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**A DECADE OF OTHERING:
RUSSIAN POLITICAL LEADERS' DISCOURSE
ON RUSSIA-EU RELATIONS 2004-2014**

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Abstract

This article systematically analyzes the discourse of the Russian political leadership on Russia-EU relations between 2004 and 2014. Forty-eight documents, mostly speeches delivered by Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Medvedev and Sergey Lavrov, are examined through qualitative content analysis and rhetorical analysis. The findings demonstrate that Russia's leaders have consistently juxtaposed an overwhelmingly positive image of Russia with a rather negative image of the EU for almost the entirety of this period. The fact that many European experts and politicians expressed surprise at the severe deterioration of Russia-EU relations in 2014 thus reveals the need to take rhetorical action more seriously, and to more intensively study discourse as both a cause and effect of international relations.

Keywords: rising powers, victimization, identity, the Other, cooperation

Introduction

The Russian leadership's proposal for a harmonious economic community from Lisbon to Vladivostok, which had been on the table for several years, has certainly always been ambitious. However, despite increasing dissatisfaction with the state of relations between Russia and the European Union (EU), until the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine, many EU politicians were hoping that the partners could still turn the corner. Strikingly, even distinguished European analysts had apparently been unable to foresee the

current, and in the words of renowned analyst Maria Lipman (2014), “deep – and for now irreparable – crisis” in EU-Russia relations.

The unpreparedness of the EU’s political elite arguably boils down to the lack of a common European understanding about “Russian views” on EU-Russia relations over the past years. Better informing such an understanding is thus vital – could the EU have expected recent developments regarding Russia-EU relations and hence possibly have preemptively addressed them? To answer this question, this article poses the following simple, yet strikingly under-researched question: what were the views of Russia’s political leadership on Russia-EU relations between 2004 and 2014? At first sight, even recent speeches and articles by the Russian political leaders paint a rather positive picture of the relations, coined by a “truly business-like and very open and constructive atmosphere” (President of Russia 2014). At the same time, however, the fact that the EU was labeled as part of “the West” in more than 50% of all statements since 2013, which had been done in only 6 out of 39 speeches and articles between 2004 and early 2013, already points towards a more confrontational tone. It thus appears highly relevant and topical to closely scrutinize the development of the views of the Russian leadership over time.

This article follows the approach of discourse analysis, understood broadly as the “fixation of meaning within a particular domain” (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002, p.141). It proceeds from the assumption that discourse agents, in our case the Russian political leadership, “by representing reality in one particular way rather than in other possible ways, constitute subjects and objects in particular ways, create boundaries between the true and the false, and make certain types of action relevant and others unthinkable” (p.145). In order to understand the Russian leadership’s discourse on Russia-EU relations, this article will analyze 48 speeches, statements and articles by Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Medvedev and Sergey Lavrov and three Foreign Policy Concepts by means of an inductive qualitative content analysis. Additionally, the leadership’s recurring rhetorical patterns and strategies will be scrutinized.

The article is structured as follows: First, a short literature review is given. Second, the research design is explained. Thirdly, the empirical findings are presented and discussed, and lastly, the conclusion closes with several important implications for our understanding of Russia-EU relations from the perspective of the Russian leadership.

Russia-EU Relations in Perspective

In order to create a common ground regarding prevailing scholarly views on EU-Russia relations during the period under scrutiny, the following section will provide a short literature review¹. Due to the lack of a new framework agreement, EU-Russia relations remain based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) signed/ratified in 1994/1996. However, the PCA has often been criticized for its vagueness and the lack of dispute settlement mechanisms (Van Elsuwege 2011). According to Schulze (2008 p.150), the EU's project to modernize Russia through the PCA failed.

In 2003, Russia and the EU launched their *Common Spaces*. Two years later, in 2005, Russia and the EU agreed on roadmaps, which specify how these spaces should be created. The Common Space of External Security seemed like a real novelty and apparently produced somewhat more transparency and trust (Sergunin 2012). Generally, however, most experts were disappointed by the initiative. Despite the enthusiasm around the project, the goal of a free trade area between Russia and the EU was no longer mentioned and concrete policy instruments or often even precise definitions of concepts were missing (Barysch 2006; Emerson 2005; Sergunin 2012). According to Benc (2009, p.30), “the positive first moments” of the initiative helped strengthen business cooperation, but a free trade area seemed more distant in 2009 than it had in the years before.

Despite various difficulties in EU-Russia relations, Dmitry Trenin (2008, p.134) argued that in 2008 there was still “no alienation, and only limited estrangement” between the partners. The early years of Dmitry Medvedev's presidency created the expectation that a restoration of trust was underway and that a “breakthrough in Russian-Western rapprochement” seemed possible (Rahr 2011, p.321). The partners thus came up with yet another initiative, the Partnership for Modernization (P4M), which was launched in 2010. According to the P4M coordinators, “various stakeholders praised the contribution of the P4M to the widening of sectoral cooperation and to the improvement of business relations” (Wiegand & Likhachev 2014, p.5).

At the same time, “mutual alienation” and a “conflictual impasse” were already dawning in 2010, and almost no progress could be made on substantive issues (Rahr 2011, p.310). Thus, Lyne (2011) argued that the lack of common

¹ It should be noted that only literature available in English was scrutinized. While this could be considered a limitation, it also enables us to compare ‘Western’ scholars’ views with the Russian leaders’ discourse.

values had already led to a lack of trust among the partners (also Medvedev 2008, p.212). Schulze (2008), moreover, observed a Russian desire to transform international power structures, which the EU did not want to accommodate. Romanova and Zaslavskaya (2004, p.102) had already argued in 2004 that emerging values and power gaps between Russia and the EU would lead to difficulties. In 2012-2014, the relations seemed to be deteriorating “in virtually every sphere” (Stewart 2014, p.4). In 2014, the annexation of Crimea, the war in Ukraine and the mutual imposition of sanctions showed how far Russia and the EU had drifted apart.

Nevertheless, Alexander Rahr, a long-standing German expert on Russia, stated that “when Crimea happened...we were all caught unawares” (in Kerneck 2014)². Indeed, Russian official documents and declarations had – at first sight – remained ambitious. For instance, the 2013 Russian Foreign Policy Concept mentioned a potentially “truly unified region” comprising Russia and the EU, thereby hinting at a (expectably) strong mismatch between the leaders’ rhetoric and the actual state of relations. As this article will show, scrutinizing the Russian discourse more closely would have significantly relativized any positive perception of the Russian attitude towards Russia-EU relations.

Research Design

The following section will elaborate on the research design employed to investigate the Russian leadership’s discourse. The term “discourse” will be understood broadly, encompassing “linguistic action, be it written, visual or oral communication, verbal or nonverbal, undertaken by social actors in a specific setting determined by social rules, norms and conventions” (Wodak 2008, p.5). Generally speaking, *discourse analysis* scrutinizes the “interrelation of language and social reality and how the one influences the other” (Schreier 2012, p.48). According to Michel Foucault and most structuralist discourse analysts, discourse “defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about” and thus also “rules in and out” specific policy options (Hall 2013, p.29). The article at hand will thus analyze the “patterns and commonalities of knowledge and structures” (Wodak 2008, p.6) contained in the discourse of Putin, Medvedev and Lavrov on Russia-EU relations, which can be assumed to have heavily influenced the viability of certain policy options.

As discourse analysis is “less a method, and more an attitude towards research” (Schreier 2012, p.49), the article at hand uses qualitative content

² Translated from German by the author.

analysis and techniques of linguistic and rhetorical analysis. Qualitative content analysis is “a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material” through the assignment of codes to single words and passages (Schreier 2012, p.1)³. It has several assets: it increases the transparency and reproducibility of the analysis and reduces content to the essential (6), and it is an ‘unobtrusive’ and non-reactive method (Berg 2001, p.258).

In the words of Bavelas, Kenwood, and Philipps (2002, p.113) “new ideas or entirely new frameworks are not going to come from the library; they will come from carefully observed data” – for this reason, the following analysis is based on an inductive research design. Moreover, there are few comprehensive analyses of the Russian discourse that could have been drawn from in order to create a deductive design. Proceeding inductively, the coding scheme was developed step-by-step, and the (sub-) categories were re-assembled several times by means of subsumption and abstraction⁴. Nevertheless, as Forman and Damschroder (2008, p.56) argue, “there is no clear line between data analysis and interpretation” in qualitative content analysis - the coding scheme is thus already a product of interpretation. Where possible and deemed significant, code frequency distributions and their transformation over time will be compared. However, since ‘implicit meaning’ and rather complex phenomena were coded, quantitative findings can hardly be relied on, and the analysis proceeds largely qualitatively.

In addition this article will analyze certain prominent rhetorical means and strategies, most notably the construction of self/other dichotomies, which have been shown to impinge on the possibilities for international cooperation (Neumann 1996, p.162f.; Reinke de Buitrago 2012). As will be demonstrated, the Russian leadership’s discourse relied heavily on “othering” and used narratives, metaphors and other rhetorical means in order to construct Russia and the EU as binary international actors.

The period of 2004-2014 was selected for analysis as it appeared most suitable for tracing the development of the Russian views over a manageable amount of time, which can be broken into three periods: Putin’s second presidency (2004-2008), Medvedev’s presidency (2008-2012), and the first half of Putin’s third presidency. Putin’s second presidency marked the beginning of the

³ Since qualitative content analyses often include numerical illustrations, it is more accurate to describe qualitative content analysis as a *qualitatively oriented* method with *quantitative elements* (Mayring 2010, p.610).

⁴ See the appendix for the simplified coding scheme.

creation of the ‘power vertical’, with which “Russia sought to acquire the features of a hierarchical state at home and a unitary actor abroad”, and thus potentially a solidification of the discourse (Collina 2011, p.14). Moreover, the years 2004 and 2007 saw the EU and NATO accessions of several former Eastern Block states, which was assumed to have impacted on the discourse heavily.

The selection of documents proceeded according to the criteria named by Rae (2007): relevance to the focus of the research (Russia-EU relations); authorship (Russian president or foreign minister, as the most important foreign policy actors in the Russian Federation); apparent significance; and genre (preference given to speeches and public statements). Eventually, all Annual Presidential Addresses to the State Duma between 2004-2014 plus a large number of additional documents and speeches that specifically dealt with foreign policy or EU-Russia relations were selected: the Russian Foreign Policy Concepts that were in effect 2004-2014, the Russian press statements made after Russia-EU summits, and numerous speeches and news articles delivered by respectively published in the name of the Russian Presidents and the Foreign Minister since 2004⁵.

The Russian Discourse on Russia-EU Relations

Having outlined the research design of the article, the following section will finally embark on an analysis of the Russian leaders’ discourse on Russia-EU relations. As became clear during the inductive coding process, the Russian leaders have frequently juxtaposed Russia and the EU and characterized them with opposing attributes. Russia has been described as a global player with a pragmatic, norms-based foreign policy that promotes stability and peace, while the EU was frequently referred to as a divided construct which unnecessarily politicizes technical issues of cooperation, disregards international norms, and thereby instigates chaos. Moreover, as the analysis will show, the Russian leaders have created a powerful narrative of Russia as a victim of other international actors, whereas the older narrative of Russia as “a part of the European family” was discarded.

⁵ The speeches and articles were mainly gathered by screening the sections *Articles* and *Statements on Major Issues* on the website of Kremlin, out of which all those that clearly dealt with Russia-EU relations were selected for analysis. Document collection ended in mid-August 2014. Since the official English translations of the speeches were used, minor deviations from the original versions cannot be completely ruled out. A full list of the documents is provided at the end of the article.

A Rising Global Player vs. A Divided Construct

To begin with, the Russian leaders have contrasted Russia as a *rising* (39x) and *already powerful* global actor (78x) with a divided or weak EU. Interestingly, Medvedev exposed a rather pragmatic view on how to promote Russia's rise, which should not be based on "past achievements". Instead, he revealed ideas to turn the country into a giant financial center or an innovation hub and to take it to a "higher level of civilization" (Medvedev 2008a; 2009a; 2010a).

Vladimir Putin (2012b), in contrast, increasingly focused on traditional cultural aspects, stating that "Russia has a chance not only to preserve its culture but to use it as a powerful force for progress in international markets". According to him, it is "absolutely *objective* and understandable for a state like Russia, with its great history and culture, with many centuries of experience" to strive to be a leader (e.a., Putin 2013a)⁶. In 2013(b), Putin claimed that the "desire for independence and sovereignty in spiritual, ideological and foreign policy spheres is an integral part" of the Russian "national character". Promising that Russia has a "great, powerful future", he, however, also spoke about "plans for developing the Armed Forces, and they are very intense" (2013b). In the 2012 Annual Address he gave insights into the rather bold view that Russia

must not only preserve its geopolitical relevance – it must multiply it, it must *generate demand among our neighbors* and partners...This applies to our economy, culture, science and education, as well as our diplomacy, particularly the ability to mobilize collective actions at the international level. Last but not least it applies to our military might (Putin 2012a).

The leadership often connected Russia's rise as an international actor to an emerging "new balance of economic, civilizational and military forces" (2012a), within which Russia would, already in the year 2000, try to ensure its "worthy place in the world" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2000).

The image of Russia as an *already* powerful global actor was referred to even more frequently. Interestingly, it appeared in almost all summit statements, which could be interpreted as a Russian desire to demonstrate strength in its relations with the EU and to be regarded as an equal partner. Already in the

⁶ According to Trenin (2011), the Russian desire to be a great power goes back to the days of Peter the Great and was "finally achieved as a result of victory over Napoleon", so "being one of a half-dozen mightiest powers to jointly manage the world is a natural aspiration" (p.415f.).

A Decade of Othering

2000 Foreign Policy Concept, Russia was characterized as “a great power, as one of the most influential centers of the modern world” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2000). Most frequently, Russia was described as a *global economic power* (Putin 2007; 2013a) – its “anti-crisis policy has been more effective than in many other countries” and it passed the “difficult test [of the financial crisis]...with flying colors” (Medvedev 2011a). Interestingly, Russia repeatedly proclaimed its willingness to help the EU overcoming the financial crisis through direct assistance (Medvedev 2008a; Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the EU 2010a; President of Russia 2011, 2012a).

Moreover, Russia has also been described as an *energy power* (President of Russia 2005a, 2006a), a (*geo*-)*political power* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2000; Putin 2006a), and a *military power* - particularly since 2008 and in the contexts of the wars in Georgia and Ukraine (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008; Medvedev 2008a; Putin 2014c). In 2014, Putin (2014c) mentioned Russia’s “most sophisticated arms, such offensive and defensive systems...unavailable to other armies of the world”, which “are yet to cheer up” its partners. In the context of the annexation of Crimea, Putin (2014a) assured Western leaders that “if you compress the spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard”. The metaphor suggests that Russia’s assertive stance followed certain *physical laws* and was thus an inevitable reaction to the West’s engagement in Ukraine.

The depictions of Russia as *united* and *historical power* are particularly noteworthy. Russia was first portrayed as a *united power* during the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, when Medvedev (2008a) declared that Russians “have much to love and be proud of, much to stand up for and defend, and much to aspire towards”, so they “will stand firm in the Caucasus”. The Crimea crisis then confirmed the image of Russia as a ‘united power’ that draws its “foreign policy position...from the will of millions” (Putin 2014a). Thanking “everyone without exception” for the “patriotic spirit”, Putin in 2014(a) asked the audience: “Are we ready to consistently defend our national interests, or will we forever give in, retreat to who knows where?”. His dramatic choice of words and the frightening implications of ‘who knows where’ arguably put those unwilling to defend the alleged national interests on the brink of treason.

Remarkably, the image of a rising or already powerful Russia was often contrasted with the image of a divided or weak EU. Occasionally, the Russian leaders *praised the EU’s strength*, mostly after summits, for example for the “swift and synchronized manner” in which it took “reasonable and well-coordinated” steps against the crisis (Permanent Mission of the Russian

Federation to the EU 2010a). In 2013(b), Putin remarked that the EU leaders are “very nice guys, very friendly, polite, pleasant to talk” and to “eat caviar and drink vodka, good German beer or Italian or French wines” with, but that but they are “very tough negotiators“.

Nevertheless, the EU was much more frequently portrayed as disunited or weak. Notably, the image of a *disunited EU* has often referred to as a consequence of its Eastern enlargement (President of Russia 2007a; 2008a; 2009b)⁷. As of 2006, the EU was *openly* depicted as *weak*, particularly in the context of the financial crisis (Putin 2010). The 2013 Foreign Policy Concept made it clear that the “European continent is not the focus of global politics any more” and that the “the ability of the West to dominate world economy and politics continues to diminish” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013). In 2014(a), Putin openly denied the EU’s independence by stating that Russia’s “Western partners” are “led by the United States of America”; Lavrov (2014) suggested that “Europe may become a pole in the new international system only through the development of its partnership with Russia”. The wider Russian discourse on Russia-EU relations has thus clearly juxtaposed a rising and powerful Russia with a weak and divided EU. While the antagonistic characterization may recently have become more explicit, the strength/weakness dichotomy had appeared rather early.

Pragmatism vs. Politicization

The Russian leaders’ discourse frequently invoked a second dichotomy - Russia as a pragmatic and rational actor vs. the EU as an irrational actor that unnecessarily politicizes issues. Remarkably, the leaders have depicted Russia as a pragmatic actor in almost every single document. The 2013 Foreign Policy Concept proclaims boldly: “Russia’s foreign policy is transparent, predictable and pragmatic” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013). Allegedly, Russia has always promoted “sincere, straight from the mouth and omission-free discussion of the most complicated problems with any partners” (Lavrov 2014). Lavrov (2013b) has, moreover, described Russia as mild and forgiving - “stirring up the past is not for credible politicians... Russia is only going ahead, only into the future“. In the context of the brokering of the ceasefire during the Russian-Georgian war, Medvedev (2008b) assured that Russia was ready to discuss “face to face, even if one of the consequences is a

⁷ Clearly, Russia didn’t approve of the fact that its relations with the Western European states became more complicated due to the accession of states that act like “frosty pragmatists” and “new cold warriors” (Leonard & Popescu, 2007).

bunch of talk about non-existent details. Russia will work with its partners” (Medvedev, 2008b).

In the field of economic and business cooperation, the picture of a pragmatic, work-oriented Russia had long been painted. For instance, during WTO accession, while the Russian leadership “honestly” wanted to turn its “backs on the talks and slam the door”, they stayed pragmatic and “did not succumb to emotion” (Putin 2012b). In 2014, Putin still tried to de-politicize economic cooperation; despite complaining about the alleged “unfair demands” the West made within the WTO and the EU’s application of anti-dumping measures against Russia, he stated that “these are all technical matters” and that “trade continues to grow with every year” (President of Russia 2014).

A similar picture was painted in the field of energy cooperation. In 2005(a), Putin put forward that even if some EU member states import 90 percent of their consumed gas from Russia, “everyone is happy” – because Russia has “always been and always will be a reliable partner” that sells its energy at cutting-rate, market-based prices (President of Russia 2006a). In Putin’s view, allegations that Russia uses gas exports as a political tool have “obviously nothing to do with reality⁸” (2010). During the gas crises, Russia simply wished to enforce international contracts, which is “not a bad thing” (President of Russia 2009a) and “absolutely normal” (Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the EU 2010b).

In contrast, the EU has frequently been characterized as an irrational actor and as unnecessarily politicizing common issues (21x). This narrative emerged in the period of 2006-2007 and was more frequently invoked in 2010, 2012 and 2013. Often, the EU has been accused of not accepting “obvious facts” and as being stuck in a Cold War mindset (Putin 2007c). Interestingly, suggesting various initiatives for enhanced cooperation, Putin (2010) apparently wondered whether the EU was ready for the ‘sober, factual type of work he had in mind’. European fears of dependency on Russian gas have been portrayed as irrational and as an unnecessary politicization (President of Russia 2006a; 2008a; 2009a; Putin 2007c; 2010; 2014b). In sum, the Russian discourse thus clearly juxtaposed an irrational EU with a pragmatic Russia - who would challenge the authority of a pragmatic actor, and who would not doubt the competencies of an irrational one?

⁸ Translated from German by the author.

A Norms-Based Foreign Policy vs. Disregard for International Norms

Thirdly, the discourse often depicted Russia as conducting an ethical, norms-based foreign policy while referring to the EU as disregarding international norms and exposing immoral behavior. The image of Russia as pursuing an ethical foreign policy based on norms was invoked relatively constantly (66x in total). According to Lavrov (2013), Russia's foreign policy "is based on strict observance of principles and norms of international law" and opposed to "forceful operations". It was also claimed recurrently that Russia would never "impose development models or...force the *natural pace* of the historical process" (e.a., Putin 2007a) and that it wants to "strengthen universal norms in the area of human rights without double standards" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008). Russia has also been characterized as a fair player, giving "equal consideration to the interests of all partners" and thus pursuing a democratic foreign policy (Putin 2007a). Allegedly, Russia wants to achieve its foreign policy goals mainly by strengthening multilateral decision-making in the UN system, that is, through a "democratization of international life" (Putin 2007a). Arguably, employing the positively connoted concept of 'democratization' is intended to yield legitimacy to the Russian approach. Regarding assistance to Ukraine, Lavrov (2014) claimed that Russia had "from the very beginning" been "for dialogue, transparency and consideration of each other's interests".

Again, the EU has been characterized inversely, namely as disregarding international norms, behaving unethically, or adhering to double standards (32x). Clearly, these accusations peaked in 2007 and between 2012-2014. While the Russian leaders usually did not explicitly refer to the EU, the political context made clear that the EU was addressed or among the addressees. Only twice were these accusations made at summits, which suggests that the Russian leadership until 2014 adhered to a diplomatic tone when speaking face-to-face with their EU colleagues.

First, the EU has been depicted as *disregarding international norms*. Already the 2000 Foreign Policy Concept complained about attempts in the "Euro-Atlantic region...to belittle the role of a sovereign state as the fundamental element of international relations", generating "a threat of arbitrary interference in internal affairs" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2000). The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept then referred to "attempts to portray violations of international law as its 'creative' application", which are "detrimental to international peace, law and order" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008). Rather outspokenly, Putin moreover exclaimed that "countries that forbid the death penalty...are airily

participating in military operations that are difficult to consider legitimate” and killing “hundreds and thousands of civilians” (2007b)⁹.

Second, Russia often complained about the EU’s alleged *adherence to double standards*, particularly in its foreign policies, as will be elaborated on below. Lastly, the EU has been said to *actively pursue unethical or immoral policies*. For example, Putin (2007b), speaking about development policy, stated that “one hand distributes charitable help and the other hand not only preserves economic backwardness but also reaps the profits thereof” (2007b). In 2013(b), he even claimed that “Europe is used to the well-known principle of eating from one’s neighbors’ plate before eating from one’s own”. In sum, while Russia has been portrayed as a powerful international actor that contributes to unity and the development of legal norms (Medvedev 2008a; 2009a; 2010a; 2011a; 2012), particularly during the last years, the EU has been characterized as disregarding international norms.

Promoting Stability and Peace vs. Instigating Chaos

More specifically, Russia, a promoter of peace and stability, was also opposed to the EU as an instigator of chaos and as illegitimately interfering in the affairs of other states. The image of Russia as a promoter of peace has been invoked throughout the whole period under scrutiny, 78x in total; particularly frequently in the context of the Russo-Georgian War and again since 2012.

According to Putin, Russia’s role as a peacemaker is grounded in history: when it took part in peace negotiations, e.g. in Yalta 1945, the peace was lasting, generous and just; when it was excluded, fairness was absent, e.g. at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, which led World War II (2013b). Thus, Russia would do everything in its power to make the world a fairer and safer place (Medvedev 2008a; Putin 2012a). Thus, Russia was often portrayed as a *guarantor of peace and stability*. Frequently, the Russian leadership referred to the principle of non-interference. Interestingly, the Russian leadership’s characterizations often appeal to common sense. For instance, in 2013(b), Putin asked, “What’s the point in rushing in and bombing away when you don’t know the outcome?” By posing a rhetorical question, he arguably implied that the only possible answer is that *there is no point* – a rather simplistic understanding

⁹ Back then, Russia frequently criticized the EU, respectively its member states, for their intervention in the Kosovo conflict, their promotion of the concept of responsibility to protect, their participation in the Iraq ‘coalition of the willing’ and their promotion of the Responsibility to Protect.

of military interventions that precludes any international *Responsibility to Protect*.

Allegedly, Russia's goal has been to promote a "good-neighbor belt" along its borders by contributing to conflict resolution and development (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2000), emphasizing that Russia would never intervene in the internal affairs of its neighbors (President of Russia 2004a; 2014). By nevertheless intervening in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict in 2008, Russia allegedly prevented a "humanitarian catastrophe" and "save[d] the people of the people of the republic [of South Ossetia]" (Medvedev 2008a). Again, through its 2014 annexation of Crimea, Russia allegedly defended the "rights and lives" of humans and promoted democracy for the inhabitants of the region (e.a., Putin 2014a). Moreover, Putin (2014c) claimed that Russia had done everything it could for the conflict in Eastern Ukraine to "end as quickly as possible, so that the bloodshed in Ukraine comes to an end".

Yet again, the Russian leaders' wider discourse painted a reverse picture of the EU, which was characterized as instigating chaos and illegitimately interfering in other states (61x) (Putin 2007d). Interestingly, the image appeared mainly between 2006 and 2008 and from 2012 to date and was thus absent during Medvedev's presidency. According to Putin (2007b), Russia itself serves as an example for why foreign interference is unnecessary:

Did not our country have a peaceful transition to democracy? Indeed, we witnessed a peaceful transformation of the Soviet regime – a peaceful transformation! And what a regime! With what a number of weapons, including nuclear weapons! Why should we start bombing and shooting now at every available opportunity?

