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Different paths to regional hegemony: national identity contestation and foreign economic strategy in Russia and Turkey

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ABSTRACT

IPE scholars have extensively studied regionalisms in various parts of the globe. However, little has been done to explore the role that countries with regional leadership aspirations have played in fostering regional integration. Why do regional powers pursue different forms of leadership to exert economic influence over their neighbors and achieve regional hegemony? Through a comparison of Russia and Turkey, I argue that elite national identity conceptions construct national economic interests and shape foreign economic policies of these regional powers. In both countries, ruling elites have embraced national identity conceptions that were in stark contrast to the national identity conceptions of their predecessors. Russia under Putin has pursued a coercive hegemonic form of leadership in Eurasia contrary to the Yeltsin era. Conversely, Turkey under Erdogan has pursued liberal regional economic leadership in the Middle East as opposed to the coercive and isolationist policies of Westernist elites. In both cases, the consolidation of political power and international developments have strengthened the prevalent national identity conceptions at home, and reinforced regional economic leadership strategies. As it highlights the domestic ideational sources of the pursuit of regional hegemony, this study has implications for the study of regional powers, regionalism and economic nationalism.

KEYWORDS Regional powers; regional hegemony; regionalism; national identity; Russia; Turkey

Over the past several decades, IPE scholarship has been marked by an implicit assumption that regional dynamics would push states toward greater cooperation with their neighbors. Notwithstanding the growing pace of regionalism, states continue to search for ways to gain economic advantage and influence over their neighbors. This paper is driven by an empirical puzzle: why do regional powers pursue different strategies of economic leadership in their regions? Through a comparison of Russia and Turkey, I ask why leading regional powers adopt divergent foreign economic strategies in their search for regional hegemony. Russia and Turkey have pursued regional economic influence in Eurasia and the Middle East, respectively. Ruling elites in both Moscow and Ankara have defined

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their countries as order providers in their regions and seek to foster regional economic cooperation. However, the two countries have used quite different tools of economic leadership in order to pursue this goal. While Russia has relied primarily on coercive tools such as manipulating the price of natural gas, economic sanctions that target ‘disloyal’ post-Soviet states, and threats over regional immigration, Turkey has turned to more liberal tools of leadership such as widening its free trade agreement network in ways that benefitted target countries and using private business actors to expand Turkey’s regional trade and investment capacity.

Following a constructivist approach to IPE (Abdelal, 2001; Abdelal, Blyth, & Parsons, 2010; Helleiner & Pickel, 2005), I argue that the national identity conceptions of regional powers’ ruling elites shape the form of their economic policies toward their neighbors. In this process, domestic contestation among elites over national identity works to constitute national economic interests, and hence foreign economic policies. My argument builds on earlier calls to bring the domestic society and societal actors into the study of national identity and foreign (economic) policy (Hopf, 2002). Domestic political elites interpret international developments based on their national identity conceptions. In the process, objective material facts can become secondary in devising foreign economic strategies aimed at providing order to a region. Economic policies are designed in line with social hierarchies that outline a nation’s social purposes in a region and propose a framework of regional economic order.

As I will demonstrate, domestic political struggles over the content of national identity significantly shaped foreign economic strategies in both Russia and Turkey. In Turkey, the JDP has aimed to make Turkey the regional order provider in the Middle East. As a party with political Islamist roots, it has adopted a liberal, inclusive strategy in order to contrast with the security-oriented and coercive approach of the Kemalist/Westernist elite toward the region. In contrast, the Putin government’s great power nationalists have pursued a coercive strategy as a clear rebuke to the pro-Western policies of the early 1990s, which they believe ignored Russia’s historically dominant role in Eurasia and offered too much policy space to newly independent post-Soviet states.

Regional powers and regional economic cooperation

Sources and paths of regionalism and regionalization have been central to IR Theory and IPE since the initial steps of European integration were taken several decades ago. With the end of the Cold War, IR scholars turned their attention to studying regions and regional powers from many theoretical perspectives, with most research focusing on the causes of regional peace and order and the lack thereof (Buzan & Weaver, 2003; Fawcett, 2004; Frazier & Stewart-Ingersoll, 2010; Lake & Morgan, 1997; Paul, 2012). Scholars such as Acharya and Johnston (2007), and Katzenstein (2005) have shown that various systemic and domestic factors shape political and economic cooperation in parts of the world other than Europe. Regional integration in Latin America, Southeast Asia and East Asia has attracted particular attention from scholars of IPE (Acharya, 2007; Ravenhill, 2010; Ruggirozzi, 2012). In addition, scholars from realist, liberal and constructivist backgrounds and regional expertise have debated which factors cause regional economic and security cooperation or the lack thereof (Mansfield & Milner, 1997; Solingen,

2008). Much of the literature focuses on explanations for regional integration, as opposed to the pursuit of regional influence.¹ Little of this work has examined the variations in the way regional powers assert their leadership in their neighborhoods. In particular, although scholars commonly identify states such as Russia, Turkey, Brazil, China, India and South Africa as 'regional powers' (that is, as the dominant economic power within a particular geographic area), little has been done to analyze comparatively how these states assert their economic power toward their neighbors.²

Constructivist IPE focuses on ideational constitutive variables or factors such as national identity and cognitive processes in policy-making (Abdelal, 2001; Herrera, 2005). In the constructivist approach, regions are socially constructed political units (Acharya, 2011; Hurrell, 2007, p. 242). In Hurrell's (1995, p. 352) words, regional awareness and 'sense of belonging to a particular regional community' shape regional security, economy and order. Therefore, consensus among regional states on the necessity and prospects for successful economic integration is a prerequisite for actual political initiatives. However, as my comparison of Russia and Turkey will demonstrate, regionally shared understandings of belonging to the same region is not a necessary condition for regional powers for devising their regional strategies. Conversely, a government in the country A, can devise a regional policy aimed at ultimate regional integration, even if the government in the neighboring country, B does not endorse such an outcome. That makes it crucial to investigate how one set of political actors come to conceptualize a region, a region's boundaries, and the prospects for regional cooperation. This is why a close scrutiny of national identity and national identity conceptions held by various political groups in a country is essential in understanding and explaining regional strategies of regional powers.

Approaching foreign economic policies of regional powers from the lens of principal-agent theory, Hancock (2009) offers another explanation for why some regional powers tend to follow hierarchical forms of economic integration with their neighbors. In her comparative analysis of Prussian, South African and Russian regional economic leadership, Hancock argues that it is logical for regional hegemony to pursue economic integration by extending their customs tariffs to other members of the region. Less wealthy states – the 'joiners' – delegate authority to the wealthiest state in the region – the 'designer'. As a result, regional powers control policy-making for the entire region and consolidate their hegemony. According to this argument, Russian efforts to integrate the post-Soviet region are inevitable and rational. However, in the initial years after the Soviet collapse Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his allies did not pursue regional economic hegemony vis-a-vis CIS members. Also, as Brazil's experience indicates, a regional power with a preponderance of material power does not necessarily have to follow such hierarchical forms of economic integration with its neighbors (Burges, 2009). Material preponderance does not always result in the pursuit of regional economic hegemony, and material interests do not speak for themselves.

As we will see, material explanations are insufficient to explain the variation in current Russian and Turkish regional leadership strategies as well. Domestic debates in both countries demonstrate that there are varying views on what Moscow's and Ankara's policies toward their neighborhoods should be. Russia was far more reluctant to pursue Eurasian integration in the 1990s, when the chances

of doing so were greater from an objective material perspective. Turkey, on the other hand, has pursued a liberal form of leadership in the Middle East, but employs more coercive economic tools in Armenia and Cyprus for identity-related reasons. National economic interests are not given, and will vary depending on different actors' perceptions of what constitutes an economic gain.

