative political identity. The 2005 address focused specifically on the domestic, stigma rejecting part of this identity negotiation. There was little mention of international affairs or counter-stigmatisation of the West.

The main counter-stigmatising speech focusing on the West's 'undemocratic' domination of international affairs was Putin's infamous February 2007 Munich Security Conference speech. Lamenting the supposedly 'unipolar world', Putin argued that such a world 'has nothing in common with democracy. Because ... democracy is the power of the majority in light of the interests and opinions of the minority. Incidentally, [we] are constantly being taught about democracy. But for some reason those who teach us do not want to learn themselves' (Putin 2007). Casting Russia as part of a silent majority being 'taught' by the dominant minority (i.e. the US) recalls Goffman's original conception of 'out-group alignment', although as noted by Zarakol (2010, chap. 5), in practice Russia had been reluctant to fully embrace its supposed outgroup allies in the BRICS and other forums, instead seeking respect (if not recognition) from Western actors (this has changed somewhat post-2014; see e.g. Salzman 2019). Either way, the 2005 and 2007 speeches together represent the stigma-rejecting and counter-stigmatising approach of the Russian president in response to accusations of democratic deficiencies. These two themes would come out in force again during the Ukraine crisis, as the Russian leadership responded furiously to accusations of undemocratic conduct.

The Ukraine crisis: The West as promoters of an armed coup

The day after EU presidents Barroso and Van Rompuy's 25 November 2013 joint statement blaming Russia for Yanukovich's about-turn on the Association Agreement, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a reply rejecting the EU's narrative on every point, encapsulating what would be the repeated Russian response over the coming months. It 'noted' the presidents' disapproval of Russian actions and expressed its puzzlement and disappointment at this 'and other statements made by European politicians and EU leaders of late', which were 'evidently caused by an aspiration to make Russia responsible for the problems in Ukrainian society due to the policy of explicit pressure used by the European Union against Ukraine' (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). The EU had tried hard to make Ukraine sign the Association Agreement 'by any means', thereby interfering 'in the internal affairs of a sovereign country'. Russia had merely warned Ukraine about the economic consequences of the agreement, which would have included 'many years of economic disarray, de-industrialisation, the ruining

of farms and, as a consequence, the growth of unemployment and a reduction in the level of life of the population'. The EU was thus not only anti-democratic, interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, but anti-prosperity, being disingenuous about its role in promoting democracy, stability and prosperity.

The same rejection of any discreditable behaviour and harsh criticism of Western practices became the Russian mantra through the winter of 2013-14. When challenged about Russia's \$15 billion loan to Ukraine by Russian and foreign journalists on 19 December and again after the EU-Russia Summit on 28 January, Putin dismissed suggestions of having applied pressure on Ukraine – '[n]o one was trying to strangle anyone here' – and repeated criticisms of the Association Agreement – '[l]ook at what is written in it: open the markets, get no money, introduce European trade and technical regulations. That means the production sector has to be shut down, and agriculture will not develop. ...this is very clearly tilting Ukraine towards becoming Europe's agricultural appendage' (Putin 2013c; 2014a).⁷⁶

As the Maidan protests developed in Kyiv, Russia sought to highlight the radical, anti-democratic political leanings of some of the protesters, the atmosphere of illegality and disorder, and Western politicians' encouragement of the protesters, rather than the Yanukovich governments heavy-handed response. The foreign ministry chastised the Ukrainian opposition for not abiding by its supposed commitment to 'democracy and European values' and accused the US of attempting to impose a 'western vector' on Ukraine and 'dictating to the authorities of a sovereign country, what they should do' (Lukashevich 2014a; Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014a). As the worst violence developed on 18-20 February and Western actors moved quickly to blame the government, Russian actors in increasingly frequent and angry statements instead blamed protesters and the West. The foreign ministry called the events a 'direct result of the connivance policy by those Western politicians and European structures which have been turning a blind eye to aggressive actions of radical forces in Ukraine', and expressed outrage at the lack of reaction from both opposition leaders conniving in a 'brown' (i.e. fascist) revolution while 'hiding behind democratic slogans about commitment to democracy and European values' and European actors, 'who refuse to admit that the

⁷⁶ The \$15 billion loan was announced a few weeks after Yanukovich's decision and almost certainly influenced it.

opposition is responsible for the actions of radical forces' (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014b; 2014c). From a tour of Middle Eastern countries, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described the situation as an attempted coup d'état by 'extremists' and spoke of the responsibility of the West: 'Representatives of European countries and the United States have been present in Ukraine, during the last three months, almost every day. What did they do in their contacts with the government and the opposition?' (Lavrov 2014a; see also 2014b). In phone calls with German chancellor Angela Merkel and British prime minister David Cameron, Putin blamed 'extremists' and 'terrorists' for the events in Ukraine and called on the West to drop its 'accusatory attitude' towards the Yanukovych government (kremlin.ru 2014a; 2014b).

The Russian position remained constant after the seizure of power on 22-23 February. A 24 February Foreign Ministry statement listed several concerns, including the parliament's reliance on nothing but 'revolutionary appropriateness' in passing laws counter to human rights, the non-observance of the 21 February government-opposition agreement for an orderly transition negotiated after mediation by EU foreign ministers, as well as the violent acts of militants and national radicals. The West's reaction was particularly disappointing:

We are forced to note that some of our western partners are not concerned about the fate of Ukraine, but rather their own unilateral geopolitical considerations. There are no principles assessments of criminal actions of extremists, including their Neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic manifestations. All the more so, such actions are intentionally or unintentionally promoted. (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014d)

Putin initially remained quiet following the takeover of power except for a 27 February instruction to the Russian government to continue contacts with 'partners in Kiev' and 'examine' a call from 'Crimean regional authorities for humanitarian aid' (kremlin.ru 2014c). However, in a 4 March press conference dedicated exclusively to Ukraine, he laid out the Russian position in terms both rejecting any stigma for itself and framing the West as anti-democratic:

There can only be one assessment: this was an anti-constitutional takeover, an armed seizure of power. Does anyone question this? Nobody does. ... Are the current authorities legitimate? The Parliament is partially, but all the others are not. The current Acting President is definitely not legitimate.

There is only one legitimate President, from a legal standpoint. ... We see the rampage of reactionary forces, nationalist and anti-Semitic forces going on in certain parts of Ukraine, including Kiev. ... Is this democracy? Is this some manifestation of democracy? ... [W]hat motivates our partners? They supported an unconstitutional armed take-over, declared these people legitimate and are trying to support them. (Putin 2014b)

Thus, the basic separation was drawn on both sides separating the un/anti-democratic 'them' from 'us'. What by Western actors was framed as a democratic uprising against a corrupt and increasingly illegitimate government was for Russia an unconstitutional armed coup executed by reactionary extremists. For the West, Russia's support for the Yanukovich government and opposition to the democratic uprising put it on stigmatisable ground, although this was not yet enough to seek to implement status loss. In response, Russia built its own case for (counter-) stigmatisation, openly separating itself from the meddling West, which was not only undemocratically interfering in Ukraine's sovereign choices but also promoting some unsavoury undemocratic forces.

Conclusion

By 2014, the Russian leadership was thoroughly labelled and stereotyped as undemocratic both in its domestic and international conduct, separated rhetorically from Western democratic actors like the US and EU and also aspiring democratic states like Ukraine. The status loss emanating from this particular process is harder to gauge, as the processes were gradual, and there appeared to be little outright exclusion based exclusively on Russia's democratic credentials. One example may have been the inability of the EU and Russia to renew the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement after its expiry in 2007, but as noted by Hiski Haukkala (2015), this was equally owing to a difference in worldviews and the Russian leadership not being interested in what the EU was offering as to any principled exclusion stance by the EU. Nevertheless, Russia's gradual stigmatisation as authoritarian mattered in that it provided an additional stigma

to those that would accumulate over the 2000s and a background against which to read all Russian behaviour.

Russia's stigma management as regards democracy also provides a microcosm of its overall efforts to deal with its various stigmas. The stigma-rejecting tactic of 'deny, deny, deny', increasingly laced with a counter-stigmatising rhetoric of painting the US, EU and other Western actors as 'morally degenerate' (Haukkala 2015, 31–32; I. B. Neumann 2016) would characterise also the Russian approach to dealing with accusations of human rights abuses, as discussed in the next chapter. However, it is notable that a concept like 'sovereign democracy' was not a wholesale rejection of democracy as such – while rejecting the specific 'liberal' version of democracy as not suitable for Russia owing to its particular stage of development, Russian leaders did pay lip service to the concept itself, which speaks to its hegemonic position. As noted by Morozov (2008, 156), given that much of Putin's domestic legitimacy rested on his establishment of 'stability' as compared to the chaotic period of 'democracy' under Yeltsin in the 1990s, the fact that he and his team tried to 'save Russia's democratic reputation by playing with the slogan of "sovereign democracy" ... must tell us something about the structures of power in today's world, which turn "democracy" into a norm and make any deviations subject to punishment'. This indicates the fruitfulness of the stigma lens – it allows us to see how actors work to avoid the consequences of deviance.

Chapter 5

Human Rights

This chapter analyses stigmatisation and stigma management processes in relations concerning human rights. It traces the evolving Western stigmatisation of Russia as well as Russia's developing reaction in relation to three cases: the wars in Chechnya and Russia's breaches of international humanitarian law as well as ongoing human rights abuses in the republic; Russia's observation of civil and political rights, particularly media freedoms, the right to protest and the work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs); and finally controversies over LGBT rights and women's rights in connection with Russia's turn towards an espousal of 'traditional values', in itself a counter-stigmatising move which in turn created more stigmatisation from the West. In conclusion, some tentative theoretical conclusions are drawn, focusing on the disjuncture between 'observable' stigmatisation and the reaction of the stigmatised, as well as the need for a transnational lens to capture the full dynamics of stigmatisation internationally.

I – Chechnya

Much of Russia's discreditability (though not necessarily actual discrediting) as far as human rights goes can be summed up in one word: Chechnya. The North Caucasus republic, part of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) pre-1991 and *de jure* an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation since the USSR's collapse, was the scene of two bloody wars between Russian armed forces and Chechen separatists, first from 1994-96 and again from 1999-2000 (the end of the military phase of operations, with an ongoing armed insurgency and counter-insurgency operations). The wars were huge blots on Russia's international image, with a combined civilian death toll in the tens if not hundreds of thousands. Several thousand Russian soldiers also died, in large part due to bad planning and military incompetence (see e.g. Treisman 2011, 294–95). Despite the authorities' efforts to limit any critical reporting, particularly during the second war, journalists and activists documented numerous war crimes and human rights abuses by

both sides.⁷⁷ This productive power process continued through the 2000s and 2010s, with journalists and activists continuing to document the human rights abuses perpetrated under the Kremlin-backed local rule of President Akhmad Kadyrov (from 2003 until his assassination in 2004) and his son, Ramzan Kadyrov (from 2004). Some, like investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya and activist Natalya Estemirova from human rights organisation Memorial, were murdered because of their work, contributing to Russia's slide in human rights and press freedom rankings.⁷⁸ An additional source of discreditability was the rising number of cases brought against Russia at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) after its ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in 1998, the first wave of which were related to human rights abuses in Chechnya during the second war (Mälksoo 2015, 159–67; see also Mälksoo and Benedek 2017).

The causes and consequences of the Chechen wars were many and complex.⁷⁹ The first war has been described as both 'a war of national liberation, a war initiated by criminal bandits, and a clash of civilizations: it was as much a military campaign as it was an information war, and explanations were as varied as they were outlandish' (Forsberg and Herd 2005, 458). The second war, launched the month after he became prime minister in 1999, did much to help the relatively unknown Putin build and consolidate a popular public image, and has for this and assorted reasons been the subject of several conspiracy theories since.⁸⁰ Both in December 1994 and September 1999 there were putatively good reasons for the Russian authorities to reimpose a degree of central control over Chechnya – the security situation in the republic was at both times

⁷⁷ See Gessen (2012, 145–51) for a first-hand account of the military's restrictions on reporting in the second war, and Ostrovsky (2015, 280–81) and Wilhelmsen (2016) for further analysis, including of how the mainstream Russian media discourse was overwhelmingly pro-war.

⁷⁸ It has never been fully established who ordered neither Politkovskaya's 2006 murder, although five Chechen men were convicted of the killing in 2014, nor Estemirova's in 2009. As Masha Gessen noted in 2012 about Politkovskaya's murder, reflecting on the perils of being a tireless (and at times unpleasant) investigative journalist critical of both the Russian government and its Chechnya policy: 'Who could have done it? Anyone' (Gessen 2012, 219).

⁷⁹ For detailed accounts and analyses of the wars, see e.g. Lieven (1998), German (2003), Politkovskaya (2003); for a highly original world systems theory-inspired analysis, see Derluigian (2004).

⁸⁰ Aside from the straightforward theory that the war was launched to build Putin's image as a strongman leader, suspicions centre on a series of bombing attacks against apartment blocks across Russia in the lead-up to the war. Officially, these were carried out by Chechen terrorists, but allegations that the security services themselves executed them to justify the war are rife. See particularly the book *Blowing up Russia* by former FSB agent Alexander Litvinenko, assassinated in London in 2006, and historian Yuri Felstinsky (2007).

deteriorating, with kidnappings and terrorist attacks spreading to neighbouring regions. In 1999, the trigger for invasion was an incursion by Chechen forces into the neighbouring republic of Dagestan. However, the 'way force was used' by Russian forces was unjustifiable (Treisman 2011, 296, emphasis in original), particularly once initial hopes of quickly overwhelming separatist forces ended in predictable fashion and indiscriminate shelling of urban areas ensued, with the Chechen capital, Grozny, reduced to rubble and the civilian death toll high (see e.g. Gessen 2012, 146). When the circumstances of the case additionally lent themselves well to a 'romantic' version of events pitting the 'ancient nation of Muslim mountain dwellers, the Chechens' against the brutal Russian colonisers, a view that 'inform[ed] much [Western] press coverage' (Treisman 2011, 262) and thereby constituted Russia as a human rights violator in Western media discourse, the stage should have been set for a clear-cut case of stigmatisation. Instead, a mixed bag occurred.

The first war did delay elements of the relationship building between the newly established EU and Russia, with some degree of separation and concurrent status loss. Both EU and US leaders accepted the basic premise of Russia's need to maintain its territorial integrity and therefore neither framed the issue as a case of decolonisation or national self-determination nor recognised Chechnya as a sovereign state (despite its 1993 declaration of independence). Instead, they focused on human rights violations, issuing progressively stronger criticisms of Russian forces' conduct and insisting on an end to fighting and a political solution (see e.g. Forsberg and Herd 2005, 459–60; W. J. Clinton 1994; 1995; W. J. Clinton and Kohl 1995). In early 1995, the EU decided to postpone ratification of the EU-Russia Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA), signed in June 1994, citing Russian violations of humanitarian norms in Chechnya. This example of separation was the 'strongest demonstration of [the EU's] determination to enforce its normative agenda', and yet was far from a clear-cut case as both bilateral programmes and the dispersing of technical aid funds continued (Forsberg and Herd 2005, 460). An interim treaty was signed in July 1995 as the European Commission noted some progress in Russia's Chechen policy, and following the cessation of hostilities in 1996-97 the PCA was ratified by the EU and eventually came into force in December 1997 (Forsberg and Herd 2005, 460–61). Russia's admission to the Council of Europe in February 1996, meanwhile, preceded the final ceasefire and peace treaty by around six

months. The war was not enough of a stigma for the Council states to keep Russia out – despite much debate and a consensus that the country did not objectively meet the criteria for membership (yet), the side that argued it was better to include Russia to further push its development in a positive direction won out (Mälksoo 2017, 3–5). The most hard-line actor was the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which suspended the Russian accession procedure in February 1995 only to allow it to proceed a year later (Leach 2017, 257–60).

Western leaders justified their relative leniency by citing the need to not rock the boat on Russia's democratic transition, illustrating the power of 'transitionology' (Monaghan 2016) highlighted in the previous chapter, or what Lauri Mälksoo (2017, 3–5) dubs the West's *mission civilisatrice*. While security concerns about the territorial integrity of Russia were also important in Western decision making, public pronouncements focused on President Yeltsin's indispensability to Russia's democratisation process (Forsberg and Herd 2005, 459). When asked on the day Russian troops attacked Chechnya in December 1994 whether this and other Russian moves called into doubt Russia's reliability as a strategic partner, President Clinton was unequivocal: 'No. And I'd like to say why. They don't because Russia is still a democracy. Russia is still pursuing economic reform' (W. J. Clinton 1994). Two months later, in February 1995, both Clinton and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl spoke in similar terms, with Kohl invoking the same temporal dimension identified in the previous chapter, hinting at what would happen should Western states cut off ties with Yeltsin's government: 'I'm absolutely sure, absolutely convinced that if we were to push the forces of reform and the President into a corner, isolate them ... *this will immediately bring us back to the old, bad structures of the past*' (W. J. Clinton and Kohl 1995, emphasis added). Thus, while the use of force in Chechnya was condemned repeatedly, there were only tentative steps towards any kind of separation from or stigmatisation of Russia – the state's continued progress along the road to democracy (and, notably, economic reform) was deemed more important than its questionable attitude towards and record on human rights.

Evidence of stigmatising processes during the second war was equally ambiguous, revealing not only the tension between Western strategic and normative concerns but also the challenge involved in constructing and maintaining a united 'audience of

normals'. There were clear divisions between EU states about what approach to take. Germany, Italy and particularly France emerged as the harshest critics of Russia's policies. The three countries issued an independent statement expressing concern on 29 September 1999, to the surprise of the Finnish EU presidency, and in an example of physical separation German foreign minister Joschka Fischer cancelled his participation in a meeting on the Northern Dimension (a joint EU-Russia-Norway-Iceland policy), citing Russia's 'ill-conceived' Chechnya policy (Forsberg and Herd 2005, 462–63). As other foreign ministers followed suit, Finland (the hosts) remained the only EU representative at the meeting. Indeed, Finnish leaders were among the actors advocating continued engagement with Russia over isolation – others included the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who stated his scepticism against sanctions during his visit to St Petersburg in March 2000 (Forsberg and Herd 2005, 462–64; Zygar 2016, 16). Meanwhile across the Atlantic, US leaders maintained a similar line of emphasising Russia's right to defend its territorial integrity and fight terrorism, while at the same time (and with increasing frequency as the violence escalated) condemning any indiscriminate use of violence and calling for a political solution (see e.g. S. Berger, Grossman, and Hill 1999; W. J. Clinton 1999a).

The most forceful and united stigmatising front by Western actors over Chechnya came in December 1999, as the Russian ultimatum to the population of Grozny to 'leave the city or face annihilation' coincided with the 10-11 December European Council meeting (Forsberg and Herd 2005, 463). Pressed to act, EU leaders adopted the 'Declaration on Chechnya', condemning 'the intense bombardments of Chechen cities, the threat levelled at the residents of Grozny and the ultimatum set by the Russian military commanders, as well as the treatment of the internally displaced persons as totally unacceptable' (European Council 1999). The declaration recognised Russia's right to 'preserve its territorial integrity' and to 'fight terrorism' but said Russia's 'behaviour [was] in contradiction with the basic principles of humanitarian law, the commitments of Russia as made within the OSCE and its obligations as a member of the Council of Europe' and called on Russia to end its 'disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force against the Chechen population'. Invoking the same spatio-temporal dimension seen in the chapter on democracy and implicitly linking the humanitarian violations to questions of

modernity and democracy, EU leaders reiterated that ‘the Union has constantly expressed its willingness to accompany Russia in its transition towards a modern and democratic state’ (European Council 1999). A similarly worded joint US-EU declaration was issued after a summit on 17 December, six days after the expiration of the ultimatum deadline (United States and the European Union 1999). The EU statement had threatened sanctions if Russia failed to comply, including the suspension of parts of the PCA, a review of the EU’s Common Strategy on Russia and the redirection of technical aid funding towards humanitarian assistance. A limited selection of these measures was indeed introduced with effect from February 2000, but these were lifted in June the same year following the end of active hostilities, despite continued verbal criticism of Russia’s behaviour using what Forsberg and Herd (2005, 465) characterise as the ‘usual phrases’: ‘condemnation of the use of disproportionate and indiscriminate force’, ‘independent investigations of human rights violations’, etc. In the Council of Europe, PACE was again the most hard-line actor, suspending the Russian delegation’s voting rights in April 2000 while asking the Council of Ministers to suspend Russia’s membership of the Council completely, something it refused to do – voting rights were then re-instated in January 2001 (Leach 2017, 257–60).

The criticism also continued in global forums like the UN, demonstrating the even greater difficulty of assembling an ‘audience of normals’ on a larger scale. Three resolutions on Chechnya were tabled in the UN Commission on Human Rights between April 2000 and April 2002, each following a report by the High Commissioner on Human Rights and at least the last two sponsored by the EU (UN Human Rights Commission 2000; BBC News 2001; Kirby 2002). The first resolution, adopted while EU sanctions were still in place in April 2000, expressed ‘grave concern’ about the continued violence and human rights abuses, including ‘disproportionate and indiscriminate’ use of Russian military force, called upon Russia to investigate and requested it to educate its military about ‘basic principles of human rights and international humanitarian law’. The resolution passed by a roll-call vote of 25 votes to 7, with a full 19 abstentions in the 53-member commission (UN Human Rights Commission 2000).⁸¹ This indicates that even in an

⁸¹ This official record leaves two votes unaccounted for. A roll-call vote should technically have a list of countries, but this is absent in the official document. Almost certainly, the majority of supporters will have come from the 10 ‘Western European and other’ states (including at this point the US and Canada) and Western allies in the other regional categories such as Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Japan, etc.

apparently clear-cut case of human rights violations, getting support for a relatively mild-worded critique was a challenge.

The second, April 2001 resolution adopted stronger language despite the fact that it was adopted almost a year after EU sanctions had been lifted and in between two EU-Russia summits where Chechnya was kept in the background (Forsberg and Herd 2005, 466). The resolution 'strongly condemn[ed] the continued use of disproportionate and indiscriminate force by Russian military forces, federal servicemen and State agents, including attacks against civilians and other breaches of international law as well as serious violations of human rights, such as forced disappearances, extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions' (UN Human Rights Commission 2001). However, foreshadowing the post-9/11 US/EU increased acceptance of the Russian version of events in Chechnya, Chechen 'terrorist activities and attacks' were also condemned, as opposed to merely expressions of 'grave concern' over 'attacks against civilians' in the 2000 resolution. The resolution passed in a roll-call vote by 22 votes to 12, again with 19 abstentions, indicating a slowly dwindling 'audience of normals' in support of criticising either Russia specifically or internal human rights abuses generally.⁸² This slow dwindling tipped the balance a year later, when in April 2002 a similar EU-sponsored resolution was narrowly defeated by 16 votes to 15, with 22 abstentions (Kirby 2002). The difference between April 2001 and April 2002 were the events of 11 September 2001, the US's invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 and burgeoning talk of a potential war in Iraq.

Just as 9/11 transformed world politics, it 'transformed the context of the Chechen war' (Forsberg and Herd 2005, 467) and the success of Russia's stigma management approach. Throughout the Chechen wars, Russian leaders had rejected any discreditable behaviour in relation to Chechnya, insisting that the conflict was an internal issue of no concern to anyone else, that no (serious) human rights abuses had ever taken place, and/or that it was fighting 'terrorists' and therefore was doing the international community a favour. Statements frequently also included a dose of counter-stigmatisation, as when Deputy Foreign Minister Ivan Ivanov stated in May 2001 that

⁸² Supporters of the resolution included EU states, US, Canada, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia – the presence of the last two indicating that even the commitment of the supporting 'stigmatising coalition' to human rights was somewhat skin-deep. Opponents included Russia, India, China and Nigeria (BBC News 2001).

‘These [EU] amateurs on the Chechen issue should occupy themselves with Macedonia, where the [EU] is about to get its own Chechnya’ (quoted in Forsberg and Herd 2005, 467). The terrorism argument was particularly prevalent in the second war, as Moscow allied itself with Chechnya’s chief mufti, Akhmad Kadyrov, and labelled all oppositional Chechen forces, some of which were indeed affiliated with Al-Qaeda, ‘terrorist’ (Zygar 2016, 34). Chechnya was also thoroughly ‘securitised’ in the domestic Russian discourse, becoming a symbol for the potential disintegration of Russia as a whole, which justified extraordinary measures and made the war and its brutality ‘possible’ in spite of any concerns about human rights (Wilhelmsen 2016). Before 9/11, this approach did not resonate with Western leaders or international opinion. As Mikhail Zygar recounts, ‘when Putin told Western colleagues about his war on terror, they listened attentively, nodded, and said they would do what they could do to assist’, but then did nothing, leading to growing Russian resentment (2016, 34). After 9/11, the tune changed somewhat. Putin was, famously, the first leader to call President Bush after the attacks, and two weeks later Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov told US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice ‘Chechnya and Afghanistan are branches of the same tree’, expressing support for the US operation in the latter (Zygar 2016, 34–35; Ivanov quoted in Forsberg and Herd 2005, 467). As the US launched its ‘Global War on Terror’ and sought political and logistical support for its interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Russian and American discursive contexts aligned, leading to a ‘sudden, if temporary, decline in the number of open critiques of the situation in Chechnya’ (Gilligan 2010, 178). Even European leaders who in other contexts were highly sceptical of American policy called for (more or less cautious) reassessments of Russia’s Chechnya policy, and human rights abuses in Chechnya disappeared off the regular bilateral EU-Russia agenda despite the continued criticism and documentation by media and activists (Forsberg and Herd 2005, 468–72). In autumn 2002, a curious case of ‘reverse separation’ compared to the normal power relationship occurred when Putin refused to attend an EU-Russia summit in Denmark because the country would not extradite the Chechen leader Akhmed Zakayev; instead of standing its ground, the EU moved the meeting to Brussels (Forsberg and Herd 2005, 469).

In sum, elements of stigmatisation did occur in Russian-Western relations over the two Chechen wars, but it appears premature to speak of ‘full’ stigmatisation, for three

reasons. First, Western moves were hesitant as well as quickly and easily reversed, including the delayed PCA in the 1990s and the selective sanctions in 2000. Second, the 'audience of normals' was never unified, with splits both within the EU, between the EU and US (after 9/11) and no broader international consensus (as shown by the UNCHR votes). Third and related, other normative and/or strategic concerns tended to overrule the potential human rights stigmatisation when in direct conflict, notably the concern to maintain Russia's 'fragile democracy' in the 1990s or the 'international struggle against terrorism' in the early 2000s. Western leaders never completely gave up mentioning the need for human rights investigations, freedom and democracy in Chechnya (e.g. Bush 2003), but their concerns were not enough to engender full-on stigmatisation. Meanwhile, the Russian reaction, here as in the case of democracy, was a complete stigma rejection, insisting on the normality of their conduct and (through the tight control of media access in the second war) seeking to prevent any information that could lead to their discrediting from reaching the public sphere.