Again, Putin relied on common sense, rhetorical questions and amplification in order to support his point. In 2012(b), he stated that "some forces" use "political manipulation, for example, in shaking up objectionable ruling regimes" and that "the West has shown too much willingness to 'punish' certain countries". By reminding his audience that "we are not in the 19th century or even the 20th century now", Putin also implied that the Russian approach is more progressive than the West's. Probably fearing Russian exclusion from decision-making, the 2013 Foreign Policy Concept even warned that bypassing the UN Security Council "lead[s] to the expansion of the conflict area, provoke[s] tensions and arms race, aggravate[s] interstate controversies and incite[s] ethnic and religious strife" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the

Russian Federation 2013). In 2012(b), Putin even argued that the West's alleged eagerness for humanitarian interventions leads to the spread of the "a-bomb".

From the beginning, the Russian leaders had been critical of the EU's involvement in the common neighborhood. Regarding the Orange Revolution, in which the EU had supported the Ukrainian opposition, Putin recalled that no one has a "moral right to incite mass disturbances in a major European state" (President of Russia 2004b). Later, he suggested that the Color Revolutions had been controlled by the West, which had "cynically" taken advantage of the feelings of locals in order to impose its own standards on them, resulting in chaos and conflict (Putin 2014a). By supporting the Maidan protests in 2013/14, the EU had then "crossed the line, playing the bear and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally" (Putin 2014a). The image of the bear is noteworthy; it depicted the EU as feral and aggressive, while at the same time only "playing" and thus not posing a real threat. According to Putin (2014a), while Russia allegedly did not want to harm its neighbor in any way, the West "sacrificed Ukraine's unity for their political ambitions" and thus caused the "civil standoff".

Again complaining about double standards, Putin (2012b) argued that the West "privatized" the monitoring of human rights, which means that interventions may not represent "noble mission[s] but rather outright demagoguery" (Lavrov 2014). Since regime changes would often lead to business opportunities, "one could reasonably conclude" that the EU's interferences in the domestic affairs of other states "have been encouraged to a certain extent by someone's interest in a re-division of the commercial market rather than a concern for human rights" (Putin 2012b). While Russia was thus characterized as a peacemaker, the EU was often referred to as instigating chaos and arbitrarily intervening in the affairs of other states, exhibiting an "itch for military intervention" (Putin 2012b). Given the constantly negative evaluation of Russia-EU security cooperation and the worsening of image of the EU among Russian leaders in the context of the Arab spring, it is little surprising that, according to Popescu (2014, p.2), "although cooperation on security issues had always been low on the EU-Russia agenda, it is now even less substantial than before".

Russia as a Victim of Other International Actors

As the previous sections already indicated, the narrative of Russia as a victim of other international actors was invoked during the whole period under scrutiny and appeared in most of the analyzed documents. Already in 2004(a), Putin noted that "it is far from everyone in the world that wants to have to deal with an independent, strong and self-reliant Russia". By 2014(a), Putin had clearly

become more explicit, claiming that that “*they* are constantly trying to sweep us into a corner because we have an independent position...and because we call things like they are and do not engage in hypocrisy” (e.a.) - thus implying that the West has criticized Russia for *actually positive* features, such as strength, independence, and honesty. The Russian leaders have also often complained about an allegedly persisting bloc mentality on the part of the EU and ambitions to create “new dividing lines” in Europe, thereby excluding Russia from the “European family” (Putin 2006a; 2006b; 2007b; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008; President of Russia 2009a; 2014).

Frequently, the Russian leaders criticized an alleged unwillingness on the part of the United States and ‘the West’ more generally to listen to their concerns (e.g. Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the EU 2011a; 2011b; Putin 2006a; 2008a; 2010; 2012b; 2013b; 2014a). Additionally, the Russian leaders have warned about the danger of blaming only Russia for international conflicts (Medvedev 2008c). Russia was also portrayed as a victim of military threats, especially from the US and NATO, but meanwhile also from EU member states, notably in the context of plans to develop a Missile Defense System (MDS) in Eastern Europe (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2000; Putin 2006a; Medvedev 2008c; 2012; Putin 2013a; Lavrov 2014). Interestingly, Medvedev had seemingly discarded the image of the dividing lines at first, stating that Russia-EU relations “have been very good and will remain so”, and that he “would not draw any dividing lines” (President of Russia 2008a). Nevertheless, the narrative of Russia as a victim of other international actors soon returned even more forcefully¹⁰. According to Putin (2013b), with NATO’s Eastern expansion, Russia “got cheated, to put it quite simply. That’s the whole story” (2007b) ¹¹. A NATO accession of Ukraine, particularly when it had still been in control of Crimea, would have been perceived as particularly humiliating, because “NATO’s navy would be right there in this city of Russia’s military glory, and this would create not an illusory but a perfectly real threat to the whole of southern Russia” (2014a).

¹⁰ For more detailed accounts of the Russian victimization discourse and how it can be related to theory, see Feklyunina, 2008, Wertsch, 2001, Kratochvíl, 2008, Welch Larson and Shevchenko, 2010.

¹¹ According to Kratochvíl et al. (2006) Russia simply failed to convince both the Western community and the CEE states that the latters’ accession broke commonly agreed principles (505).

Russia was also victimized in the field of economic and business cooperation - while Russia allegedly gladly welcomed European investors, “granting them access to the ‘juiciest morsels’”, while Russian investors were “not welcome abroad and... often pointedly brushed aside” (Putin 2012b). Apparently, Putin sensed a “greatly exaggerated” fear in Europe of Russia “buying up all of Europe’s assets” with its “petrodollars”, which lead to “unjustified restrictions and other discriminatory measures” (President of Russia 2007b). Meanwhile, the sanctions imposed by the EU after Russia’s annexation of Crimea were depicted as “entirely unfounded and unlawful”, “primitive”, “ineffective and harmful” (2014c). A significant point of disagreement was Ukraine’s planned economic integration with the EU, as the EU-Ukraine Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement was portrayed as a potential back door into the Russian market (Putin 2013b; President of Russia 2014). Earlier, Russia and the EU had already started fighting over the liberalization of energy trade - Putin claimed that former Commission President Barroso himself “feels wrong, guilty” about the EU’s third energy package and that ownership unbundling had been selectively applied to Russia (President of Russia 2012b).

Russia – A European State?

While the narrative of Russia as a European state cannot be described in detail in this article, a brief discussion of the findings will contribute to our understanding of how the Russian geopolitical positioning has changed. In 2005(a), Putin stated that “above all else Russia *was, is and will, of course, be a major European power*” [e.a.]. It is a “*natural member of the European family*” (2006b), and an “inalienable and *organic part of Greater Europe and European civilization*” (e.a., Putin 2012b). Allegedly, Russia had passed “hand in hand” with the other European states through the Enlightenment, the recognition of human rights, and democratization - “sometimes behind *and sometimes ahead* of European standards” (e.a.; Putin 2005a). Frequently, the Russian political leaders employed the metaphor of the “common European home” for which Russia and the EU “share a responsibility” (President of Russia 2008a). Chilton and Ilyin (1993, p.8) have shown that the metaphor has been used in Russia since 1980 after having been introduced to the public by Gorbachev in 1985. Back then, it “clashed with, and challenged the cold war discourse structures that still shaped the European continent” and thus “seems to have played a leading role in public discussion of the future shape of Europe”.

Notably, Russia was not only characterized as European, but also as *having contributed to Europe* - to “the development of European spirituality, culture and simply to civilisation itself” (President of Russia 2007b) – quoting Dostoyevsky, Putin argued that “being a *true Russian* will ultimately mean

bringing *reconciliation to Europe's contradictions*" (e.a., 2007c). Strikingly, however, the Russian leadership has recently more and more distanced itself from Europe. For instance, in 2013(b) Putin explained how "the Euro-Atlantic countries are denying moral principles and traditional identities...[,] implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan". Malinova (2013, p.84f.), examining Russian identity construction until 2011, argues that the then model of Russian identity, while being a combination of different elements, still sought to "represent Russia as actually (not just potentially) similar" to Europe. The analysis at hand, in contrast, shows that the leadership's narrative of Russia as a European state has meanwhile been abandoned.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article closely examined the Russian political leadership's discourse on EU-Russia relations between 2004 and 2014 and exposed a highly antagonistic characterization of Russia and the EU as external actors. Moreover, it has been shown that the Russian leadership constantly resorted to a strong narrative of Russia as a victim of other international actors. The Russian leaders' discourse on concrete aspects of EU-Russia cooperation was rather negative *during the whole period under scrutiny*, particularly regarding foreign and security policy and the common neighborhood. The narrative of Russia as a European state, in contrast, was abandoned during Putin's third presidency.

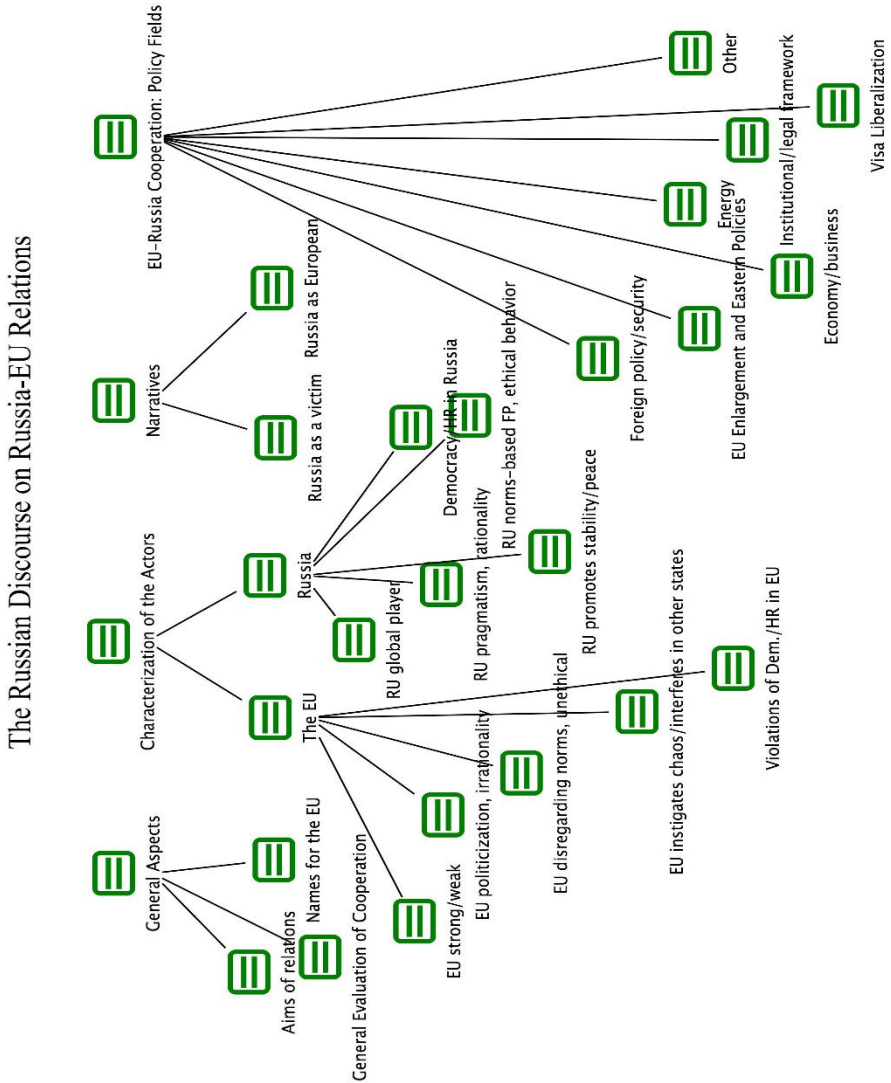
This is the first in-depth study of a wide range of primary sources of the Russian leaders' discourse, and the finding that Russian leaders have voiced rather negative views for a long time is striking. Viewed in this light, it is actually not at all surprising that Russia-EU relations did not make any significant progress in recent years and that they deteriorated so drastically in 2014. It can be doubted that the Russian leadership even sought to make progress, at least not within the existing framework for cooperation, which is a product of the 1990s and a time when Russia wielded significantly less power on the international stage than it can today. In addition, the apparent unpreparedness of parts of the European political and scholarly elite for the recent crisis in Russia-EU relations seems remarkable. Possibly, it can be attributed to a lack of attention to the Russian leadership's speeches or to an unwillingness to consider them seriously and prepare for their implications. This article disproves the argument that Putin's legacy will demonstrate that "words mean nothing" (Neshitov 2014): promises may have meant nothing, but threats have been meaningful. Thus, the conventional wisdom that "presidential actions do not comport with their rhetorical statements" is a dangerous simplification (Cummins 2008, p.377). With the words of Anne Applebaum (2014), "just because their language

sounds strange to us doesn't mean that they, and those who follow them, don't find it compelling, or that they won't pursue their logic to its ultimate conclusion".

Importantly, the analysis that was conducted allows us to deduce several factors that, according to the Russian leadership, drove the deterioration of Russia-EU relations. Firstly, it has been shown that the leaders were concerned with an apparent imbalance between Russia's and the EU's global power and the latter's incapacity to 'speak with one voice' in its external relations. Clearly, this factor is related to the Russian dissatisfaction with the framework for cooperation that was developed during a time when Russia was a significantly less powerful actor than the EU and is thus perceived as disadvantageous. Secondly, according to the Russian political leaders the relations were negatively affected by the EU's constant desire to focus on political aspects, with the Russians preferring a more technical approach. Related to that, they also expressed their frustration with the EU's interference in Russia's internal affairs and its frequent criticism of Russia, perceived as unjust and wrongful. Lastly, it seems that the Russian leaders increasingly mentioned the existence of differing value systems and identities as factors that negatively impacted on Russia-EU cooperation.

Arguably, whether the Russian leaders truly believed that these factors were crucial or whether they were merely excuses for an *unwillingness* to cooperate is irrelevant for practical Russia-EU cooperation: the latter proceeds according to what is being 'said and done', and not according to what is pondered secretly. Moreover, it is clear that EU leaders certainly provide rather different explanations for the deterioration of Russia-EU relations. Finally, based on the assumptions of discourse analysis an additional factor for the deterioration of the relations can be perceived. As stated above, discourses are not simply products of actions, but can be considered actions themselves or at least shape which actions are 'within the possible'. Thus, the antagonistic Russian discourse might in itself have contributed to a declining potential for cooperation. This again reveals the needs to take rhetorical action more seriously, and to more intensively study discourses as both products and producers of international relations. While this study strives for objectivity and a systematic, replicable analysis, it should lastly be emphasized again that the coding of implicit meaning is an interpretative process – presumably, a different researcher would have come up with a different coding scheme, and thus with potentially different findings. In that sense, this article provides excellent opportunities for further research about the Russian as well as on the European discourse on Russia-EU relations.

APPENDIX 1: The (simplified) original coding scheme developed inductively during the analysis of 48 speeches, articles and statements



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**THE LEGITIMIZATION OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE
THROUGH CONSTRUCTED EXTERNAL THREATS:
RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA DURING THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS**

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Abstract

This article focuses on normative regime legitimization through the construction of external threats and reference to national identity. According to aspirational constructivism, domestically constructed national identity influences the country's relationship with its Others and hence its foreign policy. Political elites often transform these alien Others into external "evil", or enemies, through political propaganda in order to get support for the country's external policies and to strengthen the domestic legitimacy of the regime. During the Ukrainian crisis that started in November 2013, Russian political elites resorted to the use of aggressive propaganda and enemy-or-friend-thinking in order to promote their statist and civilizationist aspirations, while co-opting national sentiments amongst the Russian population. This helps Putin to garner additional domestic support for his authoritarian rule and jeopardizes the Westernist elements of Russia's national identity.

Keywords: Ukrainian crisis, Russia, evilization, propaganda, identity

Introduction

During the Ukrainian crisis that started in November 2013, politicians, journalists and the general public in the West perceived Russia as an aggressor and often personally demonized President Putin. At the same time, the popularity of Putin's regime at home increased significantly after the annexation of Crimea in March 2014. This indicates a need to understand the way Russian political elites and the media have constructed the perception of the Ukrainian crisis on the domestic level.

This article argues that Russian political elites intend to normatively legitimize Russia's actions during the crisis in Ukraine through the construction of a political propaganda based on enemy-or-friend-thinking. They do so in order to promote their statist and civilizationist aspirations while attempting to decrease the value of the Westernist elements of Russia's national identity. Identity¹ is conceptualized here as a non-instrumental mode of social and political action, which is governed by self-understanding rather than by self-interest (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, p.6). In its simplest terms, identity refers to how the state's position in the world is understood. Political propaganda is defined here as the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist (Jowett and O'Donnell 2014, p.7).

In order to construct external threats for propagandist purposes the Russian media and political elites have utilized certain ideas, images, and concepts. Some of these concepts, like fascism, were real threats to Russia in the past, while others, like liberal thought, are presented as having allegedly been alien to the Russians and Russian culture since time began. Identifying certain international actors with these concepts and images, and thus constructing threats coming from the West, has helped political elites to garner additional domestic support for authoritarian rule and to propagandize their political aspirations. The choice of the political elites to promote statist and civilizationist elements of Russia's national identity is explained in the article through the lens of aspirational constructivism.

The article contributes to the bulk of literature that treats legitimization as one of the building blocks of autocratic stability. In particular, it focuses on normative legitimization through the construction of political propaganda promoting the common enemy. It also makes an important contribution to research on national identity while using the framework of aspirational constructivism to show how domestic processes influence the country's foreign policy.

The following section presents the theoretical framework and methodology used. It then goes on to give an account of appointing the Other as being evil in international relations theory, and in particular for propagandist purposes. Further, it examines the case of Russia's propaganda in the Ukrainian crisis.

¹ The definition of identity is the subject of ongoing scholarly debate. For instance, Brubaker and Cooper not only criticise the use of this "deeply burdened, highly ambiguous" term, but also suggest some alternative variants to replace it (2000, p.8).

Thus, it looks at three ideologies that have contributed to the formation of Russian national identity and the construction of Russia's Others, especially during the third term of Putin's presidency. Then, it deals with the question of how and why Russia's Others are maligned in Russian propaganda in relation to the Ukrainian crisis. Finally, it concludes that the evilization of Russia's Others can further weaken Russian identity in the long run.

Theoretical background and methodology

The choice of the research topic reflects the recent trend in the transformation studies to analyze the process of regime dynamics from the perspective of autocratic stability. Thus, since 2000, instead of the transition towards democracy, transformation studies have started to explore the "transition from democracy" (Erdmann 2011, p.6). However, whereas the old autocratic research paid considerable attention to the concept of legitimization, especially through ideology and economic efficiency (Arendt 1951; O'Donnell 1979), there has been little discussion about the legitimization of the ruling elites in the new autocracies so far (Kailitz 2009, p.472). As Gerschewski (2013, p.18) noted "recent research efforts have gradually lost sight on the legitimization dimension". Therefore, the article contributes to the bulk of literature that treats legitimization as a tool to ensure autocratic stability (Burnell 2006; Gilley 2009; Holbig 2011; Schlumberger 2010; Sedgwick 2010; Gerschewski 2013). Legitimization is understood here as a process of gaining both diffuse and specific support among the general population. Specific or output legitimization includes socio-economic performance, which addresses the demands of society. Diffuse, or input, legitimization refers to the substance of the regime and rests upon national idea, ideology, religion, and protection against external threats (Gerschewski et al. 2012, pp.9-10). This article focuses on diffuse legitimization through the construction of political propaganda promoting the common enemy.

The construction of external threat lies at the core of the legitimization strategy used by Russian politicians and the mass media in the Ukrainian conflict. Therefore, the analysis of the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, starting from November 2013, provides a useful up-to-date insight on how political propaganda through evilization works and what functions it fulfills. The research was carried out until August 2014, when Russia introduced a one-year ban on Western food imports. Therefore, certain subsequent significant events, like rounds of Minsk negotiations or the ongoing economic crisis in Russia, are not considered in the paper. In order to understand why Russian political elites opted to propagate a certain vision of national identity in the researched period, the article turns to the explanatory

power of aspirational constructivism. Hence, it also includes a brief historical perspective on the formation of Russian identity.

Aspirational constructivism, introduced by Clunan (2009, pp.22-52), draws on social identity theory (SIT) and explores the formation of multiple never-fixed identities within the state. These identities are changed by political elites and other opinion-makers on the basis of their human need for positive self-esteem. The core of the collective self-esteem lies in memories of the historical past and the aspirations they create for the future. In the process of identity formation political elites promote their preferred self-image, which is constructed according to their ideas about the political purpose and international status of the country. Domestically formed identities and aspirations then define the state's behavior in the international arena and its relations with the "casted" Others.

In this article, aspirational constructivism is used as the theoretical framework for several reasons. First, this approach allows exploring the construction of national identity by considering the relationship between domestic political processes and official foreign policy. Accordingly, in order to explain the construction of Russia's identity, both primary sources, like Russia's official state documents and speeches of major Russian politicians, as well as secondary sources, such as key scientific works on Russian identity, are analysed in the paper.

Second, aspirational constructivism helps to overcome the problem of hierarchies in the process of identity construction. Assuming the existence of multiple identities, it suggests that political elites and major opinion-makers wield authority to promote their vision of the national Self and engage in contestation to project this power. At the same time, in order to complement the focus made on elites and uncover another layer of the identification process, the article analyses Russian public attitudes on the basis of opinion poll data.

Third, aspirational constructivism sheds light on how elites promote their vision of national identity within political discourse and depict other countries as "similar or dissimilar to the national Self", creating orientations for the Self to behave with the Others (Clunan 2009, p.204). When promoting their version of the national Self, political elites often resort to propaganda tools. Political propaganda aims at the promotion of the preferred self-image of the ruling elites and changing perceptions, norms, and ideas that contradict the promoted version of the national identity. Therefore, the constructivist

approach is an appropriate tool for examining the vision of the Ukrainian crisis and Russia's national identity as presented by Russian politicians and the mass media. For that purpose, the article explores the Russian official discourse on the crisis in Ukraine manifested in Russian official documents, state media and on the pro-government demonstrations during the period under consideration.

Evil is the Other

The rhetorical use of concepts pointing at the difference between the Self and the Other is not new in international relations (see International Relations 2004, International Politics 2014). Thus, the politics of resentment rests on "accusing outside forces of causing every problem that arises on the domestic front" (Smith 2012, p.53). Whole countries, political and religious groups, and political leaders have often been labelled as negatively deviant, with this label consequently shaping their identity and relationships with other international actors. Moreover, certain ideologies, structures, and concepts can also be "cast" as negative Others. The scale of this article does not allow a discussion of the concepts of evil or enemy from philosophical and historical perspectives. Therefore only the use of these concepts in political discourse and their relevance in international relations theory will be discussed here.

Derrida (1993, p.355) argues that "it is the political as such [...] that would no longer exist without the figure and without the determined possibility of the enemy". Thus, he addresses the figure of the enemy as something inalienable from the political – a notion he derived from the work of Carl Schmitt (1976). The idea of an enemy as an actor with opposite interests and values does indeed lie at the core of classic political concepts, such as war or competition. However the degree of enmity, the scale of hostile action, and the severity of consequences vary substantially in each particular case. Thus, an "evilized" enemy is so fundamentally opposed to another conflict party that no compromise or reconciliation is possible: "the evil is irredeemable" (Müller 2014, p.447). In order to provide a definition of evil, Casebeer (2004, p.445) connects evil with moral theory and brings into play three moral axes of evaluation: that of the agent, the action, and the outcome. Accordingly, for him:

evil starts with mal-ordered psychology, increases in magnitude as that psychology affects actions that ignore duty, and achieves its peak when the actions taken result in catastrophic consequences.

Thus, the appointing of evil presupposes the presence of bad intentions, horrible actions, and catastrophic consequences. The scale of offence normally does not allow evil actors to become reintegrated into the normative structure of international society. At the same time, another category of deviant actors – rogue states – can suffer punishment and then come back to the international arena. These states possess the following characteristics: they are usually underdeveloped, strive to obtain WMDs, and support international terrorism (Geis and Wunderlich 2014). The terms “evil” and “rogue state” are both widespread in contemporary political discourse. Political scientists also use the term “asymmetrical counter-concepts”, coined by Koselleck, to conceptualize certain ideas, images, and concepts that represent deviant Others (for the historical semantics of the asymmetrical counter-concepts see Koselleck 1979). Counter-concepts constitute conceptual pairs that “serve to stabilize a positive, universal self-conception while denying the other equal recognition by defining him or her through negation” (Geis and Wunderlich 2014, p.468). In contemporary international relations, counter-concepts are reflected in such dichotomies as “West/East”, “democracy/autocracy” or “international community/axis of evil”. Whereas asymmetrical counter-concepts are used primarily to conceptualize the inferiority of the negative actor to the “good” one, negative othering performs other functions as well.

According to Casebeer (2004, pp.447-448), the use of the term “evil” in international relations performs at least four functions. First, it is used to motivate people to take actions against the negative Other. Second, evil rhetoric can be adopted by an actor as a response to being labelled evil or an enemy itself. Third, actors can use demonization to draw divisions between the negative Others and themselves, thereby justifying the denial of mutual recognition and the confirmation of the superiority of the Self, and mobilizing the population against the Other. Fourth, the term “evil” can simply help to describe a state of affairs from a normative perspective. All these functions can be applied to the different categories of deviant actors described above. While appointing deviant Others contributes to the legitimization of the external policy of intervention and the mobilization of the population to protect the Self, constructing the Other, being it an evil or a counter-concept, has always been a part of political propaganda.