Moreover, even though both Russia and Turkey have been unsuccessful in realizing their grand economic projects in their regions, both have continued to pursue their regional leadership strategies by relying on the same strategies that have already proven ineffective. Russia's economic coercion in Ukraine pushed Kyiv away from Eurasian integration and closer to the European Union. Turkey's regional integration efforts in the Middle East came to an end with the Arab Spring, which Ankara had first interpreted as a historic opportunity. Had Moscow designed its foreign economic strategy according to objective material factors, it could find economically more optimal ways to keep Ukraine as a partner. For instance, it could interpret an EU-Ukraine deal in economically profitable terms. Similarly, Ankara could prioritize economic integration in other regions such as the Balkans or the Caucasus, or pursue a regional strategy in the Middle East that utilized its EU membership candidacy. Finally, Russian and Turkish regional strategies can be interpreted as strategies of political control (see for instance Morozov, 2015) as opposed to strategies of economic leadership. My argument does not rule out this explanation as political and economic goals are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the article demonstrates that foreign economic strategies should be examined in detail to understand how regional powers strive to reach political goals.

To sum up, although a new strand of regional powers research has emerged that focuses on different forms of hierarchy (Destradi, 2010; Nolte, 2010; Prys, 2010), this literature remains limited and needs to be expanded with comparative case studies. This paper contributes to our understanding by examining why Russia has perceived economic cooperation in Eurasia in zero-sum terms and applied coercion on its neighbors, while Turkey has perceived economic cooperation in positive-sum terms and exerted influence through liberal means.

National identity conceptions and regional economic leadership strategies

National identity conceptions

I build my argument on the rich scholarship that addresses the role of identity in international politics (Abdelal, 2001; Hopf, 2002; Neumann, 1999; Wendt, 1999). As Wendt (1999) argued, identity is an intersubjective structure and constitutes actors' interests, which then shapes states' behavior as well as the order(s) of international politics. In Bially Mattern's (2001, p. 350) words, 'material incentives ... become motivating to actors within the context of an identity that is stable enough to shape and give meaning to their interests'. I use the term 'national identity conceptions' to refer to the ways in which political elites interpret their societies' collective identities in order to understand the political and economic roles that their nation has and should have in relation to other nations. As Abdelal (2001, p. 31) argues, 'A key element of national identities, and nationalisms in general, is their directionality'. Depending on how societies and political elites define the content of

their nation's identity, foreign economic policies may be designed to foster cooperation with certain states and lead to conflict or disengagement with others. In addition to directionality, I argue that the content of national identities, which are historically shaped and continuously redefined by political agents, also shape the *forms* that economic cooperation can take, from more hierarchical, coercive and exclusive policies to more liberal and inclusive ones.

Relational comparisons (Abdelal et al., 2009, p. 19), more commonly known as Self-Other dynamics, are particularly important for this study because they are fundamentally about how a social group defines itself in interaction with other social groups (Hopf, 2002, p. 7). Accordingly, 'the content of a collective identity is relational to the extent that it is composed of comparisons and references to other collective identities from which it is distinguished' (Abdelal et al., 2009, p. 23). The way that social groups view themselves in relation to Others is a crucial element for conceptualizing the political, cultural and economic boundaries of the group as well as defining its social purposes. This process leads to defining the friends and enemies as well as subordinates and superiors of a national identity, which then leads to setting foreign policy and foreign economic goals. The process of collective identity formation therefore shapes the prospects for cooperation and conflict in international politics, as it shapes the 'social cognitive structures' (Hopf, 2002) within which national interests are formed.³

It is equally important to identify whose national identity conceptions matter for actual policy-making. Political elites may disagree as to what the role of their nation should be in a particular region as well as in world politics. The understanding of the nation in relation to other nations is a dynamic and contested process, which can take different forms depending on who the actors are. Influenced by different ideologies or worldviews, different political elites may interpret the content of national identities differently. This contestation takes place among various societal and political groups, who each seek to make their own conception prevalent in defining national interests. However, it is the government in power that has the ability to craft a state's foreign economic policy, and as such it is the national identity conceptions of the ruling political elite that matter for practical policy making.

The history of a regional power's relations with its neighbors, and how different political elites or discursive formations inside a regional power perceive that history matters greatly. As Pouliot (2010, p. 63) rightly argues, 'since no social realities are natural, they are the results of political and social processes that are rooted in history'. For regional powers, governmental self-perceptions are closely related to the sense of the historically-shaped 'special responsibility' that the ruling elite in a regional power feels toward its neighborhood (Nolte 2010, p. 890).⁴ The process of historical engagement becomes even more important for regional powers such as Turkey and Russia because both had empires in the past, the disintegration processes of which resulted in the emergence of tens of independent nation-states in the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. As examined in detail by Morozov (2015) and Zarakol (2011) imperial legacy has had significant influence on the formation and evolution of national identity debates in both Russia and Turkey. Interpretations of the history of engagement with the region by different elites influence how regional powers use their power in the region. For example, whereas for Putin and Russia's great power nationalists,

Russia's historical responsibility is to be the hegemonic power in Eurasia, for Erdoğan and Turkish conservatives, Turkey's historical responsibility is to play a facilitating role among the 'brotherly' nations of the Middle East, who were forcibly distanced from each other by Western colonial powers. In both cases, the ruling political elites perceive their state's role as 'exceptional' (Prys, 2010) in shaping political and economic relations in a particular region. This sense of responsibility affects the ways in which economic capabilities are used for regional leadership. Moreover, as Morozov (2015) and Zarakol (2011) explain, both Russia and Turkey have hybrid identities due to their complex historical encounter with Europe as latecomers to Eurocentric international society. This historical dimension makes the interplay between Westernizers and the opposing political elites even more important.

Both Turkish conservatives and Russian great power nationalists have seen their states as order providers in their regions, which put Moscow and Ankara at the top of the social hierarchy in the post-Soviet space and the Middle East, respectively. In line with Lake's famous conceptualization of hierarchy, the Putin and Erdogan administrations sought to discipline materially subordinate regional states as well as encourage bandwagoning behavior 'against possible challenges or threats' (Lake, 2009, p. 10). If both regional powers have a hierarchical worldview with regard to their roles in regional affairs, then why do we observe varying foreign economic strategies of regional institution building and order provision? The answer, I argue lies in the domestic contestation over national identities. As Hopf's (2002) study of Russian foreign policy demonstrates, identities are shaped with relation to not only external others, but also internal ones; a state's hierarchical view of international politics is a product of the domestic struggle between political elites, who define the content of national identity differently.⁵

Consolidation of political power by the ruling elite

If domestic contestation over identity matters so much, why do governments not put their foreign economic strategies into practice immediately? That brings me to the final key element of national identity conceptions. I argue that domestic power consolidation constitutes a crucial critical juncture in eradicating alternative/opposing national identity conceptions and setting sail for the region(s) or set of countries that the prevalent national identity conception prioritizes. The consolidation of power has a social component and a power dynamic at the same time. It strengthens the ruling elite's prevailing identity conception and makes it less susceptible to policy suggestions by political actors with alternative identity conceptions. In addition, as a result of this process, the ruling elites are freed to exert stronger influence on policy making and can more easily put their national identity conceptions into policy practice.