II – Freedom of expression and association

Increasing restrictions on freedom of expression and protest, the tightening of state control over media institutions and civil society organisations, as well as regular instances of physical attacks against individual journalists and human rights activists (several leading to deaths) were all persistent sources of labelling and status loss for the Russian government. Russian and international NGOs, international organisations and Western governments all criticised, more or less consistently, the excesses of the Putin and Medvedev administrations' attempt to monopolise administrative resources and marginalise alternative sources of power. However, by itself this discreditable behaviour was not enough to cause sustained separation by Western governments. The instances that caused the most sustained criticism were those where violations of civil rights coincided with more broadly discreditable behaviour, for example when protests against alleged election fraud were suppressed. Russia's reaction to stigmatisation in these areas mostly followed the well-trodden stigma rejection path, as well as the *tu quoque*/'whataboutist' counter-stigmatising tactic of pointing out discreditable behaviour in Western countries. There were several prongs to the government's strategy,

including the legal and administrative efforts to manage the electoral process and marginalise the political opposition described in the previous chapter, the Yukos affair (which will be examined in Chapter 7) and three elements that will be dealt with here: increased state control over the media, increased restrictions and crackdowns on protests, and increased restrictions on the activities of non-governmental organisations, particularly foreign ones or those receiving foreign funding (Greene 2014, 84–87).

The examples of discreditable behaviour in these areas were multiple and are covered in detail elsewhere, but a brief summary of key cases is warranted. Soon after Putin's election in 2000, the media mogul Vladimir Gusinsky's Media Most Group company was raided and Gusinsky arrested on tax fraud charges. Gusinsky was released and left Russia, while his TV station NTV, which had been critical of both Chechen wars, satirised Putin in a popular puppet show and openly questioned the FSB's potential role in the September 1999 apartment block bombings, was gradually taken over by the state-owned gas company Gazprom. The government also moved to assert control over Russian Public Television (ORT, in which it owned a 51% stake) from Putin's one-time champion Boris Berezovsky (who also left Russia after selling his shares to fellow oligarch Roman Abramovich) after the channel's critical coverage of Putin's handling of the August 2000 *Kursk* submarine disaster (Ostrovsky 2015, 292–302; Zygare 2016, 25–40). These moves marked the beginning of a growing increase in state control over mass media, particularly television, used to control information and promote the government's own view of affairs, as well as the use of tax and extremism laws and unofficial pressure to shut down or harass independent news outlets (Schönfeld 2012, 251–54). This was accompanied by physical harassment and killings of journalists, particularly those working for critical, independent outlets like *Novaya Gazeta* and/or reporting on the situation in Chechnya. The US-based NGO Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) recorded 26 journalists killed in Russia from 2000-16 (compared to 30 from 1992-99), while domestic organisations put the number far higher (Schönfeld 2012, 254–56).⁸³ High-profile cases included the detention of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reporter Andrey Babitsky by security forces in Chechnya in January-February 2000, and the above-mentioned killings of *Novaya Gazeta*-affiliated Politkovskaya and Estemirova (Gessen 2012, 32–36). Not all these cases were necessarily ordered or conducted by the government or even state

⁸³ www.cpj.org (accessed 3 August 2018).

representatives, but the lack of investigations and low conviction rates implicated the state heavily in the overall environment.

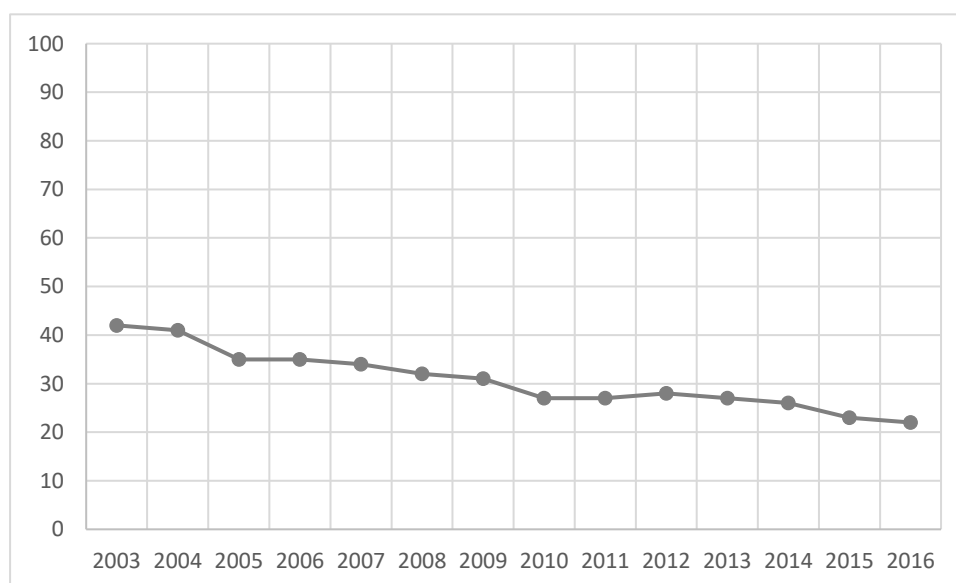
The picture was similar for NGOs and activists. Like independent news outlets, NGOs were subject to inspections and other harassment such as tax raids or accusations of ‘extremist’ activity. In summer 2004, a new law on protests was introduced that severely restricted the ability to hold protests in city centres and gave authorities wide discretion to refuse permissions, and in 2006 legal restrictions on NGO activities were passed that gave the government increased powers to deny registration to any organisations deemed a threat to Russia’s sovereignty or national interests and obliged NGOs to provide detailed reports of all projects and their funding to the government (Robertson 2009, 450–51; McAuley 2015, 153). These measures were escalated in May–July 2012, when the fines for engaging in unsanctioned protests were upped significantly and the law requiring all foreign NGOs and those receiving any funding from abroad to register as ‘foreign agents’ were introduced (Skibo 2017). In 2015, the ante was upped again as legal changes were introduced that allowed prosecutors to declare organisations ‘undesirable’ and thereby ban them from operating in Russia – by the end of 2016 six organisations had been categorised as such, including the National Endowment for Democracy, the Open Society Foundation and the International Republican Institute.⁸⁴ In addition to these legal restrictions, both official and unofficial protests were frequently cracked down on through detentions, arrests and legal cases against protest leaders, increasingly so since 2011–12 when political protests against electoral fraud and Putin’s return to the presidency took off. The most notable case was the violent crackdown on the ‘March of Millions’ protest in Moscow’s Bolotnaya Square on 6 May 2012 against Putin’s inauguration. Several hundred protesters were detained, dozens were injured in fighting with police, and more than 30 people were subsequently charged with inciting a ‘mass riot’ and/or violence against the police and convicted in a ‘slow drip of arrests, trials and sentences [that] created a pervasive sense of fear’ – the last verdict was not handed down until December 2015 (Greene and Robertson 2019, 23–26, quote from 25).

⁸⁴ See details of the legislation and list of organisations at The International Center for Non-Profit Law’s *Civic Freedom Monitor* website, <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/russia.html> (accessed 20 July 2019).

One of the most notable aspects of stigmatising practices in relation to Russia's record on freedom of expression and assembly and on civil and political rights more broadly was the central role played by non-state actors. A wide range of international and domestic NGOs monitored, documented and publicised human rights abuses, shamed the Russian government for its poor record and lobbied Western governments and international organisations to put pressure on Russia to improve. Within the conceptualisation of stigmatisation adopted here, such activities contribute heavily to the labelling and status loss components of the process, albeit with the caveat of these actors' primarily productive power. The consistently poor and worsening placement of Russia on NGO rankings such as Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* (see Chart 5.1) or *Freedom of the Press* and Reporters Without Borders' *World Press Freedom Index* contributed towards the knowledge production of Russia as an increasingly 'not free' state (in Freedom House's parlance). Regular critical reports and press releases from high-profile human rights organisations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Russia's own Memorial provided a consistent source of evidence of discreditable behaviour related to the above-mentioned areas as well as other issues like persistent torture and disappearances in Chechnya and the North Caucasus.

Chart 5.1 – Russia's aggregate score on Freedom House's Freedom in the World index, 2003-2016.

100 = entirely free, 0 = entirely unfree.



Source: 'Aggregate Category and Subcategory Scores, 2003-2019',

<https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world>.

These forms of stigmatising practices were highly intentional and strategic on behalf of the organisations involved. They broadly conformed to the ‘norm entrepreneur’ and/or ‘shaming’ logics identified by mainstream constructivist IR scholarship (e.g. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; 2013; Friman 2015), with a clear purpose of effecting change in a positive direction, be that towards increasing human rights compliance in the case of e.g. Amnesty or towards the more nebulous concept of ‘freedom’ in the case of Freedom House. As with an election being deemed neither free nor fair by the OSCE/ODIHR, the very fact of being labelled as a human rights-abusing government or ‘not free’ state by the likes of Amnesty and Freedom House was and is a contributing source of status loss for states, even if the organisations lack the institutional or coercive power to back it up (and to protect themselves against a counter-stigmatising backlash). This can be seen from the Russian government’s strong pushback against human rights NGOs’ assessments of and activities in Russia, seeking to pass as normal by repressing, delegitimising and (counter-) stigmatising the NGOs in question.

A second key part of the stigmatising process on the human rights front was the stream of cases and judgments against Russia at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg after its accession to the Council of Europe in 1996 and to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in 1998. As mentioned above, the first wave of these cases related to human rights abuses during the second war in Chechnya – at least 260 judgments finding violations had been issued by the ECtHR in connection with the conflict by the end of 2016 (Leach 2017, 255–56). But there were also numerous judgments relating to human rights breaches more generally. Russia was among the ECtHR’s “bad boys” both qualitatively and quantitatively: cases against it [were] numerous and many of them concern[ed] violations of core rights’, with a high degree of repetitive violations (Mälksoo 2017, 6). At the end of 2016, the number of pending cases against it at the Court was the fourth highest by country – 7,821, behind Ukraine, Turkey and Hungary (Council of Europe 2017, 192–93).⁸⁵ From the Court’s establishment in

⁸⁵ Russia’s statistics look better when population size is considered. The number of allocated cases per capita in 2016 was 0.38, compared to the ECtHR average of 0.64. Still, as Mälksoo notes, the issue is qualitative as well as quantitative, and the downward trend in allocated cases (from a high of 14,309 total/1.01 per capita in 2010) was probably more due to the Court becoming more restrictive about admitting cases, the increasingly anti-ECtHR rhetoric within Russia and intimidation of those considering bringing claims, than to any improvement in the human rights environment (Provost 2015).

1959 until the end of 2016, Russia ranked second for the number of judgments against it that had found at least one violation of the ECHR (1,834, behind Turkey on 2,889), and first for judgments relating to articles such as the right to life (270), prohibition of torture (50), inhuman or degrading treatment (612) and the right to liberty and security (816) (Council of Europe 2017, 202–3).⁸⁶ Compared to this, the number of judgments relating to freedom of expression (31) and assembly/association (20) were few, but they still made Russia the fourth- and second-worst violator of these rights, respectively.

Two things are worth noting about the stigmatising effects of ECtHR rulings. The first is that despite its legal and highly respected status, its power was primarily productive, i.e. its continued judgments against Russia served mainly to constitute the state and its government as a discreditable actor. The Court's judgments regularly require states to provide compensation when found guilty of violations, but the sums are usually relatively small from a state perspective and it has no real coercive power to enforce its rulings if a state refuses to comply. This does not make the status loss as a result of being identified as a serial violator of the ECHR any less real, but it does mean that there is usually no tangible pressure for states to comply beyond their leaders' concern for their reputation (Schönfeld 2012, 264). The second thing is that the Court's rulings did not just touch on human rights in a narrow sense but frequently emphasised the importance of for example freedom of expression to the broader good of a democratic society, demonstrating the mutually constitutive relationship between human rights and democracy in the dominant normative order. For example, in the 2007 case of *Dyuldin and Kislov vs. Russia*, the Court emphasised the importance of freedom of the press and thereby 'free political debate' for the very 'concept of a democratic society' (Schönfeld 2012, 268–69). The Court also frequently either explicitly or implicitly addressed issues linked to norms like capitalism and non-aggression, demonstrating the mutual constitution of the dominant norms. For example, its 2014 judgment in the case of *Yukos vs. Russia* awarding the oil company's shareholders €1.866 billion in compensation was a damning indictment of the Russian government's respect for the property rights central to liberal capitalism, and its 2004 ruling in the *Ilascu vs. Moldova and Russia* case

⁸⁶ This should be seen in the context of Russia only ratifying the ECHR in 1998 (vs. Turkey in 1954), although pre-1998 the ECtHR was not a full-time institution, and changes that allowed individuals to bring claims to it from 1999 onwards significantly increased the number of cases.

implicated Russia as a direct party to the Moldovan-Transnistrian conflict and *de facto* sovereign over separatist Transnistria, against Russian insistence to the contrary.

In addition to the ECtHR, two other international institutions whose productive power contributed to Russia's discrediting are worth mentioning. First, the Council of Europe's Venice Commission (technically the European Commission for Democracy through Law), which provides legal advice to member states. The Commission issued 18 opinions on Russian laws or legal amendments between 2003 and 2015 (often at the request of other Council of Europe bodies such as the Parliamentary Assembly), including Chechnya's draft constitution, several election-related laws, the law on combating extremist activity and the law on public demonstrations.⁸⁷ The Commission's opinions were as a rule negative, pointing out shortcomings and necessary improvements. In its opinion on the 2012 amendments to the 2004 law on demonstrations, the Commission employed the same temporal language that has been identified as a stigmatising trope throughout this study: the amendments represented 'a step backward for the protection of freedom of assembly' in Russia (Venice Commission 2013). The second noteworthy actor was the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media, tasked with ensuring the maintenance of media freedoms across the OSCE. Along with other OSCE institutions like the ODIHR, the Representative regularly issued critical opinions of the media situation in Russia, contributing to the overall process of labelling from non-state actors and international organisations (Schönfeld 2012, 256).

In contrast to this consistent process of discrediting, state-to-state practices of stigmatisation between Western state actors and Russia over civil and political rights was patchy, at least until Putin's return to the presidency in 2011-12. The human rights situation in Russia, whether linked to Chechnya, media freedoms or the right to protest, was always present in inter-governmental discussions as a topic of dialogue and criticism. However, as is often the case when states are involved, security issues and economic interests often meant that 'softer' issues like human rights were relegated in importance – rarely would Russia's discreditable human rights situation be the number one issue on the agenda or on its own be the explicit cause for instances of separation like cancelled meetings or summits. For example, in June 2000, the month after the first raid on Media

⁸⁷ For a full list, see the Commission's website at http://www.venice.coe.int/WebForms/documents/by_opinion.aspx?lang=EN (accessed 8 August 2018).

Most's offices, President Clinton visited Russia for his first summit with President Putin and signed agreements relating to the reduction of nuclear weapons and information sharing, while stressing the importance of an independent media and expressing confidence that Putin was capable of maintaining 'freedom and the rule of law' (W. J. Clinton and Putin 2000).⁸⁸ A year later, following the completion of Gazprom's aggressive takeover of NTV in April 2001, President Bush met Putin at the G8 Summit and noted 'Chechnya and ... media relations' as areas of 'differences' between the two countries before praising Putin as '... an honest, straightforward man who loves his country [and] family. We share a lot of values. I view him as a remarkable leader' (Bush and Putin 2001).⁸⁹ As noted above, the post-9/11 War on Terror temporarily muted American criticisms of Russian human rights abuses, and also severely undermined the US's (and its allies') claim to moral legitimacy and/or superiority concerning human rights. Even President Obama's less compromised administration chose initially to pursue better relations with Russia through its infamous 'reset', focusing on co-operation on security issues despite the worsening human rights situation in Russia. Similarly, in Europe, both the EU and individual European states continued co-operation and trade with Moscow despite growing concerns about human rights abuses, as evidenced by the 2003 establishment of the four 'common spaces' and the 2005 adoption of roadmaps for these, although by this time Russian-EU relations were running out of steam (Haukkala 2015, 30-31).

Russia's stigma management: denial and counter-stigmatisation

As with its reaction to being stigmatised as undemocratic and to criticisms of its Chechnya policy, the Russian government's response to criticism over its human rights abuses more broadly consisted of a mixture of stigma rejection and, increasingly, of counter-stigmatisation of both state and non-state actors. However, the picture was not uniform, and its counter-stigmatisation approach developed and became more aggressive over time, contributing to a spiral of more stigmatisation.

⁸⁸ Privately, Clinton was not so sure of this. See Talbott (2018).

⁸⁹ See Zygar (2016, 18-19) for details of how Putin prepared for the meeting with Bush, playing up to his religious views.

Russian authorities did in various ways and at various times either explicitly or implicitly acknowledge that human rights violations occurred in the country. For example, despite its increasingly hostile rhetoric towards the ECtHR and its intimidation of prospective claimants (a clear attempt at hiding discreditable behaviour), the Russian government generally paid out compensation in ECtHR cases, with notable exceptions such as *Yukos* and *Ilascu* (Mälksoo 2017, 5–6). A human rights commissioner/ombudsman office was established in 1997 and continued to operate, although a survey cited in its own annual report for 2014 in which only 7% of respondents said they would turn to the office if their human rights were violated (as opposed to 23% who would turn to the president and 24% to ‘nobody’) indicates limited visibility and effectiveness (High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation 2015, 16). The government’s approach to explicitly acknowledging human rights abuses can be summed up by a note from the foreign ministry’s Information and Press Department in June 2006, responding to a report by the ‘US human rights group Freedom House ... on how “bad” things are with democracy in Russia’ (the note also singled out the State Department and Human Rights Watch as fellow producers of ‘an endless stream of “compromising material” [that] is being churned out against Russia’): ‘The technique for preparing such material is simple. They ferret out individual facts of violations, which, of course, can be found in any country and at any time. Then they make generalizations, and the isolated facts become “dominating tendencies”’ (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). In other words, of course there are human rights violations in Russia – where are there not? – but not more than in any other country.

The statement on Freedom House is also notable for another reason. It highlights the close attention paid by the Russian government to NGO assessments of the country and the blurring of the lines between state and non-state actors that formed the central part of its counter-stigmatising approach against such organisations. That the foreign ministry would find it necessary or beneficial to publicly respond to a critical report by an NGO itself indicates some of the power exercised by these non-state actors and their relevance for a study of stigmatisation in international society. The statement went on to state that Freedom House ‘receives US government grants’ as well as money from ‘powerful public organizations’ with government subsidies and noting how it was headed

by a former CIA director, calling it a 'battleworthy unit' and linking its rankings of democracies to the new US National Security Strategy (the 'Bush Doctrine'):

Perhaps, all this should not be taken so seriously but for one important circumstance. In the new strategy for US national security Russian-American interstate relations are made directly contingent upon how Washington appraises our "behavior" in the field of democracy and human rights. ... why these continuous exercises in denigrating Russia? Probably, somebody needs them at present. Somebody wants to keep pressure on us, using from force of habit human rights themes as in the time of the Soviet Union. Scheme tried and tested, running smoothly. Why invent something new? (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006)

In effect, the foreign ministry labelled Freedom House as an agent of the American government and therefore neither objective nor to be trusted. By extension, this was the case for any NGO receiving funding from the American government (or other Western government) and providing support for or assessments of human rights and democracy in Russia. The immediate background to all of this was the colour revolutions, in which the stigmatisation of incumbent regimes as undemocratic had contributed to their removal. While a fairly straightforward explanation for why these laws were enacted can thus be made focusing on the Russian government's regime security, the measures' symbolic nature suggests a counter-stigmatising logic where the democratic legitimacy of such revolutions was being targeted.

This counter-stigmatising logic already underpinned the 2005-6 legislation restricting the activity of NGOs deemed a threat to Russian national security and came to full fruition with the 'foreign agent' law of 2012 and the 'undesirable organisations' law of 2015. Such labels would be highly stigmatising in almost any context and Russia was not the only government to use them,⁹⁰ but the term 'foreign agent' carried a particular negative resonance in the country during the Soviet period. The government took clear steps to ensure compliance: after many civil society organisations initially ignored the law, it launched a series of inspections that forced them to register, applying a liberal interpretation of what constituted 'political activity' in the process (Skibo 2017).⁹¹ The

⁹⁰ The US Foreign Agents Registration Act was passed in 1938 and is still in force – in 2017 the Russian TV channel RT was registered.

⁹¹ For example, in September 2016 the Levada Center, a highly respected independent polling institute, was placed on the register because conducting sociological surveys was deemed to constitute political activity. See Gessen (2017, 472, 481).

application of the foreign agent label to an organisation was made publicly available, both through a series of television exposés and through the practical requirements of the law. For example, the register of ‘foreign agents’ was available online on the Ministry of Justice’s website, and all organisations registered as such were required to mark their publicly available documents as ‘published by a foreign agent’ (Skibo 2017).⁹² These laws thus indicated a clear government strategy to not only cripple NGOs’ operations through administrative hurdles but to publicly stigmatise them in the eyes of the Russian population and thereby to delegitimise these organisations’ own stigmatisation of the government. A Levada Center poll of 1,600 people conducted in December 2016 indicated the success, albeit limited, of this strategy: a clear majority of those who had heard about the law held negative views about both ‘foreign agents’ and foreign funding of non-profit organisations. However, 73% of those polled had never heard about it.⁹³ Nevertheless, the ‘counter-audience of normals’ targeted by the Russian government in this case appears clearly to have been the Russian domestic population rather than some international or transnational audience.

While it is safe to assume that the labelling of civil society organisations as foreign agents had a stigmatising impact on the organisations in the domestic Russian context, internationally the Russian government’s increasingly aggressive counter-stigmatisation tactics only led to a step up in condemnation. This condemnation was also increasingly fuelled by another strand of Russian policy, namely its increasingly conservative and repressive stance on gender and sexuality, including LGBT rights.

III – ‘Sovereign morality’ as counter-stigmatisation

As noted briefly in Chapter 3, the position of gender rights, particularly LGBT rights, within the dominant normative order was more ambiguous than that of more widely accepted rights like the right to vote or protest, given the relatively recent decriminalisations of homosexuality even in some Western countries and the continuing

⁹² See the register at <http://unro.minjust.ru/NKOForeignAgent.aspx> (accessed 9 August 2018). In 2015, legal changes made it possible for organisations to be removed from the register, but the most common reason for being removed is either liquidation or self-liquidation.

⁹³ <https://www.levada.ru/en/2017/03/20/foreign-agent/> (accessed 9 August 2018).

debates over same-sex couples' right to marry, adopt, serve in the military, etc. The ECtHR had an evolving position on LGBT rights, only treating it as a full-fledged discrimination issue from the late 1990s and not recognising same-sex marriage as a fundamental right as late as the 2000s owing to the lack of consensus across the Council of Europe member states (Bartenev 2017, 327–30). Women's rights were a similarly mixed area, despite these and gender equality often being held up as particularly 'Western' traits by supporters and opponents alike (Towns 2009). While gender equality formed a fundamental part of the post-1945 human rights norm on paper, its practical implementation was slow, and there was no consensus even within or among Western states over key issues such as the rights to abortion and divorce. In spite of, or perhaps precisely because of this ambiguity, the area of LGBT and gender rights would form part of the most sustained and successful Russian counter-stigmatisation tactic.

Russia decriminalised homosexuality in 1993 and equalised the age of consent for same-sex intercourse in 1997, but discrimination against LGBT people persisted (see Healey 2017 for a history of homophobia in Russia). LGBT activists' application to hold a gay pride parade in Moscow in 2006 was turned down by the mayor's office and a demonstration against the ban by a few dozen activists was marred by violence from anti-LGBT protesters. A similar pattern of authorities refusing permission to the parades and violence against demonstrators continued over the next five years, until in 2012, Moscow's mayoral office banned all gay pride parades in the city for a period of 100 years. In 2010, the ECtHR's judgment in *Alekseyev vs. Russia* ruled that the continuous banning of pride parades violated the ECHR articles on freedom of association, effective remedy and discrimination (Bartenev 2017, 331–32). The Russian government had argued in its unsuccessful defence that the holding of pride parades would have a morally detrimental impact on children.⁹⁴ This foreshadowed the federal law adopted in June 2013 outlawing the promotion of 'non-traditional sexual relationships' as an acceptable social norm to minors (under-18s), dubbed the 'gay propaganda law' in the West.⁹⁵ The law specifically mentioned pride parades as an example of the kind of activity it outlawed, but as with the

⁹⁴ The Court argued that there was no 'scientific evidence or sociological data' to support this, something Bartenev (2017, 331–35) calls a 'mistake' as it implied that if such evidence did exist the banning could be lawful. Unsurprisingly, a government-supported research project was then launched in Russia to provide the scientific basis for this position – a stigma removal attempt.

⁹⁵ The law followed similar legislation in several Russian regions, starting with Ryazan as early as 2006 and then 13 more from 2011–14, including St. Petersburg (Bartenev 2017, 335–36).

ambiguous definition of 'political activity' under the various NGO laws, the terminology was so vague that almost any mention of non-heterosexual relationships in the presence of people under 18 could constitute a crime.

The 2013 law formed part of a wider series of policy moves and symbolic actions apparently geared towards constituting the Russian government as a defender of 'traditional family values' against the corrosive influence of Western-style gender rights (the law's full name was the federal law 'for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values'). The targets of these moves were both LGBT people, feminist activists and other advocates of allegedly 'non-traditional' gender norms. The example that gained most prominence internationally was the trial of and harsh sentences (two years in a penal colony) handed down to three members of the feminist punk rock group Pussy Riot in August 2012 for staging a 'punk prayer' in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in February 2012 in protest against Putin's presidential bid, calling on the Virgin Mary to 'exorcise Putin' and 'become a feminist' (Sperling 2015, 233–34). In its judgment, the court noted that 'feminism is incompatible with social relations in Russia that are historically based on a religious worldview' (Sharafutdinova 2014, 616). But forerunners setting the scene for this harsh ruling were many – for example, throughout the 2000s, the government had implemented increasingly pro-natalist policies to address the country's falling birth-rate, such as restrictions on abortion in 2003 and 2011 and the institution of an official award and medal for raising large families (the 'Order of Parental Glory') as well as a 'maternity capital' programme in 2007-08 (Sperling 2015, 149–50, 255–57). In Cai Wilkinson's (2018, 105–8) words, the link between Pussy Riot, the gay propaganda law and the broader traditional values agenda was the development of a 'hypermasculine' Russian state under Putin, performing hegemonic masculinity by protecting its 'damsel in distress' Mother Russia from the 'Unholy Queer Peril' of 'feminism, unnatural gender roles and secular Western decadence'.