The creators of political propaganda predominantly appeal to a domestic audience. They use the process of othering to make the population think and act in a certain way and to legitimize specific state policies. In this process, the Other is constructed as both a threat and a target. For that purpose, evil is

conceptualized as non-Self; it is placed outside the Self and is made “extrinsic and separable from the self” (Abdel-Nour 2004, p.430). This externalization of the Other makes it possible and – as a consequence of successful propaganda – justifiable to take counteraction, if not extraordinary measures, against the deviant Other. However, total externalization of the Other is merely an illusion, because the very existence of the Self is impossible without the Other – its “mirror”, its alternative identity. Actions taken against the Other can lead to tangible consequences for the Self and the international community as a whole. Considering dramatic events in international politics, such as 9/11 or genocide in Rwanda, some political scientists argue against the externalization of deviant actors. For instance, Lu (2004, p.505) stresses the interconnectedness and interrelatedness between evil agents and the social structures in which they operate. The acknowledgement of the mutual constitution of agent and structure would not allow the construction of the negative Other as if he had appeared “out of nothing” and the misuse of this image for propagandistic purposes. On the contrary, the non-dichotomized agent-structure relationship implies the moral responsibility of the Self for the acts of the Other, as both of them contribute to the social structure, which in turn shapes their identities. Abdel-Nour (2004, p.433) points to the interconnection between the Self and the negative Other in conceptualizing evil as connected-to-self. According to this conception, even though the Self may distance itself from the negative Other and oppose it, the interconnection between the two makes room for historical self-reflection and a deeper understanding of the most negative sides of the Self.

In summary, though opposite of the Self, the deviant Other represents an integral part of identity. In international relations it can be conceptualized as an evil, a rogue state, or an asymmetrical counter-concept. The demonization of an alien Other is often used to mobilize the population against the Other as non-Self through political propaganda and can lead to dramatic consequences for the Self and the international community. The understanding of the Other as connected-to-self contributes to a more promising relationship between the identity composites. The next section sheds light on Russia’s main Others.

Others in Russian foreign policy

Tsygankov and Tsygankov (2010, p.664) describe three of Russia’s ideological traditions – Westernist, statist, and civilizationist. They define ideology as a “systematic presentation of Self, Other, and their relationships” and therefore provide an enlightening explanation of the role played by Others in the construction of Russian identities since the 19th century. Thus, each ideology

has emerged as a result of the historical interaction of Russia with the outside world and the Russian elite's worldview.

The Westernizers have seen Russia's Self as a part of the West: First, as one of the European monarchies, then as a part of the European socio-democratic world of ideas, and after the collapse of the USSR, as a country that shares Western values, such as democracy, human rights, and free markets. Westernizers, like Boris Yeltsin or Andrei Kozyrev, perceived the non-Western world as Russia's significant Other and aimed at an integration with Western liberal institutions as an opposite to moving towards the Eurasian vector.

Statists praise a strong state that is able to preserve social and political order. At different times they have valued monarchy, the supremacy of the Communist party, or strong presidential power. Statists are afraid of external threats and have demonized both Eastern and Western Others as threatening Russia's independence. On the way to Great Power status, statists, for instance, Yevgenii Primakov or Vladimir Putin, favored both accommodation with the West and balancing strategies.

Finally, for civilizationists the Self-Other dualism represents cultural oppositions. They view Russia as a "civilization in its own right" opposed to different threatening both Western and non-Western Others (Tsygankov and Tsygankov 2010, p.669). Since the rule of Ivan the Terrible civilizationists have stressed Orthodox values, Pan-Slavic ideology, socialism, or Eurasianism as lying at the core of Russia's own special path. Some civilizationists, like Mikhail Gorbachev's followers, support cross-cultural dialogue, in which Russia's distinctiveness would be respected and promoted. However, there is also a visible, although radical, part of the civilizationists, which can be defined as hard-line nationalist opposition.

Hard-line nationalists consistently advocate the "restoration of a West-independent empire through international alliances against Western nations" (Tsygankov 2009, p.189). This group includes, among others, national communists, like Gennadii Zyuganov, who merge old communist and nationalist ideas, in particular to restore military and economic potential within the Soviet boundaries. The Eurasianists, or civilizational nationalists², also represent the hard-line opposition. They adhere to conservative values and aim at a geopolitical expansion to resist the influence of America. One of the most famous neo-Eurasianists is Aleksandr Dugin, recently labeled as

² On the term "civilizational nationalism" see March 2011.

“Putin’s brain” (Barbashin and Thoburn 2014) in the Western press. Being an adviser to the State Duma speaker, a leader of the International Eurasianist Movement and a university professor in the past, he has become a prominent public and political figure in Russia, even though he supports a radical conservative and profascist ideology (Umland 2009, p.78).

Until recently, hard-line nationalists were rather marginalized in domestic politics (Tsygankov 2009). At the same time, they became able to influence political discourse through parliamentary institutions to a large extent (March 2012, p.69). For instance, the nationalist State Duma members supported the autonomy claims of the eastern regions of Ukraine after the Orange revolution. Later on, they recommended supporting “all political movements aimed at decentralization and federalization of Ukraine” (Tsygankov 2009, p.198).

From the perspective of aspirational constructivism a single fixed national identity does not exist. Instead, multiple identities pave the way to the construction of national identity and hence the foreign policy of the country. These identities revive historical memories and represent the perceptions of the ruling elites, which have the power to promote their version of identity at home and abroad. In Russia each of the three ideologies described above has influenced the construction of national identity with varying intensities at different periods of time. The next chapter will examine the construction of the Russian identity during Putin’s third term.

The Russian identity and construction of Others during Putin’s third term

According to aspirational constructivists, national identity and interests are constructed in accordance with what the political elites identify as the country’s political purpose and aspirations towards a certain international status (Clunan 2009, p.31). Russia’s identity appeared to be rather inconsistent and fluctuating in the Putin era. Russian politics in the 2000s, especially after 2006, did not prove the thesis about the imperial ambitions of Russia. Many experts see Russia’s identity as a pragmatic power (Tsygankov 2006; Jarosiewicz et al. 2010; Shapovalova and Zarembo 2010; Trenin 2011) rather than an autocracy promoter (see Ambrosio 2009; Tolstrup 2009; Jackson 2010; Silitski 2010). Overall, during the first term of Putin’s presidency, mainly the statist, who are initially nationalistic because of their Soviet past, have constructed both domestic and foreign policy discourses. Gradually, fuelled by the hard-liners, anti-Western nationalism “moved from the margins to the mainstream of Russian discourse” (March 2012, p.63).

Putin is widely known for co-opting liberal, communist, and nationalist ideas to legitimize his regime. Some experts even argue that the Kremlin's nationalism is simply "an attempt to co-opt ideas that have a popular resonance in the service of the regime goals" (March 2012, p.68; on Kremlin's instrumental use of conservatism see Rodkiewicz and Rogoza 2015). Thus, against the background of the uncontrolled flow of migration, nationalist sentiments in society, and growing political activity of the hard-line nationalist opposition and the overall nationalization of the elites, Putin introduced the idea of state-civilization, according to which Russia represents a "unique socio-cultural civilizational entity formed of the multi-people Russian nation" (Tsygankov 2013, p.6). Accordingly, since Putin has entered his third presidential term, elements of the civilizationist ideology also became visible in Russia's political discourse. The Kremlin has apparently started to strive for more than just recognition of its great power ambitions; it "seeks to offer the world its vision of moral values" (Shevtsova 2014a, p.76).

In September 2013, in his address to the Valdai club (an international discussion club which promotes dialogue between Russian and international intellectuals on Russia and its place in the world), Putin (2013a) declared that Russian policy would be based on Christian and conservative values, which should be protected from the liberal West:

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. [...] Without the values embedded in Christianity and other world religions, without the standards of morality that have taken shape over millennia, people will inevitably lose their human dignity. We consider it natural and right to defend these values.

On the whole, Putin's third term in office confirms an assumption according to which "over the years the Kremlin has gradually developed an ideological meta-narrative [...] this meta-narrative crystallizes values identified as conservative" (Laruelle 2013, p.2). In his address to the Federal Assembly in December 2013, Putin (2013b) clearly articulated the Russian conservative position:

We know that there are more and more people in the world who support our position on defending traditional values [...]: the values of traditional families, real human life, including religious life, not just material existence but also spirituality, the values of humanism and global diversity. Of course, this is a conservative position. But speaking in the words of Nikolai Berdyaev, 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.

The promotion of this neo-conservative ideology has been carried further by some eccentric public figures, such as the political philosopher Igor Panarin and the political commentator Aleksandr Dugin, “academic teachers [...] of the young generations of geopoliticians” (Darczewska 2014, p.19), as well as Aleksandr Prokhanov, the editor-in-chief of the extreme right weekly *Zavtra* and the chairman of the Izborsk club of almost 30 nationalist or conservative ideologists and politicians. Some of the Club’s members managed to get high media visibility through personal contacts at Channel One, in particular with the conservative right-wing media commentator Mikhail Leontyev (Laruelle 2015, p.126).

At a meeting of the Valdai club in October 2014, Putin only briefly mentioned traditional values and focused more on security and world order issues. He resorted to rhetoric reminiscent of the realist school of international relations theory and characteristic of statist ideology (Tsygankov 2010, p.677). He stressed the unipolarity of the global order with the US being a “big brother” who had “declared itself the winner of the Cold War” and “decided to pressure events and reshape the world to suit their own needs and interests” (Putin 2014b). Thus, Putin referred to one of Russia’s significant Others as a challenge.

Since the end of the Cold war, the US has been recognized as Russia’s Other, its main threat and role model simultaneously and hence a part of Russian identity (Trenin 2009, pp.15-16). Paraphrasing Rene Descartes, this can be formulated in another way: “I am America’s equal rival, therefore I exist” (Piontkovsky 2006, p.5). The Concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation until now implies that the US is the counterweight of Russia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia 2013). Russian politicians still present issues with the US, for instance, NATO enlargement, US missile defence deployments in Central Europe, or the official US policy of democracy promotion, as direct threats or serious problems (Trenin 2007, p.2). Moreover, strong anti-Western sentiments prevail in Russian society. During Putin’s third presidential term and against the background of the Ukrainian crisis, they increased sharply: in 2014 84% of Russians expressed confidence that today’s Russia has enemies, 43% of Russians evaluated the relations between Russia and the US as tense, and 39% as hostile (Levada Center 2014).

The EU can be conceived as another important Other for Russia, even though it is widely believed to be subordinate to the US. 50% of the respondents in the above-mentioned opinion poll conducted by Levada Center (2014) stated that Russia's relations with the European Union were tense and 16% marked them as hostile. Even though the term of Yeltsin's presidency was characterized by the prevalence of Westernist ideology, the widespread perception among the ruling elites was that the relevant community (the EU, or the West) failed to recognize Russia's pro-Western intentions and its adherence to the norms of European identity. This was also one of the reasons why political circles in Russia were prompted to turn to nationalism and pragmatism in foreign policy (Splidsboel-Hansen 2002, pp.1-9). After the first color revolution, Russian politicians started to perceive the European Union and its enlargement as an increasing threat to Russia. This constructed threat has moved beyond security discourse and entered even the cultural sphere. Thus, in its draft document on the foundations of cultural politics, the Russian Ministry of Culture drew a clear line between Eastern and Western civilization and generated a widely discussed slogan "Russia is not Europe" (Queer Russia 2014).

In his above-mentioned speech at the meeting of the Valdai club in 2014, Putin (2014b) warned against possible global anarchy and urged to institutionalize these newly appeared political poles in the international environment. As a framework to lead a "battle of ideas" with the West to promote the legitimacy of its own way as an alternative to Western liberal democracy, the Russian governing elite has used its well-developed linkage with the former Soviet republics (Averre 2009, p.1696). Thus, already in 2011 Putin had initiated the creation of the Eurasian Union as a geopolitical counterforce to the EU. His Eurasian Union project implies the creation of common economic, political, and military space with Belarus and Kazakhstan and – as opportunity offers – with other post-Soviet countries, as an alternative to the European Union. The identity of the Eurasian Union is to be based on a "presumed special spiritual and civilizational community, referred to as the 'Russian world'" (Menkiszak 2014).

Nonetheless, the CIS countries have responded to Russian appeals to civilizational unity and common historical destiny with caution, as Russia often does not present itself as an equal partner nor does it behave as such, but as a superior state in the CIS region. In the absence of the power of attraction, Russia offers its neighbors "tough love" instead of love (Trenin 2009, p.26). Russia does not appear to be a "powerful magnet able to integrate the region around itself" (Torbakov 2011, p.11). As a result, some Russian neighbors, for

instance Belarus, have become the classical “balancers” between Russia and other significant actors. In Ukraine, society has become heavily polarized over the issue of “the preferred integration vector (to the West or to the East)” (Pogrebinskiy 2015, p.94). The Ukrainian crisis that followed Yanukovitch’s decision to delay the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU in 2013 has served as fertile soil for the further revival of the age-old issues of identity and nationalism in Russia and their instrumentalization by the country’s ruling elite.

In brief, since Putin entered his third presidential term the Russian elite has been promoting identities that reflect elements of both statist and civilizationist ideologies. They ascribe Russia the role of a conservative great power, which should defend its traditional values against the US and its Western allies, as well as promote its own principles of political organization and multipolarity worldwide. The Ukrainian crisis exemplifies how and why political elites promote their versions of Russia’s identity while demonizing Russia’s Others through official propaganda.

The Demonization of the Others

During the third term of Putin’s presidency, the ruling elites have attempted to shape national identity in accordance with statist and civilizationist ideologies, which imply active resistance to the states perceived by the ruling elite as threats to Russia’s independence, or Western pressures. Thus, the current crisis in Ukraine began in November 2013, after President Viktor Yanukovych opted to reject an Association Agreement with the EU in favor of closer ties with Russia and the first protesters came to the Maidan. What seemed to be a domestic crisis of governance soon transformed into a confrontation between Russia and Ukraine, with the EU and the US taking a backseat. Russia first condemned the Euromaidan as another Western-backed revolution. Then, it seized the opportunity of the turmoil in Kiev and gradually took control of the Crimean peninsula. The annexation of Crimea was performed under the pretext of defending the rights of the ethnic Russian majority and subsequently “legitimized” by the results of the highly disputed unconstitutional referendum. Whereas from the politico-historical perspective, this turn can be considered “the most recent chapter in a much longer story” (Uehling 2015, p.71), for the international community the events were rather unexpected.

Thus, the EU and the US started to gradually introduce sanctions, including visa bans and asset freezes. As the crisis unfolded, Russia activated its support of pro-Russian separatists in southern and eastern Ukraine and some areas of

Russian Propaganda during the Ukrainian Crisis

Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts declared their independence as people's republics. In response, the US imposed economic sanctions in the financial and energy sectors. After a Malaysia Airlines passenger jet with 298 people on board was shot down over Ukraine in July 2014 and Russia was unwilling to contribute to the proper investigation of the accident, the EU expanded its sanctions (Rutland 2015, pp.137-138). Russia responded with a one-year ban on imports of certain food from Western countries. The questions about how far mutual sanctions can go and how far Russia is going to proceed with military intervention in Ukraine have given rise to rumors of (a new Cold) war. In their attempt to strengthen national identity, Russian elites see Russia's de facto direct military involvement in Ukraine as justified. In order to legitimize Russia's role in the Ukrainian crisis, Russian politicians and the media have resorted to the use of aggressive propaganda and enemy-or-friend-thinking.

How does the Self see its Other? Or, in other words, what vision of the West do Russian propagandists attempt to construct and how? In order to boost enemy-or-friend-thinking in society they utilize counter-concepts that characterize significant Others of Russia's identity as constructed and promoted by the ruling elites.

The West is in decline – this is the favorite assumption of Russian propaganda. Accordingly, certain values that Western countries actively promote are not comparable with traditionally Russian ones and can lead to “degradation and primitivism, resulting in a profound demographic and moral crisis” (Putin 2013a). These counter-concepts include liberalism, globalization, and democracy. Western liberalism is perceived as a threat to traditional Russian values, because this philosophical thought puts individual liberty against the pressure of social collectivism and incursions of the state. It implies that people possess individual rights and freedoms and the state serves mainly as a wealth maximizer for the citizens. Additionally, unlimited sexual and religious freedom and tolerance have a corrosive effect on traditional family and religious values, and the pursuit of wealth leads to materialism and consumerism. As a consequence, Western society is experiencing moral decay. As Putin (2013a) put it:

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 civilization. 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.

Therefore, Russian civilizationists strive to set up a “post-liberal ideological superstate” as an alternative to Western civilization (Darczewska 2014, p.19).

Globalization is seen as another threat to Russia. Russian intellectuals consider three postulates of globalization theory as highly controversial. These are the crisis of the state, modernization, and Westernization as a natural outcome of globalization and democratic unipolarity as a way for self-organization in the international system (Bogaturov 2005, p.297). Therefore, globalization is understood as an equivalent to a unipolar world with the economic, political, and cultural hegemony of the Western community, where the US plays a leading role and pursues a neocolonial policy through the controlled “color” revolutions and NGOs (or “foreign agents”), among other tools. In accordance with this way of thinking, Russia is doomed to remain on the margins of global politics if it does not actively exercise its potential to restore its political and economic dominance in the post-Soviet area in order to counteract Western influence and contribute to the creation of the new, just, multipolar world. Moreover, the principles of globalization and multiculturalism imply blurring borders and endanger the authentic culture of the Russian world. Thus, a draft report “Foundations of State Cultural Politics” presented to the public by the Russian Ministry of Culture in April 2014 underlines the ultimate rejection of multiculturalism: “Any reference to ‘creative freedom’ and ‘national identity’ cannot justify behavior which is considered unacceptable from the standpoint of traditional Russian values” (cited Queer Russia 2014).

Other universal values promoted by the Western countries are democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Russia denies the universality of these values, or at least of how these values are understood in the West. Furthermore, the Russian Orthodox Church remains “the only large and influential Christian church in the world that is alien to the principles of democracy and human rights” (Filatov 2011, p.17). For Russia, Western countries tend to use “double standards” when it comes to the implementation of these values: they tolerate shortcomings in domestic policies, but severely condemn minor violations of democratic principles and human rights in other countries or even interfere in the internal affairs of these states to impose their own rules and norms. Correspondingly, the West does not accept the fact that the development of democracy is a gradual process that needs time and adjustment to local conditions and cannot be simply “copy-pasted”. At the same time, according to the concept of sovereign or managed democracy, Russia has made a significant contribution

to democratization on the global level as a counterbalance to Western powers, and “all is well with democracy in Russia, and the Kremlin doesn’t establish puppet parties or control television broadcasting”, as Russian politicians claim (Surkov cited in Ambrosio 2009, p.75). The abovementioned counter-concepts “cast” by Russia do not remain abstract; they are used to characterize the two major Others of Russia: the US and the EU.

Russian politicians and media do more than simply stress the difference between the EU and the US on one side, and Russia on the other. They use demonization of the significant Others as a tool of political propaganda in order to motivate and mobilize people to take action or support state policies against the Others. Russian official political rhetoric includes references – often religious in nature – to the categories of good and evil. Thus, in March 2014 the Speaker of the Russian Parliament Sergey Naryshkin commented on the annexation of Crimea by Russia: “It is a watershed event in world history, it is a turning point in the confrontation between good and evil, black and white” (TASS 2014). Russia’s significant Others, in turn, are believed to be engaged in “evilizing” Russia. As Putin (2014b) said in his most recent address to the Valdai club in regard to the position of the US in the world,

Arbitrary interpretations and biased assessments have replaced legal norms. At the same time, total control of the global mass media has made it possible when desired to portray white as black and black as white [...] Today, we are seeing new efforts to fragment the world, draw new dividing lines, put together coalitions not built for something but directed against someone, anyone, create the image of an enemy as was the case during the Cold War years, and obtain the right to this leadership, or diktat if you wish.

The evilization of the Other lies at the core of Russian propaganda in the Ukrainian crisis. As mentioned above, appointing the Other as an evil performs at least four functions (Casebeer 2004, pp.447-448). In the case of the Ukrainian crisis, the evilization of the Other is used, first, to motivate pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine and their supporters in Russia to take action against the rest of Ukraine’s population. Second, Russian political leaders have adopted evil rhetoric as a response to being labelled evil or enemies themselves, as Putin’s recent Valdai speech shows. Third, Russian ruling elites and media use demonization to draw divisions between Western and Russian values, thereby justifying the confirmation of Russia’s own special way and antagonizing the population against the West. Fourth, the term “evil” “mirrors” the normative perspective that radical representatives of the statist, civilizationists and hard-line nationalists have on the West.

As far as the appointing of evil presupposes the presence of bad intentions, beastly actions, and disastrous consequences, the Russian media and politicians have to attribute these characteristics to the political elites in Ukraine and the West. This is where harsh rhetoric in the coverage of the crisis in Ukraine by the state media comes from. Thus, during the television program “Genocide in Eastern Ukraine”, screened on the 13th of July 2014, Russia’s propaganda network RT accused Ukraine of carrying out beheadings, rape, ethnic cleansing, systematic genocide, of using weapons of mass destruction, and of engineering international conspiracies – to name just a few atrocities (Euromaidan Press 2014).

The Russian official discourse on the Ukrainian crisis is more restrained. It is constructed in line with the counter-concepts ascribed to the Western powers. This vision implies the following pattern: The US tried to expand their influence and promote liberal values in Eastern Europe through the mechanism of EU enlargement. When Yanukovich refused to sign an Association Agreement they ignited a revolution and sponsored a coup d’état. Euromaidan was supported by Ukrainian ultranationalists and fascists, as well as by those who blindly believe in decaying European values. Considering the decisive role of the Russian people in World War II, Russia had to prevent the revival of fascism in Europe. Hence the banners during the pro-government demonstration on the 15th of March 2014 in Moscow said “We believe Putin” and “Fascism will not pass” (RB.ru 2014). In his speech at the Security Council meeting on the 22nd of July 2014, Putin (2014a) stated:

Undesirable regimes, countries that conduct an independent policy or that simply stand in the way of somebody’s interests get destabilized. Tools used for this purpose are the so-called color revolutions, or, in simple terms – takeovers instigated and financed from the outside. [...] Frequently the forces used here are radical, nationalist, often even neofascist, fundamental forces, as was the case, unfortunately, in many post-Soviet states, and as is the case with Ukraine now.

On the same occasion he also mentioned that “it is important for all Russians, regardless of where they live, to have equal rights and equal opportunities”. Accordingly, in the view of the increasingly nationalist sentiments in Ukraine, Russia had to defend the Russian-speaking population in the country. While fulfilling this mission, Russia restored historical justice and returned the Crimean peninsula to its territory through a referendum. The situation in south-eastern Ukraine with a majority Russian-speaking population appeared to be more complicated. According to the official Russian propaganda,

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Western powers deny the right of these regions to self-determination, despite the fact that this norm is enshrined in international law. Therefore it is Russia's responsibility to protect the rights of Russian-speaking people and save the Russian world from the expansion of the liberal Western ideology³. Putin (2014a) promised to do everything possible to resolve the large-scale humanitarian crisis in south-eastern Ukraine.

The propagandist version of the Ukrainian crisis described above attempts to shape the perception of the goals and policies of the EU and US among the Russian population. It contains elements of both statist and civilizationist ideologies, which currently prevail among Russian political elites, appeal to national memory, and instrumentalize nationalist and religious sentiments in society. Using propaganda allows Russian political elites to promote their vision of Russia's identity and hence legitimize the domestic autocratic regime, including the restriction of rights and freedoms, strengthening the power vertical and non-transparent governance, as well as manifestations of Russia's aggression, from the annexation of Crimea through the retaliatory sanctions against the Western countries to the hostilities in southern and eastern Ukraine. Thus, Russia has experienced an unprecedented surge of patriotism and unity domestically with 83% of Russians saying they approve of Putin's leadership (Gallup World 2014). As one of the leading experts on Russia, Shevtsova (2014b), put it:

the amazingly successful military-patriotic Kremlin mobilization of the Russian society after the Crimea annexation has confirmed the sad truth: Russian state and national identity is still based on the search for the enemy.

The enemy-or-friend-thinking promoted by Russian propaganda implies a conceptualization of evil as non-Self. This means that the negative Other is externalized from the Self in order to facilitate aggression against the Other. However, as mentioned by Abdel-Nour (2004, p.430), this concept is an illusion: while identity is constructed through the interaction between the Self and the Other, the Other is connected to the Self. Moreover, according to aspirational constructivism, the process of identity formation is ambiguous and fluctuating; identity is never fixed. Thus, along with the statist and civilizationist ideologies, Russia's national identity also encompasses elements

³ Ironically enough, according to opinion polls conducted by KIIS in February 2015, pro-European orientations prevail over pro-Russian choice, among others, in the predominantly Russian-speaking Southern region and Kyiv (Sakhno 2015).

of Westernist ideology. Therefore, the counter-concepts that Russia has cast and labelled as external evil in its propaganda are inherent in its own society.

As a matter of fact, the concepts of liberalism, democracy or globalization have never been alien to Russia's identification process. Liberal values are supported by those who demonstrated on Bolotnaya Square in December 2011 or made anti-war statements and advocated holding a Congress "Against the war, against the isolation of Russia, against the restoration of totalitarianism" in March 2014. Globalization is an essential characteristic of economic relations between Russia and the rest of the world, with Russia's foreign trade turnover in May 2014 totaling 70.3 billion USD (Federal State Statistics Service 2014). Internationalism does not only describe the diversity of the Russian population, it also describes the processes of communication and cultural exchange in the globalized world in which the Russians are actively involved. Moreover, the brand-new concept of sovereign democracy needs rigorous revision to become at least comparable to the long-standing European tradition of democracy. Recent developments in Russia, such as anti-gay laws, the foreign agents law, mandatory registration of popular blogs as mass media, and increasing restrictions on freedom of speech are not commensurate with democratic principles, regardless of how democracy and human rights concepts are interpreted. Self-reflection and awareness about the fact that the Other cast and labelled as evil is an integral part of one's identity contributes to a deeper understanding of the Self.