It took the Putin and Erdogan governments at least one term in office to devote full attention toward economic integration in Eurasia and the Middle East. In Russia, Yeltsin's terms as president were marked by oscillating foreign economic priorities, as no political elite group was able to consolidate power and eradicate the foreign economic priorities of others. Similarly, in the 1990s, Turkey pursued multiple foreign economic targets, yet none of those targets became firmly established except the traditional goal of acceding to the EU-Turkey Customs Union

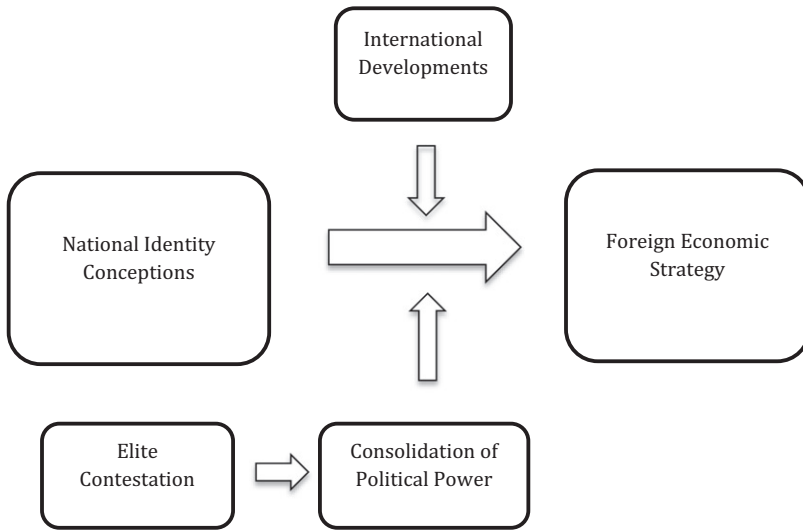


Figure 1. Argument.

Treaty in 1996. Consequently, multiple national identity conceptions co-exist and influence foreign and foreign economic outcomes (Abdelal, 2001; Hintz, 2015; Tsygankov, 2014a). Governments in power can put into practice the roles and purposes ascribed to the state and the nation by their own national identity conceptions only after they consolidate political power. After power is consolidated, opposition elites with alternative national identity conceptions are less likely to influence policy outcomes. Consolidation of power makes prevalent identity conceptions socially more coherent, and offers identity freedom in shaping foreign economic strategy (see Figure 1).

The form of regional economic leadership

I measure the form of regional economic leadership by examining the tools employed by regional powers to assert leadership toward their neighbors (Destradi 2010, p. 928). The *form* of the regional leadership strategy can be examined on a spectrum. On one end of the spectrum lies a coercive type of hegemony,⁶ a hierarchical form of interaction in which the regional power sets the rules, provides public goods to the regional states and in return expects compliance. Coercion refers to the use of economic force in making a neighboring state comply with the grand economic projects of the regional power (Lake, 2009). Measures such as applying economic sanctions or using economic power to enforce regional integration and prevent the followers' potential economic re-orientation away from the regional power are typical signs of coercive leadership. In case of noncompliance, regional hegemons can use economic force for punishment and prevention of future noncompliance by followers.

On the other end of the spectrum lies liberal multilateralism, in which the regional power keeps regional economic cooperation regimes as open and inclusive

as possible in defining liberal economic behavior. Regional powers that pursue a liberal leadership strategy expect regional states to comply with the rules of cooperation, but do not unilaterally punish noncompliance. Liberal leaders aim to foster economic cooperation in a positive-sum manner, in which the participants mutually gain without the threat of domination by the regional power. Unlike coercive hegemony, liberal leaders seek the consent of regional states in forging regional economic cooperation institutions. Liberal leaders aim to exert influence through facilitating coordination among neighbors. More importantly, a liberal form of leadership relies on open markets, in which regional states enjoy the benefits of cooperation among each other, but at the same time do not close their domestic markets to extra-regional economic flows. Therefore, the signing of multilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) that are loyal to the rules of the global trade regime is a key indicator of a liberal form of foreign economic relations. In line with WTO rules, the enlarged regional common market or free trade area is also open to cooperation with extra-regional states and organizations. Hence, the regional integration that is likely to emerge from a liberal leader's initiative is also integrated, or aims to achieve integration into international markets. Liberal leaders also exert influence through private actors such as business councils and regional business forums unlike coercive hegemony the policies of which more closely resemble neo-mercantilism. Liberal regional powers choose to act as facilitators rather than enforcers of regional cooperation. They strive to foster cooperation among business groups in the region with the ultimate goal to create a web of interconnectedness among regional economic actors.

Methodology

The current Russian and Turkish governments pursue opposing forms of regional economic leadership. For the Russian case, I examine foreign economic strategy under Putin administrations (2000-onward) and for the Turkish case, I examine the Erdoğan administrations (2002-onward). My qualitative analysis is built on three steps. First, using primary documents, I recover national identity conceptions in Russia and Turkey inductively. Second, I use data from the 26 semistructured interviews I conducted in Russia and Turkey to support the primary research findings and clarify the constitutive link from identity to foreign economic strategy. Finally, in order to observe the constitutive link between national identity conceptions and the form of regional leadership, I use process tracing.

In examining primary documents, I assess how these ruling elites understand their nations' identities and histories in relation to their neighbors within a particular geographical region. To achieve this, it is crucial to analyze primary sources that describe and shape the ruling elite's conception of their nation's regional role. This process of examining key texts helps me to recover the cultural context within which political decisions are taken and policy-makers are embedded (Abdelal 2001, p.43). Examination of key texts and speeches of leading government figures such as Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs, party programs and governmental publications such as foreign policy and security concepts is the first step in identifying prevalent national identity conceptions. In addition, I examine the publications of intellectuals and academics who are known to influence and share the ideological views of the ruling elites. I recognize that national identity

conceptions are shaped in a historical process (Neumann, 1999). However, I take snapshots of national identity conceptions rather than examining in detail how Turkish and Russian national identities have evolved over time.

Second, I conducted 26 semistructured interviews with diplomats, bureaucrats, business association representatives and academics in Turkey (Ankara and Istanbul) and Russia (Moscow) from January to June 2014.⁷ Reaching out to decision makers was difficult in both countries. The majority of my interviewees included academics and experts who shared either the prevalent national identity conception or the primary alternative. In the words of Pouliot (2010, p. 84), my respondents were ‘proxies’ for Russian and Turkish decision-makers. Also, because I wanted to understand how economic interests were formed in both countries, my interviewees included economists and business representatives.

Finally, through process tracing, I investigate how prevalent national identity conceptions have shaped the countries’ regional economic leadership strategies. Process tracing helps me to ameliorate the potential problem of tautology of revealed preferences. As Bennett & Checkel (2015, p. 32) recently argued, ‘the only option’ to overcome this potential weakness ‘is to infer preferences from an actor’s earlier rhetoric and actions and use these to explain subsequent behavior...’. I show that national identity conceptions preceded Turkish and Russian regional integration projects. Regional leadership practices then led to the reinforcement of national identity conceptions in both countries. Moreover, the consolidation of political power by Putin and Erdoğan has eliminated the power of alternative worldviews. Finally, international developments such as the deterioration of ties with the West in both countries starting from mid-2000s, as well as the Global Financial Crisis of 2008–2009 have contributed to strengthening the prevalent national identity conceptions in both cases at the expense of the alternatives.

Russia: a coercive regional power in Eurasia

National identity conceptions: great power nationalists vs. Westernizers

Vladimir Putin and his political allies have embraced the great power nationalist identity conception. As Table 1 demonstrates, the early years of Russia’s post-communist transformation were marked by the influence of Westernizers such as President Yeltsin, Minister of Foreign Affairs Kozyrev, and Acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar. This brief period was highly influential on Russia’s domestic economic and political transformation in the post-communist era. The growing power of the Westernizers notwithstanding, Russia’s great power nationalists retained their influence within the bureaucracy and the defense sector. The most important political figure among the great power nationalists in the 1990s was Minister of Foreign Affairs (1996–1998) and Prime Minister (1998–1999) Evgeny Primakov. Criticizing American unilateralism in world politics, Primakov argued that the world order should evolve toward a multipolar structure, in which the world’s regions would be under the influence of traditional great powers such as Russia, India and China (Primakov, 2016, pp. 10–15 and 23–27). ‘The economic collapse, political chaos, corruption, violence and uncertainty’ of the early years of transition discredited the Westernizing identity conception (Hopf 2016, p. 247). For great power nationalists, the first years of post-communist transition were marked by

Table 1. Summary of comparative analysis.