The portrayal of Western countries as dens of sin and sexual deviancy can be summed up neatly in the increasing prevalence of the term 'Gayropa' to denote Europe in state-supported media discourse since Putin's return to the presidency in 2012 (Riabov and Riabova 2014; Foxall 2017). But similar language was also present in official

discourse, for example in Putin's comments to the Valdai discussion club in September 2013:

We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilisation. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious and even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan. The excesses of political correctness have reached the point where people are seriously talking about registering political parties whose aim is to promote paedophilia. People in many European countries are embarrassed or afraid to talk about their religious affiliations. Holidays are abolished or even called something different; their essence is hidden away, as is their moral foundation. And people are aggressively trying to export this model all over the world. I am convinced that this opens a direct path to degradation and primitivism, resulting in a profound demographic and moral crisis. (Putin 2013a)⁹⁶

In addition to labelling them as morally wrong, Putin portrayed the 'aggressive export' of Western values as fundamentally undemocratic. In his address to the Federal Assembly in December 2013, he accused the liberal West of seeking to foist its 'neutered and barren' culture of tolerance upon Russia and others, going on to invoke an ever-growing 'audience of normals' against such imposition:

Today, many nations are revising their moral values and ethical norms, eroding ethnic traditions and differences between peoples and cultures. Society is now required not only to recognise everyone's right to the freedom of consciousness, political views and privacy, but also to accept without question the equality of good and evil, strange as it seems, concepts that are opposite in meaning. This destruction of traditional values from above not only leads to negative consequences for society, but is also essentially anti-democratic, since it is carried out on the basis of abstract, speculative ideas, contrary to the will of the majority, which does not accept the changes occurring or the proposed revision of values. We know that there are more and more

⁹⁶ The gendering of the demographic situation highlighted by Wilkinson and Sperling is front and centre here, as is the homophobic linking of homosexuality and paedophilia. When asked about whether gay athletes would be welcome at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, Putin responded 'as long as they stay away from the children' (Sperling 2015, 299).

people in the world who support our position on defending traditional values... (Putin 2013b)

Echoing the temporal/teleological metaphors used by Western officials, Putin acknowledged that this position was 'conservative', but invoked the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev's words to argue that 'the point of conservatism is not that it prevents movement forward and upward, but that it prevents movement backward and downward, into chaotic darkness and a return to a primitive state' (Putin 2013b). The two statements' invocation of a silent majority ('People in many European countries are embarrassed'; 'more and more people in the world support us') opposed to and stigmatised by an unaccountable elite ('the destruction of traditional values *from above*') is a classic simultaneous stigma rejection and counter-stigmatisation move. For Putin and his government, it carried a dual domestic and international purpose: domestically, emphasising traditional values shored up his popularity with the conservative, older and often rural population and positioned him as an opponent of the 'liberal metropolitan elite' in Moscow, while internationally, such a conservative agenda aligned Russia with other opponents not just of Western power but of liberal human rights norms as a whole.

The promotion internationally of 'traditional values' as a normative system for other states and governments to rally behind and subvert their own stigmatisation within the dominant order predated Putin's return to the presidency. A repeated practice was the promotion in the UN Human Rights Council of resolutions on 'promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind'. Three such resolutions co-sponsored by Russia (a member of the Council from 2006-16) were passed in 2009, 2011 and 2012, respectively. Each time, a majority of between 24 and 26 states including Russia and other primarily eastern and southern states supported the resolutions against a minority of 14-15 mostly Western states and a mixed bag of abstentions (6-7).⁹⁷ These resolutions were not directly critical of established human rights norms – each resolution paid lip-service to the universal and indivisible nature of the Universal Declaration. However, they sought to establish that 'all

⁹⁷ As an illustration, the 2012 resolution was supported by Angola, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, China, Congo, Cuba, Djibouti, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Thailand and Uganda, and opposed by Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland and the US. Benin, Chile, Guatemala, Nigeria, Peru, Moldova and Uruguay abstained.

cultures and civilizations in their traditions, customs, religions and beliefs share a common set of values that belong to humankind in its entirety' and that had 'made an important contribution to the development of human rights norms'. The 2009 resolution called for a workshop to discuss such values, which was duly held in October 2010 (UN Human Rights Council 2009; 2010). The 2011 resolution singled out 'dignity, freedom and responsibility' as three particularly important such values and requested that the Council's Advisory Committee 'prepare a study on how a better understanding and appreciation of [these values] can contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights' (UN Human Rights Council 2011). The 2012 resolution took this one step further by requesting that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights gather information from states and other stakeholders 'on best practices in the application of traditional values' (UN Human Rights Council 2012).

The stigma management approach encapsulated in these resolutions was thus twofold: stigma rejection, through an attempt to establish that 'traditional values' were in fact just as universal as human rights and indeed constitutive of them, and attempted counter-stigmatisation, in that the exercise in collecting information was almost certainly intended to 'reveal' the non-protection of 'traditional values' in Western states and thereby label them. In the event, Russia did not even submit any information on 'best practices' itself (though other supporters such as Qatar did), while the EU delivered a stinging rebuke of the whole exercise and several human rights organisations, including the Russian LGBT Union, submitted detailed take-downs of the concept.⁹⁸ The promotion of similar resolutions in the Human Rights Council continued: in June 2014, Russia, China and a group of similarly inclined states sponsored and passed a resolution entitled 'Protection of the family', reaffirming the family as 'the natural and fundamental group of society'. A year later, a more substantive resolution affirming the family's contribution 'to the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living for its members' was passed by a similar group of states, again against the opposition of most Western states on the council (UN Human Rights Council 2014; 2015).

Gulnaz Sharafutdinova (2014) has dubbed the conservative turn in Russian policy since 2012 a move from sovereign democracy to 'sovereign morality', and emphasised

⁹⁸ See submissions at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/TraditionalValues.aspx> (accessed 16 August 2018).

the international resonance of this originally domestic agenda. In her words, '[w]hat was initially a domestic strategy turned into an internationally oriented discourse, as Putin took upon himself the mantle of the champion of conservative values worldwide' (2014, 616; see also Laruelle 2016). The UN initiatives listed above were only part of the story: Russia's new positioning not only gave it natural allies in other governments opposed to gender equality, LGBT rights or the broader liberal rights agenda, but also conservative, nativist movements within the West opposed to the 'liberal social policies and multiculturalism' of their elites (I. B. Neumann 2016, 175). The well-publicised close relations between the Kremlin and France's Front National were only one instance of several connections between the Russian government and far-right parties across Europe, involving underhand funding based on ideological affinity and shared strategic goals (Shekhovtsov 2017). In the same way that such parties positioned themselves domestically as the 'true' protectors of 'real' European (usually Christian, frequently national) values to reject or evade the stigmas of racism, intolerance and backwardness, Russia's government positioned itself as the leader of a silent majority of 'normals' against the 'deviant' liberal West.

Conclusion

There are some interesting tentative conclusions to be drawn from the above analysis. First, the interrelations and close connections between the norms investigated here are clear from the way Russia reacted to its growing stigmatisation as broadly undemocratic not by defending the alternative political organisation or value system of 'authoritarianism' but by doubling down on 'conservatism' and 'traditional values', thereby focusing primarily on the 'liberal' part of Western 'liberal democracy' (as well as its alien nature, symbolised in the 'foreign agent' law). The notable thing is that state-to-state stigmatisation of Russia over the kinds of human rights encapsulated in the 'traditional values' agenda – LGBT rights, gender equality, reproductive rights – was not particularly pronounced prior to 2012. This changed subsequently, with both the Pussy Riot trial and the gay propaganda law becoming central themes in Western criticisms of Russia's direction under Putin, albeit still primarily on the NGO level. For example, while several Western heads of state or government stayed away from the opening ceremony

of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and the US had a subtle dig at Russia by nominating openly gay athletes for their opening and closing ceremony delegation, human rights and/or LGBT rights were not explicitly cited as a reason for this highly symbolic display of separation (Goldstein 2013).⁹⁹ But rather than being a case of Russia's classic *tu quoque* tactic, whereby Russian leaders by default pointed their fingers straight back at Western countries' own faults whenever criticised, this was a deeper, more fundamental counter-stigmatising approach where the whole 'Western' value system was being rejected. Russia portrayed itself as the 'true' Europe against the decadent, liberal version further west (I. B. Neumann 2016, 169–78).

Theoretically and methodologically, this points to some important dynamics and questions. Primarily, there appears to be no clear relationship between the observable existence or not of a successful (sociological) stigma imposition and the (psychological) reaction or experience of the stigmatised. To an outside observer, Russia was not particularly stigmatised for its supposed 'traditional values' pre-2012, yet this was the area that was most furiously asserted as being under attack by the Russian government. This may of course have been a purely strategic calculation and not down to any actual feeling of being stigmatised on the part of the Russian leadership. Even so, the relative success of this 'sovereign morality' discourse both domestically and internationally points to a deeper unease within and without Russia about the 'liberal' side of the liberal democratic order.

Second and relatedly, the high involvement of non-state actors in the stigmatisation processes surrounding human rights and the close attention paid to their activities by states like Russia points to the need for a transnational approach to stigmatisation. By focusing only on inter-state dynamics, it is possible to lose sight of the important productive roles played by NGOs and international institutions like the European Court of Human Rights. Moreover, we lose sight of transnational processes like the Russian government's support for and co-operation with ideologically like-minded actors both at government and opposition level across Europe and the world. As such, audiences and counter-audiences of 'normals' and 'stigmatised' in international relations

⁹⁹ The US did not send either a president, vice-president, first lady or former president to the ceremony for the first time since 2000. The German president and chancellor, UK prime minister, Canadian prime minister and French president also declined to attend, citing various innocuous reasons.

do not just consist of states. When the Russian government identified itself with the 'out-group' of 'illiberals' who supported traditional values, gender roles, etc., they were not just building an alliance of states but of anyone who subscribed to these ideas, just like Western governments did when they sought to include the 'Russian people' in their own (democratic) audience of normals against the 'abnormal' Russian government.

Chapter 6

Non-aggression

This chapter analyses stigmatisation processes in relation to perhaps the most fundamental norm of the international society of states non-aggression. As argued in Chapter 3, forcefully violating another state's 'territorial integrity or political independence', as stated in article 2(4) of the UN Charter, was a clear and well-established taboo for states, legally enshrined both in treaties and customary international law since at least 1945. As interventions across state borders nevertheless continued to be a core feature of international relations, the challenge for any would-be intervening state wanting to avoid the potential stigma of aggression was to either hide any dubious intervention from the world, to seek authorisation from the UN Security Council owing to a threat to international peace and security, or to successfully frame an intervention in such a way as to be consistent with one of the established or emergent and still contested exceptions to the general rule, primarily peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention/the Responsibility to Protect, or at least a notional promotion of the general principles of democracy or human rights.

This chapter proceeds in three sections. In the first, Russian-Western interactions in relation to the series of Western interventions in the late 1990s and early 2000s – Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq – are analysed from a stigma perspective. While none of the interventions involved full stigmatisation from either side, each in their own way affected the normative stability and legitimacy of future stigmatisation attempts. Second, the tentative but uncompleted steps towards the stigmatisation of Russia as aggressive in connection with the 2008 war in Georgia are analysed. Third, the fulfilment of Russia's stigmatisation over aggression in the response to its annexation of Crimea is analysed. In each of these sections, the evolving Russian stigma management is also considered.

I – From Kosovo to Iraq: shifting norms

The Western interventions in Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) each provided crucial turning points both in the developing normative framework on the use of force and in relations between Russia and Western powers. Russian acquiescence and even support for the Afghanistan intervention came during the brief period of US-Russian (and, to a lesser extent, Russian-European) normative and strategic convergence around the need to combat international terrorism in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks in the US. This was bookended by the more conflictual relations over the Kosovo and Iraq interventions, both of which Russia strongly opposed. However, while there were elements of stigmatisation such as labelling and separation involved, particularly in the case of Kosovo, neither case resulted in complete stigmatisation either of the Western interveners (as aggressors) or Russia (as opposer of the values the interveners claimed to be upholding), with no sufficient audiences of normals mobilised or separation or status loss enacted in support.

Kosovo

Operation Allied Force (OAF), NATO's March-June 1999 bombing campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) to stop the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo Albanians by FRY government forces during their ongoing conflict with the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), was worrying to the Russian political leadership for several reasons. Strategically, as NATO's first operation outside of its member states' territory and in Russia's former sphere of influence in the Balkans, it provided clear evidence of the post-Cold War shift in balance of power in Europe. The intervention side-lined forums in which Russia played a part, including the UN Security Council (in large part because of Russia's threatened veto), and showed the ultimate failure of negotiations Russia had sought to maintain for the previous year and a half, leaving it as an 'affronted bystander' (Allison 2013, 51; Averre 2009, 577). That the intervention was against the 'fraternal' Slav nation of Serbia (FRY's main constituent republic) provided fuel to ethnic nationalist forces in Russia, who were pushing the government to take a tough stance despite

Russia's diminished capabilities (particularly so soon after the 1998 Russian financial crisis). Normatively, the emerging concept of humanitarian intervention, used by leaders such as Tony Blair to justify the NATO campaign, and its solidarist implications in Russian eyes undermined the pluralist principle of non-intervention and set a potential precedent for similar involvement in Chechnya. At the same time, too strong an opposition to the Western action risked excluding Russia from future negotiations about Kosovo's status and isolating the country at a particularly vulnerable time economically (Allison 2013, 50–55). Seeking a balance between these different concerns, the Russian leadership paired heated rhetoric, in which NATO's actions were labelled both 'genocide' and 'neo-colonialism' by Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, with 'relatively restrained diplomatic measures' of separation, including for example the recall of Russia's chief military representative to NATO and suspension of Russia's participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme (Averre 2009, 579–82). In perhaps the most immediate of separation acts covered in this study, when he was informed about the start of the NATO operation by US Vice President Al Gore while on a private plane on his way to meetings in Washington, Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov ordered the plane to turn around and immediately return to Moscow (Broder 1999).

In addition to such bilateral separation, the Russian government sought to label NATO's action as a violation of international law and norms on the use of force and to mobilise an international 'audience of normals' behind this. On 26 March 1999, two days after the start of OAF, the UN Security Council met to vote on a resolution drafted by Russia and Belarus and co-sponsored by India that categorised NATO's 'unilateral use of force' as a 'flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter' and a 'threat to international peace and security' (UN Security Council 1999b). The resolution was defeated by 12 votes to three.¹⁰⁰ In their statements before and after the vote, opponents of the resolution (both NATO members and others) emphasised the dire humanitarian situation in Kosovo, the intransigence of the Milošević government (often referred to as such rather than as the 'Yugoslav' government, indicating the personal stigma increasingly attached to Milošević), and the fact that the military intervention was a last resort (UN Security Council 1999a). The level of opposition to the resolution 'offered a degree of tentative

¹⁰⁰ China, Namibia and Russia voted for; Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, France, Gabon, Gambia, Malaysia, Netherlands, Slovenia, the UK and US against.

support for [NATO's] combined justifications for OAF' (Allison 2013, 53). The absence of a united stigmatising 'audience of normals' was illustrated by the divergent language even of the resolution's supporters. Russia spoke of NATO's 'aggressive military action', 'military aggression' and a 'virus of lawlessness' (language echoed by Belarus, Cuba and FRY itself), and invoked the Rio Group, the CIS Council of Defence Ministers and the Non-Aligned Movement as fellow opposers (UN Security Council 1999a, 5–6).¹⁰¹ However, China and India were more guarded in their statements, not explicitly using the word aggression and focusing primarily on the need to halt violence and restore the authority of the Security Council (UN Security Council 1999a, 9, 15–16). China's opposition to the NATO action grew exponentially six weeks later after the inadvertent bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, but at this point Russia had decided to instead work with Western states to find a political solution, as indicated by an agreement in principle reached at the G8 foreign ministers' meeting on 6 May 1999 that formed the basis for UN Security Council Resolution 1244 adopted on 10 June with China abstaining (Allison 2013, 54).

There are some tentative conclusions to draw from the Kosovo intervention about the role of stigmatisation processes both in the evolving normative order concerning the use of force and in Russian-Western relations. First, the stigma of aggression could be avoided if an intervention could be successfully framed as a necessary and proportionate response to grave human rights abuses (as would be debated at length in subsequent debates on humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect). This relativizing of the stigma against the use of force had several unintended consequences, including, according to Russian analysts, making the Russian leadership less worried about using force in Chechnya, by both lifting a 'taboo' on using military force to resolve ethnic problems and giving Russia a potent *tu quoque* argument against NATO criticism of its imminent second Chechen campaign (Averre 2009, 585). Second, at this stage, neither Russia nor Western powers were interested in pushing the normative conflict into active, sustained stigmatisation territory, despite Russia's view of OAF as a flagrant violation of international law and Western views of Russia as directly or indirectly supporting Milošević's human rights abuses. For the Russian leadership, too much was at stake –

¹⁰¹ According to Allison (2013, 54–55), the CIS defence ministers actually failed to adopt a Belarus-proposed resolution condemning 'NATO aggression against Yugoslavia'; each of its leaders interpreted the NATO intervention in ways favourable to their own political goals.

negotiations on the adapted Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty and on an IMF assistance programme were ongoing (Averre 2009, 582–84). For the West, the aforementioned commitment to helping Russia's transition to democracy, particularly in the face of the communist/nationalist challenge in the upcoming 1999 parliamentary election, militated against rocking the boat.

Afghanistan: brief, mutual stigmatisation of 'terrorists'

As noted in the chapter on human rights, for a brief period following 9/11 and President Bush's declaration of his 'War on Terror', the normative outlook of the Russian and Western, particularly American, governments converged around a mutual stigmatisation of 'terrorism' and 'terrorists', mainly of the Islamist jihadi kind. Thus, Russia supported the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) to oust the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, despite concerns about the potential impact on the broader security situation and American influence in Central Asia. Drawing on Moscow's existing representation of Chechnya as a 'key transnational terrorist-inspired conflict' (rather than one about separatism or secession), Putin framed Afghanistan explicitly as 'a continuation of the anti-terrorist operation in Chechnya' (Allison 2013, 91–92). While this was further than Western politicians were willing to go and critical official voices remained, further information on links between al-Qaeda and Chechen rebels led Western leaders, particularly Bush, to accept Chechnya as a counter-terrorism case (Allison 2013, 93–94). 9/11 thus led to a brief lull in stigmatisation dynamics in Russian-Western relations.

The Afghanistan intervention was important from a stigmatisation perspective in demonstrating another potential way of avoiding the stigma of aggression (or, in the case of domestic use of force, human rights abuses): by successfully framing an intervention as a response to, or as aimed at combating, terrorism (particularly international/transnational terrorism). 'Terrorism' or 'terrorist' was and remains itself a stigma, a mark reducing its bearer(s) to something less than full humanity and singling them out for separation, status loss and other extraordinary measures such as rendition or even summary execution (see e.g. Patel 2012; Zarakol 2011). The contentious point, as will be seen below in both Russian and Western justifications for interventions, comes

when defining who or what counts as terrorist or terrorism. During the Kosovo war, Russia had designated the KLA as terrorists, and by extension criticised NATO for supporting Islamist extremism (Averre 2009, 582). Afghanistan was thus both indicative of a potential rule – the power of the terrorism stigma in trumping other stigmas – and was itself an exception of a moment when there was relatively widespread agreement on the labelling of a specific group (in this case the Taliban and/or al-Qaeda) as terrorist.

Iraq: the shattering of a fragile consensus

The invasion of Iraq in March 2003 ‘fractured international society more deeply than any other post-Cold War military intervention’ (Allison 2013, 116). In their attempts to legitimise the intervention and avoid the stigma of aggression, US leaders and their British allies made use of a variety of strategies and tactics, many of which can be productively read through a stigmatisation lens, from President Bush’s labelling of Iran, Iraq and North Korea as the ‘Axis of Evil’ in January 2002 to the persistent attempts to demonstrate the Iraqi government’s alleged possession or pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, itself a stigmatisable attribute/behaviour in contemporary international relations (Shamai 2015; Tannenwald 2005). Indeed, since its own aggression against Kuwait in 1990, Iraq had been one of the more directly stigmatised states in international society, the subject of ongoing economic sanctions by the UN Security Council.

From a stigmatisation perspective, the lack of any form of consensus, even among Western states, about the intervention and accusations of transgression in all directions led to what Adler-Nissen (2014b) calls a split between different normative visions of international society. As Allison (2013, 94–110) points out, Russian opposition to the intervention was both principled and expedient at the same time – while the Russian government was relatively sympathetic to the US interpretation of the general principle of pre-emption against threats to national security, it did not want this applied to states (only to non-state actors like terrorist groups). Moreover, it was sceptical of the selective American designation of certain states (which all happened to have decent relations with Russia) as ‘rogues’, the bypassing of the UN Security Council and the general transformative precedent set by the *ex post facto* justification of regime change and supposed democratisation in Iraq. It was joined in opposition to the intervention by usual

suspects such as China but also France and Germany, with three trilateral Russian-French-German summits through 2003 and another in 2004. However, despite their shared 'heartfelt irritation' at American arrogance, Putin, Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder each also had different levels of 'cynical self-interest' driving their opposition to war and did not readily align in a common normative front or 'audience of normals' against Bush and Blair's 'coalition of the willing' (Allison 2013, 114; Zygar 2016, 37). Notably, in neither the foreign minister-level UN Security Council meeting on 19 March 2003 when the invasion was imminent nor in the expanded ambassador-level meeting on 26 and 27 March did Russia (or France or Germany) label the invasion an act of aggression, unlike several members of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Arab League, Cuba and Belarus (UN Security Council 2003a; 2003b). Given the predominant power relations, with the world's most powerful state being accused of aggression, such labelling was not accompanied by much separation or status loss. By May 2003 the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1483, following negotiations and compromises between its sponsors (Spain, the UK and the US) and opponents of the invasion. The resolution lifted sanctions on Iraq and recognised the US and UK as 'occupying powers' and their 'unified command' as 'the Authority' (UN Security Council 2003c, 2). This to some extent legitimised the occupation, though Allison (2013, 114) points out that the resolution neither condemned nor condoned the intervention itself, rather accepting it as a *fait accompli* and moving on to manage its consequences – either way the interveners did not face full, direct stigmatisation from their peers.

The legacy of Iraq for subsequent interventions and stigmatisation dynamics in Russian-Western relations was nevertheless important. The occupiers' failure to find any evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and subsequent revelations about deliberate deception or disinformation by the US and UK governments severely undermined their legitimacy both internationally and even domestically. In the UK, having supported the war became a stigma of sorts for Labour politicians in intra-party politics. Any future attempt by the US or UK to stigmatise others for aggression or unnecessary intervention would now be (legitimately) subject to the retort of 'what about Iraq?'. Regarding Russian-Western relations specifically, according to Zygar (2016, 37) Iraq 'permanently changed Putin's attitude toward the United States' (and his 'friend' Blair). Having already been 'furious' about what he saw as American duplicity over the

prolongation of a temporary airbase in Kyrgyzstan beyond the one year promised at the time of the Afghanistan intervention, Putin and the rest of the Russian establishment were highly sceptical of the US and UK arguments on Iraq from the beginning given the close contacts between Moscow and Baghdad (a legacy from the Cold War). They knew Saddam Hussein to be 'surrounded by corruption but not weapons of mass destruction' (Zygar 2016, 35–36). The American intransigence and seeming deception thus fuelled already growing Russian cynicism about the US-led liberal order and anxieties about its own power within it, pushing the leadership towards an 'anti-hegemonic' position (Allison 2013, 118). This would manifest itself in increasingly stigma-rejecting and counter-stigmatising positions and a more actively subversive or revisionist stance.

II – Georgia 2008: a deliberate transgression?

Officially, the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia lasted for a mere five days, from 7 to 12 August. In Ronald D. Asmus's words, '[by] the standards of modern warfare, it was a little war. It was nevertheless a little war that shook the world' (2010, 4).¹⁰² One of the main reasons for this was Russia's breach of what Asmus called the 'cardinal rule of post-Cold War European security': 'that borders in Europe should never again be changed by the force of arms' (2010, 4). However, despite this apparent clear breach of a well-established taboo, Russia faced few consequences and little direct stigmatisation, at least from its peers. This section considers the reasons for this seeming paradox.

While appearing murky at the time owing to limited international media presence and knowledge of the region, the basic facts of the conflict have been well established. Central to this was the report of the EU's 'Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia' (named the 'Tagliavini Report' after its lead author, Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini), published in September 2009. Over three volumes and 1,129 pages, the mission sought to meet its mandate of investigating the 'origins and course' of the conflict, re-iterating that its task was to establish the 'facts', not acting as a 'tribunal' ('Independent

¹⁰² Given the overwhelming European focus of Asmus's reasons for this claim, it would perhaps be more accurate to say that the war shook Europe (and North America).

International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia Volume I' 2009, 5, 2). Its headline summary of the conflict was as follows:

On the night of 7 to 8 August 2008, a sustained Georgian artillery attack struck the town of Tskhinvali [the capital of the Russian-backed breakaway republic of South Ossetia]. Other movements of the Georgian armed forces targeting Tskhinvali and the surrounding areas were under way, and soon the fighting involved Russian, South Ossetian and Abkhaz military units and armed elements. ... In a counter-movement, Russian armed forces, covered by air strikes and by elements of its Black Sea fleet, penetrated deep into Georgia, cutting across the country's main east-west road, reaching the port of Poti and stopping short of Georgia's capital city, Tbilisi. ('Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia Volume I' 2009, 10)

The report also acknowledged that the Georgian attack was 'only the culminating point of a long period of increasing tensions, provocations and incidents', stretching back several years but becoming increasingly intense over the preceding months and weeks ('Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia Volume I' 2009, 11). In total, the fighting left around 850 people dead and thousands wounded or displaced before a ceasefire was negotiated on 12 August after mediation by French President Nicolas Sarkozy on behalf of the European Union and fighting gradually ceased over the coming days ('Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia Volume I' 2009, 5). Shortly afterwards, on 26 August 2008, Russia's new president, Medvedev, officially recognised South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states after a unanimous motion to that effect had been passed by the Russian Duma (Medvedev 2008). Russia's two main potentially discreditable actions were thus, first, its intervention 'deep into Georgia' (if not its prior incursions, general support for Abkhazia and South Ossetia and clear preparations for an invasion long before the Georgian attack – see e.g. Illarionov (2009)) and, second, its recognition of separatist republics as independent states, thereby violating Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The Russian government sought to counter any potential stigmatisation both by seeking to control the narrative and information flow about the conflict and by offering a series of legal and moral justifications for its actions. Efforts to control the narrative were intense on both sides of the conflict, with both the Russian and Georgian governments seeking 'to define for their own peoples, their opponents and the international

community ... who was the aggressor ... and who was the victim' (Goble 2009, 181). Russia was mostly on the offensive in this information war. For example, in one of many moves that strongly indicated forward planning, around 50 Russian journalists were flown in to Tskhinvali from 2 to 7 August, the day the Georgian offensive began, while foreign journalists were denied entry; Russian state television also appeared well-prepared in disseminating the official Russian message as soon as the war was underway (Goble 2009, 183–87; Illarionov 2009, 72–73). On a diplomatic level, Russia seized the initiative, calling an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council for the early hours of 8 August to denounce Georgia's 'aggressive actions' and its 'treacherous and massive attack' on South Ossetia (UN Security Council 2008a, 2–3).

Overall, Russia's defence of its actions centred on three themes: that Georgia (and specifically Saakashvili) was the aggressor, that Russia had no choice but to intervene to defend the human rights of its citizens (a somewhat warped 'responsibility to protect' argument), and that the West had no right to criticise given its previous actions in Kosovo (which had declared unilateral independence earlier in 2008) and elsewhere (Goble 2009, 183; Toal 2017, 179–90). Georgia was accused of perpetrating 'genocide' against the Ossetian population, with wildly exaggerated death tolls initially cited by Russian officials (Allison 2013, 157). Overall the Russian discourse, Allison (2013, 151) argues, was 'challenging in its legal *jus ad bellum* justifications, interesting in its (mis)use of humanitarian claims, and unsettling in its support for political secession'. None of Russia's claims held up to international legal scrutiny. Even if a claim can be made that Georgia 'started' the conflict (in a narrow sense) and it has been well documented that the Georgian side also violated international humanitarian law, Russia's intervention and massive use of force was disproportionate to any threat to either its peacekeepers, the human rights of Russians and/or Ossetians or Russian territory (which Georgia never attacked) ('Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia Volume I' 2009, 22–26).