In sum, in order to justify Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian crisis, Russian ruling elites attempt to construct a vision of the West as a declining global power in an unjust unipolar world. For this purpose, they use political propaganda to motivate pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine and their supporters in Russia, draw divisions between the Russian world and the West, and respond to allegations of Russia being an evil force itself. Thus, the Russian media and politicians have cast certain counter-concepts, like liberalism, globalization, and democracy, as significant Others, and then identified them with images of the US and the EU to construct external threats. In the Ukrainian crisis, Russia presents itself as a defender of the Russian-speaking community and a counterforce to the liberal West in a civilizational conflict. Even though Russian involvement in Ukraine has contributed to the domestic legitimacy of Putin's regime, the constructed battle of values with the West could further weaken Russian identity in the long term, while deepening the inconsistency of its ideological elements.

Conclusion

This article argued that Russia resorted to political propaganda and enemy-or-friend thinking as a tool to justify its involvement in the Ukrainian crisis, thus legitimizing its authoritarian rule. The focus was on the construction of the Russian national identity and interconnection between its components. Aspirational constructivism sees national identity constructed by political elites on the basis of their need for self-esteem and in accordance with the self-image they promote. Moreover, national identity influences the relationship between the Self and its “casted” Others, and hence the foreign policy of the state. The ruling elite tends to transform alien Others into external “evil” or enemies in order to mobilize the population for the support of the country’s external policies, and strengthen domestic legitimization of the regime.

The article has shown that the Ukrainian crisis provided a fertile soil for the promotion of the statist and civilizationist visions of Russia’s image by the ruling elite. Thus, during the crisis in Ukraine, Russian politicians and the mass media resorted to the evilization of Russia’s Others through political propaganda to set up pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine and their supporters in Russia against the rest of Ukraine’s population, draw divisions between the Russian world and the West, and react to the evilization of Russia by the Western political elites. The constructed ideological conflict between the elements of Russia’s national identity can further weaken it in the long run. However, in the short term, the mobilization of the Russian population in the face of external threats stemming from Western values strengthens the legitimization pillar of an autocratic regime in Russia. In general, the study exemplified the interconnection between Russia’s identification process and the country’s foreign policy using the aspirational constructivist lens. It also extended the knowledge on legitimization strategies of autocratic regimes on the post-Soviet space.

As suggested by Köllner (2008, p.363), future research might explore the other side of the legitimization pillar, namely specific or output legitimization of autocratic regimes. In the case of Russia, a further study could assess to what extent the legitimacy beliefs among supporters of the current Russian authorities are reinforced by the socio-economic performance of the regime, considering the severe financial crisis in Russia that started in 2014 or the economic impact of annexing Crimea.

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**TRUST IN CHANGING INSTITUTIONS:
THE OHRID FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT AND
INSTITUTIONAL TRUST IN MACEDONIA**

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Abstract

The Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) adopted in 2001 commenced a new chapter in the development of Macedonian democracy. The reforms that followed from the agreement introduced power-sharing elements in the functioning of state institutions. In order to assess part of the implications of these reforms, this paper aims at exploring the changes in the levels of institutional trust in Macedonia pre and post OFA. For the purposes of this research, survey data from four different time points, ranging from 1998 to 2008, is analyzed. The study finds that the agreement contributed to a great increase in citizens' institutional trust levels, especially in the case of ethnic Albanians.

Keywords: institutional trust, Ohrid Framework Agreement, ethnicity

Introduction

After a decade of challenging the very foundations of the Macedonian state by the ethnic Albanian minority of the country (Daskalovski 2005, p.52), the situation escalated into a violent conflict in 2001 between the state security structures and the Albanian paramilitary organization - the National Liberation Army (NLA). The conflict ended with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) in August 2001. As part of the OFA, Macedonia amended its constitution and enacted a series of laws in the years following the agreement. The implemented legal reforms effectively meant establishing a power-sharing model of democracy, i.e. consociational democracy.

All four key power-sharing elements of consociational democracy (Lijphart 1969; 2008) can be identified in the new Macedonian democratic model: mechanisms of group inclusion into the executive, proportional representation in the public administration, increased self-government, and veto rights (Bieber 2013, p.134). A grand coalition was not institutionalized, but the practice of creating multi-ethnic government coalitions, which was present (even) before 2001, remained. The concept of "just and equitable representation" (OFA 2001) introduced guarantees for larger representation of the minority ethnic communities in all administrative bodies. Regarding the territorial arrangements, the country did not introduce federal territorial organization, but a decentralization process was conducted, which significantly increased the self-rule of the local units of self-government (Maleska 2005; Goio & Marceta 2009; Bieber 2013; Vankovska 2013).

The initial motivation of the OFA was to cease the armed conflict and to prevent it from escalating into an ethnic one. The agreement achieved this goal; however, its success cannot be evaluated merely in terms of absence of conflict. The agreement has profound implications on the functioning of Macedonian democracy, so its success should be evaluated in a broader context; namely, by examining whether it enables or endangers the functioning of the democratic system as a whole (Bieber 2011, p.14). There is a need for a comprehensive assessment of the effects of the agreement, and a well-grounded evaluation of whether it paved the way for a stable and healthy democratic development of the society, or provided a merely temporary solution to the problem which would eventually lead to future separation of the ethnic groups and even secession.

Public trust in the democratic institutions of the country is an important issue for democracy, since it is closely related to political legitimacy. Democratic governments are bound to cooperate with their citizens, because they are limited in the exercise of coercive power over people, and they need citizens' approval in order to be legitimate (Boda & Medve-Bálint 2012, p.2). As Almond and Verba (1963, p.191) indicate, greater satisfaction with the political system creates greater attachment to it. Furthermore, high levels of institutional trust can significantly improve the effectiveness of the institutional performance, as well as policy implementation, and they are found to be closely related to law compliance (Marien & Hooghe 2011). Therefore, healthy levels of institutional trust of all segments in the society are necessary for the successful functioning of Macedonian democracy.

The conflict and the changes introduced by the Ohrid Framework Agreement had a strong impact on the functioning of the Macedonian democracy in general, and the political institutions in particular. Namely, the agreement's provisions for special procedures in the parliament, decentralization, non-discrimination, just and equitable representation, use of languages, as well as the protection of identity and culture of the communities in the country (OFA 2001), were all implemented with the purpose of greater integration of the ethnic minority communities in the country. A great part of the country's population, especially the ethnic Albanians, endorsed this reform. However, a sizable proportion of the citizens, mainly among ethnic Macedonians, had negative attitudes towards this change. Public opinion surveys indicate that two years after the agreement, in 2003, only 38% of ethnic Macedonians as opposed to 91.6% of ethnic Albanians expressed support for the OFA. The smaller ethnic groups in the country were also not very enthusiastic towards the agreement, with 47.2% of them expressing support for it (Early Warning Report 2003). Eight years after the agreement, when much of its implementation had already taken place, the opinions about the agreement remained divided: only 24% of ethnic Macedonians, as opposed to 83% of ethnic Albanians expressed support for it (Mitevaska 2009). Bearing in mind the importance of the implications of this agreement, it is meaningful and relevant to analyze whether there are changes in the levels and factors that explain institutional trust, pre and post the conflict and the implementation of the OFA. Thus, this article aims at evaluating how the Ohrid Framework Agreement affected the trust that the Macedonian citizens express towards the political institutions in the country.

The question of institutional trust pre and post the adoption of the OFA is relevant for Macedonia mainly because the general sustainability of this democratic system is at question. The consociational model of democracy in Macedonia was seen as the best institutional design for the conflict resolution after the 2001 situation. The analyses in the following period were focused on evaluating the full implementation of the OFA and establishment of the new institutional framework as such (Klekovski 2011; Risteska & Daskalovski 2011), but the evaluation of the consequences or effects of this institutional arrangement, and the real possibilities of building a stable and healthy society remains an unfinished task. Therefore, this paper aims to provide insight whether the democratic model chosen in 2001, is sustainable on the long run, and whether it leads to stabilization and democratic development of Macedonian society.

The first section of this paper reviews the literature on institutional trust. Next the Macedonian political situation is presented with emphasis on the changes introduced by the Framework Agreement. This will be followed by a description of the data and methods used in the analysis. Finally, the findings of the analysis will be presented and discussed in relation to the country's context.

Theories of institutional trust

The academic interest in trust has been extremely pronounced in recent years. The main reasons for this are the declining levels of institutional trust noted in the developed Western democracies (Norris 1999; Pharr & Putnam 2000; Dalton 2004), as well as the generally low levels of institutional trust measured in the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (Mishler & Rose 1997, 2001; Lovell 2001; Boda & Medve-Bálint 2012). Generally, there are two theoretical traditions which offer competing explanations about the origins of institutional trust: cultural theories and institutional (or performance) theories. On the one hand, cultural theories treat the origins of institutional trust as exogenous. Trust is determined by early life socialization and cultural norms. According to Uslaner, one of the major advocates of this view, trust is not experience-based, but rather learned and transmitted in our socialization process, and depends on the optimistic or pessimistic worldview we hold; thus, trust is essentially a moral value (Uslaner 2002).

Therefore, we learn to be trusting or not early on in our lives. This approach finds that social and institutional trust are closely linked. Specifically, we project the learned social trust to the institutions, and with that we influence institutional performance (Mishler & Rose 2001). Uslaner (2002, p.8) argues that '[g]ood government doesn't generate trust. But trust in others helps make governments work better', and in his opinion, high levels of general trust, push towards the creation of more egalitarian societies. However, Uslaner (2002, p.48) also states that, although general trust cannot be enhanced by the government, it can be destroyed by it, giving the post-communist countries as an example. Putnam (1993; 2000) and Almond and Verba (1963) also advocate this culturally dependent, bottom-up approach.

The cultural theories assume a strong relationship between generalized, or social trust and political, or institutional trust. The existence of this relationship has been the focus of a number of empirical studies, and it has yielded inconsistent findings. Namely, Grönlund and Setälä (2011), among others, confirm the existence of this direct relationship, however, Newton finds that

their relationship is mediated by the effectiveness of social and political institutions (Newton 2001, p.211).

On the other hand, institutional or performance theories treat the origins of institutional trust as endogenous. They find that institutional trust is a consequence of the institutional performance itself. On the basis of our experience about the performance of the political institutions (which is constantly updated) we make a judgment about how much trust or confidence we will place in our political institutions. So, well-performing institutions will generate trust towards them, while those who do not meet our expectations will generate distrust (Mishler & Rose 2001). This is a top-down approach, as opposed to the bottom-up one adopted by cultural theories. Namely, the advocates of institutional theories challenge the direction of causal relationship between institutions and trust. According to Rothstein (2005), universal and trustworthy institutions facilitate the creation of trust, and not the other way around, as suggested by Putnam (1993, 2000). Herreros (2004) challenges Putnam's (2000) and Uslaner's (2002) view that the state can only have a negative impact on social trust. He argues that the state function of enforcer of third-party agreements can have beneficial effects on social trust (Herreros 2004; Herreros & Criado 2008). Grönlund and Setälä (2011) test the relationship between institutional trust and satisfaction with policy outputs, as well as the perceptions of public officials in terms of honesty and incorruptibility. They find that the satisfaction with policy outcomes is the most powerful determinant of institutional trust, but also that the perceptions of public officials play a role.

The relationship between institutional design and / or type of democracy with political support has not been addressed in much detail in the literature. However, one study provides evidence that the institutional design does in fact matter for institutional trust. Namely, Criado and Herreros (2007) argue that the type of democracy - majoritarian or proportional - affects citizens' perception of institutions. Using survey data, they provide evidence that the effect of institutional performance on institutional trust is higher in majoritarian than in proportional democracies, due to the fact that the attribution of political responsibilities is less clear in proportional as opposed to majoritarian democracies.

These two theoretical approaches have been tested in different contexts, in order to evaluate their explanatory power and primacy, in different regions and countries. Luhiste (2006) finds that both theories have merit in explaining institutional trust in the Baltic states. Mishler and Rose (2001) tested these two theories in the post-communist context, and found that the strongest

predictors of institutional trust in post-communist societies are individual perceptions about the political and economic performance of these new democracies. The study conducted by Chiru and Gherghina (2012) on four Visegrad countries shows that indeed citizens' perceptions regarding the performance of institutions matter a great deal for the expressed levels of institutional trust. In particular, this study demonstrates that European Union accession influences citizens' attitudes towards their national institutions, through creating a positive spillover effect of trust, and through boosting optimism regarding the possible economic gains from European Union accession (Chiru & Gherghina 2012).

Although both these theoretical traditions have found their application in different societal contexts, often the specific context of the society can have a great influence on the possibility of building and maintaining institutional and social trust. One particularly interesting type of society, where building trust seems to be especially challenging, is the one characterized by ethnic heterogeneity, and deep divisions along the ethnic lines.

Trust in divided societies

It is a common finding in the literature that social trust is lower in ethnically heterogeneous societies (Alesina & La Ferrara 2000; Leigh 2006). Deep ethnic divides, can lead to the creation of "social traps", where the strong feelings of distrust prevent people from cooperating, even when they have common goals (Rothstein 2005). As Rothstein (2005, p.42) argues, the only way to overcome these social traps is by creating universal and impartial institutions, which will allow people to calculate their actions according to the expected reaction of institutions.

Pronounced, systematic discrimination of the ethnic minorities, or majorization, often leads to alienation of the minority communities from the political system and the wider society (Pantoja & Segura 2003; Baldwin et al. 2007; Weller 2010). The members of the minority communities would not be able to develop a feeling of commitment to the political system, and will not be able to consider it as theirs. In this situation, where the minorities in the society are discriminated, and their opportunities to participate in the political processes are extremely limited might lead to open expression of the minorities grievances, even in a violent way (Muller et al. 1982).

In order to provide stability in ethnically diverse societies, mechanisms of effective minority integration and representation into the political system should be set up (Bieber 2003). One institutional design that aims at creating a

balance between the powers of different ethnic groups in deeply divided societies is the consociational model of democracy advocated by Lijphart (2008). This democratic model assumes the creation of institutional mechanisms that will avoid the establishment of dominant part of the population, and will give space to the minority communities to have a say in the political processes in the country, and control over policies and areas of the political life that directly affect their well-being. However, according to Horowitz (1985) this model leads to reinforcement of the ethnic divisions, and as an alternative to it, he suggests an integrative power-sharing model, which promotes the creation of cross-cutting cleavages. Nevertheless, the extensive research on several case studies conducted by Norris (2008) indicates that power-sharing models are indeed beneficial for deeply divided societies, since they lead to greater democratization. However, one can never underestimate the importance of context.

The Macedonian Context

Macedonia is a multiethnic society. According to the last census held in the country in 2002, 64.2% of the population declared themselves Macedonians, 25.2% ethnic Albanians, 3.9% Turks, 2.7% Roma, 1.8% Serbs, and the rest as belonging to one of the smaller ethnic groups which are below 1% (Census of the population 2002). At the same time, Macedonian society is considered as deeply divided, with the ethnic cleavages creating different and even parallel worlds in which citizens live. Studies measuring the social distance between ethnic groups confirm this fact (Pecijareski 2011; Jashari & Simkus 2013). This being said, it is evident that in order to maintain peace in the country, and to satisfy the needs of all ethnic segments, institutional arrangements need to accommodate the specific characteristics of the country's population.

The 1990s were a very challenging period for the young Macedonian democracy. As Daskalovski notes, in the early years of Macedonian independence, the political elites of the country, representing Macedonian and Albanian ethnic segments of the population, clashed over the basic concept of the Macedonian state (Daskalovski 2005, p.52). The situation escalated into a conflict between the National Liberation Army (NLA) and the state forces of Macedonia in January 2001. The conflict lasted until 19 August 2001, and resulted in the death of approximately 100 people and the displacement of over 100 000 civilians (Daskalovski 2005, p.91). The goals of the NLA during the conflict were ambiguous. They evolved from support for the idea of "Greater Albania" to demands for guaranteeing of the human rights of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia through constitutional reforms (2005, p.80).

The conflict was settled by the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement by the heads of the largest political parties in the country, and special representatives of the EU and the US. The talks were confusing and difficult, due to the fact that all four parties in the national unity government had different positions on the issue. The role of the international factor in reaching the agreement was very important. Namely, the EU and the US provided incentives for a speeded-up Euro-Atlantic integration of Macedonia to abandon the idea of ceasing the conflict through military means, and to negotiate a peace agreement (Daskalovski 2004, p.3, Ilievski 2007).

Finally, the agreement introduced the demanded reforms. This document made possible the introduction of power-sharing elements in the functioning of the Macedonian democracy and marked the beginning of significant institutional reforms. In the following part, the most important changes brought by the OFA are described.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement

The immediate goals of OFA were: cessation of hostilities, and implementation of confidence-building measures (Report on the Implementation Status 2012, p.10). However, the most important and major changes introduced by OFA involve the amendments to the Constitution, as well as the laws which followed from the agreement, regarding decentralization of the government, non-discrimination and equitable representation, special procedures in parliament, as well as policies related to identity, culture, use of languages and education.

The constitutional amendments redefined the constitutive people of the Macedonian state. They also introduced provisions for official usage of languages of the communities, guarantees for appropriate and equitable representation of citizens belonging to all communities, as well as guarantees for protection of the culture and religious expression. Furthermore, the amendments introduced novelties in the parliamentary arena. In particular, all laws concerning culture, use of languages, education, personal documents, and use of symbols must be voted with a “double majority”, i.e. a simple majority of all representatives, and a majority of votes from the representatives of non-majority ethnic communities. Finally, a Committee for Relations between the Communities was introduced. These constitutional amendments were followed by numerous laws, regulating decentralization and local self-government, protection against discrimination and providing equitable representation of all communities, specifying the special parliamentary procedures (i.e. the application of the double majority rule), as well as enacting policies related to

identity, culture, use of languages and education. The entire set of laws and policies enacted as a result of the Ohrid Framework Agreement had the goal of greater inclusion of the ethnic minorities in the decision making processes, their greater integration in the society, and better protection of their cultural and religious autonomy.

The political situation in the country after 2001 significantly stabilized, however, inter-ethnic relations remained fragile. Several ethnic incidents have occurred, including riots, protests and clashes with the police, however none of them escalated into a major ethnic clash (Marusic 2013). However, the governing political parties have been constantly accused by intellectuals that they manipulate the public, and heat up ethnic tensions in order to boost up their ratings (Unkovska 2010; Zafirovski 2010).

Framework for analysis

The inter-ethnic relations and the implementation of all the measures specified in the Ohrid Agreement were the most salient political issue in Macedonia throughout the 2000s. The effects of the agreement were felt shortly after its signing, as soon as the policies related to identity, usage of languages, and especially regarding the policies of just and equitable representation, started being implemented. Because of the underrepresentation of the minority communities in the public bodies, the reforms entailed great waves of employment of dominantly ethnic Albanians in the public administration.

The signing of the Agreement triggered strong negative feelings among the ethnic Macedonian population of the country. The politicians from the Macedonian block, through their opposition to the agreement manipulated the public opinion of ethnic Macedonians, creating fear that the terms of the agreement would threaten the national identity. Ethnic Macedonians perceived the agreement as pressured upon them by the international community, and felt betrayed by the US and NATO (Brunnbauer 2002, p.8). They found themselves as being the 'losers' in the situation. Ethnic Macedonians feared that the Agreement would give enormous power to the Albanian community in the country, which might lead to demands for secession. Furthermore, the plans for decentralization were perceived by ethnic Macedonians as a possibility for creating ethnically dominant Albanian municipalities, where they would enjoy complete control.

Similarly, the provisions for just and equitable representation in all public bodies were thought of as job losses, in the already very difficult job market. The ethnic Albanian population saw themselves as the 'winners', since they

finally got their demands recognized. However, there was also a strong feeling of skepticism present among the Albanian part of the population, because they did not believe that the agreement would be fully and effectively implemented (Tsukatos 2008, p.35). The negative feelings of ethnic Macedonians towards the OFA remained long after the agreement was signed. A survey conducted eight years after the Agreement found that only 24% of ethnic Macedonians expressed support for it, while the support of ethnic Albanians was much higher - 83% (Mitevaska 2009).

Due to the fact that the separate institutions of the country perform substantively different tasks, and they have been subjected to reforms that differ in both scope and nature, it is useful to observe the development of institutional trust in each institution separately. Therefore, in this research project, the trust citizens hold for the government, parliament, judiciary, police, and civil service are observed separately.

Notably, the government as an institution went through the least changes in this process of institutional reform. Specifically, the power-sharing element of inclusion of all the important segments in the society into the executive was present even before 2001. The tradition of forming government coalitions between the largest Macedonian and Albanian party was uninterrupted since the independence of the country. However, the government is the most powerful political body in the country, therefore the citizens' general satisfaction with the political situation in the country is most likely to be reflected in the confidence they express towards this institution.

In contrast to the government, the parliament went through substantive changes, among which the most important was the introduction of the 'double majority' rule. The work of the judiciary was affected by the introduction of the provisions for selection of the Ombudsman, members of the State Judicial Council and judges of the Constitutional Court with the double majority principle.

Finally, the police and the civil service went through the biggest changes, as a result of the implementation of the fair and equitable representation provision. Namely, both these institutions went through considerable staff changes, as a result of the employment policies implemented in order for a fair, and proportional representation of ethnic communities. Furthermore, the work of the police was also affected by the decentralization process, which transferred more control over this institution to the local government.

Although it would be important to analyze trust towards other institutions in the country, such as the educational system, and the local government, data for such analysis was not available. Therefore, this analysis is limited only to these five institutions.

The focus in this paper is on three main explanatory variables which are closely linked to the cultural theories, and have particular importance in the Macedonian context. These variables are: belonging to a specific ethnic group, social trust, and support for one of the parties currently in government. The central explanatory variable in the cultural theories of institutional trust is social or generalized trust. Social trust refers to the levels of trust people express towards other people that they do not necessarily know. As Uslaner suggests, when asked "do you trust people in general, or you cannot be too careful?", we think not only about people like us, but also about people that are different from us, revealing one important component of bridging social capital we possess (Uslaner 2008, p.104). In the Macedonian context, this variable indicates the level of trust people have towards people who are not necessarily in the same socio-economic position as them, or do not share the same religion, or belong to a different ethnic group. In diverse societies as the Macedonian one, higher levels of social capital indicate greater cohesion, and integration within the society. So I find it important to analyze whether the levels of generalized or social trust have an impact on institutional trust, as the cultural theories suggest.

As Rose-Ackerman notes, in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, politicians have established a practice to run their governments in extremely partisan ways. Thus, they have created a polarized electorate that expects good treatment from the government, only if the party that they support is part of it (Rose-Ackerman 2004, p.9). Macedonia has not been an exception from this practice. Moreover, with the reforms introduced by the Ohrid Framework Agreement, especially in the part of just and equitable representation policies, the governing political parties have gained even more space to reward their supporters, and thus gave more reasons to citizens to equate the institutions of the country with the current government. Therefore, support for incumbent is the second explanatory variable, accounting for the support citizens express towards political parties currently in government.

The third explanatory variable is the central variable in this study, given the nature of the institutional changes introduced in Macedonia - ethnic group belonging. This variable accounts for the effect of ethnicity in evaluating the

state institutions and will provide grounds for comparison between different ethnic groups.

A group of variables that is commonly used in analyses of institutional trust is the demographic characteristics of the individual respondents in surveys. These variables have secondary importance in my analysis, as opposed to the previous three, but they do provide important information about the origins of institutional trust. These variables are: age and educational attainment.

From the analysis, I expect to find a pattern in the changing levels of trust as well as the factors that explain them, which would be associated with the institutional changes introduced by the Ohrid Framework Agreement in Macedonia. Primarily, because of the winners and losers discourse, as well as the low support expressed by ethnic Macedonians for the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the reforms it entailed, I expect that the general levels of institutional trust of ethnic Macedonians will decrease in the years following the Ohrid Agreement; in contrast, I expect that the general levels of institutional trust of ethnic Albanians will increase.

H1. The levels of institutional trust of ethnic Macedonians will decline over time, in the period following the OFA.

H2. The levels of institutional trust of ethnic Albanians will increase over time, in the period following the OFA.

I do not make predictions about the smaller ethnic communities in the country, because I do not believe that they could be considered as a coherent group, since the agreement had different effects on them. However, due to the small sample size of these ethnic communities, they cannot be analyzed separately. Furthermore, although the just and equitable representation principle was a noble idea to offer equal opportunities for the advancement of all the communities in the country, the way this provision was, and still is implemented might lead to increased association of the political institutions with the parties currently in government. Namely, the employment strategies according to the ethnic and political party key, increase citizens' incentives to become supporters or members of the parties currently in government, because they will have more opportunities to gain benefits, such as employment in public administration. Therefore, citizens had increasingly more reasons to equate parties with state institutions.

H3. The citizens that support one of the parties in the government coalition will become more trusting of the political institutions in the period after the adoption of OFA.

In regards to social trust, age, and education, I do not have any expectations about their effects on institutional trust. The inclusion of the age and education variables in the analysis will primarily have the purpose of detecting possible differences between the younger and older, as well as the more and the less educated citizens in their likelihood to have confidence in the political institutions in the country.