Turkey	Russia
Liberal regional power in the Middle East <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prevalent national identity conception:</i> Conservative • <i>Internal Other:</i> Coercive Westernizers of the 1990s 	Coercive hegemon in Eurasia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prevalent national identity conception:</i> Great Power Nationalist • <i>Internal Other:</i> Liberal Westernizers of the 1990s
Consolidation of power: 2007	Consolidation of Power: 2004
Key international developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deterioration of ties with the West (mid-2000s onwards) • Global financial crisis • Arab Spring, 2011 	Key international developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color revolutions • Deterioration of ties with the West (mid-2000s onwards) • Global financial crisis • Ukraine crisis, 2014 • Syrian intervention, 2015
Tools of economic leadership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free trade agreements • Economic incentives • Business actors 	Tools of economic leadership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural gas dominance • Economic sanctions • Threats over immigration

‘absolutely unlimited Western romanticism’ and the ‘illusion’ that the West would embrace Russia as an equal partner.⁸ Great power nationalists in the security community were appealing to Yeltsin, who was aiming to rebuild Russia as a strong state (Tsygankov 2014b, pp. 92–93). Because ‘there were more Primakovs in Russia at the time than there were Kozyrevs’ great power nationalism emerged as a powerful alternative to Russia’s Westernizers in the mid-1990s.⁹

At the same time, the 1990s witnessed a fierce competition between the statist definition of the Russian nation, and those who embraced ethno-nationalist or imperialist views toward Russia’s position in the post-Soviet region (Laruelle, 2009). Liberal or civic versions of nationalism have co-existed with imperialistic and xenophobic movements (Ziegler, 2016). Yeltsin faced parliamentary challenge from expansionist foreign policy visions of Gennady Zyuganov’s Communist Party of the Russian Federation, and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. While the former called for Soviet re-unification with a stronger role for the Orthodox Church, the latter advocated for a more ethnically concentrated Russia that would also be the dominant military force in the post-Soviet space. These groups described Russia as a ‘self-sufficient economic, political, cultural unit in the middle of Eurasia’, which viewed Russia ‘as a Eurasian empire within the former Soviet borders’ (Tsygankov, 2003, p. 120). Outside the parliament, Eurasianists defined Russia as a unique civilization with a self-standing in international politics, while far right groups struggled to increase their popularity with an anti-immigration agenda (Laruelle, 2009, pp. 49–83). These groups were also highly critical of the pro-market reforms of the 1990s. Within this complicated map of discourses, President Yeltsin tried to preserve the balance between those who conceptualized Russian as a European state and as a unique civilization in Eurasia on its own.¹⁰

Vladimir Putin’s rise to power in 2000 offered an opportunity for great power nationalists to consolidate their views and policy course, and to eliminate their most important internal others – the Westernizers – from policy making

completely. Unlike the Westernizers, Russia's great power nationalists have argued that Russia's great power identity (*derzhavnost'*) was a key element of its national revival (Putin, 1999; Tsygankov, 2014b, pp. 105–106). The Russian ruling elite has systematically pushed for the transformation of the international order toward multipolarity, an aspiration that started with Primakov and has remained constant in official Russian discourse. In the words of Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov (2007), 'unipolarity, quite simply, is an encroachment on God's prerogatives'. In fact, according to Makarychev and Morozov (2011), Russia's calls for multilateralism in international politics must be put into the context of multipolarity in Russian foreign policy thinking. Under Putin's rule, the Kremlin has conceptualized Eurasia as a 'pole', in which Russia has historically been the sole dominant power. Economically speaking, the former Soviet space was a burden for Russia's Westernizers.¹¹ For great power nationalists, conversely, Eurasia offered mass economic opportunities.

Putin and his allies have attributed a historically superior role for Russia in the region, which has been under Russia's political, economic and cultural influence for centuries. This self-conception helps explain why the Russian ruling elites have perceived the 'color revolutions', NATO enlargement, EU's Eastern Partnership program and finally the Euromaidan as efforts to curb Russia's historical leadership role in Eurasia. Putin's economic adviser Glaziev (2013) and Putin himself have argued that Eastern Partnership and the Euromaidan events were targeted against Eurasian integration (President of Russia, 2014). More importantly, Putin argued in his Crimea speech of March 2014 that containment policies of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries were still continuing today (President of Russia, 2014). Finally, Russia's great power nationalists have perceived international politics as a realm of a confrontation of value systems. Putin's former advisor, and an influential professor of international relations, Sergei Karaganov (2011) argued that the new world was going through a 'revolutionary chaos' which entailed not only 'an unprecedentedly swift redistribution of power in the economy', but also a collapse of the values of Western capitalism. According to Pavel Andreev, former executive director of the Valdai Discussion Club, the Eurasian Union incorporated 'a civilizational rather than a political ideology. It is aimed at creating some sort of a center of gravity in the competition of values, which is going on globally between the West and the rest of the world'.¹² Similarly, according to an influential Russian political scientist, a search for a new Russian identity had marked Putin's third term as President. According to him, Orthodox Russia was increasingly presented as 'a torch of wisdom: savior of and the only true believer in the Judeo-Christian world'.¹³

In the first years of his presidency, Putin's discourse on Russian identity included references to Russia's dual European and Eurasian character. For example, in his addresses to the Federal Assembly in 2001 and 2005, Putin stated 'integration with Europe is one of the key areas of our foreign policy', and 'above all else, Russia was, is, and will, of course, be a major European power' (President of Russia 2001, 2005). At the same time, Westernizers have continued to be part of the debate on (re)defining Russia's roles and purposes in international politics. As Tsygankov (2016, pp. 180–185) demonstrates, liberals such as German Gref and Aleksei Kudrin were quite powerful in shaping Russia's domestic reform agenda, especially in the first two terms of Putin's presidency. However, Westernizers' effect

in shaping Russian foreign economic strategy has remained minimal. Russia's great power nationalism became the only game in town gradually as Putin and his allies consolidated their political power and Russia's relations with the West deteriorated. The consolidation of power in Russia corresponds to the year 2004, when President Vladimir Putin was elected to office for the second time in a row, gathering 71.8% of the votes. The ruling United Russia party has redefined Russian nationalism as patriotism built around the idea of conservative state centrism, eliminating the influence of alternative national identity conceptions. This has made great power nationalism more coherent, with clear roles and purposes for the Russian nation. As Laruelle (2009, 2015) demonstrates, after 2004 Putin brought leading nationalist politicians such as Rogozin into the Kremlin. Since the 1990s, through the Congress of Russian Communities and his political party Rodina (Fatherland), Rogozin had championed Russia's hegemonic role in the post-Soviet space (Laruelle, 2015, pp. 90–91). Putin appointed Rogozin as Russia's ambassador to NATO in 2008, and Medvedev appointed him as Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Defense and Space industries in 2011.

