

Abstract

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the illegal annexation of Crimea, and the Russian proxy-war in the Donbas region of Ukraine, the idea of the Russian threat to the West has emerged in the academia and political discourse. While generally accepted as a serious concern among both Western democracies and international organizations, its conceptual complexity increased with time, to the point that the understanding of which Russian capabilities and foreign activities had to be considered threatening became multifaceted and convoluted. In order to understand how the idea of the Russian threat has evolved over the years, a discourse analysis of the texts from the EU and NATO was conducted, examining how the factors of context, identity, and goals have affected the articulation of the discourse. Research has shown that even though Russia gained a status of an ideological Other to the West, it was not always considered a threat. Additionally, while the awareness and understanding of the threats it posed to Western democracies grew over time, the organization(s) could not always articulate a clear discourse of the Russian threat. The changing contexts, the identities of the organizations and the values they are based on, as well as the EU and NATO's goals pertaining to Russia, have both facilitated and hampered the establishment of the idea of the Russian threat at different points in time.