Data and Methodology

Several different sources of survey data are used in this analysis. Citizens' institutional trust is measured through four publicly available surveys conducted in 1998, 2001, 2004, and 2008. The time frame of analysis is limited by the availability of data. The survey data sources are summarized in Table 1.

Because the survey data used in this analysis comes from different sources, there are small differences in the wording of the questions. However, there are larger differences in terms of the number of response categories in the survey questions. In order to be able to compare the data from the different surveys, I have recoded the variables, each containing only two categories, except for the variable belonging to a specific ethnic group, which was recoded into three categories. The list of variables and their categories after the recoding process is presented in Appendix 1. The data analysis is conducted using loglinear modeling due to the characteristics of the data, i.e. the dominance of categorical variables.

Table 1: Sources of survey data used in the analysis

Data collection	Source	Sample size
Feb. 1998	World Values Survey (3 rd wave)	995
Nov. – Dec. 2001	World Values Survey (4 th wave)	1,055
May 2004	Survey conducted by Prof. G. Ivanov and the Faculty of Law "Iustinianus Primus", Ss Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Macedonia	1,091
July – Oct. 2008	European Values Survey (4 th wave)	1,500

Findings

The findings of the analysis are organized according to the separate institutions taken under investigation, in the following order: government, parliament, judiciary, police and civil service. However, before the loglinear models are

presented, a brief discussion of the overall trend of citizens' trust in these institutions is provided, with reference to the separate ethnic groups. The presentation of the findings is followed by their discussion, as well as comments on the limitations of the analysis.

Institutional trust over time

In all five institutions taken under investigation, the general levels of trust for all ethnic groups have risen substantively in the post-OFA period. This rise in citizens' levels of trust is the most notable in the case of the government and parliament. In particular, 20% or less citizens have expressed trust in these institutions in 1998, while already in 2004 these percentages are larger than 50. Ethnic Albanians seem to have experienced the largest increase in trust in these two institutions. In fact, in the case of the parliament, ethnic Albanians have become the most trusting ethnic group in the post-OFA period. The increase of trust levels in the judiciary in the post-OFA period is not as dramatic as in the government and the parliament. In particular, in 1998 approximately 25% of the survey respondents reported that they have trust in the judiciary, while 10 years later, this percentage has reached approximately 35%. However, as in the case of the parliament, the largest increase in trust in the judiciary has been experienced by ethnic Albanians, whose levels of trust surpasses those of ethnic Macedonians in the post-OFA period. In the case of the police, the situation is slightly different than in the other institutions. In particular, in 1998 and 2001 ethnic Albanians expressed virtually no trust towards this institution. In the post-OFA period, although their trust rises substantively, it still remains lower than the one expressed by the other ethnic groups in the country. Finally, in regards to the civil service, as in the case of the parliament, the general levels of trust rise significantly: from less than 20% in 1998 and 2001, to almost 50% in 2008. Here again, the largest increase in trust levels is noted among the ethnic Albanians, whose trust levels surpasses the ones expressed by the other ethnic communities in the post-OFA period. The graphic representation of the general trust levels, as well as a breakdown by ethnicity is provided in Appendix 2.

Confidence in the government

Table 2 presents the coefficients from several loglinear models ran for each year for which data was available¹. The conditional odds ratios of the ethnic group variable indicate that the odds of ethnic Macedonians were approximately 1.4 times greater in 1998, and almost 2 times greater in 2001 than the odds of ethnic Albanians to have confidence in the government.

¹ Models which contain variables that have no, or very limited effects have not been presented here.

Already in 2004, it is evident that the direction of the likelihood for ethnic Macedonians and Albanians for trusting the government is reversed. Namely, in this period the odds for ethnic Albanians are slightly greater than the odds of ethnic Macedonians to have confidence in the government. The strongest predictor of trust in the government seems to be the support for one of the parties in the governing coalition. Namely, the odds of respondents who declared that they support one of the incumbent parties in 1998 are 2.23 times greater than the odds of non-supporters to have confidence in the government. In 2001 and 2004 the likelihood of governing-party supporters to trust the government is slightly increased, while in 2008 decreases again.

Social trust has a consistent effect on trust in the government throughout the whole period of analysis. However, the effect is not very strong. Namely, the odds of people who have social trust are from 1.2 to 1.4 times greater than the odds of distrustful respondents to have confidence in the government. Education however, does not seem to have a consistent direction or impact on trust in the government. Finally, throughout the whole period, people older than 40 are more likely to have confidence in the government than younger people, although the size of the likelihood greatly varies over time.

Confidence in parliament

In Table 3 the log-linear models constructed to explain trust in parliament from 1998 to 2008 are presented. As the coefficients in the table indicate, in 1998, the odds of ethnic Macedonians were 1.34 times greater than the odds of ethnic Albanians to express confidence in parliament. In 2001, ethnic Macedonians were even more trustful towards parliament than ethnic Albanians: their odds were 1.7 times greater than for ethnic Albanians. Similarly to trust in the government, in 2004, it was the ethnic Albanians that were the most trustful.

Support for the incumbent (one of the political parties in the governing coalition) is again a strong predictor for confidence in parliament, as it was in the case of confidence in the government. Thus, the odds of the supporters of the incumbent were 1.7 times greater than the odds of non-supporters to trust the government in 1998. The effect of incumbent support increased in the following period, and it reaches the odds ratio of 2.5 in 2004, but it decreases again in 2008. Social trust seems to have the largest effect in 2001, only few months after the conflict and the agreement. Education has a weak and inconsistent effect in the whole period, while the odds of people over the age of 40 are consistently greater than the odds of younger people to have confidence in parliament.

Table 2: Conditional odds ratios explaining confidence in the government

Year	Model	Ethnic group			Incumbent support	Social trust	Education		Age	
		Mac.	Alb.	Other	Yes	Yes	≤ high school	university	≤ 39	≥ 40
1998	12, 13, 14, 15, 2345 (p = 0.182)	vs Alb. 1.36 vs others 0.48	vs Mac. 0.73 vs others 0.35	vs Mac. 2.05 vs Alb. 2.80	2.23	1.28	1.10	0.91	/	/
2001	12, 13, 16, 236 (p = 0.746)	vs Alb. 2.33 vs others 0.87	vs Mac. 0.42 vs others 0.37	vs Mac. 1.14 vs Alb. 2.68	2.39	/	/	/	0.69	1.43
2001	12, 14, 16, 246 (p = 0.476)	vs Alb. 1.90 vs others 1.01	vs Mac. 0.52 vs others 0.53	vs Mac. 0.99 vs Alb. 1.87	/	1.19	/	/	0.78	1.28
2004	12, 13, 15, 16, 2356 (p = 0.644)	vs Alb. 0.911 vs others 1.28	vs Mac. 1.10 vs others 1.40	vs Mac. 0.78 vs Alb. 0.71	2.66	//	0.81	1.23	0.97	1.02
2008	12, 13, 14, 234 (p = 0.051)	vs Alb. 1.13 vs others 0.86	vs Mac. 0.88 vs others 0.76	vs Mac. 1.16 vs Alb. 1.32	1.99	1.38	/	/	/	/

1 - Confidence in government; 2 - Ethnic group; 3 - Support for governing party; 4 - Social trust; 5 - Education; 6 - Age.

Table 3: Conditional odds ratios explaining confidence in parliament

Year	Model	Ethnic group			Incumbent support	Social trust	Education		Age	
		Mac.	Alb.	Other	Yes	Yes	≤ high school	university	≤ 39	≥ 40
1998	12, 13, 14, 15, 2345 (p = 0,182)	vs Alb. 1.34 vs others 0.49	vs Mac. 0.74 vs others 0.36	vs Mac. 2.06 vs Alb. 2.76	1.68	1.35	1.04	0.96	/	/
2001	12, 13, 23 (p = 0.149)	vs Alb. 1.78 vs others 1.05	vs Mac. 0.56 vs others 0.58	vs Mac. 0.95 vs Alb. 1.70	2.05	/	/	/	/	/
2001	12, 14, 16, 2356 (p = 0.663)	vs Alb. 1.67 vs others 1.24	vs Mac. 0.60 vs others 0.75	vs Mac. 0.80 vs Alb. 1.34	/	1.76	/	/	0.71	1.39
2004	12, 13, 15, 16, 2356 (p = 0.144)	vs Alb. 0.79 vs others 1.28	vs Mac. 1.26 vs others 1.62	vs Mac. 0.78 vs Alb. 0.62	2.46	//	0.86	1.16	0.98	1.02
2008	13, 14, 15, 16, 3456 (p = 0.367)	/	/	/	1.48	1.24	1.14	0.88	0.98	1.02

1 - Confidence in parliament; 2 - Ethnic group; 3 - Support for governing party; 4 - Social trust; 5 - Education; 6 - Age

Confidence in the judiciary

As the conditional odds ratios in Table 4 indicate, in 1998, the odds of ethnic Macedonians were 1.4 times greater than the odds of ethnic Albanians to have confidence in the judiciary. In 2004 and 2008, it is the ethnic Albanians that are more trusting in this institution than the ethnic Macedonians, however, the difference in odds between these two ethnic groups is very small.

Support for the governing party has a fairly strong effect in the entire period, and the odds ratios range from 1.3 to 1.5. Unlike in the case of the previous discussed institutions, education has a more consistent effect on confidence in the judiciary. In particular, people with high school education or less are consistently more likely to trust the judiciary than more educated people. Finally, age has a weak and inconsistent effect.

Confidence in the police

Table 5 presents the log-linear models constructed to explain the trust in the police from 1998 to 2008. As the coefficients in the table indicate, throughout the entire period, ethnic Macedonians had a greater confidence in the police, than ethnic Albanians. The odds of ethnic Macedonians to trust the police were 2 times greater in 1998 and 10 times greater in 2001 than the odds of ethnic Albanians. In 2004 and 2008, the difference between the likelihood of trusting the police between ethnic Albanians on the one hand, and ethnic Macedonians and the smaller ethnic groups in the country on the other hand, greatly decreased. Namely, the odds of ethnic Macedonians and the smaller ethnic groups were from 1.5 to 1.2 times greater than the odds of ethnic Albanians to trust the police.

Support for the incumbent has a moderate effect on trust in the police. Namely, the odds of supporters of the party in government were from 1.2 times, to 1.8 times greater than the odds of non-supporters to have confidence in the police. Social trust and education have weak and inconsistent effects on trust in the police, while age has a moderate and consistent one. Older people are more likely than younger people to express confidence in the police.

Confidence in the civil service

Table 6 presents the log-linear models constructed to explain trust in the civil service from 1998 to 2008. In 1998, the odds of ethnic Macedonians were 1.3 times greater, than the odds of ethnic Albanians to trust the civil service. In 2001, the differences increased, so the odds of ethnic Macedonians were 2.5 times greater than the odds of ethnic Albanians. In 2008 the situation changed, so the odds of ethnic Albanians were 1.13 times greater than the odds of ethnic

Macedonians to have confidence in the civil service. Support for the incumbent has a moderate effect on trust in the civil service, with odds ranging from 1.1 to 1.5. Education and age seem to have small and inconsistent effects on trust in the civil service.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings indicate that the general levels of trust in all five institutions taken under investigation increased substantively after 2001. The biggest changes on a general level are observed in the case of trust towards the government, parliament, and the civil service, while in the case of the police and the judiciary they are not so dramatic. The expressed trust towards the institutions of the ethnic Albanian part of the population had the highest growth in the post 2001 period. Namely, in all five analyzed institutions, except for the police, the ethnic Albanians expressed higher levels of trust than the ethnic Macedonians. The most plausible explanation for the rise of institutional trust among ethnic Albanians is that the Ohrid Agreement and its implementation in the following years had a positive effect on the perceptions that this part of the population holds for the political institutions of the Macedonian state.

There are two possible explanations why the OFA made the ethnic Albanians more trusting towards the Macedonian institutions. The first one draws from the winners-and-losers rhetoric. Namely, the ethnic Albanians perceived themselves as the winners of the conflict, and the Agreement gave them a feeling of increased control, and a greater inclusion in the Macedonian political system. In this explanation, the effect of specific policies and legal reforms that were implemented does not bear importance. The second explanation focuses exactly on the effects of the policies deriving from the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The ethnic Albanians gained trust in the Macedonian institutions, because they felt the positive effects of the reforms, i.e. were more satisfied with the functioning of the institutions themselves. However, these two explanations are not mutually excluding.

Table 4: Conditional odds ratios explaining confidence in the judiciary

Year	Model	Ethnic group			Incumbent support	Social trust	Education		Age	
		Mac.	Alb.	Other	Yes	Yes	≤ high school	University	≤ 39	≥ 40
1998	12, 13, 15, 16, 2356 (p = 0.961)	vs Alb. 1.40 vs others 0.50	vs Mac. 0.71 vs others 0.35	vs Mac. 2.01 vs Alb. 2.81	1.51	/	1.03	0.97	0.90	0.11
1998	12, 13, 14, 234 (p = 0.051)	vs Alb. 1.30 vs others 0.50	vs Mac. 0.77 vs others 0.38	vs Mac. 2.00 vs Alb. 2.60	1.53	1.03	/	/	/	/
2004	12, 13, 16, 236 (p = 0.076)	vs Alb. 0.90 vs others 0.85	vs Mac. 1.11 vs others 0.94	vs Mac. 1.18 vs Alb. 1.06	1.46	//	/	/	1.35	0.74
2008	12, 13, 15, 235 (p = 0.588)	vs Alb. 0.94 vs others 0.79	vs Mac. 1.06 vs others 0.84	vs Mac. 1.26 vs Alb. 1.19	1.31	/	1.14	0.88	/	/
2008	13, 14, 15, 16, 3456 (p = 0.348)	/	/	/	1.33	1.29	1.12	0.89	1.00	1.01

1 - Confidence in the judiciary; 2 - Ethnic group; 3 - Support for governing party; 4 - Social trust; 5 - Education; 6 – Age.

Table 5: Conditional odds ratios explaining confidence in the police

Year	Model	Ethnic group			Incumbent support	Social trust	Education		Age	
		Mac.	Alb.	Other	Yes	Yes	≤ high school	University	≤ 39	≥ 40
1998	12, 13, 15, 16, 2356 (p = 0.691)	vs Alb. 2.31 vs others 0.61	vs Mac. 0.42 vs others 0.26	vs Mac. 1.65 vs Alb. 3.91	1.36	/	1.14	0.87	1.07	0.93
2001	12, 13, 15, 235 (p = 0.156)	vs Alb. 10.02 vs others 1.28	vs Mac. 0.10 vs others 0.13	vs Mac. 0.78 vs Alb. 7.86	1.33	/	0.91	1.10	/	/
2004	12, 13, 15, 16, 2356 (p = 0.175)	vs Alb. 1.44 vs others 1.01	vs Mac. 0.69 vs others 0.70	vs Mac. 0.99 vs Alb. 1.43	1.83	//	1.11	0.90	0.97	1.03
2008	13, 14, 16, 346 (p = 0.449)	/	/	/	1.23	0.94	/	/	0.84	1.18
2008	12, 15, 25 (p = 0.419)	vs Alb. 1.33 vs others 0.78	vs Mac. 0.75 vs others 0.59	vs Mac. 1.28 vs Alb. 1.71	/	/	1.12	0.89	/	/

1 - Confidence in the police; 2 - Ethnic group; 3 - Support for governing party; 4 - Social trust; 5 - Education; 6 - Age;

Table 6: Conditional odds ratios explaining confidence in the civil service

Year	Model	Ethnic group			Incumbent support	Social trust	Education		Age	
		Mac.	Alb.	Other	Yes	Yes	≤ high school	University	≤ 39	≥ 40
1998	12, 13, 14, 234 (<i>p</i> = 0.182)	vs Alb. 1.31 vs others 0.50	vs Mac. 0.77 vs others 0.39	vs Mac. 1.98 vs Alb. 2.59	1.45	1.22	/	/	/	/
2001	12, 13, 15, 235 (<i>p</i> = 0.645)	vs Alb. 2.50 vs others 0.84	vs Mac. 0.40 vs others 0.34	vs Mac. 1.19 vs Alb. 2.97	1.10	/	0.92	1.09	/	/
2001	12, 14, 15, 245 (<i>p</i> = 0.250)	vs Alb. 2.51 vs others 0.84	vs Mac. 0.40 vs others 0.33	vs Mac. 1.19 vs Alb. 2.99	/	1.07	0.92	1.09	/	/
2001	12, 13, 16, 236 (<i>p</i> = 0.167)	vs Alb. 2.50 vs others 0.84	vs Mac. 0.40 vs others 0.34	vs Mac. 1.18 vs Alb. 2.97	1.10	/	/	/	1.00	1.00
2008	12, 13, 15, 235 (<i>p</i> = 0.257)	vs Alb. 0.88 vs others 0.95	vs Mac. 1.13 vs others 1.08	vs Mac. 1.04 vs Alb. 0.92	1.31	/	1.15	0.87	/	/

1 - Confidence in the civil service; 2 - Ethnic group; 3 - Support for governing party; 4 - Social trust; 5 - Education; 6 - Age

Regarding the expectations I had about the results from my analysis, it seems that my first hypothesis that the levels of institutional trust expressed by ethnic Macedonians will decline in the period after the adoption of OFA was disproved. Ethnic Macedonians, regardless of the negative feelings towards the Agreement, gained confidence in the country's institutions in the period following 2001. My second hypothesis, however, was confirmed by the findings of my analysis, since the confidence levels of ethnic Albanians substantively increased after the signing of the Agreement. Regarding the third hypothesis stating that after the Framework Agreement, supporters of the currently governing parties will become increasingly more trusting in institutions over time, the findings are not so straightforward. Incumbent support has a strong effect on institutional trust in all five analyzed institutions, however, the size of the effect does not increase over time as expected.

This study has several limitations, which can partly be addressed by future research on the topic. The first limitation comes from the need to combine several data sources, in order to obtain overview of the developments in institutional trust in a larger time frame. The surveys used in the analysis do not have the exact same wording of questions, scales of measurement, and sampling techniques, which is a potential problem for the comparability of the data. Furthermore, the list of variables used in this study was limited by the availability of data. Further research should include variables regarding the citizens' perceptions of the fairness and effectiveness of institutions, in order to obtain more a nuanced picture about the factors that affect the levels of institutional trust. Further research should strive to obtain more detailed data which will indicate whether the increased trust in institutions after OFA is a result of the Agreement per se, or of a general improved perception regarding the fairness and the work of the institutions.

Appendix 1. Complete list of variables after recoding

Response variables	Categories
Trust in the government	1) Trust; 2) No trust
Trust in the parliament	1) Trust; 2) No trust
Trust in the judiciary	1) Trust; 2) No trust
Trust in the police	1) Trust; 2) No trust
Trust in the civil service	1) Trust; 2) No trust
Explanatory variables	Categories
Belonging to a specific ethnic group	1) Macedonian; 2) Albanian; 3) Other
Social trust	1) Trust; 2) No trust
Support for the incumbent party	1) Support; 2) No support
Age	1) ≤ 39 ; 2) ≥ 40
Education	1) High school or less; 2) University

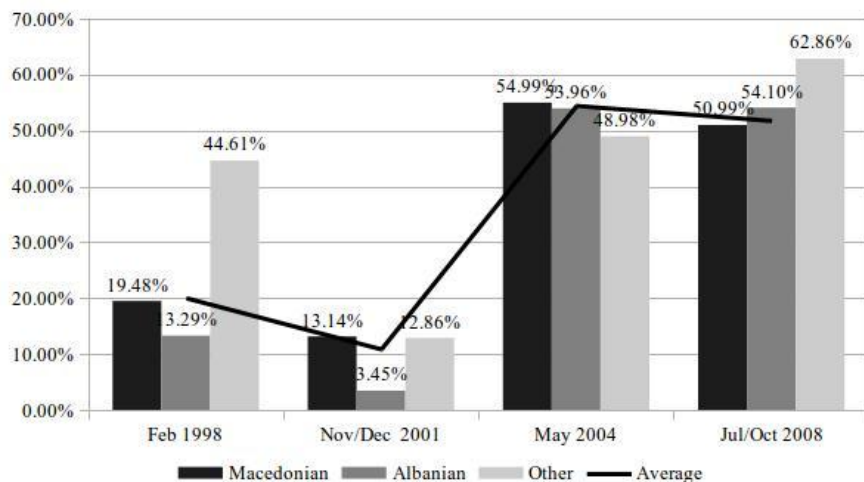
Appendix 2. The evolution of institutional trust over time**Figure 1: Confidence in the government**

Figure 2: Confidence in the parliament

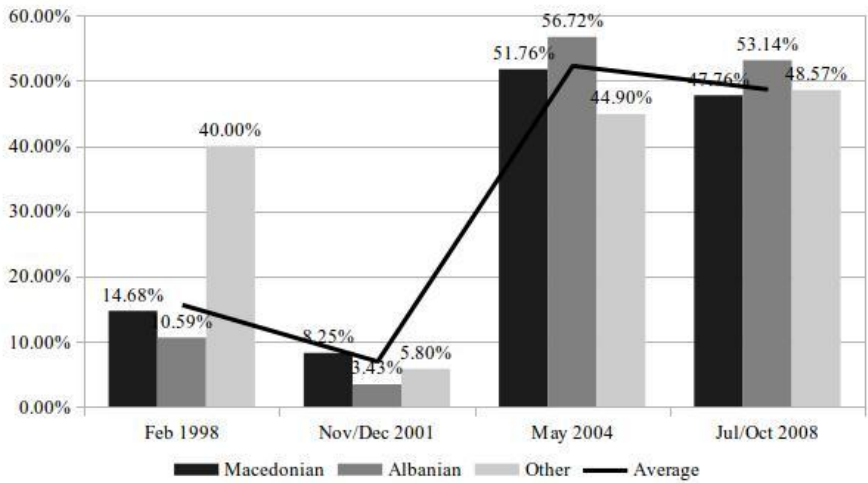


Figure 3: Confidence in the judiciary

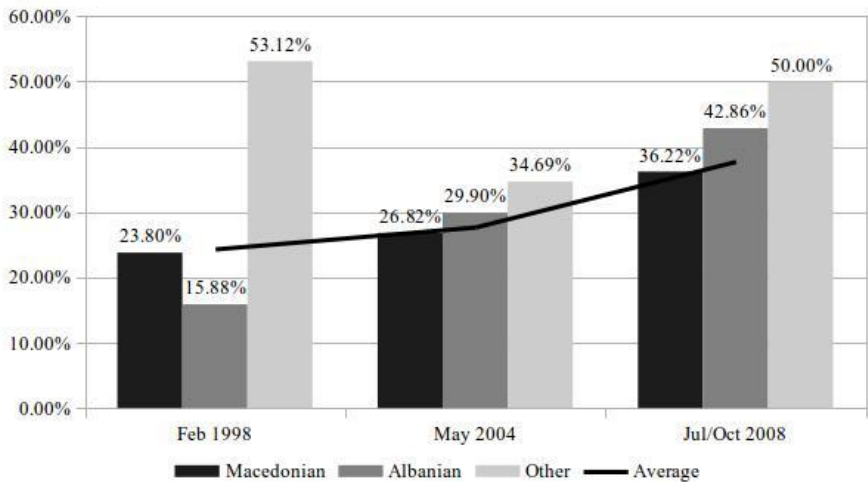


Figure 4: Confidence in the police

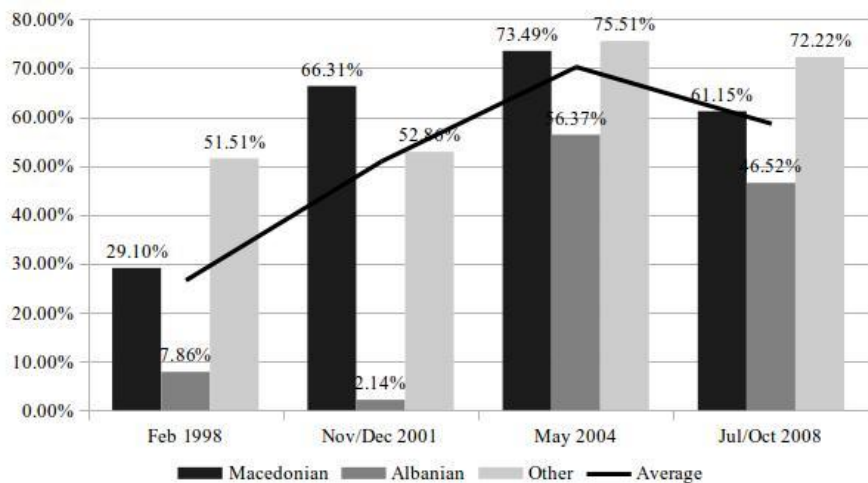
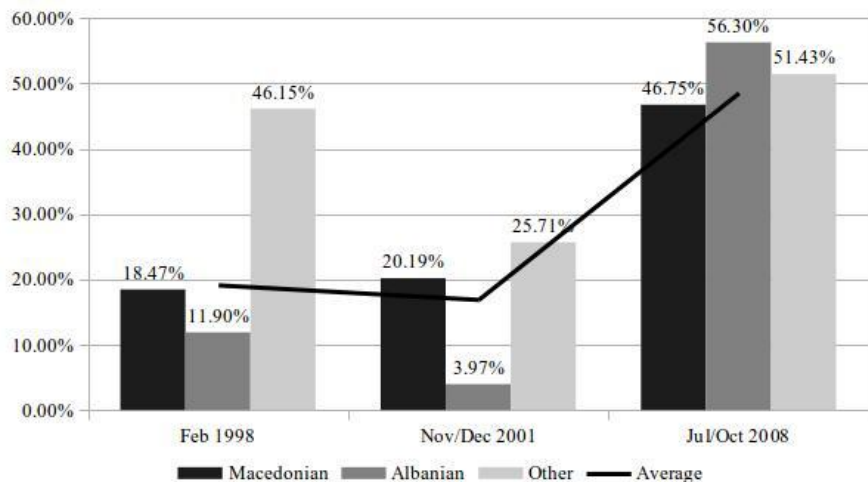


Figure 5: Confidence in the civil service



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**THE DIFFUSION OF “INVENTED CONCEPTS”
VIA HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN
COMMUNIST ROMANIA (1964-1989)**

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Abstract

This study aims to illustrate how various factors such as historians and historical studies, historiography, history teaching, history textbooks design, production and usage, official state ideology, propaganda apparatus, and specific institutions converged in instrumentalizing the knowledge about the past in a long-lasting romanticized, false and counter-productive Weltanschauung among Romanians. The central argument of this article is that the communist leadership officially engaged in the politicization of social and political languages and ideologized the historiography through a specially designed institution with the objective of producing, shaping and reshaping the social and political vocabulary. To this end, the analysis focuses on several Romanian history textbooks and discuss their role in the formation of the “historical consciousness”.