From a stigma perspective, Russia's actions in Georgia are interesting in several respects. First, regarding stigma management strategies, the focus on controlling information to hide evidence of aggression and the persistent framing of Georgia's government as the aggressor was another prime example of a proactive attempt both to hide discreditable activity, as with human rights abuses in Chechnya, and to 'discredit the

discreditors' (Meisenbach 2010). Indeed, by labelling Georgia in general and vilifying Saakashvili in particular as a war criminal, seeking to place him 'beyond the political pale' (Allison 2013, 157), the Russian government was itself engaging in a stigmatisation campaign, seeking to mobilise an 'audience of normals' both at home and abroad against the Georgian government. It clearly recognised the potency of the potential stigma of aggression and sought both to avoid it and to label others with it.

Second, in the broader scheme of Russian-Western relations and Russia's increasingly explicit counter-hegemonic, counter-stigmatising stance, Georgia 2008 – particularly the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states – appears as a very *deliberate* transgression, aimed at unveiling the hypocrisy of the 'normals'. Evers (2017, 786) notes how overt and self-conscious violations of international norms can be employed strategically by states. In the case of Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the key context was Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence from Serbia on 17 February 2008 and its recognition as an independent state by an increasing number of states, mostly but not exclusively Western.¹⁰³ Russia had consistently opposed the prospect of Kosovo's independence throughout the years of UN-led mediation and compromise-seeking since the 1998-99 conflict, out of a mix of geopolitical concern about increased Western influence in the Balkans and the precedent both of independence following Western military intervention and for the right to secession in general. The recognition of the two separatist republics in Georgia did not sit well with this supposedly principled opposition to secession – indeed, in February 2008, while condemning recognition of Kosovo as immoral and illegal, Putin claimed that 'nobody was talking about the recognition of Abkhazia or South Ossetia' (Allison 2013, 160). In Medvedev's statement justifying Russia's recognition, a point was made of claiming that Russia had maintained its call for negotiations between the Georgian government and the separatists 'even after the unilateral proclamation of Kosovo's independence', showing how the different cases were linked in the Russian view (Medvedev 2008). Nevertheless, the statement proceeded to make a case for secession by painting Saakashvili as a latter-day Milošević who had 'opted for genocide to

¹⁰³ By the time of Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, 46 states had recognised Kosovo, including 21 of 27 EU members, 22 of 26 NATO members, and other 'Western' stalwarts like Australia, Costa Rica and Japan. See <http://www.beinkosovo.com/countries-that-have-recognized-kosovo-as-an-independent-state/> (accessed 8 January 2019).

accomplish his political objectives’, claimed that after ‘what has happened in [South Ossetia] and what has been planned for Abkhazia’ the people of the republics had ‘the right to decide their destiny by themselves’, referred to previous referendums in which support had been expressed for independence and called on other states to ‘follow [Russia’s] example’ in recognising the two *de facto* states (Medvedev 2008). Kosovo was cited as a reason also in a *Financial Times* article in Medvedev’s name on 27 August (Asmus 2010, 211).

The fact that Russia went to great lengths to portray the recognitions as within international law does not make them any less of a transgression. While a ‘remedial secession’ argument of the right to secede in the face of gross human rights violations is supported by a minority of international lawyers, it has never entered state practice and did not fit the facts of the case (Allison 2013, 160–61). The Russian leadership knew it was breaking a taboo, but almost certainly chose to do so in part to seek to expose the ‘double standards’ of the West (in addition to other strategic goals like keeping Georgia out of NATO), while at the same time creating as much confusion as possible around the facts of the case in order to avoid or evade the stigma that might follow such an act. When confronted with criticism, it again resorted to stigma rejection and going on the counter-attack, for example UN Ambassador Churkin in the Security Council on 26 August:

I must say that I in particular liked the statement of the Permanent Representative of the United States reminding the members of the Security Council that States must refrain in their activity from the use or the threat of the use of force. I would now like to ask the representative of the United States whether he has found the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq yet, or is he still looking for them? (UN Security Council 2008b, 17)

Russia may also have genuinely hoped for other states to join it to create a stigmatising coalition against Georgia and an ‘audience of normals’ behind the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but neither of those things occurred. The only UN members to have joined Russia in recognition by the end of 2016 were Nicaragua (2008), Venezuela and Nauru (2009), and Vanuatu and Tuvalu (2011, both since retracted). The foreign ministers of the Russia-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) did issue a statement in September 2008 condemning Georgia’s ‘aggression’, but all CIS states refused to recognise the two separatist republics and most were ‘shocked both by the Russian empowerment of separatism and its redrawing of CIS state borders’, which

'overturned a foundational CIS norm' (Allison 2013, 164–65). Russia's actions thus marked it out as a transgressor also regionally, although even if its fellow CIS members had had the inclination to unite and stigmatise Russia, the power imbalance would have made this difficult.

As it was, Russia faced remarkably little direct stigmatisation even internationally as a result of its actions in Georgia. While Russia and Georgia each accused each other of aggression during the active phase of the conflict, Western states mostly expressed concern over the escalation of violence in general and, as Russian forces moved past South Ossetia's borders and into Georgia proper, Russia's 'disproportionate' use of force, rather than aggressive actions. In addition to strategic concerns about not wanting to be dragged into a confrontation with Russia, a primary reason for this was the perception that the Georgian government had started the war with its attack on Tskhinvali, which was reinforced by the previously mentioned dominance of the Russian media story in the first days of the conflict (Goble 2009). Perceptions of Russian intent started to change as the Russian army advanced further, Putin refused to countenance a ceasefire in private conversations with presidents Bush and Sarkozy while in Beijing for the Olympic opening ceremony on 8 August, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during a call on 10 August that Russia wanted Saakashvili to resign as a condition for ending the war (Asmus 2010, 182, 189–92). In the US, debates raged in the media, within the Bush administration and between presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama about how hard a line to take, and Vice President Cheney briefed the media that he had called Russia's actions 'aggression' in conversations with Saakashvili (Toal 2017, 190–95). Still, the 'interpretation of cause and effect' that President Sarkozy summed up after the war – 'there was a military intervention by Georgian forces, which was an error. The reaction of the Russian army was disproportionate' – closely affected the Western response in general and Sarkozy's ceasefire negotiations, which resulted in an agreement that did not even mention Georgia's territorial integrity (Asmus 2010, 193). In their conclusions from an extraordinary meeting on the situation in Georgia held on 1 September, EU leaders expressed grave concern about 'the open conflict that has broken out in Georgia, by the resulting violence and by the disproportionate reaction of Russia', thereby refraining from apportioning blame for the initial aggression (Council of the European Union 2008).

The threat of separation and of damage to Russian-Western relations was invoked by President Bush and Defence Secretary Robert Gates (who also spoke of Russia's 'aggressive posture and actions') when calling for Russia to abide by the negotiated ceasefire, but not in response to the original attack (Asmus 2010, 208; Allison 2013, 156). After the fact, the EU's fact-finding mission's report, while rejecting Russia's claims and legal justifications also lent some credence to the 'Georgia started it' thesis, thereby undermining the potential for stigmatising Russia ('Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia Volume I' 2009).¹⁰⁴

Reactions to Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were more clear-cut. The recognitions were widely condemned by other leaders, including President Bush, EU leaders, foreign ministers of the other G8 countries and other members of the UN Security Council (except China, which was present but did not take the floor at the relevant meeting) (Bush 2008; Council of the European Union 2008; Reuters 2008; UN Security Council 2008b). However, unlike six years later in the case of Crimea, these reactions did not lead to material consequences in the form of suspensions, sanctions or other overt separation or status loss. Russia remained a member of the G8, the Russia-NATO Council continued to operate, and EU-Russia summits were not suspended. The question of sanctions was mentioned in the EU but dismissed by French officials (BBC News 2008). Less than a year later, in March 2009, the new US presidential administration extended a hand to Russia through the 'reset', seeking Russian co-operation on disarmament and NATO supply lines to Afghanistan. Fuelled in part by the relatively greater ease of working with the superficially more 'liberal' (aka 'normal') Medvedev, even if Putin still called most shots behind the scenes, the West and particularly the US achieved some notable successes that would have been much less likely had Russia been ostracised following Georgia, for example the establishment of the Northern Distribution Network for NATO troops in Afghanistan with Russian support in 2009, and the signing of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) between the US and Russia in 2010. While relations soured again with the controversy over NATO's

¹⁰⁴ It should be noted that in 2016, after a preliminary examination, the International Criminal Court authorised an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity between 1 July and 20 October 2008. See <https://www.icc-cpi.int/georgia> for details (accessed 19 December 2019).

intervention in Libya in 2011 (Allison 2013, 189–203) and Putin’s return to the presidency, the nadir was reached over Ukraine and Crimea in 2014.

III – Ukraine 2014: Russian aggression takes centre stage

As noted in the Introduction, in his speech during the General Debate of the 69th UN General Assembly on 24 September 2014, President Obama juxtaposed the threat of Russian aggression with dangerous diseases and terrorism:

As we gather here, an outbreak of Ebola overwhelms public health systems in West Africa and threatens to move rapidly across borders. Russian aggression in Europe recalls the days when large nations trampled small ones in pursuit of territorial ambition. The brutality of terrorists in Syria and Iraq forces us to look into the heart of darkness. ... We will impose a cost on Russia for aggression, and we will counter falsehoods with the truth. And we will call upon others to join us on the right side of history. (Obama 2014k)

The statement is an illustration in microcosm of Link and Phelan’s four components of stigmatisation. First, Russia is *labelled* as aggressive. Second, this label is linked to *stereotypes* of backward and regressive characteristics (‘territorial ambition’, the juxtaposition with terrorists and Ebola). Third, ‘we’ (those on the right side of history) are *separated* from ‘them’ (those on the wrong side of history) and the mobilisation of an ‘audience of normals’ is called for (‘we will call upon others to join us’). Finally, a *status loss* (‘a cost’) is promised for the stigmatised – Russia, but by implication also those others who choose to join the Russians on the ‘wrong side of history’. Unlike in 2008, this time the threat had already been accompanied by both symbolic and material costs in the form of suspensions and sanctions. Of all the episodes covered in this study, none contributed more to Russia’s stigmatisation than the 2014 Ukraine crisis, and specifically Russia’s annexation of Crimea and support for the insurgency in eastern Ukraine. It was already established in Chapter 4 how by the time of Viktor Yanukovich’s downfall in late February 2014, Russia had become increasingly discredited as undemocratic by Western actors because of its support for the Ukrainian leader. To this undemocratic stigma was now added the aggressive one, despite Russian attempts to reject, evade and counter-stigmatise.

Despite the lack of an official fact-finding mission (as in Georgia) and the quantity of mis- and disinformation, the basic facts of the Ukraine case are well established.¹⁰⁵ Soon after Yanukovich fled Kyiv on the weekend of 22-23 February, Russian soldiers without insignia from the Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol started taking control of public buildings in Crimea, holding up the regional parliament at gunpoint and making them install a new regional government that soon announced that a referendum would be held on whether Crimea should join Russia. Initially scheduled for May, the referendum was soon moved forward to 16 March, and official results reported that 96.77% of voters on a turnout of 83.1% had supported joining Russia. An accession treaty was duly signed in Moscow on 18 March amid much pomp and fanfare. After some small-scale unrest in the largely Russian-speaking east of Ukraine in February-March, violence escalated in April as groups of armed militants including Russian security agents started occupying government buildings in towns across the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (the Donbass) and declaring the establishment of the Donetsk and Luhansk ‘people’s republics’, both of which held independence referendums on 11 May officially resulting in votes for self-rule. Russia stopped short of recognising these referendums, instead saying it ‘respected’ them. The Ukrainian government launched an ‘Anti-terrorist Operation’ against the militants on 16 April, and the conflict descended into a civil war between the covertly Russia-backed rebels on the one hand and the Ukrainian army and voluntary militias on the other. Flashpoints over the summer of 2014 included a fierce battle for Donetsk International Airport in late May; the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 over Donetsk region on 17 July (almost certainly by rebels using a Russia-supplied anti-aircraft missile launcher), killing 298 people; and the counter-offensive by insurgents and, almost certainly, regular Russian forces in August that pushed back a Ukrainian offensive and more or less established the current borders of the two people’s republics. A ceasefire was signed in September 2014 in Minsk under the auspices of the OSCE, and another in February 2015 (Minsk II) after continued fighting. By the time of Obama’s

¹⁰⁵ As noted in the Introduction, the literature on the Ukraine crisis is substantial, fast-growing and polarised. For three collections that provide a variety of perspectives on both the domestic and international aspects of the uprising, the crisis and the following conflict, see the edited volumes by Marples and Mills (2015) and Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Sakwa (2015), and the articles in the special issue of *Europe-Asia Studies* edited by Averre and Wolczuk (2016). For an eyewitness account from a Ukrainian novelist, see Kurkov (2014).

General Assembly speech in late September 2014, several thousand had died in the fighting, both civilians, militants and soldiers.

The annexation of Crimea and Russian support for the rebels in Eastern Ukraine sparked the most concerted and sustained stigmatisation of the Russian government by Western states since the end of the Cold War. Below, different aspects of this process are analysed in turn, starting with the labelling of Russia as aggressive and then moving onto stereotyping, separation and status loss, before Russia's response and stigma management tactics are considered.

Labelling: aggression and illegality

The labelling of Russia as an aggressor started with the military operation in Crimea on 27-28 February. On 28 February, as military installations and other key infrastructure were taken over by what Putin initially claimed were local self-defence forces but would later admit included Russian military servicemen, Obama protested:

...we are now deeply concerned by reports of military movements taken by the Russian Federation inside of Ukraine. ... It would represent a profound interference in matters that must be determined by the Ukrainian people. It would be a clear violation of Russia's commitment to respect the independence and sovereignty and borders of Ukraine and of international laws. And just days after the world came to Russia for the Olympic Games, it would invite the condemnation of nations around the world. And indeed, the United States will stand with the international community in affirming that there will be costs for any military intervention in Ukraine. (Obama 2014e)

Here is both the maintenance of the democratic/anti-democratic separation analysed in Chapter 4 ('matters that must be determined by the Ukrainian people') and the beginnings of a condemnation of Russian aggression and of attempts at building an 'audience of normals' against Russian actions: Russian aggression 'would invite the condemnation of nations around the world'.

The criticism, separation and construction of a united front grew quickly, as evidence of direct Russian involvement in the Crimean operation mounted and the upper

house of the Russian parliament authorised the potential use of force by the Russian military on the territory of Ukraine 'to normalise the situation in the country' on 1 March. At the UN Security Council, an extraordinary session met on 1 March at the request of the Ukrainian representative, who called on the Council 'to do everything possible ... to stop aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine'. Western ambassadors lambasted Russian actions. US Ambassador Samantha Power accused Russia of violating its 'commitment to protecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine', and maintained the democratic/anti-democratic separation: the Ukrainian people's 'aspirations' had to be respected. Gérard Araud of France and Sir Mark Lyall Grant of the United Kingdom spoke similarly, though not yet directly accusing Russia; the latter noted that the UK 'condemn[ed] any act of aggression against Ukraine' (UN Security Council 2014a).

By 2-3 March, Russia's actions were openly labelled aggression by Western actors. In a 2 March television interview, US Secretary of State Kerry called Russia's actions 'an incredible act of aggression' (Kerry 2014). On 2 March, the leaders of the G7 countries issued a statement condemning Russia's 'clear violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine' (G7 Leaders 2014a). In another Security Council meeting on 3 March, where Russia sought to legitimise its actions by referring to an alleged request by Yanukovich for the help of Russian troops to establish 'legitimacy, peace, law and order' in Ukraine, US ambassador Power stated: 'What is happening today is not a human rights protection mission or a consensual intervention. What is happening today is a dangerous military intervention in Ukraine. It is an act of aggression. It must stop'. France and the UK chimed in similarly (UN Security Council 2014b). In Brussels on 3 March, another meeting of EU foreign ministers was held that reached the following key conclusion, the first time the EU officially labelled Russia as an aggressor:

The European Union strongly condemns the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces as well as the authorisation given by the Federation Council of Russia on 1 March for the use of the armed forces on the territory of Ukraine. These actions are in clear breach of the UN Charter and the OSCE Helsinki Final Act, as well as of Russia's specific commitments to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity under the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 and the bilateral Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership of 1997. (Council of the European Union 2014a)

Meeting three days later with the new Ukrainian prime minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the EU's heads of state or government endorsed the above conclusion and re-iterated the condemnation of Russia's 'unprovoked violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity' (European Council 2014b).¹⁰⁶

As the 16 March referendum on Crimean independence neared and passed, followed closely by the 18 March conclusion of accession treaties between Russia, Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, the emphasis of the West's criticism shifted from aggression to illegality. In the 6 March statement quoted above, the EU's heads of state deemed the referendum 'contrary to the Ukrainian Constitution and therefore illegal' (European Council 2014b). On the same day, Obama emphasised that '[t]he proposed referendum on the future of Crimea would violate the Ukrainian Constitution and violate international law' (Obama 2014e). These positions were re-iterated by US and EU officials over the next two weeks (see e.g. Barroso and Van Rompuy 2014a; Ashton 2014; Obama 2014h; 2014i). In their joint statement of 16 March, Barroso and Van Rompuy (2014a) summarised the Western position straightforwardly: 'The referendum is illegal and illegitimate and its outcome will not be recognised'. In the conclusions to the European Council on 21 March, the meeting at which the political part of the Association Agreement with Ukraine was signed, the EU's heads of state 'strongly condemn[ed] the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation' (European Council 2014a, 13–15). Obama summed up Russia's 'illegal', 'illegitimate' and 'dangerous' choices on 20 March: 'We've seen an illegal referendum in Crimea; an illegitimate move by the Russians to annex Crimea; and dangerous risks of escalation... These are all choices that the Russian Government has made, choices that have been rejected by the international community' (Obama 2014i). Again, Obama was talking not just on behalf of the US but a putative 'audience of normals' – the 'international community'.¹⁰⁷

Stereotyping – out of time

¹⁰⁶ For their part, in their rhetoric Yatsenyuk and other Ukrainian leaders such as President Petro Poroshenko, elected in May 2014, repeatedly elevated the stakes of the conflict to a global battle for 'freedom', fitting in with the European and (perhaps especially) American narrative (Toal 2017, 293–95).

¹⁰⁷ Note, as per footnote 64 above, the more tight-knit connotations of 'community' as opposed to e.g. 'society'.

In addition to the labelling of Russia as aggressive, a theme of Western discourse that came out in force during the crisis was the linking of Russia's behaviour to a stereotype of being regressive and stuck in the past, on the 'wrong side of history' (Obama 2014b). This way of talking about Russia is common among many Western observers and senior policy makers, and it became particularly prevalent in 2014 (Monaghan 2016, 13–16). As noted in Chapter 4 when discussing the Western reaction to Yanukovich's postponement of the EU Association Agreement, it is inextricably linked to Western actors' tendency to identify themselves as agents of good and forces of teleological progress, reducing anyone opposed by default to a stereotypical opponent of progress.

From the time of the government overthrow and Crimea incursion in late February-early March 2014, several Western actors started chastising Russia for engaging in outdated practices. The theme was prevalent in the discourse of several Western representatives, including Obama, Kerry, Barroso, European Commissioner for Enlargement Štefan Füle, UN ambassadors Araud and Lyall Grant, and also made its way into collective conclusions of the EU heads of state. The most basic element of these discourses was the negative framing of Russian actions as outdated, particularly the refrain that this kind of behaviour does not belong in the 21st century. In the above-cited 2 March interview where he labelled Russian actions as aggression, John Kerry also stated that '[you] just don't, in the 21st century, behave in 19th century fashion by invading another country on [a] completely trumped up pretext' (Kerry 2014).¹⁰⁸ Echoing Kerry, on 3 March Lyall Grant stated in the Security Council that '[in] the twenty-first century, no country should be acting with such blatant disregard for international law. ... This is not 1968 or 1956', recalling the Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia and Hungary (UN Security Council 2014b, 7; see also 2014e, 6). In its conclusions on Ukraine from its 21 March 2014 meeting, EU leaders stated: 'The European Council firmly believes that there is no place for the use of force and coercion to change borders in Europe in the 21st century' (European Council 2014a, 15). While the formulation disappeared from subsequent EU statements, leading individuals continued to invoke it. Barroso had already stated on 12 March in a speech to the European Parliament that '[t]he page of last

¹⁰⁸ That an American secretary of state seemingly had forgotten about the very much 'trumped up' 2003 invasion of Iraq was of course heavily ironic. To be fair, Kerry could have cited both his own subsequent criticism of the Iraq invasion (though he did vote to authorise the use of force as a senator in October 2002) and Obama's opposition to it in his defence. The US of course also did not annex Iraq, although at this point (2 March) it was not clear that Russia intended to annex Crimea either (Treisman 2016).

century's history should be turned and not re-written', and now added that 'there will be consequences for some of the kind of behaviour that we think is simply unacceptable in the 21st century' (Barroso 2014b; 2014c). In their statement on the adoption of new EU sanctions against Russia on 29 July, Barroso and Van Rompuy re-iterated the theme: 'illegal annexation of territory and deliberate destabilisation of a neighbouring sovereign country cannot be accepted in 21st century Europe' (Barroso and Van Rompuy 2014b). Barroso repeated similar formulations again to the media after meeting with Ukrainian president Poroshenko on 30 August 2014, after the European Council on the same date, and in speeches to the Yalta European Strategy annual meeting on 12 September and at Yale Management School on 21 September (Barroso 2014e; 2014f; 2014g).¹⁰⁹ Füle, whose commission portfolio put him on the 'frontline' of EU-Russia relations, repeatedly criticised Russia for attempting to turn the Eastern Partnership into a 'zero-sum game', a 'battle for the creation of past centuries' spheres of influence', denouncing such practices as obsolete: 'This is not how politics is conducted in the 21st century' (quotes from Füle 2014c; 2014b; see also 2014a; 2014d; 2014e). Other actors were more evocative while conveying a similar message, notably French UN ambassador Araud who on 3 March told the Security Council: '[it] is in fact the voice of the past we just heard. ... In short, Russia is taking Europe back 40 years. ... Russia seems to be returning to its old ghosts, playing outmoded roles in an outdated setting on the stage of a bankrupt theatre' (UN Security Council 2014b, 5–6; see also 2014c, 5).

The stigma being evoked in these statements is of being out of time, pre-modern. There is a parallel here to the types of teleological logic identified in Chapter 4, where undemocratic practices were also seen as somehow outdated. Moreover, in some statements a spatial logic is also at play, whereby this kind of behaviour is unacceptable 'in Europe', implying (whether intentionally or not) that it might be acceptable elsewhere. These unifying stigmatising frames of backwardness and being out of place will be returned to in the Conclusion.

¹⁰⁹ In the speech at Yale, Barroso stated that 'We could simply not accept this behaviour. This would mean the explicit *return* of spheres of influence or limited sovereignty to the European continent' (emphasis added), echoing Füle's usual rhetoric of spheres of influence.

Separation and status loss: sanctions, suspensions and shaming

In Link and Phelan's model, stigmatisation would not be complete without separation between the stigmatised and stigmatisers as well as status loss for the stigmatised. This stage is closely intertwined with the separation stage: if the stigmatisers are successful in separating themselves from the stigmatised as well as creating a robust 'audience of normals', this may already entail a certain degree of status loss through the stigmatised's loss of social standing. However, status loss can also include more concrete measures taken to impose such loss, measures which are usually explicitly justified by the labelling and stereotyping already made, thereby reinforcing these. During the Ukraine crisis, Western actors separated themselves from and imposed a status loss on Russia in two main ways: bilaterally, through sanctions and restrictive measures against Russian individuals and sectors of the Russian economy, suspensions of co-operation in various formats, and multilaterally, through the shaming of Russia in international forums such as the UN.

The effect of Russia's stigmatisation was physically manifest in several awkward summit encounters between Western and Russian leaders. While bilateral summits were suspended and the G8 discontinued, diplomatic decorum or the reluctance of non-Western states to take part in the stigmatisation meant there were still occasions where leaders had to meet. The first time was the D-Day commemorations in France in June 2014, where UK Prime Minister David Cameron reportedly refused to shake President Putin's hand, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Putin had a brief, tense conversation and President Obama and Putin spoke only briefly in an exchange the White House stressed was 'merely an informal exchange, nothing official' (Trippe 2014). At the November 2014 G20 summit in Brisbane, Western media reported that Putin received a 'frosty' welcome and, after a series of confrontational conversations with Western leaders, left the summit early (e.g. Viellaris 2014; Wintour and Doherty 2014). This demonstrates Goffman's (1963, 24–31) point about the uneasiness the 'normals' and stigmatised are likely to feel in each other's presence.

Bilateral status loss: sanctions and suspensions

The EU and the US both implemented sanctions against Russia through the spring and summer of 2014. From an initial focus on the individuals allegedly involved in violating Ukraine's territorial integrity, sanctions broadened to encompass whole sectors of the Russian economy. Diplomatic, state-to-state measures also implicated Russia and the Russian government. With stigmatisation in mind, it is instructive to investigate the public justifications given for these measures, all of which were based on the labels and stereotypes identified in the above section.

The US's justifications were based on the anti-democratic and aggressive activities of those sanctioned. Executive Order 13660, signed by Obama on 6 March 2014, introduced travel bans and asset freezes against several yet unspecified individuals. The order argued that the sanctioned individuals' 'actions and policies' contributed to an undermining of 'democratic processes and institutions in Ukraine', a threat to Ukraine's 'peace, security, stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity', and the misappropriation of Ukrainian assets (Obama 2014d). The same wording was used for Executive Order 13661, signed on 17 March, after the Crimean referendum, but this time the actor in question was 'the Government of the Russian Federation' and those sanctioned included seven senior Russian officials including Presidential Aide Vladislav Surkov, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin and Speaker of the Federation Council Valentina Matviyenko (Obama 2014g). The status loss involved was still travel bans and asset freezes only. On 20 March 2014, in remarks made about the expansion of Executive Order 13661 to apply to a further 16 Russian government officials and the signing of Executive Order 13662, which opened the possibility for the more severe status loss of sanctioning whole sectors of Russia's economy, Obama elaborated on the reasons for the sanctions using both the anti-democratic, aggressive, illegal and 'outdated' categories identified above. Russia's actions were 'illegal', 'illegitimate' and 'dangerous', and the 'principles that govern relations between nations in Europe and around the world must be upheld in the 21st century' (Obama 2014i). These justifications remained when the sanctions were expanded in April 2014 to include a ban on business transactions in the US by several Russian individuals and companies, and in July 2014 when asset freezes and transaction bans were expanded to include more banks, defence and energy companies. As Russia was still engaging in the same 'provocations', the focus was on the sanctions' continued inability to enforce the expected behaviour and the consequent need to ramp them up

(Obama 2014j). Speaking on 16 July, Obama said: ‘...what we are expecting is that the Russian leadership will see, once again, that its actions in Ukraine have consequences, including a weakening Russian economy and increasing diplomatic isolation’ (Obama 2014j). This made clear both the social status loss and the material costs the sanctions were meant to induce.