The most significant Westernizing attempt within the Kremlin since 2004 was then-president Medvedev's modernization program, which according to Hopf (2013) aimed to move Russia from a semiperipheral status to the core of the capitalist world economy. Medvedev's program largely failed, however, and Putin continued to embrace the strong state tradition that prioritizes religion, traditional values and state capitalism as he came back to office in 2012 (Tsygankov 2014b, pp. 103–151). At the same time, Russia's relations with both the US and the EU have gradually worsened as the latter severely criticized Russia for its authoritarian policies at home and coercive foreign policy in the post-Soviet region. Ultimately, the discursive power of the Westernizers in Russia has waned considerably (Tsygankov 2014b, pp. 189–201). Russia's involvement in the conflicts in Eastern Ukraine and Syria has further solidified the political system in which Russia's liberals cannot prevail.¹⁴

Building the Eurasian union through economic coercion

As great power nationalism gradually became the only game in town, Eurasian economic integration was firmly established as a core element of Russia's foreign economic strategy. As stated in the most recent Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation of 2016, Eurasian economic integration is currently Russia's top foreign policy priority in the post-Soviet region.¹⁵ Eurasian integration gathered pace after the global financial crisis, which the Russian ruling elite read as an opportunity to develop a response to the shifts in the global economy (Johnson & Köstem, 2016; Krickovic, 2014). Although there were some earlier attempts at Eurasian integration, such as the 1995 Customs Union Treaty and the formation of the Eurasian Economic Community in 2000 between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, the consolidation of great power nationalism encouraged Eurasian integration to develop at a much more robust pace, especially with the Customs Union (2010) and the Common Economic Space (2012) between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, and finally the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015. In fact, from an economic point of view, there is much to criticize in Russia's efforts to integrate the post-Soviet states. The chances of economic integration was higher during the early 1990s, Moscow distanced itself from the idea; conversely when

economic structures of post-Soviet countries diverged substantially over time, Moscow re-introduced the Eurasian integration project.¹⁶ According to an influential Russian economist, Eurasian integration does not have much economic rationale and Russia would be better off with a free trade agreement with the European Union, instead of an economic union around itself.¹⁷

In line with the prevalent great power nationalism at home, Moscow's policies of economic integration in Eurasia have taken a coercive and hierarchical form in which Russia set the parameters of economic integration and expected other potential member states, the most important of which was Ukraine, to comply. Russia has chosen to apply economic pressure on countries such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, whose identity conceptions and foreign economic policies diverged from a pro-Russian one. Ukraine has been a special case as the key target of the Eurasian Union project. Defining Russia as a natural superpower, great power nationalists had come to believe that Ukraine would collapse economically if it did not join the Eurasian Union.¹⁸ For Putin, the economics for Ukraine of not joining the Eurasian Union were obvious; a Ukraine that was not part of Eurasian integration, according to Putin, would turn into an agricultural appendage of Europe (Hopf, 2016, p. 245). Eurasian integration, however, would offer Ukraine the opportunity to modernize its economy and stand stronger in the global economy.

In exerting economic influence over its neighbors and fostering Eurasian integration, Russia has relied on three tools; natural gas, trade sanctions and threats over immigration. While these three tools have been used in different times and circumstances, they have together constituted the backbone of Russian foreign economic strategy under the Putin administration, aiming to solidify Russian influence in the post-Soviet region and prevent noncompliant countries from moving closer to the EU. The first tool that Russia has used to coerce its neighbors was natural gas. Starting with Putin's second presidential term in 2004, the Kremlin developed the official discourse that Russia would then on rely on market prices in its natural gas deals with post-Soviet states. That meant that Russia was ready to cut off the subsidies to those junior partners, which resisted taking part in Russia's Eurasian integration projects. However, as Popescu and Wilson (2009, p. 44), and Balmaceda (2007, 2013) have demonstrated, Moscow has been selective in adjusting the price of its natural gas to market conditions despite the official rhetoric on adjusting to market prices. For example, in 2009, Armenia was paying \$154 per a thousand cubic meters, while Ukraine was asked to pay \$360. Russian-Ukrainian energy conflicts of January 2006, January 2009 and April 2010 were especially important as Russia used gas pricing in order to influence elections in Ukraine and extend the lease of the naval base in Sevastopol (Orttung & Overland, 2011, p. 77). Natural gas price was among the package of tools that Moscow used to draw Ukraine, the most important target of Eurasian integration, as opposed to signing an Association Agreement with the EU in November 2013. Putin offered Yanukovich to cut the price of natural gas that Ukraine purchased from Russia by more than one third if it turned away from the EU Association Agreement in November 2013 (Charap & Colton, 2017, p. 121). In addition to using gas prices as leverage, Russia has also aimed to control the strategic sectors of post-Soviet states, which have aimed to become members of the Russia-led integration projects. As a result of this 'comprehensive policy of economic statecraft' (Popescu & Wilson, 2009, p. 4) Russia has taken control of important (and varying) percentages of

Moldovan, Belarusian and Kyrgyz national natural gas companies in the past decade.¹⁹

Second, Russia has systematically used economic threats and applied trade restrictions on Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, three post-Soviet states that have declined to be a part of Eurasian integration, and pursued economic integration with the European Union. In response to the spread of the color revolutions across Eurasia and the perceived threat of the rise of the EU's appeal in its sphere of influence, Russia has used import bans on Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. Russia has targeted the most important sectors of these countries' economies to increase its leverage over these three countries and used nontariff barriers to prevent imports from these countries. A typical policy has been using sanitary standards to ban agricultural imports (applied to Moldova from 2005 onward, Georgia from 2006 to 2013, and Ukraine from 2013 onward). Russia imposed a ban on Moldovan and Georgian wines in 2006 on sanitary grounds. Russia's ban on Georgian products continued until 2013, when a new, much-less pro-EU and anti-Russian administration took over power from Georgia's former President Saakashvili. While Russia's first ban on Moldovan wines in 2006 was not effective, it continued to rely on the same tool subsequently. Dimitry Rogozin, Russia's nationalist Deputy Prime Minister, has been the key figure in implementing this coercive strategy. In a visit to Moldova in September 2013 ahead of the EU's Vilnius Summit, Rogozin openly threatened Moldova with freezing in winter (Socor, 2013). As Rogozin failed to convince Chisinau to embrace Eurasian integration, Moscow imposed new sanctions on the Moldovan economy in September 2013. In August 2014, Russia suspended the tariff-free trade preferences for several Moldovan products under the 2011 CIS Free Trade Agreement between the two countries (Cenusa et al., 2014, p. 5). Finally, Russia tightened the screws on the Ukrainian economy as the latter's plans for moving away from the former's Eurasian integration project got clearer. In July 2013, Moscow imposed bans on Ukrainian textiles, fruits, vegetables, poultry and railcars (Cenusa et al., 2014, Charap & Colton, 2017, p. 118). In Summer 2013, Russia also started to apply extensive customs checks to all Ukrainian imports (Charap & Colton, 2017, p. 118).²⁰ After 'Euromaidan' protests that led to the ouster of Yanukovich and the rise to power of a pro-EU government in Ukraine, Russia expanded its restrictions on Ukrainian goods to include agricultural products, which are still in effect. In December 2015, Russia also suspended its Free Trade Agreement with Ukraine, which was in effect since 2011.

Finally, Russia has threatened Moldova, Georgia, as well as Central Asian states such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to impose visas and restrict immigration in case of noncompliance with Russia's regional integration initiatives. Regulating flows of legal and illegal migration from the CIS countries has been on the agenda of Putin especially with the start of his third term in office in 2012. Yet, Russia's policy of using immigration strategically dates to earlier years of Putin's presidency. For example, during the 2006 economic sanctions crisis with Moldova, Russia used the 300–500 thousand illegal Moldovan immigrants working in Russia as leverage, threatening to kick them out of the country. Similarly, in September 2013, Rogozin referred to the hundreds of thousands of Moldovans who work in Russia as one reason why Moldova should back away from signing the Association Agreement with the EU (Socor, 2013). Remittances of Moldovan, and other post-Soviet

country citizens make up considerable percentages of the GDPs of these countries. Interestingly, this contradicts Russia's policy of creating a single Eurasian economic space in which citizens of member states enjoy complete freedom of movement.