Keywords: national-communism, historiography, textbooks, invented concepts, historical consciousness, ideology.

Introduction

In a study about the psychological profile of Romanians, Daniel David argues that the way Romanians describe themselves, believe to be seen by others and wish for them to be is strongly influenced by stereotypes, school-inculcated prejudices and societal-constructed self-images (David 2015). In this article I argue that among the factors which cause the perpetuation of such self-images, transcending political regimes and socio-historical contexts, textbooks and education have a major role. In communist Romania, it was especially the

historical studies and historiography, which generated a deformed perception over past, history, and society.

For the study of totalitarian regimes, for the theory of ideology, for conceptual history and finally for understanding how textbooks function as ideology diffusion channel, I hold the Romanian example as relevant through its peculiar features among the other totalitarian regimes. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan argue that the communist regime in Romania fitted Max Weber's ideal-type category of *sultanism*. Its essence, according them, which I hold as true, is the *unrestrained personal leadership* (Linz & Stepan 1996, p.54). However, beyond potential methodological benefits, I plead for avoiding generalizing concepts such as *sultanism*, *eastern bloc*, *former Soviet republics*, *Warsaw Pact States* and so on, which may cause confusions and misinterpretations. Instead, I insist on analyzing the political regime in 1964-1989 Romania, and other totalitarian political regimes in Eastern Europe or outside Europe according their peculiarities and not as ideal types. Considering Ceausescu's Romania as part of the same category with North Korea, Iran or Central African Republic (Linz & Stepan 1996, p.51) I hold as questionable at least from a cultural and geographical point of view without mentioning further more consistent arguments. I believe that among the totalitarian states Romania developed a sui-generis interpretation of communism and therefore it should be analyzed as such.

Ceausescu's political regime often called *national-communism* (Verdery 1991) was characterized by nationalism, autarchy, isolationism, extreme xenophobia, lack of popular opposition and subsequent dynastic tendencies. The causes and factors are numerous and do not make the topic of this paper. Among the main features of the political regime in Ceausescu's Romania one could mention: the inexistence of a civil society, the traditional gap between the intellectual elite and the population, the privileged intellectuals, the virtually inexistent dissidence, the rehabilitation and reactivation of inter-war extreme right personalities and discourses, the rejection of Marxism, the inexistence of new political party and political actors after '89 which clearly shows political continuities, the collaborationism of the Orthodox Church, and so on. These peculiarities can be understood only in relation with Romania's cultural background and political culture which make it worth studying.

According to recent formulations in the theory of education, the basic function of an education system is the reproduction and innovation of societal and cultural structure. It transmits towards the new generations values, competences and knowledge the individual needed for the own development

and for the society. Furthermore, the schooling system generates identities, is source of the political regime's legitimation, and secures its confirmation and support. Michael W. Apple's question (2013, p.74), whether education can change society, could easily find its answers by studying the teaching and learning in totalitarian regimes where the school was by law declared and designed as tool of propaganda and indoctrination. As Helmut Fend (2006, p.234) argues, education systems and educational media are always political, especially within totalitarian political regimes.

From the perspective of conceptual history the relevance of a textbook analysis resides in several aspects. First, it should show how the conceptual approach can illuminate the way students of history used language to position themselves towards past historical realities, how were they taught to write, think and conceptualize the past. A second reason is the significance of historical discourse in the Romanian society. The implications of politics in historical studies and the political instrumentalization of history have been shaping the Romanian culture over a century. The present debates over which history should or should be not studied in schools, over the question whether history should refrain to the scholar realm, whether it should be tool for building identities or a medium for conveying values reveal the importance of history discourse. One recent similar thorny issue concerns the religion, how should it be taught or whether it should be a study discipline in school in the first place. Such controversies are peculiar to the former communist states in Eastern Europe, with less consolidated education systems and where the identity discourse based on romantic ethno-nationalist values of race, language, history, religion etc. still finds adherents. A third argument is the broader conceptual history interpretation. This article advocates the importance of studying conceptual meaning and change in textbooks and highlights the impact of historiography and history textbooks over the social and political vocabulary and their importance for the individual and the societal development.

From a methodological point of view, this work should be situated at the intersection between the history of historiography, theory of ideology, and the Koselleckian *Begriffsgeschichte*. The conceptual approach seeks to provide a historiographical and conceptual interpretation of the social and political discourse employed in and communicated through history textbooks and history teaching. The theoretical premise of this investigation is the observation that, "the discipline of history always performs a political function, albeit a changing one" (Koselleck 2002, p.16).

The Diffusion of “Invented Concepts”

The sources to be analyzed are mainly Romanian history textbooks for the secondary study years and high schools in the period 1964-1989. Since the nationalist discourse about the past penetrated in the 1970s and 1980s virtually all sciences, textbooks for disciplines such as the social and political education or civic education will be scrutinized. Several history textbooks for the minorities in Romania (Hungarians and Germans) will be also analyzed, although when compared to those for Romanians they differed only with respect to language. Their content was entirely identical and the Romanian ideological *wooden language* was occasionally transferred into German or Hungarian through forced translations. The reduced number of the textbooks used for this study finds its explanation in the minor changes occurring in the textbooks from a study year to another. The comparison with the textbooks in the first half of the 20th century or those in the post 1989 years shows the perpetuation of the same nationalist master narrative.

This paper has three parts. In the first part I present in a nutshell the ideological function of history textbooks, I mention the nowadays main narratives and approaches regarding textbooks and I reveal their long term effects of the personality of individuals starting with some examples in present day Romania and Hungary. In the second section I show the role of state established specialized institutions in Romania such as the “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*” in the in the design of textbooks as ideology and propaganda tools. I follow the development and continuities of history textbook design in Romania (1964-1989). I further analyze the concepts of *nation* and *people* as basic concepts of the national-communist historical and political discourse. In the final section I discuss the role of the national-communist *wooden language* in the formation of the historical culture and consciousness.

History education and history textbooks in Eastern Europe

In the 20th century Europe history textbooks have been subject of contestation and controversy. Due to their contents and purpose, textbooks address issues which concern both politics and education. They have the bivalent role of educating politics and of being the main tool of education policies. From the point of view of education, textbooks, especially those for humanities have a significant impact on the formation of pupils’ and students’ character. Because of their implications, contents and addressees textbooks could be situated amongst the most complicated type of written texts.

In Europe, the schooling system and textbooks set the bedrock for personal development and for the way of thinking (Fend 2006, p.40). It has become nowadays a truism to assert that textbooks and the knowledge they provide

are a social construct (Marcus Otto 2012, p.91). Through their content, textbooks convey values and cultural peculiarities specific to a certain nation, cultural space or group. They can educate children and youngsters in the spirit of democracy, tolerance, liberalism and diversity as much as they can inculcate xenophobia, exclusivism, intolerance, fanaticism of all kinds, hatred and resentments against alterities or invented enemies (Lässig 2013, p.1). History textbooks have a particular formative role. They construct identities, modulate the individual's relation with the culture of the area he or she lives in, they fundament the citizens' attitude towards past and the present realities. Moreover, the importance of textbooks resides in the wide range of effects they produce, the number of readers they address and the long timespans they are in use. Scholars such as Werner Wiater, define schoolbooks as "a didactic medium in the shape of a book used for the planning, initiation, support and evaluation of school information and communication process" (Wiater 2011, pp.37-43). Through the collective identity and memory they produce, textbooks have a social integrative function (Fend 2006, p.47). Schools and textbooks are the zone where a fierce competition of concepts and ideas unfolds, the milieu where the values transmitted by the family find confirmation or collide against those of the society.

From a political point of view, the strength of textbooks resides in their selective character reflecting the socio-historical context which explains a certain selection of content (Markova 2013, p.103). As the conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck observed, "the difficulties connected with any formation of epochs and periods can be easily perceived in the organization of textbooks, schoolbooks, and reference books" (Koselleck 2002, p.156). Following Reinhart Koselleck's theoretical framework, I argue that the basic social and political concepts employed in the history textbooks acted both as *factors* and *indicators* of socio-cultural change.

By dealing with sensitive historical issues, many of them still unsolved and with a real potential for acrimony, history textbooks, have been always a thorny issue in the Central and Eastern-Europe in particular. Take for example the case of the *Sigma* history textbook, the first alternative history textbook in post-communist Romania, designed for the academic year 1999-2000. The new textbook offered an updated and rational approach of the past, challenging the clichés of national-communist historiography (Petrescu & Petrescu 2007, p.368). Yet, the new textbooks were characterized as "anti-national", "subversive" and "reactionary". One member of the Parliament even condemned the textbooks "to be burned in the public square". The controversy revealed the public's sentimental attachment to the romanticized

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interpretation of historical past, inculcated during communism. Furthermore, it showed the need of a radical reformation of Romanian historiography in order to cover the huge gap between the Romanian and Western scholarship.

Twelve years later, the 2012 sixth and seventh grade history textbook for the Seklers, a small minority in Transylvania, caused similar reactions. The foreword of the textbook starts with the words “*alea jacta est*”, a formula the authors use to encourage students to struggle for their autonomy or independence. The textbook declared its mission to reveal the “true history” of the Seklers, a small and allegedly neglected cultural group. It stressed out the historical role of Seklers as the leading elite over the majority of Romanian serfs. Regardless the historical truth, of great importance is the effect such a textbook produced within the public discourse. Feeling offended, some representatives of the Romanian majority reacted against being called *serfs*. The author of a newspaper article debating this topic appreciated the textbook as manipulative and denounced the indoctrination it causes among fourteen years old pupils, an age which, according to him coincides with the “disappearance of innocence and the formation of character” (Diaconescu 2014).

Another example is the newly introduced ethics textbook for the fifth grade public schools in Hungary. The textbook teaches children the government’s interpretation of Hungarian history, advocating the religious virtues and the national ideology. From the textbook we learn that the nowadays values of a Hungarian individual are pride, patriotism, religiosity, heroism, and strength. Children also learn that the greatest act of a brave man is to die for his or her country. The textbook is an amalgam of ethics and religious teachings resembling Christian national-conservative doctrines, with strong focus on national(ist) values. Another example is the 2007 controversy around the “myth of Batak” in Bulgarian history textbooks. Such examples of textbooks and the passionate debates they caused are numerous and could be found in most of the eastern European countries. The debate over the interpretation of past in this part of Europe, has been traditionally spilling beyond the academic realm involving multiple layers of society with national and transnational implications.

The evolution of history education in Eastern Europe overlaps with and is a product of the development of historiography. Compared to the German and western European historiography in general, which starting with the 1960s witnessed a process of reformation and redefinition of its methods and objectives (Fend 2006, p.197 sqq.), with some exceptions, east and southeastern European historiography perpetuated the 19th century way of

thinking and writing about the past (Murgescu 2001, pp.266-288). According to the romanticist pedagogy, the role of history teaching was oriented to the present. History was a tool for building identities and for spreading nationalist ideas. The great deeds of national heroes were supposed to give the population self-confidence and pride. Historians were less preoccupied with objectivity, and did not engage a critical and objective approach. They were interested in forging nationalism through myths of origin, unity, virtuous past and heroes of the nation reaching as deep as to mythical times. The national community of the present had its mirror image in the past. The fundamental distinction between history as a past reality and history as an intellectual product of the historian's mind did not exist. The overall approach of historical facts and events was a political-ideological, anachronistic and nationalistic one.

The goal of teaching history was to build responsible members of the national body by learning from the heroic deeds of people from the past. Having one country, one nation and one destiny required one unitary history. Therefore, a single master narrative of the past, with various degrees of complexity was taught from the primary school to the university level. The article signed by an influential columnist in a Romanian newspaper with the title "How many histories does Romania have?" with respect to the allegedly subversive aforementioned *Sigma* history textbook, in 1999, is suggestive for the idea of one single and canonical master narrative of Romania's past. These features of historiography and history teaching are valid for the entire 20th century Eastern Europe reaching beyond the post '89 period as well (Wilschut 2012, pp.1-31).

The new approach to history teaching regards history textbooks and education as a catalyst for peace, mutual understanding and social cohesion. Textbooks should foster understanding and diminish conflict potential through a transnational and interdisciplinary approach of past realities. The alternative perspectives on national, regional and European history should be implemented and disseminated among pupils and students. The formation of critical thinking citizens should replace prejudice and subjective attitudes. According to Simone Lässig the new approach of textbooks design should be based on the concept of *reconciliation*:

stands for arduous, complex, lengthy and potentially reversible processes that are dependent on a number of uncertain factors. In the course of these processes, societies, social groups, and states show their willingness and (re)claim their capacity to coexist in peace and to move beyond experiences of violence and conflict, to interact with a minimum of empathy, to overcome

victim-perpetrator dichotomies as key partners of interpretation for their past, present and future, and to form relationships of trust (Lässig 2013, p.8).

A lab to invent concepts: “The Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” in Romania

In this section I show how the communist regime realized the importance of mastering the social and political languages and, with the aid of specialized institutions such as “*The Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*”, controlled the history textbooks design, the history teaching and the formation of what was called “the historical culture” of the “new man”. I show through a few examples how artificial concepts (*invented concepts*) were created by the scholars working at “*The Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*”, how were they employed and perpetuated in the social and political languages via historiography and the educational media.

The “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*”¹ was founded in 1966 by the Romanian Communist Party after merging two former existing institutions. Its role was to educate and train the party’s ideologues and the Romanian political elite according to the communist ideology. Starting with the mid 1950s and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej’s so called “Declaration of Independence”, in 1964, which opened a long lasting ideological and doctrinal conflict with the Soviet Union, for the Romanian communist leadership the need to articulate a national interpretation of communism became imperative. The national-communism emerging during the mid-1960s basically put in the center of the communist doctrine the concept and *nation* whilst opposing the soviet communist internationalism. According to the Romanian Communist Party, the idea of a borderless communist community had been wrongly interpreted by the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 confirmed and deepened the hostility towards USSR fostering the nationalist dimension of the Romanian communism.

The “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*” was to produce political elites meant to fight back all ideologies perceived as threatening be it fascism, nationalism, capitalism, western democracy and soviet internationalism. Grouped in what was called “the ideological front”, a significant number of journalists, historians, sociologists, teachers, translators, philologists, philosophes,

¹ The institution’s history, its formation, evolution and reorganization is a broader topic, which cannot be covered in this study. Similar to other communist institutions “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*” witnessed various struggles for power and influence. It had a major role in theorizing and implementing Ceausescu’s often controversial ideological directives. The goal of this section is to give a glimpse into the role the *Academy* had in the process of textbooks design and their usage as ideology communication channel.

economists, newspaper and magazine editors worked for the communist state and ideology and sought to provide an alternative Romanian (national/nationalist) interpretation of communism. Furthermore, the new school had to instruct politicians and experts, with “healthy origins” (which basically meant sons of peasants with no connection to the leadership prior to 1945). A further objective was to minimize the importance of the Romanian Academy of Science which, despite repeated ideological purges, was still regarded as reactionary and retrograde. The new *Academy* represented, as Vladimir Tismăneanu puts it, “the doctrinal center of Romanian communism” (Tismăneanu 1992, p.149). A further goal was to provide the party with the corresponding ideology and theoretical argumentation in order to gain the adherence of population to the new regime.

The *Academy* had three main functions: *production* of competent elite in key domains, of ideology, propaganda, discourses and languages; *diffusion* of its products through all possible channels of communication and media; *perpetuation and self-reproduction* of the political regime through a process of permanent selection and evaluation of the political leadership. Virtually, every member aspiring to a position within the political leadership attended the *Academy*. The institution resembled any other western elite school of politics or economics. Starting with 1977 it had three faculties, sociology, commerce and journalism and a monopoly over these fields of research. Students graduating “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*” became members of an informal network of alumni, an elite group protecting the state’s interests in every domain and corner of the country and, in an equal manner the material interests of the group’s members. Their loyalty was in many cases secured through the privileged status and standard of life they were granted. Yet, against Katherine Verdery’s argument (Verdery 1991, p.191), I believe one should not regard the competition for state resources as the main explanation for the perpetuation of the political system and state ideology in Romania. It should be also stressed that besides its political-ideological function, the *Academy* trained a significant number of specialists in less ideological fields such as economy, marketing, and management.

The works published under the patronage of “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*” twisted, altered, instrumentalized and tendentiously interpreted first hand western literature so that it fitted the ideological demands. Such a literature amalgamated discourses and concepts of western and soviet literature, merged communist and nationalist ideas, melted the various conceptualization of basic political and social concepts without considering the differences between historical periods and contexts. Such works are relevant for they set

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the main trends of sociological, historical and political thought research for the entire academic milieu. They communicated ideas and ideological postulates which reached the entire population, from the scholarly to the lowest and simplest level of conceptualization via media, laws, education system and textbooks². They were the articulation of theoretical interpretation and medium of diffusion for the ideas formulated by the political organisms and the state apparatus. The structure of the history textbooks, for example, follows with accuracy the “history of the fatherland” sketched by the successive Congresses of the Romanian Communist Party.

The main aspect which to be stressed out here is the interconnection between the state propaganda apparatus, the center for ideological studies at “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” and the population via education system. The theories formulated by the ideologues were communicated especially through textbooks, whilst giving pupils and students virtually no room for alternative reading on the topic studied. Many of the theoretical works published within the “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” were neither known nor read by most of the population. Yet, the ideas they contained managed to penetrate the lowest levels of education. Occasionally such books were sold compulsory together with other books. According to the ideologues signing such theoretical treaties, their goal was to confer new meanings to existing concepts of the social and political vocabulary, such as *nation*, *national consciousness*, *patriotism*, *ethnicity*, *national specificity*, and *national-communism*. By being direct involved in the design of the schooling system and legislation, “The Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” could effectively communicate its semantic and conceptual engineering towards population.

The *invented meanings* and *concepts* were inserted in the public discourse and perpetuated through the state propaganda apparatus, official ideology and more important through legislation and official documents. Their official dimension gave them a compulsory character and was therefore to be used as such. For example, such an invented concept was the *socialist nation*. It appeared for the first time the Constitution of 1965. According to the state’s fundamental law, “in the Socialist Republic of Romania, the entire state activity has as goal the development and the flourishing of the *socialist nation*” (Muraru & Iancu 1995, p.159). Basically, the *socialist nation* designated an artificial and theoretical combination of two opposed and incompatible

² Analyzing the Bulgarian historiography during communism, Roumen Daskalov identified similar relations between the historical scholarship, history teaching and textbooks and the “collective consciousness” (Daskalov 2004, pp.252-253).

ideologies: *nationalism* and *communism*. The “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” allocated huge human and material resources to remove the contradiction between these two ideologies and to demonstrate the originality and viability of the *socialist nation*. The goal was the regime’s very doctrinal legitimacy towards both western countries and the other communist states on one hand, and the rejection of the Soviet model of socialism on the other hand.

The *socialist nation* was the core concept of the national-communist ideology and regime. The scholars in domains ranging from social sciences to physics and mathematics saw themselves forced to accept and use such invented concepts in the papers and works they published. Far more evident was the impact of the invented concepts in the field social sciences and history where concepts such as *revolution*, *nation*, *state*, *national consciousness*, governed the written or spoken discourse. Since in the Marxist and communist rhetoric, *revolution* was a basic concept, the ideologues at “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” sought to interpret every historical event as a *modern revolution*. Another such basic concept is the *communist struggle/fight*. Through its performative dimension, *struggle* suggests a dynamics of events and a teleological process of becoming. Everything was regarded as a struggle which produced some controversial formulas. In the official discourse it became a cliché, for example, the paradoxical *struggle/fight for peace*.

The role of “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” the core of state ideology production is revealed by its presence in the laws education issued in the timespan 1964-1989. The 1948 and 1968 education reforms stipulated the reorganization the Romanian state schooling system according to the political and ideological demands. The role of education was to form the *communist consciousness* and culture. Free and obligatory education was guaranteed by law. The Education law in 1968 clearly specified the compulsory character of the 9th Congress directives of the Romanian Communist Party on education. The goal of education was to form the materialist-dialectic conception of life and society among citizens (Legea nr. 11/1968), to contribute to the development of the socialist nation and to cultivate the love for fatherland and people. The Education Law of 1978 condemned the education reforms in 1950s which, according to the communist leadership in the 1970s, had applied soviet models disregarding the Romanian traditions and realities.

The Education Law in 1978 (Legea nr. 28/1978) deepened the interference of the state ideology in the education policies and oriented the entire schooling system towards nationalism. The law is an example for the institutionalized instrumentalization of education for political purposes. Accordingly, the

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schooling system had the mission to create and educate the *new man* in the spirit of the Romanian Communist Party's ideology and politics. It emphasized pupils' and students' obligation of contributing to the country's development and their readiness of *any sacrifice* for the fatherland's independence and sovereignty (Legea nr. 28/1978). The secondary school, especially the high schools, had to inculcate the political-ideological education among students and to foster the formation of the *socialist consciousness*. According to the teaching methodology textbook for pedagogical high schools in 1980s, history “should not be taught only to be known, but to be emotionally lived by children” (Bărbuleanu 1988, p.18).

The Education Ministry in close cooperation with “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*” had the responsibility to permanently train teachers and school staff in ideology teaching competences. Moreover, renowned scholars employed by the academy were involved in the textbook contents selection and production process and controlled strictly the manual's final design. The third section of the 1978 Education Law was dedicated to the “educational-political activity and the study of social sciences”, regarded each school as a center for socialist and communist education (Legea nr. 28/1978). The main objective of the social sciences studies was the transmission and appropriation of a communist *Weltanschauung*. Along its whole content, the education law stressed the ideological mission of teaching and its role in inculcating values and characters. It also aimed to build a voluntary attachment to communist values, fatherland and sacrifice resembling the credo of a *political religion*. The importance of “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*”, as the main ideological authority was repeatedly and explicitly specified by law.

The “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*” was dissolved in January 1990. Its properties were split between three new founded faculties – psychology sociology, journalism and the faculty for higher political studies. Many of the scholars and teachers at “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*” were included in the teaching staff of the new faculties whilst many others became part of the Romanian political and intellectual elite after 1989. In the following section I analyze several history textbooks and show how the “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*” used them as a channel for ideology diffusion.

Communicating history, inventing concepts

As in other non-democratic regimes (Knopke 2011; Deyanova 2013, pp.91-100), in communist Romania, schoolbooks were a tool for securing and consolidation of power. They were produced and designed exclusively by the Ministry of Education and Teaching in collaboration with the “*Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy*” were published by exclusively by the publishing house *Editura Didactică și*

Pedagogică and had a compulsory status. Successive generations were taught the same obsolete interpretation of the past whilst the unitary character of the school curricula provided a discursive tradition and therefore a more effective indoctrination. The master-narrative of national ontology and the teleological paradigm of historical interpretation remained virtually unchanged from the beginning of the 20th century until the Sigma alternative textbooks in year 2000³.

The history textbooks designed by Nicolae Iorga, one of the most influential figures in the Romanian politics, identity discourse and historiography in the first half of the 20th century were the main models for the all Romanian schoolbooks to follow both as structure and interpretation. Nicolae Iorga was among the first southeastern European historians interested in the non-national history, historical philosophy, historical theory and methodology. Nevertheless, he remained a practitioner of historicism and a fervent nationalist politician. The history textbook published by Nicolae Iorga in 1910 (Iorga 1910) and those in 1930s (Petrescu 1935; Lambrino 1939; Ilie 1936; David 1937) opened with the formation of the Romanian people and nation and continued according the main pillars of romantic conceptualization of the cultural nation – *territory, language, continuity, specificity* etc. Although oscillating in strength according to the mutations within the social and political context, the nationalist dimension of the history schoolbooks discourse remained a constant feature of Romanian history teaching and schooling concept in general. From the historiographical point of view, all Romanian textbooks, during the entire 20th century, approached history from the same historicist Rankean perspective. During the communist regime, the authors assured the reader that everything was objectively presented, “the way it actually happened” yet without any theoretical or methodological background. The authority over an interpretation or another was given by the name of a famous historian appearing among the authors of the textbook. The construction of a singular interpretation of the past, with no alternatives, has

³ The perpetuation of a national identity master narrative with roots in romantic nationalism and interwar organist right wing racial discourses is a feature shared by most of eastern European states. The role of rightist interwar authors such as Nae Ionescu in Romania, Yanko Yanev in Bulgaria or the influence of Vuk Karadzic’s *Serbianism* in Yugoslavia as source for the identity discourse during communism is a further common feature (Daskalov 2004). Jasna Dragovic-Soso highlights the key-role *long durée* structures have in the perpetuation of traditional identity discourses over different political regimes and historical contexts in southeastern Europe (Cohen & Dragovic-Soso, 2007).