The EU imposed similar sanctions, with similar justifications. On 6 March 2014, following the Crimea incursion, EU leaders condemned Russia’s ‘unprovoked violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity’ and suspended long ongoing bilateral talks with Russia on ‘visa matters’ and a new agreement to replace the expired 1997 EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (European Council 2014b). On 17 March, after the Crimea referendum, EU foreign ministers introduced asset freezes and travel bans against 21 individuals ‘responsible for actions which undermine or threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine’, and threatened ‘additional and far-reaching consequences for relations’ (Council of the European Union 2014b). The same justifications – including the above-cited reference to ‘the use of force and coercion to change borders’ having ‘no place’ in ‘Europe in the 21st century’ – were cited on 21 March, after the Crimea annexation, when EU leaders expanded the list of individuals subject to asset freezes and travel bans, cancelled the next EU-Russia Summit, noted an end to ‘bilateral regular summits [between Russia and EU member states] for the time being’ and supported ‘the suspension of negotiations over Russia’s joining the OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] and IEA [International Energy Agency]’ (European Council 2014a). When adding further individuals to the list in late April and when expanding the sanctions to include restrictions on sectoral co-operation, Russian access to EU capital markets, etc., in late July, the underlying separation was unchanged but magnified. In Barroso and Van Rompuy’s words on 29 July, ‘[the sanctions are] meant as a strong warning: illegal annexation of territory and deliberate destabilisation of a neighbouring sovereign country cannot be accepted in 21st century Europe’ (Barroso and Van Rompuy 2014b). Fitting the characterisation in this study of stigmatisation as a process meant to enforce and/or induce norm-abiding behaviour, the EU emphasised how its sanctions ‘were not punitive’ (although they were clearly designed to inflict both material and symbolic

losses) but ‘designed to bring about a change in policy or activity by the target country, entities or individuals’ (European Commission 2014b).

The imposition of sanctions was not a straightforward task, despite the appearance of unity and purpose. EU and US sanctions were not uniform, with different individuals and companies being targeted by the two at various stages. The US was reluctant to implement its most hard-hitting sanctions, owing to the ‘extreme fragility in the emerging market economies’ at the time and the potential for further instability (Tooze 2018, 498–99). Attitudes to sanctions within the EU differed from state to state for reasons ranging from respective business communities’ exposure to the Russian market to the ideological affinities of individual governments (on the variation in sanctions and the political tensions, see e.g. Connolly 2018, 56–68; Tooze 2018, 498–502). Even France, otherwise a key player in the stigmatisation, was reluctant to give up its lucrative sale of two Mistral aircraft carriers to Russia, though it eventually cancelled the delivery in September 2014 (BBC News 2014b). This made the EU’s process of adopting sanctions slower than that of the US. A key turning point uniting EU leaders around stronger sanctions was the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Donetsk region on 17 July 2014, demonstrating the stigmatising effect of highly affective events and the ‘moral indignation’ it brought (Tooze 2018, 502). Reports from an EU meeting on sanctions five days after the shootdown noted that the tone of the EU’s statement grew harsher as the day went on owing to ‘harrowing accounts’ from the crash scene (Borger, Luhn, and Norton-Taylor 2014).

Multilateral status loss: audience-building and shaming

In addition to the bilateral status loss identified above, Western actors sought to inflict a multilateral status loss on Russia in two ways. First, by encouraging other ‘like-minded partners’ sharing the values of ‘freedom and democracy’ to implement their own sanctions (quote from European Commission 2014a; Barroso 2014d). And second, by shaming Russia in multilateral forums including the UN. In both ways, the US and EU sought to create and maintain a robust ‘audience of normals’ that would reinforce the norms of ‘freedom and democracy’ as they saw them by discrediting Russia.

The easiest of these tasks was building the audience of 'like-minded' partners. Already on 2 March 2014 the leaders of the G7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US) decided to suspend Russia from the G8, cancelling their participation in the planned June 2014 G8 summit in Sochi (Naylor 2019, 39–40).¹¹⁰ This was a marked status loss for Russia, depriving it of membership of one of the most exclusive group of states in international society, albeit one that had been subjected to increasing criticism for that same exclusivity. The reasons cited were Russia's 'clear violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine' and that its actions 'contravene the principles and values on which the G-7 and the G-8 operate' (G7 Leaders 2014a). The leaders issued several strong-worded statements throughout the following months, repeatedly condemning Russia's 'illegal annexation' of Crimea and violation of international law, norms and principles (G7 Leaders 2014b; 2014c; 2014d; 2014e; 2014f; 2014g). Canada and Japan also introduced their own sanctions against Russia, and several other states including Albania, Australia, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway and Switzerland either implemented their own sanctions or aligned themselves with the EU's.

It was harder to construct a wider 'audience of normals' of states at the UN to openly condemn Russian actions and provide full force to the attempted stigmatisation. Events in Ukraine featured heavily on the UN's agenda through 2014, with the Security Council meeting 18 times to discuss the matter in either open or closed formats from 28 February to 19 September. The tone of each of the 15 Security Council member states' discourse is instructive in gauging Russia's stigmatisation in wider international society. Apart from China, which adopted a neutral stance throughout calling on all sides to remain calm in this very 'complex' situation (notable given China's usual insistence on territorial integrity), there were two discernible groups in the Council. The first was the Western states, comprising the permanent members France, the UK and the US and the non-permanent members Australia, Lithuania and Luxembourg. These six participated fully in the stigmatisation of Russia, with Australia and Lithuania often even more vocal in explicitly denouncing Moscow as the anti-democratic aggressor than the three permanent members. The remaining seven non-permanent members (Argentina, Chad, Chile, Jordan, Nigeria, Republic of Korea and Rwanda) took up positions in between that

¹¹⁰ As Naylor points out, technically 'the G7 neither suspended nor expelled Russia from the G8, but rather suspended themselves from the G8' and went back to meeting as the G7, demonstrating the 'ambiguity of how inclusion works in this club with no explicitly defined membership rules'.

of China and the Western countries. While expressing consistent alarm and concern about the violence and instability in Ukraine and re-iterating their support for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, these states generally did not openly or explicitly blame or stigmatise Russia. Their positions illustrate one of the main limits to successful stigmatisation on the international scale: the lack of a sufficiently 'thick' common expectation of state behaviour worldwide.

This limitation became clear in Western states' attempt to pass a resolution in the Security Council on 15 March 2014 in response to events in Ukraine. The draft resolution was submitted by 42 states: the 35 EU and/or NATO member states plus Australia, Georgia, Japan, Montenegro, New Zealand, Moldova and Ukraine. This showed a clear Western bias. Still, in an apparent attempt to garner as many votes as possible, the resolution refrained from the stigmatising language so far employed by Western actors and did not explicitly mention Russia, focusing instead on obligations to solve disputes peacefully and reaffirming all states' commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within internationally recognised borders (UN Security Council 2014d). The resolution was supported in the Council by 13 states. China abstained and Russia used its veto power to prevent the resolution from passing. In the debate following the vote, the Western states continued in the usual stigmatising vein, with both the UK and US talking of Russia's isolation. In Power's words, Russia stood 'isolated, alone and wrong' (UN Security Council 2014c, 3-4). In contrast, the seven non-Western, non-permanent members maintained their support for UN principles such as territorial integrity and the peaceful resolution of disputes, but did not criticise Russia directly (UN Security Council 2014c, 7-10). The Rwandan representative even criticised 'cynical' calls for isolation (UN Security Council 2014c, 7).

The limitation appeared again on a larger scale when a similar resolution came before the UN General Assembly on 27 March, nine days after Russia's annexation of Crimea. Resolution 68/262, entitled 'Territorial Integrity of Ukraine', again had an overwhelmingly Western sponsorship. Canada, Costa Rica, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine were the original promoters, and a further 42 states joined as sponsors, including the remaining sponsors of the failed Security Council resolution, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Panama, San Marino and Somalia. The resolution text again did not mention Russia directly. Instead, it referred to all states' obligation to refrain from the

use of force and respect others' territorial integrity, and declared the Crimean referendum invalid (UN General Assembly 2014a). With no veto power to stop it, the Assembly adopted the resolution by 100 votes to 11, Russia mustering a small group of allies in opposition (UN General Assembly 2014b, 17).¹¹¹ Superficially, this may seem like a successful construction of a global 'audience of normals' supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity and – implicitly if not explicitly – stigmatising Russia. However, the 100 votes were again notable for their concentration in the West, as seen from the summary in Table 7.1. Perhaps the most notable aspect of the voting record was the considerable number of abstentions and absences – 42.5% of UN member states. More African and Latin American/Caribbean states abstained than approved, and the abstentions included such influential states as the other BRICS (Brazil, China, India and South Africa) and even two states that had supported the Security Council resolution – Argentina and Rwanda. Among the absentees were Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia (the only non-CIS European states that did not support the resolution), Iran and Israel.

Table 6.1 – Voting record by region on UNGA Resolution 68/262

<i>Region</i>	<i>Approve</i>	<i>Reject</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Absent</i>	Total
Africa	16	2	24	5	47
Asia-Pacific ¹¹²	20	1	14	5	40
CIS	3	3	2	3	11
Europe/North America	41			2	43
MENA	7	1	4	7	19
Latin America/Caribbean	13	4	14	2	33

¹¹¹ The 11 states were Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, North Korea, Russia, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

¹¹² The Asia-Pacific states included such 'Western' stalwarts as Japan, Australia and New Zealand, and five Pacific island states.

Total	100	11	58	24	193
% of UN members	51.8%	5.7%	30.1%	12.4%	100%

The pre- and post-vote debate reflected the divisions already apparent in the Security Council and the wider discourse. The Ukrainian acting foreign minister, Andrii Deshchytsia, spoke strongly of Russian aggression and invoked the temporal and spatial tropes identified above: ‘Many still struggle to grasp the reality that [this] happened in Ukraine, in the very heart of Europe ... in the twenty-first century’ (UN General Assembly 2014b, 1–3). He was echoed by the EU representative, Thomas Mayr-Harting, who spoke of the need to protect the UN Charter-based international system implemented after the ‘horrors of the Second World War’ and repeated EU leaders’ recent assertion that ‘there is no place in the twenty-first century for the use of force and coercion to change borders in Europe or elsewhere’ (UN General Assembly 2014b, 4–5). US ambassador Power invoked the existence of a broad, global ‘audience of normals’: ‘We meet today to express our collective judgement on the legality of the Russian Federation’s military intervention in, and occupation of, Ukraine’s Crimea region. ...this draft resolution expresses the desire of the international community to see a peaceful outcome... We echo the views expressed by all regions of the world these past weeks calling for a de-escalation...’ (UN General Assembly 2014b, 5–6). Other Western states supported the strong stigmatisation line, while several others spoke in support of the principle of territorial integrity without directly criticising Russia.¹¹³ In response, Russian ambassador Churkin repeated Russia’s stigma rejection line and counter-stigmatisation of the West, accusing EU and US representatives of marching with the anti-democratic, anti-government protesters and hailing the ‘historic’ role of the Crimean referendum in bringing Crimea back to Russia (UN General Assembly 2014b, 3–4).¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Of the states that supported the resolution, the following took to the floor: Azerbaijan, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Iceland, Japan, Libya, Liechtenstein, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, Malaysia, Moldova, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Qatar, Singapore, Thailand and Turkey.

¹¹⁴ Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, North Korea and Venezuela also took the floor in opposition.

In addition to the division, which was not unexpected, the most notable aspect were the explanations given by various states for their abstention.¹¹⁵ The theme was generally one of opposition to meddling in what was still deemed the internal affairs of another state, interspersed with more or less thinly veiled criticism of the West's role in the affair. China repeated its detached calls for everyone to show restraint and re-iterated its 'consistent, balanced and impartial' position, Argentina said it did not want to be interpreting Ukrainian laws for Ukrainians, Jamaica called for balance, Ecuador noted the 'irresponsible presence of [Western] foreign politicians' in Kyiv during the protests, Botswana pointed to the 'unconstitutional removal of a democratically elected president', and St. Vincent and the Grenadines complained of the tendency of all major powers to impose 'double standards', thereby undermining the consistent application of international law (UN General Assembly 2014b, 10–11, 15–16, 19–20, 24–25, 26).

The ambivalence of several UN members to what from a Western perspective was a straightforward case of flagrant norm transgression indicates some of the limits to the operation of stigmatisation on a global scale, in particular the limited 'thickness' of shared norms and the fact that norms must always be enforced by someone (in this case Western states), opening any instance to suspicions of double standards and the influence of historical mistrust. The framing of both the Security Council and the General Assembly resolutions to deal exclusively with questions of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, with no mention of either Russia, aggression or democracy, indicates that their Western drafters doubted whether more directly stigmatising resolutions would have passed as easily. Given voting patterns and non-Western states' justifications for their way of voting, this was justified. While it is impossible to establish states' 'true' intentions or feelings about the norms in question just from these records, it is fair to assume that even several of the 100-strong 'audience of normals' that supported the General Assembly resolution did so as much owing to instrumental concerns, be they a need to keep the US happy or their own separatist problems, as out of any normative commitment to Western-style freedom and democracy.¹¹⁶ Their commitment to stigmatising Russia for any principled reason is thus doubtful.

¹¹⁵ Of those that abstained, Algeria, Argentina, Botswana, Brazil, China, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Paraguay, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Uruguay and Vietnam took the floor,

¹¹⁶ A cursory examination of the voting record throws up several such candidates, including Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and even Turkey.

Despite this ambivalence, for Russia the passing of the resolution certainly represented a defeat and a clear status loss, in the form of reputational damage. In counter-stigmatisation terms, the support of 10 states well-known to be in permanent opposition to Western dominance under their current governments was an underwhelming ‘audience of counter-normals’, and a 13-1-1 defeat in the Security Council even more so. In the Euro-Atlantic context, where the dominant order was strongest and Russia has traditionally wanted to be treated as an equal partner, the status loss was even greater. The resolution thus played its part in the wider stigmatisation of Russia.

Russia’s reaction: rejection, counter-stigmatisation and evasion

As with its previous intervention in Georgia and its reaction to stigmatisation over other norms, Russia again pursued a vehement stigma rejection strategy in the case of Ukraine. Crimea was framed as a case of prevention of persecution followed by the lawful self-determination of the Crimean people, and the protests in the east as the legitimate, democratic expression of popular concern about the new government’s policies, building on the existing, above-mentioned narrative of the radical coup d’état. Added to this were further attempts at the counter-stigmatisation of Western actors, who were framed as both anti-democratic and aggressive over their support for the Kyiv government’s ‘anti-terrorist’ operation in eastern Ukraine. In sum, Russia both rejected stigma and sought to counter-stigmatise the West over both aggression and breaches of international law.

The first key theme of Russia’s response was the rejection of the accusation of aggression and breaches of international law. From the very beginning of the Crimea operation, Russian actors went to great lengths to emphasise their compliance with bilateral agreements. The foreign ministry claimed on 27 February that Russia ‘rigorously’ observed the Black Sea Fleet agreements, and Putin emphasised in his 18 March address to the Federal Assembly on Crimea’s accession that Russia had never exceeded the troop limits imposed by these agreements as evidence that it could not have ‘[violated] norms of international law’ (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014e; Putin 2014c). At a UN Security Council meeting on 3 March, Russian ambassador Churkin presented a letter from Yanukovich allegedly requesting the help of Russian armed

forces in establishing 'legitimacy, peace, law and order and stability' in Ukraine (UN Security Council 2014b, 3–4).¹¹⁷ In his Q&A session with journalists on 4 March Putin stated that any decision to use armed force in Ukraine would be 'a legitimate decision in full compliance with ... international law, since we have the appeal of the legitimate President' (Putin 2014b). In the 18 March speech, Putin addressed the question of aggression directly, using yet another justification: 'They keep talking of some Russian intervention in Crimea, some sort of aggression. This is strange to hear. I cannot recall a single case in history of an intervention without a single shot being fired and with no human casualties' (Putin 2014c). Rather than violating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Russia had '[helped] create conditions so that the residents of Crimea for the first time in history were able to peacefully express their free will regarding their own future' (Putin 2014c). Putin's address contained a range of arguments for why the Crimea annexation was within international law and democratic, drawing on everything from national self-determination to the 'Kosovo precedent', which Russia had somewhat ironically opposed until then (Mälksoo 2015, 173). The accuracy of these arguments is not under consideration here – Russia clearly 'broke the rules' of modern international law (Allison 2014). From a stigmatisation perspective, the important part is Russia's rejection of its stigma but at the same time acceptance of the broader need to be seen to operate legally and avoid being labelled aggressive.

The flipside of the rejection was an attempt at counter-stigmatising the West for being aggressive and breaching international law. This took two forms. The first was a rehearsal of old arguments about Western aggression worldwide, the second a direct link to ongoing events in Ukraine. The former referred both to actual interventions and the West's 'aggressive promotion' of a certain way of life and government. Russian foreign ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich took a broad sweep on 6 March, both accusing the US of fomenting the protests in Ukraine and bringing up previous interventions in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Vietnam, Lebanon in 1958, the Dominican Republic in 1965, Grenada in 1983, Libya in 1986 and Panama in 1989, emphasising that the 'pretext' of the last five had been to protect US nationals in zones of conflict – exactly what he claimed Russia was doing in Crimea (Lukashevich 2014b). Putin rehearsed the themes

¹¹⁷ Since Churkin's death on 20 February 2017, senior Russian officials have issued contradictory statements about the letter's origin and veracity (Coynash 2017).

in his 18 March address, referencing Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and the ‘series of controlled “colour” revolutions’ that imposed standards on nations from without:

Like a mirror, the situation in Ukraine reflects what is going on and what has been happening in the world over the past several decades ... Our western partners, led by the United States of America, prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun. ... To make this aggression look legitimate, they force the necessary resolutions from international organisations, and if for some reason this does not work, they simply ignore the UN Security Council and the UN overall. (Putin 2014c)

As the new Ukrainian government declared its ‘anti-terrorist operation’ against the insurgency in eastern Ukraine in mid-April, Russian representatives attempted to label it (and by extension its supportive Western backers) as an aggressor against the civilian population. An emergency Security Council meeting was called on 13 April at Russia’s initiative, with Ambassador Churkin accusing the ‘Maidan henchmen’ of waging ‘war against their own people’ with the backing of their ‘Western sponsors’ (UN Security Council 2014e). Following the announced resumption of the operation in late April, the Russian foreign ministry issued alarmed statements denouncing the Kyiv authorities’ ‘irresponsible and aggressive actions’, accusing the US and EU of conniving (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014g; 2014h). The new Ukrainian government was regularly accused of undertaking ‘punitive military operations’ against its own people, aided by ‘terrorists’ and ‘pro-fascists’ (UN Security Council 2014f), while Russia portrayed its own actions as ‘humanitarian’, including the dispatch of several ‘humanitarian convoys’ to the conflict zone in Ukraine (e.g. UN Security Council 2014g, 12–13).¹¹⁸ Russia thus sought to stigmatise its opponent and ‘despoil’ or prevent the spoiling of its own identity in the process.

True to the mirroring effect apparent in their stigma-rejecting and counter-stigmatising response to being called anti-democratic and aggressive, Russian actors also engaged in their own temporal stereotyping, repeatedly accusing Western actors of engaging in practices of the past. One such example was Putin’s assertion in his 18 March

¹¹⁸ The Ukrainian authorities and international actors suspected that the convoys were in reality carrying weapons for the rebels.

Crimea speech that ‘the infamous policy of containment, led in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, continues today’ (Putin 2014c). But the more prevalent theme was accusations against the West and the new Ukrainian government of supporting the revival of neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism in Ukraine. This was particularly prevalent in Russian foreign ministry discourse, focused on the participation of the far-right, ‘ultranationalist’ Freedom (*Svoboda*) party first in the opposition movement and then the post-February Ukrainian government, and the activities of the militant group Right Sector (*Pravy Sektor*) and other paramilitary groups both in the Maidan protests and the fighting in eastern Ukraine. Repeated references were made to the European Parliament’s December 2012 resolution, which followed *Svoboda*’s entry into the Ukrainian parliament, calling on other parties not to co-operate with it due to its far-right ideology. Again, the veracity of the Russian discourse is not the subject of this analysis – there is no doubt that Russia overplayed the role played by ultranationalist forces, just as Western actors downplayed it (see Walker 2018, 111–31 for a thoughtful account). The relevant point is that this was used to label and stereotype the West and create a separation between the West and Russia, with the West as the irresponsible, regressive party and Russia the responsible progressives remembering the lessons of history and fighting fascism: ‘In the year when we celebrated 75 years since the start of the Second World War, we should remember the consequences... of playing with Nazis’ (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014f).

As was seen above in the case of the UN General Assembly resolution, Russia’s stigma rejection and counter-stigmatisation did not lead to the construction of any substantial ‘audience of counter-normals’ of states beyond the usual suspects, probably reflecting both many states’ dismay at Russia’s actions (despite their reluctance to side with the West) and the power imbalance between the West and Russia. This power imbalance also showed in Russia’s other attempts at imposing a ‘counter-status loss’ on the West. This took primarily two forms. First, a mobilisation of other diplomatic relationships, notably the other BRICS countries, and second, countersanctions in the form of import bans on Western foodstuffs to Russia.

In terms of multilateral diplomacy, Russia worked to minimise its isolation by seeking to prevent the expansion and solidification of the Western-led audience of normals. The most obvious target here were the other BRICS countries, all of which abstained on the General Assembly resolution. Brazil’s, China’s, India’s and South Africa’s

neutrality and reluctance to participate in the stigmatisation of Russia was further evidenced by a March 2014 BRICS statement opposing the suggested exclusion of Russia from the upcoming G20 summit in Australia, and at the sixth BRICS Summit in Brazil on 15-17 July 2014, the first international summit President Putin participated in since Russia's exclusion from the G8 (BRICS Information Centre 2014; AFP 2014). The summit declaration included a short reference to Ukraine, tucked away in article 44 of 72, expressing the five states' 'deep concern' and calling for a 'peaceful political solution, in full compliance with the UN Charter and universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms' ('Sixth BRICS Summit – Fortaleza Declaration' 2014). While the other BRICS' neutrality represented a 'diplomatic win' for Putin, especially considering usual Chinese concerns about territorial integrity, their unwillingness to actively support the Russian position on Ukraine or Putin's proposed measures to prevent 'sanction attacks' from the US was also notable (Boadle 2014; Sakwa 2014a, 113). Article 27 of the Fortaleza Declaration included a passage that could be read as equally critical of both the West and Russia: 'We condemn unilateral military interventions and economic sanctions in violation of international law and universally recognized norms of international relations' ('Sixth BRICS Summit – Fortaleza Declaration' 2014). The BRICS were thus a break on the stigmatisation of Russia, and also helped it to compensate economically for the impact of Western sanctions and to provide an alternative source of political legitimacy in the face of Western stigmatisation, providing an 'out-group' of sorts to identify with (Connolly 2018, 74–76; Salzman 2019, 88–117). However, beyond their already ambivalent position regarding Western-promoted norms they did not offer active support for Russia's counter-stigmatisation and attempt to impose a status loss on the West over its sanctions.

On the bilateral level, Russian options were also limited, especially given that Western actors had already cut off several bilateral relationships and areas of co-operation as part of their own sanctions. Russia implemented counter-sanctions against US and Canadian officials in March 2014, with the Russian foreign ministry drawing on all the above separations to justify the move: 'the American side continues to blindly believe in the effectiveness of such methods, taken from the arsenal of the past, and does not want to face the obvious: the people of Crimea, in a democratic way in full accordance with international law and UN regulations, voted to join Russia' (RT International 2014).

As part of their stigma rejection, Russian officials also maintained that Russia would not engage in tit-for-tat sanctions. This changed after the US and EU's implementation of sector-wide sanctions in July 2014, with a ban announced on 6 August 2014 of food imports from countries that had introduced or joined sanctions against Russia. The food import ban was clearly a blow to certain parts of the EU agricultural industry, with the European Commission implementing targeted emergency support measures (European Commission 2015). Creative ways around it were also found, as evidenced by the sudden appearance on the Russian market of salmon marked as originating from landlocked Belarus and tasting suspiciously like the Norwegian real deal (Gubarevich 2015). More broadly, the food ban's success in imposing a status loss of any sort on the West is dubious, showing Russia's limited power to engage in successful counter-stigmatisation. In fact, the ban only fed the Western separation of legal/illegal further, introducing also a criticism of Russia's transgression against good capitalist practice through its 'politically motivated' economic measures:

The European Union regrets the announcement by the Russian Federation of measures which will target imports of food and agricultural products. This announcement is clearly politically motivated. ... We underline that the European Union's restrictive measures [against Russia] are directly linked with the illegal annexation of Crimea and destabilisation of Ukraine. (European Commission 2014c; see also 2014d)

In short: they are doing politics; we are doing law.

A final element in the Russian stigma management surrounding Ukraine was the stigma evasion embodied in the 'disinformation' or 'information warfare' campaign it carried out both online and through more traditional channels. As mentioned above, both in the second Chechen war and the 2008 Georgia war, the Russian state had sought to tightly control information by either stopping it from coming out or heavily managing the media narrative. During the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent conflict, the practice became characterised more by information overload. The number of official Russian statements through these months was extremely high, particularly from the foreign ministry. Multiple statements were often issued in one day, as direct responses to statements or actions either by Western or Ukrainian actors or representatives of international organisations such as the UN or OSCE accusing Russia of transgressions. Moreover, both the internet and Russian state-controlled media like RT and Sputnik were

flooded with false information, alternative theories, etc., that sought to pre-emptively evade or avoid any stigma linked to direct support for rebels in eastern Ukraine or participation of Russian soldiers in the fighting. When evidence was presented implicating Russia, the tactic of denial returned, for example in the insistence that captured Russian troops had simply been on holiday and showed up in Ukraine 'by accident' (BBC News 2014a). The evasion tactic became particularly pronounced after the downing of flight MH17, with the promotion of theories accusing e.g. Ukrainian forces of shooting down the plane (for analysis of the online 'battle' over MH17, see e.g. Khaldarova and Pantti 2016; Sienkiewicz 2015; Golovchenko, Hartmann, and Adler-Nissen 2018). Added to the strenuous denials were thus strenuous evasions of responsibility for any discreditable activities.