All in all, Russia's great power nationalism has been the key driving force behind its search for establishing the Eurasian Economic Union as an alternative geoeconomic bloc and applying coercive tools over its neighbors in realizing this goal. As opposed to seeing the integration of post-Soviet countries into the EU as an economic advantage that could also transform the Russian economy, Russia's great power nationalists have used coercive economic statecraft to pull those countries toward Eurasian integration (see [Table 1](#) for a summary).

However, this strategy has been remarkably unsuccessful for Russia. In Katzenstein and Weigandt's (2017, p. 434) words, Russia's sphere of influence mentality and 'milieu goals' have been challenged by the realities of an interdependent world order that have pushed Ukraine, Georgia and others toward closer cooperation with Europe. The share of the post-Soviet region for Russia's foreign trade actually decreased from 17.8% in 2001 to 12.7% in 2017.²¹ Russia lost its status as Ukraine's top trading partner in 2016 as a result of the sanctions it imposed on the Ukrainian economy. Since 2013, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova have all signed Association Agreements with the EU. Ukraine has decisively re-oriented its trade toward Europe, while Georgia and Moldova continue to have ambivalent positions toward closer economic cooperation with Russia.

Turkey: a liberal regional power in the Middle East

Transforming national identity conceptions: conservatives vs. Westernizers

The 1990s were marked by the co-prevalence of various political factions with divergent national identity conceptions in Turkish politics. While Westernizing Kemalists were still powerful in the Turkish military, ministry of foreign affairs, and security bureaucracy, the Turkish political scene was an arena of intense contestation between the social democrats, center right parties, the Islamists and the nationalists.²² With this hybrid elite structure and a transforming global order, Turkish governments prioritized two regions in foreign economic strategy; Europe and the post-Soviet space. Middle East, on the contrary, was regarded as conflict-ridden and threatening for Turkey's national security. That perception changed dramatically with the rise to power of the former Islamist, conservative Justice and Development Part (JDP) in 2002 under the leadership of the current President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Similar to the rift between great power nationalists and Westernizers in Russia, in Turkey, the ruling JDP's conservative national identity conception was defined in opposition to the traditional Westernizing one that had marked Turkish foreign and security policy since the early years of the Republic.

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister Davutoğlu has been the most influential figure in redefining Turkey's national interests under consecutive JDP governments. Davutoğlu argued that it was imperative for Turkey to establish its influence in the Middle East to become a global power; that was Turkey's destiny due its Ottoman past and geographical position. In Davutoğlu's (2001) famous theory of 'strategic depth', the region was of key importance for a deeper Eurasian and Asian strategy. Davutoğlu (2001, p. 118) would also propose that Turkey had

to consolidate its political, economic and cultural ties with regional countries because the Middle East, in this conception, was Turkey's 'inevitable hinterland' (Davutoğlu, 2001, p. 137). This view was later taken up by other influential figures of the current administration such as Ibrahim Kalin, the President's spokesperson. For instance, Kalin (2008) wrote that Turkey 'comes back to its past experiences, dreams and aspiration in its greater hinterland', which was 'embedded in its Ottoman past'.

According to Davutoğlu, Turkey should undertake the role of an order-providing country²³ and peace-builder in the region, the historical roots of which was to be found in the common Ottoman legacy that Turks, Kurds and Arabs shared. Davutoğlu was also calling for a transformation in Turkey's geopolitical identity from a 'bridge country' to a 'central country' (Arıkan & Kınacıoğlu, 2016, p. 394). Why did JDP, despite the 'central country' role that Davutoğlu had ascribed to Turkey, propose to implement this hierarchical vision through a liberal strategy? The answer, again, lies in the domestic contestation over Turkey's relations with the Middle East. For Turkey's former Islamists and new conservative democrats, proposing a stronger role for Turkey in the Muslim Middle East was the outcome of a historically-shaped debate over Turkey's civilizational belonging. In contrast to Turkey's Kemalists as well as the pro-European center-right and center-left political elite, JDP would locate Turkey within the Islamic civilization, but with a specific focus on the former Ottoman territories (Hintz, 2015). This conservative identity conception, which Hintz (2015) calls 'Ottoman Islamism', has perceived the Middle East and peoples of the region as 'brothers' that Turkey had long been alienated from equally by the colonialist powers such as Britain and France, and Turkey's secular Republican elite who had perceived the region as conflict-prone and inherently backward.

According to Turkey's former ambassador in Tehran and Moscow, for example, it would be impossible that Turkey undertook a coercive or imperialist leadership vision in the Middle East – a region with the people of which it shared a common civilization.²⁴ According to him, economic instruments were the most effective in achieving Turkey's 'socio-political goals'. In the words of the current presidential spokesperson Ibrahim Kalın (2013), Turkey's Westernizing elites had turned their backs to Turkey's self by pretending to embrace a different civilizational identity. Turkey's comeback to the Middle East, therefore, had to be through 'a values-based approach' (Kalın, 2012, p. 16) as opposed to the security-oriented mindset of the traditional Turkish elites. Turkey's 'new elite', in Kalın's words, were re-interpreting its history and geography as 'cultural assets' (Kalın 2011–2012, p. 9). Kalın (2012, p. 15) also criticized Turkey's Westernizers, or 'the state establishment' for considering regional countries to be a threat to Turkey's national security. Opting to become a regional leader in the Middle East, JDP instead chose not to 'dominate' the region. Moreover, head of Turkey's National Intelligence Agency, Hakan Fidan (2013, p. 91) argued that Turkey's regional policies were based on 'a more liberal understanding of international relations', favoring principles such as 'limitless cooperation, conflict resolution, mediation, defending democratic ideals and demanding a just international order'.

JDP rule has witnessed the gradual reinforcement of the prevalence of the conservative identity conception in Turkey. The JDP was an ardent supporter of Turkey's accession into the European Union in its first term (2002–2007). Ankara implemented significant reforms in human rights and democratization in the first years of JDP's rule within the framework of Turkey's EU candidacy (Müftüler-Baç,

2005). JDP's pro-European stance, however, faded over time as it consolidated its power at home and the West has become more critical of Ankara's poor human rights and democratization record. JDP's consolidation of power took place in 2007, as JDP won 47% of the votes in the general elections, offering it a parliamentary majority for the second time in a row. Also, the year 2007 witnessed the rise to presidency of Abdullah Gül, a senior JDP politician and former Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Consequently, the ruling JDP as a 'counterelite' to the Westernizing Kemalist establishment, gained 'political hegemony' to redefine the meaning and boundaries of the Turkish nation (Aktürk, 2011, pp. 148–153). As a result, JDP's conservative identity conception acquired a more coherent content in attributing Turkey a leadership role in the Middle East.

External developments have also contributed to the reinforcement of the prevalence of the conservative identity in Turkey at the expense of alternative identity conceptions. First, Ankara's EU accession process stalled in JDP's second term (2007–2011) and the EU's criticism of authoritarianism in Turkey has gradually sharpened since then. As Turkey's relations with the EU have plummeted, the discursive power of the Westernizing identity has shrunk in favor of conservatism. As Aktürk (2018) explains, that corresponded with the transformation of President Erdoğan's discourse from 'Islamic multiculturalism' to 'Muslim nationalism' in the 2010s. Accordingly, Erdoğan's JDP has reconceptualized the boundaries of the nation in Islamic terms by attributing a supra-ethnic Islamic character to Turkishness (Aktürk, 2018, p. 5). In this process, Erdoğan has rejected the more traditional secular definition of Turkish nationalism for being 'alien' and 'Western-inspired' (Aktürk, 2018, p. 5). At the same time, nationalists led by the Nationalist Action Party have continued to prioritize Turkic Eurasia for Turkey's foreign policy and economic interests. As the JDP attained political hegemony, conservatism has also reached an unrivalled primacy, eliminating the influence of alternative identity conceptions.