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been traditionally one of the political regime’s goals. The history of the people had to be unitary, to depict the process of unification of the national state and to produce unity. Furthermore, through the history treaties the Romanian Academy periodically published, under the Communist’s Party keen control, a “canonical” and singular interpretation of past was advocated causing a quasi-sanctification of national heroes and historical past. In a higher and more detailed form, such treaties provided the same narrative as the school textbooks and were the main academic reference on historical research.

The historiographical paradigm promoted by the bulk of historians was what Eric Hobsbawm called “orthodox history”, that is “great public actions, battles, cabinets, treaties” (Hobsbawm 1984, p.41). Society was reduced to *nation* and *nation-state* whilst the object of historical research was a “constructed history” outside society and the history itself. The entire Romanian historiography, without counting the role of ideology or censorship, has been traditionally rejecting alternative or opposed historical interpretations out of the historians’ personal creed and professional formation. Thus a scholar writing “a history” against the mainstream was swiftly tagged as a “fifth column activist” and in most of the cases excluded. That nowadays a large part of the population has vehement rejection reactions towards any negative remark with respect to a personality from the past is a further argument for the long term effects of the ideology charged historical discourse over the population via schoolbooks. Relevant here is the fact that, during communism, especially in the 1980s a literature for children amalgamating fairytales and legends with historical facts and personalities endorsed even more the sentimental attachment to a deformed interpretation of the past. Such personal convictions with respect to personal values and virtues constructed via ideology charged literature during childhood proves nowadays in most of the cases difficult to challenge through rational argumentation and critical interpretations.

The Soviet model

The education reforms in 1948 changed the whole teaching and learning approach according to the soviet model. Marxism and its interpretation became the omnipresent feature of society until the end of the 1960s. During the period 1948-1951, according to the official numbers in the period, allegedly around 590 new textbooks were designed and printed in about 28 million copies (Tismăneanu 2007, p.488). The reforms in 1948 introduced unique textbooks for disciplines of study in all schools in the country. The main objective was a clear cut with the previous teaching paradigm which was to be condemned and replaced. All history textbooks, including those edited in the languages of the minorities highlighted the historical importance of the

October Revolution as the most important event in history whilst presenting Marx and Lenin as the most influential personalities of the 20th century. The history textbook for the fourth grade German schools exacerbated the importance of Slavs in the formation of the Romanian people and culture during antiquity, positively assessing their peaceful agricultural occupations in comparison to the war-oriented tribes in the same period. Furthermore, the allegedly abundance of Slavic words in Romanian was an extra reason of Romanian-Soviet friendship and justified the study of Russian in the Romanian schools (Almaş & Petric 1960, pp.28-29). In the same manner, the history textbook for the tenth grade German schools declared the crisis and dissolution of imperialism as the last stage of capitalism and its replacement with socialism appreciated as the most evolved and successful stage of society (Almaş & Vianu 1960, p.5).

The history textbook for the eleventh grade published in 1966 interpreted the historical past according the historical materialism and Marxism. The main factor of historical development is the production of material commodities and the *class struggle*. The textbook revealed the merits of the Marxism in “removing the chaos and arbitrary which had governed the historical and political conceptualization” (Almaş & Georgescu-Buzău 1966, p.3). The main concepts occurring in the historical discourse are *struggle, class, production forces, revolution, progress, retrograde forces, bourgeoisie, proletariat, exploiting classes, workers class*, etc. The concepts and notions suggesting movement are abundant on every page of the manual and refer to *evolution, revolution, development, progress* etc. The core message communicated towards students was the joint Romanian-Soviet effort in eliminating fascism and the evolution in a progressively accelerated pace of society towards socialism and communism. The history textbook for the 12th grade in 1968 (Daicoviciu & Constantinescu 1968) had significantly fewer references to Marxism.

The rebirth of nationalism

After the soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Ceauşescu’s so called “cultural revolution” in 1971 the history textbooks were purged of Marxism. In the 1970’s and 1980’s the communist regime turned to the revival of old national mythology dating from the 19th century transferring the conceptual apparatus of those times both in form and meaning. Starting with the “July Theses” in 1971 and Ceausescu’s “cultural revolution”, the protochronist ideology provided the discursive framework for the articulation of ethnic exclusivism, cultural differentiation and cultural sovereignty within the official political discourse. Its presence in the public discourse was in the years 1970-

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1980 massive. Hence concepts such as nation and its entire semantic field became in the 1970s and 1980s a meta-discourse of the newly emerged protochronist ideology.

The analysis of history textbooks and teaching reveals the increasing role of the nationalist discourse in the Romanian communist ideology. The traditional national master narrative replaced the materialist paradigm. According to the history textbook from 1972, the role of history education was to show how the Romanian *people* and *language* appeared, to advocate its Latin origins, to demonstrate its uninterrupted continuity on the territory it occupies. Moreover history education is, according to one of the objectives present in all textbooks, one of the main tools for the formation of responsible and dedicated citizens. The ‘real history’ was to be only the *work* and *fight* of masses (Florea et al. 1972, p.4) which were regarded as the only forces making history.

The textbook of modern history for the 9th grade, edited in 1977, and 1979 related the historical events in the first half of the 19th century with the accomplishments of the Romanian Communist Party and the socialist society during the 1970s. According to it, history education “reveals the glorious past of the Romanian people and educates the love for fatherland, praises martyrdom and celebrates the heroes of the people” (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1977, p.6). The first lesson in the textbook presented the formation of the Romanian *nation* during the 19th century. In the regime’s official interpretation the concept of *nation* was understood as a “social and ethnic community historically formed on the common territory, economy, and language, with common psychological and spiritual characteristics expressed through the national consciousness and culture” (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1977, p.8). It reproduced the romantic-nationalist nation understood as *blood, people as race, territory, nature, common past* and *specificity*. The formation of the *nation* was regarded as a *natural, necessary* and *compulsory* process occurring in the history of every people. The crystallization of *nation* was caused by the existence of a consciousness of kin, by the belief that all Romanians belonged to one unitary ethnic group, with common ancestors, traditions and destiny.

Thus, the romantic and interwar meanings of the concept of *nation* were transferred by the Communist Party’s ideologues in the 1970 with no substantial alteration. The conceptualization of *nation* highlighted especially the exclusion of everything regarded as foreign and therefore dangerous. The overall interpretation of history was a teleological one, a chain of events and circumstances developed under the impact the people’s permanent *fight*,

which culminated with formation of the *nation*. The lesson in the textbook ended with a quotation from Simion Bărnuțiu, one of the leading Romanian political thinkers amid 1848s. According to him, “nation is the most powerful urge of action for the happiness of human spirit. The one who does not feel the need to act for the glory and happiness of his nation, is nothing but a selfish a for the humanity lost person” (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1977, p.12). The tasks at the end of the lesson required students to be able to demonstrate the formation of the *nation* as the result of a long lasting process and to trace back in the following lessons the evolution of the *nation*. The master narrative was to be memorized as such without much room for interpretation or debate.

Basic concepts: “nation “and “people “

The history textbooks communicated to students the official definition of *nation* as it was formulated in the Program of the Romanian Communist Party in 1975. The *nation* was defined as “an ethnic and social human community, historically formed on a common territory, with a common economy, language, with common psychical and spiritual features expressed through the national culture and consciousness” (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1977, p.8). Whereas in the past the *formation of nation* was one of the fundamental historical phenomena, a “historical permanence” (a concept coined by the great interwar Romanian historian and nationalist Nicolae Iorga), during the communist society the *socialist nation*, the textbook argued, gained the central role in the progress of the communist Romanian society (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1977, p.12). The implementation of the concept of *socialist nation* invented by the ideologues at “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” was more obvious in the 1988 edition of the same textbook. It clearly showed that the theoretical background for the historical research and knowledge are the Communist Party’s documents and the works of Ceaușescu (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1988, p.6). The Romanian national interpretation of the socialism, as a *sui generis* version corresponding to the local realities was extended to a universal dimension with the argument that it influenced the destiny of other peoples and nations.

A further omnipresent and core concept of the historical and political discourse during communism with a sematic field even more specialized and with a higher degree of exclusion than the concept of *nation* was the concept *people* (Romanian - *popor*). During the interwar period it denoted a *collective individual* in an ethnical sense that is Romanian by blood and orthodox Christian, with meanings resembling the German concept of *Volk*. The national-communist ideology removed the religious connotation of the concept *people* and utilized its meaning as a collective national organism. During communism, the concept

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of *popor* (*people*) had almost no social or a class meaning, in the sense of the proletariat, but it was used with its exclusive ethnical connotation. In relation to other ethnic or cultural minority groups the meaning of *people* (*popor*) set clear-cut boundaries, excluding those people of origins other than Romanian. The notion *people* (*popor*) was used on almost every page within the history textbooks and become an all-encompassing *collective person* yet selective and exclusive, which removed the idea of individual responsibility or opinion. The textbooks instructed pupils about the *people's fight, will, destiny, welfare, culture, language, specificity, history, consciousness* and so on.

Relevant for the ideological function of education, worth mentioning here, was the textbook for *social and political education* designed for high schools and professional teaching in 1975 (Ardeleanu 1975, pp.7-9). It provided a more complex type of discourse with the objective of initiating students in ideological and political training. The first pages highlighted the obligation of every member of the society to take part to and be familiar with the state's internal matters and foreign affairs aiming a sort of civic participation. Obviously, as in all “popular democracies”, the suffrage and the population's consultation was a formal one. However, students were required to act as an active member of the socialist society and to develop a *socialist consciousness*. It should be noted that its authors, the otherwise among the top ideologists of the regime in social and historical field, were aware of the importance of notions, concepts and categories for the social and political language in the new designed communist world. A further interesting aspect can be observed in the lesson on religion and science, a real plea for atheism dubbed with an almost pejorative depiction of religions. Religion, according the authors, was a deformed and false reflection in the mind of people on natural phenomena and society. Thus, religion was *opium for the masses*, equal to superstition and a token for the retrograde classes (Ardeleanu 1975, p.149). Yet in the second half of the 1980s, the atheist state ideology started to explore the possibility of strengthening the populations' adherence to the regime by introducing a form of *political religion*. Based on the interwar national ontology it had at its core a constructed spiritual relation between *nation* and *territory/nature*. After 1989 no major change in the design of the history textbooks or a reevaluation of their role and mission could be observed. Instead, the rebirth of post-communist nationalism made the political language of the interwar context the core of the political discourse once again.

Discussion and conclusions

This article showed the extent of the politicization of history and the perpetuation of one and the same master narrative of the national identity. I

choose to open this short study with a quotation from Victor Klemperer's *Lingua Tertii Imperii* for I find it relevant in highlighting the key-role political regimes, of all kinds, be it totalitarian or democratic gave to language. As I showed in this paper, the language used in textbooks had the role to inculcate the communist regime's interpretation of reality. In his diary, the German linguist Viktor Klemperer accounted with great finesses the totalitarian discursive strategies and linguistic mechanisms used to invent a new language whilst replacing the existing one. Similar patterns could be identified in the Romanian national-communist historiographical discourse I approached in this study.

Named by Françoise Thom, *La langue de bois* (1987) or “newspeak” by George Orwell, the “wooden social and political language”⁴ emerged in Romania during communism had several general features valid for the rhetoric practiced by most of the socialist states in Eastern Europe. Among these one should remind the long term effects of the repetition of single words, idioms, and sentence structures, recurrence, replacement of existing meanings with new ones, the corruption of concepts' meanings, the usage of concepts and meanings from the past, the irony, the abundance of the notion *enemy*, the historical and mythical heroes, the permanent fight, the uniformity of the written language which explains the homogeneity of the spoken language, the standardized form of the written text, the permanent threat, the dichotomy *we-they*, the inclusion and exclusion of various groups, the obsession for specificity, self-differentiation and self-definition.

In the Romanian case, the social and political language had to cope, as the Romanian communist ideology in general, with what was called the “dialectic dilemma of continuity and discontinuity”. This meant basically, melting together the opposed doctrines of *nationalism* and *socialism* whilst finding the proper theoretical support. The ideologists responsible for inventing and communicating the “new language” fused old concepts with new meanings, produced new concepts for anachronisms, replaced the future oriented Marxist discourse with the past oriented 19th century nationalism.

The role of history textbooks was significant especially through their uniformity, selective and monopoly character. One single master narrative

⁴ The Romanian linguist George Pruteanu defined the “wooden language” as the modality of telling less with as many words as possible. Its purpose was to give the impression of a real communication between the political elite and the population whilst no clear message was transmitted.

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regarding the national identity perpetuated via textbooks was shared by succeeding generations of students. As shown, school was by law designed as a part of the “ideological apparatus”, a channel of communication for the invented concepts. The invented and ideologically charged notions and concepts are still in use nowadays causing occasionally confusions and conflicts. A further important effect of the linguistic engineering practiced by the communist ideology was the amalgamation of the political left and right, both as political languages and doctrines. This aspect has nowadays a clear negative influence over the political culture and performance of the political leadership. From a historiographical point of view, the analysis of history textbooks reveals with some moments of superficial change obvious continuities. Most of the history textbooks in the 20th perpetuate the same 19th century romantic interpretation of history which is symptomatic for the Romanian historiography as a whole.

The communist propaganda succeeded in creating a *historical culture and consciousness*. The two concepts overlapped in the communist conceptualization and were understood through their strong voluntary dimension. The historical culture had to produce reactions, convictions and beliefs deeply rooted in the individual personal set of values and professional formation and to stimulate the individual to endorse the *collective individual* which was the *nation*. The obsessive occurrence of the notion “consciousness”, attached to a significant number of basic concepts of the social and political vocabulary suggests the interest the state ideology had in gaining voluntary adherence to the political regime. The communist ideologists understood the “historical consciousness” not only as knowledge about the past, but rather with a wider meaning i.e. as a human asset for the orientation in life and the world, a *Weltanschauung* of the “new man”. The formation of the “historical consciousness” merged the “literacy” and “awareness” involving in the same proportion history teaching, historical academics and public history (all means for communicating and diffusion such as press, radio, cinema, television with a key-role in shaping successive generations of people).

However, the “historical consciousness” created by the communist ideology has a strong negative dimension through its forced past orientation. It opposes the pragmatic dimension of the concept of “historical consciousness” employed by scholars as Jörn Rüsen as an analytical category (Rüsen 2004, p.66) for it endorsed a retrograde “temporal orientation”⁵. From a

⁵ Jörn Rüsen argues that the *historical consciousness* should be conceptualized as an “operation of human intellection rendering present actuality intelligible while

historiographical point of view, the *historical consciousness* implied a trans-generational mental orientation and exchange and the aptitude of thinking back and forth in time.

Yet, in the communist Romania, the making sense of the past was not used for constructing expectations for the future but was confined to the present. The instrumentalization of the past via textbooks and historical education did not focus on communicating values and moral examples for the future development of society. Instead it insisted on traditions, ancestors, and preservation of “true values” for the sake of an eternal continuous present. Applying Jörn Rüsen’s idea of “hierarchical development of *historical consciousness*” (Rüsen 2004, pp.70-78), it becomes obvious that in communist Romania the *historical consciousness* did not evolve to the stages of *critique* and *genetic understanding*, which correspond to a society with a higher and educated level of knowledge. Instead, the communist *historical consciousness* persisted in the *tradition* and *exemplariness* lower phases. After being shared by a homogenous population within the national state for a long period of time the *communist historical consciousness* turned into an obstacle for the development of the nowadays Romanian society, hindering inter-group relations and the adaptation to the accelerated changes of the 21st century.

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fashioning its future perspectives. Historical consciousness deals with the past qua experience; it reveals to us the web of temporal change in which our lives are caught up and (at least indirectly) the future perspectives toward which that change is flowing”.

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DIRECT DEMOCRACY NOTES

THE 2014 REFERENDUM IN CRIMEA

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Outline

- The “referendum” in Crimea held on 16 March 2014 fulfilled the criteria of neither legality nor legitimacy.
- The “referendum” was conducted in breach of Ukraine’s domestic, bilateral (Ukraine-Russia) and international legal frameworks.
- The procedure for the preparation and conduct of the “referendum” on the day, including its international observation, was entirely inadequate.
- The “referendum” cannot be considered as a legitimate expression of popular will due to the violation of the criteria of free and fair voting and due to the actual number of voters and their choices being unknown.
- The “referendum” creates a precedent of illegal irredentism in interstate politics and a violation of international law.

This note provides an analysis of the legality and legitimacy of the so-called referendum on the status of Crimea held on 16 March 2014. It is argued that the “referendum” fulfilled neither criteria and hence cannot be considered either as legally valid or legitimately representative of public opinion. In conclusion the following points are made: first, a standpoint in both the Russian and Western mass-media of interpreting the “referendum” as a proxy for an opinion poll is misguided. Second, the “referendum” undermines political stability in Ukraine and beyond as it sets a precedent for illegal irredentism portrayed as democratic process.

Background and legal framework

Crimea is an autonomous republic situated in the south of Ukraine. Geographically a peninsula, it was acquired by the Russian Empire from the decaying Ottoman Empire in 1783 (Taagepera 2014) and in 1922 it was incorporated into the Soviet Union. In 1954, on the basis of the Soviet Constitution of 1936 (Article 18), through a decision of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union of 25 January 1954, given effect by a resolution of the Soviet Supreme Council of 19 February, the then Crimean Oblast' was transferred from the then Russian Federative to the then Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, of which Ukraine is a direct successor.¹

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the declaration of independence by Ukraine on 24 August 1991, Crimea became the Autonomous Republic of Crimea within a unitary Ukrainian state. Crimea further demanded and, following a tense stand-off with Kyiv between January 1994²-1995 under the presidency of Leonid Kuchma and with the involvement of OSCE (Stern and Druckman 2006), finally received the status of an autonomous region fixed in the Constitution of 28 June 1996. This autonomy implies its own constitution, parliament and government. However, these institutions remain subordinate to the Constitution, Parliament and President of Ukraine (according to the Articles 85(28), 85(37) and 106(16) of the Constitution of Ukraine). The Crimean Tatars, indigenous people of Crimea, are represented by their own highest representative body, the *Qurultai*, and its executive body, the *Mejlis*.

As a result of the Russian Empire's and the Soviet Union's nationalities policies, Crimea has a complex demographic history. In the aftermath of these policies, including the long-term genocide of Crimean Tatars culminating in their large-scale deportation to Central Asia in May 1944 (Moser 2014), Crimean Tatars

¹ This fact is often represented as a decision by an allegedly "drunken Khrushchev" based on his nationalist sentiments (Lewycka 2014). This is incorrect as the rationale behind that decision was complex: it included territorial continuity, infrastructural and overall economic integration, and the need to consolidate Soviet power after the annexation of Western Ukraine (Kramer 2014). Also, the Crimean Oblast' was transferred to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic following a transfer in 1924 of some of that republic's south-eastern territories to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Bayley et al. 2012, p. 654).

² When the nationalist-minded Russian Yuri Meshkov was elected president and demanded independence, he ran into a political standoff with the Presidium of the Crimean Supreme Council by September 1994 on the basis of violating both Crimea's and Ukraine's legislation.

(recently estimated at 12% of the peninsula's population) became the third largest nationality after Russians (recently estimated at 58.3%) and Ukrainians (recently estimated at 24.3%); and 6% of population is comprised of other nationalities: Belarusians, Tatars, Armenians, Jews, Poles, Moldovans, Azeris and others, according to the national census of population of 2001.³

Despite the historic and demographic complexities of Crimea and the turbulent political scene of the rest of Ukraine, Crimea's institutional framework functioned until 23 February 2014. On that day, after the flight of President Viktor Yanukovich and the change of government following the three-month long *Maidan* protests, troops without insignia occupied administrative buildings in Crimea, blocked Ukrainian military bases there and on 6 March 2014 the Crimean Parliament made a decree "About the conduct of an all-Crimean referendum" on 16 March 2014.⁴ A consideration is now made of the legal grounds for such a referendum to take place: domestic, bilateral (i.e. between Ukraine and Russia) and international.

The domestic legal framework was based on the Constitution of Ukraine. An alteration to the territory of Ukraine may only be decided exclusively by a national referendum, initiated for this purpose by the Parliament of Ukraine, *Verkhovna Rada*, according to the Constitution (Article 73) and to the Law of Ukraine "On the national referendum" of 2013 (Articles 3(2), 14). In the same law the procedure for organizing such a referendum is outlined, which, among other things, provides for a period of 50 days for its preparation (Article 27).⁵

On this basis alone, the decision by the Crimean Supreme Council to hold a referendum was legally null and void. Furthermore, it violated international legal frameworks: both bilateral, between Ukraine and Russia, and international. Crimea can only organize local referenda (Article 138 of the Constitution of Ukraine). Therefore, the "referendum" of 16 March 2014 was unconstitutional.

According to legal experts' estimates, Russia's recognition of Ukraine's borders inherited from the Soviet Union, including Crimea, was clear and unambiguous. It was secured in such bilateral treaties as the Belovezhskaya Pushcha Accords of 8 December 1991 on the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Alma Aty Declaration of 21 December 1991 on the establishment of the Commonwealth of

³ About the number and composition population of Ukraine by data All-Ukrainian population census' 2001 data.

⁴ Postanovlenie VR ARK "O provedenii obshchekrymskogo referendum," March 6, 2014.

⁵ Zakon Ukrayiny "Pro vseukrayins'kyi referendum," November 6, 2012.

Independent States, and the Treaty on friendship, cooperation and partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine of 31 May 1997 (Weller 2014).

The international legal framework of interstate relations covers:

- (1) prohibition of the use of force against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of any state, based on which the use of foreign armed forces on the territory of a state is defined as amounting to aggression regardless of a declaration of war and the type of presence (invasion, attack, occupation, annexation, blockade, contravention of the agreement governing foreign troops' presence or sending irregulars), according to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution of 1974 (Article 3);
- (2) sovereign equality, refraining from the threat or use of force, inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity of states, peaceful settlement of disputes, and non-intervention in internal affairs, according to "Helsinki Final Act OSCE" of 1 August 1975;
- (3) specifically for Ukraine, security guarantees on the political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country within its existing borders in exchange for nuclear weapons' disarmament according to the Budapest Memorandum of 5 December 1994, signed by Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, and by France and China in individual statements, following Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.⁶ Those guarantees were reaffirmed by the United States and Russia in the Joint Declaration of 2009 (Burlyuk 2014).

Campaign

From a sociological point of view, there was no history of significant support for independence of Crimea or for joining the Russian Federation among public opinion in Crimea (Bohm 2014). An evaluation of preferences of Crimea's Russian population as largely moderate and more likely to support the *status quo* than secession was predominant in diplomatic as well as in academic circles (Aronov 2014; Burlyuk 2014).⁷

⁶ Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine inherited the world's third largest stockpile of nuclear weapons.

⁷ Differing opinions were present as well. As summarized by the political analyst Oleksandr Sushko shortly before the "referendum," "There is turbulence and there are differences between the regions but not to that extent. In sociological terms, there are absolutely no grounds for a split... The only region where the idea of secession is more

In fact, the public opinion polls on the status of Crimea since Ukraine's independence referendum in 1991 have demonstrated a fairly consistent pattern: the majority – up to 60% – supported the *status quo* autonomy within a unitary state, some 25% favored secession or joining Russia, and a remaining minority of about 15% preferred other options, including decentralization and further autonomy.

Table 1: Public opinion polls on the status of Crimea since 1991

Year	Question	Responses
1991	“Do you support the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine?”	54.19% - “yes” ⁸
2009	“Do you want Crimea to leave Ukraine and join Russia?”	32.3% - “yes”
2011	“Do you want Crimea to leave Ukraine and join Russia?”	24.4% - “yes”
2011	“Do you perceive Ukraine as your motherland?”	71.3% - “yes” (out of those 66.8% Russians), 18.6% - “no” (22.2% Russians) ⁹
October 2011	“In your opinion, what should the status of Crimea be?”	49% - “autonomy in Ukraine (as today)”; 33% - “Crimea should be separated and given to Russia”
May 2013	“In your opinion, what should the status of Crimea be?”	53% - “autonomy in Ukraine (as today)”; 23% - “Crimea should be separated and given to Russia” ¹⁰

As Table 1 illustrates, roughly the same percentage of voters in Crimea, with a slight increase over time, kept supporting the idea of one country within its

or less popular is Crimea, because it's the only region where ethnic Russians are in the majority” (Rettman 2014).

⁸ Register of results of all-Ukraine referendum, December 1, 1991.

⁹ Mironova 2014.

¹⁰ The International Republican Institute, Baltic Surveys Ltd./The Gallup Organization, Rating Group Ukraine, 2013.

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borders.¹¹ The inevitable question that arises is that how does this tally with the “official” results of the “referendum” where 97% of voters apparently supported joining Russia. In this respect, two aspects are key: first the preparation and second the conduct of the “referendum.” The first aspect, as outlined in the five points below, concerns the procedural issues of the preparation of the “referendum.”

First, it was initiated by the Crimean Parliament on 6 March 2014, i.e. ten days in advance of the “referendum” itself and was followed by the “adoption” on 11 March 2014 of the declaration of independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Crimean Supreme Council and Sevastopol City Council, respectively.

There is no evidence that the majority of MPs supported irredentism or secession. According to the then vice prime-minister of the Crimean Government, Rustam Temirgaliev, who was deputy of the “Regions of Crimea” faction, there was no discussion on issues of separatism and secession during the faction’s meetings in late February 2014. The thrust of the debates was the increase of economic autonomy within the limits of Ukraine’s constitutional reform.¹² Sergei Aksenov, a leader of the nationalist party ‘Russian Unity’ with three seats out of 100 in the Crimean Parliament, supported the irredentist option; he was installed as a prime-minister the day after a de-facto military take-over on 27 February 2014 (Ackerman and Bartkowski 2014, Bohm 2014).