Conclusion

Of all Russia's discreditable behaviour in relation to the four norms under investigation in this study, its breach of the norm of non-aggression was the behaviour that led to the most direct and sustained stigmatisation. This speaks both to the explicit nature of the transgression and to the centrality of non-aggression as the enduring cardinal rule of the international society of states, despite the many caveats allowing intervention in certain cases. Still, even in this clear-cut case of a norm violation, it is notable that the directly enforced status loss was less than it could conceivably have been. On the one hand, this was due to Western actors' inability to muster a truly global audience of normals condemning Russia, which was itself a result in large part of the West's own discreditable history of breaches. On the other hand, even Western actors were reluctant to pull out the really big stops when it came to the sanctions regime – there was no severing of diplomatic relations, no wholesale blockade of economic activity. The sanctions were 'painful', but 'far from decisive' (Tooze 2018, 499). This speaks both to the relative power and size of Russia, making such measures inconvenient if not impossible, and to the difficulty of effective economic sanctions in an inter-connected capitalist world economy. Blockading small, communist Cuba in the 1960s was doable, doing the same to capitalist Russia in the 2010s would be much harder, not least because of the reciprocal economic hit it would cause, in particular for European business.

Russia's stigma management strategy shows evidence of both stigma rejection, evasion and counter-stigmatisation. The Russian leadership vehemently denied any instance of aggressive behaviour, insisting that everything had been done in full compliance with international law and invoking the democratic right of the Crimean population to choose their national allegiance, thereby seeking to override any stigma of aggression with the legitimacy of democracy. This was added to an evasive disinformation campaign seeking to hide any evidence of discreditable behaviour by Russian forces, as well as the counter-stigmatisation of both Western actors and the new Ukrainian government over both its historical instances of aggression and its operation against the rebels in eastern Ukraine. Russia's insistence on its democratic conduct and invocation of the 'Kosovo principle' – turning its own long-standing opposition to Kosovo's independence on its head (Mälksoo 2015, 179–82) – constituted more of a 'parody' of the norms in question than a sincere application of them, but parody can be a potent form of contestation (Burai 2015).

By way of epilogue, a year after the worst fighting had subsided in Ukraine, Putin made an unsuccessful attempt to counteract Russia's stigma by forming a new 'audience of normals' in the form of an international coalition against terrorism. During his speech to the UN General Assembly on 28 September 2015, the Russian president first lay the blame for the current state of the Middle East and North Africa on those who had promoted 'democratic' revolutions in the region (i.e. the West), which had resulted only in 'violence, poverty, social disasters and total disregard for human rights', and then went on to call for a 'genuinely broad international coalition against terrorism', specifically the Islamic State, '[s]imilar to the anti-Hitler coalition' (Putin 2015). The call was always going to fall on deaf ears, in large part because of Russia's stigmatisation over Ukraine and its support for the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria (including its blocking of a potential referral of Assad to the ICC by the UN Security Council), a support that Putin's call sought to justify.

Only two days later, Russia started a bombing campaign in Syria that would bring even more opprobrium to its door. The campaign targeted not just Islamic State but all parts of the anti-Assad opposition forces, in a bid to '[soften] up Assad's enemies' (Trenin 2015; Lund 2015). While this tactic forced other international actors involved in the conflict to take account of Russia and gave it a central role in the ongoing negotiations

between the government and opposition, it also led to further stigmatisation as Russia was increasingly accused of the indiscriminate use of force. The height of this came during the closing months of the battle of Aleppo in late 2016, when Russian and Syrian forces were accused in multiple Western media outlets of destroying the city in the way Russian forces had destroyed the Chechen capital Grozny in 1999-2000, demonstrating again the potential for stigmas to endure and resurface (e.g. Galeotti 2016; The Economist 2016). The reference was taken up by US Secretary of State John Kerry, who also called for the Russian and Syrian governments to face war crimes investigations (Mance 2016; Borger 2016). As Aleppo eventually fell to government forces in December 2016, the outgoing US Ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power, threw aside diplomatic language to strongly criticise Russia (and Iran) in the Security Council: 'Are they truly incapable of shame? Is there literally nothing that can shame them? Is there no act of barbarism against civilians, no execution of a child that gets under their skin or just creeps them out a little bit? Is there nothing that they will not lie about or justify?' (UN Security Council 2016, 7).¹¹⁹ Thus, while Russia did not face further sanctions for its actions in Syria, largely owing to the legal and diplomatic complexities of the situation with Assad still being the official government, its foray into the conflict failed to alleviate its stigma as an aggressor.

¹¹⁹ Power's statement was covered widely in international news media. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-middle-east-38312665/samantha-power-at-un-are-you-truly-incapable-of-shame> for a recording including the Russian ambassador's angry response, stating that Power 'delivered her statement as if she were Mother Theresa' (accessed 6 November 2018).

Chapter 7

Capitalism

Of the four dominant expectations of ‘normal’ state behaviour analysed in this study, capitalism was the one that Russia came closest to fully meet. While its democratic and human rights credentials were always in doubt, the Russian economy was, undoubtedly, transformed from Soviet-style and centrally planned to a capitalist economy, increasingly integrated with the rest of the global economy and open to trade and investment. By 2016, the sum of imports and exports (a frequent measure of economic openness) was 51% of GDP – compared to 79% in the EU as a whole but only 28% in the US – and for much of the period prior to Western sanctions being introduced in 2014, Russia’s relative share of global foreign direct investment was higher than that of many other comparable economies, from Brazil to Turkey (Connolly 2018, 49–53). The transformation was not easy – it was achieved through ‘substantial and painful’ reforms, particularly the ‘wide-scale liberalisation and mass privatization’ of the 1990s (Connolly and Hanson 2012, 489). It was also committed to by successive Russian leaders: while rolling back democracy and human rights, as detailed in previous chapters, Putin (and Medvedev) made clear his commitment to capitalist economic management, and invoked free market principles as arguments against, for example, the grand renationalisation of industries and companies privatised in the 1990s (Hopf 2016, 236). Indeed, in one analyst’s argument, throughout the 1990s and 2000s the main purpose of Russia’s new ‘system’ was to ‘defend capitalism – if necessary at the expense of democracy’ (Wood 2018, 5). Unlike the insistence on ‘traditional values’ or the persistent criticism of Western ‘double standards’ in foreign policy, Russia’s leaders generally accepted the norm of capitalism, at least on a rhetorical level.

Despite this substantial turnaround since Soviet times, Russia’s economy remained ‘flawed in many respects’ in relation to dominant free-market norms (Connolly and Hanson 2012, 498). From substantial state involvement in the economy via a weak rule of law manifesting itself in the risk of *reiderstvo* (raiding) to the high-level corruption of government insiders, Russia was less a fully capitalist country than a ‘kleptocracy’ (Dawisha 2014), an example of ‘crony capitalism’ (Sharafutdinova 2010) or a ‘hybrid’ or

'limited-access' system of political economy (Connolly 2018). However, as Mark Galeotti (e.g. 2018) has pointed out, Russia's gangster capitalism was still capitalism, only with the state as the largest gang in town.

This chapter analyses stigmatisation and stigma management in relation to the norm of free-market capitalism. The first section considers the context of Russia's Soviet legacy and its persistent status as a capitalist developmental 'laggard', leading to diffuse stigmatisation. The second section analyses instances of direct stigmatisation. It finds that there has been comparatively little direct stigmatisation compared to other norms. For example, many of the complications surrounding Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) were not related to issues of economics but to aggression and human rights. The third section analyses Russia's stigma management, elaborating on the claim that, unlike in relation to other norms, Russian leaders mostly pursued a stigma acceptance strategy when it came to capitalism, albeit one mixed with the usual dose of stigma rejection when related to alleged transgressions such as the Yukos affair.

I – Diffuse stigmatisation: Russia's 'arrested development'

Russia's relative economic 'backwardness' has been a feature of analysis and a practical concern for the country's leaders for centuries (Gerschenkron 1962). It was a driving force behind Peter the Great's modernising and Europeanising project in the 17th and 18th centuries and Stalin's industrialisation drive in the 1920s and 1930s alike.¹²⁰ Stalin's rival Trotsky made it a primary cause in his analysis of the Russian Revolution, which he argued came about owing to Russia's combination of 'archaic and contemporary forms' of economic and social development – a key feature of his theory of 'uneven and combined development' later taken up by IR theorists (Trotsky 2008; Rosenberg 2016). In 1994, Yegor Gaidar, one of the architects of the liberalisation and Westernisation drive under Yeltsin, put it this way: '[in politics and economics] Russia, for many centuries, has been a civilization constantly playing catch-up' (Gaidar 2003, 24). As the development of a market economy seemingly stalled in the post-Soviet period after the initial 'shock

¹²⁰ As Stalin put it in 1931: 'We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall go under'. See <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1931/02/04.htm> (accessed 15 July 2019).

therapy' of the early 1990s, debates over Russia's 'arrested development' (Etkind 2014) re-emerged with force. This section briefly considers the nature of this stigma, the result of diffuse processes of developed capitalism becoming 'normal' internationally. Russian leaders' reaction to it will be considered in the third section.

In global comparative terms, the story of Russia's backwardness, particularly in the contemporary world, can be overblown. Economic and social indicators plummeted in the 1990s but recovered in the 2000s. By 2016 Russia was the world's either 13th (in dollar terms) or 6th (in purchasing power parity terms) largest economy and in 2013 the 8th largest manufacturer in terms of share of global value-added, ahead of the UK (Connolly 2018, 49, 39). Already at the end of the first Putin presidency, Shleifer and Treisman (2004; 2005) argued that for all its faults, Russia was a 'normal' country for its kind, more or less comparable to other middle-income countries (for a response, see Rosefielde 2005). However, for a country accustomed to seeing itself as a great power and comparing itself to the US and the EU's Western core, Russia's relative position was still poor on several indicators. Even adjusted for standard of living, average per capita income in 2016 was 30% of US levels and 65% of the EU average (Connolly 2018, 49). Moreover, the composition of the economy was as important as macroeconomic indicators in the story of backwardness. On this front, three potentially discreditable features stood out in relation to the hegemonic ideals of liberal capitalism and its supposed separation of the political and economic spheres: the high level of state involvement in the economy, the weak rule of law and high levels of corruption, and the over-reliance on (state-controlled) hydrocarbon exports.

The insufficient separation between politics and economics was primarily manifest in the substantial state involvement in the economy. While a relatively large private sector developed in the country after 1991, from 2005-15 the estimated share of the state-controlled segment of the economy rose steadily to around 70% (Anderson 2015, 7-8; Connolly 2018, 38). In Connolly's analysis, the state operated as a fifth sector of the economy, shaping incentives and setting formal rules and regulations (as in most capitalist economies), but also owning or indirectly controlling large parts of the economy, including those that produced the majority of taxation revenue, trade and capital flows. From this position at the 'apex' of the system it could use its levers to direct resources where it wanted them and 'subordinate economic activity to wider social,

political, and geopolitical objectives’, with the direct and indirect effect of suppressing market competition (Connolly 2018, 30, 46).¹²¹ On its own, this was not necessarily noteworthy. As Connolly (2018, 31) points out, ‘[the] vast majority of countries across the world are *not* well-functioning market economies’. However, the issue was contextual and relative – compared to the less state-dominated economies of the West, Russia was discreditable, particularly when the direction of travel under Putin was towards greater state intervention.

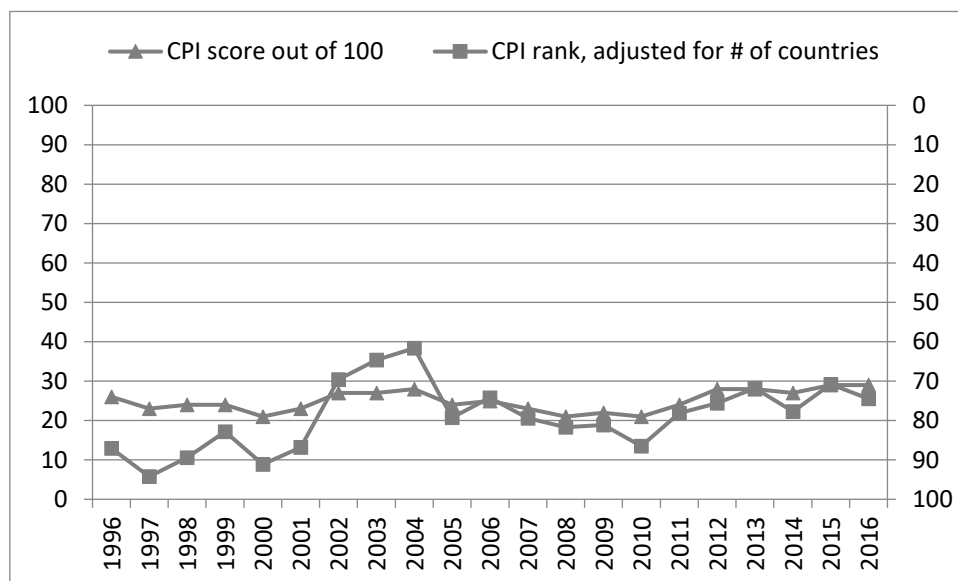
The potential for discrediting was compounded by the amount of high-level corruption and the weak rule of law, particularly around the protection of private property. The two phenomena were closely linked – the weaker and more arbitrary the rule of law, the more important are informal networks, bribes and kickbacks. A common practice in Russian business throughout the post-Soviet period, hampering the development of successful private businesses, was *reiderstvo*, a practice of the theft and relatively prompt resale of companies for large profits that increasingly became done not only by private businessmen (ignored or tolerated by the state) but initiated by state officials (Sakwa 2012; Connolly 2018, 42–43).¹²² The money gained from bribes, kickbacks, embezzlement or *reiderstvo* was generally then taken offshore. Capital flight totalled around \$335 billion from 2005–14, contributing to rampant inequality and making Putin and the elite surrounding him very rich (Dawisha 2014, 1–2). Cypriot banks and British real estate were among the favoured destinations of Russian money, with corruption thus facilitated by Western enablers or what the investigative journalist Oliver Bullough (2018) calls ‘Moneyland’ – the globalised offshore economy for the super-rich. In Dawisha’s (2014, 9) words, ‘globalization’ allowed Russian elites to keep ‘domestic markets open for predation while minimizing their own personal risk by depositing profits in secure offshore accounts’.

¹²¹ The other sectors were the globally competitive sector ‘A’, consisting mainly of natural resources, agriculture, nuclear power plant production and defence industries; the uncompetitive and domestically focused sector ‘B’, relying on direct or indirect subsidies funded by rents from sector ‘A’; the largely independent sector ‘C’, including the relatively small number of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs); and the relatively small (by international comparison), bank-centric and state-dominated financial sector (Connolly 2018, chapter 3).

¹²² As Ledeneva (2013, 188–91) explains, *reiderstvo* is distinct from Western ‘corporate raiding’, which is often ethically dubious but on the whole a legal affair.

Globalisation also exposed Russia’s weak rule of law by allowing both commercial arbitration and human rights cases to be heard outside the country’s borders: ‘Major commercial disputes are now resolved by English law: the ECtHR has been jokingly referred to as “Russia’s Supreme Court”’ (Ledeneva 2013, 177). As with the high number of ECtHR cases and critical NGO reports in the field of human rights, the number of commercial arbitrations and the country’s persistently poor ratings on indexes like Transparency International’s *Corruption Perceptions Index* (see Chart 7.1) provided the background knowledge that could be mobilised to stigmatise in the field of capitalism. In an increasingly active and direct practice of discrediting, Alexei Navalny and his Anti-Corruption Foundation would target officials within the governing circle, most prominently Dmitry Medvedev, with exposé videos broadcast online revealing the officials’ luxurious habits, vastly out of kilter with their official salaries.¹²³

Chart 7.1 – Russia’s score (left axis, 100 = squeaky clean, 0 = very corrupt) and relative rank (right axis, 0 = top, 100 = bottom) in Transparency International’s *Corruption Perceptions Index*, 1996-2016.



Source: <https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi>.

A third discrediting characteristic of post-Soviet Russia’s economy was its heavy reliance on hydrocarbon exports – the so-called ‘oil curse’. In most years, revenue from

¹²³ See <https://fbk.info/english/about/> (accessed 15 July 2019).

hydrocarbons (oil, oil products, natural gas and coal) constituted between 55% and 75% of total export revenues, and rents from this sector were instrumental both in subsidising less competitive sectors of the economy and providing a revenue stream for elite corruption – the state expanded its ownership in the sector exponentially under Putin, who himself reportedly had shares in both gas company Gazprom and gas and oil company Surgutneftegaz (Connolly 2018, 50; Dawisha 2014, 6; Rutland 2013, 357). Such a reliance on oil and gas exports could cut both ways from a stigma perspective. As Rutland (2013, 333) points out, to market advocates Russia's increasing reliance on the extractive sector would be something 'to be welcomed as evidence of comparative advantage in action', while to critics it would be 'a sign of a failure to preserve a balanced, diversified economy, capable of sustained growth and social equality' (not to mention evidence of state domination of a key economic sector and an enabling factor for corruption). Either way, it provided a reference point that could be mobilised by Western politicians to demonstrate Russia's 'semi-peripheral' and therefore backward and unimportant position in the world economy, its status as a 'raw materials appendage' providing the materials for Western (and increasingly Eastern) capitalist entrepreneurs (Morozov 2015, 67–102; Rutland 2013, 357–58).¹²⁴ Examples of such mobilisations include US Senator John McCain's jibe live on CNN in March 2014, during the height of the Ukraine crisis, that Russia was 'a gas station masquerading as a country'¹²⁵ and President Obama's statement during an interview with *The Economist* in the same year that 'Russia doesn't make anything. Immigrants aren't rushing to Moscow in search of opportunity' (The Economist 2014). The implications were: a) that Russian government concerns about events in Ukraine were not legitimate, and b) that even something like the Ukraine crisis had to be put in perspective – Russia presented merely 'regional' challenges, a subtle dig against the country's sense of self-worth.

A final, enduring stigma in relation to Russia's post-Soviet capitalist development was just that – its post-Soviet nature. Its many defects when compared with a well-

¹²⁴ This stigmatising moniker is not without basis in truth: in any given year, 'natural resources and unprocessed raw materials account for around 85 percent of Russia's total merchandise exports ... there are very few manufactured product categories in which Russian manufacturers are competitive' (Connolly 2018, 38–39).

¹²⁵ Recording available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5LyDd4vQPk> (accessed 15 July 2019) – McCain went on to say 'it's kleptocracy, it's corruption', linking the oil and gas dependence to the issues above.

functioning market economy were frequently put down to its Soviet legacy. This was an understandable trope. The country had spent the seven decades prior to the 1990s as the embodiment of the antithesis to free-market capitalism, with a centrally planned economy and no such thing as private property. The Soviet legacy undoubtedly did affect Russia's transition towards capitalism in multiple ways, although its exact impact is contested. The 'bear traps' of both bad management and skewed, uncompetitive investment (Gaddy and Ickes 2013; see also Gaddy 1996; Gaddy and Ickes 2002) plus the fact that the Soviet management class were 'reluctant capitalists' (Randall 2001) may have hindered capitalist development from a purely free-market perspective.¹²⁶ But as Gaddy and Ickes (2013) also point out, there are structural challenges in Russia such as the enormous distances and harsh climate that hamper investment and have nothing to do with the Soviet legacy. In her study of the persistence of informal networks – the so-called *sistema* – Ledeneva (2013) both acknowledges the Soviet legacy's role in frustrating modernisation (which she defines as closing the gap between the formal and informal way of doing things) and points to how such networks persisted partly as a rational response to market defects and low levels of trust in state institutions during the transitional period. Wood (2018, 57–87) takes this one step further and argues that the Soviet past in fact gave a 'hidden subsidy to the present', smoothing the path of capitalist transition by giving people a minimum of welfare support and weakening trade unions and people's attachment to working class identities, making them put up with more hardship than they would have otherwise. Etkind (2014, 158), meanwhile, takes the idea that Russia's 'arrested development' is due to Soviet-infused 'inertia' or 'tradition' to task by arguing that '[if] Russia is still post-Soviet, it is due to a concerted effort of a narrow group [Putin and his circle] that has been actively preventing Russia from becoming a productive, law-abiding, European country'. While this acknowledges the stigma of being 'post-Soviet', it puts it down not to an ineffable 'legacy' but an active choice of the current elite.

II – Direct stigmatisation: The marginality of 'capitalism'

¹²⁶ Another aspect that has been invoked by sociologists is the supposedly non-entrepreneurial mentality of the Soviet and post-Soviet population, the 'Homo Sovieticus' phenomenon. See Gessen (2017) for a sympathetic recent use of the term and Sharafutdinova (2019) for a critique.

This section analyses direct stigmatisation of Russia over its transgressions against capitalist norms. The argument is that capitalist-related defects or transgressions primarily sparked direct stigmatisation when they were combined with transgressions related to other norms such as human rights or aggression. This is illustrated through two examples: the breakup of the oil company Yukos and imprisonment of its CEO, Mikhail Khodorkovsky together with the similar Magnitsky case; and Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Before these cases are explored, one example of direct stigmatisation based on Russia's economic backwardness should be mentioned, namely the decision to exclude Russia from the economic side of the G8. As noted in Chapter 4, this led to a split between the 'economic 7' and the 'political 8', with Russia excluded from finance ministers' meetings right up until its dismissal from the club in 2014 (Naylor 2019, 127). The reason was opposition and scepticism from the G7 countries, particularly the US Treasury, about Russia's economic suitability in a club of advanced industrial nations. As one-time US G7 Sherpa Robert Fauver put it years later, Russia was an 'economic basket case' (quoted in Naylor 2019, 127; see also Treisman 2011, 333). While, as seen in previous chapters, the perceived political imperative to help Russia along in its transition dictated that it be admitted to the political side of the club, its exclusion from the economic side was a direct case of separation and stigmatisation based on its insufficient level of economic development.¹²⁷

From Khodorkovsky to Magnitsky: human rights in focus

The imprisonment of the oil company Yukos's president, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, on tax evasion charges in October 2003, his subsequent sentence to nine years prison in 2005, and the breaking up of Yukos and transfer of its assets to state-owned Rosneft, was 'an earthquake that completely changed the balance of power in Russian politics' (Zygar

¹²⁷ Another potential case would be Russia's lack of membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which it applied to join in 1996 and achieved a membership roadmap for in 2007. However, this is not a case of direct exclusion, rather slow progress (at least until the EU called for the suspension of accession negotiations during the Ukraine crisis). See <https://www.oecd.org/russia/therussianfederationandtheoecd.htm> (accessed 18 August 2019).

2016, 62).¹²⁸ Khodorkovsky had broken the unwritten bargain that Putin had offered to the Russian oligarchs when coming to power: stay out of politics, and the state will stay out of your affairs and not question the dubious ways in which your wealth was acquired in the 1990s. Yukos was funding a variety of opposition parties and bringing its considerable weight to bear against government attempts to tax mineral extraction, and Khodorkovsky, estimated as Russia's richest and the world's 16th richest man at the time, was openly talking about changing the Russian political system from a presidential to a parliamentary one. In February 2003, during a televised meeting between Putin and the oligarch group the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RUIE), Khodorkovsky had criticised Rosneft for corruption and called for the state to do more to combat the issue, prompting a seething Putin to make thinly veiled references to Khodorkovsky's and Yukos's own skeletons in the closet, reportedly telling one of his allies that Khodorkovsky had 'some nerve, preaching to me in front of everyone' (Zygar 2016, 53).¹²⁹ Yukos and its owner were taken out both to remove a political threat, as a warning to others – 'henceforward, no oligarch should think of challenging the power of the state' (Anderson 2015, 8) – and to improve the financial and economic power of Putin's close allies.¹³⁰

The Yukos affair was certainly a blot on Russia's image as a good capitalist country and caused a short-term hit in investor confidence as fears of an all-out renationalisation campaign or further state-oligarch conflict were raised in the Western financial press. However, by October 2005, the affair had apparently been settled. Khodorkovsky's was sentenced in May that year and the Russian government went on a charm offensive to convince investors that Yukos was a one-off. Credit rating agencies showered the country with upgrades and investors started returning (Aris 2005).¹³¹ As Chart 7.2 shows, net foreign direct investment in Russia rose exponentially from 2005 to 2008 before the

¹²⁸ See e.g. Zygar (2016, 47–63) and Sakwa (2014b) for accounts of the whole affair, and Hoffman (2002, 100–126) for the background story of how Khodorkovsky made his money.

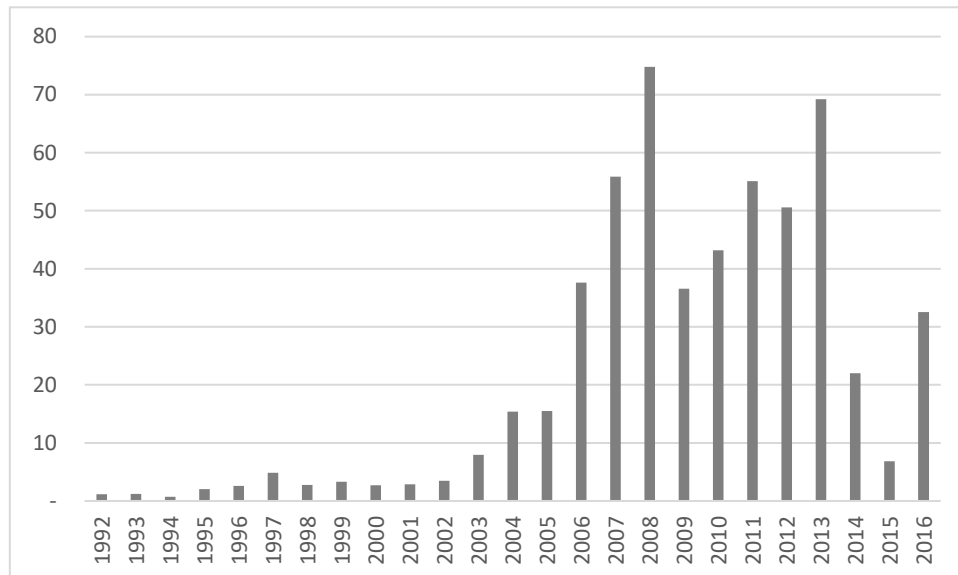
¹²⁹ Like the other oligarchs, Khodorkovsky had initially bought Yukos from the state at a bargain price during the so-called 'loans for shares' auction in the mid-1990s, during which several state enterprises were privatised and sold to banks like Khodorkovsky's Menatep Bank in order to break the power of Communist-sympathetic directors and fund Yeltsin's re-election campaign against the Communists in 1996. See e.g. Hoffman (2002) for the story of the oligarchs' grip on power in the 1990s.

¹³⁰ Dawisha (2014, 332) marks the takeover of Yukos as the start of the second phase of what she dubs Putin's 'kleptocracy', in which his entourage from St. Petersburg and the security services started their establishment of control of key assets of the Russian economy.

¹³¹ See <https://tradingeconomics.com/russia/rating> (accessed 15 July 2019) for Russia's credit ratings over time.

global financial crisis (and the war with Georgia) led to a steep drop, only matched by the sanctions-induced plummet over the Ukraine crisis in 2014-15.

Chart 7.2 – Net FDI inflows, billions of US\$, Russia, 1992-2016.