Similarly, the Arab Spring emerged as a critical juncture that has reinforced the primacy of the conservative national identity conception in Turkey's foreign policy. The ruling JDP has viewed the Arab Spring as an historic opportunity for the emergence of a set of pro-Turkey political regimes in the Middle East (Koca, 2017; Öniş, 2014). Writing for *The Guardian* in March 2011, Davutoğlu argued 'the wave of revolutions in the Arab world ... were necessary in order to restore the natural flow of history'. Davutoğlu (2011) believed 'from Libya to Turkey the will of the people has revived a sense of common destiny'. In that natural flow of history, Turkey was meant to be a leading country. In response to JDP's activism in Syria, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the head of the main opposition Republican People's Party, repeatedly argued that Turkey's direction should be toward 'contemporary civilization' as opposed to the 'Middle Eastern quagmire' (Dünya, 2014). Instead, Ankara positioned itself 'on the right side of history' to uphold the rights of the people against 'oppression in our region' (Davutoğlu, 2011). That stance would later on cost Turkey its economic regionalism projects as the Syrian civil war cut Turkey's land connection to its southern neighborhood.

Widening the market through liberal multilateralism

The transformation in Turkey's national identity debates has corresponded to a re-orientation of Turkey's foreign economic strategy to make Middle Eastern markets

a priority. As a result of a comprehensive foreign trade strategy crafted during JDP's first two terms in the office (2002–2011), Turkey has experienced a trade boom with countries in the Middle East, which has paved the way for debates as to whether Turkey was becoming a trading state (Kirişçi, 2009). From 2002, when JDP rose to power to 2012, when the Arab Spring broke out, the share of the Middle East in Turkey's total trade grew from 7.3% to 16.7%, while the share of the EU decreased from 51.8% to 37.8%.²⁵ In contrast to Russian leadership strategy in Eurasia, Turkey has sought to facilitate cooperation among the states in its southern neighborhood through liberal and multilateral means. Turkey's liberal opening to the Middle East was often championed by top foreign policy executives. Referring to Turkey's activism in the Middle East, current presidential spokesperson Kalın (2009, p. 85) argued that Turkey was 'just beginning to act like the self-conscious heir of an empire whose power of imagination' still hovered over those of the peoples of the region. In bringing Turkey back to the region, Turkey, in Kalın's (2009, p. 86) words was 'embracing globalization with a nonisolationist regionalism'.

In exerting economic influence in the Middle East, Turkey has followed a liberal strategy. Similar to other liberal powers, it strived to build 'an economically open international subsystem' and 'gave market forces free play' (Brawley, 1993, p. 24) in its regional economic policies. Turkey's foreign economic strategy in the Middle East has relied on signing free trade agreements (FTAs) and bilateral investment treaties (BITs). As part of a new comprehensive strategy toward the region, JDP has increased the number of cities that Turkish Airlines (THY) flew significantly. While inter-governmental agreements prepared the legal ground for cooperation, THY laid the logistical and physical ground for Turkish exporters and investors.²⁶

In opening up to Middle Eastern markets, JDP governments have relied on the official 'Strategy for Enhancing Trade with Neighboring Countries', initiated in 2000 under the coalition government of the Democratic Left Party, Motherland Party and the Nationalist Action Party. Turkey's accession into the EU's Customs Union was finalized in 2001. The new official strategy document aimed to utilize the European Union's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED), which aimed to create a web of interconnectedness between Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Turkey signed FTAs with Middle Eastern and North African countries that were part of EUROMED. Accordingly, FTAs were signed with Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine and Syria in 2004, Egypt in 2005, Jordan in 2009, and Lebanon in 2010. Upon signing the FTA with his counterpart in Damascus in December 2004, Turkey's Prime Minister Erdoğan would state that Syria was 'Turkey's gate to the Arab World' (Reuters, 2004). Outside the EUROMED scheme, Turkey has also held negotiations with the Gulf Cooperation Council on the formation of an FTA since 2005.

A very important aspect of Turkey's efforts to expand its FTA network in the Middle East was its positive-sum perception of regional economic relations. The two conservative architects of Turkey's foreign policy, Davutoğlu (2008) and Kalın (2009) both argued that Turkey should seek influence in the region through economic interdependence and soft power tools. That was in line with the self-ascribed mission of peaceful order provision in the region. Hence, Ankara invested heavily in convincing its partners in the Middle East that they should engage in

closer economic cooperation. Turkey's Arab partners were concerned that an FTA with Turkey would result in the dominance of higher quality Turkish goods in their domestic markets.²⁷ Therefore, Ankara had to convince its partners through lengthy rounds of negotiations. Turkey opened its markets to its Arab partners such as Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria immediately, while expecting reciprocity over a longer period. For instance, as the FTA with Syria was signed in December 2004, Turkey pledged to immediately lift its customs on imports from Syria, whereas Syria would reciprocate in twelve years (Turkish Daily News, 2005). JDP governments aimed to legitimize the opening to the Middle East with reference to national identity as well. For instance, after a visit to Syria in 2003, Kürşat Tüzmen, Minister of State Responsible for Foreign Trade, argued, 'we must never forget in this region that we are the grandsons of the Ottoman Empire. We have respect and love here, because we lived together in the past ... This constitutes a convenient commercial platform, we must use it'. National identity, therefore was both a driving force and a source of legitimacy for Turkey's new foreign trade strategy.

The global financial crisis of 2008–2009 strengthened the regionalist turn in Turkish foreign economic strategy. Similar to Russia's great power nationalists, Turkey's conservatives read the crisis as an historic opportunity. President Erdoğan (2010), for instance, referred to Turkey's economic success after the crisis, which in his view, contributed to Turkey's soft power in the region. Turkey, therefore, had to continue demanding 'justice, transparency, and legitimacy', which was 'a responsibility emanating from our history, geography, and the universal values that we hold' (Erdoğan, 2010). The crisis was quite destructive for Turkish businesses as Turkey's exports plummeted from \$132 billion in 2008 to \$102 billion in 2009. After the crisis, Ankara initiated the Levant Forum in the form of a Multilateral Free Trade Zone between Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Turkey was proposing an EU-like model in the Middle East, which would enlarge the market for Turkish exporters and investors.²⁸ Turkey's ultimate goal in this project, according to a source in the Turkish Ministry of Economy, was to create a zone of peace in the Middle East by eventually attracting Egypt, Palestine and Israel into the Levant Forum.²⁹ Ankara believed in the spillover effects of economic integration in the Levant, which would pave the way for economic development and political stability in the wider region.³⁰

Turkey's sharp stance during the Arab uprisings, however, damaged the regionalism in Turkish foreign economic strategy. After the Arab Spring, Turkey's ties with Syria and Egypt deteriorated as Ankara sided with the opposition groups against Assad and Mubarak (Koca, 2017). The Levant Forum project was effective until December 2011 when the Assad regime unilaterally withdrew from the multilateral FTA and quit the quadripartite high level strategic council. Moreover, since Sisi's rise to power in 2013, Egypt has threatened to cancel its FTA with Turkey. Most recently, Jordan cancelled its FTA with Turkey, criticizing Ankara for not being able to deliver on its promise to increase Turkish FDI in Jordan (The Jordan Times, 2018). More importantly, Turkey has aimed to expand its economic might in the region through private actors such as business associations and business forums. Turkish governments have mainly relied on the power of business groups in forging cooperation. Davutoğlu (2002) argued that business groups had an important place in Turkey's strategic vision in the Middle East. According to him,

while it was the leaders' task to determine macro-strategy, it was up to institutions such as universities, trade chambers and consulates to implement it on a micro level. It was therefore the ruling elite's responsibility to shape the imagination of a company's official in terms of where the country's strategy would be directed. Otherwise, that company could not become a component in Turkey's foreign economic strategy.

