Since Russia has reemerged as a global power, its foreign policies have come under close scrutiny. In Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin, Andrei P. Tsygankov identifies honor as the key concept by which Russia’s international relations are determined. He argues that Russia’s interests in acquiring power, security, and welfare are filtered through this cultural belief and that different conceptions of honor provide an organizing framework that produces policies of cooperation, defensiveness, and assertiveness in relation to the West. Using ten case studies spanning a period from the early nineteenth century to the present day – including the Holy Alliance, the Triple Entente, and the Russia–Georgia war – Tsygankov’s theory suggests that when Russia perceives its sense of honor to be recognized, it cooperates with the Western nations; without such a recognition it pursues independent policies either defensively or assertively.

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“In the life of states just as in that of private individuals there are moments when one must forget all but the defense of his honor.”

Tsar Alexander II, as cited in Wohlfarth, “Honor as Interest”
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Figures and Tables</th>
<th>page ix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Introduction 1

### Part I. Theory

2 Honor in International Relations 13
3 The Russian State and Its Honor 28
4 Russia’s Relations with the West 40

### Part II. Honor and Cooperation

5 The Holy Alliance, 1815–1853 63
6 The Triple Entente, 1907–1917 78
7 The Collective Security, 1933–1939 97
8 The War on Terror, 2001–2005 118

### Part III. Honor and Defensiveness

9 The Recueillement, 1856–1871 137
10 Peaceful Coexistence, 1921–1939 155
11 Containing NATO Expansion, 1995–2000 172

### Part IV. Honor and Assertiveness

12 The Crimean War, 1853–1856 195
13 The Early Cold War, 1946–1949 216
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Russia–Georgia War, August 2008</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Bibliography: 277
- Index: 305
List of Figures and Tables

Figures

2.1 An Honor-Based Explanation of Foreign Policy  page 24
6.1 Average Annual Distribution of Central Government Expenditures, 1885–1913 (as a percentage of the total)  86
15.1 Explanation of Russia’s Relations with the West 265

Tables

3.1 Content of Russia’s Honor Myth  34
3.2 Russia as Both Part of and Distinct from the West 36
3.3 Historical Constructions of Russian Honor  37
4.1 Russia’s Concepts of Honorable Behavior toward the West 41
4.2 Foreign Policy Traditions throughout Russian History 50
4.3 Cultural Explanation of Russia’s Foreign Policy  52
4.4 Russia’s Relations with the West: Realist and Constructivist Expectations 55
4.5 A First Look at the Cases 57
6.1 Political Currents in Russia before World War I 88
8.1 Declining Percentage of Citizens Who Held a Favorable View of the United States 122
11.1 Russia and Ex-Republics: Ethnic and Linguistic Dependencies 182
11.2 Russia’s Government Revenue and Expenditure, 1992 (% of GDP) 183
12.1 Relative Economic Wealth of Britain and Other European Powers (%) 203
12.2 Balance of Power before the Crimean War 204
13.1 Share of World Power, Industrial Strength, and Military Strength, 1946 (Percent) 226
14.1 Russia’s Basic Economic Indicators, 1999–2007 (%, annual change) 247
## List of Figures and Tables

15.1 Domestic Opposition to Russia’s Cooperation with the West 261
15.2 Domestic Opposition to Russia’s Defensiveness 263
15.3 Domestic Opposition to Russia’s Assertiveness 263
15.4 The Honor-Based Constructivism and the Twenty-First-Century Great Powers 273
Preface

This book grew out of my desire to develop the argument I introduced in the textbook *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), which covers Russia’s international behavior from Mikhail Gorbachev to Vladimir Putin. Encouraging reactions from colleagues, students, and members of the policy community, augmented by my own curiosity about Russian history, prompted me to refine my theory by testing it against a longer range of historical cases.

The result is a book with an explicitly developed theory of Russian-Western relations across two centuries and one that is centered on the concept of national honor. Rather than narrowly associating honor with international prestige or reputation, as some international relations theories do, I have tried to uncover what Russians themselves understand to be their honor and honorable foreign policy. I have found that Russia’s idea of honor, although continuing to shape the country’s foreign policy, reaches back to the premodern era and predates the system of nation-states. Because Russia’s behavior originates from a culturally distinct source, its foreign policy has meaning that differs from that of other members of the international system. By studying such meaning, we have an opportunity to develop a rich understanding of a particular policy’s source and future direction.

Through personal correspondence and conversations and through reading portions of this book, many friends and colleagues have contributed their support and ideas for improvement. Among them, I should like to especially mention Sanjoy Banerjee, David Foglesong, Pavel Tsygankov, and Matthew Tarver-Wahlquist. For financial support, I wish to thank IREX and San Francisco State University, which provided me with summer grants to conduct library-based research and interviews with Russian experts. Furthermore, I thank my students for their interest and feedback. I alone am responsible for the book’s content and the remaining errors.
Preface

Parts of several chapters draw on my previously published book *Russia’s Foreign Policy* and the article “Dueling Honors: Power, Identity and the Russia-Georgia Divide” (co-authored with Matthew Tarver-Wahlquist), *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 5, no. 4 (2009). I thank the publishers for permission to use these materials in the book.

At Cambridge University Press, I am especially grateful to John Haslam for his steady support of the project and valuable editorial suggestions. Comments and constructive criticisms by anonymous reviewers have assisted me in improving the book, and I hope the final version will satisfy some of their expectations.

Finally, I owe a special debt to my family for their love and support. I dedicate this book to my son Pasha who at the age of eight is beginning to express interest in the country from which his family originates. Pasha wanted me to write a book “about good Russian tsars.” Although this book will be only partly satisfactory on that account, I hope that it is a step in the right direction.

In transliterating names from Russian, I have used “y” to denote “ы”; “’” to denote “ь” and “ъ”; “yu” to denote “ю”; “ya” to denote “я”; “i” to denote “и” and “и́”; “iyi” to denote double “и”; “е” to denote “е”; “kh” to denote “х”; “zh” to denote “ж”; “ts” to denote “ц”; “ch” to denote “ч”; “sh” to denote “ш”; and “sch” to denote “щ.” I have also used “Ye” to distinguish the sound of “е” (such as “Yevropa”) in the beginning of a word from that in the middle of a word (such as “внешне”). Everywhere, I did not distinguish between “е” and “ё.” Spelling is retained in quotations.