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Over the coming years, even as cases brought by Yukos shareholders were winding their way through international courts and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe cited Yukos as a prime case of Russia’s ‘legal nihilism’ in 2009 (Ledeneva 2013, 165), foreign companies and investors were content to engage with the company that had taken over most of Yukos’s assets, Rosneft. In 2006, Rosneft was listed on the London Stock Exchange, amongst others, in the largest initial public offering (IPO) in Russia’s history. While this to a large extent legitimised it as a company, reports at the time did suggest that investors were more cautious than might otherwise have been the case (e.g. Chung and Ostrovsky 2006). In 2011, just weeks after Khodorkovsky was sentenced to a further 13.5 years in prison in a trial labelled ‘deeply flawed and politically motivated’ by Amnesty International, British oil company BP (which had bought shares in the 2006 IPO) announced a deal to increase its stake in Rosneft and a partnership for oil exploration in the Arctic. When the deal collapsed in August 2011 owing to a contract dispute between BP and its partners in the separate Russian-British oil venture TNK-BP, US oil giant ExxonMobil took BP’s place (it had also struck a deal with Rosneft for exploration in the Black Sea in January 2011). Throughout, Yukos shareholders (not

including Khodorkovsky, who sold all his shares in 2004) sought to warn BP and other companies off co-operation with Rosneft, arguing that the assets were 'stolen' in 'illegal auctions, bogus bankruptcy fire sales and expropriations' (Mason and Ruddick 2011).

This attempted stigmatisation of Rosneft and the Russian state appears to have fallen on deaf ears in the boardrooms of Western oil companies, at least in BP and ExxonMobil. This is unsurprising given the companies' number one priority of their own profit margins and desire to get access to Russia's substantial oil reserves. There is a more general point to be made, though, about the difficulty of imposing a stigma in a field and context (capitalism, especially Russian post-Soviet capitalism) where the moral lines were always murky. While Khodorkovsky and the other oligarchs presented themselves as free-market entrepreneurs and, in Khodorkovsky's case, a liberal philanthropist, it was common knowledge that their wealth was at best dubiously earned and at worst effectively stolen, including from the state and the taxpayer (D. E. Hoffman 2002, 3-7; Wood 2018). Similar to the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, the circumstances were enough to sow a modicum of doubt that undermined any stigmatisation process.

Indeed, it is instructive that, over time, the Yukos/Khodorkovsky case became increasingly framed as a human rights violation (it was also, from the start, an indicator for many of Russia's democratic backsliding owing to Khodorkovsky's political opposition to Putin). In 2011 and 2013, the ECtHR found that the trial against Khodorkovsky and his business partner Platon Lebedev had violated their rights to fair treatment but concluded that it could not judge whether the case was politically motivated. Amnesty International had no such qualms. Following Khodorkovsky and Lebedev's sentence to a further 13.5 years in prison for money laundering in 2010-11 (reduced to 12 on appeal and rescinded in practice upon their release in early 2014), the human rights NGO declared them prisoners of conscience.¹³² Yukos shareholders and/or former management brought cases against Russia both in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague and in the European Court of Human Rights, with both courts ordering Russia to pay large sums of damages within a couple of weeks of each other in July 2014.¹³³ However, at this point Russia was well on its way to becoming stigmatised

¹³² See <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/russia-khodorkovsky-and-lebedev-are-prisoners-conscience> (accessed 16 July 2019).

¹³³ ECtHR: [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-145730%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-145730%22]}). The PCA's claim was overturned by the Hague District Court in April 2016, with the latter accepting Russia's argument that the

over its annexation of Crimea and role in eastern Ukraine, as detailed in the previous chapter (the verdicts came just a couple of weeks after flight MH17 was shot down), and the added effect of these verdicts is hard to separate (though they certainly would not have helped).

The inefficacy of capitalist transgressions on their own was also evident in the tragic case of Sergei Magnitsky. Magnitsky was a tax lawyer working for Hermitage Capital Management, a highly successful investment fund headed by British-American businessman Bill Browder that became the victim of *reiderstvo* in the mid-2000s. Magnitsky uncovered the details of the scheme, including a tax rebate fraud in which a group of Interior Ministry bureaucrats allegedly defrauded the state of around \$230 million, and testified against the officials before he was detained in November 2008 on trumped-up charges of having committed the fraud himself. Over the next year he was beaten, held in inhuman conditions and denied medical treatment, and eventually died in prison in November 2009. Browder subsequently devoted much time and resources to lobbying Western lawmakers to punish those responsible for Magnitsky's death (see Browder 2015 for his somewhat sensationalist autobiography, in which he claims to be 'Putin's no. 1 enemy'). The result was the Magnitsky Act, passed by the US Congress in November-December 2012, which allowed the US government to sanction individuals it held responsible for Magnitsky's death by denying them entry to the US, freezing any US-based assets and prohibiting their use of US financial institutions – 18 names were added to the list in April 2013 (Trindle 2014).¹³⁴ This targeted form of 'smart' sanctions foreshadowed those that would later be applied against individuals deemed responsible for Russia's incursions in Ukraine (Gilligan 2016).

This survey of the Khodorkovsky/Yukos and Magnitsky/Hermitage cases indicate two things. First, that capitalism-related transgressions only led to the sort of opprobrium, separation and status loss required to meaningfully speak of stigmatisation when combined with other transgressions, notably in these two cases human rights-related ones. The theft of Hermitage's companies, while an additional case of the potential

PCA did not have jurisdiction to hear the case. <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-yukos-ruling-dutch-court-explainer/27686006.html> (both accessed 15 July 2019).

¹³⁴ See <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/hr6156/text> (accessed 15 July 2019) for the full text of the law, which puts Magnitsky's death in the context of corruption in Russia, its effect on democratic development, and expresses concerns over the Khodorkovsky and Lebedev re-trial.

perils of operating in Russia for foreign businesses and a blot on its rule-of-law image, on its own would have been very unlikely to morph into the kind of stigmatising measure the Magnitsky Act eventually became, just like reactions to the Yukos case were amplified by Khodorkovsky's treatment and elevation to prisoner of conscience status. As with the oligarchs, one of the reasons in the Hermitage case would be the compromised victim (Hermitage, not Magnitsky). While Browder (2015) insists Hermitage always paid its taxes in Russia, he also admits the company sought out those Russian regions with the most favourable tax regimes, and it maintains offices in notable tax havens like Guernsey and the Cayman Islands.¹³⁵ This leads to the second point, which is that in the morally murky world of international business, stigmatisation may simply have less traction, or transgressions may not lead to ostracization as long as there is an overriding profit motive involved. This is of course not something that applies only to profit-seeking companies – governments also put profit first, as the next section on Russia's WTO accession shows.

WTO accession: aggression and human rights over trade

Despite a stated commitment to free trade since the earliest post-Soviet days, while Russia remained outside the WTO this commitment was always in doubt, as the mechanisms by which it could be held to account for breaches of free-trade practices were fewer. The failure to join the WTO until 2012 (negotiations were started in 1994 and completed in 2009, with outstanding issues with Georgia solved in 2011) was indeed the 'most salient blot on [Russia's] image as a market economy' (Rutland 2013, 354) – in other words, a stigma. However, the most notable thing from a direct stigmatisation perspective about Russia's delayed accession was how the most vocal objections of other states were related to issues like aggression and human rights rather than trade per se, again showing the higher stigmatising potential of transgressions in these fields – and, ultimately, how they did not lead to full-on stigmatisation in the sense of continued Russian exclusion.

¹³⁵ See <https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=4486593> for a company overview (accessed 16 July 2019).

The length and complicated nature of the Russian accession process can in itself be seen as stigmatising, particularly when combined with the highly unusual amount of detailed attention other states paid to it. As Van der Borgh (2015, 329) notes, WTO accession remains a largely (power-)political process with few clear legal rules, in particular as accession normally relies on the consent of all members. This makes it ripe for stigmatisation processes to make their mark as states bring grievances from other fields, even if 'political' concerns are not meant to impinge on the process (Warner 2014, 98). Connolly and Hanson (2012, 488–89) argue that the accession process resembled a business negotiation rather than a simple adoption of standards, and that the drawn-out process was caused by this, combined with the size and importance of Russia and the distrust and suspicion of other member states. As an indication, the accession working group of 'interested parties' was both the largest (40 states initially, 65 by the final stage) and most frequently convened ever. Since China's accession in 2001, Russia was the only UN Security Council permanent member state and only member of the G8 (and, later, G20) not to be a WTO member. Compared to China's 15-and-a-half-year accession process, Russia's took almost 18 years, and the working party's final report on accession was more than 600 pages long, compared to 180 for China, which 'shows the number of questions the members had with the idea of Russian accession' (Warner 2014, 100).¹³⁶ Russia did not react well to this onerous process, at several points indicating that given its international stature (real, perceived or desired) it considered the scrutiny unworthy – a combined rejection of the stigma implied by the scrutiny and counter-stigmatisation of those scrutinising it. However, it still sought membership, in a recognition both of the status that accession would confer and the potential economic benefits (Van der Borgh 2015, 329–30).

The state that most actively opposed Russia's accession in the latter stages of the negotiations was Georgia, owing to the aftermath of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war and Russia's recognition of the two Georgian separatist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as independent states. This was not a clear-cut case of stigmatisation over aggression. In keeping with the technical, supposedly non-political spirit of WTO negotiations, Georgia's objections were framed around the very real challenges of customs controls at the

¹³⁶ See https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/a1_russie_e.htm for Russia's, and https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/a1_chine_e.htm for China's (both accessed 15 July 2019).

contested borders between Abkhazia, Georgia, Russia and South Ossetia, an issue that had also plagued Georgia's own WTO accession (Warner 2014). However, the stigma lurking in the background throughout was Russia's 2008 intervention and subsequent recognition of the two separatist states as independent, against the overwhelming majority of states worldwide. As noted in the previous chapter though, while the more powerful Western states heavily criticised Russia for its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Russo-Georgian war on the whole did not lead to direct stigmatisation in the sense of a status loss for Russia. On the subject of economics, specifically Russia's WTO accession, the US and EU were not going to let Georgia dictate terms or make this a 'make or break issue'; any Georgian attempts to create an 'audience of normals' against Russian accession would thus almost certainly have been doomed (Van der Borgh 2015, 340–45). The eventual solution, reached in 2011 after two-and-a-half years of Swiss mediation (Georgia cut off diplomatic relations with Russia after the 2008 war), was a creative agreement that on paper allowed for customs controls while avoiding the touchy issue of the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, even using 'neutral' Universal Trade Mercator co-ordinates rather than any geographical place names to avoid any geopolitical implications (Warner 2014, 98–100). This unblocked negotiations and removed the final hurdle for Russia to accede.

A further stigma-related issue that arose during the final year of Russia's accession negotiations was human rights-related and pertained to US-Russian relations specifically. Under WTO regulations, once Russia joined, the US would have to either repeal the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which withheld normal trade relations with states that refused '[their] citizens the right or opportunity to emigrate' (or, in practice, did not uphold human rights as defined by Congress), or 'graduate' Russia to the status of normal trade relations by ceasing to apply the amendment to it (Van der Borgh 2015, 346).¹³⁷ The government wanted to repeal the amendment, which led Bill Browder and his supporters in Congress to seize the opportunity to finally pass the Magnitsky Act, which had previously been lobbied against by the Obama administration owing to its 'reset' policy with Russia (Trindle 2014). In an eventual *quid pro quo*, Jackson-Vanik was

¹³⁷ The amendment was introduced as a way of countering a US-Soviet trade agreement from 1972, and thus was from the beginning a stigmatising move against the Soviet Union/Russia (the Soviets repudiated the trade agreement in protest), though it had also been applied to other states. The very language of 'graduating' and the linkage between trade and human rights illustrates one of the many ways in which hierarchies and stigmas are constructed and upheld through myriad laws, amendments, etc.

repealed and the Magnitsky Act passed as part of the same legislative package. The latter was acceptable under WTO regulations as it sanctioned individuals rather than a state – although the Russian interpretation remained that the Magnitsky Act was an ‘anti-Russian’ law replacing an ‘anti-Soviet’ one (Sergei Lavrov quoted in Van der Borgh 2015, 348).

Russia’s entry into the WTO was thus seen as more important both than its violation of a neighbouring state’s sovereignty and its violations of human rights. It was allowed to rid itself of the stigma of being outside the WTO – the ‘blot’ on its market economy image – despite the developing stigmas of aggressor and human rights violator. Whether the Western support for Russia’s accession was due to a continued case of ‘transitionology’ (WTO membership will encourage economic reform, economic reform goes hand-in-hand with democratic consolidation, etc.) or material self-interest in terms of obtaining market access for its companies is an open question. In his statement welcoming the completion of negotiations, President Obama focused on the benefits of ‘international access to Russia’s services markets’, increased exports for ‘American manufacturers and farmers’ and accountability for Russia to abide by international rules, and framed the event as part of the US-Russia reset, ‘based upon the belief that the United States and Russia share many common interests, even as we disagree on some issues’ (Obama 2011).

While Russia’s accession removed a free-market ‘blot’, it also opened it up to the potential stigma of not abiding by WTO rules. From its accession in 2012 to the end of 2016, seven complaints were made against Russia (four by the EU, two by Ukraine and one by Japan), including over a recycling fee on motor vehicles meant to protect the automotive industry and its ban on agricultural food imports as counter-sanctions during the Ukraine crisis.¹³⁸ As with the number of cases against Russia in the ECtHR, a rapidly accumulating number of cases against it at the WTO would counter the positive impact of having acceded to the organisation.

¹³⁸ See all disputes at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/dispu_by_country_e.htm (accessed 15 July 2019). Russia also opened a similar number of disputes.

III – Russian stigma management: diffuse acceptance, direct rejection

This section analyses Russia's stigma management relating to capitalism. It argues that contrary to the norms of democracy, human rights and to some extent non-aggression, successive Russian governments in the post-Soviet period accepted the norm of capitalism and, directly and indirectly, Russia's 'backwardness' in relation to the norm. Russian leaders from Yeltsin to Putin to Medvedev and back to Putin again have all been rhetorically committed to capitalism, even neoliberalism (Hopf 2016), and have pursued policies to this effect, contributing to the above-mentioned transformation of Russia from the planned communist economy of the Soviet Union to the capricious, chaotic but relatively open economy of today as described by Connolly (2018). This is not to suggest that Russia has been an entirely 'normal' capitalist country, for all the reasons discussed in section I and II – the gap between theory and practice has clearly left something to be desired (Rutland 2013). But it is to say that, in contrast to the case of human rights, where the Russian leadership gradually moved towards a rejection of the norm altogether, at least in its hegemonic Western interpretation, when it comes to capitalism no such counter-stigmatising discourse was embraced, despite ample opportunity. Below, this argument is substantiated through a closer look at the evolution of economic policy and, importantly, its justifications.

Economic policy in the 1990s was characterised by the rapid and painful introduction of free market principles, driven by reformers like Gaidar and Anatoly Chubais and foreign advisers from institutions like the IMF. Prices and foreign trade were liberalised, state assets were sold off in a mass privatisation drive, and legal and institutional reforms protecting the right to private property and free movement of goods and services were introduced (Treisman 2011, 197–207). The effects for the population at large were hardship, with spiralling inflation and increasing poverty rates, although the picture was not uniform and standards of living increased in some areas, notably European cities and resource-rich regions of Siberia (Treisman 2011, 218–19). Moreover, as Treisman notes, reforms were not always the drivers of change – price liberalisation and privatisation were already occurring spontaneously in 1991-92, and reforms were often trying to bring the process under control (2011, 197–99). Debates persist about the extent to which this 'shock therapy' introduced 'actual' neoliberal capitalism to Russia and whether a less painful, gradualist alternative existed. While the neoliberal hegemony

of the time certainly pushed reformers and their advisers towards a ‘minimalist understanding of institutions and their role in market democracy’ (Morozov 2015, 97–98), it is almost certainly also true that ‘actual policies ... diverged considerably from the prevailing neoliberal orthodoxy and were heavily shaped by the self-interest of the [policy-making] elites’ (Rutland 2013, 332). Policies were also more ‘gradualist’ and pragmatic in practice than often acknowledged. The reformers were politically vulnerable, and had to compromise – as Gaidar pointed out, in a democracy you cannot simply impose a set of reforms (Treisman 2011, 221–23). Either way, the policies of the 1990s are a prime example of stigma acceptance – like Russian leaders of history, Yeltsin, Gaidar, Chubais and their successors (neither Gaidar nor Chubais lasted long in official positions) recognised the stigma of Russia’s ‘backwardness’ and pursued a strategy of ‘catching up’ by embracing and adopting the prevailing hegemonic order (Worth 2005, 93–116). Russia was to become ‘normal’ again.

This acceptance of capitalism continued under Putin, even despite the 1998 financial crisis enabled by Russia’s increasing openness to international financial flows. The crisis discredited the remaining reformers in government, but did not stop Putin and his economic policy team of, principally, Alexei Kudrin (deputy mayor of St Petersburg alongside Putin in early 1990s, finance minister from 2000-11, since then an academic providing occasional advice to Putin) and German Gref (economic development minister 2000-07, since then president of Sberbank, the state-owned savings bank) from implementing a series of liberal tax reforms in 2000-01, including a 13% flat income tax that was praised both by President Bush and the free-market think tank the Heritage Foundation (Treisman 2011, 232, 236; Mitchell 2003; Zygar 2016, 20).¹³⁹

Whether Putin himself can be described as a capitalist is debatable. In their biography of Putin, Hill and Gaddy (2013, 143–66, 144) identify ‘the free marketeer’ as one of his six defining identities and note how he appears convinced that Russia must be a market economy to survive in the modern world. However, they go on to state that Putin’s view of how to win in the market is to be the best at exploiting others’ vulnerabilities and greed, and conclude that: ‘Capitalism, in Putin’s understanding, is not

¹³⁹ Treisman claims that many of the reforms had been planned by Yeltsin’s outgoing team and that some were already underway, while Zygar describes Putin instructing his St Petersburg associates Kudrin and Gref to draw up reforms. Either way, the substance was an embrace of liberal economics.

production, management, and marketing. It is wheeling and dealing. ... It is about personal connections with regulators. It is finding and using loopholes in the law, or creating loopholes. That view, of course, is not entirely wrong. It is simply very one-sided' (2013, 163–64). In this analysis, Putin's view of capitalism was shaped both by his experience of the dog-eat-dog world of 1990s St Petersburg and his 'case officer' mentality. When he was brought to Moscow by Kudrin and others in the mid-1990s despite his dismal record (on any economic performance metric) as deputy mayor for international economic relations in St. Petersburg, it was not for his credentials in 'developing' business but in 'controlling' it (Hill and Gaddy 2013, 165–66). Along with his stated belief in so-called 'national champions', companies supporting state interests rather than their own profit motives in the most important sectors of the economy, and the importance of controlling not just key strategic resources but the means for transporting them, this goes some way towards explaining events like the Yukos affair and the expansion of state control over the oil sector (and other sectors) pursued under Putin (Goldman 2010, 98–99; Hill and Gaddy 2013, 222–28).¹⁴⁰ Still, the commitment to capitalism and the free market in some form or other remained, not just from Putin but even more from his 'Saint Petersburg economists' team led by Kudrin (Ledeneva 2013, 59). Internationally, this was reflected for example in Russia's continued pursuit of WTO accession despite slow progress and its prioritisation of paying its debts to international lenders such as the IMF.¹⁴¹ Other areas, such as participation in international investment arbitration treaties, were more ambivalent. For example, Russia has never ratified ICSID, the most prominent international arbitration convention, despite signing it in 1992 (Mälksoo 2015, 157–58).

During Medvedev's presidency from 2008-12, stigma acceptance became more pronounced, albeit still primarily at the rhetorical level rather than in practical policy. The period was marked by the heavy economic impact of the global financial crisis. Russia's GDP contracted by 7.8% in 2009, sparking a push for economic modernisation

¹⁴⁰ As does, of course, the more straightforward and cynical explanation of corruption and kleptocracy advanced by e.g. Dawisha (2014).

¹⁴¹ Russia paid off the majority of its debt to both the IMF and other international lenders in 2001, helped by higher-than-expected oil prices. Before the oil price boon, there were fierce debates in the new government about whether to seek debt restructuring or pay up by any means. A public statement from Germany that unless the debt was paid, it may oppose Russian membership of the G8, helped swing the debate – Putin did not want a further reduction in status. See Zygar (2016, 31–33).

in response to the conclusion of many in the ruling elite that the country's 'vulnerability was caused by its technologically backward and natural resource-oriented economic structure' (Connolly 2015, 36). The most high-profile point of the debates surrounding this push was Medvedev's much-publicised article 'Russia, Forwards!' (*Rossiia, Vperyod!* – translated as 'Go Russia!' on the official Kremlin website), published online in September 2009 by gazeta.ru, 'the best online media resource at the time' (Zygar 2016, 174).

At face value, 'Russia, Forwards!' was a remarkable piece of stigma acceptance, even self-stigmatisation, at least as concerns capitalism and democracy. Medvedev opened by describing Russia's economy as 'primitive', spoke of its 'humiliating dependence on raw materials' and the persistence of the 'major flaw of the Soviet system: [the ignoring of] individual needs', and identified as Russia's three major 'ills' 'centuries of economic backwardness', 'centuries of corruption' and widespread 'paternalistic attitudes' (Medvedev 2009a).¹⁴² In keeping with his love of gadgets and modern technologies, he called for an 'intelligent economy, creating unique knowledge, exporting new technologies and innovative products'. And while the most concrete measures proposed related to economic modernisation, Medvedev also called for improved democratic institutions, the further development of civil society and lauded modern information technologies' role in providing opportunities 'for the realisation of fundamental political freedoms', albeit while simultaneously insisting, in an echo of the sovereign democracy discourse, that 'Russian democracy will not merely copy foreign models'.¹⁴³ In a somewhat paradoxical passage, the president insisted both that Russia was 'one of the world's leading economies' and that his long-term goal was 'Russia's modernisation'. Another favourite dictum of Medvedev's was the fight against 'legal nihilism', launched in his inauguration speech and becoming something of a mantra. However, for all his tough talk he implemented very few substantive reforms, whether owing to the constraints of operating in 'tandem' with Putin and his own relatively weak political position, or his lack of actual reformist intent (Treisman 2011, 139–46).

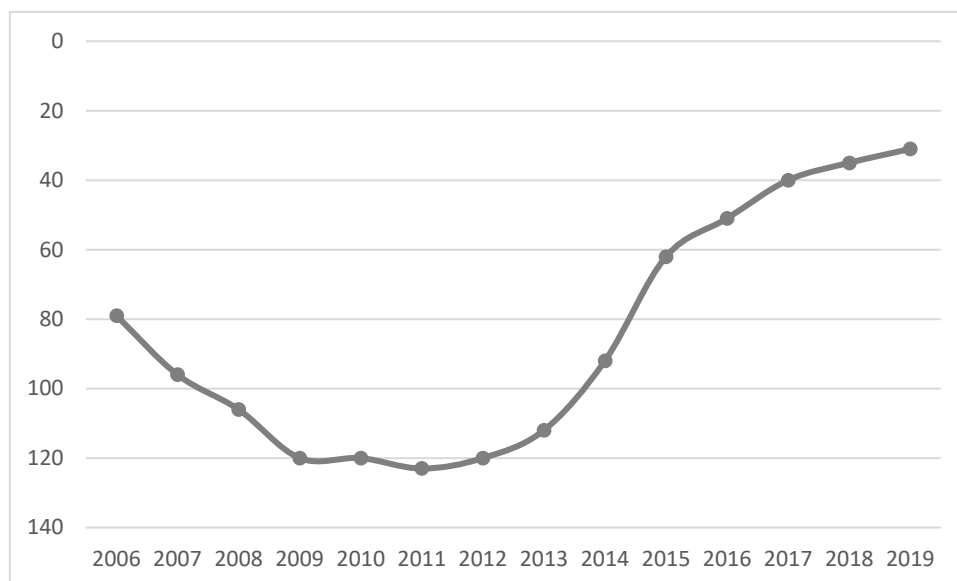
¹⁴² Citations taken from the English version for convenience; see Medvedev (2009b) for the Russian version on gazeta.ru.

¹⁴³ Moreover, in a stigma-rejecting move relating to aggression, he framed Russia's intervention in Georgia the year before as part of an alleged tradition of protecting small nations (in this case the Ossetians).

Medvedev's modernisation rhetoric and to some extent practice echoed the above-mentioned instances through history of Russian leaders playing catch-up with the West (N. Robinson 2013, 6; David and Romanova 2015; Flenley 2015). However, this time, in addition to concluding a 'Partnership for Modernisation' agreement with the EU in 2010, Russia also concluded 'a very dense web of memoranda and declarations on modernisation', including with states like South Korea and China, indicating that the West was no longer the only model. Besides, the Russians saw modernisation very much as a two-way, mutually beneficial process (David and Romanova 2015, 5). Moreover, despite Medvedev waxing lyrical about democracy (only to then extend the presidential term limit to six years), modernisation was primarily conceived in economic terms by both him and even more his prime minister, predecessor and successor, Putin, who upon his return to the presidency in 2012 spoke instead of 'new industrialisation' but also acknowledged the dependence on natural resources and high levels of corruption (Zygar 2016, 174–75; David and Romanova 2015, 5–6; Connolly 2015, 36). Since 2012, efforts at reform, such as the government-endorsed *Strategiya-2020* strategy for socio-economic development until 2020, published in 2013, focused almost exclusively on the economic sphere, with proposals such as the resumption of privatisation and infrastructure improvements (Connolly 2015, 36). Thus, despite Medvedev's rhetorical flourishes during his presidency, the stigma acceptance in practice pertained primarily to economic and technological matters, a trend strengthened with Putin's return.

One of the strategies adopted by the leadership upon Putin's return to the presidency was to improve the image of Russia's business environment by adopting reforms that would push it up the World Bank's flagship *Doing Business* ranking. As can be seen from Chart 7.3, the measures were highly effective, even if Russia fell short of its aim of entering the top 20 by the 2019 report (bne Intellinews 2018).

Chart 7.3 – Russia’s rank (0 = top) on the World Bank’s *Doing Business* rankings from the 2006 report (the first that ranked countries) to the 2019 report.



Source: World Bank Doing Business.

This sort of manipulation can be dismissed as window dressing, and the World Bank itself acknowledged that Russia and other countries like India were to some extent ‘gaming the system’ (Donnan, Foy, and Stacey 2017). But seen from a stigma perspective it is another example of the Russian leadership recognising a potential mark against it and working to ‘despoil’ its identity *within* the dominant system, rather than by positing some form of alternative value system whereby it should be judged. It thus exemplifies a stigma acceptance strategy, albeit a superficial one, almost certainly lacking any deep acceptance of liberal capitalism as such.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued two things. First, the stigmatisation of Russia in the field of capitalism was primarily diffuse, born of its structural position in the capitalist world economy, rather than direct. The latter form of stigmatisation occurred primarily when capitalist transgressions intersected with transgressions from other fields, including human rights and aggression. Second, Russia’s stigma management strategy relating to capitalism was largely one of stigma acceptance rather than stigma rejection or counter-

stigmatisation. By and large, Russian leaders accepted that the country was insufficiently economically developed and identified more capitalism, broadly understood, as the solution to this problem.