Hundreds of business representatives accompanied Turkish ministers in their official visits to Middle Eastern capitals, and Turkish diplomatic missions were instructed by JDP governments to support Turkish businessmen. In this process, traditional business groups such as TUSIAD, the Islamist business association MUSIAD, newly empowered business groups from Anatolian towns and the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEIK), as well as the Turkish-Arab Economic Forums were the key actors.

In this section, I have shown that Turkey's conservative new elite prioritized the Middle East in Turkey's foreign economic policy (see [Table 1](#) for a summary). As the writings of key policy-makers such as Erdoğan, Davutoğlu, Fidan and Kalın demonstrate, Turkey's conservative elite redefined Turkey's national interests in contrast to the previous era, in which the old elite conceptualized Turkey as a Western country. The new elite imagined the Middle East as a region with ample untapped economic opportunities. In opening to the Middle East, Turkey's conservative elite relied on liberal instruments in contrast to the security-oriented framework that of the Kemalist era. Turkey's strategy, however, has failed to fulfill Ankara's great expectations. Since the outbreak of the Arab Spring, Turkey has lost a considerable number of key economic partners in the Middle East including Syria, Egypt and most recently Jordan. Regional turmoil in the Middle East has also revitalized Turkey's economic ties with the EU. From 2012 to 2017, the share of the EU in Turkey's exports increased from 37.8% to 47.1%.³¹ Yet, the current conservative elite continues to see Turkey as an order-providing country in the Middle East. The Middle East, in this national identity conception, will continue to offer Turkey ample economic and geopolitical opportunities.

Conclusion

Regional hegemony through economic integration has been a similar end that regional powers all over the globe have strived to reach. Yet, as my comparison of the Russian and Turkish cases demonstrates, there has been significant variation in the means used to achieve that common goal. The existing literature has so far not sufficiently examined why some regional powers choose to insert regional economic influence through coercion, while others are committed to liberal leadership. I have offered a constructivist explanation, which brings domestic contestation over national identity to the forefront. Examining Russian and Turkish political elites' self-conceptions vis-à-vis their neighbors and the world, this paper found that these regional powers have been ideationally driven in their search for providing regional economic order in Eurasia and the Middle East, respectively. The consolidation of political power by the ruling elite, and international developments have reinforced prior national identity conceptions, delegitimized

Westernizing identity conceptions and intensified the search for different types of regional hegemony in both cases.

These findings have implications for multiple issue areas in the discipline. First, they demonstrate that national identity has been foundational for the formation of states' social purposes in the Post-Cold War era and will continue to be so in the near future. So far, the literature has extensively explored how national identity and nationalism influence foreign policy (Hintz, 2015; Hopf, 2002; Prizel, 1998). My comparative analysis has shown that the prospects for economic cooperation in a region are also 'rooted in collective meanings ... in domestic political and cultural contexts' (Weldes, 1999, p. 9). International economic developments such as the global financial crisis are also filtered by the domestic debate over national identity, and feed into the formation of national economic interests. By demonstrating that national identity shapes the formation of economic interests and policies in Russia and Turkey, the findings of this study calls for systematic investigations of how national identity and economic policies interact elsewhere in the world. In an attempt to predict the outcome of Brexit and the rise of Trump, Blyth & Matthijs (2017) have recently argued that the current backlash against globalization in the advanced capitalist world can potentially lead toward a neo-nationalist macroeconomic regime. In other words, the age of populist nationalism that lies ahead might reinforce the power of national sovereignty over state sovereignty as a source of political legitimacy (Barkin & Cronin, 1994). The forms of this new macroeconomic regime that Blyth and Matthijs (2017) refer to, again, will vary depending on the specific domestic debates within Britain, the US and elsewhere in the advanced capitalist world. This article has demonstrated that national identity debates have already occupied a central place in post-Soviet Russia and Turkey. This supports the literature's well-established argument that the economic nationalism is context specific and is not confined to protectionism in trade (Abdelal, 2001; Helleiner, 2005; Herrera, 2005; Rutland, 2015). What is common, however, is that national identities are foundational for the social purposes of such states, which self-identify as leaders of particular regions.

Finally, as the BRICS grouping demonstrates, economic prestige has become an inseparable component of emerging powers' overall prestige and status and challenge to the West (Kahler, 2013). Asserting leadership through regional economic organizations has been a source for boosting economic prestige for rising or emerging regional powers (Krickovic, 2015). As the share of rising or emerging regional powers in the global distribution of economic power is on the rise, this paper calls for a greater attention to examining the lenses through which actors in these states see global economic transformations and their roles in this process. This should bring to the forefront the importance of investigating domestic contestation over national roles and purposes, which are embedded in diverging and opposing national identity conceptions. The study of national identity conceptions in regional powers will therefore contribute to our understanding of foreign economic priorities of regional powers as well as the sources of the variation in regional powers' strategies of attaining economic hegemony within different regions of the world. A closer scrutiny of domestic national identity debates might better highlight why regional powers such as Brazil, South Africa, India and China behave the way they do in their own regions.

Notes

1. For recent exceptions see, Krapohl, Meissner, and Muntschick (2014); Prys (2010); Krickovic (2015).
2. For a recent attempt to explain variation in regional power behavior, see Flemes (2010).
3. For a poststructuralist account of identity formation and the co-constitutive relationship between identity and foreign policy, see Hansen (2006).
4. For the importance of history and historicity in the study of identity, see Neumann (1999, pp. 1–38) and Pouliot (2010, pp. 52–91).
5. For an excellent review of the flourishing scholarship on hierarchies in world politics, see Bially Mattern and Zarakol (2016).
6. This is close to what Destradi (2010) calls ‘hard hegemony’.
7. I only have one interview from 2017.
8. Interview at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Moscow, 22 May 2014.
9. Interview with Dmitri Trenin, 14 May 2014.
10. Interview with Lilia Shevtsova, Moscow Carnegie Center. 26 May 2014, Moscow.
11. Interview with Dmitri Trenin.
12. Interview with Pavel Andreev, former Executive Director of Valdai Discussion Club. Moscow, 21 April 2014.
13. Interview with Andrei Melville, Vice-Rector for Research, Higher School of Economics. Moscow, 20 May 2014.
14. Interview with Nikita Lomagin, Vice Rector, European University in St. Petersburg, 21 October 2017.
15. Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation Retrieved from http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/254248 (accessed 18 January 2017)
16. Interview with Olga Butorina, Professor of Economics, MGIMO. Moscow, 20 May 2014.
17. Interview with Konstantin Sonin, Professor of Economics, Higher School of Economics. Moscow, 12 May 2014
18. Interview with Shevtsova.
19. For a detailed analysis, see Balmaceda (2013).
20. Russia’s economic package for Ukraine included not only sticks, but also carrots such as the promise to purchase \$15 in Ukrainian Eurobonds (Charap & Colton, 2017, p. 121).
21. Calculated by author according to data from the Central Bank of Russia; Retrieved from <http://www.cbr.ru/Eng/statistics/?PrtlId=svs> (accessed 18 April 2018).
22. For a detailed analysis of the contestation over Turkish national identity, see Hintz (2015).
23. *Düzen kurucu ülke* in Turkish.
24. Interview with Ümit Yardım, current deputy undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ankara, 16 January 2014.
25. Calculated by author according to data from Turkish Statistical Institute; Retrieved from http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1046 (accessed 20 April 2018).
26. Interview with anonymous official at the Ministry of Economy, Ankara, 9 January 2014.
27. Interview with anonymous official at the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEIK), Istanbul. 21 January 2014.
28. Interview with anonymous official at the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEIK).
29. Interview with anonymous official at the Ministry of Economy, Ankara.
30. Interview with Mesut Özcan, head of Turkish Diplomatic Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ankara. 9 January 2014.
31. Turkish Statistical Institute; Retrieved from http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1046 (accessed 20 April 2018).

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Notes on contributor

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