Despite a lack of a popular demand, the Crimean Parliament voted for a referendum about the status of autonomy to be held on 16 March 2014 (Vlasova 2014a). The TV interview of a former self-proclaimed “separatist leader” Igor Girkin (nicknamed “Strelkov”) in which he describes bringing deputies to the vote at gunpoint¹³ sheds light on the procedural validity of the vote and of its re

Since the Parliament and the Crimean Supreme Council do not have powers to declare independence, these decisions had no more legal force in 2014 than they had twenty years earlier, in 1994. Respectively, they were declared

¹¹ It is important to note that the post-“referendum” public opinion polls’ results were seriously distorted due to a number of methodological errors, as a recently conducted poll by GfK Ukraine demonstrates, and should not be considered as representative; instead, alternative methods of polling under occupation should be applied (Fedets’ 2015).

¹² V Krymu viddilennia ne obhovoriuvai, ale hochut’ rozshyrennia, February 21, 2014.

¹³ Informatsiino-analitychna programa “Vysnovky,” January 31, 2015.

unconstitutional by the Decision of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine of 14 March 2014.¹⁴

Second, the “referendum” was prepared in ten days between 6 and 16 March, after the finalized date for voting was changed twice: originally scheduled for 25 May, it was brought forward first to 30 March and then to 16 March (Smith 2014). This is an inadequate amount of time by any standards, not least under the above-mentioned domestic Ukrainian legislation on the national referendum.

Third, the “referendum” was prepared and conducted with the open presence of foreign, albeit unmarked, troops on the territory of Crimea. That presence was explained by the new “authorities” as local “self-defense” units (Bohm 2014; Vorobiov 2014), leaving questions open about the origin of their military ammunition including weapons and vehicles, and justified in a number of ways. Arguments that troops were “invited” in by either President Viktor Yanukovich, who had recently fled, or by the Crimean new “authorities,” were made by the Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov and other senior officials (Weller 2014). In this regard, it is important to specify that, according to the Constitution of Ukraine, only the Parliament of Ukraine has the right to approve foreign troops’ presence in Ukraine (Article 85(9)), which it did not do in this case (Power 2014). From a legal point of view, Russia’s augmentation of its forces in Crimea, which accompanied the appearance of unmarked troops, amounted to an armed intervention and aggression, according to the UN definition of 1974 (Tancredi 2014). That made it impossible to conduct a referendum in a lawful and legitimate way.

Turning to another broadly used line of argumentation about the need to “protect” the Russian and Russian-speaking population in Crimea after the change of government in Kyiv, there are clear guidelines in the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of February 1995. The protection of national minorities is the responsibility of the host state and only where there is evidence of systemic and grave violation of their rights does the international community have the right to intervene on a mandate from the UN, according to its Charter of 26 February 1945. In Crimea, as in the rest of Ukraine, there was no documented evidence of even a single case of such a violation, apart from those “reported” by the Russian mass-media, usually based on “witnesses’ testimony” (Baer 2014; Bohm 2014; Burlyuk

¹⁴ Decision of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine about conformity with the Decree of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea “About the conduct of the all-Crimean referendum,” March 14, 2014.

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2014; Moser 2014; Power 2014).¹⁵ This aspect rendered the situation in Crimea completely at odds with that of Kosovo which became a frequent but inadequate comparison (Bellinger 2014; Weller 2014). Importantly, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Astrid Thors' visit to Crimea, which went largely unnoticed due to the tensions running high at the time, resulted in her concern being expressed at the risk of violent conflict and its consequences to "all communities, particularly the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar groups", and "no evidence of violations or threats to the rights of Russian speakers."¹⁶ Similarly, local protests against Russian military intervention and "protection" held throughout Crimea in early March 2014 went largely unnoticed (Ackerman and Bartkowski 2014), as did intimidating potential pro-Ukrainian voters up to preventing them from voting (Smith 2014). As the US Ambassador and US permanent representative to the UN Samantha Power put it, "military action cannot be justified on the basis of threats that haven't been made and aren't being carried out" (March 6, 2014).

Fourth, the questions on the ballot paper read: 1. "Are you in favor of the reunification of Crimea with Russia as part of the Russian Federation?" or 2. "Are you in favor of restoring the 1992 Constitution and the status of Crimea as part of Ukraine?" However, the Constitution of 1992 declared independence from both Russia and Ukraine, of which voters were not informed (Smith 2014), and was overruled by a later Constitution of 1995. Therefore, the formulation of the questions on the ballot paper did not include either a status quo option or an option for more autonomy within Ukraine (Smith 2014). It effectively presented a choice between irredentism and secession, respectively (Wilfore 2014). Above all, it violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine (Ackerman and Bartkowski 2014).

The fifth and final point regards preparation being marked by the Crimean new

¹⁵ On the contrary, the statistics on the languages used in the 589 Crimean schools prior to the "referendum" is revealing: 56% i.e. 330 of the Crimean schools were taught exclusively in Russian; 3% i.e. 15 schools were taught in Crimean Tatar; and 1% i.e. 7 schools were taught exclusively in Ukrainian. Schools within the latter two groups have, in a number of cases, been closed down since the annexation of Crimea. Incidentally, 40% i.e. 237 of Crimean schools were bi- or trilingual (Lassowsky and Dalphond 2014).

¹⁶ Developing situation in Crimea alarming, says OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, March 6, 2014.

“authorities” and the Russian media leading one-sided pro-Russian propaganda while blocking Ukrainian TV channels in Crimea (Smith 2014). Both activities were in breach of the provision on providing balanced and objective information.¹⁷

All the above points were in breach of those parts of Ukraine’s legislation as outlined above as well as being contrary to the “Code of Good Practices on Referendums” established by the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission on Democracy through Law; both Russia and Ukraine are member states of the Council of Europe (Wilfore 2014). Moreover, that commission’s experts submitted conclusions that the “referendum” would be illegal (Vlasova 2014). In short, these procedural violations are sufficient to nullify the validity of the “referendum” as a means of popular expression.

Results

The second aspect was the actual conduct of the “referendum” on 16 March 2014, presented below. The “official” results announced by Russia were of an 83% turnout and a 96.77% support for the “joining Russia” option.¹⁸ This was presented as the expression of the will of 82% of Crimea’s population. The “expression of popular will” was used by the Russian Federation as a pretext to *de facto* annex Crimea by means of a “treaty” with new Crimean “government” of 18 March 2014 (Kramer 2014).¹⁹

Table 2. Results of Crimea’s status referendum in 2014

Date of referendum:	16 March 2014
Electorate:	1,844,589
Referendum questions:	1. “Are you in favor of the reunification of Crimea with Russia as part of the Russian Federation?” 2. “Are you in favor of restoring the 1992 Constitution and the status of Crimea as part of Ukraine?”
Total votes cast:	1,274,096 (100%)
Total valid votes:	1,264,999 (99.29%)
Valid votes in favor:	1,233,002 (96.77%)
Valid votes against:	31,997 (2.51%)

¹⁷ Open declaration of “Citizen Observer,” March 18, 2014. “Civil Observer” is Russia-based citizens’ led observation community founded in 2011.

¹⁸ Crimea votes to join the Russian Federation: 96.77% say YES, March 17, 2014.

¹⁹ Dogovor mezhdru Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Krym o prinyatii v Rossiiskuyu Federatsiyu Respubliki Krym i obrazovanii v sostave Rossiiskoi Federatsii novykh sub’ektov.

The 2014 referendum in Crimea

Apart from the lack of a legal basis for conducting the “referendum” and the procedural violations of its preparation as outlined above, the procedure for holding it did not conform to any standards. Procedural violations permeated the composition of voters’ lists, the process of the actual voting and the observation of the vote. Among the principal problems were:

First, lists of voters were unofficial because the Central Electoral Commission of Ukraine blocked access to the database of the State registry of voters for Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol (Decision of 4 March 2014)²⁰ hence the new “authorities” compiled and produced voters’ lists there.²¹ Along with incomplete lists, there were cases of voting by the citizens of the Russian Federation²² and of multiple voting, e.g. in Sevastopol 124% of residents would have had to vote to achieve the “official result” (Ackerman and Bartkowski 2014).

Second, the electoral commissions’ composition was not transparent (Smith 2014) and they were not accessible to journalists.²³ Third, as a result of the legal problems mentioned above, neither the OSCE nor other international organizations sent their observers. In fact, the OSCE observers had been prevented from entering Crimea by Russian paramilitary groups a week prior to the “referendum” (Vorobiov 2014). The observers present were overwhelmingly from Russia, in particular, the so-called CIS-EMO (Commonwealth of the Independent States – Election Monitoring Organization),²⁴ and European far-right parties and organizations (Fox 2014, Shekhovtsov 2014). Therefore the “observation” was not independent and accountable to any international organizations. This is crucial because international observation is an important element to allow international recognition of the validity of free and fair expression of popular will.

Fourth, the calculation and publication of results cast a serious doubt over their validity. An inadequate organization, as outlined above, implied a lack of clarity on how many people the Crimean new “authorities” say voted. In particular, two

²⁰ Postanova Tsentral’noyi Vyborchoyi Komisiyi Ukrayiny Nr 35, March 6, 2014.

²¹ Grigorii Ioffe: Blokirovaniye dostupa k reestru izbiratelei ARK ne povliyaet na provedeniye referendum, March 7, 2014.

²² Open declaration of “Citizen Observer,” March 18, 2014.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Self-defined as “an international non-governmental organization, the main declared aim of each is to assist maintaining and developing the institution of elections and civil control in states with developing systems of democracy,” founded in Russia in 2003.

pieces of evidence undermine the “officially” published results. First was the declaration of the former head of *Mejlis* Mustafa Dzhemilev. Quoting leaked sources in the Russian Federal Security Service, he said that the actual turnout was 34.2%.²⁵ Second was the leak from the president of Russia’s Council on Civil Society and Human Rights. That leak in a report on the “referendum” in Crimea, which was posted briefly on that council’s website, stated that turnout was approximately 40%, out of which 55% voted to join Russia – i.e. 22.5% of Crimea’s eligible voting population (Gregory 2014), and “even these numbers may be inflated since voters were casting ballots under the barrel of a gun” (Kochis 2014).

These pieces of information are important enough to challenge an interpretation of the Crimean “referendum” as illegal but still legitimate or at least as being a representative expression of popular will²⁶ (Moser 2014; Wilfore 2014; Benardo 2014). Also, they align with the results of opinion polls presented above much better than the “official” results (Kochis 2014). On the basis of an analysis of those polls in 2013-2014, Snyder (2014) arrives at a conclusion similar to that of Ackerman and Bartkowski (2014): “For the supposed referendum result in both the percentage of the winning vote and total turn-out to have been accurate, all ethnic Russians would have had to vote in favor of question #1, plus virtually the entire Ukrainian minority in Crimea... Crimean support for joining Russia... would have been highly implausible to have exceeded 50%.” This is particularly the case considering that the “referendum” was widely boycotted by most of Crimean Tatars and pro-Ukraine voters (Ackerman and Bartkowski 2014; Peters 2014; Smith 2014).

In light of all the problems in respect of initiating, organizing and conducting the “referendum” presented and analyzed above, its “results” were not recognized by the EU leaders and the G7 countries as legal and legitimate (Fox 2014). The “referendum” was confirmed by the UN Security Council on 15 March 2014 as being invalid and, as such, not forming the basis for altering the status of Crimea. That resolution was vetoed by Russia and was not adopted; the following resolution of UN General Assembly condemning the unlawful annexation was passed on 27 March 2014 but it did not have binding effect (Bellinger 2014). In Samantha Power’s words of 19 March 2014, “Now, the referendum has taken place, but the national and international legal status of Crimea has not changed.

²⁵ Dzhemilevu “slili” dannye FSB ob istinnyh itogah referendumu, March 25, 2014.

²⁶ For instance, as in the editorial “Post-Crimea Relations with the West,” published on 18 March 2014 in *The New York Times* (Ackerman and Bartkowski 2014).

A thief can steal property, but that does not confer the right of ownership on the thief.”²⁷

Conclusions

Not only did the “referendum” not meet the legal criteria of a national referendum, it did not meet the procedural requirements either. On that basis, it was neither legally valid nor legitimately representative, contrary to a standpoint of treating its “results” as a proxy of an opinion poll. There are sound analytical and empirical grounds to believe that should the same “referendum” have taken place under conditions of free and fair expression of popular will, with four options offered (independence, annexation by Russia, enhanced autonomy within Ukraine or the *status quo*), the end result would in all likelihood have been different, most probably with support for the *status quo* (Ackerman and Bartkowski 2014). Therefore, the term “unlawful annexation,” which is now predominantly used in the international documents and the mass-media (Peters 2014), is both in form and content much closer to what took place in Crimea in March 2014 rather than a “referendum.” The upshot is that the “referendum” undermines the political stability in Ukraine and potentially in Russia itself and beyond as it sets a precedent for illegal irredentism portrayed as democratic process.

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²⁷ United States Rejects Russia’s Military Intervention and Land Grab in Crimea, March 19, 2014.

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THE 2014 REFERENDUM IN LITHUANIA

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Outline

- The first triple referendum in history of Lithuania as it asked to vote on amendment of three different articles - 9, 47 and 147 - of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania in one referendum question.
- A real issue of referendum – a ban of sale of agricultural land to foreigners in Lithuania.
- A referendum without campaign led to invalid results.
- A record- low turnout as only 15 per cent of eligible electorate voted.
- A failure of mainstream political parties to convince citizens that the whole referendum initiative had no clear rationale.

Among important political events of 2014 in Lithuania was a binding referendum on the amendment of articles 9, 47 and 147 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. The last referendum of this type was held more than 10 years ago (10-11 May 2003) on the country's membership in the European Union. Since then Lithuania has had two consultative referendums in the area of nuclear energy. But both of them were combined with general elections in order to have a higher participation primarily in the elections. Because of these referendum initiatives some political parties had expectations to increase their vote share during the parliamentary elections of 2008 and 2012. In other words, the 2008 and 2012 consultative referendums have been rather instruments to mobilize additional supporters for the parliamentary elections, but not real means to decide about a substantial policy issue. Moreover, between 1991 and 2014 Lithuania held 11 referendums and one plebiscite; nine of these were binding and three consultative. Valid decisions were passed only in three binding referendums, i.e. the removal of the ex-Soviet military troops from Lithuania, the Constitution adoption, and the accession to the EU. The consultative referendum on the construction of a new nuclear power plant

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(2012) was able to pass a 50 per cent voter turnout threshold, but the issue was rejected with almost two-thirds of “no” votes. Under these circumstances, the attempt to initiate a binding referendum on the amendment of articles 9, 47 and 147 of the Constitution in 2014 looked as a *mission impossible* from the very beginning.

Background

The initiative coming from a group of citizens was registered on 22 August 2013 by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC). The group submitted the draft law with three issues to amend articles 9, 47, 147 of the Constitution: 1) reduce the number of citizens required to implement the right to call a referendum from 300,000 to 100,000 citizens, 2) to restrict the foreign natural and legal persons to acquire land ownership in Lithuania as well as foreign legal persons registered in Lithuania and 3) all decisions related to the exploitation and extraction of natural resources that have national and local importance to be passed only by referendum.

A draft of the *Law of the Republic of Lithuania for amending articles 9, 47 and 147 of the Constitution* was written in three parts and focused on three issues; in the end, the entire initiative may be called a triple referendum. The referendum initiative group proposed to amend part 1 of Article 9 with the following text: “The most significant issues concerning the life of the State and the Nation shall be decided by referendum. Decisions taken by referendum may be amended only by referendum”. Part 3 of the same article was amended by the following statement: “A referendum shall also be held if requested by not less than 100,000 citizens with the right to vote”, i.e. to decrease the current requirement of 300,000 signatures by three times. The amendment to Article 147(1): “A motion to alter or supplement the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania may be submitted to the Seimas by a group of not less than 1/4 of all the Members of the Seimas or not less than by 100,000 citizens with the right to vote” was only a supplementary requirement to lower the quota to 100,000 citizens.

In fact, the amendments on sale restrictions of land to the Article 47 of the Constitution were the most important to the referendum initiative group as this group represented various interests organizations related to the agricultural sector of the country. Lithuania committed to allow foreigners to purchase land when it signed the European Union accession agreement in 2003. A seven year transition period was granted to Lithuania and an initial ban of the land sale was valid until May 2011. Later, Lithuania agreed with the European Commission to extend this period of prohibition until May 2014.

A draft amendment of Article 47 was formulated as follows:

The underground, internal waters, forests and parks may belong by right of ownership only to the citizens and the State of the Republic of Lithuania. The Republic of Lithuania shall have the exclusive rights to the airspace over its territory, its continental shelf and the economic area in the Baltic Sea. The underground as well as internal waters, forest, parks, roads, historical, archaeological and cultural objects of national and communal importance shall belong by the right of exclusive ownership to the Republic of Lithuania. Issues of national and communal importance related to the extraction and use of natural resources shall be solved only by referendum. Plots of land may belong to a foreign state by the right of ownership for the establishment of its diplomatic missions and consular posts according to the procedure and conditions established by law.

According to Article 9 – *Right of Initiative of Calling Referendum* – from the Law on referendum, the initiative group had to submit the petition in three months by collecting a minimum number of 300,000 signatures from Lithuanian citizens. Thus, the initiative group had time to fulfil this task until 29 November 2013. In recent years all initiatives to collect 300,000 signatures for a referendum failed (e.g. four initiatives were unsuccessful in 2012). However, this time was different and on 28 November 2013 the Central Electoral Commission received lists including 313,425 signatures that supported a call for a referendum on the above mentioned issues. After discussions regarding the correctness of some signatures, a decision was issued on 17 February 2014 according to which the number of signatures is higher than 300,000 and the parliament needs to decide about a referendum date.

On 10 April 2014 the Seimas passed a decision to hold a binding referendum with a vote of 79 in favor (supporters from Social democratic, Labor, Order and Justice, and Polish Electoral Action factions, which have been representing the center-left government coalition), four against and 19 abstentions (mainly from the center-right Liberal movement and Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats, HU-LCD).

Campaign

The center right political parties opposed from the very beginning the idea of this referendum. Many of them considered the call of a referendum as an imminent danger for state's stability, a move inspired by political ideologists belonging to the Russian President Vladimir Putin, and an example of anti-Western propaganda. Moreover, four MPs Jurgis Razma and Stasys Šedbaras (HU-LCD) and Eligijus Masiulis and Gintaras Steponavičius (Liberal Movement)

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addressed the Constitutional Court asking to clarify whether the legal regulation when the lawmakers are not granted the right to decide on announcing the referendum does not contradict the Constitution. Their main argument was that a provision regarding the sale of land to foreigners and legal entities was an integral part of the Treaty of Accession between the European Union and Lithuania signed in April 2003. On 11 July 2014 (*post factum*) the Constitutional Court ruled that the Parliament has to refuse to call for a referendum if it does not meet constitutional requirements. It was too late for this triple referendum.

Among the few top politicians who supported the idea of a referendum was Loretta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas and leader of the Labor Party, a member of the ruling center-left coalition. In early spring 2014 in all discussions about the possible referendum, she rejected idea proposed by some right wing politicians that the parliament may block the initiative although at least 300,000 citizens supported it. Graužinienė's argument was that this would be a restriction of democracy, interfering with people's right to express their opinion. On the other hand, the Ministry of Justice proposed amendments to the Law on Referendum, which would authorize the Seimas to filter the so-called "suspicious" referendum initiatives. Along these amendments was also suggested that only one clearly-formulated question could be asked in a referendum instead of several. This draft law was prepared as a reaction to the above mentioned ruling of the Constitutional Court on initiatives that fail to meet the constitutional requirements.

Algirdas Butkevičius, leader of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party and Prime Minister, was very cautious and undecided whether to support the call for a referendum. After several discussions, the social democrats decided to support it in the parliament along with three other ruling coalition parties because it was seen as an important and direct tool to give voice to citizens. However, the ruling parties decided not to combine the referendum with forthcoming presidential and the European Parliament elections in May 2014, but to have a separate vote. This strategic decision almost guaranteed the failure of the referendum to reach the required voter turnout threshold – after two elections in a row, the presidential and European, and due to the beginning of summer holidays.

There were several major differences between the ruling center left parties and opposition center right parties regarding this referendum. If the center right parties rejected both the proposed issues and the possibility to call for a referendum, the ruling parties basically opposed a ban of sale of land as an

issue, which came too late on the political agenda and Lithuania had no time to re-negotiate with the European Union an extension of land sale transitional period. The Labor and Order and Justice parties had openly supported a decrease of the number of signatures to call for a referendum, and the social democrats were not against it. The Order and Justice Party included this issue into its 2012 election manifesto as an important political goal together with the broader use direct democracy tools.

After casting his vote in the referendum, the Prime Minister Butkevičius told the media that the referendum will fail because less than half of all voters will participate. He stressed that the public wisdom will prevail as government and parliament adopted a law on safeguards on land sale, and there was no need for politicizing such an issue. Moreover, he emphasized that his vote was civic duty, respect for the collected signatures, and willingness to express personal opinion. This behavior sharply contrasted with many previous instances when top politicians urged citizens to abstain from voting if they disliked one referendum initiative for some reasons.

The supporters of the “yes” campaign were quite heterogeneous. They included representatives of farmers’ community, some activists from non-parliamentary parties as the Nationalists Union, Lithuanian People’s and Lithuanian Centre Parties, including small parliamentary parties like Lithuanian Peasants and Greens Union, several non-governmental organizations and few old politicians who were fighting for national independence in early 1990s. Main messages of the referendum initiative group were that the land sold to foreigners will no longer be part of Lithuania and the European Union was imposing its own rules on the country.

The campaign in itself was short and extremely weak. Supporters of the triple referendum have been using few websites to disseminate information and most important among them was “*In the name of Earth*”. Open and public discussion through national media was actually absent except few appearances of referendum supporters on national TV and radio as it may be used free of charge according to the law on referendum. A general impression was that the referendum supporters used all their arguments and efforts during a period of collection of signatures to call referendum in autumn 2013 and had no energy to campaign after agitation period officially started in late May 2014.

¹ See more: Argumentai. Available at: <http://www.zemesvardu.lt/Referendumu-siekiamo/> [Accessed 2 March 2015].

Results

According to article 7 of the Law on referendum, the binding referendum is considered valid with a participation quorum: half of the citizens, having the right to vote and having been registered in voter lists or 50 per cent plus one vote. The issue(s) of referendum is considered to be approved if more than one half of the citizens, who had taken part in the referendum voted for it, and in addition they make at least one - third of the citizens having the right to vote and having been registered on voter lists.

Table 1. Results of the 2014 referendum

Date of referendum:	29 June 2014
Electorate:	2,538,430
Referendum question:	I approve the amendment of articles 9, 47 and 147 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania
Total votes cast:	380,178 (14.98%)
Total valid votes:	369,424 (97.17%)
Valid votes in favor:	269,049 (72.83%)
Valid votes against:	100,375 (27.17%)

On 29 June 2014, less than 15 per cent of citizens cast their votes in the referendum and the turnout threshold was not passed. Despite that the proposed policy was accepted by 72.83 per cent of cast votes, these votes made only 10.6 per cent from all eligible electorate. It was a record- low turnout (the average for referendums between 1991 until 2014 was 57.3 per cent). Looking at voter turnout in different electoral districts the most passive voters could be found in the three largest cities – Vilnius (around 10 per cent), Kaunas (13 per cent), and Klaipėda (12 per cent). The least active were the residents of Visaginas with one of the largest Russian minorities in Lithuania. Slightly more active were voters from North Eastern and Southern Lithuania, where in some municipalities the turnout was as high as 20 per cent, e.g. Ignalina, Pakruojis, or Šalčininkai.

Conclusions

The referendum initiative group explained the negative outcome of the referendum in terms of bad timing, i.e. in the middle of summer. At the same time, it was a mistake of the initiative group to combine three issues into one referendum. For example, if there was a separate referendum for a lower number of signatures required to call for a referendum, this issue had real chances to pass because the public opinion is that the current number is too high. The initial reason for a high number of signatures was related to the fear

that referendums might be used too frequently for populist tasks and mobilization of a protest vote.

The land sale issue was interesting only to few minor political parties and to some naïve patriots. From the very beginning it was clear that the referendum initiative on land sale approaches a minor issue on the political agenda and previous international commitments of the country cannot be revised. The mainstream political parties failed to convince citizens that the whole referendum initiative has no clear rationale. After many failed attempts the referendum initiative group collected the required number of signatures and showed some support for these issues in a society. This share of support was higher, for instance, than a voting for winning political parties in the last two parliamentary elections as in 2008 the HU- LCD received only 9.6 per cent of total vote cast and in 2012 for the Labor Party voted 10,7 per cent of eligible voters.

Last but not least, the triple referendum in 2014 could be seen as a mean of populist protest policies rather than a tool of direct democracy meant to decide on important social, political, or economic issues. From the beginning it was quite clear that neither major political parties nor the most influential political leaders had intentions to support it. The initiative group had scarce capacity and resources to mobilize a broader public and to win a majority for its cause. Moreover, the issues of the triple referendum were in line with previous populist initiatives from 2012-2014 that aimed to subject to a popular vote questions such as the decrease of the number of parliamentarians (from 141 to 101), to introduce a right to initiate early parliamentary elections by referendum, or to ban fully nuclear energy. All these initiatives were seen by major political actors in Lithuania as marginal to the political agenda and failed to collect the required number of signatures for a referendum.

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