Categorising Russia's relationship with capitalism under Putin and Medvedev as one of stigma acceptance is not meant to suggest that Russia has become a model capitalist state (whatever such a state would look like). Clearly, it is not, as evidenced by the weak rule of law, corruption, the personalistic, informal governing style of Putin and his entourage and the dubious commitment to 'playing by the rules' internationally. However, it is notable that unlike in the case of democracy or human rights, where stigma rejection and counter-stigmatisation were the dominant modes of stigma management, the Russian leadership by and large embraced capitalism as the legitimate economic model. There were no attempts to re-instate socialism or communism, no alternative model advanced in the mould of 'traditional values', and no counter-stigmatisation of Western states as having lost their capitalist souls, despite a general grievance with the way the 2008-09 financial crisis spread from the US to severely affect also Russia after several years of responsible macroeconomic policies (Treisman 2011, 146-50).

The reasons for this are varied. On the one hand, it indicates the strongly hegemonic position of capitalism, stronger than that of democracy, human rights or perhaps even non-aggression. There was, in Margaret Thatcher's words, no alternative, even after the catastrophic events of 2008-9. For Russian leaders like Putin and Medvedev, this was doubly so given their direct experience of a centrally planned economy – Putin's oft-alleged pining for the Soviet Union certainly did not include a desire to re-instate socialism. On the other hand, the acceptance was also, of course, in large part driven by the opportunities presented by the globalised capitalist economy for personal enrichment. The leadership had vested material interests in the continuation of Russia as a capitalist economy.

Conclusion

Does Stigmatisation Make the World Hang Together?

This study has analysed processes of stigmatisation between Russia and the West in the post-Cold War period with respect to four core norms of international society. It has made two critical contributions, one theoretical and one empirical.

First, it has shown how processes of stigmatisation and stigma management are a central part of the ongoing contestation of the norms of international society. Against substantialist accounts of international society as a bounded entity and of norms as 'things' detailed in Chapter 1, it has joined other critical accounts to demonstrate how international society is a relational, dynamic, unfolding process shaped by interactions in and through time of entities-in-motion, be they states or a variety of non-state or international actors. Norms like democracy, human rights, non-aggression and capitalism are not free-floating essences but continually contested symbolic forms shaped by the labelling, stereotyping, separation and status loss imposed by actors on other actors and the latter's reactions to such stigmatisation. The structuring effect of norms is constantly shaped and reshaped through interactions, and these interactions are simultaneously about the contestation of the identity of actors involved. When Western actors label Russian elections undemocratic or Russian foreign policy actions aggressive, they are simultaneously reinforcing the 'normal' of democracy or non-aggression and marking Russia out as a deviant against which the norm is defined. A focus on stigmatisation thus shows how norms and identities are negotiated, contested, reinforced or undermined through interaction.

Moreover, unlike the often benign view of society and norms also highlighted in Chapter 1, a focus on stigmatisation lays bare the power processes involved in these interactions. Stigmatisation is infused with power: the production of certain attributes and behaviours as 'normal' and others as 'deviant' is a process of social control, albeit not a totalising one. The study has shown how these power processes vary between 'direct' and 'diffuse'. Stigmatisation can thus be both a direct political project, with actors seeking to reinforce or establish power relations and norms by marking certain actors and

behaviours as beyond the pale, as with Western actors after Russia's annexation of Crimea, and a diffuse process whereby multiple ongoing interactions have the effect of marking certain actors and attributes as inferior, as with Russia's 'arrested' capitalist development. While successful stigmatisation relies on a power differential between the 'audience of normals' and the stigmatised, stigmatisation is not merely something done by the 'powerful' to the 'weak'. It takes power to stigmatise, but power is always relational, never absolute, and dominant norms can be subverted and contested by stigmatised actors or groups to turn their stigma around, as seen in the examples of Cuba, Libya and others mentioned in this study, as well as multiple 'out-groups' through history. The Russian state's 'traditional values' campaign is an example of this dynamic: even if it tramples on weaker actors in its own population, it comes from a position of weakness in the overall power relationship between itself and the West. Stigmatisation and stigma management thus involves a dynamic, unfolding, relational *power-infused* process of interactions.

Second, empirically this study has provided an innovative interpretation of the past three decades of Russian-Western relations that addresses the three issues highlighted in the Introduction: polarisation as well as a need for theoretically inspired and interactional analysis. It eschewed the polarisation and 'blame game' of much recent work to provide a critical analysis that situates the recent deterioration of relations within the broader picture of the ongoing negotiation of international norms. Rather than locating 'fault', it showed how the direct and diffuse stigmatisation of Russia within the dominant normative structures of international society and its attempts to manage its (sometimes established, sometimes emergent) stigmas through strategies of rejection, evasion and counter-stigmatisation have contributed constitutively to the impasse in relations. It also provided a theoretical reading that both relates Russian-Western relations to fundamental social processes underpinning international society and provides a lens that can serve to aid comparison with other cases of stigmatisation. Finally, it provided a relational analysis that goes against the tendency to focus on one 'side' or the other and to treat them as substantialist entities with static attributes, defined by such characteristics as 'authoritarian' or 'democratic', 'liberal' or 'post-Soviet'.

The analysis sheds new light on several aspects of Russian-Western relations. For example, the stigma lens shows how seemingly separate Russian actions and strategies

can all be read as variations of stigma management, attempts to avoid the consequences of deviance or stigma: from the stigma-rejecting insistence on Russia's democratic nature encapsulated in 'sovereign democracy', via the stigma-evading online information campaigns surrounding the Ukraine conflict, to the counter-stigmatising campaign of 'traditional values' and 'sovereign morality'. At the same time, it demonstrates how the seemingly benign Western promotion of democracy, human rights, etc., is as much a power-laden process of stigmatisation as it is a rational, deliberative process of socialisation, and how the Western 'audience of normals' varies from norm to norm. Ultimately, rather than a tale of two fundamentally incompatible entities butting against each other, the analysis provides a tale of a two entities-in-motion engaged in a dynamic, unfolding process from which they both in part derive their identities and through which they negotiate and contest the norms of their broader social setting, namely international society.

This conclusion does two things. First, the next section builds from a summary of the empirics of the previous four chapters to discuss what the different levels and kinds of stigmatisation and stigma management can tell us about hierarchies between the different norms. This section also discusses cross-cutting stigmatising frames such as temporal frames centred on notions of modernity and progress as well as the increasing rejection of liberalism in Russia's stigma management strategies. Second, the final section considers whether stigmatisation in Russian-Western relations has 'made the world hang together' (c.f. Zarakol 2014). It argues that, owing to the relational interplay between relatively weak stigma imposition and successful stigma management strategies, stigmatisation in post-Cold War Russian-Western relations has increasingly been failing in its purpose either of enlisting 'support for [international] society among those who are not supported by it' (Goffman 1963, 164) or of keeping people 'down', 'in' or 'out' (Phelan, Link, and Dovidio 2008). While Russia's pariah status has grown in the West over its breaches of democratic, human rights and non-aggression norms, this has neither induced a change in Russian behaviour nor strengthened the norms in question. The section also brings the analysis forward by considering the impact of the election of Donald Trump as US president on stigmatisation in Russian-Western relations.

I – Cross-cutting frames and themes

Table 8.1 summarises variation in stigmatisation and stigma management across the different norms analysed in this study. This section goes beyond this summary to identify cross-cutting stigmatising frames and themes that emerge from the analysis in the preceding chapters. The first is the issue of hierarchies between the different norms. The second is the centrality of temporal frames, including the persistent linking of discreditable behaviour to the past and desirable, ‘normal’ characteristics to conceptions of being ‘modern’, and the centrality of rejections of liberalism in Russia’s stigma management.

Table 8.1 – Summary of stigmatisation and stigma management processes

<i>Norm</i>	<i>Nature of stigmatisation</i>	<i>Audience of normals</i>	<i>Stigma management</i>	<i>Audience of ‘counter’-normals</i>
<i>Democracy</i>	Increasingly direct labelling and stereotyping as authoritarian and undemocratic, but limited separation and status loss.	Mostly Western: OSCE/EU/CoE/US. Election monitors central.	Stigma rejection mixed with counter-stigmatisation. ‘Sovereign democracy’ plus critique of ‘undemocratic’ international relations.	‘Sovereign democracy’ mostly for domestic purposes. No concerted ‘counter-audience’ around ‘undemocratic’ international relations.
<i>Human Rights</i>	Increasingly direct labelling over Chechnya, civil and political rights and LGBT issues. Some	Mostly Western, but very transnational and non-state, including NGOs, international courts, etc.	Stigma rejection and increasingly active counter-stigmatisation, targeted at liberal values –	Transnational audience focused on ‘traditional values’/against liberalism. Both domestic population,

	separation over Chechnya.		‘sovereign morality’.	‘illiberal’ states and actors within West.
<i>Non-aggression</i>	Direct stigmatisation over Crimea and Ukraine, albeit not as intense as it could have been.	More global than above, but still primarily Western.	Stigma rejection, evasion and counter-stigmatisation of West. Attempt to use democratic norm and information control to evade stigma.	Very small, mostly consisting of anti-Western stalwarts. But managed to keep partners like the other BRICS neutral.
<i>Capitalism</i>	Mostly diffuse. Direct mainly when mixed with other transgressions, against human rights/non-aggression.	Little direct stigmatisation, thus not one ‘audience’. G7 comes closest.	Stigma acceptance (and rejection of any transgressions). However, an orientation towards ‘state capitalism’ in practice.	Little counter-stigmatisation, so no ‘counter-audience’.

Hierarchies: which norm is most normal?

Chapter 3 presented the four norms or ‘norm clusters’ analysed here as part of a broader package of what it meant to be a ‘normal’ state in post-Cold War international society. The norms were presented as interlinked and as broadly reinforcing of each other, at least as seen by practitioners, despite several tensions between democracy and capitalism, democracy and human rights, etc. However, the analysis of subsequent chapters, as summarised above, indicates various hierarchies between the norms in practice.

The first thing that stands out is the relative lack of stigmatisation over, and Russia's relative acceptance of, capitalism. As noted in the conclusion to Chapter 7, this indicates capitalism's strongly hegemonic position in the post-Cold War period, stronger than democracy or human rights, even if the former came close to rivalling it, as indicated by the Putin government's insistence on its (sovereign) democratic nature. Economic globalisation and the spread and institutionalisation of neo-/ordoliberal ideas of economic management led to a strong 'common sense' regarding the question of how to organise a state economically. While this took a hit with the 2008 global financial crisis, with some old stigmas overturned, it still persisted as the dominant view. And while Russia's capitalism was relatively statist (not to mention corrupt), it was still recognisably capitalism and seen as such by its leaders.

The second notable thing is that the most intense and direct stigmatisation of Russia occurred over its breach of the non-aggression norm in Ukraine. This is not in itself surprising: the transgression was flagrant (even more so than six years earlier in Georgia) and violated perhaps the most constitutive of norms in the current international society, namely the territorial integrity of states. But it does speak exactly to the enduring importance of this 'pluralist' and state-centred norm despite the increasing importance of 'solidarist', human rights and democracy-related norms. At the same time, the comparatively weak stigmatisation compared to what *could* have occurred, for example the complete severing of diplomatic relations or military intervention to restore Crimea to Ukraine, indicates the contingency of stigmatisation in modern international relations. It also shows the difficulty of uniting an 'audience of normals' against an actor as powerful as Russia and over an issue where the stigmatisers themselves had a highly discreditable history of breaches, laying themselves open to accusations of hypocrisy.

The fact that the most active counter-stigmatising parts of Russia's stigma management occurred in relation to human rights indicates the norm's enduring position as the least well embedded expectation of 'normal' state behaviour. In part, this comes back to the highly contested scope of human rights and its relatively weak embedding even in states like the US, as highlighted in Chapter 3. Despite the extensive international legal human rights regime and the well-established stigma around certain egregious abuses like genocide and war crimes, issues like gender and LGBT rights that became the focus of Russia's counter-stigmatisation campaign remain deeply disputed. As noted in

the conclusion to Chapter 5, the fact that Russia was not particularly stigmatised in this area prior to Russia itself making it the central plank of its stigma management strategy also points to the absence of any direct relationship between the observable existence of a successful stigma imposition and the reaction or experience of the stigmatised. Moreover, the rejection of 'liberal' values went deeper than Russia's usual *tu quoque* tactic of pointing the finger back at Western failures, representing instead a deeper rejection of the whole 'Western' value system. This points to a deeper rejection of 'liberalism' that will be considered below.

Overall, the study points to a hierarchy of norms in contemporary international society, with non-aggression, capitalism and democracy (the last two represented in the fusion of 'market democracy') sitting above human rights as hegemonic expectations of 'normal' state behaviour or organisation (despite patchy implementation worldwide). Potential changes to this hierarchy will be considered in the next section. But first the cross-cutting frames of temporal stigmatising tropes and Russia's rejection of liberalism will be considered.

Cross-cutting frames: temporal tropes and liberalism

A notable cross-cutting theme that emerges from the analysis is the enduring centrality of temporal tropes and teleological thinking to stigmatisation on the international scale. Despite the discrediting of formal 'standards of civilisation' where civilisation is seen as a higher and more temporally advanced stage of development, temporality and teleology have lived on as organising principles through categorisations such as 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' (Zarakol 2010). What is striking about both the stigmatising language and some of the instances of stigma management seen in the preceding chapters is the endurance of such tropes as 'modern' and 'advanced' long into the 21st century, demonstrating the continued salience of temporal politics.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ On the politics of time in international relations and the centrality of temporal distinctions to processes of 'othering', see e.g. Hutchings (2008) and the recent special issue of *Millennium*, including the contributions by Hutchings (2018), Chamon (2018), Hom (2018), Neumann (2018) and Younis (2018).

The dominance of temporal frames can be seen in how both sides of the stigmatisation process employed them. On the one hand, Russia was stigmatised for being out of time (and, sometimes, out of place) and engaging in practices of the past, with Western actors expressing a willingness to ‘help’ it on its way towards modernity. On the other, Russian leaders shot back with temporal tropes of their own, such as accusing Western leaders of re-running the Cold War. At times, they accepted their own ‘backwardness’, notably in regards to capitalism but also as part of the doctrine of sovereign democracy, with Putin’s emphasis on Russia travelling along the same path as everyone else but in its own time, at its own tempo. Only in the case of human rights and the ‘traditional values’ agenda did Russian leaders seek to take the stigma of being ‘backward-looking’ and turn it into a positive attribute, trying to counter-stigmatise the supposedly ‘modern’ West as an immoral and decadent den of iniquity.

Temporal frames thus become linked to desirable or undesirable characteristics, providing efficient stigmatising tropes such as ‘this kind of behaviour does not belong in the 21st century’ (Kerry 2014). This kind of discourse draws on a long tradition of temporal ‘othering’, what Johannes Fabian (2014) calls the ‘denial of coevalness’ that characterises both the Western anthropological field and other intellectual traditions. Central to this thinking is the idea of liberalism as progress and hence of the idea of the liberal order as a progressive force – liberal democracy, liberal human rights, liberal capitalism, liberal norms pushing history along and spreading civility. In Helge Jordheim and Einar Wigen’s (2018) terms, ‘progress’ has been the ‘synchronising’ concept behind the spread of liberal ideas. The part of this dynamic that has been highlighted in this study is how non-liberal behaviours become stigmatised as being out of time and regressive.

The above leads attention to another cross-cutting frame, namely Russia’s increasing rejection and counter-stigmatisation of *liberalism*. This was explicit in the cases of democracy and human rights and implicit in the embrace of a statist version of capitalism. For while sovereign democracy as a concept and the general management of the democratic process was still claimed as ‘democratic’ by the Russian leadership, the insistence on Russia’s democratic right to choose its own path of development was an invocation of what Gerry Simpson (2001) calls ‘Charter liberalism’: the more pluralist form of liberalism that insists on a state’s right to choose, as compared to an ‘anti-pluralist’ kind insisting on the universal validity of specifically liberal values. Sovereign

democracy was claimed to be democratic, but not *liberal* democratic. The anti-liberal argument became more prominent in the explicit rejection of liberal human rights from the late 2000s onwards. This trend is in line with broader trends and the ‘dis-embedding’ (c.f. Ruggie 1982) of certain forms of liberalism since the 1990s, both as a result of an increasing rejection by states like Russia and processes such as the relative undermining of liberal interventionism by the Iraq War and of liberal capitalism by the 2008 financial crisis. While it is beyond the scope of this study to consider the full extent of the debates around the ‘crisis’ of the liberal order,¹⁴⁵ the next section discusses one aspect of these debates: whether the process of stigmatisation is increasingly failing when it comes to constructing a stigma around illiberal practices.

II – The failing of stigmatisation? The waning of the illiberal taboo

Evoking John Ruggie’s (1998) question of ‘what makes the world hang together?’, Zarakol (2014) argues that stigmatisation, rather than socialisation, has been the key ingredient holding the modern world together. Rather than the benign spread of norms through persuasion and argumentation, she argues, the stigmatisation of non-Western attributes and practices as inferior and backward, and the internalisation by non-Western leaders of these stigmas, serves what Goffman identifies as the general purpose of stigmatisation: enlisting support for society from those not supported by it. This final section considers whether this has been the case in Russian-Western relations since the Cold War, asking whether the stigmatisation both of Russia and the illiberal attributes and behaviours it has come to represent is increasingly failing.

Despite the seemingly solid stigmatisation of Russia as undemocratic, aggressive, an abuser of human rights and all-round illiberal actor, when considering the purposes of stigmatisation proposed by Goffman and more recent scholarship, it is clear that this process did not lead to greater support for the norms of international society, either from Russia or, increasingly, from other states. Indeed, Russia’s increasingly open rejection of liberal norms, particularly gender and LGBT rights but also the specifically ‘liberal’

¹⁴⁵ For exemplary literature, see particularly G. John Ikenberry’s work (e.g. 2011; 2018), as well as Acharya (e.g. 2014), and a recent special issue of *International Affairs* including the contributions by Duncombe and Dunne (2018), Edinger (2018), Jahn (2018), Norrlof (2018), Parmar (2018) and Stokes (2018).

versions of democracy and capitalism, was a contributing factor in the growing trend against such norms internationally, forming part of a burgeoning transnational 'counter-audience' against the promotion of liberal norms that included governments like Viktor Orbán's in Hungary and far-right parties in several Western states. In this way, the normative cohesion of international society was called into question, with a dwindling 'audience of normals' on the side of liberal norms and a waning taboo around illiberal practices.

The idea of 'failure' should not be taken as conclusive or complete. If, as noted in previous chapters, relational processes of stigmatisation in some sense never fully 'succeed', they also never fully 'fail'. Rather, just as we can think of processes of *ordering* rather than a substantive order, we should conceive of stigmatisation processes *succeeding* or *failing* in relative terms. What gradually occurred through the 2000s and into the 2010s was that the stigmatisation of Russia increasingly failed to bring about norm enforcement, domination or separation. A more assertive Russia openly flouted liberal norms and reached out to fellow travellers both beyond and within the supposed Western 'core' of normals, in which increasing numbers of people had also started to question the prevailing 'normality'. Direct stigmatisation including material sanctions following the annexation of Crimea led neither to a change in behaviour nor to sustained diplomatic or economic isolation of Russia. It was both able to turn to non-Western countries, and within a couple of years summits with Western countries started to re-occur, notably after the election of Trump as US president.

The reasons for this ongoing failure are many. On the one hand, the direct stigmatisation of Russia was for most of the period quite patchy. Only with the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine was a sustained sanctions regime implemented and diplomatic contacts deprioritised by Western states and institutions. Even then, the 'audience of normals' was mostly Western, and as noted above, sanctions were relatively mild compared to what *could* have been implemented, such as whole trade embargoes or the severing of diplomatic relations (there is an argument that 'smart' sanctions targeting individuals may bite harder with the relevant people, but this is questionable in today's globalised world where it is hard to pin down a person's assets). At various stages throughout the post-Cold War period, strategic considerations, material interests and/or a lack of actual commitment to the norms in question precluded

powerful Western actors from engaging in the full-spectrum, direct stigmatisation of Russia for its various transgressions.

Of course, the size and importance of Russia mattered. Stigmatisation requires power and can itself be a source of power. But power is relative, and while Russia's claim to great power status was waning and the power imbalance between itself and the West was substantial, it was still a nuclear power and a permanent member of the UN Security Council. From the doldrums of the 1990s, it restored some of its economic and military power in the 2000s and 2010s, despite the shock of the 2008 financial crisis, subsequent oil price volatility and the impact of sanctions from 2014. Stigmatising such a state into compliance would always be a difficult proposition, although as the examples of the US's futile stigmatisation of Cuba and Libya's inversion of its UN sanctions in the 1990s show, material power imbalances are not the be-all and end-all of stigmatisation processes. Stigmatisation is above all a discursive and symbolic process, in which the outcome of the interplay between the stronger and weaker actors is not a given. This brings the focus onto the role of stigma management strategies.

In the dynamic process of stigmatisation and stigma management, both sides of the interaction are important in influencing the process towards success or failure. On a superficial level, it is clear that a strategy such as stigma acceptance or recognition is more likely to lead to norm enforcement. If an actor accepts their stigma and seeks to normalise, it strengthens the normative fabric of society. Similarly, if an actor either rejects their stigma or counter-stigmatises the 'normals', this will sow doubts about normative cohesion. However, such moves may also have the effect of strengthening the 'in-group' if the reaction of enough actors to the stigma rejection or counter-stigmatisation is to side with the initial stigmatisers and shun the transgressor(s). In Russia's case, its increasingly active stigma rejection and counter-stigmatisation strategies through the 2000s and 2010s had a dual effect. On the one hand, they brought more opprobrium. For example, its (counter-) stigmatisation campaign against foreign NGOs and its attempt to evade the stigma of having enabled the downing of flight MH17 caused more condemnation, particularly from broadly liberal Western actors. On the other hand, its 'sovereign morality' line and general critique of Western domination of international relations brought it in line with like-minded transnational audiences, providing fuel to an existing and growing backlash against Western dominance and

liberal norms. While it provided added clout to this audience, it did not invent it – the growing influence and success of ‘illiberals’ both within and beyond the West was itself a sign of the increasing failure of the stigmatisation of illiberal behaviours and attributes and the success of the counter-stigmatising narratives employed against ‘liberal elites’.

Alongside the sometimes-lacking stigmatisation and successful stigma management, another reason for the waning effectiveness of stigmatisation over norms like the four investigated here was the multiple ‘own goals’ either committed by Western actors or resulting from macro-level events in the West.¹⁴⁶ From the war in Iraq’s impact both on the norm of non-aggression and the democracy promotion agenda, via the relativizing of human rights in the name of ‘security’ in the War on Terror, to the 2008 financial crisis’ impact on the legitimacy of neoliberal capitalism (in theory if not fully in practice), Western actors had a far from unblemished record from which to stigmatise. While this did not stop them doing so, it limited their ability to mobilise an audience beyond much of the Western core, as evidenced in the General Assembly debates on the resolution to uphold Ukrainian territorial integrity in March 2014 and the relatively Western-centric participation in sanctions against Russia. This points to how discreditable behaviour by would-be stigmatisers creates its own fragility. As Goffman (1963, 161) notes, ‘in imputing identities to individuals, discreditable or not, the wider social setting and its inhabitants have in a way compromised themselves, they have set themselves up to be proven the fool’. Or, in the case of similar discreditable behaviour being traced to themselves, the hypocrite.

A final reason for the waning of the stigma of being ‘illiberal’ is the affective attractiveness of breaking taboos. As for example Cara Daggett (2018) has argued in relation to ‘petro-masculine’ climate change deniers in the US (see also Etkind 2014 on Russian ‘petro-machismo’), there can be an element of ‘desire’ involved in breaking with the hegemonic ‘reason’ of the scientific consensus. Similarly, alt-right activists tap into a long-standing tradition of framing themselves as transgressive truth-tellers against the ‘politically correct’ liberal consensus. In short, transgression can be ‘cool’, something evidenced by centuries of stigmatised out-groups and sub-cultures turning their ostracizing from mainstream society into emblems of pride. In Russia’s case, the support

¹⁴⁶ My thanks to Taras Kuzio for the idea of a stigma ‘own goal’, though his example was the annexation of Crimea.

for Putin by elements of the far right across Europe and North America has similar origins: a fascination with the Russian president's supposedly 'strong' leadership and tough-talking breach of 'taboos' like the opposition to gender rights. For the audience at home, the identification of the Russian state's international behaviour with that of a 'trickster' sticking it to and relativizing the established norms of morality and proper conduct (Morozov, Kurowska, and Reshetnikov 2018), similar to Woland/Satan and his entourage in *The Master and Margarita* from this study's epigraph, also holds a strong appeal in large parts of the population. The Russian leadership has been able to draw social capital both at home and abroad from its transgressive behaviour.

Since 2016, the Russians have been helped in this endeavour by the increased legitimacy given to the trash-talking breaking of taboos by President Trump. The election of Trump has been a gift to Russia's stigma management, albeit one qualified by the increasing opprobrium around its meddling in the election.¹⁴⁷ Russia's involvement has been seized upon by Trump's opponents as a source of stigma and sanctions have been locked in by Congress for that reason. The framing of the president specifically as a Russian stooge (rather than a corrupt and unprincipled man who would take money and information from anyone offering) and the comparative lack of scrutiny of other corporate or state lobbying interests says a lot about the growing stigmatisation of all things Russian in liberal Western discourse. But the president's willingness to re-establish summits with his Russian counterpart and even advocate for Russia's readmission to the G7, as well as his demonstrable lack of commitment to liberal principles and American normative leadership, have weakened the unity of the 'audience of normals' stigmatising Russia. In fact, Trump's association with the broader, 'illiberal' transnational coalition that Putin's 'traditional values' agenda has played up to in many ways puts the American and Russian presidents on the same side. While a detailed analysis of the period post-2016 is beyond the scope of this study, it is clear that Trump's presidency has fundamentally shifted the dynamic of the stigmatisation process not just vis-à-vis Russia, but also other stigmatised states like North Korea (and, in the opposite

¹⁴⁷ That Russia in various ways sought to influence the election in Trump's favour (or in Hillary Clinton's disfavour, probably with the expectation she would still win) is by now well established, even if the actual impact of these attempts cannot be verified. These attempts, and the general tactic of sowing mischief and discord in other elections, can themselves be read as instances of stigma management, both diffusely in the attempts to discredit democratic processes and thus drag down standards, and directly when aimed at helping politicians who would likely ease the stigmatisation of Russia.

direction, Iran). Moreover, his election despite his many transgressions is itself an indication of the increasing failure of illiberal taboos.

For a concerned defender of liberal norms like democracy and human rights, if stigmatisation is failing, what is to be done? *Should* one stigmatise Russia and other like-minded illiberals? Depending on one's commitment to a liberal democratic society and a broadly rules-based international order, the answer to that question may be a clear 'yes' on a normative level. But it is also in part a futile question. As noted throughout this study, stigmatisation dynamics often occur unintentionally, as a result of the combination of broader processes of labelling, stereotyping, discrimination and status loss. The answer, then, is to be more reflective about the fact that norm politics involve stigmatisation to a far greater degree than socialisation, and that while, as Zarakol argues, stigmatisation can hold the world together, it can also make it fall apart when the process weakens and actors seek to manage their stigmas in more confrontational ways. In Goffman's parlance, actors may go to great lengths to manage their 'spoiled' identities, including by seeking to tear down the norms that spoil them.

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